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**Domesticating San Francisco: Home, Women, and Womanhood
in a Settler Colonial City, 1849 – 1900.**

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Abstract

This thesis examines how white, middle class, Protestant American women and their allies transported the East coast's leading nineteenth-century value system – domesticity – westward and enlisted it in a settler colonial project between 1849 and 1900. By linking home building and benevolent labour to discourses of race, empire, and civilization, it reveals the crucial role reserved for women and concepts of 'womanhood' in 'Americanising' a Far Western city that was largely populated in early years of U.S. rule by a heterogeneous, homosocial, and often unruly male population. San Francisco's isolation from established Eastern communities led to an adjusted, pliable version of domestic ideology developing in the West that has received little scholarly attention. In a gendered inversion of Frederick Jackson Turner's infamous and male-dominated 1893 frontier thesis, this is termed 'frontier domesticity'.

The thesis sheds light on the transformation domestic ideology underwent as, like thousands of hopeful settlers, it travelled across recently annexed lands to San Francisco. Employing ideas about women, womanhood, and homes in efforts to reform what I term the anti-domestic orders of miners and sailors – and violently exclude California's Chinese – reveal San Francisco's 'Americanisation' hinged on understandings of the city's private sphere, alongside the better-known public realm of politics and mass culture that have predominantly been scholars' focus. Domesticity is treated as a protean discourse which, while resting on the idealisation of pure white womanhood, proved malleable enough to justify ambitious schemes for female emigration, women's interventions in debates over men's work and play, and racist assaults on immigrant enclaves. Its class, race, and religious limits, though, made advocates of transplanting domesticity to the West prone to contradiction. The thesis encourages historians to conceptualise women's efforts in domestic reform in San Francisco and the wider West as an important component of the nation's imperialist and expansionist vision.

Declaration

I, the author, confirm that the Thesis is my own work. I am aware of the University's Guidance on the Use of Unfair Means (www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/unfair-means). This work has not been previously presented for an award at this, or any other, university.

Acknowledgements

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Finally, these acknowledgements would not be complete without mention of my much better other half, Lizzie. There were days when the writing of this thesis was slow, or the whole project seemed insurmountable. They were always made better by going home and seeing her. Then came the pandemic, and often I would not speak to anyone all day whilst she was at work. When she returned, I would throw a whole day's worth of thoughts, nonsense, and incoherent summaries of what I'd been working on at her all in five minutes, forgetting that she, too, had had a long day. Only occasionally did she tell me to be quiet. Her support and the time away from thesis writing we've spent together have been so important. I could not have completed this project without her.

Introduction



Figure 1 – Emanuel Leutze’s mural *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way*, completed in 1862. The image celebrated American expansion across the continent, embodying the idea of manifest destiny. Image courtesy of the Smithsonian Libraries and Archives.

Completed in 1862, Emanuel Leutze’s *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way* celebrated the apparently insatiable desire of nineteenth-century Americans to expand their hold of the continent ever Westward. Depicting a wide range of frontiersmen and the enormous landscape of the Republic, the mural shows the moment the travellers’ far-off endpoint finally comes into sight: around the rockface, a huge expanse of seemingly empty Western land emerges, calling to the pioneers to spread out across it and colonise the ‘uninhabited’ region. The letterbox view of San Francisco Bay at the bottom of the mural hinted that American

expansion would not be complete until the harsh continent had been tamed and settled from coast to coast. Amongst the wide array of Americans forging West – troubled-looking ranchers, pioneers, and farmers – one becalmed figure stands out as the focal point of the painting. A woman, baby in arms, hands clasped together, and cloaked in a blue robe strikingly reminiscent to that of the Virgin Mary’s, sits slightly left of centre – closer to the West than the East – with that sprawling landscape before her, as if contemplating the magnitude of her task. Her dominant position in Leutze’s piece was symbolic of the role women would play in the settling of the West: she would be central to colonialism’s success, the calm amid chaos, the arbiter of morality. Though men far outnumbered women in the West – both in the mural and in reality – women were cast as crucial to the development of the region.

This thesis explores how women were employed in a self-conscious civilizing mission in the male-dominated and racially heterogeneous Far West between the 1849 Gold Rush and the turn of the century. It primarily does so by using the lens of domesticity, a crucial value system for nineteenth-century Americans, and one that over the past decades historians have shown stretched beyond the orbit of home and philanthropy into nation- and empire-making. The West, with Native peoples, Catholic Mexicans, and its largely male and transient settler colonial population, presented a series of conundrums for advocates of white Protestant domesticity. How could a ‘civilizing’ home sphere be built from such apparently unpromising elements? To do so required domestic reformers to improvise and innovate as ideas and practices honed among a new middle class in the East were adapted to California and, in this thesis, San Francisco in particular. I term this adapted form of domestic ideology ‘frontier domesticity’, a play on Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis, which situated men as the main actors in the American West. In this version, women and ideas of womanhood are foregrounded in the settlement and colonisation of the city and region and are crucial to understanding its development. By applying frontier domesticity to emigration schemes,

designs for surrogate homes, and the marking of racial difference – all underpinned by assumptions about white Protestant women’s moral influence – the metropolis of the West Coast would be ‘domesticated’.

Present-day San Francisco became part of Mexico in 1821 when the Latin American country won its independence from Spain at the conclusion of the Mexican War of Independence.¹ Huge swathes of what is now the American West and Southwest, including what would later become Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, and California all entered the Mexican Federal Republic. Twenty-five years later, only a short while after the beginning of the Mexican-American War, and under the Presidency of James K. Polk whose election campaign had been largely based on territorial expansion, the American flag was raised in Yerba Buena. On the orders of John Sloat, a commodore in the US Navy, Yerba Buena’s name was changed to San Francisco and the small village became ‘American’.²

The annexation of California and San Francisco was in keeping with an aggressive expansionist policy that had been at the forefront of American political thought throughout the century. In the 1840s, the American journalist John O’Sullivan coined the term ‘manifest destiny’, which posited that the expansion of the American Republic was inevitable, justified, and was God’s will.³ Long before the 1840s, though, the nation had expanded westward. Early

¹ The Mexican War of Independence began in 1810 and concluded in 1821 with Mexico winning its independence. A recent history of the Mexican War of Independence is Jaime E. Rodríguez O., *“We are Now the True Spaniards”: Sovereignty, Revolution, Independence, and the Emergence of the Federal Republic of Mexico, 1808 – 1824* (Stanford, 2012).

² There was no resistance from Mexican forces to this act. Mexican territory in the nineteenth century was huge and sparsely populated: the closest military force that might have fought against this occupation was perhaps as far south as present-day Los Angeles. For broad histories of California, including under Mexican rule, see Don Edward Fehrenbacher, *A Basic History of California* (Princeton, 1964); Andrew Rolle, *California: A History* (8th edn., Malden, MA, 2015). For histories on the Mexican-American War, see J. D. Eisenhower, *So Far From God: The U.S. War with Mexico 1846 – 1848* (New York, 1989); Amy S. Greenberg, *A Wicked War: Polk, Clay, Lincoln, and the 1846 Invasion of Mexico* (New York, 2012); Peter Guardino, *Dead March: A History of the Mexican-American War* (Cambridge, MA, 2017). For histories on James Polk’s influence on the acquisition of California, see Paul Bergeron, *The Presidency of James K. Polk* (Lawrence, 1987); Robert W. Merry, *A Country of Vast Designs: James K. Polk and the Conquest of the American Continent* (New York, 2009).

³ For further literature on Manifest Destiny, see Mark S. Joy, *American Expansionism, 1783 – 1860: A Manifest Destiny?* (New York, 2003); Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815 – 1848* (New York, 2007), esp. pp. 702 – 708; Peter J. Kastor, “‘What are the Advantages of Acquisition?’: Inventing Expansion in the Early American Republic”, *American Quarterly* 60 (December 2008), pp. 1003 – 1035.

expansion involved conflicts with Indian nations in the East, all precursors to the devastating American Indian Wars which reached their apogee of violence, brutality, and destruction during the nineteenth century.⁴ From 1790, shortly after the conclusion of the American War of Independence, through to 1850, the Republic's population increased from just shy of four million to twenty-three million. By the middle of the century, significantly more than half of the nation's populace lived outside of the thirteen colonial states won with independence.⁵ The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 nearly doubled American territory, continued Indian removal claimed more and more land enabling American settlers to creep ever Westward, and the conclusion of the Mexican-American War and the territory acquired from the conflict cemented American dominance from East to West.

In January 1848, not long after the U.S. flag was raised over San Francisco, gold was discovered by James W. Marshall in California's American River, heralding the onset of the largest voluntary migration the world had yet seen. Men (for initially the migration West to hunt for gold was almost exclusively male) departed from across the Union, leaving bustling metropolises, industrial towns, and sleepy villages to head for California. They were joined by Europeans, Australians, South Americans, and Asians who all set sail to America's West coast. San Francisco became the de facto hub of the Gold Rush: its bay made it the perfect arrival spot for eager miners as well as the perfect location for those who had gotten lucky and wished to spend their newly discovered riches in the rapidly growing town. It also served as a retreat for the many who were not so fortunate. Whilst some historians have argued San Francisco's geographical importance – it was strategically placed for commerce and trade, and its harbour made it a focal point for arriving ships to America's Western coast – meant it would have grown into an important metropolis regardless, there can be no doubt the discovery of gold was

⁴ Conflicts between Europeans and Anglo-Americans against Indian nations date as far back as the early seventeenth century with the 1622 Jamestown Massacre perhaps the most infamous of the early conflicts.

⁵ Joy, *American Expansionism*, p. xxv.

instrumental in flinging the sleepy mission town with a population under a thousand to a world-famous metropolis with a population of over fifty-thousand in just a few chaotic years.⁶

A City of Men

This explosion to prominence, though, did not come without its problems. Almost at once, commentators in the East expressed unease, with many beginning to wonder what effect a community such as the one that was rapidly developing in California might have on American men's morality. Would mixing with notorious Australian immigrants promote criminality? Would the alleged heathenism of the Far East begin to erode Christian values? Would extended time with pampered and overly refined Europeans strip American men of their superior national character? Where questions around the mixing of these men invited concerned speculation, the knowledge that they were without the company of mothers and wives left no one in doubt: this was not a healthy environment for white American men to inhabit. The absence of good feminine influence was seen as a serious concern during the Gold Rush. Without such a presence, it was believed, those men would descend into barbarism, lose their moral compass, and willingly succumb to vice.

⁶ For histories of the California Gold Rush, see Rodman W. Paul, *California Gold: The Beginning of Mining in the Far West* (Harvard, 1947); John Walton Caughey, *The California Gold Rush* (Berkeley, 1948); Roger W. Lotchin, *San Francisco 1846 – 1856: From Hamlet to City* (New York, 1974); J. S. Holliday, *The World Rushed In: The California Gold Rush Experience* (Norman, 1981); Malcolm J. Rohrbough, *Days of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the American Nation* (Berkeley, 1997); H. W. Brands, *The Age of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the New American Dream* (New York, 2003); Mark A. Eifler, *The California Gold Rush: The Stampede that Changed the World* (New York, 2017). Two works that focus on the social aspect of the Gold Rush are, Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York, 2000) and Brian Roberts, *American Alchemy: The California Gold Rush and Middle-Class Culture* (Chapel Hill, 2000). For histories of women in the California Gold Rush, see Elisabeth Margo, *Taming the Forty-Niner* (New York, 1955); Margo, *Women of the Gold Rush* (New York, 1992); Christine Fischer, *Let Them Speak for Themselves: Women in the American West, 1849 – 1900* (Hamden, 1977); JoAnn Levy, *They Saw the Elephant: Women in the California Gold Rush* (Norman, 1990); Nancy J. Taniguchi, 'Weaving a Different World: Women and the California Gold Rush', in Kevin Starr and Richard J. Orsi, *Rooted in Barbarous Soil: People, Culture, and Community in Gold Rush California* (Berkeley, 2000), pp. 141 – 168.

Home life offered an antidote to the poison of degeneration. From the home sphere, domestic advocates argued by the 1830s, women controlled and influenced the behaviour of their husbands and brought up their children to be responsible, useful citizens of the Republic.⁷ Communities in the East of the U.S. during the nineteenth century were largely defined by networks of private family homes. From this home-centric structure, domestic advocates believed, morality, patriotism, and Christianity, amongst a host of other benefits, radiated outwards over the community at large. Once in San Francisco, though, early migrants found those unwritten domestic rules that governed their behaviour were entirely absent. Saloons, grog shops, gambling dens, dance halls, and brothels proliferated, and each was an extremely profitable business venture for its owners and investors. In the case of Eliza Farnham, whose plans for 1850s California are the subject of the first chapter, the answer to such temptations lay in bringing marriageable women and home life to San Francisco and its environs to offer bachelor men the nourishment of domesticity.

Though the Gold Rush quickly subsided, the fears Farnham and her allies shared did not go away. The remainder of the thesis traces projects for domesticating the city from mid-century through to the 1890s, as homosocial and immigrant communities sparked anxiety amongst domestic reformers, newspaper editors on both coasts, residents of San Francisco, and visitors. Other groups of men caused problems in San Francisco, too, even as the demographic imbalance gradually lessened, and a middle class based in family homes became a more visible part of the urban terrain. The city's favourable maritime location, for example, made San Francisco a regular host to hordes of sailors who had often been restricted to their ships for months, if not years, before arriving. Well into the late nineteenth century San Francisco provided plenty of attractions for young, lonely, and often bored men to enjoy their time ashore.

⁷ This process was termed republican motherhood by Linda Kerber and will be discussed further on. See Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill, 1980).

This was certainly not a unique problem for San Francisco: port cities and towns across the Republic faced incoming marine men who were invariably looking for a drink once ashore. But the peculiar social situation in San Francisco caused by the Gold Rush and subsequent mass-migration certainly was unique and undoubtedly exacerbated the perceived problems San Francisco faced with mariners on its shores. These problems and, indeed, their proposed remedies, are addressed in chapter two.

Another problem group white American settler colonists in San Francisco identified were the Chinese. Although the Chinese community in the city throughout the whole of the nineteenth century remained heavily male, those comparatively few Chinese women that were present in San Francisco were seen as obstacles to civilizational progress, too. The ‘Chinese Question’ has been extensively written about by historians. Usually, American animosity toward the Chinese has been framed in terms of a labour dispute.⁸ The Chinese, nativist politicians and union leaders insisted at the time, would work for far lower wages than Americans, because their needs were so small in comparison; as a result they encountered violent opposition from white workingmen, who waged a series of reactionary populist campaigns against their ‘indispensable enemy’ to drive them out of employment, and indeed off the North American continent altogether.⁹ The final chapter reframes anti-Chinese sentiment by looking at white San Franciscans’ critique of the absence of domesticity in the

⁸ For works on the so-called Chinese question and labour disputes, see Elmer Clarence Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Urbana, 1939); Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley, 1971); Sucheng Chan, eds., *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882 – 1943* (Philadelphia, 1991); Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act* (Chapel Hill, 1998); Erika Lee, *At America’s Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882 – 1943* (Chapel Hill, 2003); Mark Kanazawa, ‘Immigration, Exclusion, and Taxation: Anti-Chinese Legislation in Gold Rush California’, *The Journal of Economic History* 65 (September 2005), pp. 779 – 805; Estelle T. Lau, *Paper Families: Identity, Immigration Administration, and Chinese Exclusion* (Durham, NC, 2006); Diana L. Ahmad, *The Opium Debate and Chinese Exclusion Laws in the Nineteenth-Century American West* (Reno, 2007); Nicholas Sean Hall, ‘The Wasp’s “Troublesome Children”: Culture, Satire, and the Anti-Chinese Movement in the American West’, *California History* 90 (2013), pp. 42 – 76.

⁹ Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy*.

people and space of their city's Chinese community. In doing so, I argue, those citizens also used Chinatown as a yardstick to measure the success of their own project of domestication.

Across the thesis, I emphasise the difficulties of domesticating a place on the edge of the American empire, and the classed and racial character of that process. In part, these difficulties were material. As an 'instant city' swelled by mass migration, the Gold Rush metropolis lacked the material means to build homes.¹⁰ For years after the initial population explosion, tents, flimsy wooden frames, and so-called 'shanties' predominated in San Francisco. All were at the mercy of fires, which razed the city five times between 1849 and 1851.¹¹ When the large-scale building of permanent homes did begin, finding the domestic servants to staff them presented a considerable challenge, and made San Francisco a site of experimentation in the use of East Asian domestic workers. Continuing streams of hopefuls arriving, and dejected miners leaving, ensured the population remained transient and unstable, supposedly lacking a thoroughly 'American' identity. All these factors meant that the domestication of San Francisco was a formidable task. Many East coast commentators and reformers, however, believed that if but a few good, virtuous, domestic women made the journey west – much like the Marian focal point in Leutze's painting – more would soon follow. Families would form, homes would emerge, vice would be controlled, and morality, civilization, and Christianity would begin to dominate the social structure of the Republic's newest metropolis.

The Empire of the Home in Nineteenth-Century America

¹⁰ For use of the term 'instant city', see Gunther Barth, *Instant Cities: Urbanization and the Rise of San Francisco and Denver* (New York, 1975).

¹¹ See 'Appalling and Destructive Conflagration', *Daily Alta California*, volume 1, number 8, 26 December 1849, p. 2; 'Devastating Conflagration', *Daily Alta California*, volume 1, number 109, 6 May 1850, p. 2; 'Tremendous Conflagration! San Francisco Again in Flames!', *Daily Alta California*, volume 1, number 144, 15 June 1850, p. 2; 'A Fourth Terrible Conflagration!', *Daily Alta California*, volume 1, number 230, 18 September 1850, p. 2; 'Terrible Conflagration!', *Daily Alta California*, volume 2, number 146, 4 May 1851, p. 2. Several smaller fires occurred, too, though these five were by far the most destructive.

This thesis, then, focuses on the role women played in constructing San Francisco. The role of women in the West came under serious and sustained interrogation for perhaps the first time in the 1980s. Western history, encompassing far more than just the California Gold Rush, had for a long time been a story of triumphal American exceptionalism. Almost all the main characters were Anglo-American, English-speaking men. It was a story most famously told by Frederick Jackson Turner in his 1893 essay 'The Significance of the Frontier'. Turner's thesis saw the frontier as integral to the development of American culture and identity. American men marched towards it, carrying with them the baggage of European hierarchy, but the tough material experience they had in the West stripped them of Old World influence and forged a uniquely democratic American character.¹² By the 1980s, though, alongside a rise in New Social History and Women's History, a concerted effort was made to understand the West in a broader, more encompassing, and more representative way: a New Western History emerged.

Its founding practitioners – notably Patricia Limerick, William Cronon, Richard White, and Donald Worster – rejected the influential history of the West penned by Turner almost a hundred years before. New Western Historians challenged the all-white, all-male cast of Turnerian historiography, and often questioned the very notion of a frontier at all, preferring to see the West as a place of empire and encounters rather than a line marking the advance of American civilization. Above all they criticised the celebratory nature with which Turner and subsequent Americans had characterised the expansion of the Republic westward.¹³ Instead,

¹² Frederick Jackson Turner, 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History', in *Annual Report for the American Historical Association for the year 1893* (Washington D.C., 1893), pp. 197 – 227.

¹³ The key works that led the revision early on were, Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (New York, 1985); Patricia Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest* (New York, 1987); William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York, 1991); Richard White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own': A New History of the American West* (Norman, 1991). Further work that sought to lay out New Western History's agenda are Patricia Limerick, Clyde A. Milner II, and Charles E. Rankin (eds), *Trails: Towards a New Western History* (Lawrence, 1991); William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin (eds), *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past* (New York, 1992). Worster, Limerick, Cronon, and White were labelled the 'Gang of Four', a perhaps misleading grouping as they sometimes had fundamental differences in their framing of the West as a region, a place, or, indeed, on whether there was a frontier. For a critique of the New Western History movement, see Michael Allen, 'The "New" Western History Stillborn', *The Historian* 57 (Autumn 1994), pp. 201 – 208.

they argued, Western history had to encompass African Americans, Indian nations, women, Asian migrants, and children, while foregrounding the part played by state power rather than individual heroism. Such a reading transformed our understanding of the region from one built around triumph and celebration to one of conquest and resistance. To borrow Elliott West's phrase, the newer interpretation offered 'a longer, grimmer, but more interesting story'.¹⁴

One of many results of this revisionist approach to Western history was a boom in histories of women in the West.¹⁵ These histories all had one rather obvious, but nonetheless important, aspect in common: they showed that the West did indeed play host to women throughout the nineteenth century. In studying women across a wide range of regions, classes, professions, and ages, amongst many other groupings, historians began to address that Turnerian assumption that the West was a land of men. One of the hallmarks of the early works of women in the West especially was their tendency to deconstruct the mythology surrounding women on the frontier. Take, for example, Marion S. Goldman's research on prostitution in Nevada during the Comstock Lode. She immediately dismissed the mythic version of the Western prostitute – that she was 'socially skilled, sexually experienced, rich, and beautiful; but...also calculating and manipulative' and would nevertheless eventually find her virtuous place in society.¹⁶

¹⁴ Elliott West, 'A Longer, Grimmer, but More Interesting Story', in Limerick, et al (eds), *Trails*, pp. 103 – 111.

¹⁵ Some of these works are Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Frontier Women: "Civilizing" the West? 1840 – 1880* (New York, 1979); Marion S. Goldman, *Gold Diggers and Silver Miners: Prostitutes in the American West* (Ann Arbor, 1981); Carl Nuemann Degler and Lillian Schlissel, *Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey* (New York, 1982); Anne M. Butler, *Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery: Prostitutes in the American West, 1865 – 90* (Urbana, 1985); Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson (eds), *The Women's West* (Norman, 1987); Janice J. Monk, Lillian Schlissel, and Vicki Ruiz (eds), *Western Women: Their Land, Their Lives* (Albuquerque, 1988); Levy, *They Saw the Elephant* (Norman, 1990); Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874 – 1939* (New York, 1991); Harriet Sigerman, *Land of Many Hands: Women in the American West* (New York, 1997); Glenda Riley, *A Place to Grow: Women in the American West* (Arlington Heights, 1992); John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (New Haven, 2001); Gordon Morris Bakken and Brenda Farrington, *Encyclopedia of Women in the American West* (Thousand Oaks, 2003); Mary Ann Irwin and James F. Brooks (eds), *Women and Gender in the American West* (Albuquerque, 2004); Jeanne E. Abrams, *Jewish Women Pioneering the Frontier Trail: A History in the American West* (New York, 2006); Andrea G. Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch: Women and Coeducation in the American West* (Lincoln, 2008); Laura E. Woodworth-Ney, *Women in the American West* (Santa Barbara, 2008); Robert W. Cherny, Mary Ann Irwin, and Ann Marie Wilson (eds), *California Women and Politics: From the Gold Rush to the Great Depression* (Lincoln, 2011); Cathryn Halverson, *Playing House in the American West: Western Women's Life Narratives, 1839 – 1987* (Tuscaloosa, 2013).

¹⁶ Goldman, *Gold Diggers and Silver Miners*, p. 3.

Instead, Goldman replaced this popular culture image by unearthing a hierarchical system, with a mix of race, age, and status all represented. And it was this that much of the work on women in the West did: it told the story of women properly. It placed women in all their guises, professions, races, ages, religions, and classes into the milieu of the West. With the publication of these works, the history of the West became much more aligned with the reality of the West.

Despite this more encompassing approach to history in the West, though, research on the role of domesticity and women's work in the home has remained firmly centred in the East. Richard White observed that the idea of 'home' – a broader concept than both domesticity and nineteenth-century women's work, that nonetheless fit into it – was so ubiquitous that it was easily dismissed as a cliché.¹⁷ Coupled with the absence on the Western frontier of family-based communities defined by networks of private homes, this may in part explain the omission. It is this omission that this thesis addresses. Certainly, in literature on the American West, far less attention has been paid to the home as in the East where domesticity flourished.

Historical interest in domesticity, women's culture, the home and housework, and the home's role and function in American society rose significantly after the publication of Barbara Welter's influential 1966 article on the 'Cult of True Womanhood' and the rise of women's history in the 1970s.¹⁸ The Cult of True Womanhood, or the Cult of Domesticity, was the leading value system that governed primarily the role of women and ideas surrounding femininity, but also had wide reaching consequences on a variety of American institutions, most notably the home and its role within the Republic.¹⁹ Welter's seminal article demonstrated the ways in which women were kept out of society, namely through the promotion of – and the social importance placed on – behavioural traits assigned to women that defined the true and

¹⁷ Richard White, *The Republic for Which It Stands: The United States During Reconstruction and the Gilded Age* (New York, 2017), p. 136.

¹⁸ Barbara Welter, 'The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820 – 1860' *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer, 1966), pp. 151 – 174.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

proper lady. Welter's work was built on by Nancy Cott's 1977 *Bonds of Womanhood*, which laid much of the historical groundwork for a surfeit of women's history in the following two decades. Cott synthesized previously disparate ideas of women's history: work and employment; domesticity; education; religion; and female friendship – termed sisterhoods – and produced the historical context that framed the development of female gender identity and sex roles in nineteenth-century America.²⁰ The cluster of ideas and assumptions that Welter and Cott identified would be carried westwards and adapted by some of the figures in this thesis to the West.

A True Woman adhered devoutly to four virtues: purity, piety, submissiveness, and domesticity.²¹ Domesticity, the fourth virtue of True Womanhood, was the prevailing value system amongst white middle- and upper-class Americans in the North by the middle decades of the nineteenth century. It began inside homes, but as the women involved in San Francisco's maritime reform movement would demonstrate, it frequently defied efforts to delineate strict boundaries between public and private. Domesticity elevated women morally and placed them symbolically, and indeed literally, at the centre of the home. From there, they would guide and care for their family. In its most basic sense, domesticity was the process by which American wives, mothers, and sisters created exceptional living arrangements for their husbands, children, and brothers. They did so by exhibiting exemplary commitment to the values of True Womanhood within the home, influencing and guiding their family away from sin and vice, and leading them towards a pious, Christian, and moral existence. The home as the site for this process was crucial. If overseen and managed properly by a virtuous domestic woman, it acted

²⁰ Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780 – 1835* (New Haven, 1977), pp. 160 – 196.

²¹ Purity, piety, and submissiveness were routinely displayed through the church and in social interactions with others. Woman was believed to be innately more religious than man, a highly important factor in the rise of domesticity and the development of woman's influence throughout the nineteenth century. See Welter, 'The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820 – 1860'. Eliza Farnham, whose work forms the basis of chapter one, promoted female religious superiority frequently in all her works. She expanded at length her views of women, specifically their moral, intellectual, spiritual, and religious superiority over men in her book *Woman and Her Era*. See Eliza Farnham, *Women and Her Era*, vol. 1 & 2 (New York, 1864).

as a refuge from the outside world, full of dishonesty, capital greed, and sinful influences as it was believed to be. Children, protected from the outside world, were guided, taught, and instructed by their mothers before being exposed to the corruption of public activity. Husbands and fathers, the major actors in nineteenth-century public life, were cleansed each evening upon their arrival home to a clean, Christian, and safe environment. That the home played a vital role in governing the Republic during the nineteenth century is incontestable.

Despite the American home's sanctity in the nineteenth century, it had not always held such elevated status. In this respect, domesticity was a product of a particular moment: a period that from the Revolutionary era onwards, and from the 1820s especially, witnessed profound changes in political participation, the organization of work, and the character of popular religion.²² The eighteenth-century home held different meanings to its nineteenth century counterpart.²³ Pre-Industrial Revolution and predominantly rural, eighteenth-century homes were the site of intense labour for the family and producers of patriarchal authority for men.²⁴

²² Some key works on domesticity, housework, women and the family, and domesticity's connection to the middle class are Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New York, 1973); Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*; Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York, 1977); Ellen Carol duBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1849 – 1869* (Boston, 1979); David P. Handlin, *The American Home: Architecture and Society, 1815 – 1915* (Boston, 1979); Carl N. Degler, *At Odds: Women and the Family from the Revolution to the Present* (New York, 1980); Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790 – 1865* (Cambridge MA, 1981); Mary P. Ryan, *The Empire of the Mother: American Writing About Domesticity, 1830 – 1860* (New York, 1982); Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework* (New York, 1982); Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York, 1983); Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experiences in the American City, 1760 – 1900* (Cambridge MA, 1989); Jeanne Boydson, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York, 1990); Louise L. Stevenson, *The Victorian Homefront: American Thoughts and Culture, 1860 – 1880* (Ithaca, 1991); Sue Ellen Hoy, *Chasing Dirt: The American Pursuit of Cleanliness* (New York, 1995).

²³ For one thing, eighteenth-century households had within them a clear hierarchy, and women were not at the top. Men were largely 'in charge' of family homes, with their wife below them. Next came the family's children, who were exposed early to gendered spheres of labour within the home. Boys helped their fathers with chores, girls helped their mothers with household labour. At the bottom of the household hierarchy were domestic servants and enslaved peoples. Men controlled the finances, oversaw the raising of children, and had the final say over the distribution of chores. Gendered separate spheres were certainly practiced within the home and historian Mary Beth Norton has done much to dispel what she sees as the erroneous assumption that the eighteenth-century home was an egalitarian setting for men and women. See Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750 – 1800* (Glenview, 1980), p. xiv.

²⁴ The rural setting meant an absence of the latter commercial structure that would benefit those in cities. Labour included cultivating land for plants and animals; making clothing, soaps, essential furniture for the house, and chopping wood for fires to both cook on and to heat the home.

Women's exhausting and dependent role in such households, though, held less obvious significance to society.²⁵ But a change was coming, the roots of which can be found in America's Revolutionary War (1775–1783). Political engagement in the war effort – whether through fundraising, information gathering, consumer boycotts, or supplying troops with equipment, food, and clothing – gave women the ability to act on their political convictions openly. After the War, this experience of political influence left many women feeling that they could indeed have some role to play in the governing of the Republic, even if their participation would rest more on the fulfilment of domestic 'duties' than the exercise of political 'rights'.²⁶

The transformation of monarchical subjects into republican citizens created opportunities here. Outside the exceptional case of New Jersey, which for a few years gave some women voting rights, the franchise remained the preserve of men, but fears about corruption and degeneration opened space for women to exert an edifying influence. Mary Beth Norton and Linda Kerber traced this process back to the Revolutionary era. Both demonstrated how women's experiences during the war galvanised the desire for more involvement in the political governance of the Republic.²⁷ Kerber called this republican motherhood to describe mothers' labour in socialising their children to be good citizens. While forged in the Imperial Crisis,

²⁵ Whilst Americans had noted the need for households to be watched over by proficient and capable women, they largely failed to bestow any value on either the tasks these women did, or the women themselves. Indeed, even women involved in this essential household labour did not ascribe much – if any – value to the work they did. Mary Beth Norton's study of eighteenth-century housewives shows as much: phrases such as 'my Narrow sphere' and 'my little Domestick [sic] affairs' showed women belittling their own labour. Norton found a clear sense of isolation and disconnect experienced by women from the rest of society: they did not see their roles as influential on the wider community and housework deemed only beneficial to those who lived within the home. In turn, women did not see themselves, and were not seen by others, as having a meaningful connection to the public sphere. Quotes from Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, p. 38. For more on the eighteenth-century home, see Glenna Matthews, "*Just a Housewife*": *The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America* (New York, 1987); Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, pp. 38 – 39.

²⁶ For comprehensive histories of woman's engagement in the Revolutionary War, and the political exposure gained from it, see Kerber, *Women of the Republic*; Edward Countryman, *A People in Revolution: The American Revolution and Political Society in New York, 1760 – 1790* (Baltimore, 1981); Mary P. Ryan, *The Empire of the Mother: American Writing About Domesticity, 1830 – 1860*, (New York, 1982); Matthews, "*Just a Housewife*"; Carol Berkin, *Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the Struggle for America's Independence* (New York, 2005); Rosemarie Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia, 2011); Barbara B. Oberg (ed.), *Women in the American Revolution: Gender, Politics, and the Domestic World* (Charlottesville, 2019).

²⁷ Kerber, *Women of the Republic*; Norton, *Liberty's Daughter's*.

republican motherhood persisted in the Early Republic, where the expansion of a white male electorate raised fears that without the edifying influence of good parenting, men may lack the virtue to act vigilantly in their public lives.

The beginnings of industrialisation combined with white male democratisation to focus attention on the home. By the 1830s, a growing American middle class were coming to see work and home as separate spheres, each with their own purpose. The gradual breakdown of artisanal, productive households and consolidation of production in workshops, factories, and offices – a process most evident in industrialising cities like Philadelphia and New York – did not mean an end to women’s labour. Middle-class women took on the role of home managers, while their working-class counterparts often continued as outworkers, found employment in mills, and became part of the army of domestic servants who did the drudge work in homes. For more prosperous women, though, such changes did free up unprecedented leisure time, while also creating a need to justify the emerging class and gender order. No longer did they need to engage in labour-intensive activities. Instead, with the growth and popularity of the domestic novel and instructional manuals, they could be celebrated as successful housewives, presiding over a morally cathartic sphere that would protect male citizens from corrupting influences and raise the next generation of citizens in a nourishing environment.²⁸

A further factor in the rise of domesticity were the changes that American society underwent during the Second Great Awakening. Religious revivalism in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, Daniel Walker Howe has shown, infiltrated every level of society, across class, gender, and race divisions, as well as influencing and appearing in

²⁸ Matthews, “*Just a Housewife*”, p. 11. On the explosion of domestic literature in the nineteenth century, its influence on the female population, and on the women who wrote these works, see Helen Waite Papashvily, *All the Happy Endings: A Study on the Domestic Novel in America, the Women Who Wrote It, the Women Who Read It, in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1956); Mary Kelley, *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth Century America* (New York, 1984); Jane Thompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790 – 1860* (New York, 1985); Nina Baym, *Women’s Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820 – 1870* (Chicago, 1993); Nina Baym, ‘Women’s Novels and Women’s Minds: An Unsentimental View of Nineteenth-Century American Women’s Fiction’, *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 31 (Summer, 1998) pp. 335 – 350.

‘literature, politics, educational institutions, popular culture, social reforms...child-rearing practices, and relationships between the sexes’.²⁹ Despite this apparent blanket coverage the Second Great Awakening had on the Republic’s citizens, many historians, Howe included, have suggested that women were more greatly affected by it than any other social group.³⁰ As a result of this, Welter wrote of the ‘feminization’ of religion, a term that is now common in scholarship surrounding the Second Great Awakening.³¹ As church membership grew along with the revival, women outnumbered men in almost all antebellum churches by two to one.³² A vast array of benevolent enterprises sprang forth from female church attendance and women, still fresh from their political engagement during the Revolutionary War, became Protestant evangelists. Sunday schools, charitable organisations, educational programmes, prayer groups, and social reform efforts – a tiny selection of women’s activities that spawned from religious revivalism – all served to give women more social influence.³³ The ‘feminization’ of religion, then, helped to reinforce the ideas of purity and piety, whilst also giving women a legitimate moral hold over society.³⁴ Perhaps more importantly for this project, that feminization blurred boundaries between church and home, with the latter acquiring sacrosanct status.

²⁹ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, p. 186.

³⁰ See Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*; Richard D. Shiels, ‘The Feminization of American Congregationalism, 1730 – 1835’ *American Quarterly* 33 (Spring, 1981), pp. 46 – 62; Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, p. 190.

³¹ See Barbara Welter, ‘The Feminization of American Religion: 1800 – 1860’, in Mary Hartman and Lois Banner, eds., *Clio’s Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women* (New York, 1973), pp. 137 – 155. See also Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*; Ellen du Bois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women’s Movement in America, 1848 – 1869* (Ithaca, 1978); Shiels, ‘The Feminization of American Congregationalism’; Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue*; Lisa Shaver, *Beyond the Pulpit: Women’s Rhetorical Roles in the Antebellum Religious Press* (Pittsburgh, 2012). For a general overview of the Second Great Awakening and its wide-spread effect on American society, see Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, esp. chapter 5 ‘Awakenings of Religion’, pp. 164 – 202; Steven Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders: The United States and Its World in an Age of Civil Wars, 1830 – 1910* (New York, 2016), pp. 54 – 58.

³² Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, p. 191.

³³ Though, whilst both men and women had the opportunity to engage with voluntary social activities, women’s roles in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries were always tied in some way to the church, whereas men had the freedom to engage in any of the public domains. Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, p. 191; Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*, pp. 132 – 133.

³⁴ For comprehensive histories on the feminization of religion in America and female moral superiority supported by religion, see Barbara Welter, ‘The Feminization of American Religion: 1800 – 1860’, in Mary Hartman and Lois Banner, eds., *Clio’s Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women* (New York, 1973), pp. 137 – 155; Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: “Woman’s Sphere” in New England, 1780 – 1835* (New Haven, 1977); Ellen du Bois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women’s Movement in America, 1848 – 1869* (Ithaca, 1978); Richard Shiels, ‘The Feminization of American Congregationalism, 1730

The Godly, sheltered home here became a site for the uplift of children and husbands. Civic responsibility needed to be learned, and who better to teach children from a young age but their mothers? Mid-century domestic writers, such as Eliza Farnham and Catharine Beecher, promoted the home education of children and husbands as vital to the strengthening of American society. Indeed, historian Mary Ryan suggested the socialisation of children was ‘woman’s most central domestic function’. Second to that, she said, was the socialisation of adult males.³⁵

Catharine Beecher, in perhaps the most widely read and well-known domestic publication, *A Treatise on Domestic Economy*, devoted two chapters to the importance of instilling domestic order and values in children. This would develop a stream of young men, who would grow to be successful members of the Republic themselves, and young women, who would take on the vital role of the mother themselves in later life.³⁶ The strength of the American Republic began, Beecher believed, in the nurseries of American homes. And Beecher was certainly not alone in holding such convictions. The *Young Ladies’ Class Book*, published in 1833, compiled 183 ‘lessons’ for young ladies. It constantly reminded its intended female audience of their importance as mothers to the nation:

But the influence of the female character, on the virtue of man, is not seen merely in restraining and softening the violence of human passions...Who will not confess the influence of a mother in forming the heart of a child? What man is there, who cannot trace the origin of many of the best maxims of his life to the lips of her who

– 1835’, *American Quarterly* 33 (Spring 1981), pp. 46 – 62; Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue*; Shaver, *Beyond the Pulpit* (Pittsburgh, 2012). For a general overview of the Second Great Awakening and its wide-spread effect on American society, see Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, esp. chapter 5 ‘Awakenings of Religion’, pp. 164 – 202; Steven Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders: The United States and Its World in an Age of Civil Wars, 1830 – 1910* (New York, 2016), pp. 54 – 58.

³⁵ Ryan, *Empire of the Mother*, p. 8.

³⁶ Catharine Beecher, *A Treatise on Domestic Economy: For the Use of Young Ladies at Home and at School* (New York, 1841), pp. 213 – 234.

gave him birth? How wide, how lasting, how sacred is that part of woman's influence!³⁷

In this extract, the essential nature of women's domestic labour – providing the bedrock of a domestic society – was shown. Another contributor, after discussing the importance of female influence on husbands and older males, declared 'in no relation does woman exercise so deep an influence, both immediately and prospectively, as in that of mother'.³⁸ One of the book's lessons was simply titled 'Maternal Influence', and insisted that even after death, women's labour socialising boys particularly would continue to influence their now-adult sons in the public sphere.³⁹ Beecher herself appeared in the manual, too. 'It is to mothers and teachers', she assured the readers, with her signature confidence and assertiveness, 'that the world is to look for the character, which is to be enstamped [sic] on each succeeding generation'.⁴⁰

Within these four examples from the *Young Ladies' Class Book*, the theme of female influence is constantly present.⁴¹ So too is the framing of motherhood as a sacred duty, one that could only be carried out by American women. This certainly would have served to empower the young ladies reading the manual. In Beecher's contribution especially, the patriotic framing of women's roles is clear. The raising of Christian children with strong, American morals, would contribute to the continuation of the growing American Republic. In this way, American women were taught that they were playing a vital role in the governance of the nation. Of course, though, whilst domesticity was promoted and valorised, there was most certainly antipathy publicly, and surely privately, towards the value system that effectively confined

³⁷ S. C. Thatcher, 'Influence of the Female Character', in Ebenezer Bailey ed., *The Young Ladies' Class Book: a selection of lessons for reading, in prose and verse* (Boston, 1835), p. 166.

³⁸ J. G. Carter, 'Influence of Christianity in elevating the Character of Females', in Bailey ed., *Class Book*, p. 119.

³⁹ Bailey ed., *Class Book*, pp. 263 – 265.

⁴⁰ Miss. C. E. Beecher, 'The Profession of Woman', in Bailey ed., *Class Book*, p. 201.

⁴¹ Within the *Young Ladies' Class Book*, the importance of motherhood and maternal influence almost always followed a discussion on the influence women had as wives, despite motherhood being categorised by many of the book's contributors as the most important role women had to carry out.

women to the home, limited their public presence, and aimed to keep them from earning a wage. The well-known Women's Suffrage advocate Susan B. Anthony, for example, was largely opposed to domestic spheres.⁴²

The homes exalted in domestic literature from the Early Republic therefore combined a series of virtues. They were shielded from the public sphere of work and politics, nurtured by the piety of their female managers, and offered a site of moral order in a rapidly changing society. For a rising middle class, they served as both a mooring and a promise of the future: a vision of how the United States might look if what this thesis terms its anti-domestic orders – the likes of patriarchal southern plantations, polygamous Mormon households, and raucous sites of male sociability such as taverns and gambling dens – could be eradicated.

Anti-domestic orders were largely understood and defined by their perceived distance from the idealised home setting championed by domestic adherents – private, family homes, presided over by a domestic woman. But more than just appearing different to private family homes, these anti-domestic orders were believed by reformers to pose a very real threat to institution of the home: San Francisco's early and seemingly homosocial mining community was seen to debase men and strip them of the refining influences of the East; ships at sea for months on end left mariners without family and female ties; and Chinatown's presence in San Francisco was believed to tempt white men into sex and gambling.⁴³ As each chapter in this thesis will show, ideas about race and class both certainly played an active role in designating anti-domestic orders, too: Farnham's negative characterisation of a Mexican *rancho* in chapter one, the perceived working-class machismo environment of seafaring ships in chapter two, and the racialised terrain of Chinatown in chapter three all demonstrate the intersection of gender

⁴² See Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War: With a New Introductory Essay* (New York, 1995), p. xxxii. For an introductory biography on Susan B. Anthony, see Helen Rappaport, *Encyclopedia of Women's Social Reformers*, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara, 2001), pp. 18 – 21.

⁴³ These three examples form the basis of the three chapters in this thesis. A chapter outline is found further on in the introduction.

with other markers of inequality.⁴⁴ But on top of racial and class distinctions, actions and usage of space also factored in these designations – chapter three shows that though Chinatown certainly looked very different to the rest of the city, its usage for leisure, work, family association, and religious practices played as much a role in its condemnation as an anti-domestic space as its physical appearance. Oftentimes, these spaces appeared to turn the gendered, racial, and hierarchical ordering of the Protestant middle class home on its head, and in doing so, presented a threat to an understanding of civilization that hinged on the proper social and spatial organisation of the domestic sphere.

Anti-domestic orders, then, became a crucial battleground for reformers, both in San Francisco and other cities. They were seen as antithetical to the development of domestic communities, and needed to be eradicated, or at the very least, expelled, from society to create a city that was truly domestic. Anti-domestic orders in this thesis may have been in the eye of the beholder. They were always defined by domestic women and their allies and as such existed more in the sometimes-lurid imagination of reformers than they did in the everyday experience of the people who supposedly inhabited them. But those reformers truly believed that the development and progression of the nation could only be achieved if there was a strong network of private, family homes in which domestic morality and Christian values were continually reinforced. As an idea, then, anti-domestic orders defined a reform agenda.

To purify the Republic, however, required moving beyond a narrowly demarcated private sphere. Women, drawing on their role as stewards in the home, entered the world of associational life to address the grave moral problems of their era that threatened the sanctity of domestic life: the likes of poverty, intemperance, slavery.⁴⁵ Benevolence, often in lieu of

⁴⁴ Though there is no room in this thesis to examine domestic women's reactions to, for example, Anglo-American working-class tenement housing and the slums of San Francisco, these too would have likely been designated 'anti-domestic orders' due to the perceived physical difference in appearance, as well as the absence of the benefits conferred to inhabitants of a well-managed, domestic home.

⁴⁵ For urban histories that chart the move from rural to city living, the social upheaval caused by the move, and the reform efforts stemming from the new urban environment, see Barth, *Instant Cities*; Barth, *City People: The*

public welfare, came to be seen as a crucial part of urban society. As one historian put it, ‘Voluntarism was the social currency which bound antebellum communities together, nurturing a sense of communal spirit and constantly renewing public commitment to community well-being’.⁴⁶ That social currency was certainly aided by a third wave of religious revivals in the 1850s. Evangelical members of the middle class, guided by the vision of a domestic utopia and convinced of their own moral purity, sought to ensure others would not go down the many corrupted paths offered by the metropolis. At the same time, their own involvement in reform and benevolence reaffirmed their middle-class status, their piety, and their commitment to domestic ideals.

Historian’s understanding of nineteenth-century urban reform, benevolence, and philanthropy, and of reformers themselves, have gone through two phases at odds with one another. Until the 1970s, historians had largely understood benevolence as an almost exclusively male domain connected to evangelical revivals and ideas of social control. In these accounts, wealthy and aspiring white men engaged in benevolence as a way of asserting social control whilst simultaneously spreading the Christian doctrine.⁴⁷ The factory owner who attempted to limit or prevent his workforce from drinking alcohol, for example, helped to curb one of the nineteenth century’s most detestable vices. But if successful, his efforts also afforded

Rise of Modern City Culture in Nineteenth-Century America (New York, 1980); Philip Ethington, *The Public City: The Political Construction of Urban Life in San Francisco, 1850 – 1900* (Cambridge, 1994); Mary Ryan, *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City during the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1997); Peter Baldwin, *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford, 1850 – 1930* (Columbus, 1999); David Scobey, *Empire City: The Making and Meaning of the New York City Landscape* (Philadelphia, 2002); Eugene P. Moehring, *Urbanism and Empire in the Far West, 1840 – 1990* (Reno, 2004); Barbara Berglund, *Making San Francisco American: Cultural Frontiers in the Urban West, 1846 – 1906* (Lawrence, 2007); Philip J. Dreyfus, *Our Better Nature: Environment and the Making of San Francisco* (Norman, 2008); Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders*.

⁴⁶ Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Noblesse Oblige: Charity & Cultural Philanthropy in Chicago, 1849 – 1929* (Chicago, 1982), p. 4.

⁴⁷ See Clifford Griffin, *Their Brother’s Keepers: Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800 – 1865* (New Brunswick, 1960); Charles I. Foster, *An Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front, 1790 – 1837* (Chapel Hill, 1960); Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820 – 1920* (Cambridge, MA, 1978), p. 15.

him a more virtuous, productive, and healthier labour force within the bargain.⁴⁸ In this respect, benevolence was also largely seen as an extension of male evangelical Christianity. Conservative and evangelical men championed temperance, financial prudence, and held the virtues of Christianity dear. The men involved in benevolence believed it their Christian duty to reform the masses – the idea of *noblesse oblige* – and that they were well suited to do so on account of their social position, religious commitment, and wealth.⁴⁹

We now know that not only is it inaccurate to say men were the leaders of benevolent reform in American cities, but by ignoring the women involved in urban reform, a fuller story of America's benevolent empire is missed. The rise of both the New Social History and of Women's History in the 1970s resulted in a re-evaluation of the idea that wealthy white men were the chief actors in antebellum reform efforts. Numerous authors, including Nancy Cott, Keith Medler, Mary Ryan, Carol Smith-Rosenberg, and Kathryn Kish Sklar laid the foundations for this shift.⁵⁰ They showed that not only were women involved in voluntary charity and benevolence, but that their commitment to reform was often far greater than that of men. Broadly, these early revisionist histories of reform and benevolence centred around the idea of a unique women's sphere. This sphere – essentially the shared identity women had as women – helped women to understand themselves and their roles in the Union at large. Nancy Cott's work, for example, traced the development of a 'sisterhood' in New England through

⁴⁸ Two later works that expanded ideas on benevolence as a form of social control are Paul Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815 – 1837* (New York, 1978); Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order* (Cambridge, MA, 1978).

⁴⁹ See John R. Bodo, *The Protestant Clergy and Public Issues, 1812 – 1848* (Princeton, 1954); Charles C. Cole, Jr., *The Social Ideas of the Northern Evangelists, 1820 – 1860* (New York, 1954); M. J. Heale, 'Humanitarianism in the Early Republic: The Moral Reformers of New York, 1776 – 1825', *Journal of American Studies* 2 (October 1968), pp. 161 – 175; Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789 – 1860* (New York, 1986).

⁵⁰ Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*; Keith Medler, 'Ladies Bountiful: Organized Women's Benevolence in Early 19th-Century America', *New York History* 48 (July 1967), pp. 231 – 254; Carol Smith-Rosenberg, *Religion and the Rise of the American City: The New York Mission Movement, 1812 – 1870* (Ithaca, 1971); Sklar, *Catharine Beecher*; Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class*.

the turn of the nineteenth century, which gave women a shared identity through an expansive domestic sphere. From this shared identity, Cott found, women's activism grew.⁵¹

Later historians including Nancy Hewitt, Lori Ginzberg, and Suzanne Leacock built on this revisionist literature and began to show how women's engagement in benevolent societies enabled them to create a public presence for themselves in society.⁵² Whilst their gender restricted them from engaging in partisan politics, their womanhood – that is, their assumed purity and piety – legitimised their presence in public where their work was geared towards moral reform. If benevolent work lacked the theatrics of party politics, it seemed to its champions no less important to the Union's future as vigilance at the polls. Catharine Beecher, for example, thought it woman's duty to influence the nation for the better and encouraged her countrywomen to take up the mantle. Indeed, one of her works was titled *The Duty of American Women to Their Country* and stressed the need for women to take on influential and charitable roles across all its 164 pages.⁵³ Women who became involved in benevolent reform quickly found that their lives were dominated by their charitable missions. The often daily work required to run a benevolent institution coupled, as was the case in San Francisco, with a seriously short supply of suitable women to manage the societies, meant that women's labour in benevolent endeavours often resembled full-time employment, though of course, very few

⁵¹ Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, pp. 160 – 196.

⁵² Nancy Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822 – 1872* (Ithaca, 1984); Lori Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven, 1990); McCarthy, *Noblesse Oblige*; Paula Baker, 'The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780 – 1920', *The American Historical Review* 89 (June 1984), pp. 620 – 647; Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890 – 1935* (New York, 1991); Sarah Deutsch, 'Learning to Talk More Like a Man: Boston Women's Class Bridging Organizations, 1870 – 1940', *The American Historical Review* 97 (April 1992), pp. 379 – 404; Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana, 1993); Kathryn Kish Sklar, 'The Historical Foundations of Women's Power in the Creation of the American Welfare State, 1830 – 1930', in Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (eds), *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York, 1993); Steven Mintz, *Moralists and Modernizers: America's Pre-Civil War Reformers* (Baltimore, 1995); Mary Ryan, *Civic Wars*; Bruce Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca, 2002); T. Gregory Garvey, *Creating the Culture of Reform in Antebellum America* (Athens, GA, 2006); K. David Hanzlick, *Benevolence, Moral Reform, Equality: Women's Activism in Kansas City, 1870 – 1940* (Columbia, 2018).

⁵³ Catharine Beecher, *The Duty of American Women to Their Country* (New York, 1845).

positions were paid.⁵⁴ Inspired by their Protestantism, and finding in association a powerful technology and sense of purpose, women found they could influence their communities, as well as the wider Republic.⁵⁵

Women, then, took to benevolent work in the public sphere with gusto, often with the support of reform-minded men with platforms like the press at their disposal. Legitimised by the Second Great Awakening, the subsequent feminization of religion, and the pervading belief that women were naturally more moral than men, they used their exalted position in society to sculpt the social landscape without the aid of ballots. The Second Great Awakening, championed for one by Catharine Beecher's father, the reverend Lyman Beecher, told the American public that vice and sin was a choice, but that a sinner could achieve redemption. Some sinners just needed a little help, and the good, Christian lady managers of the Republic's growing urban landscape would be there to provide it.

The Herculean nature of benevolent women's efforts, though, indicates that the domestic ideal remained an aspiration as much as a reality. It was simply not practical for huge numbers of the Republic's citizenry. Working-class wives had to work to support their family; poor widowed women did not have time to spend perfecting the home. Instead, domesticity was a way of life defined by well-off middle-class Americans.⁵⁶ Indeed, it required exclusions, for if all women attained the venerated status of Beecher's model housekeeper, who would be performing the servant labour that sustained the lifestyle? True and proper domestic women did not labour within their homes, after all, but managed them. And domesticity was also contradictory. To be a 'true' woman, wives and mothers had to be submissive. And yet, to be truly domestically accomplished, they also had to exert influence over their husbands and

⁵⁴ Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*, p. 61; McCarthy, *Noblesse Oblige*, pp. 8 – 9.

⁵⁵ Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women*, p. 53; Jeffrey, *Frontier Women*, p. 19; Ginzberg, *Women and Benevolence*, p. 135; Ryan, *Civic Wars*, p. 77; McCarthy, *Noblesse Oblige*, p. 4.

⁵⁶ That, however, is not to say that working class women rejected ideas of domesticity or did not strive to emulate and teach its values. Piety, for example, was a virtue all could attempt to meet. Moreover, domestic servants, who were certainly working class, were very much a part of the domestic canon.

children. The contradictions of domesticity resulted in increasingly blurred lines between acceptable gender roles and separate spheres ideology later in the nineteenth century. Benevolent societies, where women excluded from electoral politics nevertheless spoke out in public about poverty, alcohol, and slavery, blurred these lines further.

These contradictions would be especially apparent when domesticity was carried westwards. The heavily male population, shortage of servant workers, and the material and social condition of places like San Francisco made adapting domestic ideology and practice far more difficult than in well-established communities of the East Coast. The Gold Rush city lacked the elements for a strong home life and its accompaniments. Women – both middle class and working class – were too few. Houses and churches were thin on the ground. The impermanence of the population discouraged the kind of institution building that marked the ‘Benevolent Empire’ of the East. And yet the pervasive sense of California as a moral wilderness populated by degenerating white bachelors and foreign, often Catholic ‘Others’ made the state’s domestication even more pressing. Domesticating San Francisco, I argue, could seem to the reformers who appear in this thesis an imperative after the Gold Rush: a tool of empire to redeem and incorporate a colonial outpost.

The Home and Empire

In California, this thesis argues, domesticity, empire, and race became entangled. In the 1990s, the relationship between home and empire were brought to the fore in Amy Kaplan’s work on ‘Manifest Domesticity’. Building from a clever play on John O’Sullivan’s famous formulation, Kaplan reread the likes of Beecher to show the connections between domestic and imperial ideology. Kaplan’s thesis outlined how gendered roles within the domestic canon were used to legitimise and encourage empire building. She argued that domesticity was in one sense a fluid

ideology, which evolved depending on geographic location and the population in which it was practiced. In a national context, for example, domesticity split American men and women apart, giving each a distinct role to fulfil and place to occupy in society. But in an international context – and multicultural San Francisco belongs in this category – these gendered divisions were superseded by the presence of foreigners, who were often depicted as savage and unassimilable. Gender was no longer the dividing factor; instead, race and ethnicity separated white Americans from foreigners. In the East, American men needed controlling and civilizing by pure and pious American women, with the home itself the site in which barbarous behaviour could be reformed out of existence. In the West, in contrast, the civilizing role of the home had a far broader mission that extended to making a colonial terrain safe for white Protestant settlers.⁵⁷ In California, and more specifically San Francisco, this division of the domestic versus the foreign made the presence of domestic women doubly important, due to the high levels of residents who were not Anglo-American Protestants and a male dominated community in desperate need of female influence and supervision.

It is unsurprising that domesticity and ideas around empire, expansionism, and nation building became linked. During domesticity's rise to prominence as one of the nation's leading value systems between 1800 and 1850, support for the expansion of the United States grew. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803, for one, almost doubled the square milage of America, whilst murderous Indian removal in the 1830s especially created even more space for Anglo-American settlers heading westward. By the end of the 1840s war and diplomacy had brought

⁵⁷ Amy Kaplan, 'Manifest Domesticity', *American Literature* 70 (September 1998), pp. 581 – 606. On the links between domesticity and empire, nation building, and America's imperial aims in the nineteenth century, also see Isabella Furth, 'Manifest Destiny, Manifest Domesticity, and the Leaven of Whiteness in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', *Arizona Quarterly* 55 (Summer 1999), pp. 31 – 55; Jane E. Simonsen, *Making Home Work: Domesticity and Native American Assimilation in the American West, 1860 – 1919* (Chapel Hill, 2006); Constante González Groba, 'Planting Civilization in the Wilderness: The Intersections of Manifest Destiny and the Cult of Domesticity in Elizabeth Madox Roberts's *The Great Meadow*', *Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies* 31 (June 2009), pp. 57 – 71. Kathryn Kish Sklar reads Catharine Beecher's domestic manual in terms of nation building in her biography of the reformer. She showed how Beecher used domesticity as a way of stabilising potentially unstable communities during the Republic's rapid nineteenth-century expansion. Sklar, *Catharine Beecher*.

Texas, Oregon, and California into the U.S. empire.⁵⁸ It comes as no surprise, then, that domesticity soon began to be linked with ideas of expansionism.

Yet those linkages have been easy to miss. The focus in early women's history on separate spheres set apart a male, Turnerian Western history from the female realm of home and charity. Work on party politics rested on a similar distinction. The most ardent advocates of expansion, historians argued, were Jacksonian Democrats like O'Sullivan, who carried an aggressive white male settler ideology across the country. The Whigs, who as Howe and others have shown were more closely connected to the evangelical reform efforts of the northern middle class, proved hesitant in embracing Manifest Destiny. Many Whigs indeed opposed genocidal Indian Removal and denounced the Mexican War.⁵⁹

Evangelicals with an affinity for Whig values, however, were not necessarily anti-expansionists. Steeped in a belief in the possibility of progress through reform, they rejected Indian Removal on the grounds that white Protestants had a paternalistic duty to peaceably uplift, rather than violently relocate, indigenous people.⁶⁰ Their opposition to military adventurism in Mexico, meanwhile, hinged in part on their doubts over the possibility of assimilating millions of Catholics into a Protestant republic: especially when the benevolent empire in the East was so stretched dealing with the social consequences of the Irish Famine migration.⁶¹ Evangelicals here supported expansion on their own terms: terms that placed a civilizing mission ahead of rapid territorial conquest. As improvers, rather than self-conscious

⁵⁸ By 1859, all three states had been incorporated into the Union. Texas was admitted in 1844, California in 1850, and Oregon in 1859.

⁵⁹ See Reginald Horsman, *Expansion and American Indian Policy, 1783 – 1812* (East Lansing, 1967); Major L. Wilson, *Space, Time, and Freedom: The Quest for Nationality and the Irrepressible Conflict, 1815 – 1861* (Westport, 1974); Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago, 1979), pp. 20 – 22; Jean Baker, *Affair of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the mid-Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, 1983); Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, pp. 705 – 708.

⁶⁰ Stephen J. Valone, 'William Steward, Whig Politics, and the Compromised Indian Removal Policy in New York State, 1838 – 1843', *New York History* 82 (Spring 2001), pp. 107 – 134. See also Richard White, *The Republic for Which It Stands*, p. 151.

⁶¹ Michael A. Morrison, "'New Territory versus No Territory': The Whig Party and the Politics of Western Expansion, 1846 – 1848", *Western Historical Quarterly* 23 (February 1992), pp. 25 – 51.

conquerors, they crafted a space for women to exert domestic influence in an expanding American empire.

Contemporary domestic writers frequently framed the ideology with ideas of imperialism. In an early, popular domestic manual from 1835, Lydia Maria Child included a disclaimer on the very first page of the book, before even the table of contents: ‘It has become necessary to change the title of this work to the “*American Frugal Housewife*,” because there is an *English* work of the same name, not adapted to the wants of this country’.⁶² Child indicated to her readers that America was different and individual. By suggesting the English book of the same name was ‘not adapted to the wants’, Child showcased the idea Americans had of the trials they faced in expanding the nation. No society, they believed, had ever had to fight against an inhospitable landscape as hard as them. In taming the land, Americans had bridged the gap between the civilized and the savage. The distinction made between America and, in this case, England, also helped to bolster national unity in terms of domesticity as a prevailing ideology.⁶³

Catharine Beecher’s approach to tying domesticity with imperial expansion was more overt. Throughout her *Treatise* she intimately linked household labour – such as laundry, cooking, and cleaning instructions – with long quotations from Alexis de Tocqueville’s famous work *Democracy in America*. De Tocqueville’s publication championed American culture and claimed that despite being socially inferior to men, women had great influence over the nation.⁶⁴ Beecher’s unconventional coupling of de Tocqueville’s rhetoric with domestic instruction helped to legitimise the effort being asked of women by authors like Beecher – their reward was helping the American Republic flourish across the continent.

⁶² Emphasis in the original. Lydia Maria Child, *The American Frugal Housewife* (Boston, 1835), p. unnumbered.

⁶³ Other writers of the time also promoted American domestic culture on the frontier, whilst denigrating different housekeeping practices. See Caroline Kirkland, *A New Home: Who’ll Follow?* (New York, 1839); Catharine Beecher, *The Duty of American Women*; Eliza Farnham, *Life in Prairie Land* (New York, 1847).

⁶⁴ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. By Henry Reeve, Esq., (London, 1835).

Child's deliberate naming of her guide and Beecher's combination of philosophical democratic rhetoric with robust domestic instruction made manifest the dual purpose of the Republic's nineteenth-century ideological ideal. Yes, women were needed to run households, to influence the behaviour of their husbands and sons, and to teach their daughters how to become 'true' domestic women. But there was also a greater aim. White, middle-class American women were tasked with spreading and enforcing American values and culture across the continent with their domestic virtue. Nowhere did this seem more necessary than San Francisco.

San Francisco: The Public and Private City

The early histories of San Francisco were largely concerned with its status as an 'instant city': its rapid change from dusty mining town to world leading metropolis in a few short years.⁶⁵ Later, historians of San Francisco became interested in the political development of the nascent metropolis, often tying those political developments with the process of urbanisation.⁶⁶ One offshoot of these political histories of the city was studies on San Francisco's vigilante movements, two of which ruled the city for a period in the 1850s, and which left a lasting mark on urban political culture.⁶⁷ Early histories of the Committee of Vigilance, such as Hubert Howe Bancroft's, argued that its inception was in reaction to the absence of order and high

⁶⁵ For these histories, see Roger W. Lotchin, *San Francisco, 1846 – 1856: From Hamlet to City* (New York, 1974); Barth, *Instant Cities*; Charles Lockwood, *Suddenly San Francisco: The Early Years of an Instant City* (San Francisco, 1978); William A. Bullough, *The Blind Boss & His City: Christopher Augustine Buckley and Nineteenth-Century San Francisco* (Berkeley, 1979); Michael Johns, *San Francisco: Instant City, Promised Land* (London, 2018).

⁶⁶ See Philip Ethington, *The Public City*. For histories that have combined the urban and political development of the city, see Judd Kahn, *Imperial San Francisco: Politics and Planning in an American City, 1897 – 1906* (Lincoln, 1979); William Issel and Robert W. Cherny, *San Francisco: Politics, Power, and Urban Development* (Berkeley, 1986); Stephen McGovern, *The Politics of Downtown Development: Dynamic Political Cultures in San Francisco and Washington, D.C.* (Lexington, 1998); Chester W. Hartman, *City for Sale: The Transformation of San Francisco* (Berkeley, 2002).

⁶⁷ The San Francisco Committee of Vigilance formed in 1851 and again in 1856. Each time, the Committee disbanded after around three months when they believed their goals had been met.

crime rates in a chaotic city. More recent works, though, suggest that the vigilantes were in fact far more ideologically motivated than Bancroft's original history suggested, and shaped by a republican political culture that (in a male mirror of domesticity) placed the pursuit of virtue as the aim of the state.⁶⁸ Historians have also sought to understand San Francisco's development in the nineteenth century through studies of its environmental setting. Gray Brechin's book is perhaps the most well-known history in this field, in which he argued that an elite group in San Francisco benefited financially from the city's surrounding environment, which in turn helped to create the city.⁶⁹

In different ways these works have highlighted the public side of the metropolis: its politics, business, and shared environment. Take, for example, two of the most influential studies of San Francisco in the years between the Gold Rush and 1900, by Philip Ethington and Barbara Berglund. Ethington's 1994 monograph considers the political culture of San Francisco, which he sees as a highly public and performative re-enactment of the Roman Republic manufactured in meetings, newspaper columns, and the set piece rituals of the Vigilantes.⁷⁰ Although Ethington does include women peripherally in his study – largely with a focus on the city's women's rights movement – his emphasis on political construction through public communication mutes the voices of those, like Farnham, who disclaimed any intent to trespass in the male sphere. Sticking to the classical analogy, Ethington borrows from Mary Ryan's work on ladies in the East and writes of women's role as 'vestal virgins' in party

⁶⁸ For histories on the Committee of Vigilance in San Francisco, see Peter Decker, *Fortunes and Failures: White-Collar Mobility in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco* (Cambridge, MA, 1978); Robert Senkewicz, *Vigilantes in Gold Rush San Francisco* (Stanford, 1985); Ethington, *The Public City*; Nancy Jacobus Taniguchi, *Dirty Deeds: Land, Violence, and the 1856 San Francisco Vigilance Committee* (Norman, 2016). One work that does frame the Vigilance Committee's action as purely a reaction to the high crime rates of the city is R. M. Devens, 'The Reign of the Vigilance Committees in San Francisco: 1851 & 1856', *Western States Jewish History* 48 (2015), pp. 45 – 58.

⁶⁹ See Gray Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* (Berkeley, 1999). See also Terence Young, *Building San Francisco's Parks, 1850 – 1930* (Baltimore, 2004); Dreyfus, *Our Better Nature: Environment and the Making of San Francisco* (Norman, 2008).

⁷⁰ Ethington, *The Public City*.

politics. Women, he shows, were used as props by men seeking to demonstrate their refinement and domesticity by having a ‘good’ woman on their arm at parties and functions.⁷¹

Berglund’s book, *Making San Francisco American*, is focused on what she terms ‘cultural frontiers’: restaurants, boarding houses, and hotels; places of amusement; San Francisco’s Chinatown as a tourist destination; the Mechanics’ Institute’s annual fairs; and the California Midwinter International Exposition.⁷² Berglund uses these places to show how the nascent elite- and middle-classes of San Francisco tried to first implement and then reinforce the American social norms that many contemporaries believed had been lacking during and after the chaotic years of the Gold Rush. She documents how these public places were used to establish social hierarchy, through gendered, racial, and social segregation. For Berglund, San Francisco effectively developed into an ‘American’ city when the cultural and social norms of service in Eastern states were adopted in the city.⁷³

Ethington, Berglund, and other historians have read the development of San Francisco through its public sphere. By focusing on political and popular culture they provide a lens into aspects of the city’s growth. But in doing so we learn less about the importance of domestic life. This is despite the concerns San Francisco’s anti-domestic orders raised from the earliest days of the Gold Rush. The absence of good homes – and the true woman required to run them – features heavily in early accounts of the city. Yet no one has situated its evolution and growth from a supposedly unruly male dominated mining community to one of the American Republic’s dominant nineteenth-century cities through the lens of the ‘home’. Drawing on work on domesticity and empire, this thesis seeks to do so through a series of case studies.

⁷¹ Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825 – 1880* (Baltimore, 1990); Ethington, *Public City*, p. 61.

⁷² Barbara Berglund, *Making San Francisco American: Cultural Frontiers in the Urban West, 1846 – 1906* (Lawrence, 2007).

⁷³ One example is the employment of black men and women as waiters, waitresses, cleaners, and cooks in the popular Palace Hotel, frequented by a predominantly white clientele. This ‘*status quo*’, compared to the relatively egalitarian mining community in which success was often based as much on luck as on skill, made white Americans feel at home in the city. Berglund, *Making San Francisco American*, pp. 45 – 47.

Sources and Terminology

The writing of this thesis was disrupted by the global pandemic. Both the structure and content were adapted to mitigate the restrictions on a research trip and were instead tailored towards digitised source material. Nonetheless, both the quality and quantity of available digitised sources means that the documentation used in informing this study has not been seriously diminished. Chapter Two, for example, changed its focus to just one benevolent society that had extensive digitized publications and a considerable footprint in San Francisco's newspapers. A truncated research trip to San Francisco late on in the thesis writing process was able to fill gaps, and as such, there has been ample material for the case studies I explore.

The challenges Covid has presented in terms of archival access are not necessarily new to scholars of the city. Historians studying San Francisco have long had to deal with the absence of sources for other reasons, too. First, the community that formed in the new city's early years had little interest in record keeping. Most, if not all, were single-minded in their efforts at securing gold, and the limited capacity of municipal and state governments generated far less of a paper trail than comparable administrations in the East. Second, San Francisco was for a long time a city built of wood. Numerous fires destroyed huge swaths of the metropolis, surely taking with them valuable material that would otherwise have helped shed light on the city's early years. Finally, the city's huge earthquake in 1906 caused untold destruction and destroyed large amounts of historical data. Plague can therefore be added to the list of fire and flood that makes the task of writing the city's early history that much harder. That is not to say that there is no contemporary material from mid-nineteenth century San Francisco, though. The thesis draws on miners' letters, annual reports of early societies, city directories, and the comprehensive *Annals of San Francisco*, with surviving newspapers a particularly important

source.⁷⁴ With the emergence of a more interventionist local government around the Civil War, moreover, the availability of state records increases, especially regarding the regulation of Chinatown.

This study also draws on material published in the Eastern states of the Republic. Much of this is about California and San Francisco and is employed to establish the kind of hopes and concerns American citizens harboured for their new metropolis. Where appropriate, though, material from the East also allows me to situate the city's domestic sphere in a national culture of domesticity that was exported westwards. Most of the foundational work on domesticity was published in the East. But we know that the ideas, pamphlets, stories, and instructional writing by leading domestic advocates made their way West.⁷⁵ California newspapers regularly referenced leading domestic writers, while benevolent associations in the city remained closely connected to their East Coast counterparts. As will be shown, domesticity and its ideas were also brought West by people – Eliza Farnham, of chapter one – and institutions – the Ladies' Seamen's Friend Society, of chapter two. Thus, despite the epicentre of domesticity being situated in the East during the first half of the nineteenth century, its migration West can be tracked as surely as the thousands of people who made their own way by sea or land.

Over the following pages I treat domesticity in several ways: as an ideology, as a form of labour, and as a value system that found material embodiment in the design and running of homes. In keeping with nineteenth-century American usage, I see home broadly, encompassing not just private houses but also 'surrogate' domestic spaces such as female-run boarding houses and even public parks. Home was a contested term that could be applied to places which failed to live up to a domestic ideal (like ships or haciendas) as well as those, typically under the stewardship of true womanhood, that did. Places that provided shelter or sociability – and in

⁷⁴ Frank Soulé, John H. Gihon, and James Nisbet, *The Annals of San Francisco* (New York, 1855).

⁷⁵ See for instance the section on 'domestic economy' in Horace H. Moore, *A Classified Catalogue of the Mercantile Library of San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1861), pp. 48 – 49.

doing so exerted supposedly nefarious influence – are sometimes termed ‘anti-domestic orders’ in the text. While my focus is on San Francisco and its environs, with its miners, sailors, and Chinese population, the West was full of such sites in the period I study, with semi-nomadic Native peoples, Mormon Utah, and Catholics of Mexican descent each challenging domesticity’s hegemony.

This thesis does seek to critically reconstruct the values and assumptions of male and female reformers who, however pure their intentions, embarked on a settler colonial project. I have sometimes used their terminology or distilled their ideas without quotation marks: for instance, in referring to a good or true woman, or to concepts such as civilization and savagery, which underpinned so much domestic reform. It hopefully goes without saying that my wording here is in no way meant as an endorsement of their views.

Chapter Structure and Content

This thesis runs in a loosely chronological order. Starting with the early, male-dominated society in San Francisco, it moves through the second half of the nineteenth century and traces the development of a domestic landscape in the city and across the wider state. Chapter one examines Eliza Farnham’s scheme to transport domestic women of a marriageable age to San Francisco during the chaotic years that followed the discovery of gold. That discovery had led to thousands of migrants arriving in California from around the world – in the three years between the arrival of the first miners in 1849 to 1852, the population of San Francisco grew by around 35,000.⁷⁶ San Francisco, largely due to its natural, sheltered harbour, became hopeful miners’ starting point before they headed off into the gold fields. San Francisco, annexed barely a year prior when miners began to arrive in 1849, lacked the infrastructure to support such an

⁷⁶ *United States Census Bureau*, ‘Population and Industry of California, by the State Census for 1852’, in *1850 Census: The Seventh Census of the United States* (Washington, 1852).

influx, and most arrivals pitched tents or slept in crude wooden shelters. Contemporary accounts of early San Francisco regularly characterised the city's largely-canvas structure; its lack of moral order; the heterogeneous, but almost wholly male, population; and the fact that only a very few industries predominated – drinking, gambling, and sex.⁷⁷ Farnham's scheme to bring marriageable women to San Francisco was designed to temper early San Francisco's perceived anti-domestic order.

Though her scheme was ultimately a failure, it nonetheless shines a light on the widespread belief that many Americans held about domesticity and order in the West. On top of this, Farnham's own time in California provides instructive insight into how one woman who had been a fierce proponent of woman's influence in the East adapted her views to the material and racial milieu of the West. The lack of consumer goods, networks of like-minded women, the absence of institutions such as churches, and the region's heterogeneity curtailed her ability to recreate domesticity as it existed for her back East. Chapter one examines the adaptation of the ideology, showing how Farnham used and publicised what I term, in a gendered inversion of the Turner thesis, frontier domesticity.

Chapter two takes an in-depth look at a female-led benevolent institution – the Ladies' Seamen's Friend Society – that functioned in the city from the mid-1850s through to the turn of the century. By 1860, the city's population had increased further to around 50,000.⁷⁸ Though that population was certainly not equal in terms of a male-female split, the very presence of female-led societies indicates that more women – women of the 'right' moral calibre in the eyes of domestic reformers – were present in the city. What's more, though San Francisco was still far from being physically recognisable as a city in the way its eastern counterparts of New York, Philadelphia, and Boston were in the nineteenth century, the landscape was becoming

⁷⁷ See especially pp. 59 – 61 in chapter one for these accounts.

⁷⁸ See United States Census Bureau, *1860 Census: The Eighth Census of the United States* (Washington, 1864).

recognisably urban. Fewer tents and wooden structures served as homes, as permanent buildings were erected. Affluent neighbourhoods began to emerge, and though their residents quickly migrated to new areas to escape the growing industrial developments of San Francisco and the expansion of commerce, well-known areas of the city such as South Park, Rincon Hill and Happy Valley housed the city's wealthy, as did Van Ness Avenue.⁷⁹ Governmental structures also began to emerge, and later in the century, the suburban hinterlands of the city were developed. Between 1850 and 1885, numerous daily and weekly newspapers were established that served the city. Despite these changes, chapter two's focus provides just one example that highlighted how far the city still had to go in the eyes of its domestic proponents working toward a society that was largely defined by moral domesticity.

The Ladies' Seamen's Friend Society worked for the reformation of a marine class it cast as vulnerable and homeless, and whose liberty days ashore on San Francisco generated much angst. Whilst the case study illustrates the extent to which domesticity influenced benevolent enterprises – the organization built and ran a surrogate Christian home for sailors – it also reveals the ways in which benevolence gave women a path into the public sphere of policy and planning, albeit not without some controversy.

Chapter three then turns its attention to the domestic landscape of San Francisco in the decades after the Civil War, and shows, through the example of Chinatown, domesticity's racial boundaries. The comparisons of San Francisco with Chinatown in chapter three show the changes the city had undergone from its early days as a mining boomtown. After the Civil War and through to the end of the century, the population continued to rise. In 1870, San Francisco was home to around 150,000, and by 1890, just under 300,000 residents.⁸⁰ Those

⁷⁹ For a discussion of middle-class movement around San Francisco between 1850 and 1875, see Alvin Averbach, 'San Francisco's South of Market District, 1850 – 1950: The Emergence of Skid Row', *California Historical Quarterly* 52 (Fall, 1973), pp. 197 – 223.

⁸⁰ See United States Census Bureau, *1870 Census: The Ninth Census of the United States* (Washington, 1872); United States Census Bureau, *1890 Census: The Eleventh Census of the United States* (Washington, 1894).

San Franciscans were proudly boasting about their impressive and permanent buildings, both public and private; their wide, manicured, and clean streets and avenues; and the commercial, financial, and physical developments of the city. That is not to say domestic reformers had eradicated slums and tenement housing or put a stop to gambling and drinking; rather, the domestic sites that had been wholly missing in 1849 had been established and were now a major part of the city's identity. Department stores, restaurants, and cafés that served only women were abundant; shops selling domestically themed home furnishings were commonplace; private, family suburban homes were lived in and venerated; and Golden Gate Park had been successfully built and served as a symbol of San Francisco's progress and its morality.⁸¹ But though San Francisco had changed a great deal since 1849, there were still areas that did not befit the city's emergent domestic structure.

The Chinese were heavily criticised in San Francisco as incapable of forming good homes from the moment of their arrival. Seen as unclean, unsanitary, immoral, and thoroughly un-American, Chinatown was derided, repeatedly investigated, and always condemned. Through the criticisms of Chinatown, the standards San Franciscans had come to expect – of homes, urban public spaces, streets, and alleys – are revealed. The chapter argues that the proximity of the anti-domestic order of the Chinese quarter to San Francisco's new and comparatively ordered suburban enclaves provided a useful measure to track American progress. Unlike with the other 'problem' groups in the thesis – predominantly white miners and sailors – there were virtually no organised efforts to 'domesticate' the Chinese or Chinatown through benevolent reform or domestic education. Paradoxically, though, and despite many believing the Chinese incapable of adopting domestic practices and assimilating to American culture, the Chinese remained crucial to the city's domestic growth through their work in the service industry and private homes.

⁸¹ Golden Gate Park as a domestic site is discussed in chapter three.

The study of domesticity in San Francisco is multifaceted. In part, it involves looking internally at the way homes of different kinds were fashioned, run, and presented to the world. But domesticity involved influence in the public sphere, too. As women entered the work of benevolent reform, formed charitable societies, and took on greater roles in the church, the idea began to form that the influence women had over their family at home could just as likely be applied to the city at large. And in each chapter bad homes and bad influences – those anti-domestic orders – were subjected to withering criticism. Through models to emulate and avoid, and via the associational life that domesticity helped to spawn, the private home became a public battleground in San Francisco.

Chapter One – Eliza Farnham and Frontier Domesticity

Introduction

On Friday 2nd February 1849, Eliza Farnham published in New York a call for women to join her in travelling west to California. ‘It would exceed the limits of this circular’, the social reformer wrote, ‘to hint at the benefits that would flow to the growing population of that wonderful region, from the introduction...of intelligent, virtuous and efficient women’.¹ The ambitious plan involved Farnham accompanying 130 women to California, providing, of course, that they could pay the \$250 required and meet her strict moral standards. Those moral standards were vital for Farnham, for she tasked these women with the job of ‘civilizing’ the soon-to-be state of California and its premier metropolis San Francisco, one of the Republic’s newest – and most disorderly – cities. Farnham’s migration plan for true and proper ladies marked one of the earliest attempts in California to employ women as homemakers in the work – as contemporary middle-class Americans saw it – of ‘civilizing’ a city on the edge of an expanding continental empire. The scheme provides an insight into how gendered ideas could be used to reshape a largely male, homosocial community into one that was based around domesticity, private homes, and the values of a white middle-class.

The following pages use Farnham’s migration scheme and her subsequent time in California to enrich our understanding of post-1849 San Francisco. Scholarship on the period has largely focused on the Gold Rush and the urban development of the city, with a focus on political, cultural, and social developments.² The role of middle-class women and domestic

¹ Farnham, *California, In-doors and Out; or, How we farm, mine, and live generally in the Golden State* (New York, 1856), pp. 25 – 6.

² Rodman W. Paul, *California Gold: The Beginning of Mining in the Far West* (Harvard, 1947); John Walton Caughey, *The California Gold Rush* (Berkeley, 1948); J. S. Holliday, *The World Rushed In: The California Gold Rush Experience* (Norman, 1981); Malcolm J. Rohrbough, *Days of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the American Nation* (Berkeley, 1997); H. W. Brands, *The Age of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the New American Dream* (New York, 2003); Mark A. Eifler, *The California Gold Rush: The Stampede that Changed the World* (New York, 2017). Two works that focus on the social aspect of the Gold Rush are, Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York, 2000) and Brian Roberts, *American*

ideology in the development of San Francisco in this early stage of U.S. settler colonialism has been largely missed. This chapter seeks to demonstrate how, by using domestic ideology and female labour, Farnham and her supporters imagined that women would reform an anti-domestic and male dominated metropolis and begin to establish a society that was more representative of the middle-class American communities flourishing on the East coast. Under women's influence, Farnham reckoned, San Francisco could be civilized through the proliferation of private family homes that would spread the myriad benefits of domesticity and protect their inhabitants from the corruption and immorality of the metropolis. Farnham's management of her own home, her clear dissatisfaction with the West's anti-domestic condition, and her commentary on California's inhabitants provide a window into what one domestic adherent saw as necessary for the reform of California and its Anglo-American inhabitants. Unlike other studies of San Francisco in the first decade after the Gold Rush, which tend to give women either a peripheral, or largely symbolic role in the city's development, this chapter – and, indeed, the rest of the thesis – foregrounds both the real and imagined roles women would play in the development of the Republic's premier community on the West coast.

Neither Farnham's migration scheme, nor her later writing on California, has been widely studied. This may owe something to the limited archival trace she left behind: few of her letters survive. However, she published extensively, and discussion of her designs for the West can be followed in the press across the Union. Most of the historical literature on her has been based on her time in the East, where she served as matron of the female wing of New York

Alchemy: The California Gold Rush and Middle-Class Culture (Chapel Hill, 2000). For histories of women in the California Gold Rush, see Elisabeth Margo, *Taming the Forty-Niner* (New York, 1955); Margo, *Women of the Gold Rush* (New York, 1992); Christine Fischer, *Let Them Speak for Themselves: Women in the American West, 1849 – 1900* (Hamden, 1977); JoAnn Levy, *They Saw the Elephant: Women in the California Gold Rush* (Norman, 1990); Nancy J. Taniguchi, 'Weaving a Different World: Women and the California Gold Rush', in Kevin Starr and Richard J. Orsi, *Rooted in Barbarous Soil: People, Culture, and Community in Gold Rush California* (Berkeley, 2000), pp. 141 – 168. The leading study on the political development of San Francisco is Philip J. Ethington, *The Public City: The Political Construction of Urban Life in San Francisco, 1850 – 1900* (Berkeley, 1994). The leading study of the cultural development of San Francisco is Barbara Berglund, *Making San Francisco American: Cultural Frontiers in the Urban West, 1846 – 1906* (Lawrence, 2007).

state's Sing Sing prison; on her short stay on the then-frontier of Illinois in the 1840s; and on her domestic feminism, which went as far as championing women's superiority over men.³ She has appeared most regularly in historical works as an interesting footnote, usually accompanied by a brief outline of her scheme used to illustrate the gender disparity of Gold Rush-era California.⁴ The analysis of her time in California in this chapter begins to deepen our understanding of her relationship to the region and offers an insight into how domesticity – a valorisation of the home and proper relationships within it – guided the behaviour of both men and women. It shows too how reformers who shared elements of Farnham's vision thought social interactions, family structures, religious practice, and home building needed to be moulded, adapted, and managed by women in a region that was far from being equipped to support the dominant domestic practice in the Eastern states of the Union.

Farnham's migration for marriage scheme, and her later account of her own experience of domesticity on the 'frontier' adds a new understanding to women's roles in the nineteenth-century West. With her scheme to transport respectable, young, and marriageable women across the continent to male-dominated California, Farnham sought to establish a community on the far reaches of the growing American empire that was defined by uplifting homes. These homes would be managed by equally outstanding and influential women, whose primary function would be to sow the virtues of domestic life across city and state. The strength and importance of domesticity in the minds of contemporary middle-class reformers meant that many believed these transplanted women would bring order and structure to one of the

³ Works on Eliza Farnham include Helen Beal Woodward, *The Bold Women* (New York, 1953), pp. 337 – 356; W. David Lewis, *From Newgate to Dannemora: The Rise of Penitentiary in New York, 1796 – 1848* (Ithaca, 1965); W. David Lewis, 'Farnham, Eliza Wood Burhans', in Edward T. James, Janet James, and Paul Boyer (eds) *Notable American Women, 1607 – 1950: A Biographical Dictionary* (Cambridge, MA, 1971), pp. 598 – 600; Janet Floyd, 'Dislocations of the Self: Eliza Farnham at Sing Sing Prison', *Journal of American Studies* 40 (August 2006), pp. 311 – 325. On her time in the West, see JoAnn Levy, *Unsettling the West: Eliza Farnham and Georgiana Bruce Kirby in Frontier California* (Berkeley, 2004).

⁴ Most examples give a brief outline of her scheme as a way of hinting at the gender disparity in California. See Rohrbough, *Days of Gold*, pp. 175 – 176; Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815 – 1848* (New York, 2007), pp. 819 – 820.

Republic's newest territories and especially its disorderly, male-dominated, racially diverse, and transient metropolis: San Francisco. The scheme's failure – only three women were willing to bear the cost and discomfort of joining her on the journey west – did not destroy her faith in domesticity's redemptive power. Instead, she turned to writing to convey to readers in the East the challenges and opportunities that homebuilding presented in the region, and through a series of parables offered a feminine version of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis. The harsh encounter with the West and its people, she argued by relaying her own experience, could be softened through women's reforming labour. Rough-hewn homes, presided over by the wives of pioneers, would plant the flag of American civilization in unpromising California soil.

Yet Farnham's career also illustrates the tensions in domesticity and the challenges of carrying it westwards. Her vision, the chapter shows, reflected domesticity's racial, ethnic, and classed character. Only virtuous white women of solid Protestant stock could be trusted with the civilizing mission of homebuilding. Yet those white women, once in San Francisco, would confront a labour problem of their own as the domestic servants upon whom domesticity was built would prove extremely hard to come by. By the late 1850s, indeed, Farnham had recognised as much herself, and became involved in another migration scheme, this time with the aim of bringing servants rather than marriageable middle-class women to the shores of the Pacific. Over the course of a decade, then, Farnham – in different ways – strove to use women's work as a tool of empire building.

In 1849, the discovery of gold in California drew thousands of hopeful men to the West coast, a situation that made reformers like Farnham who championed domestic ideology and women's influence exceedingly nervous. Thousands flocked from overseas to the continent's Western seaboard, and many thousands more Anglo-Americans made the perilous journey West from the Atlantic states. The event threw San Francisco, heretofore a small village annexed along with huge swaths of the Republic's Southwest in the 1848 treaty that ended the

war with Mexico, into the limelight as it erupted into what numerous historians have termed an ‘instant city’.⁵ The nature of mining in the nineteenth century meant that almost all the nostalgically named forty-niners were men, a fact which greatly concerned middle-class reformers. In the eyes of Farnham and many of her contemporaries, such a homosocial community – especially one in such close contact with foreigners and with easy access to alcohol, gambling, and fallen or impure women – could only spiral downwards into a state of chaos. Women, thanks in no small part to the social and cultural changes of the Second Great Awakening, were often seen by American Protestants as more pious and purer than men. Thus, women had the ability to influence the male population by tempering their naturally aggressive and competitive urges, which, reformers such as Farnham felt, had been raised to dangerous levels by commercial, industrial, and urban expansion in the East. San Francisco, Eliza Farnham thought, needed a middle-class female population to bring moral order.

Eliza Farnham

Farnham’s career prior to her scheme for California reflected the close links between domesticity and reform in an Early Republic that had been sculpted by evangelical revivals. Born Eliza Wood Burhans on 17th November 1815, she had an unhappy childhood. The fourth of five children, she spent her first five years in Rensselaerville, New York, until the death of her mother in 1820. She was sent by her father to foster parents in the west of New York state. There she lived with a strict and domineering mother – a self-declared and staunch atheist – and an uncaring and alcoholic father. Farnham’s biographers have often pointed to the influence of her atheist foster mother in the development of her own (sometimes unorthodox)

⁵ For examples, see Roger Lotchin, *San Francisco, 1846 – 1856: From Hamlet to City* (Chicago, 1974); Gunther Barth, *Instant Cities: Urbanization and the rise of San Francisco and Denver* (New York, 1975); Michael Johns, *San Francisco: Instant City, Promised Land* (Chicago, 2018).

religious views, as well as her fiery and fixed stances on feminism, the gendered division of labour, and social reform generally.⁶

Desperate for a formal education, she was nonetheless denied one and ridiculed for suggesting she go to school. Taking matters into her own hands – a trait she would carry into adulthood – the young Eliza read widely on all manner of subjects, laying the intellectual groundwork for her later beliefs on womanhood, social reform, and numerous other subjects. In 1830, she left the home of her adoptive parents and moved to eastern New York with an uncle who quickly granted her wish for an education by sending her to a Quaker boarding school. Later, she attended the Albany Female Academy, reportedly collapsing after examinations, something she blamed on overexertion. Rather than continue the education she had so desired, Farnham then moved to Illinois. The time spent in this then-frontier state formed the basis of her first published book, *Life in Prairie Land*, topics of which included democracy on the frontier, homemaking, and the character of the Americans she encountered.⁷ During her time in Illinois, she met a young lawyer named Thomas Jefferson Farnham. They married in 1836 and had three children together. Unfulfilled as a lawyer, Thomas Farnham would later become known across the Republic for his writings on his travels and adventures in the West, most notably in Oregon and California.⁸

The Farnhams returned to New York in 1840, whereupon Eliza became heavily involved with reform and lecturing. She spoke most regularly on women's rights, which she saw – in contrast to some of the most radical feminists to come out of the abolition movement – as distinct from the political rights that belonged to men. This brought her into conflict with

⁶ Lewis, 'Farnham, Eliza Wood Burhans', in Edward T. James, Janet James, and Paul Boyer (eds) *Notable American Women*, pp. 598 – 600; William Zeisel, 'Farnham, Eliza Wood Burhans', in Alden Whitman (ed.), *American Reformers: An H. W. Wilson Biographical Dictionary* (New York, 1985), pp. 283 – 284.

⁷ Eliza Farnham, *Life in Prairie Land* (New York, 1846).

⁸ Some of Thomas Farnham's travel works include Thomas J. Farnham, *Travels in the Great Western Prairies, The Anahuac and Rocky Mountains, and in Oregon Territory* (London, 1843); Farnham, *Travels in California and Scenes in the Pacific Ocean* (New York, 1844). A review of Thomas Farnham's time in California can be found in Charles B. Churchill, 'Thomas Jefferson Farnham: An Exponent of American Empire in Mexican-California', *Pacific Historical Review* 60 (Nov. 1991), 517 – 537.

prominent figures. John Neil, the editor of the popular New York magazine *Brother Jonathan*, received two letters from Farnham in 1843.⁹ In a fiery, droll riposte to Neil's support of voting rights for women, Farnham, a self-declared feminist, stated her 'desire to refute a dangerous doctrine, which, if uncontroverted, might mislead the ignorant and ambitious of that sex [women] to become discontented with their natural and now happy condition'.¹⁰ For her, like other feminists who rejected the pursuit of full civil equality, women could serve the Republic better through moral suasion.

Farnham's feminist doctrine, which would influence her designs for California, placed women on a higher level of being to men. Insisting women were 'second only to the Heavenly Divine', Farnham believed that their reproductive role, their maternal duties, and their influence in keeping men from barbarism made women the most important beings on Earth. Rather than involve themselves with the male-dominated – and corrupting – spheres of politics, economics, and business, women, she argued, were far more suited and useful as homemakers, teachers, tamers of husbands, and as the creators of an empire of domesticity stretching from coast to coast.¹¹ Farnham saw no reason for women to involve themselves in male spheres. It was self-evident to her that men and women had been created for different yet complementary roles.

⁹ The first of her letters published in *Brother Jonathan* was on Saturday 24th June 1843, the second Saturday 29th July 1843. Both were long, expressive pieces in which Farnham was courteous, yet slightly sarcastic at times when rebuking points made by John Neil.

¹⁰ Eliza Farnham, 'The Rights of Women – Mrs. Farnham's Reply to John Neil, Esq.', in *Brother Jonathan*, volume 5, number 13, New York, 29 July 1843, p. 363.

¹¹ Farnham's thoughts on women, their role in society, their natural superiority to men, and the biology she believed supported these claims are all discussed by her at great length in *Women and Her Era*, published in two volumes. The book is a trying read and its thesis is supported regularly by pseudo-science and apparently supernatural forces, such as the 'Highest Central Life'. It may best be described as esoteric. Take, for example, an extract on women's nature: 'Woman is the attracting (the active) force, and man the being acted upon; the passive instrument of Nature's designs, aspiring by the late completeness and intensity with which he follows this attraction, (humanly, not brutally), to oneness or union with her who is its source'. See Eliza Farnham, *Women and Her Era*, vol. 1 and 2 (New York, 1864). Quotations in body of text and footnote are both from volume 2, p. 113. Perhaps the most comprehensive analysis of Farnham's *Woman and Her Era* can be found in, Helen Beal Woodward, *The Bold Women* (New York, 1953), pp. 337 – 356.

Referring to women's rights movements as generally being 'erroneous in philosophy, and in many practical ways, partially mistaken in direction', she earned herself many opponents, among both men and women.¹² The women's rights activists' whose views would be set down in the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 saw her as damaging the cause with her insistence that women belonged in the home; they balked too at her regular assertions that women were highly pampered and had never before lived such lives of importance or freedom across the Republic. Men, too, resented Farnham telling anyone who would listen that they were the inferior sex, and that God had designed a higher being.

Unpopular in some circles, she was nonetheless highly popular in others. Her views, though often framed in provocative ways, were commonplace among the Whigs and evangelicals who, historians have shown, were building a 'benevolent empire' that would bring virtue and order to a fast-changing society. Despite her outspoken style, then, she found a niche for herself in that emerging world of reform. Thus, Farnham was appointed matron of the female wing of Sing Sing Prison, known then as Mount Pleasant, in 1844, largely thanks to her connections with New York's crusading newspaper editor Horace Greeley.¹³ Mount Pleasant was certainly a misnomer: a more dank and disagreeable institution can scarcely be imagined. Prisoners in both the male and female wings were ordered to remain silent throughout the day, with little or no contact with other inmates at the prison.¹⁴ Harsh punishments and lengthy solitary confinement for rulebreakers were common. When Farnham took over the running of the female wing, though, she began to bring about a transformation. A harsh disciplinarian, she nonetheless made immediate changes to how the inmates were treated, with a view to bringing

¹² Farnham, *Women and Her Era*, vol. 1, p. v.

¹³ The now-famous phrase 'Go West, young man' is often attributed to Horace Greeley. There is, however, no solid evidence to suggest he was indeed the first to print it. One book suggests the words were first printed by John Babson Soule, whereafter they were reprinted in Greeley's *Tribune*. See Paul F. Boiler and John George, *They Never Said It: A Book of Fake Quotes, Misquotes, and Misleading Attributions* (New York, 1989), p. 50.

¹⁴ This was in fact the norm for nineteenth-century prisons due to the belief that if criminals were to talk freely to one another, their degenerate 'conditions' would further drag the other down. Thus, silence was ordered, and miscreants were harshly punished.

about rehabilitation. Despite her faith in phrenology – the pseudoscientific method of determining a person’s character and prospects by the shape of the head – she believed ardently in the possibility of self-improvement. She therefore introduced educational aspects into the daily running of the prison. Inmates were read to by Farnham herself, were allowed to take books to their cells, and could listen to lectures and talks.¹⁵ Farnham’s theories worked alongside the belief within phrenological study that the brain was made up of individual areas, all responsible for different actions.¹⁶ If criminal behaviour was determined by larger-than-normal or overly-dominant areas of the brain, then stimulation of the more non-offensive areas could counteract the criminal tendencies, or such was the theory.¹⁷ Farnham’s feminism often saw her calling on women to broaden their intellectual horizons, in order to improve their capacity to fulfil their one true calling: motherhood.¹⁸ Her attempts to educate the inmates at Sing Sing evinced the depths with which she truly believed all women were capable of greatness in their appointed role.¹⁹

Her speedy overhaul of the prison’s historic procedures rankled some, though. Perhaps none were more irritated by her changes than the long-serving prison chaplain, who vehemently disagreed with her distribution of literature to the inmates, and the director of the men’s wing, who disagreed with almost everything she did, but especially the relaxation of the silence rule. By 1848, she had resigned her post at the prison, quite possibly just before she was sacked.²⁰

¹⁵ Janet Floyd, ‘Dislocations of the self: Eliza Farnham at Sing Sing Prison’, *Journal of American Studies* 40 (2006), pp. 311 – 325.

¹⁶ A man named George Combe (1788 – 1854) was the most prominent advocate of phrenology worldwide at the time and certainly someone Farnham drew ideas from. Histories of the practice of phrenology and its presumed connection to criminality and education include John D. Davies, *Phrenology: Fad and Science, a 19th-century American Crusade* (New Haven, 1955); Stephen Thomlinson, *Head Masters: Phrenology, Secular Education, and Nineteenth-Century Social Thought* (Tuscaloosa, 2013); Courtney E. Thompson, *An Organ of Murder: Crime, Violence, and Phrenology in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Brunswick, 2021).

¹⁷ Floyd, ‘Dislocations’, pp. 313 – 314.

¹⁸ This, however, was not so unusual. Women were encouraged by domestic authors and advocates to read widely and educate themselves extensively.

¹⁹ Kristin Johnson (ed.), *Unfortunate Emigrants: Narratives of the Donner Party* (Logan, 1996), p. 136.

²⁰ Studies of Farnham’s tenure as matron at Sing Sing include W. David Lewis, *From Newgate to Dannemora*; Floyd, ‘Dislocations’ (2006); Anne A. Clothier, *Prisons, Petticoats and Phrenology: Eliza Farnham and Reform at Sing Sing Prison, 1844 – 1848* (MA Thesis, State University of New York College at Oneonta, 2007).

But her free time would not last long: just a year later, the greatest voluntary migration the Republic had yet witnessed would begin. Farnham would soon turn her attention to the moral salvation of the thousands of American men travelling West, drawn by the lure of riches the Gold Rush promised. She would bring with her the same faith in the possibility of moral female influence and moral improvement that had structured her actions at Sing Sing.

The Problems of a City of Men

By the end of 1849, San Francisco was a growing, disorderly, and male-dominated metropolis rising to prominence on the Pacific edge of a new American empire. Farnham, like others, would condemn it for its crass materialism. Upon the initial discovery of gold, the city's population had fallen, as residents abandoned their jobs and homes and journeyed to the hinterlands to search for their share of California's riches.²¹ One writer described the social upheaval when recounting San Francisco's formative years. 'Carpenters dropped their hammers. Blacksmiths closed their shops. Storekeepers left their counters; teachers, their schools; preachers, their pulpits; printers, their type-cases; and editors, their sanctums', he wrote. Gold, it seemed, called to all members of the social hierarchy. With perhaps only slight hyperbole, the author swore that 'Scarce an able-bodied man was to be seen upon the streets'.²²

The city, however, did not remain deserted for very long, though as it grew its demographics skewed heavily male. Due to a mixture of poor record keeping, numerous fires which ripped through the largely wooden city – destroying for one the city's 1850 census return – and a highly transient and unstable mining community, accurate population figures for San Francisco in its formative years are difficult to find. Frank Soulé, lead author of the *Annals of San Francisco*, estimated that between January and June 1849, fifteen thousand people arrived

²¹ Malcolm J. Rohrbough, *Days of Gold*.

²² B. E. Lloyd, *Lights and Shades of San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1876), p. 19.

in California, of whom two thirds came by ship to San Francisco. Of these arrivals, though, ‘only about two hundred’ were women. An average of four thousand migrants and immigrants arrived per month by sea in the months that followed, and a further thirty thousand hopefuls also travelled over the plains. Altogether, the *Annals* claimed, forty thousand people had arrived in San Francisco during 1849.²³ Soulé supposed that two-thirds of the arrivals ‘probably’ went straight to the mines, though referenced the constant stream of ‘fortunate diggers’ and the not-so-lucky ‘disappointed’ miners who returned to San Francisco to either recuperate their health, spend their money, or try their hand at another business.²⁴ By the early 1850s, surviving official counts and guesswork placed the population anywhere between about 15,000 and 65,000, with reliable figures hard to come by. The destruction of records and the tendency of boosters to overstate population in their race to make the city the premier metropolis of the Pacific makes precise numbers hard to come by: as does the tendency for miners to come and go.²⁵ What can be said with more confidence, though, is that like other

²³ Frank Soulé, John H. Gihon, and James Nisbet, *The Annals of San Francisco* (New York, 1855), p. 243.

²⁴ Soulé, *Annals*, pp. 243 – 4. This kind of transiency, whilst certainly making population difficult to ascertain, also piqued the interest of newspapers around the Republic. Comments on the city’s floating population and the fact that vast numbers were nightly sleeping in tents appeared regularly, often with emphasis on the disparity between the small collection of permanent residents and the much larger ‘floating’ population. See ‘Further California Items’, *Cleveland Daily Herald*, volume 15, issue 147, 25 June 1849, p. 2; ‘California’, *Daily National Intelligencer*, volume 37, issue 11,348, 6 July 1849, p. 3; ‘Domestic’, *Vermont Chronicle*, volume 24, issue 28, 11 July 1849, p. 3; ‘The California News’, *New York Weekly Herald*, volume 15, issue 46, 17 November 1849, p. 1.

²⁵ Numerous fires and poor record keeping in the disorganised city in early years account for the lack of official figures. An 1852 census to replace the 1850 returns destroyed by fire, however, put the city’s population at 36,151, a remarkable explosion from 1847 and 1848 when the *California Star* reported 459 and 812 residents respectively. Both times, the paper referred to San Francisco as a ‘town’. See United States Census Bureau, ‘Population and Industry of California, by the State Census for 1852’, in *1850 Census: The Seventh Census of the United States* (Washington, 1853); ‘Statistics of San Francisco’, *California Star*, volume 1, number 34, 28 August 1847, p. 1; ‘San Francisco’, *California Star*, volume 2, number 11, 18 March 1848, p. 2. Even official figures may be unreliable, though, as Warren Wood’s research into fraudulent census declarations suggests. One way this was achieved, Wood argues, was counting Chinese residents as white to inflate the ‘American’ population further than it had done. See Warren C. Wood, ‘Fraud and the California State Census of 1852: Power and Demographic Distortion in Gold Rush California’ *Southern California Quarterly* 100 (2018), pp. 5 – 43. Others appeared to simply guess at the population figures. Bill Denison reckoned somewhere between 40,000 and 60,000, whilst the Boston-based *Atlas* as little as 15,000. See Bill Denison letter: San Francisco, California, 1850 January 4, Vault MS 172, California Historical Society, p. 2; ‘By Last Night’s Mail – California Intelligence’, *The Boston Atlas*, volume 18, issue 36, 14 August 1849, p. 2. State-wide figures are easier to establish. By 1850, California’s population was 92,597 and a quite staggering 93% of this number were male. Of those males, 90% were between the ages 20 and 40. In many mining regions, the percentage of male population often reached an even higher 97%. It was not uncommon for miners to go months without seeing a woman. For California’s population figures in 1850, see United States Census Bureau, *1850 Census: The Seventh Census of the United States* (Washington,

mining communities the migrants were overwhelmingly men. The *New York Herald* only exaggerated somewhat when it noted that there were but ‘five American ladies’ in all of San Francisco’.²⁶

Another problem San Francisco's record keepers had was summarised by the irked authors of the 1850 *City Directory*: the settlement’s dismal domestic condition did not make counting easy. They complained of the difficulty in establishing precise figures for a city ‘where the floating population numbers thousands and a large portion of the fixed inhabitants live in tents and places which cannot be described with any accuracy’.²⁷ William Taylor, an enthusiastic Methodist preacher and 1849 emigrant, wrote of early San Francisco: ‘But for a few adobe houses, it would have been easy to imagine that the whole city was pitched the evening before’.²⁸ The *Annals*’ authors concurred, noting there was ‘no such thing as a *home* to be found. Scarcely even a proper *house* could be seen’. Accommodation for new arrivals and most businesses were predominantly tents or rudely built ‘shanties’: a term Farnham would later use, and which was often associated with housing in the most impoverished Irish and Black neighbourhoods of East Coast cities. Gambling houses, the *Annals* reported, were some of the only buildings in the city with ‘any pretensions to size, comfort or elegance’: a claim that suggested that San Francisco’s skewed moral priorities were reflected in its built environment.²⁹ The miner-turned-merchant Bill Denison also referred to the temporary looking structures of the city. ‘[A]bout half the city is built of canvas’, he informed his friend in a letter.³⁰ Another forty-niner, Captain Thomas W. Mulford, arrived in the September of 1849 and described San Francisco as having ‘five thousand wooden buildings if you can call them

1853). For discussion on the increased percentage of males in mining camps compared to the city, see Brian Roberts, *American Alchemy*, p. 226; Rohrbough, *Days of Gold*, p. 94.

²⁶ ‘Very Late from California, &c., &c., &c.’, *New York Herald*, no. 5520, 29 June 1849, p. 1.

²⁷ Charles P. Kimball, *The San Francisco City Directory* (San Francisco, 1850), p. 9.

²⁸ William Taylor, *California Life Illustrated* (New York, 1858), p. 19.

²⁹ Soulé, *Annals*, p. 244. Italics in the original.

³⁰ Bill Denison letter: San Francisco, California, 1850 January 4, Vault MS 172, California Historical Society, p. 2.

buildings and as many more canvas ones'. Illustrating the rapid changes the city went through, Mulford reported that 'Two months previous to my arrival here I am informed there were not 40 wooden buildings in place'.³¹ The wooden and canvas nature of the city's landscape speak to the temporary character with which many early arrivals viewed San Francisco. The propensity for this wood and canvas to burn to the ground spoke to the volatile nature of early San Francisco, too. The city's physical fabric, like its population, seemed impermanent.

Observers both near and far felt uneasy about the ephemeral character of the city and its rootless male inhabitants. Eliza Farnham, for one, questioned how morality, order, and civilization could ever truly develop in a place where 'there is not, at any one time, more than half the population...who contemplate remaining in the country, and who, consequently, act with reference to any but the most transient interest in her affairs'.³² Some residents agreed, and letters from emigrants appeared in Eastern newspapers that reinforced the image of an unstructured, ever moving community.³³ Frequent mentions of 'transient' migrants and 'floating populations' in print across the Republic's press highlight the fact that Farnham was not alone in her uneasiness towards San Francisco's lack of permanence.³⁴ Thus Farnham, William Taylor, the authors of the *Annals* and the *City Directory*, San Franciscan residents, and numerous journalists across the country had recognised a very real concern surrounding the infant city, which influenced Farnham's domestic migration plan. The transiency of the population, coupled with the near total absence of women, meant that even the most basic

³¹ Thomas Mulford Diary, The Society of California Pioneers, C058774, p. unnumbered.

³² Farnham, *California*, p. 94.

³³ Two of these letters to newspapers referenced 'floating' populations and both suggested that there was not the physical material nor the money to build any kind of permanent accommodation. Both also suggest that far more people were sleeping in tents or shanties than solid structures. See 'California', *Daily National Intelligencer*, volume 37, issue 11,348, 6 July 1849, p. 3; 'Domestic', *Vermont Chronicle*, volume 24, issue 28, 11 July 1849, p. 3.

³⁴ See 'Further California Items', *Cleveland Daily Herald*, volume 15, issue 147, 25 June 1849, p. 2; 'The California News', *The Weekly Herald*, volume 15, number 46, 17 November 1849, p. 1; 'Telegraph Dispatches', *The Scioto Gazette*, volume 15, issue 34, 21 November 1849.

structure of a civilized American community – family life – was unlikely to develop. Women, Farnham reasoned, would be needed if men were to put down roots.

Yet the material basis for that family life was also absent. Not only were there very few permanent homes, but other, more public institutions were conspicuous only in their absence. Houses of worship, for example, were in extremely short supply in California. William Taylor recalled a – probably embellished – conversation he had with a San Francisco resident upon his arrival in the city in September 1849. Asking if there were any ministers or churches in the growing city, the resident replied, ‘Yes...we have one preacher, but preaching won’t pay here, so he quit preaching and went to gambling. There is but one church in town, and that has been converted into a jail’.³⁵ The ‘church’ in question was in fact a schoolhouse that had occasionally been appropriated for religious use. Taylor was told that it would be far more profitable to sell the wooden frame of the church he had transported West, than to build and preach in it.³⁶ Asking after Methodists to begin with, and after finding none, simply any ‘lover of Jesus’, Taylor was time and again informed that ‘no such creatures’ could be found in San Francisco.³⁷ Farnham also noted the lack of religion in California. If miners ‘ever pray at all’, she criticised doubtfully, they prayed to find gold.³⁸

While we should read such stories with a sceptical eye, accounts converge in portraying the city as a moral wilderness, and that sense of a wild, untamed mining community in turn shaped reform efforts. San Francisco was depicted repeatedly as a setting with a fast-growing yet constantly shifting male population in which the anchors of moral order – family, home,

³⁵ This recollection from Taylor illustrates the contemporary belief that San Francisco, and indeed, wider Californian society, corrupted even the most pious and moralistic members of society. A preacher quitting in favour of gambling, and the building used as a church being converted to a jail hint at the undesirable nature of San Francisco during its early years. Taylor was undoubtedly attempting to illustrate the corrupting nature of the city in this conversation. See Taylor, *California Life Illustrated*, pp. 16 – 19.

³⁶ The man Taylor spoke to informed him the lumber he had transported to build his church with would fetch up to ten thousand dollars in the city. This illustrates how, whilst the social conditions for a domestic society were missing, so too were the physical necessities, such as lumber. Taylor, *California Life Illustrated*, pp. 16 – 19.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 16.

³⁸ Farnham, *California*, p. 29.

church – were almost entirely absent. The heavily male population that made up the city were mixing freely with men from other nationalities and were thousands of miles away from their relatives, and thus lacked the influence of mothers, sisters, and wives. The distance from moral suasion – and the heady temptations that gold and male camaraderie presented – caused the greatest concern amongst Farnham and other worried observers in the East. Domestic ideology was central to the construction of middle-class Protestant identity in the Eastern states. Women’s role in the home, and their moral authority beyond the front door, was vital for the betterment of the Republic. How could San Francisco escape descent into a cycle of savagery and barbarism without their presence?

Farnham’s migration scheme therefore took root amid wider calls to address San Francisco’s gender gap. The *New York Daily Herald* wrote, only one page after excitedly reporting the potential for riches in California, that women were desperately needed

before the population of that golden region eat themselves up, become cannibals, and loose [sic] all the characteristics of civilization. At present, probably, there are ninety males to ten females – an indication that it is absolutely impossible to carry on civilized society in that region for any length of time with such a disparity between the sexes.³⁹

The actual ratio of men to women in 1849 was, one historian suggests, far higher: around fifty to one.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, Farnham’s belief that California and its premier city needed domesticating with women’s reforming labour was widely shared. Almost everyone who wrote on or about California and San Francisco during its first few years as an American city referred to this gender disparity in one way or another. Captain Mulford simply declared that San

³⁹ ‘Female Emigration of California’, *New York Weekly Herald*, volume 15, issue 12, 24 March 1849, p. 4.

⁴⁰ Jacqueline Baker Barnhart, *The Fair but Frail: Prostitution in San Francisco, 1849 – 1900* (Reno, 1986), p. 15.

Francisco 'Is a city of men'.⁴¹ Denison told his friend that 'society' did not exist in the city, 'for there is [sic] not many virtuous females here and you can see but one characterestic [sic] evidenced & that is supreme selfishness & the grosest [sic] depravity'.⁴² Georgiana Bruce Kirby, a close friend of Farnham's who was an assistant at Sing Sing prison and who spent time with her in California, mentioned seeing 'the face of but one woman...in four months and a half'.⁴³ Another described how the 'gambling circles around the tables in the famous "Parker House"' had been emptied as men gathered 'to a depth...of a dozen or more' to catch but a glimpse of a lady's face who had been singing in the city's makeshift church.⁴⁴ Such vignettes indicate a faith that female influence would temper the decline of the men in California into a state of 'semi-barbarism'.⁴⁵

'Good' women, however, were in extremely short supply on the West coast. California was not entirely male by any means; exemplars of womanhood in the sense Farnham understood the term, however, were hard to find. Most women in California were foreign, Catholic, or assumed to be working in the sex industry. Many Mexican families remained in the region, and Native American women were a substantial presence too. South American women, especially Chilean, were also present, largely due to the port in Valparaíso, a frequent stopover for American migrants travelling via sea.⁴⁶ There were also some Anglo-American women, who had either made the journey to California alone or in the company of hopeful male miners. Those that were unmarried – the vast majority – often found jobs catering to so-called depraved men: as saloon bar girls; as hostesses in gambling halls; as dancing girls, as

⁴¹ Thomas Mulford Diary, The Society of California Pioneers, C058774, p. unnumbered.

⁴² Bill Denison letter: San Francisco, California, 1850 January 4, Vault MS 172, California Historical Society, p. 2.

⁴³ Georgiana Kirby diary: typed transcript, [undated], 1 February 1852, MS 1196, California Historical Society.

⁴⁴ *Autobiography and Reminiscence of George Holton Beach*, St. Helena, 1901, The Society of California Pioneers, Alice Phelan Sullivan Library, San Francisco, California, p. 6.

⁴⁵ 'Emigration of California', *New York Weekly Herald*, Monday 19 February 1849, p. 2.

⁴⁶ Farnham was abandoned at Valparaíso by the captain of the *Angelique* after numerous confrontations on the journey from New York to California. Her children and companion Miss Sampson were still on the ship as it left her in the Chilean port. She raised an unsuccessful lawsuit against the captain once she arrived in San Francisco.

singers, or as sex workers. Like Catholic Mexicans and South Americans, then, or supposedly 'savage' Native Americans, such women lacked the moral qualities of their middle-class white Protestant counterparts. By declaring that there were no women in California, then, Farnham and her contemporaries were highlighting the racial, religious, and class boundaries of domesticity. What reformers meant was that California had no 'True Women' who adhered to domestic ideology, exemplified the virtues of womanhood, and who would help to control the rowdy mining community. To be sure, then, there were women in California, though they were indeed vastly outnumbered by men and largely deemed another threat to moral order.

This is evident in early writing on the city, which saw the female emigration that did occur as contributing to rather than combating San Francisco's woes. 'Perhaps two thousand females, many of whom were of base character and loose practices, were also added this year [1850] to the permanent population', Soulé wrote. In 1851, 'Females...were beginning to increase more rapidly', but '[a] very large proportion of the female population continued to be of loose character'.⁴⁷ The authors of the *Annals* attempted to lay at least some of the blame for San Francisco's perceived wickedness at the feet of women, suggesting that they had used their female influence not to instil morality and domesticity, but instead to profit from lonely and homesick men. Soulé even mused on whether the more 'lovely' a woman was, the more likely she would be 'stooped to folly' in the city. He conceded that it was difficult for women to remain 'unblemished' whilst in a community such as San Francisco's.⁴⁸ Despite this concession, Soulé placed much of the blame for men's poor behaviour – drinking, gambling, and sexual promiscuity – on women in San Francisco. Just as there was money to be made in the mines, women could profit handsomely working in gambling halls, saloons, and in brothels, and by simply providing lonely men companionship. Female company, and not alcohol, were

⁴⁷ Soulé, *Annals*, p. 300, 357.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 502.

often what was sought by a man entering a saloon, Soulé suggested. Men ‘were attracted to these saloons more by a graceful figure and charming face, than the viands to be procured. It was quite a luxury to be spoken to and waited upon by a pretty girl’.⁴⁹ Soulé said women were ‘never slow in learning’ how valuable their ‘charms’ were, or ‘how to bring these to the most profitable market’.⁵⁰ The problem of gambling, too, was exacerbated by women. All gambling halls employed ‘Beautiful women, well skilled in the arts calculated to allure, betray and ruin the unfortunate men who become their too willing victims’.⁵¹ In Soulé’s opinion then, one of the major problems in San Francisco was that women had rejected the gendered division of labour of separate spheres so cherished in the East. Where an economic vacuum had appeared in San Francisco due to the high male percentage of the society, industrious women had quickly filled it, and profited from male rootlessness.

Farnham, however, largely rejected the idea that women were directly responsible for the vice in the city. Instead, she forged a critique of California’s moral condition that emphasized the risks of making the journey westwards, the corrupting nature of Gold Rush materialism, and the connections between mining and vice. It led her to conclude that only the carefully managed migration of true women would deliver city and state from the morass into which it was in danger of sinking. Whilst accepting that many women were falling short of the standard she expected from her sex, she suggested outside influences were to blame. Good women, she insisted, were used to the ‘enlightening and refining’ sensibilities of New England.⁵² Men were courteous and deferential when in the presence of a woman and were encouraged by domestic writers to respect and revere them. That same attitude was clearly absent in California’s mining towns and premier city. Profanity, Farnham said, was awful. ‘Men meeting and accosting each other in perfect good-will – swore as if unconquerable passion promoted every word. It

⁴⁹ Soulé, *Annals*, p. 641.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 642.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 502.

⁵² Farnham, *California*, p. 293.

appalled one to be in hearing, and there was no escape'. 'Terrible oaths' were the last things people heard before going to bed, and the first things heard in the morning.⁵³ This, in Farnham's view, had negative effects on good women, who were surrounded by vice, intemperance, and profanity.

The prolonged separation from mothers, wives, and sisters, the almost manic focus on gold and money-making, and the presence of 'fallen' women had, in Farnham's eyes, ensured that attitudes to women in general had declined amongst the American population in California. Worse still perhaps, Farnham believed that women had little trust for each other in California. 'There is a universal sense of discomfort...from distrust and reserve in their own sex, and insulting suspicions in the other', Farnham bemoaned. She was concerned that the lack of support, the abrasive society, and the constant feeling of suspicion would – and in some cases had already – cause some women with good intentions to behave in an unbecoming manner.

Farnham relayed a story about an Irish girl, staying in a 'respectable hotel', who overheard men talking about women in a negative way.⁵⁴ That it was a 'respectable' hotel was surely included to show her audience that so long as good women remained scarce, no place was safe from California's wicked ways. 'The common expression when women were spoken of', Farnham summarised, 'were that there was not an honest one in the country – that those who professed to be so, were only greater hypocrites or more successful pretenders than the others – that none were entitled to respect, and that among men, only fools and dupes believed in them'.⁵⁵ According to Farnham, the girl who overheard the conversation was 'modest', 'religiously educated', and 'really good'. She had 'grown to womanhood chiefly under the enlightening and refining influence of the sentiment shown toward females in New England'.⁵⁶

⁵³ Farnham, *California*, p. 308.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 292.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 292 – 3.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 292 – 3.

This attitude, held widely amongst men across California, Farnham saw as the chief cause ‘which has led astray...many innocent feet’.⁵⁷

Farnham and her admirers blamed such evils in part on greed. The gold rush, and the well-publicised successes a lucky few had found, had led to the belief that instant riches were available to anyone who could wield a pickaxe. For Farnham, this was one of the most destabilising influences of the migration West: Americans had developed an unhealthy obsession with riches and gold. ‘It is rare to meet with a man or woman’, she lamented, ‘who seems at all stirred by any but the money phase of the country; and it is almost literally true, that there is no conversation except upon that subject’.⁵⁸ The pursuit of gold – especially in the absence of refining domestic influence – had reduced Eastern men in California to an atavistic state. Denison, with his first-hand experience of miners in 1849 and 1850, also noticed a diminished sense of community amongst them. ‘There has been a great amount of suffering here,’ he observed, and men ‘do not appear to have much feeling for each other. Gold is what they seek eagerly’.⁵⁹ Taylor also noted the lack of community spirit: ‘to succeed in California, every man must be self-reliant and independent’.⁶⁰ Incessant pursuit of gold and riches, Farnham maintained, caused old ties, responsibilities, and restraints to be forgotten. Most worryingly, she said, where these old ties to domesticity, refinement, and genteel values were forgotten, new ones were not created in their place.⁶¹ The result to her was what sociologists would later term anomie.

Farnham saw the separation from domesticity as beginning from the moment migrants began their journey. Facing arduousness, boredom, and danger – oftentimes all three combined

⁵⁷ Farnham, *California*, p. 293. Georgiana Bruce Kirby, Farnham’s friend, echoed this thought. ‘Every good woman needs a companion of her own sex’, she wrote in an 1853 diary entry. Kirby had been isolated in California for a while at this point and had not seen another woman for some time. See Georgiana Kirby diary: typed transcript, [undated], 1 February 1852, MS 1196, California Historical Society.

⁵⁸ Farnham, *California*, p. 291.

⁵⁹ Bill Denison letter: San Francisco, California, 1850 January 4, Vault MS 172, California Historical Society, p. 2.

⁶⁰ Taylor, *California Life Illustrated*, p. 163.

⁶¹ Farnham, *California*, p. 251.

– and without the soothing and influential company of wives, children, and families, Farnham suggested that the early pioneers focused solely, almost obsessively, on their hunt for gold. ‘[L]ike a mountain suddenly upheaved before him, it has shut out from his view the objects which before filled his world; it has hidden friends and relations; interposed its ungenial self to sever the ties of consanguinity, affection, duty, [and] perhaps’, she feared, ‘of honor’.⁶² These, of course, were all the desirable things to temper the marketplace’s corruptions that the good homes on the Republic’s Eastern seaboard had provided the men before they had left: the cleansing domestic influences that soothed the damage done by exposure to greed, corruption, and other urban evils. The Californian obsession with gold, the jaw-droppingly large sums of money that could be made on the random swing of a pickaxe, and the prevalence of drinking, gambling, and prostitution all coalesced to ensure that emigrant men quickly forgot the values they had held in the East. And once they had forgotten them, there was plenty of entertainment to be had.

The easy availability of degrading entertainment for men contributed to Farnham’s hatred of California’s premier metropolis. She saw the city as the antithesis of a modern, domestic, and civilized community. In the same way she hoped private domestic family homes would influence the wider city, San Francisco’s immorality and vice determined wider California’s character, too. ‘The rapid growth, the incongruous character, the extremes of condition, the inextinguishable energy, the material luxury, and the spiritual coarseness [found in San Francisco] ...characterise the state’, she said.⁶³ The instant city was the opposite of everything she thought worthy in Eastern society, and this was one of the primary reasons for developing her gendered migration scheme. Her descriptions of San Francisco – though she did in fact spend very little time there – left no one in doubt that she disapproved of the city’s physical

⁶² Farnham, *California*, p. 252.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 363.

structure, the character of its populace, and its institutions. Even its weather – ‘the most disagreeable climate and locality of any city on the globe’ – did little to impress her.⁶⁴

Like most of the city’s commentators in 1849, ‘50, and ‘51, gambling took centre stage in Farnham’s criticisms of the city. It was gambling’s ubiquity and the casual acceptance with which San Francisco’s residents viewed it that shocked her: evidence of that quick discarding of middle-class, domestic values and morality she had outlined from the moment pioneers had left home. So too did the huge amounts of money casually won and lost within the gambling-halls. Each gambling-house also had a bar, ‘the most productive property in the country; worth more than a placer mine’, she derided, scathingly.⁶⁵ Plaza Square was often pinpointed as the heartbeat of the city’s debauchery on account of the gambling halls surrounding it. The Plaza, Farnham said, ‘was illuminated by the glare which shone from its surrounding hells’.⁶⁶ Huge crowds gathered at them, and Farnham noted that ‘Every variety of face’ was represented within them, an early hint toward her opinions on racial ordering in the metropolis. So too was every clothing style, suggesting a mixing of class Farnham was unused to.⁶⁷

Farnham was not alone in her assessments of San Francisco, either. The preacher William Taylor recalled his first sighting of the Plaza. ‘On all sides of you were gambling houses, each with its band of music in full blast. Crowds were going in and out; fortunes were being lost and won, terrible imprecations and blasphemies rose amid the horrid wail, and it seemed to me that Pandemonium was let loose’, he wrote despairingly.⁶⁸ A sense of chaos and the clear lack of social structure in San Francisco comes through in both these descriptions.

Such establishments represented the antithesis of the temperate, domestic order idealised in middle-class evangelical thought on the East Coast and illustrated the herculean task

⁶⁴ Farnham, *California*, p. 77.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 274.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 271.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 272.

⁶⁸ William Taylor, *Seven Years’ Street Preaching in San Francisco, California* (New York, 1857), p. 5.

confronting reformers. As if the mere presence of them were not enough, though, Farnham noted that they were often owned and run by men that she believed should be assisting with the domestic improvement of the city. The men who owned the gambling-halls, saloons, and brothels were ‘members of the City Council and of the honorable professions’.⁶⁹ These were the men who, in the East, might have enlisted in the benevolent empire or even sponsored her migration scheme. So too were the patrons. Farnham, annoyed by the rampant intemperance, observed that the groups of ‘idle’ men who daily sat drinking were ‘not broken-down ruins in the garb of paupers, such as we should chiefly see in other countries at such places, but vigorous, hale persons, many elegantly, and all comfortably clad, with abounding life and energy’.⁷⁰ These were good men ruined by San Francisco. Its gold mania, the desire to get rich overnight, and the distance from the refining influence of good, true women had corrupted even a virtuous middle-class.⁷¹

A gendered and racialised contrast between cosmopolitan and male disorderly drinking dens and a harmonious, yet absent, domestic sphere, ran through such discussions. Soulé believed that the city’s ‘filthy dens of vice and crime, disease and wretchedness’ stemmed directly from the lack of homes in the city and the resultant want of ‘domestic satisfaction and social intercourse’.⁷² It was, according to Soulé, the worst feature of the city. Men and women socialised and drank together, in filthy clothing. Perhaps the largest cause for Soulé’s concern, though, was that ‘Americans and Europeans, Mexicans and South Americans, Chinese and even negroes, mingle and dissipate together’.⁷³ One miner writing in a newspaper asked why the city’s saloons and gambling halls were always so crowded, and why there was such a

⁶⁹ Farnham, *California*, p. 274.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 308 – 309.

⁷¹ This was not unique to San Francisco’s early years, either. Later, when a benevolent society seeking to keep sailors out of boarding houses, saloons, and gambling halls requested money from the city’s merchants and business owners, they found them to be largely unsupportive, since contributing to the society would effectively take away their business clientele.

⁷² Soulé, *Annals*, p. 647.

⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 645.

feeling of dissatisfaction amongst men in the city. Answering his own question, he suggested it was due to ‘the fact there are so few females in the country’. Like many reformers in the East, he recognised the solution. ‘Drinking saloons would soon diminish, and card-playing decrease’, he declared, if women arrived to preside over domestic homes.⁷⁴

One far-off observer in Vermont framed the issue as an immediate threat to American racial superiority and a threat to the nation’s imperial aims. ‘Unless there is very soon a migration of white females to California...the population of that region give a promise of mingling of colors, which will result in a generation as dingy as the rankest amalgamationist could wish’. Without white women, the author predicted, pioneers would ‘accept...almost anything in the shape of a woman’.⁷⁵ This mixing of cultures and races was certainly a cause for concern for the city’s reformers, too. Berglund’s work on the city reveals as much, detailing how this open and inclusive community of the early years was stripped away by later city reformers as they built cultural establishments that reinforced status hierarchies based largely on race through the service industry.⁷⁶

Both Farnham and Soulé believed that the introduction of good white women to San Francisco’s vice-ridden society would quickly begin to temper that immorality. Farnham’s confidence in woman’s ability meant she believed a strong domestic sphere could be established if women were to come in numbers sufficient to protect one another from California’s enervating moral influences. ‘Her presence is the guarantee for the best manifestation of his [men’s] nature’, Farnham assured her readers.⁷⁷ Soulé also looked towards the future and the arrival of ‘a naturally better set of citizens’ in San Francisco. ‘The example

⁷⁴ ‘The Interior People Seconding our Call for Female Immigration’, *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 5, issue 65, 23 December 1857, p. 2.

⁷⁵ ‘Pack up Girls’, *Vermont Patriot and State Gazette*, volume 24, issue 18/174, 26 April 1849, p. 1.

⁷⁶ One establishment Berglund uses to illustrate this is San Francisco’s Palace Hotel. The middle-class establishment relied on the labour of South American, Black, and Chinese immigrants to serve the Anglo-American clientele. See Berglund, *Making San Francisco American*, pp. 45 – 47 especially.

⁷⁷ Farnham, *California*, p. 295.

and benefits of good men and good institutions, homes and domestic society...will gradually reduce the number of the haunts of vice' in the city.⁷⁸ Without the right kind of women, then, San Francisco would still be defined by its vice and immorality. Eliza Farnham knew this, and the untimely death of her husband whilst himself in California presented her with the opportunity to hatch a plan that would see her help domesticate that most wicked and barbarous of American cities.

Migration for Marriage

The death of my husband, Thomas J. Farnham, Esq., at San Francisco, in September last, renders it expedient that I should visit California during the coming season. Having a desire to accomplish some greater good by my journey thither than to give the necessary attention to my private affairs, and believing that the presence of women would be one of the surest checks upon many of the evils that are apprehended there, I desire to ask attention to the following sketch of a plan for organizing a party of such persons to emigrate to that country.⁷⁹

So began Farnham's attempt to transport women of a marriageable age around the Republic to California to bring much-needed female influence and domestic order to America's newest city. At no point during the announcement of her scheme did she say the purpose was for the women to marry, but her beliefs on gender roles, how American society could flourish, and her take on women's rights all suggest that this was certainly her hopeful objective. Newspapers, which helped spread news of the scheme with gusto, also felt this was the plan's real objective: many referenced marriage in their largely supportive commentary.⁸⁰ By marrying the men in

⁷⁸ Soulé, *Annals*, p. 453.

⁷⁹ Ship Angelique: California Association of American Women, New York, 20 February 1849, Broadsides, Vault B-004, California Historical Society.

⁸⁰ See 'Market for Wives', *The Baltimore Sun*, 16 March 1849, p. 1; 'Female Emigration to California', *The Lancaster Examiner and Herald*, 4 April 1849, p. 2.

San Francisco, Farnham believed, women could use their domestic influence to temper the ‘many evils that are apprehended there’.⁸¹ Although the scheme failed, a close reading of its genesis and reception reveals the links between white middle-class womanhood and a civilizing mission in the West: a connection that Amy Kaplan has called in the literature of the period ‘manifest domesticity’.

Though Farnham’s design was unique to nineteenth-century American expansion, the female-led emigration of single women for the purpose of domesticating, civilizing, and establishing empire across the globe was certainly not unique. From the 1830s, through to 1914, when the onset of the First World War reduced migration, Britain boasted numerous female migration societies that sent so-called ‘surplus gentlewomen’ out to Britain’s empire and colonies.⁸² The schemes based in Britain had remarkable similarities to Farnham’s. As Lisa Chilton writes in her study of British female migration to Canada and Australia, the aim was to ‘domesticate the dominions’, ‘transform “frontier” spaces’, and colonise and reform ‘the “uncivilized” inhabitants of the empire’s relatively unsettled regions’. These schemes were supported by ‘a firm assertion of British superiority over all other peoples’.⁸³ Though Farnham was alone in the Republic in attempting to use women to civilize and create a community based on American values in a recently settled region, she was certainly not the only one who believed women could be useful tools in establishing empire around the globe.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Ship Angelique: California Association of American Women, New York, 20 February 1849, BroadSides, Vault B-004, California Historical Society.

⁸² Marie Ruiz explains why these women were deemed surplus. See Marie Ruiz, *British Female Emigration Societies and the New World, 1860 – 1914* (Basingstoke, 2017), pp. 1 – 3.

⁸³ Lisa Chilton, *Agents of Empire: British Female Migration to Canada and Australia, 1860 – 1930* (Toronto, 2017), p. 12.

⁸⁴ Further studies on female emigration societies from Britain include A. James Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen: Genteel Poverty and Female Emigration 1830 – 1914* (London, 1979); Julia Bush, ‘“The Right Sort of Woman”: Female Emigrators and Emigration to the British Empire, 1890 – 1910’, *Women’s History Review* 3 (1994), pp. 385 – 409. One study that focused on unattached female settlers in heavily male populated regions in New Zealand is Charlotte Macdonald, *A Woman of Good Character: Single Women as Immigrant Settlers in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand* (Wellington, 1990).

The original circular set out exactly who Farnham was hoping to attract to accompany her around the Horn and on to the Republic's newest city. There were, she suggested, vast numbers of women who were not 'bound by any tie that would hold them here [the Eastern states of America]'. She later claimed that over two hundred women contacted her about the scheme.⁸⁵ Yet her requirements narrowed down the pool considerably. Successful applicants needed to be at least 25 years old and able to provide references on 'education, character, [and] capacity' from their 'clergymen or some authority of the town'. Finally, the potential emigrants needed to also pay \$250: the price Farnham thought reasonable to cover costs of the journey. That fee would 'defray the expenses of the voyage, make suitable provision for their accommodation after reaching San Francisco...and create a fund to be held in reserve for the relief of any who may be ill, or otherwise need aid before they are able to provide for themselves'.⁸⁶ The cost therefore provided a measure of insurance against virtuous women falling into dishonourable positions in the event of hardship.

Such a high fee, though, did little to encourage applicants.⁸⁷ One newspaper reckoned as much, musing that 'those who have money in the bank won't draw it, so thoroughly impressed are they with the idea that "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush"'.⁸⁸ And why would they draw their money for such a scheme? What incentive was there for young, unmarried women with swift access to \$250 dollars in 1849 to uproot themselves to 'uncivilized' California? Farnham, and many of her contemporaries including Catharine Beecher and Lydia Maria Child, would have swiftly responded that the growth of the American nation, the needs of struggling American bachelors, and a duty to the Republic as women was surely more than enough incentive. Unfortunately for Farnham, it appeared that these reasons were trumped by

⁸⁵ Farnham, *California*, p. 27.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 26.

⁸⁷ For context, \$250 in 1849 has the equivalent buying power of nearly \$10,000 in September 2022.

⁸⁸ 'Mrs. Farnham at Lowell', *The Daily New Orleans Crescent*, 23 April 1849, p. 1.

a reluctance to leave home, the high cost of the scheme, and fears of discomfort and ill-treatment in the unordered West.

Yet if recruits proved thin on the ground, Farnham's design proved popular among Easterners eager to find ways to integrate California into the Republic and domesticate its largest city. Organised projects for mass migration were not new in an era in which reform-minded citizens joined colonisation societies or funded emigrant aid associations. Such projects sought to deliver social benefits (at least in the eyes of their advocates) rather than financial returns: the elimination of slavery and emancipated people in the Upper South, the peopling of the West by hardy free white farmers. Nor were schemes for women's migration necessarily unfamiliar to citizens; attempts to bring 'surplus' women from the Old World to North America for work as domestic servants occurred periodically around mid-century, and generally secured favourable write-ups in the press. Thus, what Farnham proposed was not entirely outlandish, and the migration scheme was supported by numerous prominent New Yorkers. Thirteen signatures of respectable Manhattanites appeared under the circular Farnham distributed, all of whom supported the scheme and deemed Farnham 'worthy the trust and confidence necessary to its successful conduct'.⁸⁹

Perhaps the two most important signatories were women whose careers exemplified Kaplan's 'manifest domesticity': Catharine Sedgwick and Caroline Kirkland. Both were well-known writers of domestic fiction. Sedgwick was arguably the Republic's most popular female author in the nineteenth century. Her stories were tinged with nationalism, examples of American men and women performing their prescribed roles with exceptional fortitude, and heavy criticism of behaviours and attitudes that did not fit her domestic ideal. Often in her novels, a young woman was able to achieve control over her own life through a diligent

⁸⁹ Ship Angelique: California Association of American Women, New York, 20 February 1849, BroadSides, Vault B-004, California Historical Society.

commitment to home life.⁹⁰ If Farnham could have outlined the type of women she hoped to accompany to San Francisco, they would have likely resembled a Sedgwick character.

Caroline Kirkland wrote about the frontier and white settlers heading West. Her books depicted white men and women working hard to tame the land and make a living. Her first book, *A New Home – Who'll Follow?*, was a call to Americans to expand across the North American continent.⁹¹ Her writing, seen as an early example of realism in American literature, tried to make sense of the role women had on the frontier and discussed, amongst many other topics, community building on the edge of empire.⁹² One trope of her writing that may have recommended her to Farnham was that many of her female characters went West in tow of their husbands, or a man. Rarely did the women in her books go through their own choice: they nonetheless exemplified the duty that many domestic adherents saw women as having to the men of the Republic, and the Republic itself. Farnham certainly saw this role as a duty, a point she made continually clear in her memoir. Other signatories vouching for the scheme included Horace Greeley, an ally and supporter during her time at Sing Sing, as well as editor of the influential *New York Tribune*, and Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, brother of Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe who was a major actor in the Second Great Awakening and was well known across the Eastern seaboard. The combination of prominent men and publicly recognised domestic women lent authority to Farnham's gendered migration scheme.

That authority was bolstered by a generally positive reception of the scheme in the nation's printed press, who commended Farnham's scheme on account of its attempt to counter the lack of morality that was believed to be flourishing amongst the heavily male population out West. Often formulaic, discussions of the scheme introduced Farnham, attested to her fitness to carry

⁹⁰ Nina Baym, *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America* (Urbana, 1978).

⁹¹ Caroline Kirkland, *A New Home – Who'll Follow? or, Glimpses of Western Life* (New York, 1839). Original published under the pseudonym Mrs. Mary Clavers.

⁹² For an analysis of Kirkland's view of women in community formation on the frontier, see Ana-Isabel Aliaga-Buchena, "'The Magic Circle': Women and Community Formation of a Frontier Village in Caroline Kirkland's 'New Home – Who'll Follow?'" , *Critical Survey* 16 (2004), pp. 62 – 77.

out the enterprise, and almost always referred to the supporting signatories that accompanied the scheme. Despite the repetitive nature of the coverage, the discussions of the plan in newspapers nevertheless revealed a deep-seated understanding of the civilizing power domestic households had and of women's influence over man, and therefore the necessity of women travelling to California. 'Without woman', the *Arkansas Intelligencer* proclaimed when discussing the scheme's merits, 'man cannot be anything higher than a quadruped on two legs, like any other monkey or dancing bear'. The absence of women would only lead to men 'degenerating into a lawless, savage, brutal mob', regardless of how respectable they had been before travelling West.⁹³ Befitting the era of renewed religious vigour, the paper used a biblical analogy for its readers. Before Eve, it said, Adam had only been fit for the company of animals. The imagery was clear: woman, God's most loyal and pious servant, would be rescuing man, just as Eve had elevated and rescued Adam at the beginning of the bible.

Other papers agreed that Farnham's plan had worth in that it was employing women in a civilizing mission to benefit the nation. Philadelphia's *Public Ledger*, a strong supporter of both Farnham and the scheme, declared 'where the sexes are separated, woman is sent to the desert of Sahara, and man to hell'.⁹⁴ According to the *Ledger*, then, the separation was detrimental to both sexes: women were wasted without men to civilize, and men could only suffer in their absence. New York's *Daily Herald* insisted that the presence of respectable ladies in San Francisco would 'prevent the male population from degenerating into a state of semi-barbarism, which they would otherwise be liable to do'.⁹⁵ A sense of confidence clearly rings out in these statements; newspapers expected women to answer Farnham's call, and they expected the domestic influence of these women to establish a moral community in the West quickly. *The Lancaster Examiner* continued with this expectation, claiming 'The savage

⁹³ 'Influence of Women', *The Arkansas Intelligencer*, 31 March 1849, p. 2.

⁹⁴ 'Emigrantesses to California', *Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*, 28 February 1849, p. 2.

⁹⁵ 'Emigration to California', *New York Daily Herald*, 19 February 1849, p. 2.

roughness of habits and manners now complained of will soon be smoothed into morality and refinement; and under the benignant influence of homes made happy by the smiles of virtuous females, the California adventurer will learn that there is a wealth “Dearer than Plutus’ mine, richer than gold”⁹⁶ However they framed it, newspapers in the East of America were sure on one thing: male-dominated communities that lacked the right kind of women were destined for disaster. This widespread support of Farnham’s migration for marriage scheme also throws the popularity and interconnected nature of gendered spheres, nation building, and expansion into sharp relief. Farnham’s plan – though adventurous – was not radical in the minds of many East coast contemporaries; rather, it fit comfortably within the dominant nineteenth century national outlook.

In San Francisco, there was far less opportunity to discuss the scheme. News of Eliza Farnham’s migration plan reached the infant city after the ship chartered for the journey had departed New York. Farnham speculated in the original circular of the plan that the vessel would depart around the ‘12th or 15th of April’, whilst the first news of the scheme was published in San Francisco’s then weekly *Alta* paper on the 24th May 1849.⁹⁷ The scheme’s presentation in San Francisco was largely similar to the coverage it received in the Eastern states. The brief initial report of the plan in the *Alta* related that due to her husband’s death, Farnham would be travelling to California and proposed to accompany ‘a number of respectable and intelligent unmarried females who may be desirous to emigrate to California’. It confirmed that the scheme was recommended by a ‘large number of highly respectable and talented New Yorkers’, and that the *Alta* was ‘inclined to look favourably on the undertaking’. Full confidence in both Farnham’s ‘ability and integrity’ were also declared.⁹⁸ Perhaps the most revealing section of the article, however, was confined to the final sentence. ‘[W]e believe’,

⁹⁶ ‘Female Emigration to California’, *The Lancaster Examiner and Herald*, 4 April 1849, p. 2.

⁹⁷ Farnham, *California*, p. 27; ‘A New Adventure’, *Weekly Alta California*, volume I, number 21, 24 May 1849, p. 2.

⁹⁸ ‘A New Adventure’, *Weekly Alta California*, volume I, number 21, 24 May 1849, p. 2.

the approving Californian editors announced, ‘that the young ladies engaging in it [the scheme] would soon find good husbands and comfortable homes’, revealing the pervasiveness of the idea that the presence of good women always resulted in good homes.⁹⁹ What the *Alta* left unsaid was that the ‘respectable and intelligent’ women would first need to tame frontier bachelors before they could set about making the currently non-existent homes comfortable.¹⁰⁰

By July, unwelcome news had reached San Francisco. The *Placer Times* simply announced that ‘Mrs Farnham’s enterprise has turned out to be a sad failure’.¹⁰¹ The week before, the *Alta* had a little more to say on the subject. ‘This enterprising lady, after all her efforts...has had to leave for California with a very small number of ladies accompanying her’, the paper bemoaned. Indeed, the ship chartered for the journey left New York with far fewer than the anticipated 130 marriageable emigrants who would begin to domesticate the far West. Only three other women accompanied Farnham and her two children to California. ‘One of the chief difficulties that were felt by the women who consulted me’, she confessed in a letter to a friend, ‘was the fear that they should not be protected against rudeness, and perhaps something worse’.¹⁰² San Francisco’s reputation, it appeared, had preceded it. Clearly supportive of Farnham’s aims, the *Alta* was far less impressed with the response of East coast women. ‘The ladies of America are much less disposed to engage in a hazardous undertaking than the men and seem disposed to “let well enough alone”’, it criticised. ‘But that’, the irate paper declared, ‘was not the spirit of their forefathers, to whom they owe so much’.¹⁰³ It appears, then, that like Farnham, the editors of the *Alta* newspaper, San Francisco’s first and most prominent, saw women’s roles as a duty to the Republic. American men had made the dangerous journey first

⁹⁹ ‘A New Adventure’, *Weekly Alta California*, volume I, number 21, 24 May 1849, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ ‘That Cargo of Ladies’, *Placer Times*, volume 1, number 13, 28 July 1849, p. 2.

¹⁰² *Greenville Mountaineer*, issue 44, 8 March 1850.

¹⁰³ ‘Mrs. Farnham off for California’, *Weekly Alta California*, volume I, number 29, 19 July 1849, p. 1.

and now desperately needed women to join the growing community. The women they needed, however, had failed their obligation to the nation.

Yet even in its failure, the scheme illuminates important aspects of American history during the nineteenth century. For one, it highlights the imperial aims of the young Republic, still very much in the grip of Manifest Destiny in 1849. Establishing functioning ‘American’ communities on both the Eastern and Western seaboard would be a sure victory for American expansionism and would help seal coast-to-coast dominance of the continent. The influx of men from around the world to California in 1849 led some to worry about the erosion of the American character. White American men, mixing with Black, Latino, Asian, and European men, who all brought their own social values to the gold fields, could dilute the supposed superior character of American men. The presence of American women, in the role of wives, and later mothers, would ensure that American values dominated the state.

In casting women as imperial agents who would aid America's expansion across the continent, the scheme further illustrates the importance of gendered labour and social roles. The backing Farnham's plan received, both by prominent citizens and the Republic's press, attest to the pervasive attitudes around the respective roles of men and women in America. Farnham actively cast women as imperial agents aiding America's expansion across the continent, forcing the nation to see women's role in society as sacrosanct and indispensable. Women in California would stand on the precipice of the American empire and would help to spread American values through their work in the home, the very embodiment of the ideology of domesticity. Seeing domesticity as a tool of empire also helps to explain why an outspoken feminist like Farnham received such support for her plan from prominent men in New York and elsewhere across the Republic. She was engaging women in a self-conscious civilizing mission for the benefit of the nation.

Farnham's California: Frontier Domesticity in Print

The failure of the migration scheme did not end Farnham's interest in domesticating California. After her efforts to engineer the arrival of women had failed, she turned to a more familiar tactic of reform movements: suasion. Here, Farnham's talents as an author would be used as she set out to exploit the wide interest in colonising the West in the East's literary marketplace. This section uses Farnham's writings – especially her memoir of her time in California – to illuminate how advocates of domesticity envisaged middle-class women's labour transforming the Pacific coast. Published in New York in 1856, that memoir was the first book by an American woman to describe life in California.¹⁰⁴ Combining biographical detail with narrative vignettes – typically parables that carried a thinly-disguised message – it was ultimately designed to instruct and influence. It is also, however, an invaluable source in understanding that domesticity was not a fixed and immovable set of ideas, but rather a fluid ideology that could – and needed to be – adapted to its surroundings to achieve a fixed end goal.¹⁰⁵ The memoir showed American women what life was like in the West, how they could improve it, and compared domestic practice on either coast of the Republic. This final point was crucial to the book. Farnham used her own experience to show that domesticity would be different in California.¹⁰⁶ The lack of homes, communities, families, servants, and white middle-class women made emulating the sophisticated domestic culture of the Eastern states a material impossibility. Rather, she showcased a new kind of domesticity to her readers, which I have termed frontier domesticity. Often makeshift, rarely perfect, and yet always overcoming the unpromising physical and racial environment, she chronicled her journey on the wild and rough

¹⁰⁴ Levy, *Unsettling the West*, p. 91; Mary Ellen Snodgrass, *Settlers of the American West: The Lives of 231 Notable Pioneers* (Jefferson, 2015), pp. 53 – 54.

¹⁰⁵ Farnham claimed that 'a considerable part of the book' was written in 1851 and begged the reader to understand that the California she described in its early days was much different in 1856 than it had been in 1849 – 51. Farnham, *California*, p. iii.

¹⁰⁶ Whilst the process of housework and home labour was different, the womanly virtues of domesticity did not change on the West coast. Women were still expected – and needed – to be True Women.

frontier and demonstrated exactly how America's true women could be the much-needed heroines of California.

Farnham's recollections of her time in the West show her distaste for its anti-domestic order and her hopes for what women's redemptive labour might achieve. Through her book, Farnham showed American women that California's salvation would come with the large-scale establishment of exemplary family homes presided over by tenacious housewives. Unlike many domestic writers, though, she described herself doing the work she was instructing others to do. She provided personal examples of the challenges and obstacles she had to overcome. The solutions she outlined demanded much of Farnham. But alongside venerating hardship, they told a wider story about the process of domesticating and civilizing California. If her home symbolised an improving Californian society, then she herself played the role of the legions of American women in the East whom she so wanted to heed her call and come West in the name of uplift. Her home improvements, the triumphs over the many obstacles California provided women, and her rock-solid spirit and fortitude – manifestations of the duty she felt women should feel toward the Republic – told her readers that together they could make California a citadel of American domesticity.

This was an imperial vision as well as a domestic one: indeed, the two elements reinforced one another. Farnham did not just see California's miners as a threat to domesticity; she also suggested the homes of Catholic Mexicans and indigenous people needed urgent improvement. White women's settler colonialism here could do what the emigration of American men alone could not in lifting a supposedly barbarous society to a state of refined civilization. In this respect Farnham invested white Protestant women with exceptional influence in the vanguard of manifest destiny.

As alluded to in her original circular outlining her plan, Farnham had private affairs to see to when in California. Her husband had purchased a farm in the West, with the intention of the family emigrating to live there, but his death left the property in his wife's hands. After a difficult voyage to San Francisco, she travelled to Santa Cruz to take possession of the farmhouse. Farnham initially referred to her new home as 'El Rancho La Libertad' – The Liberty Ranch.¹⁰⁷ The name made a nod to California's liminal position: its Spanish roots now giving way to American freedom. But Farnham also despised San Francisco, and it is possible that the liberty the ranch provided was from that of the corrupting and vice-ridden city. This explanation is perhaps more likely; just a few pages later, she wrote 'In the deep seclusion of La Libertad I enjoyed that silence and solitude...a change from bustle and annoyance, such as had been our previous lot in California'.¹⁰⁸ In any case, the name did not stick, and Farnham used it infrequently. Instead, she rather drolly referred to the farmhouse as 'The Shanty' – a term typically used by reformers in the East to describe the inadequate habitations of the urban and rural poor – throughout. The seed of American liberty, the persistence of Spanish culture, and the unavoidability of miserable conditions seemed to define her domestic setting.

The new home in California juxtaposed the refined East coast family home and the West coast 'shanty'. It was, Farnham wrote, very much aware of the state's lowly reputation for homely comforts, 'not a cheerful specimen even of California habitations'.¹⁰⁹ If there was any doubt on this point, Farnham quickly set about ensuring her readers would fully understand the dearth of domestic order in Californian homes. 'There is not a foot of floor, nor a pane of glass, nor a brick, nor anything in the shape of a stove', she told her audience.¹¹⁰ That final item, the centrepiece of the kitchen alongside the dining table, was as crucial to the home as its physical

¹⁰⁷ Farnham, *California*, p. 42.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 44.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 42.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 42.

elements.¹¹¹ The kitchen was where the family gathered and ate together, where the mother of the home could ensure the health and wellbeing of her children and husband. One historian has said that the stove in 1850 was ‘the vehicle through which she [the American housewife] did much of her most significant work, and the work locale where she could most often be found’.¹¹² No wonder Farnham gave it such prominence.

Farnham invested her kitchen with significance as a tool of empire. Like other domestic writers, she employed militaristic language to frame her work, imbuing her labour with not only a sense of professionalism and importance, but giving it a decidedly patriotic edge, too. Take for example an event she termed ‘the siege of the stove’. It hinted at the difficult and often trying conditions Farnham continually warned women would face in California, but also framed a purely domestic issue with martial meaning.¹¹³ Once at their new home, Farnham’s small party was relying on bread baked for them by a neighbour until their own stove arrived. Once it did, Farnham ‘began to feel a sense of independence and comfort in its possession’, illustrating the positive effect domestically themed items had on a domestic woman’s outlook.¹¹⁴ The rough journey to the even rougher region, however, had damaged parts of the stove. Two members of the party ‘spontaneously resolved themselves into a committee on that branch of domestic order’, eager to get it working.¹¹⁵ They ‘never doubted that perseverance and skill would prevail over all difficulties, and that we should soon see and feel the grateful

¹¹¹ Matthews, “*Just a Housewife*”, p. 12, 84, 111. One unofficial, but nonetheless comprehensive, marker of the contemporary importance of something to good domestic housekeeping is whether the Beecher sisters dedicated a chapter to it in their exhaustive *American Woman’s Home*. Chapter five is titled ‘Stoves, Furnaces, and Chimneys’. See Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The American Woman’s Home: or, Principles of Domestic Science; Being a Guide to the Formation and Maintenance of Economical, Healthful, Beautiful, and Christian Homes* (Bedford, MA, 1869), pp. 66 – 83.

¹¹² Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York, 1983), p. 85. Amelia Simmons’ *American Cookbook* (1796) had numerous nationally themed recipes, too. Dishes such as ‘Congress Cake’, ‘Election Pie’, made women’s work in the kitchen patriotic.

¹¹³ Farnham, *California*, p. 54. Beecher also continually framed domesticity, women’s work, and household labour as a duty to the nation. This fit well with Republican Motherhood and gave women a sense of purpose in their work.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 54.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 56.

presence of an article so necessary even in our rude housekeeping'.¹¹⁶ In this small extract, a technique Farnham used throughout her memoir is apparent. Often, she styled her commentary on daily activities, chores, and events to convey a wider message about middle-class women's roles and their labour in California. These stories always showcased the benefit of the presence of women. In this instance, the installation of the stove – a domestic necessity – stood in for the women's roles in California. The heavily male society there was defective, but women's 'perseverance and skill', Farnham suggested, could, and would, begin to correct the anti-domestic order that predominated in the West. As necessary as the stove was to the successful running of the home, Farnham hinted, so too were women to the improvement of Californian society.

Nonetheless, Farnham's optimism could not fix the problem. Three days after its arrival, it remained unusable. 'Our spirits', Farnham said of the group at large, who had all in turn performed their 'duty' to try and fix the stove, 'were now so thoroughly tamed by it, and our demands upon it so humbled, that we agreed to come to its terms without further parley'.¹¹⁷ Deciding to forge ahead without the broken parts, Farnham and her party found that 'the question was amicably settled' and the stove worked perfectly.¹¹⁸ Reflecting on the struggle, Farnham concluded thoughtfully: 'it shows how, often, difficulties that seem insuperable, are in truth more imaginary than real – that in an hour from this concession we had our stove well heated and its oven doing duty upon a generous pan of biscuit, very comforting to our eyes. 'This', a satisfied Farnham declared, 'was a great triumph'.¹¹⁹

Once more, the struggle, the compromise, the result, and the satisfaction were telling a wider story than that of Farnham's stove. Reading the so-called 'siege of the stove' through a domestic lens, the story gave an early hint toward Farnham's belief that the West coast required

¹¹⁶ Farnham, *California*, p. 55.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 56.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 57.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 57.

a tailored, fit-for-purpose domesticity. Farnham's party – read *good, true women* – had to adjust the stove – read *domestic ideology* – for it to work in California. The immoral, frontierlike, chaotic, and unstructured state, she was suggesting to her readers, could be tamed, could be domesticated. The presence of the right kinds of women from the East would be the cure to the broken aspects of California, and with enough of the right kind of woman, it would quickly turn into the domestic region Farnham hoped for. But the women she implored to go West would need to reshape their vision of domesticity to what was possible in California, an undeveloped, sparsely populated part of the country, lacking in the metropolitan, consumer, and social comforts that all aided women in their domestic management in the East. This adapted, remodelled domesticity was what Farnham most regularly illustrated in her own housework. In setting the example, she hoped others would follow.

As well as her regular parables for the domestic development of California and the role women would play in it, Farnham placed heavy emphasis on the actual physical process of homemaking. This was, after all, where Farnham believed women would have the most positive influence from. Private family homes were the starting point for Californian reform and from there, women's positive influence would spread out across the community at large. Documenting her shanty's transition from hovel to haven, then, provided her with the opportunity to elaborate on the frontier style of domesticity she had hinted at. But her own home in California also served as the benchmark from which all others were judged during her time there. Homes that did not meet the standard of her own – of which there were many in California – were 'bad' homes only in opposition to hers.

Initially, though, Farnham's home was not in an ideal state. She quickly set about rectifying this, dutifully playing her part in creating a domestic environment in which morality, purity, and Christian values would rule, before radiating outwards over the community at large. This was the process through which California could be reformed. Upon arrival at 'The

Shanty’, Farnham had noted the almost dilapidated floors, windows, and walls, but she also complained about having nowhere to lay down her outside clothing. Though seemingly an innocuous omission from ‘The Shanty’s’ amenities, neatness and order were in fact crucial aspects of domestic home keeping.¹²⁰ Catharine Beecher, for example, stressed their importance in her manual of domesticity, promoting the mantra ‘a time for everything, a place for everything, and everything in its place’.¹²¹

But the actual presence of domestically themed amenities in homes were a powerful force for influence, too. Timothy Dwight, once president of Yale University, hinted at how bad homes begot bad furniture, and vice versa. But, he said, ‘a sense of superiority’ is found from ‘handsome dress, furniture, and equipage’ in the home.¹²² Andrew Jackson Downing, the nineteenth century’s most prominent designer of homes, wholeheartedly agreed. Domestic accessories in a home were ‘an unfailing barrier against vice, immorality, and bad habits’ which ‘breathe forth to us...a domestic feeling’.¹²³ The absence of a suitable place to hang clothes, then, was as much a part of California and San Francisco’s anti-domestic order as the metropolis’ numerous saloons, brothels, and gambling halls were.¹²⁴

With few stores to buy furniture from in California, Farnham knew the women she wanted to see populate the state would have to think on their feet at times like this. In her quest to demonstrate the frontier-style domesticity she had been hinting at, she did just that. After employing her brand of frontier domesticity, she informed readers that ‘Innumerable nails’ had been placed ‘on all sides’ of the room. When not in use, these nails ‘announce[d] that trophies

¹²⁰ This is a theme that reappears in chapter two, which focuses on the reform of sailors in a domestic benevolent home.

¹²¹ Catharine Beecher, *Miss Beecher’s Domestic Receipt Book: Designed as a supplement to her Treatise on Domestic Economy* (New York, 1848), p. 248. Order and neatness are continually repeated, essential themes to domestic housekeeping in Beecher, *Treatise*, passim.

¹²² Timothy Dwight, *Travels in New-England and New-York*, vol II (New Haven, 1821), p. 494.

¹²³ Andrew Jackson Downing, *Cottage Residences: or, A Series of Designs for Rural Cottages and Cottage Villas, and their Gardens and Grounds: Adapted to North America* (New York, 1873), pp. iii – iv.

¹²⁴ For an explanation of how materialism and consumer culture became entwined with domestic ideology, and how home accessories promoted domesticity Lori Merish, *Sentimental Materialism: Gender, Commodity, and Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Durham, NC, 2000).

of civilization depend from them during the hours when dresses and the et ceteras...are laid aside'.¹²⁵ With this small innovation, Farnham now had a place to hang her clothing. This was the make-shift domesticity she had been hinting at when discussing her stove. The central pillars of domesticity remained – her clothes could now be stored neatly – yet due to isolation, the ‘rude’ conditions of most buildings, and the lack of a service industry, oftentimes corners had to be cut. For Farnham, this in no way lessened the significance, nor the positive influential effect, of domestic home management. In fact, she was quite clearly proud of her domestic achievements because of the less-than-ideal conditions she had to labour in. By improvising – just as she had with the broken stove – the effect of domesticity would be just as strong.

This visual difference became a marker of success for Farnham, in that she could demonstrate her continual commitment to domestic labour despite these hardships. It was also a valuable lesson to her intended audience: with hard work, commitment to domestic values, and an indomitable sense of purpose, they could still perform the crucial moral and civilizing roles they were expected to. And so, she did not let up. Describing the dimensions of ‘The Shanty’, she again made implicit reference to the contrast between the ordered East and the chaotic West. The building was irregular in shape, and Farnham made sure her readers were aware of this. One room was ‘fifteen feet in length on one side, and about ten feet on the other. The width, at one end, was ten feet, at the other fourteen, and the roof sloped down at the narrow end to the height of about five feet from the floor’.¹²⁶ Nonetheless, after more diligent housework in that oddly proportioned room, Farnham wrote

It would astonish housekeepers at home to know that in this space we kept and used every day...[were] two bedsteads of ordinary size, a sofa, a large dressing-table, six or eight chairs, a tolerably commodious closet, generally from sixty to eighty

¹²⁵ Farnham, *California*, p. 66.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 69.

volumes on shelves about the walls, and four or five large trunks. In the space left after these were stowed, we received visitors, took our meals, made our butter, nursed our little invalid boy, and did the other household offices of a family.¹²⁷

Her description of the home she had created became the benchmark by which she judged others and was certainly in her mind when she was in a Mexican home.¹²⁸ The odd dimensions which she had so clearly outlined, and the resulting cramped space helped to legitimise one of Farnham's key messages about frontier domesticity to Eastern women: California homes were not perfect, but they could still be cathartic sanctuaries. Indeed, little by little her efforts created a material environment in which the virtues of domesticity could flourish. The badly proportioned house included beds (the proper place to sleep), a large dressing-table (women always must be presentable, regardless of location), a breakfast-table (recall the importance of the kitchen and its accessories), and sixty to eighty books (education and awareness of social issues kept the Republic's citizenry engaged).¹²⁹ It was a strangely shaped home to be sure, but nevertheless a domestic one. The lesson Farnham no doubt intended to impart was that regardless of the layout, it was the woman who made the home. Good, domestic women could do so in any environment with the right domestic labour.

Farnham also linked home improvement, housekeeping, homes more generally, and by association, women's labour, to ideas about civilization and empire. This was perhaps most apparent in an anecdote about the initial housework in 'The Shanty' upon her arrival. Seemingly a trivial aside, Farnham mentioned a presumably load-bearing post in the middle of the strangely shaped and worn-down room. She named it 'Pompey's pillar', probably in reference to an Egyptian obelisk built in the first century AD, which would have been widely

¹²⁷ Farnham, *California*, pp. 69 – 70.

¹²⁸ Farnham's criticism of a Mexican home is discussed later in the chapter.

¹²⁹ Many of San Francisco's benevolent societies, one of which forms the focus of chapter two, spent money and time on establishing a good library for their charges. Self-education and betterment were key components of domestic life.

known to a readership steeped in Classical history.¹³⁰ As was frequent with Farnham's writing, parables, and suggestive imagery, though, there is another possible explanation for the naming of Pompey's Pillar. William Clark, one half of the duo that led the Lewis and Clark Expedition, carved his name into a rocky outcrop – later named Pompey's Pillar – in Montana during a journey that became inextricably linked to the idea of manifest destiny.¹³¹ Whether in reference to Roman or American expansion, then, Farnham mapped her own home with imperial markers, hinting – albeit elliptically – at the national significance of her seemingly mundane work.

On top of her regular demonstrations of the benefits of housework to the home's inhabitants, Farnham was also keen to stress the symbolic resonance well-cared for homes had for those returning after long days in the public sphere. This was an especially important release for men spending their days in the anti-domestic order of Californian public life. The home had become a refuge for the thousands of Americans who moved into cities during the Industrial Revolution and were daily exposed to the poverty, immorality, suffering, and crime of the metropolis. The Protestant, domestic atmosphere created by the true woman of the home cleansed those negative urban experiences from the man and reinforced the genteel values of domesticity. Certainly, the women who managed these homes played a crucial role in this process but, as Farnham was keen to demonstrate, merely the concept of a well-managed home played an important role, too.

Drawing again on her own experiences, she recalled being requested to assist a far-off neighbour who had fallen ill. He was an Anglo-American emigrant, formerly a Captain in the

¹³⁰ Farnham, *California*, p. 66. Farnham again referred to Pompey's Pillar when her party moved out of The Shanty and into a new home, perhaps hinting to her audience that once established, civilization takes root and does not easily crumble. Farnham, *California*, p. 170. Just two studies that examine how these ancient societies influenced nineteenth-century middle-class life are Carl J. Richard, *The Golden Age of the Classics in America: Greece, Rome, and the Antebellum United States* (Cambridge, MA, 2009) and Jeffrey Richards, *The Ancient World on the Victorian and Edwardian Stage* (Basingstoke, 2009).

¹³¹ See Nicholas Biddle, *History of the Expedition under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark*, Paul Allen (ed.), vol II (Philadelphia, 1814), p. 388.

army, who had, according to Farnham, ‘heard favorably of my skill in homoeopathy, [and] had sent a pressing invitation for me to call on him professionally, which, of course, I could not fail to do’.¹³² This additional information to the story was a chance for Farnham to allude to the varied roles women were expected to undertake, especially in a place like California, lacking as it was in public institutions such as hospitals. It was also a chance to remind the women she hoped would read her work of – what she saw as – the duty true women had to the American nation: they were the nurses, cooks, and teachers, as well as the nation’s housekeepers.

Setting out to the ex-Captain’s home, then, Farnham and her companion travelled five miles. Due to her escort on the journey being ‘quite a stranger to the equestrian exercise’, their progress was slow and arduous. By the time they arrived, Farnham confessed she was ‘exhausted’.¹³³ She did not report on her ministrations, but instead moved straight on to her return journey, which was again severely held up by her inexperienced riding companion. The pair became lost, traipsing ‘through a muddy lane and over a large tract of unfenced lands’, and even stopping at three Spanish ranches to ask for directions. Finally, they stumbled upon a Canadian who knew the area and directed them home. Having waded through rivers and fords, plunged through mud, and searched in the darkness, they finally reached home, which for the travellers served as a symbol of Anglo-American civilization. Farnham was ‘glad’, she said, ‘to see its cheerful interior: the black walls clothed, as they now were, with clean, light cloth; the stove open, with a blazing fire inside it; and a neat hearth and the clean-swept floor suggesting an idea of comfort and home I had not felt at sight of any other house I had seen’.¹³⁴

Farnham’s journey through a wild and largely Mexican California back to home comforts can be read as a metaphor for the broader transformation of the region under the stewardship of Yankee women. She had travelled a long way, laboured, encountered to her mind semi-

¹³² Farnham, *California*, p. 60.

¹³³ *Ibid*, pp. 61 – 63.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 64 – 65.

civilized foreigners, and tackled the wilderness. The sight of her well-cared for home, though, provided her with the refuge absent from miners' lives. Indeed, similar tropes are evident in contemporary discussion of the region's mining community. 'What they need', the *Grass Valley Telegraph* wrote of 'cold, wet and fatigued' miners reaching their cabins after a hard day's toil, 'is to find a cheerful fire, a change of clothes, and a comfortable meal ready, which they may enjoy, instead of, as now, having to cook, wash, &c, for themselves'.¹³⁵ Such was the sanctity of a well-managed home Farnham saw it as superior even to the recuperative power of nature celebrated by the Transcendentalists of her era. On a leisure trip with friends, Farnham spent several days exploring the Californian coast. Nonetheless, on her return, she insisted that 'the home we returned to was more beautiful than any spot we had seen'.¹³⁶ Women's labour in the home here acquired elemental power as a civilizing force.

Through such stories, Farnham's memoir elaborated the principles that had underscored her migration scheme, while still recognising the problem of the state's skewed demography. Domestic labour, as her example hinted at, had the potential to reform California from the inside out, as home virtues would seep outwards and remake an amoral and un-American society. 'The home, holiest and purest nursery of what is good in the heart, springs up everywhere before woman', she assured her audience.¹³⁷ Yet in the years after the Gold Rush, California remained short of the white, Protestant women Farnham had invested with such critical work.

A mission town Farnham visited in 1850 allowed her to illustrate the racial limits of the state's domesticity while offering a tale of redemption to entice women West. Like a good deal of commentary on California, Farnham described much of the state as a wild and uncivilized frontier. The mission town of San José was no exception. Her description drew on tropes East

¹³⁵ 'Wives for the Miners', *Grass Valley Telegraph*, volume 5, number 11, 26 December 1857, p. 2.

¹³⁶ Farnham, *California*, p. 246.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 294 – 295.

Coast urban sketch writers used to describe Irish Catholic neighbourhoods like New York's Five Points: the sharp boundaries distinguishing public and private life blurred, and a work ethic absent. One man, presumably Mexican, was 'taking his siesta' outside an adobe building in the middle of the street, his slumber 'too sound' to be broken. She wondered how this could be given the 'disquiet of the place', which perhaps hinted at her suspicion that alcohol was involved. Making sure the cultural mix of California towns was not lost on her readers, she referred to the 'incessant jabber of half-a-dozen Indians over a carcass of beef' – again in the middle of the street – which did not rouse him, nor the great 'deal of noise that issued from a party of three or four who were engaged with a living animal a little further on' down the street. The implicit comparison was clear: livestock, loafing, and promiscuous intermixture had no place on a street where separate spheres reigned supreme. But for Farnham idleness, chaos, and a disconcerting racial heterogeneity characterised the Californian community in its early days.¹³⁸

An act of unsentimental violence that an East Coast middle class readership would have been shielded from only emphasised the scale of the task confronting emigrant women. Turning to identify the source of 'a horrid noise', Farnham witnessed the animal she had seen earlier being slaughtered in the middle of the street. 'I had never witnessed the shocking spectacle before, and coming suddenly upon me, weary and heated as I was, it was near proving an overmatch for my firmness', Farnham confessed. The sight of the blood, much like Christ's crucifixion, 'made the earth waver, and the sunshine turn to darkness'.¹³⁹ Never one to miss an instructional opportunity, though, Farnham demonstrated the 'fortitude, indomitable resolution, [and] dauntless courage' she regularly told her countrywomen they would need if they were to come West.¹⁴⁰ In that moment, she 'resolutely' held herself up, burying her face

¹³⁸ Farnham, *California*, pp. 114 – 115.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 115.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 156. See also p. 301 for another example. Farnham, though desperate for 'good' women in California, was forthright in telling those without these qualities they need not come West. Too many 'innocent feet' were

to block out the noise, and resolved that ‘she could be pleased with nothing in the place where people permitted such horrors to be enacted in the public streets’.¹⁴¹ This was a key message of Farnham’s to prospective female emigrants: they must resist the brutalising influences that surrounded them and remain committed to the values of domesticity. Yankee women needed to know the size of the task they were taking on, as well as the character they would need.

As ever, though, Farnham showed the possibility of domestic salvation. She was quickly escorted off the street into a home that was clearly inhabited by Anglo-American settlers. What followed showed domesticity’s redemptive power in the most unpromising setting. Farnham walked into an unexpectedly cathartic retreat. Exiting the dangerous, uncivilized, and corrupting street, and entering the safety of the home, she wrote:

I was ushered into a room wherein the evidences of female taste and refinement soon encouraged me to forget the shock I had experienced without. A tumbler of roses, an India work-basket, with a bit of muslin, and a gold thimble lying beside it, gave assurance of the presence of a home deity not often found in California, and which I certainly had had no idea of meeting in this place. Scattered books, and those of the best, too, raised my hopes still higher.¹⁴²

The incident underscored the significance of her memoir’s title: *California, In-doors and Out*. Farnham, as she did so often, contrasted the sanctuary of a well-managed home to the oppressive and immoral public streets; within the state’s few good homes, civilization might flourish, albeit in a ruder way than might be expected in the East. But the condition of the mission town’s street, despite the citadel of domesticity, provided proof that more women were needed: isolated outposts like Farnham’s shanty or her new acquaintance’s house could only

led astray by California’s immorality because they were unable ‘to live uprightly and purely’ in amongst the degeneracy of the state. See Farnham, *California*, p. 293.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 115.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, pp. 116 – 117.

ever be outposts rather than engines of reform. Neither the Mexican missions nor the miners of San Francisco would be transformed by such scattered efforts. Still, the effect the home had on Farnham demonstrated what the multiplication of such homes might do. Moreover, the ‘home deity’ had only been in California for a couple of days but had already established a domestic haven away from the chaos. Though she had never met the woman in charge of the house, Farnham’s opinion of her purity and true womanhood were not in doubt: the strength of her domestic management told her all she needed to know. ‘I was delightfully surprised to find in this secluded place so sweet a woman – so perfect a lady’, she wrote of the creator of such a serene and tranquil home.¹⁴³ Like Farnham and her speedy work on ‘the Shanty’, the woman had wasted no time in establishing her own miniature domestic empire. Farnham’s message was again clear: if women of virtue would come in numbers, the reformation of the state and its leading city would be swift.¹⁴⁴

Racial and Imperial Domesticity

One group in California who were not esteemed by Farnham for their domestic habits, their virtue, or their morality, however, were (in the eyes of U.S. settler colonists) foreigners. Farnham was, at best, dismissive and apathetic towards non-Americans; at worst, as she hinted at in her discussion of the mission town, she saw them as obstacles to building a home sphere. Generally, those she had most contact with were Mexican families, who until 1848, had certainly not been foreign in California. People of colour generally played only a supporting role in her book, were referred to only by their ethnicity or race, and were portrayed as simple, uncivilized, and sometimes barbaric. But even white foreigners – especially Catholics – received similar treatment: in her party was an Irish emigrant whose name the reader never

¹⁴³ Farnham, *California*, p. 117.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 117.

learned. Instead, throughout her work, the man is referred to almost exclusively as ‘our Irishman’, or ‘the Irishman’. Much like the Irish ‘Bridget’ in East Coast homes, he often served as a source of exasperation for his employer on the ranch, usually on account of his regular disappearing acts (Farnham insinuated that drink took him away).¹⁴⁵ In contrast, her main Protestant American male companion, who escorted her on journeys across the state, was named, praised for his hard work, and depicted as a sensible, conscientious man.¹⁴⁶

Farnham’s attitude towards the non-American population of California gives credence to Kaplan’s ‘Manifest Domesticity’ thesis: that in a multi-national setting, fears related to ethnic and racial heterogeneity entangle with the more immediate concerns about domestic order.¹⁴⁷ In such places, the behaviour of American men may no longer be the main problem for domestic reformers, as foreignness becomes a more pressing threat to home life. Farnham most certainly exhibited this dual domesticity in her interactions with Mexican families. Her criticism of Hispanic home life centred around its supposed difference with the American domestic idyll that she sought to bring to mining communities and mission towns alike.

According to Farnham, Mexican homes lacked one of the most important supporting pillars of domesticity: the deference and respect shown to women by men. Farnham, who maintained that American women by the 1850s were more liberated, free, and important to the Republic than had ever been the case, saw the position Mexican women occupied as damaging to the successful running of a home. ‘The absence of that grand characteristic of enlightened Christianity – respect for woman – is painfully apparent in these rude houses’, she informed

¹⁴⁵ See Farnham, *California*, pp. 55, 148 for examples. For an introduction into ‘Bridget’ – a collective name for Irish servants – see Margaret Lynch-Brennan, *The Irish Bridget: Irish Immigrant Women in Domestic Service in America, 1840 – 1930* (Syracuse, 2009); April Schultz, ‘The Black Mammy and the Irish Bridget: Domestic Service and Representation of Race, 1830 – 1930’, *Éire-Ireland* 48 (2013), pp. 176 – 212.

¹⁴⁶ The man’s name was Tom. Mentions of Tom carrying out crucial labour are found in Farnham, *California*, pp. 54, 69, 85. Escorting Farnham across state on pp. 105, 110 – 121, 196. When writing about Tom, Farnham made it clear that his presence was necessary for her party’s physical home building, crop growing, and farming, amongst many other chores.

¹⁴⁷ Amy Kaplan, ‘Manifest Domesticity’, *American Literature* 70 (September 1998), pp. 581 – 606.

her audience when discussing the high number of Mexican homes around ‘The Shanty’.¹⁴⁸ One of domesticity’s most important precepts was the respect given to women by American men, and indeed, male respect for the home itself – the ‘empire of the mother’, to borrow Mary Ryan’s phrase.¹⁴⁹ Numerous male writers, all proponents of domestic ideology, wrote instructional manuals not just for young women, but also for men. They too needed direction on how to emulate domestic ideals best. Middle-class men were instructed by leading figures – William Alcott, William Cobbett, and T. S. Arthur to name a few – to respect, even revere, both the home and the women who ran them.¹⁵⁰ The participation of men in the domestic ideology contributed to both the status of women, and the influence they were able to distribute over their families and wider society.

Farnham argued that California’s Mexican women lacked an exalted role within and beyond the home. The rise of domesticity had coincided with a change in attitude towards marriages in America. More and more, marriage had become based on mutual affection rather than financial, property, or status considerations. As such, Protestant middle-class women at least found themselves able to exert far greater influence over family matters.¹⁵¹ Among California’s Spanish speaking population, though, Farnham saw no such forces at work. The ‘man never walks by the side of his wife, mother, or sister; does not eat at the same table with her; does not consult her in any of the things wherein she is chiefly or alone concerned; and, in

¹⁴⁸ Farnham, *California*, p. 183.

¹⁴⁹ Mary P. Ryan, *The Empire of the Mother: American Writing about Domesticity 1830 – 1860* (New York, 1982)

¹⁵⁰ William Cobbett, *Advice to Young Men, and (incidentally) to Young Women* (New York, 1833); William Andrus Alcott, *The Young Husband, or, The Duties of man in the marriage relation* (Boston, 1840); T. S. Arthur, *Advice to young men on their duties and conduct in life* (Boston, 1848). See also Amy S. Greenburg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York, 2005), especially discussions on ‘restrained’ manhood and its definition.

¹⁵¹ See Glenna Matthews, “*Just a Housewife*”, pp. 10 – 11. This is certainly not to say that the change in attitude towards marriage in the nineteenth century made the institution a completely equal one. Financially, for example, men still had ultimate control and could spend the money in any way they deemed fit, even if it was explicitly against the wife’s wishes. Rather, the point here is that the union was based on respect, thus engendering the desire to help and support one another in the social roles ascribed. For an interpretation of the changing marriage ideals in the nineteenth century from a feminist point of view, see William Leach, *True Love and Perfect Union: The Feminist Reform of Sex and Society* (New York, 1980).

short, assigns her the position of a humanely-treated slave'.¹⁵² This was far from the way women were supposed to be treated, either inside the home or out in the public sphere.

Farnham suggested such behaviour had a detrimental effect on home life. It resulted, she believed, in Mexican women doing the 'little labor they think it worth their while to bestow upon home comfort'.¹⁵³ Frank Soulé criticised Mexican women in San Francisco's *Annals*, too: 'They show no ambition to rise beyond the station where destiny, dirt, ignorance and sloth have placed them'.¹⁵⁴ Any notion of duty – that word Farnham was so fond of when discussing women's roles and domestic labour – appeared to be missing. Farnham herself noted how Mexican women in California seemed to do things for themselves far more than their families: the women sewed and 'did ornamental work upon *their own* wardrobes', as well as 'dress[ed] prodigally for church and the fandango'.¹⁵⁵ Service to the family, to the home, and to the nation was, in Farnham's view, entirely absent from Mexican households.¹⁵⁶ The role of the woman was not revered and venerated as it was in good American homes.

The absence of male deference, Farnham indicated, benighted home life, turning an institution that ought to have been a refuge and a beacon into a sore. The physical condition and management of Spanish speaking homes appalled her. Farnham hinted at a distaste of Mexican domesticity soon after her arrival in the state, musing on the fact she had not been able to find a suitable neighbour who might have offered her shelter while she worked on 'The Shanty'. Lamenting that very few American families lived in the locale, and those that did were 'entirely unknown' to her, she dismissed the possibility of lodging in a 'Spanish house' as 'entirely out of the question'.¹⁵⁷ She offered no further elaboration. This aloof, dismissive

¹⁵² Farnham, *California*, p. 184.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 184.

¹⁵⁴ Soulé, *Annals*, p. 472.

¹⁵⁵ Farnham, *California*, p. 184. Emphasis added.

¹⁵⁶ Of course, the recent annexation of California meant that those Mexican families living in the new American territory were no longer based in their nation.

¹⁵⁷ Farnham, *California*, p. 48.

attitude toward non-Americans was a trope of Farnham's writing and was consistent with her belief that the Protestant domesticity of the East was the ultimate – and in the Western hemisphere likely exceptional – expression of civilized society.

Farnham developed her critique of the Mexican household when she made an overnight stop at a *rancho* after a visit to San Francisco. Having arrived from a comfortable *ranch* – the lack of the 'o' denoted an Anglo-American settler – she found a stark contrast. Immediately upon arrival, Farnham began her scathing commentary. She noted two large fires 'around which were gathered twenty or thirty men and women, and several mules and horses'. The scene provided just the first example that this was not a home governed by domestic ideology. Men and women were unlikely to socialise indiscriminately in this fashion, much less so in the company of animals. '[H]aving no desire for the contiguity of these gentry, biped or quadruped', she wrote sarcastically, Farnham went inside in search of a fire, finding one in the *rancho*'s kitchen: a key room in domestic ideology.

From the off, though, Farnham made it very clear that the kitchen in this home was not up to scratch. 'The Yankee housewife thinks, now, I ought to have been very comfortable', she quipped after entering the *rancho*, 'for the kitchen, in her land, is a bright, cheerful place to enter from the chilliness of a dark night'. But this, she sneered, 'was not a Yankee kitchen'.¹⁵⁸ Race and hygiene provided her with a yardstick to compare the two. By mid-century, cleanliness marked out a good home and distinguished Protestant white women from their perceived racial inferiors. Farnham frequently emphasised her own commitment to hygiene: she had cleaned 'the Shanty' thoroughly upon arrival, just as she had her rude dwelling in her previous experience as an emigrant on the prairie.¹⁵⁹ The *rancho*, in contrast, was unredeemed by such labour, and marked by racialised squalor. There was 'a dirty Indian girl' making

¹⁵⁸ Farnham, *California*, p. 124.

¹⁵⁹ Eliza Farnham, *Life in Prairie Land* (New York, 1847).

tortillas next to an ‘ill-favored basin of water, into which she occasionally thrust her hands’. Another girl worked in the kitchen with an apron ‘so excessively dirty’ Farnham felt compelled to reach out her hand ‘to stay it when it fell too near the cooking’.¹⁶⁰ Managing to forget the ‘filthy apron’ and ‘the long hair and suspicious-looking arms of the Indian girl’ whilst she ate, her judgemental eye soon saw more cause for concern.¹⁶¹ The girl with the dirty apron was washing up ‘by dashing a handful or two of water over the plate...and, shocking to tell’, she informed her readers, ‘wiping them on the very apron!’ Not yet finished with her scathing depiction, she wrote about children ‘informally’ sitting on the ‘earthen floor’ eating their meal. The food, according to Farnham, was served in ‘[t]wo or three large toilet basins’, from which the children ‘supplied his or her plate at will’.¹⁶² She saw one final opportunity to amuse her readers the following morning. The Indian girl was ‘washing one of the iron pots with a high colored handkerchief she had worn on her head the previous evening’. Perhaps, Farnham mused, ‘the same process served to cleanse both’.¹⁶³ Farnham’s haughty and condescending tone conveyed exactly how she felt about the Spanish residence: that it was uncivilized, dirty, and racially heterogeneous.

Having opined on what she saw as a lack of hygiene in the *rancho*, Farnham then turned her withering eye to the broader organisation of the house.¹⁶⁴ Just as domestic ideologues emphasised the importance of a clear demarcation between public and private spheres, they also stressed the importance of functional specialisation within the home. Houses needed many rooms, each of which had their own distinct role in sustaining domestic life. Here the *rancho* failed again. The room Farnham was to sleep in fell short of her exacting standards. Farnham’s own bedroom at ‘The Shanty’ served as the benchmark to be compared against, and though it

¹⁶⁰ Farnham, *California*, p. 125.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 127.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, p. 128.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 130.

¹⁶⁴ Catharine Beecher for one was insistent that each room in a home should have a specific usage and that there should be no crossover in each of a house’s rooms. See Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher*, p. 166.

lacked the material comforts common on the East Coast, it included the most important accessories: a dressing table, a closet, and reading material.¹⁶⁵ On the other hand, the ‘sleeping-apartment’ – Farnham was ever reluctant to give would-be domestic spaces their proper name if domestic order was absent – was also used as a ‘store-room, and granary’. Moreover, after all her effort to ensure her clothes – or ‘trophyes of civilization’ – were hung up neatly, in this anti-domestic space they were stored alongside the grain.¹⁶⁶ Two beds stood at one end, whilst ‘wheat and barley...and sides of leather, old barrels, boxes, [and] broken chairs’ filled the rest of the room. That the door to the room would not close was a complaint soon rendered obsolete when she discovered she would be sharing the space that night with ‘six to eight persons’.¹⁶⁷ At ‘The Shanty’, in contrast, private spheres were respected, and the men and the women and children had separate areas.¹⁶⁸ Farnham longed to return as quickly as possible. Turning down the invitation for breakfast the following morning, Farnham foreshadowed the relief she would feel when finally arriving back to a clean, domestic, and American home: ‘the neat table-service, and wholesome cleanliness...rose so palpably before me, that on retiring to my room I directed Tom to have the horses ready and call me very early in the morning’.¹⁶⁹

As with numerous other of her recollections, her night at the *rancho* could also serve as a parable for the hardships California’s American men were experiencing. A day in California’s mines, or its premier city, surrounded by uncivilized, anti-domestic orders and influences was what Farnham’s night at the *rancho* symbolised. Her deep desire to get back home, to be

¹⁶⁵ Farnham, *California*, pp. 69 – 70.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 66

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 129.

¹⁶⁸ Even when ‘The Shanty’ was not ready for habitation and Farnham’s party was living out of a large tent, they still maintained the separation of the men in the party from the women and children. See Farnham, *California*, pp. 53 – 54.

¹⁶⁹ Farnham’s framing of Mexicans is consistent with the domestic view of foreigners. Chapter three demonstrates how, once San Francisco became recognisably more domestic, the city’s large Chinese population were denied the benefits of domesticity and domestic reform on account of their supposed inability to perfect domestic ideology. Paradoxically, these same Chinese men were crucial in maintaining San Francisco’s domestic identity, performing vital labour in the service industry as cooks, domestic servants, and by running businesses that sold traditionally ‘female’ labour, such as laundrettes.

surrounded by American influences, was a message to Yankee women: if she felt that way after one night, imagine the needs of the Republic's bachelor miners, desperate as they were for female company and good homes.

Concluding her stay at the *rancho*, Farnham had one more jibe at her hosts before turning her attention back to the issues that American men in California faced without home comforts. 'It is difficult for us [Americans] to imagine contentment in the idle, aimless life of these rancheros, or cheerfulness in the dark, dirty, naked houses they inhabit; but they have sufficed for them, and it must be confessed, that their domestic condition does not, in most parts of the country, promise any very rapid improvement from the example of their new neighbors'.¹⁷⁰ Yes, Farnham concluded, the anti-domestic orders of California's Mexican and Native population was problematic. But there was also the problem that for all the American immigration to California since the discovery of gold, no improvement had, or would, happen given the benighted condition of the Far West's Yankee homes. White men too, she implied, might degrade permanently to such a state without salvation. Such a warning reminded her audience that only true women could build a civilizing domestic order on the frontier.

Conclusion

Eliza Farnham returned to New York in 1856, where she remained until she died from consumption in 1864, aged 49. Despite her scheme's failure, its widespread support on both the East and West coasts illustrates the links between, and support for, employing white, middle-class womanhood in an imperial civilizing mission in the recently annexed and colonised West. Much like the Marian figure in Leutze's mural hinted, the approval Farnham received when designing her project begins to reveal how crucial women were to be to the

¹⁷⁰ Farnham, *California*, p. 131.

expansion of the U.S. and the colonisation of newly acquired lands that had distinctly heterogeneous populations. Moreover, in studying Farnham's time in California, we gain an excellent insight into the process of how one woman, who was utterly convinced of female superiority and women's ability to domesticate and civilize, sought to adjust domestic practice for it to be successful in a racially diverse, unordered, and unurbanized community. The absence of an established middle-class feminine sphere, the lack of consumerist support in the unordered region, and a dearth of both secular and non-secular institutions, meant that Farnham demonstrated an adapted domesticity. This chapter has termed this adaption frontier domesticity.

Though disappointing to her and her supporters in San Francisco, her scheme's failure did not sound the death knell for the introduction of domestic, middle-class women into San Franciscan society. Rather than relying on large-scale orchestrated schemes, though, such women often followed in the footsteps of their husband, drawn to a city that, despite political upheavals like the Vigilance Committees of 1851 and 1856, was beginning to offer more attractions in the form of churches and homes. This did not in itself balance the skewed demographic ratios, and Farnham continued to look for ways to encourage middle-class female emigration. Cheaper travel offered one possibility. 'We are all anxiously hoping for the opening of some additional route to San Francisco,' she wrote a year after returning to the East. 'At the present rates of fare it is impossible for men with families, unless they are also men of fortune, to get there'.¹⁷¹ But her earlier scheme remained the only concerted attempt to transport women for the express role of marrying wayward men and managing households.

After 1856, though, Farnham's interests shifted towards spurring working-class domestic migration. During the Panic of 1857, she founded the Women's Protective Emigration Society

¹⁷¹ 'Letter from Mrs. Farnham', *California Farmer and Journal of Useful Sciences*, volume 8, number 13, 9 October 1857, p. 102.

(WPES). Altogether a far more successful venture than her earlier effort, the WPES funded unemployed working women to head West and set them up in domestic roles. The economic downturn devastated many of the roles working-class women held in the East; especially hard hit were seamstresses.¹⁷² At the same time, though, middle-class women in newer cities in the West complained of shortages of household servants. Most of the women the WPES placed out arrived in Illinois and Indiana. Just like her California scheme, Farnham took a leading role in the society, personally travelling with several parties to their new homes.¹⁷³ But Farnham also appealed to Californians to help ease the suffering of these Eastern working women. She knew full well that even if there had been a slow increase in middle-class women, the West was still seriously short of good, domestic servants.¹⁷⁴ Her shift from a focus on middle-class women to working-class servants reflected too the changing society of California. With growing numbers of wealthy women present in the state, and a physical infrastructure for middle-class domestic culture fast developing, the need had shifted from the wives who would establish homes to the domestics who would do the bulk of the arduous labour within them.

In 1869, some of California's residents came to this conclusion, too, and founded the California Immigrant Union (CIU). Their efforts to induce female domestic service migration sprang from their discontent with the higher wages they had to pay servants in California in comparison to rates across the rest of the Republic. But this was not the CIU's only focus – they emphasised the agricultural, mechanical, and commercial potential of the state, and pushed the idea that while mining was no longer a profitable business for emigrants, California offered

¹⁷² Andrew Urban, *Brokering Servitude: Migration and the Politics of Domestic Labor During the Long Nineteenth Century* (New York, 2018).

¹⁷³ By 1858, the WPES had sent just shy of a thousand women West and placed them in domestic service roles. See 'Letter from Mrs. Eliza W. Farnham', *California Farnham and Journal of Useful Sciences*, volume 9, number 13, 9 April 1858, p. 102; 'To our Readers and Correspondents', *California Farmer and Journal of Useful Sciences*, volume 9, number 12, 2 April 1858, p. 92. See also Marilyn Irvin Holt, *The Orphan Trains: Placing Out in America* (Lincoln, 1992), pp. 96 – 97; Urban, *Brokering Servitude*, pp. 50 – 53. For more on Farnham's role in the WPES, see Levy, *Unsettling the West*, pp. 155 – 164.

¹⁷⁴ 'Letter from Mrs. Eliza W. Farnham', *California Farnham and Journal of Useful Sciences*, volume 9, number 13, 9 April 1858, p. 102.

other avenues for profitable enterprise. Disappointed by the lack of migration West after the completion of the Pacific Railroad, the Union engaged in strong boosterism to try and attract settlement from the Eastern states and from Europe.¹⁷⁵ The CIU were tired of the state's image as a transient, get-rich-quick location, and thus worked hard to emphasise the possibility – even probability – of successfully carrying out traditional commerce there.

Since 1850, then, there had been a shift. Advocates of migration like Farnham once called for the arrival of genteel 'home deities' to civilize miners and Mexicans. Within a decade they had turned to urging working-class women to move instead. The objective now was to meet the demand for domestic drudgery at affordable rates of pay. As Andrew Urban has shown, efforts to import household servants would play an ongoing role in the domestication of city and state and shaped the contradictory reception of Chinese workers.¹⁷⁶ The female population of California, and more specifically, San Francisco, continued to rise throughout the late 1850s and 1860s. But the heavily male dominated beginnings of that metropolis, urban reformers believed, had the infrastructure to corrupt. Saloons, dance halls, and gambling dens all remained. Even as their numbers augmented, newly arriving middle-class women would not be walking into a metropolis that domestic ideologues might recognise as conducive to the kind of society they wished to create. They, like Farnham, would see a city with potential, but also one in which the moral force of home struggled to radiate outwards. Where Farnham had failed to domesticate the city, her successors would try through associated activity.

¹⁷⁵ Casper T. Hopkins, *Common Sense Applied to the Immigrant Question: Showing Why the "California Immigrant Union" Was Founded & What It Expects To Do* (San Francisco, 1896), 325 .H77, California Historical Society.

¹⁷⁶ See Urban, *Brokering Servitude*, passim.

Chapter Two – Domesticating the Sailor: The Ladies’ Seamen’s Friend Society of the Port of San Francisco

Introduction

In the nineteenth century, the United States had a problem with sailors. Confined to their ships for months – sometimes years – at a time, when marine men came ashore, they invariably looked to have a good time. Perhaps the very best time on offer to these weary mariners was to be found in the anti-domestic order of San Francisco, where a proliferation of saloons, gambling halls, and sex workers abounded, and where the arriving seamen did little to bring order to the city. But though San Francisco may have offered the release sailors looked for, it certainly was not the only place facing an issue with the marine class; this was a national problem. Newspapers across the Republic lamented the violence, frequent intoxication, and general disorderly conduct of sailors ashore. They rioted and fought; they drank and partied; they chased immoral pastimes such as gambling and ‘illicit intercourse’; and they sometimes caused criminal damage.¹ Port communities across the Republic had continual arrivals and departures of unattached men, seeking release from the tough – and oftentimes brutal – conditions on board ships. The behaviour of docked mariners who were finally granted a liberty day or days caused major concerns for reform-minded citizens in port cities and towns striving to suppress vice. Providing sailors with a good home offered a means to do so.

¹ Quote taken from ‘Temperance’, *The Ohio Observer*, volume 10, issue 19, 28 July 1836, p. 4. Three examples of sailors’ mischief on land from Maine, Pennsylvania, and California’s printed press are, ‘From the New York Times, Dec. 13 – Outrages’, *Aurora and Franklin Gazette*, volume 15, issue 2701, 14 December 1826, p. 2; ‘A Police Officer Stabbed by a Drunken Sailor’, *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 22, issue 78, 9 July 1866, p. 5; ‘A Shooting Affray’, *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, volume 36, issue 282, 27 November 1869, p. 3. One event that illustrated almost all the problems port cities had with sailors – violence, drinking, criminal damage, and transiency – was a riot in New York’s Five Points district between Irish and American sailors. Both groups quickly dispersed not to be seen again after the riot’s conclusion. See ‘Riot at the Five Points on the 4th July’, *The United State Gazette*, 11 July 1838, p. 4. [Reprinted from the *New York Times*]. Even sailors misbehaving ashore in foreign lands made the American press. See ‘Riot Between American and Greek Sailors at Cardiff’, *North American*, volume 74, issue 19,643, 26 Feb 1856, p. 1. [Reprinted from *London News*, 4 February 1856].

This chapter examines one domestically minded group's attempt to correct the anti-domestic orders of marine men whilst ashore in the city of San Francisco. The Ladies' Seamen's Friend Society of the Port of San Francisco (LSFS) was a female-led benevolent institution that aimed to reform seamen and establish domesticity amongst the marine class. Much like Farnham, the LSFS saw their reform happening through the institution of the home where the men would be sheltered from the corrupting nature of the city. In their attempts to establish, decorate, and run a Sailors' Home, the LSFS show how Farnham's plan to reform California with homes was taken into the sphere of benevolent reform and applied to a large group of men, who, like San Francisco's bachelor miners, represented the antithesis of domesticity.

The LSFS provide an important angle with which to view nineteenth-century female benevolence in an urban setting. In many ways, the society shared much with other female-led charities established in the nineteenth century. The women involved were white, middle class, and Protestant. They subscribed to the ideology of domesticity. They drew up constitutions and by-laws, had elections for prominent roles, and viewed their benevolence as labour, akin to employment. They also thought that their benevolence was vital for the city's progression. Yet while benevolence was widespread across the Republic from at least the 1820s onwards, very few female-led societies distributed aid to destitute, immoral, or wayward men. Largely, women aided other women, who were usually deemed by the reformers as destitute or fallen. And these were not just any men the LSFS attempted to aid, either. Sailors were widely seen as some of the most problematic citizens of the Republic: not least because the ships on which they spent their working lives seemed to be utterly inadequate as homes.

In providing sailors with a home, the LSFS took on the role of surrogate republican mothers who advanced the interests of an expanding American empire. This guiding, supportive, influential role had originally developed in the Revolutionary era, where mothers

provided the moral and religious tutelage in private that would prepare sons for the responsibilities of citizenship in the public sphere.² The LSFS took the tenets of republican motherhood from individual homes to the ‘surrogate’ domestic space of the Sailors’ Home.³ If it was agreed women could influence their own husbands and sons, what was stopping them bringing that same moral influence to other men? In this respect, the LSFS’s work was imperial as well as republican. As Brian Rouleau has argued, citizens in the middle decades of the nineteenth century saw their sailors as representatives of the Republic abroad and were often embarrassed when they failed to live up to expectations of American manhood.⁴ Civilizing the sailor through domesticating him became a way for San Francisco’s benevolent women to uplift the reputation of the Republic in the eyes of the world. Yet with the stakes so high, such work inevitably attracted controversy. The murky and blurred boundaries of the so-called separate spheres inhabited by men and women in nineteenth-century American cities were strained by the mass participation of middle-class white women in benevolent societies that carried out their work in the public realm. This was especially true, as the experience of temperance and abolition shows, when those societies aimed to reform men.⁵ Sailors provide a telling example.

This chapter draws heavily on the records of the LSFS, especially an almost complete run of their annual reports. Rich and informative as they are, there is nevertheless a need for caution when using self-published material to judge a society. Annual reports were a chance for benevolent societies to celebrate their successes, champion their cause, and further their interest and status in the locale they operated in. As such, they tended to inflate their organizations’

² Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill, 1980); Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty’s Daughter’s: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750 – 1800* (Glenview, 1980).

³ See Peter Baldwin’s work on city planning in Hartford for more on the idea of public areas becoming ‘surrogate’ domestic spaces for residents, especially his chapter on parks. Peter C. Baldwin, *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford, 1850 – 1930* (Columbus, 1999), pp. 116 – 146 esp.

⁴ Brian Rouleau, *With Sails Whitening Every Sea: Mariners and the Making of an American Maritime Empire* (Ithaca, 2014).

⁵ Bruce Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca, 2002).

importance and overstate their achievements. They do, however, remain valuable resources that reveal a great deal about the institution. The LSFS's early annual reports, for example, betray a feeling of frustration and annoyance at the difficulty they faced in establishing their permanent Sailors' Home. Perhaps more importantly, they provide insights into the values and assumptions that underpinned the LSFS and allow us to track how domestic ideals infused the work they did.

The papers of the society also highlight something that is beyond the scope of this study. They track the transition from relatively unorganised annual reports, at times filled with whimsical and chaotic passages in the society's early years, to highly professional, organised, and efficient documents charting the society's activities in its later years. Benevolent societies were often the vehicle that provided women with their first step into the political, economic, legal, and social spheres of the city, at least in a professional capacity, which is how benevolent women largely understood their labour. The changing nature of the content and structure of annual reports produced by groups such as the LSFS would make a valuable contribution to a study that investigated how women built a decidedly feminine political, commercial, and professional identity for themselves in the nineteenth-century metropolis through organised charity.

San Francisco's newspapers are also a valuable resource for studying the LSFS. Benevolent societies in general used the local press to announce themselves, promote fundraising, thank donors, and publicise annual meetings and reports. Generally, the relationship between newspapers and the organisations was harmonious. In new cities like San Francisco, the appearance of such institutions provided booster publishers with evidence of the march of civilization; the wives and daughters of those same publishers might participate in the institutions, too. Above all, though, newspapermen recognised that in an outpost of the Republic with fledgling social and political structures, a fluctuating economy, and virtually

non-existent public provision of welfare, benevolent women's labour provided a path to stability.

But the city's printed press was also used as a platform for the LSFS's detractors and critics to voice their opposition to the society. In the latter decades of the century, the LSFS courted controversy over the running of the Home as a supposedly profit-making enterprise. These accusations were often dismissed by the women out of hand in their annual reports – if they were mentioned at all – and so these public criticisms help to build a clearer picture of the society and the city's reception to it. In this way, the city's newspapers served to illustrate that even the virtuous and respected sphere of female benevolence and charity was not immune from the corrupting competition of public life in the city. Indeed, when female-led domestic reform became entangled with urban capitalism, it came under fierce criticism from San Francisco's men.

Informing this study too are sailors' memoirs, which offer valuable insight into the life of seamen, who were so often depicted and derided, but very rarely themselves heard. Providing rich material of day to day lives at sea and ashore, sailors' memoirs nonetheless need careful consideration. Rare are the memoirs of self-reflective working-class mariners with thirty years at sea under their belt. Instead, these texts were often written by wealthy, middle-class men who tried sailing for a period, rather than adopting it as a lifelong career. Most of the authors of these memoirs appeared to be remarkably – and in their own estimation, often singularly amongst their crew mates – unaffected by the multitude of corrupting influences in sailors' lives. Charles Nordhoff, the author of *Nine Years a Sailor*, for example, was often condescending about his crew mates who, he was quick to divulge, went directly to grog shops, saloons, and brothels upon going ashore. He also regularly mocked their propensity for

fighting.⁶ Nordhoff was surely aware of the attitudes towards sailors and their behaviour, and perhaps edited his own involvement in such situations to preserve his own reputation. Other marine writers discussed the shortcomings of sailors as if they were a spectator and not a part of the same group, too.

This chapter begins by outlining the rise of benevolence in the recently settled city of San Francisco. Benevolence in San Francisco, and the wider West more generally, was largely seen as vital to its development. The rapid nature of San Francisco's growth meant that government institutions, welfare, and the physical structure to provide help to settlers was severely lacking. In place of these avenues of relief, benevolent institutions filled the void and provided aid in various forms. The chapter then moves on to outline how marine men were perceived across the Republic, before examining some of the circumstances of the sailors' lot many reformers thought responsible for their less than moral lives. It then moves on to the case study of the LSFS, seeking to illustrate how domesticity influenced female-led benevolent reform, how the women of the society intended to use their Home to instil domestic ideology in sailors, and the ways in which domestic benevolence enabled women to take a step into the public sphere and impact urban development.

Benevolent Society in San Francisco

Benevolence was crucial to the development of the Republic's nascent urban centres in the nineteenth century. The rapid shift from a population largely based in rural settings and engaged with agricultural work to the nation's cities with all their developing industries created unprecedented instability. For the lucky – largely those who were already wealthy – the move

⁶ Charles Nordhoff, *Nine Years a Sailor: Being Sketches of Personal Experience in the United States Naval Service, The American and British Merchant Marine, and The Whaling Service* (Cincinnati, 1857). See pp. 225 – 228 for an example of Nordhoff's habit of not associating himself with the immoral behaviours and activities of sailors ashore.

to cities created further opportunity to enhance their fortunes. For many of the workers that flooded the urban centres, poverty, crime, illness and disease, and the loss of a church-based community network became their new reality. Government welfare was slow to keep up with the population rise in urbanising areas, and as such, benevolent aid and charitable associations became crucial aspects in easing the hardships of these densely populated locales.⁷

As the Republic spread further westward, frontier communities were ripe for benevolent and charitable institutions. The instant cities of the West faced similar social problems to their counterparts in the East but lacked long-established systems of philanthropy and relief to abet them. San Francisco was no different. The boom-bust nature of a gold mining city created enormous instability which local government, falling periodically into the hands of vigilance committees, struggled to address. The burden of ordering the city, however, would be taken up by an emerging middle class.⁸

The first fifty years after the U.S. annexation of California saw intense institution building. By 1893, San Francisco boasted at least 204 ‘charitable agencies’ dispensing aid to the needy in the city.⁹ A significant number of these charities were formed, controlled, and managed by women of the city. In San Francisco’s early, male-dominated days, though, this was not the case. Not only were most of the city’s associational groups controlled by men; they were also far fewer in number, an indication of that transient community structure that Farnham and many of her contemporaries so despised. To begin with, the city’s male-led societies were social and

⁷ Sam Bass Warner, Jr. outlined the disruption the city move caused to people’s lives in this way. The rapid change and the desire of residents to make money meant the ‘American city ceased to be an effective community’. Quote from Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Private City; Philadelphia in Three Periods of its Growth* (Philadelphia, 1968), p. x. Warner’s initial characterisation of the city as destabilising is in Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870 – 1900* (Cambridge, MA, 1962).

⁸ On the ordering of cities, see Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877 – 1920* (New York, 1967); Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper’s Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815 – 1837* (New York, 1978); Diane Shaw, *City Building on the Eastern Frontier: Sorting the New Nineteenth-Century City* (Baltimore, 2004).

⁹ Charles K. Jenness, *The Charities of San Francisco: A Directory of the Benevolent and Correctional Agencies, Together with a Digest of Those Laws Most Directly Affecting Their Work* (San Francisco, 1894).

fraternal associations, demarcated by nationality, race, or ethnicity.¹⁰ Three of the earliest groups in the city were the Eureka Benevolent Society, organised in 1850, the French Benevolent Society, organised December 1851, and the German Benevolent Society, organised January 1854.¹¹ None of these groups, nor any other early society, had it in their mandate to change the social or cultural structure of the city like the LSFS and later organisations; rather, their aim was to provide financial assistance, medical aid, repatriation, and friendly networks in a far off, foreign land. These early fraternal groups ensured that settlers were ‘in a measure reconciled to the want of homes and families, and made to feel less like isolated and uncared-for strangers’.¹²

As middle-class women began to arrive in earnest in San Francisco, they brought with them from the Eastern states the desire to volunteer in a metropolis undergoing exponential growth.¹³ These women began to fill the void in welfare provision. The number of female-led societies in San Francisco increased steadily throughout the nineteenth century from the establishment of San Francisco’s first – The San Francisco Protestant Orphan Asylum – in 1850, to 1890, when the numbers plateaued.¹⁴ In 1860, there were seven female-led societies. In 1871, fifteen were led by women and one with a mixed board of managers. 1880 saw a large

¹⁰ Some later female-led societies were separated on grounds of religious and national affiliation, too. Examples include German Ladies General Benevolent Society, Italian Ladies’ Aid Society, Ladies’ United Hebrew Benevolent Society (Jewish), Magdalen Asylum (Catholic), Orphan Asylum Society (Protestant). See Henry G. Langley, *The San Francisco City Directory for the Year Commencing March 1875* (San Francisco, 1875).

¹¹ The German Benevolent Society was the result of the unification of other disparate, smaller German groups that had existed before 1854.

¹² Frank Soulé, John H. Gihon, and James Nisbet, *The Annals of San Francisco* (New York, 1855), p. 715.

¹³ That exponential growth is seen in a forty-four-fold increase in population from 1849 (roughly 820 residents) to 1852 (36,151 residents). For figures, see United State Census Bureau, *1850 Census: The Seventh Census of the United States* (Washington, 1853).

¹⁴ One explanation for this plateau may be due to there being many more mixed gender boards controlling benevolent societies. Another reason is that, due to the presence of the women who had been working in these benevolent societies, there was now a much more equal gender ratio. That meant more families, more marriages, and more homes in the city. In a society with homes, families, and a prospering economy, there was less need for some charitable institutions. There remained, of course, many people who still needed benevolent and charitable assistance.

increase: twenty-three female-led societies and two with mixed boards, and 1890 recorded twenty-two female boards, and four mixed.¹⁵

Female-led benevolent institutions were crucial to San Francisco's development as one of the premier port cities on the Pacific seaboard between 1850 and 1898. This was not unique to San Francisco, though. Across the Republic, women stepped out more and more into the public world of benevolent reform. The women involved not only earned a good, solid social reputation, but they also found ways of bringing what they believed to be key moral issues to the fore in the minds of the city's residents, and, perhaps more interestingly, to the fore in the political discussions of the city. Of course, the realm of electoral politics was overwhelmingly a male one in 1850s San Francisco. Both Mary Ryan and Philip Ethington's research has shown that women were largely used in the 1800s as political props by men. Ryan described women in the nineteenth-century city as 'not so much absent as present in disguise and marked for political exclusion'.¹⁶ Ethington termed women used by men in this way 'vestal virgins', a throwback to Republican Rome, which he has argued provided San Francisco vigilantes with a model to emulate. By appearing alongside their husbands and fathers, good and pure women could 'lend moral and ethical legitimacy to the proceedings of the men'.¹⁷ Their connection with the domestic ideal, republican motherhood, and benevolent reform marked these women as true and proper ladies, who could teach their husbands correct behaviours. Thus, the presence of such women in the lives of these men meant their political policies would not be the product of a corrupt and sinful mind. Excluded from any real political debate, women were used to help validate their husband's political rhetoric.¹⁸ When representing their institutions,

¹⁵ Henry G. Langley, *The San Francisco City Directory for the Year 1860* (San Francisco, 1860); Langley, *City Directory 1871* (San Francisco, 1871); Langley, *City Directory 1880* (San Francisco, 1880); Langley, *City Directory 1890* (San Francisco, 1890). There is no surviving copy of the city directory for 1870.

¹⁶ Mary Ryan, *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City during the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1997), p. 67.

¹⁷ Philip Ethington, *The Public City: The Political Construction of Urban Life in San Francisco, 1850 – 1900* (Berkeley, 2001), p. 61.

¹⁸ Mary Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825 – 1880* (Baltimore, 1990). See esp. pp. 135 – 139.

though, the lady managers of benevolent societies forced their way into political discussions by demanding an audience and lobbying for change.

San Francisco's printed press quickly recognised the need for benevolent activity in the unstructured and developing city and, as such, were generally positive in their coverage and assessment of benevolent endeavours. Regardless of the gender of the board of managers, San Francisco's newspapers were acutely aware of the pressures on the city. The enthusiasm benevolent societies received in the press, then, stemmed from an understanding of their necessity. *The Daily Alta* for one was vociferous in its praise of charitable and benevolent institutions. When discussing one of the city's most prominent and long-lasting female-led societies, the San Francisco Ladies' Protection and Relief Society (SFLP&RS), the paper claimed that some of the city's 'repulsive features are passing away'. The very existence of the society, the approving *Alta* claimed, showcased 'the movement of California society; it is becoming consolidated, and powerful for good'.¹⁹ According to the *Alta*, then, the city needed institutions like the Protection and Relief Society to rid the city of some of its less-savoury elements, and to showcase its advancing civilization to an onlooking world.

Providing homes to the insecurely housed became a common object for benevolent societies. The authors of the *City Directory* commended the SFLP&RS on carrying out 'a large amount of good in relieving the distress of sick and destitute women and children, and providing employment for females desirous of procuring work'.²⁰ Another contemporary commentator celebrated how the SFLP&RS had ensured that 'Very many unfortunate females have been furnished...with comfortable homes, and provided with situations in respectable families, where they are enabled to earn honest livelihoods'.²¹ Once their Home was established in the mid 1850s, they offered shelter to poor, destitute, and unwell women and children. Often,

¹⁹ 'The World Does Move', *Daily Alta California*, volume 6, number 171, 11 July 1855, p. 2.

²⁰ Langley, *City Directory 1865*, p. 32.

²¹ Soulé, *Annals*, p. 716.

they placed families into the homes of the city's poor and paid the board. They also sought to find employment for women, predominantly as domestic servants. Much like Farnham, who called for the emigration of poor women to California in the Panic of 1857 to serve middle-class households, such an arrangement was seen as mutually beneficial. San Francisco's homemakers would secure the labour they needed, while servants would learn from their influence. Where they could not find domestic work, those in need were housed in the society's Home, or in feminised roles, such as seamstressing. The underlying tenet of their benevolence was to secure a place in a home – either a family home or the society's – where domestic values ruled.²² Similarly, the San Francisco Orphan Asylum, founded 1851, placed orphaned children into homes, where they would receive the benefits of republican motherhood and gain the myriad other benefits homes gave American citizens.²³ Most female-led benevolence in the city was domestic in nature. Those institutions helping to build that domestic structure were crucial to San Francisco's early development as an important Western metropolis of the Republic.

The Ladies' Seamen's Friend Society of the Port of San Francisco

One such institution was the Ladies' Seamen's Friend Society of the Port of San Francisco. The geographical designation within the society's name – of the Port of San Francisco – might suggest an isolated approach to the benevolent reform of seamen. On the contrary, however, marine reform efforts, whilst separated by huge distances across the Republic, were largely unified in their approach to redeeming the sailor. All agreed that seafaring was inherently

²² Information on the SFLP&RS comes from annual Report of the managers of the SFLP&RS, 1858, PAM 20763 and SFLP&RS Annual Reports, 1865 – 1906, PAM 14382, San Francisco Ladies' Protection and Relief Society; California Historical Society.

²³ The Orphan Asylum was a Protestant organisation. A Catholic society for orphans was established in 1851, also. Both were managed by women who schooled the children in both religious and educational terms. See Langley, *City Directory 1860* (San Francisco, 1860), p. 440 for a short description of both societies.

dangerous to the sailors' morality; all agreed that a home modelled on domestic ideology, managed by pious women, and removed from temptation and vice would help to cure him; and all supported the notion that the treatment of marine men on shore by landlords – or landsharks – was abhorrent, endemic, and needed to be abolished.

The American Seamen's Friend Society (ASFS) was the national body of marine reform.²⁴ Organised on 5th May 1828, the ASFS served as the centrepiece of marine reform in the nineteenth century and published the widely read *Sailors' Magazine and Naval Journal*. Headquartered in Boston, the ASFS had numerous auxiliary branches, predominantly across the Eastern seaboard, with a few scattered elsewhere across the Republic. The ladies of San Francisco remained independent from the national body, however. Nonetheless, they forged and kept close ties with the ASFS, and occasionally appeared in their publications, often being praised for their hard work, and later in the society's existence, through reporting on the marine reform laws the LSFS took to congress with the support of the ASFS. Moreover, despite being separate from the ASFS, the LSFS and all other marine reform societies were aware that just one good Sailors' Home could not reform mariners: a more concerted effort would be needed. Thus, the LSFS was independent from, and yet unified with, the national sailor reform organisation and its auxiliaries.

The LSFS formed at a time in which the city of San Francisco was beginning to transform from a Gold Rush boomtown into the established metropolis of the West Coast. According to Farnham's favoured metric, the city had begun to improve as more middle-class women arrived. And the lady managers of the LSFS were certainly middle-class. Nonetheless, very little discussion of who they were can be found in contemporary sources, despite them always been formally named in newspapers and annual reports. Generally, discussion of the women

²⁴ The ASFS was in fact the second attempt at creating a national marine reform movement. In two attempts in 1825 and 1826, The National Seamen's Friend Society failed to meaningfully establish itself.

involved in the society took the form of platitudes: '[t]he ladies having charge of the Society are well-known and charitable', they generally read.²⁵ A core of around ten women were consistently associated with the society in prominent positions throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, chief amongst them Mrs. Knight, Lambert, and Cogswell. The annual reports published by the LSFS listed the addresses of each lady associated with the society – a sure sign that these women were wealthy and well positioned to distribute charity, not receive it. Those wide, grand streets such as California, Washington, Folsom, and Sacramento occurred often.

Caroline E. Cogswell, who was unusual in that she occupied the position of Treasurer consistently rather than switching roles like the other ladies, is a prime example of the types of women involved in female-led urban benevolent societies in California. Born in the East, she travelled West with her well-educated husband, Dr. Henry Cogswell, who set up a successful dentistry practice in the city. An ardent temperance advocate, Cogswell had no less than five drinking fountains dedicated to his name across the Republic.²⁶ Together, they were a typically middle-class, benevolently minded couple: she worked toward the domestication of sailors, he to limit drinking amongst his countrymen. Near the end of the nineteenth century, they set up the Cogswell Polytechnic College, an educational institute for the sciences, art, and medicine.²⁷ Many of the other women involved in the society were the wives of important and influential men in the city, too.

These middle-class, benevolent women provided the impetus and labour for the LSFS. On the 4th August 1857, around a year after its initial formation, the organisation was officially incorporated in the city and laid down its objectives in its constitution: 'The objects of the

²⁵ 'The Sailors' Friends', *Daily Alta California*, volume 27, number 9390, 19 December 1875, p. 1.

²⁶ Frederick C. Moffatt, 'The Intemperate Patronage of Henry D. Cogswell', *Winterthur Portfolio* 27 (1992), pp. 123 – 143. See also 'Another Cogswell Fountain', *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 57, issue 23, 2 November 1883, p. 3.

²⁷ See 'Cogswell's Gift', *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 60, issue 85, 16 July 1885, p. 3; 'The Cogswell Polytechnic College', *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 63, issue 150, 2 April 1887, p. 4.

society shall be to relieve ship wrecked and destitute seamen, and to protect seamen against the pernicious influences and injustices to which they are subjected in this port, and for such other purposes as shall tend to their moral and intellectual improvement'.²⁸ It would do so through a method Farnham surely approved of: by building a home.

The Anti-Domestic Orders of Seafaring Men

The occupants of the LSFS's home would be seafaring men. The contemporary nineteenth-century image of the sailor (who, after the British example, was often referred to as 'Jack') was one of disorder, vice, and immorality. To the American public, especially those living in port cities and towns across the nation, Jack meant trouble. In the nation's newspapers, the mariner was always drunk, often violent, and rarely, if ever, emblematic of the disciplined manhood idealised in middle-class culture.²⁹ For many Americans, the brave and patriotic marine men who had explored and guarded the nation's maritime frontiers were gone, replaced by an uncivilized, intoxicated, and immoral marine class who, according to the sailor George Little, some thought to be 'dangerous to society, and who ought not to be suffered to roam at large'.³⁰

At least part of this image was derived from the perception of the ways sailors expressed their masculinity. Where a woman's social worth was derived from her ability to adhere to the domestic ideal, the same cannot be said for men. Historians of the mid-nineteenth century have broadly divided masculinity into two opposing types, each one visible in the likes of newspapers and novels, but also evident in everyday behaviour. One historian has termed these

²⁸ LSFS, *Ninth Annual Report of the Ladies' Seamen's Friend Society of the Port of San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1865), p. unnumbered.

²⁹ On the stereotypical sailor, see Paul A. Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront: American Maritime Culture in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia, 2004), esp. chapter one, pp. 3 – 32.

³⁰ George Little, *Life on the Ocean: or, Twenty Years at Sea: being the personal adventures of the author* (New York, 1856), p. 369.

expressions of masculinity restrained and martial manhood.³¹ Those who championed domestic order were unequivocal in their belief that the former was the right expression of manhood, and the latter was not. As the name might suggest, restrained men placed high value on qualities such as self-control and the active denial of sinful indulgence. Practiced in both the North and South, and by no means limited solely to the middle class, restrained men demonstrated their masculinity through unwavering commitment to the family structure, success in work and business, prudent financial management, and zealous devotion to the Christian faith. Outward aversion to blood sports, gambling, and intemperance shaped their identities. Restrained men exalted women as moral exemplars who deserved a position of authority in the Republic's homes. Thus, the domestic sphere became a crucial site in the production of an ideal of manhood.³²

The antithesis of this expression of masculinity was martial manhood. Martial men took great pride in the rejection of the refined attitudes that defined their more restrained compatriots. They enjoyed bare-knuckle boxing, animal blood fights, and horse racing, all of which were enmeshed with a culture of gambling and alcohol consumption. That alcohol consumption – sometimes heavily and to excess – was celebrated in saloons and bars and worn as a badge of honour. Visiting brothels and dancehalls, gambling on cards and table games, and occasionally fighting amongst themselves were also pastimes of the martial man. These

³¹ Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York, 2005), p. 11. Other terms for 'martial' manhood include the male-sporting masculinity, the sporting fraternity, or bachelorhood. Elliott J. Gorn, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America* (Ithaca, 1986); Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *The City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790 – 1920* (New York, 1992); Howard P. Chudacoff, *The Age of the Bachelor: Creating an American Subculture* (Princeton, 2000).

³² Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*, p. 11. See also Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780 – 1835* (New Haven, 1977), p. 64; Jan Lewis, *The Pursuit of Happiness: Family and Values in Jeffersonian Virginia* (New York, 1983), 222. Catharine Beecher cemented this type of masculinity within the domestic canon. Describing men's duties – 'toil[ing] in the foundries, travers[ing] the ocean, transport[ing] merchandise' amongst many others – she declared that 'the great stimulus to all these toils, implanted in the heart of every true man, is the desire for a home of his own, and the hopes of paternity'. Beecher tied restrained manhood's values to domestic ideology and effectively rejected any other masculine expression. See Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The American Woman's Home: or, Principles of Domestic Science* (New York, 1869), p. 19.

men showcased their masculinity through displays of strength and physical dominance over others. This outlook centred around strength and aggression was found outside of saloons and gambling halls, too. Whether expressed through more legitimate associational groups like fraternal clubs and volunteer fire companies, or through more illegitimate means such as street gangs and vigilance committees, martial men found alternative ways of expressing their masculinity in direct opposition to restrained men.³³

It is important to again stress that there were no class restrictions to either of these two versions of masculinity. Middle-class men were not all restrained, just as working-class men were not all martial. In contrast to nineteenth-century Europe where enjoyment of blood sports was generally confined to the wealthier upper classes, American men from across the wealth and class spectrum could and did identify with either restrained or martial manhood. In the same vein, it is of course far too binary and restrictive to suggest that all martial men who enjoyed boxing had no time for the institution of home or family, or that they all lacked respect for their wives. So too that a restrained man, evangelical in his Protestant faith and committed to his family, did not enjoy and value the companionship of other men. Certainly, there were crossovers between these two groups. Yet an ideal and practice of manhood that championed strength, aggression, and physical confrontation jarred with one that championed self-control.³⁴

Not without reason, sailors were generally placed into the martial category by their contemporaries, though closer scrutiny indicates they may have been harder to categorize than those contemporaries implied. In this respect they can be compared to other martial manhood subcultures either side of the Civil War. Howard Chudacoff's study of nineteenth-century bachelors highlighted a form of masculinity that not only rejected the institution of marriage, but in some cases, was actively repulsed by it.³⁵ Elliott Gorn's study of 'sporting men' –

³³ Chudacoff, *The Age of the Bachelor*, p. 36; Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*, p. 11 – 12.

³⁴ Chudacoff, *The Age of the Bachelor*, p. 35; Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*, pp. 13 – 14.

³⁵ Chudacoff, *The Age of the Bachelor*, passim. On men horrified by the thought of marriage, see also Gilfoyle, *City of Eros*.

specifically bare-knuckle prize fighters and their urban working-class fans – presented another iteration of the martial masculine type. His depiction of predominantly Irish American sporting masculinity, though bounded by ethnicity and class, emphasises the role of home values in constructing gender identities. Gorn’s pugilistic subjects ‘gathered to seek companionship, garner one another’s esteem, and compete for status’, the result being ‘a rejection of the cult of domesticity so characteristic of bourgeois Victorian life’.³⁶

If these varied social articulations of masculinity show anything, it is that grouping the men who rejected the ideals of restrained manhood is no simple task. It is perhaps never harder than when attempting to place seafaring men into one of these categories, though. Certainly, sailors exhibited many of the traits of martial men in their propensity to drink heavily and fight, either for honour or fun. They were also largely a bachelor labour force, but studies have shown that, far from being repulsed by marriage and home life like many of Chudacoff’s bachelor subjects, both were often idealised aboard ships and even pined for. Margaret Creighton’s research into sailor’s diaries in the nineteenth century, for example, found that marine men often had favourite sex workers in certain port cities and would only acquire the services of one woman, often referred to in diaries as their ‘wife’.³⁷ This quasi-monogamous role play hinted at a desire for marriage, or female companionship at the very least. And sailors’ memoirs also challenged the idea that seamen rejected the home, family life, and female companionship. Nordhoff, for example, reported that when his ship finally began sailing toward home, many of his crewmates were excited to see fathers, mothers, sisters, and brothers. They ‘spoke of the pleasures of meeting with the loved ones, of the cheerful fireside...of the renewing of old friendships’. He found himself ‘wondering how those who seemed capable of so keen

³⁶ Gorn, *The Manly Art*, p. 142.

³⁷ Margaret S. Creighton, *Dogwatch and Liberty Days: Seafaring Life in the Nineteenth Century* (Salem, 1982), p. 61.

enjoyment of home pleasures, could have strayed away so many years'.³⁸ Bachelorhood amongst sailors, then, appears to be a result of the isolation of seafaring labour, rather than a conscious choice made by the seafaring man.

Perhaps the biggest barrier to placing Jack into one of these categories – or indeed, a mix of all three – though, is the fact that the martial, sporting, or bachelorhood identities were defined in opposition to a value system that sailors had very little contact with. Restrained manhood and its opposites were all practiced on land by men with easy access to the spaces and institutions (homes and churches; taverns and gambling houses) that helped define their masculine identity. Sailors, spending most of their time at sea, remained some way removed from such sites. Rather than place them beyond redemption, though, this made sailors, in the minds of the women of the LSFS, ripe for reforming. It also made them a target for the press, who were tired of sailors' rowdy and destructive behaviour when ashore in the Republic's port cities and towns.

But this anti-domestic order amongst the maritime class had larger implications than questionable behaviour in the Republic's many port towns and cities. It had far-reaching, international, and decidedly political consequences, too. Rouleau's study of nineteenth century marine commerce points out that American sailors overseas often became foreigners' archetypal 'American'; he terms seamen 'nonstate actors'. That sailors were brash, intemperate, often violent, and irreligious made this a problem for American missionaries, emissaries, diplomats, and government officials.³⁹ Indeed, in one such example, an 1852 riot in Honolulu involving American seamen that lasted three days undermined efforts to annex Hawaii. Because of the sailors' actions and the resultant perception the Pacific Island formed

³⁸ Charles Nordhoff, *Nine Years A Sailor: Being Sketches of Personal Experience in the United States Naval Service, The American and British Merchant Marine, and The Whaling Service* (Cincinnati, 1866), pp. 280 – 281

³⁹ Brian Rouleau, *With Sails Whitening Every Sea*, p. 10. For Rouleau's analysis on sailors as a diplomatic problem overseas, see pp. 6 – 8 and esp. chapter 4, pp. 102 – 133.

of Americans at large, its monarchy lent closer to Britain, and later to Japan, as major international allies.⁴⁰

In the Republic, a recurring theme in news reports about sailors ashore in port cities and towns centred around alcohol consumption. These reports were usually coupled with displays of violence, largely against the proprietors of boarding houses or saloons. When interpersonal violence was not directly involved, stories of drunk sailors served to depict them in a foolish, almost childlike manner. One recurring event in newspapers of port cities and towns told of sailors who had gotten drunk and fallen overboard. Sometimes, the unfortunate mariners were found drowned in the morning. Other times, they needed to be rescued, usually by a ‘brave’ man, or a ‘gentleman’, whose bravery and sobriety was juxtaposed to that of the rowdy seaman.⁴¹

Other examples of foolishness amongst sailors caused by their intemperance appeared, too. The veracity of these reports is questionable, especially given they appeared most often in the temperance press, but they nonetheless captured a widely shared stereotype. One example told of a group of sailors who heard a storm outside the saloon they were ‘carousing’ in and ‘became so fully persuaded that they were on board a ship and in danger of shipwreck, that they threw all the furniture out of the windows, under the idea that they were lightening the ship’.⁴² *The Liberator*, which interwove calls for temperance into its better known agitation for abolition, reported the incident of ‘a drunken sailor’ on horseback in the street ‘with an irresistible

⁴⁰ Rouleau, *With Sails Whitening Every Sea*, p. 103. Hawaii became the 50th and last state to join the Union on 21st August 1859. With a different emphasis, work on the eighteenth century has emphasised the tumultuous character of mariners. See Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (London, 2001).

⁴¹ For examples of when sailors died after jumping or falling overboard whilst their ship was in port, see ‘City Intelligence’, *New York Herald*, volume XI, number 346, 16 December 1845, p. 2; ‘A Sailor Drowned’, *New York Daily Tribune*, volume XVII, issue 5100, 25 August 1857, p. 7. For examples of rescue by ‘brave’ and ‘gentlemanly’ citizens, see ‘News Items’, *The Columbian Fountain*, volume I, number 130, 18 May 1846, p. 2; ‘Almost Drowned’, *The Daily Dispatch*, volume IV, number 196, 9 June 1854, p. 1; ‘A Rescue From Drowning’, *New York Herald*, issue no. 6888, 7 July 1855, p. 4. In each of these examples, all the overboard sailors were said to have been drinking or in a drunken state at the time.

⁴² ‘Drunken Vagaries’, *South Carolina Temperance Advocate*, volume 2, issue 47, 27 May 1841, p. 1.

propensity to pitch forward...to the complete sacrifice of all horsemanship'. Having fallen from his mount, the intoxicated sailor was reportedly too drunk to figure out why and 'swore that the fore legs of his steed must be shorter than the hind, and actually stopped and *measured* them', the paper announced incredulously, to a presumably amused public.⁴³ Whether these stories and others like them are true, works of fantasy, or largely embellished, is of less significance to their continual appearance in newspapers across the country. Sailors' regular enjoyment of alcohol was antithetical to the developing domestic value system that was beginning to take hold across the Republic in the 1840s. The apparent ridicule of sailors whilst under the influence of alcohol stigmatised their behaviour and reinforced 'correct' values of self-control and temperance whilst also serving to paint the sailor ashore as 'the other' and a problem for cities to contend with.

When not infantilising the sailor, newspapers focused on the violence that seemed to readily partner their heavy drinking. According to papers, the two were intimately connected in the lives of marine men. In 1826, four sailors arrived at a port in Brooklyn, and 'after becoming intoxicated, became very abusive and turbulent at a public house...finally stabbing the proprietor in the arm'.⁴⁴ In 1831, a paper published in Washington D.C. reported on an affray that occurred between sailors of the US ship *Vincennes* and some of the local citizens in Florida territory. Having come ashore on liberty, the seamen were intoxicated and 'made an attack on some young men near the Catholic Chapel, who were assembling there for the Services of the afternoon'. Christopher Pearl, one of the sailors, was stabbed during the affray and died of his wounds shortly afterwards. The paper 'deeply lamented' the matter as the 'first serious dispute between the citizens and seamen', suggesting that if sailors continued to arrive in port, further serious disputes were surely to be expected.⁴⁵ Reporting on instances of sailor

⁴³ 'Items', *The Liberator*, volume 11, issue 8, 19 February 1841, p. 4. Italics in the original.

⁴⁴ Untitled article, *American Watchman and Delaware Advertiser*, volume V, number 514, 22 December 1826, p. 3.

⁴⁵ 'Alexandria, DC', *Phenix Gazette*, volume VII, number 1802, 19 May 1831, p. 3.

violence in far off cities was not uncommon, either. In Iowa – hardly a hotbed of maritime activity – one paper nonetheless carried a story of three drunk mariners in Chicago, detailing their gruesome injuries.⁴⁶ Reports of a brawl inside a San Franciscan Sailors' Boarding House made news in West Virginia, too. '[A] fracas among the sailors at City Front this morning resulted in several being wounded, one losing a hand and one nearly losing his life'.⁴⁷

America's relentless nineteenth-century march westward meant that before long, stories of sailors' intemperance, violence, and rowdiness were to be found in California, too. In 1846, California's first U.S. newspaper regretted that large amounts of liquor had been sold to sailors. 'Quite a number have been found intoxicated, noisy and turbulent', they bemoaned.⁴⁸ In 1854, 'some ten or twelve half-drunken sailors and a party of quarrymen...merged into a desperate and bloody fight' in Sacramento.⁴⁹ The story made it abundantly clear that the sailors had been the chief aggressors, and had even returned for a second round, in which a reportedly innocent bystander was stabbed. In 1866, a sailor named George Welch was 'on a spree' and 'crazy with liquor' in San Francisco when a police officer tried to arrest him. The sailor stabbed the police officer in the chest and the following morning could not remember the event at all.⁵⁰ Just three years later an alliance between church and male reformers saw the creation of the Marine Temperance Society which aimed to make sailors 'sober men'.⁵¹ It had plenty of work to do.

And so, amongst the Republic's press at least, the premier problem with the nation's marine class was an obvious one: they came ashore, drank heavily, and got involved in brawls and disagreements, or else destroyed property and generally made a nuisance of themselves.⁵²

⁴⁶ Untitled article, *Muscatine Journal*, volume V, number 37, 10 February 1854, p. 2.

⁴⁷ 'Sunday Night's Dispatches by the Cable – From San Francisco', *The Wheeling Daily Register*, volume 6, number 142, 15 June 1868, p. 4.

⁴⁸ 'Disorder', *Californian*, volume 1, number 3, 29 August 1846, p. 2.

⁴⁹ 'Serious Affray', *Sacramento Daily Union*, volume 7, number 1011, 20 June 1854, p. 2.

⁵⁰ 'A Police Officer Stabbed by a Drunken Sailor', *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 22, issue 78, 9 July 1866 p. 5.

⁵¹ 'The Marine Temperance Society', *San Francisco Examiner*, volume 8, number 75, 31 March 1869, p. 3.

⁵² Labour disputes were another feature of waterfront life. See, for example, the report of a crew in San Francisco striking against their ship and fleeing into the city in 'Seamen and Shipmasters', *The Sacramento Bee*, volume 2, number 302, 22 January 1858, p. 2.

Those interested in sailor reform, however, saw a far more complex and nuanced set of factors that influenced the immorality of the marine class, and they were at pains to ensure that others during the nineteenth century were aware of them, so as not to write off this valuable class of men as irredeemable.

Homeless on the High Seas

Maritime reformers looked to show that the absence of home influence accounted for the immoral behaviour of the marine class, rather than any natural proclivity for vice among seafaring men. From the foundation of the first benevolent sailor societies on the East coast, reformers rejected the idea that Jack was naturally immoral and pointed instead to those mitigating circumstances that they believed explained the sailor's degraded life. The ASFS laid down this challenge to the orthodoxy in one of its early publications. Sailors, they maintained, were victims, not villains. They were:

taught the love of strong drink by daily rations of 'grog' at sea, instructed in the language of profaneness by the example of their officers, led into temptation and pollution by landlords at home, neglected by the community at large, [and] deprived for large portions of the year of all the hallowed influences of the sanctuary, the Sabbath, and the domestic circle

Given their subjection to such anti-domestic influences, the ASFS piece concluded, 'who can wonder that the sailor, having like passions with other men, should become that degraded outcast which we often see him to be in our seaports?'⁵³ The preeminent problem reformers saw in the life of seamen, indeed, was his separation from a good home and family. The absence

⁵³ ASFS, *The Sailor's Magazine and Naval Journal* (New York, 1839), p. 107.

of a cathartic domestic sphere, reformers felt, left the sailor adrift, with neither an anchor to land nor civilized society. Instead of a nourishing home life, sailors lived on ships, sometimes for months on end, and often under brutal and immoral regimes.

Here, the sailors who came ashore at San Francisco were subtly different to the miners who had caused so much angst in the Gold Rush. At the glance, the two communities look strikingly similar. Both consisted of large groups of transient men who bore more of the traits of the martial masculine archetype than its restrained, domestic equivalent. Beneath these important similarities, however, there were some key differences between the two that framed their behaviour differently in the minds of reformers. Many of the miners who troubled Farnham and her contemporaries had families and homes in the East before their departure for California in 1848 and '49. They wilfully left behind wives and children, or if still young and unmarried, as many early pioneers were, stepped away from the safety and protection of home and their mother's guiding influence. Plenty of these pioneers left secure middle-class employment: lawyers, doctors, and successful merchants departed *en masse* in search of gold.⁵⁴ In Farnham's eyes, this made their swift abandonment of middle-class values even more problematic, raising as it did the spectre of degeneration in California's unpromising environment. The path to sin here was a route freely taken. The miners knew how to live virtuously, but as soon as they had left the watchful eyes of mothers, sisters, and wives, they had abandoned those values in pursuit of Mammon.

In contrast, maritime reformers argued, sailors had never enjoyed a good home life with its associated domestic comforts. They had not given up their respectable middle-class office jobs to choose adventure on the oceans. They were not leaving behind their wives and children

⁵⁴ See Malcolm J. Rohrbough, *Days of Gold: The Californian Gold Rush and the American Nation* (Berkeley, 1997), p. 4. In his monograph, Brian Roberts rejects the idea that early migrants to California were wild and rough pioneers, but instead largely middle-class men, or young men well on their way to becoming middle-class. Brian Roberts, *American Alchemy: The California Gold Rush and Middle-class Culture* (Chapel Hill, 2000). See also Soulé, *Annals*, p. 246.

with speculative promises of riches. Few, if any, laboured under the delusion that seafaring offered a path to extravagant wealth. Large numbers of sailors joined the merchant marine as young men, some even as boys, and so a sizable portion of the marine class had either long since left the nurturing republican environment of the Eastern home or never been subject to its beneficent influences at all. Their homelessness was not a reversion but the norm. A hymn, titled *Pity the Seamen*, printed as a pamphlet for sailors at sea characterised this separation from family perfectly:

O think on the Sailor toss'd on the billow!
Afar from the home of his childhood and youth;
No mother to watch o'er his sleep-broken pillow,
No father to council, no sister to sooth.⁵⁵

This was, according to maritime reformers, the chief issue facing the sailor. Separation from the domestic sphere isolated seafarers from the rest of society and left them dependent on people the reformers were convinced did not have the sailor's best interests at heart. To the public, the lady managers of the LSFS portrayed sailors' lack of home and family as pitiable and tugged at the heartstrings of potential donors. 'You would be astonished to hear, as *we have*', they informed their audience a few years after their founding, 'how little many of these [sailors] know of their own early years...there was no mother, sister, or friend to rejoice when they returned to port, or weep if they were never heard from more'.⁵⁶

The sailor's evisceration from home life became a regular feature in sentimental reform literature. 'What man is there,' one author wrote in a didactic domestic handbook from 1835, 'who cannot trace the origin of many of the best maxims of his life to the lips of her who gave

⁵⁵ Phineas Stowe, *Ocean Melodies, and Seamen's Companion: A Collection of Hymns and Music: for the use of Bethels, Chaplains of the Navy, and Private Devotion of Mariners*, (Boston, 1849), p. 121.

⁵⁶ LSFS, *Ninth Annual Report*, pp. 7 – 8.

him birth?’⁵⁷ William Taylor, San Francisco’s most prominent Methodist preacher during its early years and a strong supporter of sailor reform, likened adult sailors to orphan children. ‘The little orphan boy’, he wrote of young mariners, ‘was put aboard ship at the age of five years, and educated in the forecandle, under the tuition of the regularly graduated tars of the old school’. As a result, the sailor’s character bore ‘not one molding touch of a mother’s prayers or councils,’ nor, he regretfully added, ‘the refinements of home circles’.⁵⁸ With ship life providing a poor surrogate for republican motherhood, amoral sailors would continue to come ashore and wreak havoc. Thus, reform societies felt that without a good home to stay in when on land, nothing could break the cycle of ‘education’ which saw all the sailor’s worst habits passed down to the next generation of seamen.

Indeed, one sailor, Horace Lane, explicitly justified reformers’ fears in a memoir that depicted his childhood experiences in a brutalising environment. Lane left home aged eight and worked aboard a ship destined for the West Indies at only ten years old. The first morning after departing New York, the young Lane was hit around the head by an officer and was called the sailor’s favourite refrain – a ‘d---d young son of a b---h’.⁵⁹ He quickly picked up lessons on how to behave. Upon returning to New York, Lane went with the other young crewmates to a boarding house ‘where each one of us was not backward in exhibiting our bravado...and, monkey like, all that we had heard or seen practised by the sailors, we thought it becoming in us to say and do’.⁶⁰ Lane also recounted borrowing money from his captain – an upstanding paternal influence in his memoir – to buy clothes, which he then spent on a good time, hiring

⁵⁷ S. C. Thatcher, ‘Influence of the Female Character’, in Ebenezer Bailey ed., *The Young Ladies’ Class Book: a selection of lessons for reading, in prose and verse* (Boston, 1835), p. 166.

⁵⁸ William Taylor, *Seven Years’ Street Preaching in San Francisco, California; embracing incidents, triumphant death scenes, etc.* (New York, 1856), p. 223.

⁵⁹ Horace Lane, *The Wandering Boy, Careless Sailor, and Result of Inconsideration: A True Narrative* (Skaneateles, NY, 1839), p. 21. Lane, like most sailors of the nineteenth century, was uncomfortable spelling out profanities out in his memoir. The quote is given as it appeared in his memoir.

⁶⁰ Lane, *Wandering Boy*, p. 27.

horses and going to taverns with other young deck hands.⁶¹ Within two years of going to sea, then, Lane had learned vice.

Stories like Lane's exemplified the fears reformers had about the male community that made up the seafaring class: if raised and taught by immoral men, the youthful sailor will only ever learn immorality himself. George Little realised this as he was departing on his maiden voyage as a young man: 'I found that I was about to leave friends, and all the social comforts of home', he wrote, 'to mix with a society of men, who, as I had heard, were of the very worst habits and character, and confine myself to the narrow limits of a ship's deck for months'.⁶²

The absence of virtuous female influence in young sailors was compounded by a transient life that deprived seafarers of the material comforts of home. Continually moving from port to port, marine men – much like the itinerant residents of early San Francisco – had no permanent ties to place whilst in the service. Thomas V. Sullivan, an affiliate of the ASFS, believed that this was a damaging way to live. 'The best illustration that can be furnished on the sailor's capacity for domestic life', he wrote 'is found in the superior condition of seamen sailing out of our fishing ports, and the portion of native seamen employed in the coasting trade'. What, he asked, explained such superiority? 'Simply because they have homes on shore, and many of them wives and families'.⁶³ This was something the LSFS focused on when they outlined the sailors condition in California's growing metropolis too. 'He changes his ship, his destination, his master, and messmates, almost every voyage,' the organization noted in 1865. 'In such circumstances anything like friendship or wholesome, genial influence from society is impossible'.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Lane, *Wandering Boy*, p. 25.

⁶² Little, *Life on the Ocean*, p. 31.

⁶³ Thomas V. Sullivan, *Scarcity of Seamen* (Boston, 1854), p. 12.

⁶⁴ LSFS, *Ninth Annual Report of the Ladies' Seamen's Friend Society, of the Port of San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1865), p. 7.

An absence of home influence not only eroded the sailor's moral fibre, reformers argued, but also left him trapped in a wider net of exploitation. The LSFS and other marine reform societies believed sailors' treatment at the hands of captains, officers, landlords, and shipping officers degraded the seafarer further. Life on the ships, where sailors spent most of their time, could be harsh. Even *The Liberator*, which called for the immediate abolition of chattel slavery, nevertheless claimed that seamen were worse off than those who were enslaved. '[T]he men who sail American vessels, under American officers, with the American flag flying over their head', it declared, 'are the most mauled, maimed, lashed, gashed, cut up, and every way tortured and brutalized'. They were so used to 'being kicked, and cuffed, and knocked down' by those who were supposed to care for them, that 'all self-respect, all sense of shame, all aspiration to the good opinion of others' had been lost.⁶⁵

The San Francisco preacher William Taylor was given a first-hand account by a young sailor of how the physical violence and poor treatment aboard ships served to destroy his constitution. He spoke to a young sailor who claimed that once his ship left port, the captain had flogged him thrice daily. Such a violent experience turned him into a 'wild, drinking boy'.⁶⁶ The city's *Bulletin* thought this poor treatment did more than just humiliate mariners, too: 'A careful observation leads to the conclusion that nine-tenths of all the acts of violence committed by sailors are occasioned by brutal treatment from their superiors'.⁶⁷

Aside from sailors' physical treatment aboard ships, the very act of seafaring was believed to be so monotonous that it damaged the sailor. Margaret Creighton's study of seamen's journals found that mariners had two main aims on liberty days ashore: 'to make up for past deprivations and to stockpile experiences for the future'.⁶⁸ Aside from partly explaining rowdy mariner behaviour on land, such aspirations hinted at the need for something to occupy the

⁶⁵ 'Seamen and Their Friends', *The Liberator*, volume 29, issue 20, Friday 20 May 1859, p. 4.

⁶⁶ Taylor, *Seven Years*, p. 192.

⁶⁷ 'Local Matters', *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 21, issue 100, 3 February 1866, p. 3.

⁶⁸ Creighton, *Dogwatch and Liberty Days*, p. 60.

mind whilst at sea. The boredom of ‘sea life,’ Nordhoff wrote of one sailor he met, had cost him ‘those powers of comparison and observation, without which one need not go traveling’.⁶⁹ San Francisco’s marine reformers shared similar concerns as they urged their audience to imagine the seafarer’s plight. ‘[A]float, he is alone amid a crowd of strangers in his ocean home’, the LSFS wrote of the sailor. ‘[H]is voyage is generally dreamy and monotonous, and but for occasional storms, and the art of always being busy it would be intolerable’. At sea, he was ‘generally [deprived] of books, amusement or recreation of any kind, and too often without the education which would enable him to enjoy books, if he possessed them’.⁷⁰ Part of the LSFS’s design, then, was to ennoble the sailor, giving him the capacity to learn about and engage with the issues of the day. Through female guidance and education, they hoped he would not only realise the futility of a vice-ridden life, but also develop an interest or passion, which could occupy his mind while afloat.

The physical conditions in which sailors lived on ships were seen as being far from ideal, too. In a sermon to the ASFS, Reverend Samuel Herrick outlined the sailor’s lot. They had:

[N]o homes but their hammocks, with no Sabbath-rest breaking for them the monotony of the year, with no cessation of care, and no domestic retreat, and no unbroken repose when the night stops the plow, the shuttle, the hammer upon the land, – with no church-fellowship and no place of social prayer.⁷¹

Herrick’s ideal here, some four decades on, bore similarities to Farnham’s design for California: sailors, like miners, needed true women, homes that provided a haven from work, and the wider support of Christian networks.

⁶⁹ Nordhoff, *Nine Years*, pp. 233 – 234.

⁷⁰ LSFS, *Ninth Annual Report*, p. 7.

⁷¹ Rev. Samuel E. Herrick, *Christ for the Sailor – the Sailor for Christ; a discourse before the American Seamen’s Friend Society, at its fifty-sixth anniversary* (New York, 1884), p. 11.

Unfortunately, when sailors came ashore at San Francisco, they found nothing of the kind. Indeed, if the handling sailors received aboard ships caused concern, then their treatment at the hands of unscrupulous boarding house landlords and their employees was equally worrying to the women of the LSFS and their allies. ‘They are strangers in most places they go’, one concerned citizen wrote of sailors in an open letter to a mid-century newspaper, ‘and instead of being met by real friends, they are met with open arms by their most deadly enemies’.⁷² These deadly enemies, according to the letter and the LSFS, were made up of boarding house landlords, saloon owners, and shipping officers, as well as coercive runners and longboat men employed by all three. Reformers claimed they took advantage of the sailor for their own profit. Referred to as landlordism by the lady managers, the women of the society targeted the act known colloquially as *Shanghaiing* – the process of drugging seamen or plying them with alcohol until insensible, signing them up for a voyage, and collecting a hefty percentage of the advance wage paid to seamen for themselves.

The term *Shanghaiing* originated in California.⁷³ During the height of the gold fever across the recently annexed territory, men of all professions left their employment to join the thousands of other hopefuls seeking riches.⁷⁴ Consequently, any ship that was not destined for a swift return journey to California became extremely hard to crew: sailors, just like lawyers, doctors, merchants, and labourers, did not want to miss out on the mining boom. Voyages to Shanghai especially therefore became almost impossible to crew from San Francisco. Global shipping passages dictated that to return to California from Shanghai, mariners would need to complete a trip around the globe rather than return immediately across the Pacific. Most were not willing to spend this long away from the gold fields. Thus, a ‘whole system of drugging,

⁷² ‘Can Sailors be Reformed?’, *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, volume 19, issue 26, 31 June 1852, p. 2.

⁷³ Various spellings of *Shanghaiing* exist in nineteenth-century documents. This work will use ‘*Shanghaiing*’ unless quoting directly from contemporary material.

⁷⁴ See Rohrbough, *Days of Gold*, p. 16. For a contemporary account, see B. E. Lloyd, *Lights and Shades of San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1876), p. 19.

extortion, and cruelty' emerged on San Francisco's waterfront.⁷⁵ Numerous reports and memoirs, as well as loud and persistent outrage from marine reformers, suggest that the practice was indeed endemic.⁷⁶ Coercing seamen to fill a ship's crew had long been practiced, but the phenomenon took on new meaning in Gold Rush California. Taylor claimed San Francisco had twenty-three separate *shanghaiing* fraternities established on the waterfront.⁷⁷ He told an audience in the city the secret motto of these fraternities was 'get all the sailors' money, honestly if most convenient, but get it'.⁷⁸

Shanghaiing worked in the following way: longboat men would board ships as soon as they dropped anchor, or runners would meet sailors as they disembarked.⁷⁹ They would promise the weary seamen warm meals, comfortable and clean lodgings, and often assure the sailors that he could secure employment on land for them, claiming that men were making a hundred dollars a month in the city. The sailors were taken to a boarding house and treated to a party, apparently out of kindness by the landlord. Once they were thoroughly intoxicated, the landlord would then force – or trick – the sailors into signing shipping forms, before dumping them aboard their new ship mere hours after coming ashore, collecting a hefty wedge of the advanced wages paid to the swindled sailor in the process. Taylor claimed that to make the seamen 'insensible as a log', a dangerous mixture of brandy, whiskey, gin, and opium was served in the boarding houses. The few who declined alcohol were offered cigars laced with 'opium and other poisons...equal to a dose of chloroform'. If the landlord could not get the sailor to sign any shipping articles, then the 'free' drinks, food, and accommodation (plus, Taylor suspected, anything else the landlord thought of adding to the bill) were charged to the

⁷⁵ Taylor, *Seven Years*, p. 237.

⁷⁶ For a selection of examples of coercing seamen on to ships, see J. Grey Jewell, *Among Our Sailors* (New York, 1874). See especially pp. 96 – 101, 108 – 113. See also Taylor, *Seven Years*, pp. 231 – 233; Lane, *The Wandering Boy*, p. 111. For discussion of *Shanghaiing* in a San Francisco newspaper, see 'The Case of Shanghaiing a Sailor', *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 6, issue 59, 16 June 1858, p. 2.

⁷⁷ Taylor, *Seven Years*, p. 225.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 225.

⁷⁹ An example of this is found in 'Trouble with Sailor Boarding House Runners', *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 32, issue 123, 30 August 1871, p. 3.

sailor's account so that he had no choice but to ship and pay large sums of his advance wage to settle his debt.⁸⁰ Often, the sailor had no recourse: by accepting the original offer to come ashore with the runner, he had engaged in desertion or breached his contract.

Despite the horrors stemming from *Shanghaiing*, the women of the LSFS were careful not to be too openly critical of the city's businessmen, though their disgust crept through in places. To do so risked moving from the legitimate realm of moral reform into the murkier business for women of openly contesting the organization of political and economic life. Thus, they tended to cast *Shanghaiing* as a rogue enterprise rather than a systemic feature of the maritime labour market. In justifying the need for a Sailors' Home, for example, the women declared that the establishment of one such home 'conflicts with no legitimate branch of industry, honestly pursued'.⁸¹ But this proved a fine line to tread and at points the LSFS identified underlying problems that demanded political attention.

Criticism of the waterfront economy, though generally couched in moral terms that emphasised the susceptibility of helpless mariners to malevolent influence, thus could develop into a wider attack on the likes of landlords. '[I]f he lands in a so called Christian country,' the LSFS wrote of the sailor, 'just think of the population that gather around him'. They begged the public to consider 'his life for months previously' aboard the ship which 'combined with his mental and moral training' left him vulnerable and open to exploitation. With no true friends for company, and no 'rational' interests to keep him busy, 'he is let loose among strangers with idle hours to spend, and an idle purse to empty, and at once surrounded by the basest of the population, and dragged alas! not unwillingly to the vilest dens of dissipation, there to be robbed and ruined'.⁸²

⁸⁰ Taylor, *Seven Years*, pp. 219 – 242, p. 231.

⁸¹ LSFS, *Ninth Annual Report*, p. 5.

⁸² *Ibid*, p. 7.

Boarding houses – the most likely places for sailors without a ship to find shelter – came under particularly withering attack from the LSFS and other reformers. Such lodgings, which had roots in the early nineteenth century and generally accommodated men in separate rooms but with shared facilities, had initially been welcomed for the vital service they provided in a transient republic. They provided a bed for new arrivals in a city, and when well run, incubated newcomers from the ‘perils of urban life’ whilst simultaneously providing the ‘discipline necessary for American urban-industrial development’.⁸³ Early boarding houses had sought to emulate the nascent model of the American family home. They provided shared meals and a space for civilized interaction among boarders. They were often stratified by class and even occupation, thereby combatting ‘the potential moral and social problems of undisciplined peer-group life’.⁸⁴ They were certainly not intended to house immoral single men and ‘fallen’ women under the same roof.

By the mid-nineteenth century, however, boarding houses had come to be seen as incompatible with the cult of domesticity. As they transformed into purely business ventures reformers turned against them. Managers of lodgings no longer offered meals and places to socialise; instead, they provided just a room, often shared, for rent. Boarders were forced to eat in local restaurants and socialise in cafes, bars, and saloons.⁸⁵ The relaxation of boarding house discipline also caused unease. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the lodgings ‘threw together promiscuous assortments of men and women, sheltering them in close and dangerous proximity’.⁸⁶ If the private family home encapsulated the middle-class ideals of a domestic society, boarding houses in the second half of the century represented – much like the ship – an anti-domestic order.

⁸³ Mark Peel, ‘On the Margins: Lodgings and Boarders in Boston, 1860 – 1900’, *The Journal of American History* 72 (March 1986), pp. 813 – 834, p. 814.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 814.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 814.

⁸⁶ Wendy Gamber, *The Boardinghouse in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore, 2007), p. 102.

Contemporary commentators, from the poet Walt Whitman to the domestic author Sarah Josepha Hale, publicly denounced the widespread boarding house culture that had spread in the nation's metropolitan areas.⁸⁷ Thomas Butler Gunn's *Physiology of New York Boarding Houses*, published in 1857, presents one of the most biting examples.⁸⁸ Satirical and humorous, chapters of the book included 'The Dirty Boarding-House'; 'The Mean Boarding-House'; 'The Boarding-House Where the Landlady Drinks'; 'The Boarding-House Where You're Expected to Make Love to the Landlady'; and 'The Fashionable Boarding-House Where You Don't Get Enough to Eat'. In fact, so prevalent were unsatisfactory boarding-houses that Gunn included a later chapter titled 'Another Mean Boarding House'. Perhaps the most telling 'chapter', though, was 'The Boarding-House Which Gives Satisfaction to Every Body'. This chapter was left entirely blank of content. Though comic effect certainly drove Gunn's inclusion of this non-chapter, the point remains salient: no boarding house, most mid-nineteenth-century commentators believed, could provide a healthy home-like environment.⁸⁹

Despite such concerns, the ladies of the LSFS were not necessarily against private boarding for sailors, though they did decry the management and moral order of waterfront operations in San Francisco. For the ladies, boarding houses and boarding house landlords were not inherently bad. 'It is well known that many men have entered into that business with the purest intentions', they conceded. Most landlords in the business were 'ruined by the vices of their boarders' or were 'forced to take advantage' of their clients. They no doubt alluded here to the practice of *Shanghaiing*, but the LSFS also implied the sale of alcohol, too, which became a common feature of the establishments frequented by Jack.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Walt Whitman's criticism is found in 'New York Dissected', *Life Illustrated*, volume II, number 12, 19 July 1856, p. 93. Hale's novel *Boarding Out* was essentially a one-hundred-and-thirty-page castigation of boarding houses, resulting in the death of a young child due to the insalubrious conditions boarding houses offered. See Sarah Josepha Hale, *Boarding Out: A Tale of Domestic Life* (New York, 1846).

⁸⁸ Thomas Butler Gunn, *The Physiology of New York Boarding Houses* (New York, 1857).

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, contents pages.

⁹⁰ LSFS, *Ninth Annual Report*, p. 5.

These, then, were the problems marine reformers confronted. Sailors moved from the brutalising environment of the ship to the degrading and exploitative conditions on shore. At no point were they subject to the soothing domestic influences upon which civilization rested. Virtually homeless, their disorderly behaviour became possible to explain, even if it remained hard to excuse. The LSFS believed that only the establishment of a benevolent Sailors' Home in San Francisco could address such issues. According to the lady managers, 'seamen had to be raised and fitted by patient judicious effort, to be qualified for boarding in private houses'. A well-run institution, geared towards providing the home life sailors lacked, would have effects that reverberated well beyond its walls. Thus, LSFS reformers claimed that one of the most 'prominent testimonies' of the 'efficiency' of Sailors' Homes was that once established in a town or city for a few years, 'private boarding-houses of good character gradually grow up around them'. Referring to the work of Sailors' Homes as being 'progressive in character', the women demonstrated their long-term ambitions for the society and the impact they hoped they would have on the wider city.⁹¹

Domesticating the Sailor

The LSFS was formed with the express resolve of countering these perceived problems seamen faced with the hope of transforming the anti-domestic orders that governed marine life to an alternative defined by domestic order. To do this, the LSFS would create a Sailors' Home: one that would provide the adrift mariner with a safe and secure place he could rest, emerging with the renewed moral fibre required to weather the storms of the wider metropolis and his oceanic workplace. In short, the LSFS's labour would play its part in civilizing the sailor, and with it the city.

⁹¹ LSFS, *Ninth Annual Report*, p. 6.

The San Francisco Sailors' Home would be controlled by a female board of managers – generally referred to as 'lady managers' – and would house arriving marine men, shielding them from the immorality of the waterfront and its corrupt businessmen.⁹² Inside the Home, sailors would have access to clean and spacious bedrooms, ample room to hang clothing, and domestically ordered spaces suitable for leisure, dining, reading, and religious edification.

The Sailors' Home proved to be popular amongst arriving mariners. Even the temporary site they inhabited initially – deemed an unsuitable location and building for the reform of the sailors – was used extensively. In just its second year, the temporary Home hosted over 1200 men. In the early years, arrivals averaged around 100 boarders per month.⁹³ Records from a surviving register used by the ladies to record arrivals suggest Jack stayed on average between six and 10 nights at the Home.⁹⁴ Though the women worked to create the best Home they could, they nonetheless appeared keen to limit the time sailors were idle and unoccupied.⁹⁵ Partly, this was to do with the seemingly endless distractions San Francisco had to offer its visitors, but may have also been related to the rise of the producer ethic, which glorified those 'whose daily lives required exertion and strain'.⁹⁶

By the end of the ninth year of operation, in 1865, the ladies reported that they have given room to just shy of 11,000 sailors.⁹⁷ The new Home they would move to was bigger and projected an image of both security and grandeur.⁹⁸ One report reckoned it was 'capable of

⁹² Examples of the term 'lady managers' being used include 'Orphan Asylum', *Daily Alta California*, volume 6, number 352, 20 May 1855, p. 2; M. A. Knights, 'Secretary's Report' in *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Ladies' Seamen's Friend Society of the Port of San Francisco, 1880* (San Francisco, 1880), p. 8.

⁹³ There were 38 arrivals in February 1857; November 1857 saw 93 arrivals; 139 arrivals in April 1858; and 133 arrivals in March 1859. See Sailors' Home Register, MS 1862, California Historical Society.

⁹⁴ The register shows some stayed just the one night, where others might stay for up to a month. See Sailors' Home Register, MS 1862, California Historical Society.

⁹⁵ They encouraged the men to quickly pick another ship and get back to work and regularly posted adverts for soon-to-depart ships in the Home. See 'The Sailors' Home', *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 40, issue 141, 21 September 1875, p. 3.

⁹⁶ For more on the producer ethic, see Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (Ithaca, 1998). Quote from p. 13.

⁹⁷ LSFS, *Ninth Annual Report*, p. 5; Mary Ann Irwin, "'Going About and Doing Good": The Lady Managers of San Francisco, 1850 – 1880', in Robert W. Cherny, Mary Ann Irwin, and Ann M. Wilson, *California Women and Politics: From the Gold Rush to the Great Depression* (Lincoln, 2011), pp. 27 – 58, p. 37.

⁹⁸ See figure 2.

SAILORS' HOME

FOR THE
PORT OF SAN FRANCISCO.



Corner Main and Harrison Streets.

SEAMEN arriving in this Port are informed that the above Home is kept up by the 'LADIES' SEAMEN'S FRIEND SOCIETY," of the Port of San Francisco, California, and is always ready for the reception of Boarders. The Home equals, if not excels, any similar institution in the world, and offers superior inducements to Seamen, having well ventilated Bed Rooms, good Beds, Bath-Rooms, large Library and Reading-rooms, well supplied with books, papers and periodicals. Good Board and every facility for shipping. Sailors are cautioned against parties representing themselves as runners for the Home or using the name "Sailors' Home" for the purpose of enticing them to other Houses.

Seamen wishing to have their earnings sent to their friends in any part of the world, can rely on having such matters safely attended to.

D. SWANNACK, Superintendent.

Figure 2 – An LSFS advertisement placed in every annual report and around San Francisco's port after the acquisition of the U.S Marine Hospital to entice sailors to the Home. The building presented a formidable and imposing appearance, and certainly would have conveyed the idea of protection for the seamen who wanted it. The gentlemen – some with top hats and canes, all apparently smartly dressed – seen out the front of the building suggest an idea of calmness and civility. Listed below, the services and amenities of the Home are outlined for the benefit of arriving seamen. Note how the LSFS refer to their institution as a 'Home', but to other lodging facilities as merely a 'House'.

accommodating about 600 persons'.⁹⁹ Another, 'from 400 to 500'.¹⁰⁰ Whilst these estimates appear roughly accurate for a building that was once a large hospital, it appeared the LSFS were never close to achieving this many residents at one time. The 1879 annual report, three years after moving to the new location, reported 494 boarders across the year. In 1880, it was 451 across eight months.¹⁰¹ Perhaps this lull in boarders was due to the new location: arriving sailors did not know where the benevolent ladies had gone. By 1883, though, the LSFS was back to housing large numbers of sailors and claimed 6,471 men since the new location's opening. That year alone had seen 1,431; the following year 1,732.¹⁰²

Whether characterised as a benevolent society, a charitable organisation, or a reform movement, one thing remains constant: the ideology of domesticity and the centrality of home to that value system. If the LSFS could establish a surrogate home, the reformation of sailors in the port of San Francisco – and, they hoped, beyond – would surely be swift. 'If we would elevate the moral condition of seamen, we must have a place of refuge, where the sea-beaten, toil-worn, shipwrecked mariner may find a shelter and a home', the women explained in the ASFS's nationwide magazine. In their Home, the sailor would be 'surrounded by salutary influences, and mingle in respectable female society, and be recognized as part of the human family'.¹⁰³ As a domestic alternative to the saloons, gambling halls, and boarding houses of San Francisco's waterfront, it would provide sailors with the comforts their land-based countrymen were accustomed to. The Home was therefore intended to be a replica of the middle class, private family home: a surrogate domestic space. Within its walls, moral order would

⁹⁹ 'Sailors' Home', *Sacramento Daily Union*, volume 2, number 145, 10 August 1876, p. 5.

¹⁰⁰ 'A Home for the Sailor', *Pacific Rural Press*, volume 13, number 6, 10 February 1877, p. 89.

¹⁰¹ LSFS, *Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth Annual Reports*, pp. 6, 11.

¹⁰² LSFS, *Twenty-seventh Annual Report*, p. 9; LSFS, *Twenty-eighth Annual Report*, p. 14. 1890 saw 1,769 mariners arrive, and then for the first time in 1892, the society accepted over 2,000 sailors into the home inside a year. See LSFS, *Thirty-fourth Annual Report*, p. 9; LSFS, *Thirty-sixth Annual Report*, p. 7.

¹⁰³ American Seamen's Friend Society, *The Sailors' Magazine and Naval Journal*, vol. 29, no. 3, November 1856 (New York, 1856), p. 93.

prevail. The LSFS's Home would not be a private one like Farnham's, though it was hoped it would play the same civilizing role.

Indeed, such was the power of the institution of the home in the nineteenth century, the lady managers were convinced that their efforts would go a long way to reforming the seamen in their care. Its first and most important role would be to provide a place of protection from the unscrupulous men who took advantage of sailors whilst ashore. In its nurturing confines, the mariner would be shielded from the 'pernicious influences and injustices' perpetrated on him by the city's boarding house landlords, saloon owners, shipping officers, and landsharks. Second, within the home, the sailors would have access to – and would hopefully begin to emulate – a Christian, middle-class lifestyle under the watchful eye of the lady managers and the Home's male superintendent. A well-stocked library and accompanying reading room; a commodious dining room; spacious and clean bedrooms; and regular religious meetings would all contribute to the mariner's reform. The removal of vice from the sailor's life whilst ashore in San Francisco – namely alcohol, gambling, and the company of 'loose' or 'fallen' women – would show the mariner a different and better – in the minds of middle-class reformers – way to live.

And so, for the female Board of Managers, the Home was largely a protective space with designs to reform the mariners through domestic influence, pastimes, and values. For the Home's first male superintendent, James F. Stewart, it certainly needed to be a place of protection and reform, but it also had an additional role to fulfil. Stewart was keen for the sailor to learn how to manage his own affairs: in essence, he was keen to see the sailor grow up. His emphasis was less on the maternal care the women intended to provide to the sailors and more on the restoration of the liberty and self-governance of the mariner. According to Stewart, what was required in San Francisco was

an establishment of sufficient character to inspire confidence, that neither their purse, nor their liberty shall be tampered with; further, that its arrangements and accommodations should be characterised by such a degree of neatness, order, and cleanliness, as would be calculated to inspire self-respect, in the inmates; while the business department should promote their pecuniary interests, by assisting and stimulating them to a provident disposition of their earnings; cultivating habits of economy and prudence; encouraging remittances to parents and relatives; supplying judicious council...and, also affording them every facility for reshipping upon the vessels of their choice.¹⁰⁴

Stewart, like many men in the benevolent sector, emphasised the need for seamen to become upstanding, self-reliant citizens. He advocated for the seafaring men under the care of the LSFS to learn and adhere to the restrained masculinity that so complimented the values of domesticity.

Andrew Jackson Downing – perhaps America’s most influential pioneer of interior and exterior home design, and a key proponent in the mass suburbanisation of the United States in the latter half of the nineteenth century – summarised the prevailing middle-class view of homes in his widely read book on architectural design. ‘[A] good house’, he confidently declared, ‘is a powerful means of civilization’ and the ‘moral influence’ of a good home ‘is more powerful than any mere oral teachings of virtue and morality’.¹⁰⁵ Whatever the key functions of the Home were to each individual associated with the LSFS, they all agreed on that fundamental principle: a good Home in San Francisco would help its marine class adopt the middle-class values of domesticity, refinement, and civility. But to be a good Home, it also needed to be a permanent Home. For twenty years, the women of the LSFS fought against

¹⁰⁴ LSFS, *Ninth Annual Report*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁵ Andrew Jackson Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses; Including Designs for Cottages, Farm-houses, and Villas, With Remarks on Interiors, Furniture, and the Best Modes of Warming and Ventilating* (New York, 1859), pp. v – vi.

legislative roadblocks, a crowded female-led benevolent field, the city's reputation as a wild frontier town, and the long-running apathy and self-interest of leading businessmen.

Establishing a Permanent Sailors' Home

At the beginning of the LSFS's existence, the women rented accommodation on the waterfront for the sum of \$100.00 per month. It was a less-than-perfect location for their benevolent designs. Rented accommodation, on the doorstep of the grog shops and gambling dens that so troubled reformers, was not an ideal position. Nor was the LSFS's tenant status. 'It is desirable that the "Home" building should be owned by the society', the women told the supportive *Alta* when publishing their first annual report.¹⁰⁶ Expending monthly rent on an expensive property near the waterfront further damaged their chances of success. A permanent location was crucial to the ladies' vision for the sailor's reformation.

The resulting twenty-year quest for that permanent location sent the lady managers of the LSFS crashing through the gendered boundaries that governed public and political life in nineteenth-century urban America. Their attempts to secure a permanent location for the Home, like their critique of *Shanghaiing*, brought them into the male-dominated political sphere as they began to lobby legislators. In 1861, the society requested the appropriation of \$10,000 from the state government to help them in establishing their refuge. The request was approved by the Senate but defeated in the House. The defeat came on the back of one member suggesting that the U.S. Marine Hospital in San Francisco already existed for the care of seamen.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ 'The Sailors' Home', *Daily Alta California*, volume 9, number 153, 3 June 1857, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ See 'News of the Morning', *Sacramento Daily Union*, volume 20, number 3097, 1 March 1861, p. 2; 'Charity for the Sailors', *Daily Alta California*, volume 13, number 4137, 14 June 1861, p. 2. The *Sacramento Daily Union* strongly opposed this decision not to award the money and pointed out that the objector had been incorrect in his belief that the U.S. Marine Hospital accepted all sailors.

Showing a stubborn streak for a fledgling society, the LSFS turned down a revised offer of \$5,000, for they had ‘asked for \$10,000, [and] were not willing to take less’.¹⁰⁸

Their failure to secure the requested funds from the state legislature, and their refusal of a lesser amount, meant the women focused all their efforts on persuading San Francisco’s population to donate liberally to their cause. In 1867, this meant giving up the daily running of the rented Home to Captain James Stewart, the Home’s first superintendent, which gave the ladies ‘the opportunity of directing all their energies to building the long needed “Sailors’ Home”’.¹⁰⁹ In 1874, a big fundraising opportunity arose in the form of the Industrial Fair. The lady managers set up a kitchen to feed the Fair’s visitors and laboured tirelessly for eight weeks, ‘more earnestly’, it was said, ‘than many of them were accustomed to do in their own homes’.¹¹⁰ The women managed to raise \$1,800, an amount ‘not as great as the ladies could wish, or perhaps were entitled to expect’.¹¹¹

Around the same time, the society purchased a lot in the city, with the intention of leasing the property out. The rent received would go toward the society’s money pot. It was not, however, smart business. The vast majority of the \$125 rent the property commanded went to paying off the mortgage.¹¹² Thus, once more, the women started down another unexplored avenue with the hope of securing a permanent location. Having tried and failed to win over the state legislature, they turned instead to the federal government for help. They ‘engaged in efforts to secure from the United States government a donation of the old Marine Hospital grounds for the uses of a Sailors’ Home, and measures looking to that end have already been introduced before Congress with some prospect of final success’, the society were pleased to

¹⁰⁸ ‘All About Jack Tar’, *Marysville Daily Appeal*, volume V, number 87, 11 April 1862, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ LSFS, *Report for 1869 – 70 of the Ladies’ Seamen’s Friend Society*, (San Francisco, 1870), p. 5. Captain James Stewart had previously been involved in benevolent work. Specifically, he was elected president of the St. Andrew’s Society, a benevolent group for immigrants from Scotland. See ‘City Items – St. Andrew’s Society’, *Daily Alta California*, volume 15, number 4997, 3 November 1863, p. 1.

¹¹⁰ LSFS, *Report of the Ladies’ Seamen’s Friend Society of the Port of San Francisco for the years 1874, 1875, 1876* (San Francisco, 1876), p. 5.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 5.

¹¹² *Ibid*, p. 4.

report.¹¹³ This was finally a campaign the prominent men of San Francisco could get behind. The *Alta* reported that five thousand businessmen from the city had signed the petition, and the number increased to eight thousand when the support of other marine reform societies were included.¹¹⁴ Despite being wildly above and beyond the original purview of the LSFS's aims, they were able to persuade the federal government to hand over possession of the Marine Hospital to the city and county of San Francisco.¹¹⁵ In turn, the building would be leased to the LSFS at a peppercorn rent of \$1 per year, provided it was used solely as a Sailors' Home under the society's control. The success of this campaign underlines the widespread support ideas of women's influence, the home, and gendered roles within the urban milieu had in the minds of Americans during the second half of the nineteenth century.

The women had displayed shrewd political and business acumen in their acquisition of the old Marine Hospital: being a government building, the property was not liable for taxes of any kind.¹¹⁶ They sold the property they had purchased a few years previously as an investment and combined the funds from the sale with all they had raised through their canvassing of the city. With that money, after twenty laborious years, they would finally begin their work of creating a domestic refuge for sailors arriving in San Francisco.

Furnishing a Christian Home

To best understand the ideal of material comforts the LSFS envisioned for their permanent Sailors' Home, we can look not to what they had, but what the lady managers and their male superintendent referred to as the rented accommodation's 'principal want[s]'.¹¹⁷ The

¹¹³ LSFS, *Report for the years 1874, 1875, 1876*, p. 6.

¹¹⁴ 'Sailors' Home', *Daily Alta California*, volume 28, number 9460, 29 February 1876, p. 1.

¹¹⁵ See 'Sailors' Home', *Sacramento Daily Union*, volume 2, number 145, 10 August 1876, p. 5; 'A Home for the Sailor', *Pacific Rural Press*, volume 13, number 6, 10 February 1877, p. 89; 'Dedication of the Sailors' Home', *Daily Alta California*, volume 29, number 9974, 30 July 1877, p. 1.

¹¹⁶ 'A Home for the Sailor', *Pacific Rural Press*, volume 13, number 6, 10 February 1877, p. 89.

¹¹⁷ LSFS, *Ninth Annual Report*, p. 10.

shortcomings of the rented space illustrate the blueprint for their eventual permanent Home. Superintendent Stewart, whose contributions to the annual reports were almost always more focused on the deficiencies and limitations of the Sailors' Home than (as for the lady managers) the celebration of its successes, gave a frank assessment of these principal wants in 1865. They were all, he claimed, hindering the progress of the Home and the reform of the mariners. His first gripe was with the small and poorly furnished sitting-room the society's early property had. 'The men', he regretfully announced, 'are all huddled in one place'. His concern was a simple one: 'I have no doubt...they could find more convenience, in some of the neighbouring bar-rooms, than what we can, in our limited space afford them'.¹¹⁸

But that limited space restricted more than just the amount of reform the society could achieve – it also limited the number of sailors they could accommodate. One report related a conversation between Stewart and a sailor. 'I've been drunk; got a black eye, a cut face, a night's lodging in the calaboose, and I am now without a dime of my wages', the sailor told Stewart, squarely blaming him for his predicament. Asking how this could possibly be his fault, the sailor told Stewart, 'when I came on shore last Thursday...I came to the Home, and you would not take me in'. Stewart and the ladies blamed this on their inadequately sized Home, claiming over a hundred men were turned away that week.¹¹⁹

Limited space that drove the men into the establishments the society was working so hard to keep them out of threatened the LSFS's mission. The belief that a good, well-ordered, and domestic environment could influence a person's behaviour and morality was a common motif amongst city planners and urban reformers who sought to blame the ills of the nineteenth-century city on the condition of its working-class housing. Termed by historians 'moral environmentalism', and closely tied to ideas about miasma and epidemic disease, it

¹¹⁸ LSFS, *Ninth Annual Report*, p. 10.

¹¹⁹ Annual Report of the Ladies' Seamen's Friend Society, March 1868, PAM 1289j, California Historical Society, pp. 6 – 7.

encapsulated the belief that ‘the natural and built environments exercised a profound tutelary influence on domestic and public life’.¹²⁰ Of course, the lessons from the surrounding environment could be either positive or negative. In the case of sailors in San Francisco, the lessons were decidedly negative given the proximity of the waterfront to immoral temptations. ‘The metropolitan ideal’, one historian has written, ‘shared several key assumptions with other versions of Victorian domesticity. It stressed...the need for seclusion from the hurly-burly of public life’.¹²¹ It hardly needs stating that the best kind of seclusion for the sailors was believed to be one that provided the refined domestic benefits of a good family home.¹²²

Moral environmentalism, though generally applied to the built environment of cities, held true inside homes, where it might be termed domestic environmentalism. Indeed, historians Glenna Matthews and Linda Kerber have both written about such ideas. They explore the way well-managed homes were believed to impact not only the families living inside them, but also society at large. A cared for dwelling, presided over by a true woman, ‘provided a touchstone of values for reforming the entire society’, Matthews argues.¹²³ The overcrowded and ill-equipped sitting-room the LSFS had to offer in its rented Home could not provide the reform Matthews outlined.

Stewart, ever eager to provide solutions to the problems he highlighted, referenced other benevolent institutions he had seen elsewhere. In all successful Sailors’ Homes, Stewart reported, ‘there are two places for the accommodation of the men’. If the LSFS were to be

¹²⁰ David M. Scobey, *Empire City: The Making and Meaning of the New York City Landscape* (Philadelphia, 2002), p. 9.

¹²¹ Scobey, *Empire City*, p. 181.

¹²² For more on moral environmentalism, see David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore, 1986); Stanley K. Schultz, *Constructing Urban Culture: American Cities and City Planning, 1800 – 1920* (Philadelphia, 1989), esp. pp. 112 – 114; Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order, 1820 – 1920* (Cambridge, MA, 1992).

¹²³ Glenna Matthews, *“Just a Housewife”: The Rise & Fall of Domesticity in America* (New York, 1987), p. 35; Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic*. Kerber’s discussion of well-kept homes is more focused on the benefits this could provide to Republican Motherhood. This ‘touchstone of values’ was how Farnham had originally seen California being civilized. The establishment of domestic homes would have a knock-on effect and begin to exert influence over the rest of the community at large.

successful, they would need the space to emulate this set-up. One of the rooms was for socialising, conversation, and relaxing with friends, ‘where they can amuse themselves as they may’. Those amusements, of course, would be carefully monitored and remain in keeping with the middle-class, domestic family home the ladies tried to create. That meant for instance no alcohol, gambling, or casual mingling of the sexes. The second room would be ‘more select’, and by all accounts was more important to the managers of the LSFS than the first. It would contain the library and be used ‘for religious and educational purposes’.¹²⁴

Stewart was clear that the deficiencies in the rented accommodation were stymieing the efforts of the society. ‘You embrace more in your object than simply caring for the physical needs of the seamen’, he said, distancing himself from the Home’s inadequacies by eschewing the collective we, ‘yet the want of an adequate hall is a great obstacle in the way of benefitting them in any other way’.¹²⁵ These ‘other ways’ were the moral and spiritual growth of the seamen, which needed dedicated and spacious areas for the sailors’ leisure time. Once the twenty-year quest for a permanent Home was finally realised, the LSFS began to implement the domestic comforts they could not provide in their rented accommodation.

After 1876 when their permanent Home opened, the tone of the society’s annual reports changed markedly. No longer did they need to continually implore the local San Franciscan community for funds – at least, not to quite the same degree – or emphasise the plight of the sailor in the name of garnering support for the beleaguered seamen arriving in San Francisco’s port. Instead, the annual summaries shifted to focus more and more on the many changes and updates the Home had gone under the previous year. After the Centennial, the society conveyed the feeling of pride amongst the lady managers for their work. Work, though, would continue. In 1880, for example, the society’s then secretary Mrs. M. A. Knight wrote that there had ‘been

¹²⁴ LSFS, *Ninth Annual Report*, p. 10.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 10.

several improvements in and around the Home, but there is still need for more'. Knight assured the public that the lady managers would continue their labour until they had achieved the 'desired end – namely, a perfect Sailors' Home'.¹²⁶ 1880 saw Daniel Swannack replace Stewart as the society's superintendent, and he too referred to the improving nature of the Home by telling the public that 'the physical comfort' of the sailors is 'carefully promoted here'. Swannack also reported that 'the Home, through its social and domestic influence, [and] its library and reading room...is doing all that can be done with the means at hand to save the sailors'.¹²⁷

Apparently trivial outlays here reflected the role domesticity played in the maintenance of the Home's environment. By 1883, the LSFS could report that '[e]very dollar of income received by the society has been expended in solid improvements in and about the Home'. The headline improvements that year were the addition of eighteen officers' rooms and twelve stationary wardrobes, 'together with many other needed comforts' which left the Home 'in much better condition than formerly'.¹²⁸ Seemingly innocuous purchases, such as wardrobes, often held great significance in building a domestic environment within the home. Catharine Beecher espoused her motto 'a place for everything, and everything in its place'.¹²⁹ Neatness and order characterised her instructions for inside the home, and the hanging of clothes was no exception. Seen through a lens shaped by domestic reformers like Beecher and Farnham, then, the wardrobes provided in the Sailors' Home offered more than simple storage place for clothes. Above all, they ensured that men could present themselves in a neat and proper manner, cultivating the feeling of self-worth that a life at sea deprived them of. Aboard ships, the storage of seamen's clothes was analogous to the Mexican hosts whose home Farnham had derided.

¹²⁶ LSFS, *Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth Annual Reports* (San Francisco, 1880), p. 8.

¹²⁷ LSFS, *Twenty-fourth Annual Report*, p. 10.

¹²⁸ LSFS, *Twenty-seventh Annual Report*, p. 5.

¹²⁹ Catharine Beecher, *Miss Beecher's Domestic Receipt-book: Designed as a Supplement to Her Treatise on Domestic Economy* (New York, 1846), p. 248.

Clothes, personal belongings, and food and drink supplies were balled up together and stored in trunks, usually kept in the ship's forecabin. Sometimes, these trunks were communal. The new wardrobes, in contrast, introduced sailors to the way middle-class men stored their clothing. They represented the sailors' commitment to civilization as well as pride in his profession and appearance. The seamen who went to work in a neat and clean uniform, the lady managers hoped, would have the fortitude to avoid temptation and exploitation. In this way, the influence of the Home would spread out into the public sphere, having made a lasting and indelible mark on the sailors.

Communal facilities too saw important improvements designed to have an impact beyond the Home itself. 1884 saw the dining room 'changed, enlarged and re-furnished'. Twice as many mariners could dine in the room afterward. They could also take in a 'fine view and pleasant surroundings, which with good fare, make it attractive to all who come to the Home'.¹³⁰ The motivations of the managers went beyond providing a pleasant vista for residents to gaze upon. Mealtimes within the private family home were an important part of domestic management for mothers. The husband and children received a home-cooked (and likely servant-cooked) meal and sat together: the burdens of the husband's day were put down, and the children spent time with their parents. The act of the family saying grace reaffirmed the home as a Christian retreat. The dining room at the sailors Home, however, was less focused on symbolic familial processes – although the lady managers undoubtedly insisted on saying grace and observing proper table etiquette – than it was on providing an alternative to the legions of saloons and boarding houses that offered cheap meals on the waterfront. The fine views and pleasant surroundings provided by the Home certainly stood in contrast to the often rowdy, smoky, and dirty eateries that constituted the city's working-class restaurants.

¹³⁰ LSFS, *Twenty-eighth Annual Report*, pp. 5 – 6.

By 1884, though, the largest outlays of money went towards improving mariners' accommodation. The amount spent on mattresses – both repairing old ones and purchasing new ones – demonstrates the LSFS's commitment to creating a perfect and comfortable Sailors' Home. \$499.10 was spent on mattresses alone.¹³¹ Like the dining room (in fact, like all rooms inside a domestic home), the bedroom was important both in terms of the moral reform of the sailor, but also his personal comfort. The lady managers of the LSFS were all too aware of the lack of private space on a ship, as well as the inadequate sleeping arrangements aboard many vessels. Even if for just one night, the lady managers ensured the sailors in the Home would have a comfortable place to rest that was their own space.

The seafaring Charles Nordhoff's experience in a different Sailors' Home suggests some of the thinking that lay behind such expenditure. At the 'quiet and scrupulously clean' Boston Sailors' Home, where, Nordhoff reported, no effort was spared on keeping the sailors 'on the right track', he described his arrival and the following night:

We were shown to nice, airy rooms, where matters looked more like comfort than anything I had seen for the last three years...That night I enjoyed a glorious rest. For three long years a narrow hammock, hung on a crowded deck, had been my only sleeping place – aside from a still harder deck plank – and to find myself once more in a good bed, with nice, clean sheets and pillows, and surrounded by all the comforts of home, comforts, by-the-way, which we don't know how to value till we are obliged to do without them, was a most unmistakeable pleasure.¹³²

This was exactly the feeling the women of San Francisco's Sailors' Home wanted to create for the weary and mistreated seamen who arrived at their door. Nordhoff's roommate, a fellow sailor named Harry Hill, was equally pleased with their accommodation. He gleefully told

¹³¹ This is around \$15,000 in September 2022.

¹³² Charles Nordhoff, *Nine Years a Sailor: The Merchant Vessel* (Cincinnati, 1857), pp. 13 – 14.

Nordhoff that there would be ‘no calling of hands...no turning out in the cold to scrub decks, no getting down on your marrow-bones’: they would instead be in perfect comfort all night. The only concern Hill harboured was that he would sleep so soundly that he would be unable to appreciate just how enjoyable the break from their hard lives aboard ships truly was.¹³³

The refurbishing of the bedrooms and the dining hall were in keeping with the society’s mission of recreating a middle-class home and giving the sailors a taste of the comforts their land-based country men and women experienced daily. Through these experiences of the middle-class home, the lady managers intended the sailors to develop the same moral outlook as the private home inspired in families across the Republic. Superintendent Swannack certainly thought they were making good progress. In 1884, he congratulated the ladies, saying ‘The changes made by your Board during the year, have added greatly to the convenience and comfort of the Home, and increased our facilities for making it attractive and homelike’.¹³⁴ The women themselves declared their institution a ‘*Home indeed*’.¹³⁵ The women, it appeared, were slowly succeeding in their efforts to create a truly middle-class, domestically ordered retreat for the mariners in the port of San Francisco. Their labours continued through the 1880s and 1890s, with the LSFS proudly documenting the improvements undertaken.¹³⁶

The outside of the Home became an object of attention too. As well as being unappealing to the eye, one nineteenth-century architect claimed that ‘crude and uninteresting’ buildings were degrading to the public.¹³⁷ A beautiful house, on the other hand, was ‘a pleasure to everyone’.¹³⁸ This presented a problem when the LSFS was leasing lodgings. Early in his tenure, Stewart had spoken of the ‘mortification’ he felt when sailors claimed, ‘from the

¹³³ Nordhoff, *Nine Years a Sailor: The Merchant Vessel*, p. 14.

¹³⁴ LSFS, *Twenty-eighth Annual Report*, p. 14.

¹³⁵ LSFS, *Twenty-seventh Annual Report*, p. 6. Italics in original.

¹³⁶ LSFS, *Thirty-third Annual Report*, p. 8; LSFS, *Thirty-fourth Annual Report*, p. 5; LSFS, *Thirty-sixth Annual Report*, p. 8.

¹³⁷ Louis H. Gibson, *Beautiful Houses: A Study in House-building* (New York, 1895), p. 10.

¹³⁸ Louis H. Gibson, *Convenient Houses: With Fifty Plans for the Housekeeper* (New York, 1889), p. 102.

dilapidated appearance of the building...that there was no Sailors' Home in San Francisco'. Stewart spoke of his anguish at seeing seamen 'chop-fallen and dubious' as they compared the LSFS's rented accommodation with the 'magnificent places' in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia which they had recently left. Once permanently established, the society proudly placed an image of the Sailors' Home in their yearly reports and around the city's port. By 1883, a picket fence – perhaps the most symbolic image of American suburbia and family life – had been erected around the grounds of the Sailors' Home and freshly painted.¹³⁹ The ladies believed the fence had 'improved the surroundings of the Home very much'.¹⁴⁰ Outside and in, the efforts of the LSFS had crafted a surrogate domestic space.

As well as being a domestically ordered retreat for the suffering sailors, the Home was also designed to nurture Christian values. With common roots in the evangelical upheavals of the Second Great Awakening, domesticity by the mid-1800s had become an extension of Protestantism. Indeed, religion was as much a part of a good home life as order, neatness, and cleanliness in the writing of Farnham, Beecher, and other domestic authors. As religion became increasingly feminised, and Americans found in evangelicalism a way to bring meaning and structure to their fast-changing lives, the private family home became, perhaps for the first time, more central to Protestantism as a sacred place than the church.¹⁴¹

Thus, ministers and preachers, as well as female writers, cast middle-class homes as critical sites of religious and spiritual learning. Largely, their guidance centred around the teaching of Christian doctrine to the children within the household. Horace Bushnell, a leading minister in the push for home-centric Christianity, conflated the domestic and the divine:

¹³⁹ Indeed, the front cover of Kenneth Jackson's seminal book on the suburbanisation of America depicts the front garden of a home surrounded by a neat, white picket fence. See Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York, 1985).

¹⁴⁰ LSFS, *Twenty-seventh Annual Report*, p. 6.

¹⁴¹ Historian Colleen McDannell's research would suggest that the home was also central for Catholic families in nineteenth century America, too. See Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840 – 1900* (Bloomington, 1994).

‘Home and religion are kindred words; names of both love and reverence; home, because it is the seat of religion; religion, because it is the sacred element of home’.¹⁴² Catharine Beecher went even further, offering her audience architectural designs that overrode the physical boundaries separating the sacred and the profane. Written with her sister Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The American Woman’s Home* included a plan of a generic home that, thanks to a movable screen, transformed into a church on Sundays. Godliness, like republicanism, would be nurtured by America’s women in the domestic sphere.¹⁴³

Whilst the shift of religious locale from church to home was largely centred around raising a Christian citizenry from childhood, the women of the LSFS did not ignore the importance of imparting Protestantism to grown men. The tendency among reformers to see sailors as orphans left the latter in need of moral education. The Christian values of the LSFS’s Home – its rejection of alcohol and gambling, its focus on surrogate familial experiences in the dining and leisure rooms, and the reading material it provided to the men – all served to introduce the sailors to a Christian lifestyle. That is not to say, though, that the LSFS eschewed quotidian elements of the faith: prayers, sermons, hymns, and Sabbath services remained the primary focus of the society’s chaplains, as did the self-education of the men.

¹⁴² Horace Bushnell, *Christian Nurture* (New York, 1861), p. 406. Bushnell’s predominant focus on making the home a religious space was the benefits American children would receive from it. In an earlier publication, he confessed to being tired of converted adults being the ‘principal supply of the church’ and challenged his countrymen and women to ‘see if we cannot train up our children *in* the ways of God’. ‘The house, having a domestic Spirit of grace dwelling in it’, he told Americans, ‘should become the church of childhood’. See Horace Bushnell, *Views of Christian Nature, and of Subjects Adjacent Thereto* (Hartford, 1847), p. 13, 234. For more on the conflation of home and religion in the nineteenth century, see A. Gregory Schneider, *The Way of the Cross Leads Home: The Domestication of American Methodism* (Bloomington, 1986); Colleen McDannell, ‘Creating the Christian Home: Home Schooling in Contemporary America’, in David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal, eds., *American Sacred Space* (Bloomington, 1995), pp. 187 – 219.

¹⁴³ Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The American Woman’s Home: or, Principles of Domestic Science; Being a Guide to the Formation and Maintenance of Economical, Healthful, Beautiful, and Christian Homes* (New York, 1869), pp. 455 – 458. Farnham also indirectly acknowledged the interconnected nature of home and religion shortly after her arrival in California. Invited to sermon shortly after arriving at ‘The Shanty’, she wrote that it was ‘a pleasure which, considering the state of our household affairs, within and without, we were not very likely to indulge him in’. Her priority was to establish her domestic household – a naturally Christian environment – rather than attend the sermon. Even once her new home was established, it was a full two months from her arrival in California that Farnham visited a church: her new home was as good a place as any to pray, sing, and worship. See Farnham, *California*, pp. 52 – 53, 135.

Religion and self-education, which were intimately intertwined in the eyes of the lady managers and the chaplains they employed after the establishment of a permanent home in 1876, were cast as vital to reforming the sailor. Through the word of the gospel, morally loose sailors would learn that their intemperance was a sin, as was their gambling, free sexual encounters, violent behaviour, and frivolous spending.¹⁴⁴

Moreover, the religious awakening of the sailors was crucial in efforts to establish a benevolent marine empire, which – reformers hoped – would be fronted by American seamen serving as missionaries in far off lands. The educational aims of the LSFS had clear parallels in this respect with republican motherhood. Through their education in the Sailors' Home, mariners would gain three benefits. First, they would cultivate an understanding of the political questions confronting the Republic in a manner denied to them on the high seas. Second, the religious tracts and reform literature available in the home would shape the sailors' character in a way that aligned mariners with the values of domesticity. Finally, with a wide array of literature available, sailors would develop interests outside of seafaring and its attendant vices. This would assist in relieving the monotony of sailing and help the mariner to see that he was not just a much-maligned Jack Tar, but a useful citizen of a republic. The reformed sailor would then carry those new values over the ocean, and in turn transform the marine class from an embarrassment to the United States to exemplars of Protestant America.

The LSFS's ecumenical Protestant chaplains oversaw most of the sailors' religious edification whilst inside the Home. Their labour bore similarities to the mission work that became a feature of nineteenth-century American Protestantism at home and abroad. In 1879, the position was held full-time by the Presbyterian Reverend James F. Pierpont. Pierpont would

¹⁴⁴ For a broad overview of the bible as a tool of reform, see Ernest R. Sandeen, ed., *The Bible and Social Reform* (Philadelphia, 1982). Some key works that recognise urban reform as a type of Christian social control are Clifford Griffin, *Their Brother's Keepers: Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800 – 1865* (New Brunswick, 1960); Charles I. Foster, *An Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front, 1790 – 1837* (Chapel Hill, 1960); Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium*.

only serve in the role for a year but remained strongly connected to the LSFS thereafter by donating books, tracts, and pamphlets to the society's library through his connection to the San Francisco Sunday School.¹⁴⁵ Reverend Ludwick, a Methodist, then took up the chaplaincy in June 1880 and immediately took a prominent role in the Home's daily operations. Most of Ludwick's work came in the form of giving sermons, leading prayers, and singing hymns with the men, and he worked to increase the attendance of sailors at religious services. Ludwick claimed a successful first two months, proven by the fact large numbers of men staying at the Home had sought 'personal interviews' with him to discuss 'religion and their soul's salvation'.¹⁴⁶ Engaging the men in religion was crucial for the LSFS: the lack of church attendance and difficulty of accessing religious material aboard ships had been a major concern amongst the marine reform community since Sailors' Homes were first established on the East coast.¹⁴⁷

In part, the chaplains' efforts were directed to integrating the sailors into a land-based Christian culture. Once drawn into that Godly orbit, the reasoning went, the pull of San Francisco's taverns and dens would be weakened. To do so, LSFS chaplains included non-marine men and women in the Home's religious services, which Ludwig believed would help the alienated seamen feel like he belonged in an American community. 'The increasing interest manifested by people out the Home', he said of the LSFS's Sunday service, 'is a great help, as it inspires the sailors with a feeling Christian people desire their welfare'. Casting land-based visitors to the home as part of a surrogate extended family, Ludwick would 'call the men into the chapel for an informal "sing" thus giving to our Home as often as possible one of the most

¹⁴⁵ LSFS, *Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth annual reports*, p. 16.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 11.

¹⁴⁷ Some examples of ministers and preachers noting their concerns about seamen's lack of church activity, observance of the Sabbath, and the general absence of religion aboard ships, and the resultant effects this had on sailors' morality, the profession as a whole, the nation's commerce, and the global image of America can be found in Edward D. Griffin, *The Claims of Seamen* (New York, 1819); J. P. K. Henshaw, *A Plea for Seamen* (Baltimore, 1826); John Truair, *A Call from the Ocean: or, An Appeal to the Patriot and the Christian, in Behalf of Seamen* (New York, 1826); Taylor, *Seven Years' Street Preaching in San Francisco* (New York, 1857).

attractive features of home-life'.¹⁴⁸ And the lady managers of the LSFS played a part in this, too. Though they had given up the daily running of the Home to the male superintendent and his wife to devote more time to fundraising and promoting the Home, the ladies still regularly attended chapel services with the sailors and sang hymns along with them. Indeed, when Ludwick was without an organist for a few months, one lady manager stepped in and filled the void for a time.¹⁴⁹ Ludwick hoped that staging religious ceremonies – informal or otherwise – with non-seafarers and seafarers alongside one another would hasten the latter's adoption of the gospel. Mariners might be reformed through the influence of a wider Christian family. Religious practice within the Home therefore reintroduced sailors to the Christian faith, connected them to a wider faith-based community, and helped to remind them that despite their lengthy absence on the ocean, they had ties to both family and land.

The saturation of the Home with religiosity complemented the direct tutelage provided by the chaplain. These Christian values were enforced subtly in the day-to-day running of the Home. From arrival to departure, the women were careful to restrict access to vice and temptation. The process that seamen underwent on arrival at the Home demonstrates this protective culture, as well as the Christian morals and values that were upheld in the institution. On arrival, the men were registered, and indicated the type of ship they wished to sail on and where they wanted to go: a safeguard against the *Shanghaiing* common in other boarding houses and a way of restoring the free agency of the mariner. In the LSFS's Home, the sailor was made aware that he was a free man, not to be coerced, robbed, or tricked. By requesting this information, the LSFS were telling the sailors that they were protected by caring Christian women, who would be looking out for them, not seeking to profit from their time ashore.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ LSFS, *Twenty-fourth Annual Report*, p. 11.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 13.

¹⁵⁰ 'The Sailors' Home', *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 40, issue 141, Tuesday 21 September 1875, p. 3.

Upon arrival, a physical description of the mariner would also be taken, which became an important element in providing Christian care. Mortality rates for mariners ashore were remarkably high across the United States, and the transient nature of mariner's work often meant that bodies remained unidentified in unfamiliar ports.¹⁵¹ Deceased seamen were frequently buried in unmarked graves without religious rites.¹⁵² The simple matter of ensuring proper identification was intended to avoid such treatment of the dead. Information gathered in checking in also helped in assisting with passage home for extremely ill sailors and, in some instances, returning the bodies of the dead sailors back to their families.¹⁵³ After the establishment of the permanent Home, the women of the LSFS appeared incredibly proud of their attached cemetery, in which all sailors registered at the Home were granted a plot free of charge. They provided proper Christian funerals for all who died under their care.¹⁵⁴ In assuring the men of a safe home even after death, the women were enhancing their institution's status as a Christian environment.

There were also measures in place to ensure the mariners were limited in their association with non-Christian values, too. Once registered, a runner employed by the society retrieved their luggage, a subtle way of preventing the men from returning to the corrupting locale of the bustling port. In a similar attempt to limit arrivals' access to vice, new residents had to hand over all valuables and money to the managers for safekeeping. In this way, the women limited the sailors' ability to purchase alcohol and sex or gamble their wages away. It was the

¹⁵¹ Some examples of this are 'Unknown Dead Body Picked Up', *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 5, issue 81, 13 January 1858, p. 3; 'Sudden Death on Board a Steamboat', *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, volume 25, issue 268, 14 May 1859, p. 2.

¹⁵² Funeral practices in the nineteenth century changed markedly from the beginning of the century to the end. For work on nineteenth century attitudes to funerals and their importance, see James J. Farrell, *Inventing the American Way of Death, 1830 – 1920* (Philadelphia, 1980). See also Charles O. Jackson (ed.), *Passing: The Vision of Death in America* (Westport, 1977).

¹⁵³ Even before the Sailors' Home was established in its permanent location, the women strove to collect personal details on sailors so they could assist them in times such as these. For one example, see LSFS, *Report for 1869 – 70* (San Francisco, 1870), p. 11.

¹⁵⁴ A recent history on the importance of rural cemeteries, their role in reforming society, and their transformation into important spiritual sites for visitors is Jeffrey Smith, *The Rural Cemetery Movement: Places of Paradox in Nineteenth-Century America* (Lexington, 2017).

beginning of the tuition toward the financial maturity Stewart had advocated for early in the LSFS's existence. As an added benefit for the society, it also ensured that no one could avoid paying the 'moderate charge' the society debited for accommodation. One report suggested this charge was \$5 for a week's 'board [and] lodging, as well as educational and social privileges'.¹⁵⁵ From the moment of entering the Home, the weary sailor found himself protected from the wicked city under the supervision of the lady managers in a Christian and domestically ordered environment.¹⁵⁶

The process of checking into the Home, then, illustrates how the men's experiences of the institution were laden with Christian, domestic values right from the moment they stepped through the front doors. The desire to keep the men from venturing back to the waterfront and their ships to collect belongings was largely down to the distrust marine reformers had in the ability of sailors to manage their own affairs and resist the illicit invitations they would no doubt receive. But it also reflected contemporary views around moral environmentalism: of the virtues of pious, domestic surroundings, and the dangerous influences that sailors might be subjected to in less salubrious parts of the metropolis. Indeed, the very location of the LSFS's Home – removed from the bustling waterfront by around half a mile – inscribed the inner resolve of evangelical men onto a map of metropolitan space. These men saw their restraint – their rejection of sin – as a Christian virtue, and their preference of domestic environs over sites of sin was reflected in the sequestered setting of the old U.S. Marine Hospital.

These were all attempts to introduce and normalise Christian values into lives seemingly lived far removed from home, family, and moral order. The benevolent lady managers of the LSFS created, in their own estimation, an edifying domestic retreat for the men. Though not a private family home – the most cherished place in which to exert domestic influence – it

¹⁵⁵ This figure comes from a critic of the lady managers and the LSFS, who argued that he could provide the same service for \$3 a week. The LSFS's detractors are discussed further on. 'The Sailors' Home', *Daily Alta California*, volume 38, number 12795, 25 April 1885, p. 1.

¹⁵⁶ 'The Sailors' Home', *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 40, issue 141, 21 September 1875, p. 3.

nonetheless enabled the women to perform many of the same functions that countless mothers across the Republic did. To those who ran it, San Francisco's Sailors' Home brought the manifold blessings of domesticity to the undomesticated.

The Benevolent Empire Abroad

The importance of the LSFS's work extended beyond San Francisco. Certainly, the organisation enjoyed support in the press for its efforts to discipline an unruly marine class, but reformers' ambitions extended beyond their immediate locale. Indeed, though societies like the LSFS were generally confined to a single port, their objects had significance for the wider nation. In an era of intensive missionary efforts, sailors were seen as emissaries, whose example affected the United States' international image and its efforts to spread Christianity around the globe to the 'heathen' masses. Local benevolence here could shape distant perceptions of the Republic and brought the work of female managers into the business of foreign relations. Maritime historian Brian Rouleau, for instance, has shown the international aspirations of antebellum marine reform movements. Rouleau argues that the unrestrained behaviour of sailors overseas shaped overseas opinion of American culture and politics.¹⁵⁷ In some cases, like the sailors' riot in Hawaii that led the archipelago kingdom to seek closer ties with Britain, this risked hurting foreign policy objectives.¹⁵⁸

Converting seamen to Christianity was an important part of reform efforts, but marine reformers often had an even grander scheme in mind than the mere conversion of individual mariners. Preachers and ministers from the mid-1800s harboured visions of a mighty marine class who would act as missionaries for the U.S., spreading the gospel around the globe as they went. In keeping with the distinct imperial vision of evangelicals, who tended to see

¹⁵⁷ Rouleau, *With Sails Whitening Every Sea*, p. 106.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 103.

assimilation and moral uplift as a necessary accompaniment to rapid territorial conquest, these advocates of manifest destiny cast ocean-borne carriers of the gospel as a versatile tool of empire.¹⁵⁹ Seafarers therefore played a critical role in their vision. With their moral compass restored in sailors' homes, such men would carry the values they had imbued overseas. John Truair, a minister for the ASFS on the East coast, advocated for seamen to act as missionaries as early as 1826. Truair preached at length on how seamen were the chief reason for the difficulty in Christianising 'heathen' people. His pamphlet on the subject, designed to represent 'the real state of seamen', urged the American public to 'immediately...do something to meliorate their moral condition'.¹⁶⁰ Pious mariners, he claimed, 'would be the most active and powerful auxiliaries to foreign missions of almost any men in the world'. Without the gospel, though, their behaviour placed 'innumerable and constant hindrances' in the way of American missionaries. Sailors, he emphatically declared, 'do more to prejudice the minds of the heathen against the Christian religion, than all other men besides'.¹⁶¹

Given its role as the launch-pad for U.S. expansion into the Pacific, San Francisco had an important role here after its annexation in 1848. The San Franciscan preacher William Taylor, indeed, echoed Truair's ideas three decades later, labelling sailors 'one of the greatest barriers to the successful preaching of the Gospel to heathen nations'.¹⁶² Both men also agreed on what the problem was: 'heathens' were put off Christianity by the behaviour of seamen, who were often the only examples of Christianity they had encountered.¹⁶³ Truair paraphrased the response American missionaries got from those they intended to convert:

¹⁵⁹ Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago, 1979), pp. 20 – 22; Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815 – 1848* (New York, 2007), pp. 702 – 708.

¹⁶⁰ John Truair, *A Call from the Ocean: or, an Appeal to the Patriot and the Christian in Behalf of Seamen* (New York, 1826), p. unnumbered preface.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, pp. 8 – 9.

¹⁶² Taylor, *Seven Years*, p. 220.

¹⁶³ Truair, *A Call from the Ocean*, p. 9, Taylor, *Seven Years*, p. 222.

We have learned most of our degrading vices from the Christians! [W]e never knew any thing about ardent spirits and drunkenness till we learned it from the Christians; uncleanness, too, was almost unknown among us till we were visited by Christian intriguers; and we were united, and comparatively happy, among ourselves, till these Christians came among us. Would you, then, have us exchange a religion under whose influence we were comparatively happy, for one which has introduced among us so many and such incalculable evils?¹⁶⁴

Seamen needed converting, Truair entreated, speaking directly to the American public, ‘for they now pull down nearly as fast as all your missionaries can build up’.¹⁶⁵

Taylor also attempted to galvanise the American public into action for the sailor, giving three advantages of using marine men as missionaries for the United States. If Americans were destined to spread out across the North American continent, he asked not long after the Mexican War, then why not the world? Seafarers had the first advantage of mobility. ‘What trouble and expense the missionary endures in overcoming this difficulty’, he exclaimed, but ‘to the sailor no part of the globe is remote’. The second advantage lay in the cargo ships carried. Heathens did not want missionaries, Taylor argued, but the sailor ‘gain[ed] access to their hearts at once through the channels of...commerce, trade, and self-interest...He is but a common man like one of themselves’. The final advantage was long term presence. The sailor ‘makes his mark’ on ‘heathen countries’, the preacher continued, years prior to the eventual arrival of missionaries. When missionaries did finally arrive, they found the sailor had ‘been received by the natives for a century past as a *bona fide* representative of Christianity’. All this meant that for Taylor, ‘the conversion of seamen is of the first moment, if not absolutely necessary to the Christianization of heathen nations’.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Truair, *A Call from the Ocean*, p. 9.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 10.

¹⁶⁶ Taylor, *Seven Years*, pp. 220 – 223.

The LSFS's chaplains agreed with both Truair and Taylor and worked hard to ensure that not only did the men receive religious tuition at the Home but were also equipped to serve as emissaries of American Protestantism. 'I say to them that they are missionaries, and they ought to be Christian missionaries, every one', James Pierpont reported in his solitary year as LSFS chaplain.¹⁶⁷ Ludwick was able to offer more than just words once the LSFS had established a permanent Sailors' Home. 'An important feature of the Chaplain's work is that of providing suitable reading matter for the sailors while in the Home and especially on going to sea'.¹⁶⁸ Not only would mariners have access to the gospel on the high seas, but they would also carry its good news to far off lands. To that end, Ludwick made it his mission 'to permit no man to sail without furnishing him with a package of papers, magazines and tracts, and giving him a testament'.¹⁶⁹

Viewed through the lens of missionary work and foreign relations, marine reform societies like the LSFS can be seen as more than purely urban enterprises to bring moral order to port cities; they were important institutions that could Christianise the globe. Not all the lady managers will have shared such aspirations, though. The LSFS's initial aims, after all, were simply to provide a domestically organised home for sailors to stay in whilst ashore in the city. What we do know, however, is that the boundaries between the domestic, urban, and imperial often blurred in their work. The moral regeneration of sailors in a good home here could extend to dreams of extending a benevolent empire across the Pacific.

Attacking the Sailors' Home

¹⁶⁷ LSFS, *Twenty-third Annual Report*, p. 6.

¹⁶⁸ LSFS, *Twenty-fourth Annual Report*, p. 12.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 12.

The LSFS operated throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and evidently enjoyed largely positive support from the city's press and public, who welcomed the efforts to offer a good home to rowdy mariners. But the lady managers of the LSFS were not immune to opposition from vocal critics. Benevolence in general, though deemed highly necessary in post-Industrial America, perhaps never more so in California's transient and unordered premier city, still faced criticism, and efforts were made after the Civil War to put it on a more scientific footing that distinguished between a deserving and undeserving poor.¹⁷⁰ Even as early as 1860, for instance, the SFLP&RS noted that the dispense of aid required 'much serious thought', as well as 'sound judgement' to differentiate between 'real suffering and poverty, and that well-disguised, undeserving, imposition, so frequently practised in our midst'.¹⁷¹

Criticism of the LSFS, though, rarely centred around the deservedness of sailors. Few voices across the country were raised against the necessity of reforming marine men. More often it stemmed from the simple fact that its female managers were distributing aid to men. Other benevolent societies in the city, like the SFLP&RS, who provided aid to destitute and needy women, and the city's Orphan Asylums, received far less resistance. Largely, this was because their work did not involve prescribing men's behaviour in public. Women may have had the moral authority to influence men in their family circle, but not everyone accepted their right to do so beyond the home.¹⁷²

The LSFS also came into conflict with those who profited from the waterfront economy. Opposition to the LSFS frequently revolved around the alleged mismanagement of the Home, and the suggested impropriety of the lady managers themselves. This was perhaps one of the reasons that encouraged the women to hand over the daily running of the Home to

¹⁷⁰ Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women*, p. 63.

¹⁷¹ San Francisco Ladies' Protection and Relief Society, 'Secretary's Report', *Report of the Trustees of the S. F. Ladies' Protection and Relief Society* (San Francisco, 1860), p. 6.

¹⁷² That the men the ladies of the LSFS were helping were widely believed to be completely immoral and sexually promiscuous did not help this image, either.

their male superintendent and his wife.¹⁷³ On their part, the women framed this as an opportunity to focus their energies on establishing the permanent home, furthering the cause, and fundraising, rather than an acknowledgement of impropriety. Occasionally, these allegations were direct and personal. In 1857, for example, Mrs. Lambert, a founding member of the LSFS, was accused of receiving a \$100.00 salary as well as free board at the Sailors' Home. This, the outraged lady managers admonished, was not only untrue, but did 'great injury to...[the] cause'.¹⁷⁴ Only a year had passed since the society was created, but the women felt it necessary to appoint an independent committee to review their financial activities to clear Mrs. Lambert of any wrongdoing.

In 1866, that independent committee was needed to again refute extensive criticism in a letter sent to the *Daily Alta*. A landlord of a Sailors' Boarding House – the kind of institution marine reformers saw as complicit in *Shanghaiing* – declared that far from being a 'public charity, entitled to...aid from the State', the LSFS's Home was instead 'managed for the exclusive benefit of a few individuals'. He first claimed the society had collected \$300 for a woman in need who was later found to be 'unworthy' of the charitable aid, leading the lady managers to keep the money for themselves.¹⁷⁵ Second, he charged that the profits from selling clothes to the sailors never went towards the upkeep of the Home, nor towards the relief of sailors, but instead directly to the women. Finally, he accused the ladies of collecting a 'bounty' for the seamen they placed aboard ships: the very same practice the society vehemently condemned in the city's many boarding houses. The *Alta* was magnanimous in its response, reiterating its long-held stance that the LSFS was 'one of the deserving institutions of San Francisco', but said that if the landlord could provide proof, the accusations should be

¹⁷³Annual Report of the Ladies' Seamen's Friend Society, March 1868, PAM 1289j, California Historical Society, pp. 6 – 7.

¹⁷⁴'Today's Advertisements', *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 5, issue 17, Tuesday 27 October 1857, p. 2.

¹⁷⁵There is no other evidence that the LSFS ever collected money for women in need rather than sailors.

investigated thoroughly.¹⁷⁶ The independent committee (largely composed of men with close ties to the Society) did thoroughly investigate and found all the claims to be false. ‘We find the charges made against the Home and its management’, the committee of seven prominent men concluded in its report, to be ‘without foundation in fact, and false in particulars and in the whole: and we find the Sailors’ Home doing incalculable good to the seamen of this port’.¹⁷⁷ But such charges reflected the resentment the women’s work inspired among proprietors of the businesses that benefited from the port economy.

By the 1880s, indeed, the LSFS faced regular attacks, prompting male figures associated with the society to come to their defence. In 1882, Captain Samuel Soule, a long-time associate and then president of the Board of Trustees, sailed to the defence of the society, which was again accused of abusing its position and profiting from the Home. Soule quickly rebutted the claims, but his riposte focused more on the gentlemen associated with the LSFS whose names were being tarnished by the accusations, rather than a defence of the women. When the propriety of the Sailors’ Home was questioned, Soule fervently declared, it ‘indirectly damns the gentlemen’ whose names appeared in connection with it.¹⁷⁸ Swannack might have foreseen this problem when he took up his role as superintendent. ‘I entered upon the duties of the place under circumstances somewhat embarrassing and a little discouraging’, he confessed to the managers in his first report for the society. His discomfort, it transpired, was due to the ‘prejudices against’ the Home.¹⁷⁹

But Swannack himself came under fire in 1885, too. Under his supervision, an anonymous contributor to the *Alta* alleged, ‘The Home is run...as a regular boarding house. It employs

¹⁷⁶ ‘City Items – Serious Charges Against the Management of the Sailors’ Home’, *Daily Alta California*, volume 18, number 5787, 12 January 1866, p. 1. No proof from the landlord was forthcoming in later editions of the *Alta*.

¹⁷⁷ ‘Sailors’ Home – Report of the Committee of Investigation’, *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 21, issue 114, 20 February 1866, p. 2. Of the seven men, three were on the LSFS’s male Board and handled much of the society’s legal business. The remaining four were husbands of serving lady managers.

¹⁷⁸ ‘Ladies’ Seamen’s Friend Society’, *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 53, issue 126, 8 March 1882, p. 2.

¹⁷⁹ LSFS, ‘Superintendent’s Report’, *Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth Annual Reports*, p. 9.

runners, keeps a clothing establishment in connection with the Home, and wrings out of the sailors precisely the same profits as the second-rate clothiers do'. The accuser further claimed that Swannack 'openly admits that he charges his men \$5 "for cashing their checks"' and 'admits to being a member of the Boarding-House Ring', too. The article finally accused Swannack of profiting handsomely from his position to the tune of nearly \$30,000.¹⁸⁰ Three years later, this accuser, at least, was vindicated: Swannack 'admitted to the Labour Commissioner that he received about \$32,500 a year for the board of sailors, and that he realized about \$19,000 profit above what he paid to the society'.¹⁸¹ The lady managers distanced themselves from him and brought in a new superintendent.

Accusations of such impropriety gave San Francisco's boarding house landlords cover to try and shut down the Home once again. By 1889, the landlords of boarding houses were 'working the hardest to withdraw the Home from the ladies' control, claiming that under the guise of charity it is running in direct opposition to their business and making money out of it', the *Alta* wrote. The president of the society for that year, Mrs. Sykes, again strongly rebutted the claims of men whom they had long criticised for their part in sailors' plight. She reminded the *Alta*'s readers that 'The opposition is all from the boarding-masters, who see lots of chances for "bloody money" lost by reason of men coming to the Home'.¹⁸²

The aspersions cast on lady managers, the attacks on the Home, and the charges of impropriety show that by the late nineteenth century, benevolence did not simply involve establishing a good home. Political pressures needed dealing with, public controversies arose, and public opinion had to be carefully managed. The outsourcing of financial management to salaried male superintendents, moreover, had created opportunities for embezzlement, and,

¹⁸⁰ 'The Sailors' Home', *Daily Alta California*, volume 38, number 12759, 25 April 1885, p. 1.

¹⁸¹ 'Health and Police Matters', *Daily Alta California*, volume 42, number 14325, 24 November 1888, p. 5.

¹⁸² 'The Sailors' Home – Opposition to the Ladies' Seamen's Friend Society – Where it Chiefly Comes From', *Daily Alta California*, volume 81, number 182, 29 December 1889, p. 8.

given the Home's longstanding enemies, the opportunity to point to apparent hypocrisy. The shining beacon of purity in a fallen city had been sullied.

Conclusion

The attacks on the Sailor's Home raise another question: if the LSFS was meant to provide sailors with a refuge from urban corruption and competition, can it truly be said to have been a success? The society often became entangled with the very elements of urban life it sought to shield its residents from. Whether these unpleasant aspects were fuelled by legitimate claims against fleecing superintendents, by the self-interest of aggrieved boarding house landlords, or the unease felt at women participating in debates over San Francisco's political and economic life, the Home, in one sense, clearly could not be entirely sequestered from the wider metropolis.

But in another sense, it was. The Home had been crafted by the lady managers to provide domestic order to the arriving sailors. This it did not only through its physical appearance both internally and externally, but also through the utilisation of its reading rooms, dining rooms, and private bedrooms, which were all intended to offer a sharp contrast to life on the typical ship. The LSFS employed such domestic influence to instil in men the Christian virtues their lives were supposedly so short of. In their efforts to create a shelter for sailors that would emulate the domestic influence of the private family home, the women of the LSFS enjoyed some success.

The LSFS helps us understand domesticity's place in nineteenth-century benevolent reform. In San Francisco, domesticity had quickly moved from family homes managed by women of Farnham's ilk into a terrain that straddled the boundaries between public and private spheres, and which had the power to reshape cities and even extend American empire. This

spread from home to city and beyond gave women a path into the public sphere where they could directly influence policy and shape metropolitan life. But we have seen this new public presence for women was not universally popular. The criticisms the society faced, despite its firm grounding in domestic ideology, reveal the resentment held by some towards women ‘meddling’ in urban society. True and domestic women managing their home for the reform, moral improvement, Christian education, and promotion of patriotism within their family group received no criticism. After all, many believed women to be naturally designed to undertake this role, and domestic advocates like Farnham and Beecher encouraged it; by doing so, women were fulfilling their duty to the nation.¹⁸³ But when women’s domestic benevolence interfered with male commerce and criticised seemingly moral men’s roles in corrupt practices – in the LSFS’s case, principally the port-side merchants and boarding house landlords of San Francisco – there was some pushback against domesticity and women’s presence in public.

Evaluating the actual impact of the society’s efforts on sailors is beyond the remit of this study. Memoirs, written by men who spent time at sea before becoming models of self-restraint, may have praised the influence of sailors’ homes, but are hardly representative of the experience of the thousands of sailors who passed through such establishments. But in the estimation of its managers and supporters, the LSFS enjoyed success. The beginnings of a benevolent empire in San Francisco during the 1850s illustrated to contemporaries the beginning of its evolution from a chaotic instant city, defined by its overwhelmingly male population, to one that could be civilized through women’s domestic labour. The LSFS’s

¹⁸³ Indeed, Barbara Welter claimed anyone who ‘dared to tamper’ with the role or virtues of True Womanhood ‘was damned immediately as an enemy of God, of civilization, and of the Republic’. Once domesticity found its way outside the home, though, this deference appeared to go missing in some quarters. See Barbara Welter, ‘The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820 – 1860’ *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer, 1966), pp. 151 – 174. Just some works that suggest women’s primary role in America was to exert good, moral influence over men and children are Ebenezer Bailey, *The Young Ladies’ Class Book* (Boston, 1840); Catharine Beecher, *The Duty of American Women to their Country* (New York, 1845); Eliza Farnham, *Woman and Her Era*, vols. 1 and 2 (New York, 1864). See also Catherine Villanueva Gardner, ‘Heaven-Appointed Educators of Mind: Catharine Beecher and the Moral Power of Women’, *Hypatia* 19 (Spring, 2004), pp. 1 – 16.

efforts throughout the second half of the nineteenth century made a small contribution to this ongoing process.

Chapter Three – ‘Heathen Homes’: San Francisco’s Chinatown and the Drawing of Domestic Boundaries

Introduction

In 1880, San Francisco’s Board of Health conducted an official survey of the city’s Chinese district, known as Chinatown. It was the fourth of five similar investigations throughout the nineteenth century, beginning in 1854, the last of which was carried out in 1885.¹ All of these inspections were carried out at the behest of the city government. The Committee, after numerous visits to the twelve-block district bounded by Broadway and Sacramento streets on the north and south, and Kearny and Stockton streets on the east and west, were decidedly unimpressed with what they found. ‘The streets and habitations [were] filthy in the extreme, and so long as they remained in that condition’, the Board of Health warned the city fathers, planners, politicians, and residents, ‘so long would they stand as a constant menace to the welfare of society as a slumbering pest, likely at any time to generate and spread disease’.² The ‘welfare’ of the city, though in this instance framed as a threat to residents’ physical health, also included the moral and social wellbeing of San Francisco. The Chinese endangered all aspects of the city’s security. The 1880 investigation into Chinatown resulted in the infamous declaration that ‘the portion of the city here described be condemned as a *nuisance*’.³

In contrast to Eliza Farnham’s miners or the LSFS’s seafarers, however, there were barely any attempts on the part of white San Franciscans to ‘domesticate’ the city’s Chinese residents. Rather, this chapter shows how Chinatown and the Chinese were cast beyond the pale of

¹ Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown* (Berkeley, 2001), p. 19.

² San Francisco Board of Health, ‘Report of Special Committee’, in W. B. Farwell, *The Chinese at Home and Abroad, together with the Report of the Special Committee of the Board of Supervisors of San Francisco on the condition of the Chinese quarter of that city*, part II (San Francisco, 1885), p. 4

³ The word *nuisance* carried a legal meaning in the nineteenth century. Streets, buildings, and areas condemned as such could be torn down, and the top foot of soil on which they sat excavated to remove all traces of alleged filth and disease. Workingmen’s Party of California, *Chinatown Declared a Nuisance!* (San Francisco, 1880), p. 6. Italics in original.

domesticity, and as U.S. settlers did so, they rethought their own understanding of home and the design of their neighbourhoods. In their condemnation, commentators, reformers, city planners, and residents all designated Chinatown as an un-American evil which established a clear antithesis of domestic harmony and proper gender relations. In studying Chinatown's anti-domestic orders, we can appreciate San Francisco's broader transformation from a city in which the homosocial communities of 'homeless' white men presented a challenge to moral order, to one in which racialised immigrants became the starkest – and supposedly least reformable – problem. Here, domesticity's racial limits – which, as we have seen, were always present in the work of reformers like Farnham – become most apparent.

A large body of literature on the Chinese in California exists, though the majority is focused on the anti-Chinese movement, fuelled by the so-called 'labour question', the rise of Dennis Kearney's populist and nativist Workingmen's Party, and the resultant Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.⁴ There is comparatively little written on the exclusion of Chinese immigrants from domestic reform in the nineteenth century. I show here that race-based barriers – ideological, legal, and physical – were constructed through supposed racial differences. In turn, these were used to exclude the Chinese from the privileged place in an empire of the middle-class home. Despite this, the Chinese were crucial to the establishment and upkeep of domestic order in the city through their roles in the service industry – most

⁴ Just some of the works on Chinese exclusion and anti-Chinese rhetoric during the nineteenth century in the West are Elmer Clarence Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Urbana, 1939); Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley, 1971); Sucheng Chan, eds., *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882 – 1943* (Philadelphia, 1991); Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act* (Chapel Hill, 1998); Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882 – 1943* (Chapel Hill, 2003); Mark Kanazawa, 'Immigration, Exclusion, and Taxation: Anti-Chinese Legislation in Gold Rush California', *The Journal of Economic History* 65 (September 2005), pp. 779 – 805; Estelle T. Lau, *Paper Families: Identity, Immigration Administration, and Chinese Exclusion* (Durham, NC, 2006); Diana L. Ahmad, *The Opium Debate and Chinese Exclusion Laws in the Nineteenth-Century American West* (Reno, 2007); Nicholas Sean Hall, 'The Wasp's "Troublesome Children": Culture, Satire, and the Anti-Chinese Movement in the American West', *California History* 90 (2013), pp. 42 – 76.

prominently as domestic help and in the laundry industry.⁵ The restriction of domestic reform toward the Chinese population illustrates the racial hierarchy of domesticity, as well as the perceived racial superiority white San Franciscans felt over the Chinese. At least part of the absence of domestic reform and tutelage is explained by the common belief that the Chinese could never learn how to create good homes due to supposedly innate mental, physical, and moral inferiority.

This chapter on Chinatown and San Francisco's domestic landscape is informed by a variety of sources, and it largely departs from the focus on domestic reformers in chapters one and two. Benevolent white women had little interest in uplifting their Chinese counterparts, in part because most immigrants were men, and in part because the community was seen as incapable of improvement. Such was the prevalence of the 'Chinese question' in late nineteenth-century San Francisco, it is tough to find contemporary material that does not in some way refer to it. Newspapers, which are used extensively over the following pages, provide insights into how San Franciscans learnt about Chinatown and the Chinese. While they should not be read as an unproblematic reflection of 'public opinion', they do illustrate what kinds of criticisms were expressed in public, and their hostility to East Asian homes is evident elsewhere. They also provide a wildly contrasting view of the rest of San Francisco, which the booster press lauded as a bright, clean, safe, and domestic metropolis – overlooking vice districts such as the Barbary Coast and the continuation of boarding houses that sold alcohol in abundance – in juxtaposition to dark, dirty, dangerous, and disorderly Chinatown. Tourist guides of the city often had whole sections or chapters on Chinatown and the Chinese and again

⁵ For the prevalence of Chinese men in domestic roles, see David M. Katzman, *Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* (Urbana, 1981), passim. On Chinese presence in the service industry, particularly laundry service, see Ronald T. Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston, 1990), pp. 92 – 93; Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York, 2000), pp. 125 – 126; Joan S. Wang, 'Race, Gender, and Laundry Work: The Roles of Chinese Laundrymen and American Women in the United States, 1850 – 1950', *Journal of American Ethnic History* 24 (Fall, 2004), pp. 58 – 99. For a more comprehensive overview of the Chinese dominated laundry business in nineteenth-century California, see Paul Ong, 'An Ethnic Trade: The Chinese Laundries in Early California', *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 8 (Winter 1981), pp. 95 – 113.

painted contrasting pictures with the rest of the city.⁶ More general informational city guides did much the same, too.

Official documentation produced by governmental investigations into Chinatown and the Chinese, as well as reports from political parties that opposed the presence of the Chinese in the city, add to this study, too. The San Francisco Board of Health often investigated the condition of the Chinese district of the city and helps to illustrate that the ‘Chinese question’ was in part made a question of public health. The Workingmen’s Party of California (WPC) were leaders in the anti-Chinese movement and produced numerous pamphlets, leaflets, and reports on the district.⁷ Through this male, white, and mostly working-class populist movement, which shared little with benevolent reformers like Farnham and the LSFS, we can see how the tropes of domesticity nevertheless came to be enlisted in violent nativism. And we can see too how male-dominated attacks on Chinatown, while often reflecting disgust at Chinese domestic arrangements, rested more on environmentalist precepts than the home management extolled by Beecher, Farnham, and their acolytes.

This chapter begins by sketching out the physical and cultural progress of San Francisco’s ‘domestication’ in the decades after the Civil War. As the city’s population stabilised and money poured into its built environment, the critical role in homebuilding played by true women faded into the background, with the construction of a material environment conducive to moral order and public health now becoming a priority. Yet the racial dimensions of true womanhood meant it remained a powerful tool in nativist politics and in the second section, I outline the arrival of the Chinese in San Francisco and the alarm their presence caused in the

⁶ Chinatown was an extremely popular tourist destination for those visiting the city. San Francisco’s position on the West coast as the premier port meant that it was the first city in the country to have a so-called Chinatown and had by far and away the biggest Chinese population in the whole country. For work on San Francisco’s Chinatown as a tourist attraction, see Barbara Berglund, *Making San Francisco American: Cultural Frontiers in the Urban West, 1846 – 1906* (Lawrence, 2007), pp. 95 – 136; Raymond W. Rast, ‘The Cultural Politics of tourism in San Francisco’s Chinatown, 1882 – 1917’, *Pacific Historical Review* 76 (February 2007), pp. 29 – 60.

⁷ For more on the WPC, see Ralph Kauer, ‘The Workingmen’s Party of California’, *Pacific Historical Review* 13 (September 1944), pp. 278 – 291; Neil Larry Shumsky, *The Evolution of Political Protest and the Workingmen’s Party of California* (Columbus, 1992).

city. This threat was largely seen through Chinatown as an area and the Chinese as a group being antithetical to the domestic ideal and the American home. It then takes a closer look at the perceived anti-domestic orders of the Chinese district and the criticisms the area received. Here, I show how attacks on Chinatown rested on ideas about gender and household propriety, and not just on the menace the neighbourhood and its residents supposedly posed to white American jobs and disease. Finally, the chapter zooms out to examine the contrasts drawn between Chinatown and San Francisco's burgeoning white suburbs, with the former coming to serve as a yardstick used by boosters, journalists, and politicians to measure the civilizational progress of the city's white population. 'The qualities of things', the domestic author Sarah Josepha Hale wrote when introducing a chapter on 'Heathen Homes', 'are best understood by their opposites'.⁸ Applying Hale's statement to San Francisco reveals how Chinatown's perceived failings magnified San Francisco's successes.

Building a Domestic Sphere

By the 1870s the male-dominated city that had so troubled Farnham was receding into memory. As San Francisco's female population grew, so too did the number of permanent families, and a middle-class culture based around home, church, and sites of genteel leisure and consumption had begun to emerge. The LSFS, under the stewardship of benevolent women, provided one example of how the metropolis was beginning to mimic the example of the North-eastern urban middle class. San Francisco, its champions suggested, had shed its reputation as a chaotic frontier boomtown. Instead, it was becoming 'Americanised', a term that could almost be used

⁸ Sarah Josepha Hale, *Manners; or, Happy Homes and Good Society All the Year Round* (Boston, 1868), p. 211.

interchangeably with domesticated by the latter nineteenth century.⁹ Yet that process of domestication sometimes marginalized the work of women.

The transformation could be seen in different arenas of urban life. Department stores catering to the middle-class opened around the city from 1854 onwards, selling exotic fabrics, clothes, and items that filled the wardrobes of a growing affluent population.¹⁰ Ladies' restaurants, cafés, and tearooms provided a safe space for true women to dine in, replacing the indiscriminate mixing of men and women in the city's early saloons and gambling halls.¹¹ Advertisements in directories and guidebooks hinted at the profits to be made from marketing the material culture of domestic comforts. In the days of the Gold Rush, they had predominantly showcased mining equipment, banking services, and steamship travel. These adverts, directed towards men, illustrated the transient preoccupation with money making that Farnham saw as degenerative. That mood had shifted, though, and postbellum advertisements aimed to catch the attention of genteel women with the promise of a fuller home life. One recurring notice in Langley's 1875 *City Directory* simply stated, 'Ladies should bear in mind that the Best Bathing Appliances are at 113 Geary'.¹² Frank Warner's *Guide Book and Street Manual* was laden with adverts for purveyors of domestic goods: these included a suit shop, which stocked 'the largest

⁹ Barbara Berglund's *Making San Francisco American* demonstrates how important it was for San Francisco's residents to demonstrate that their city was 'American' in character. Barbara Berglund, *Making San Francisco American: Cultural Frontiers in the Urban West, 1846 – 1906* (Lawrence, 2007).

¹⁰ Mary Ryan argues that the predominant motivation for the rise of specific spaces for females in the city was commercial. See Mary Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825 – 1880* (Baltimore, 1990), pp. 76 – 77. See also Anne Evers Hitz, *Lost Department Stores of San Francisco* (Charleston, 2020). An advert in 1854, directed at 'the Ladies of San Francisco', announced the opening of the Davidson & Lane department store. It offered such domestic themed products as linen sheets, napkins, ladies and gentlemen's clothing, black silks, and tablecloths. See 'New and Fashionable Dry Goods Store', *Daily Alta California*, volume 5, number 169, 19 June 1854, p. 4.

¹¹ For examples of ladies' rooms being advertised in San Francisco newspapers, see 'Our Great Show', *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 38, issue 84, 15 July 1874, p. 3; 'Multiple Classified Advertisements', *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 38, issue 93, 25 July 1874, p. 2. Historian Barbara Berglund also highlights separate social rooms for men and women in San Francisco's impressive Palace Hotel. See Barbara Berglund, *Making San Francisco American: Cultural Frontiers in the Urban West, 1846 – 1906* (Lawrence, 2007), p. 42. San Francisco's Cosmopolitan Hotel also had separate parlours and drawing rooms for women. See Ryan, *Women in Public*, p. 77.

¹² Henry G. Langley, *San Francisco City Directory for the Year 1875* (San Francisco, 1875). This advert appeared at least 20 times in the margins of that year's *City Directory* – for one example, see p. 27.

and choicest assortments of ladies', misses' and Children's cloaks, suits, ulsters, etc.', and a furniture company, offering elegant pieces for parlours, bedrooms, libraries, dining rooms.¹³ Domesticity, which had been in such short supply when Farnham had drawn up her emigration scheme, had become a crucial element of the city's commercial culture.

San Francisco's physical landscape was also changing in a way that, for the most part, pleased advocates of domesticity. Long gone were the dusty, unpaved streets and planks of wood buried in thick mud which scarcely hinted at a pathway. 'For the number of inhabitants', one 1866 article began approvingly, 'few cities in this or any other country spend annually such an amount in grading, paving, macadamizing and sewerage [sic] streets as San Francisco'.¹⁴ Alongside these expenses came projects for airy boulevards. In the 1860s efforts to widen a section of Kearny Street got underway. Once completed, the *Evening Bulletin* declared, Kearny would 'present one of the finest thoroughfares in San Francisco'.¹⁵

Good sidewalks and wider streets provided a fitting terrain for rituals of middle-class sociability like the evening promenade and offered a healthier setting for elegant homes.¹⁶ Nowhere was this more important than on the mansion-lined Van Ness Avenue which saw two proposals to heighten its already considerable grandeur.¹⁷ In 1876, property owners on the

¹³ Frank W. Warner, *Guide Book and Street Manual of San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1882), pp. 12, 26.

¹⁴ Macadamizing is a road-laying process, in which small stones are heavily compacted to create a durable yet smooth road surface. Popularised in the early nineteenth century by John MacAdam, macadamized roads held special importance in San Francisco in the second half of the nineteenth century. Adverts for suburban plots often highlighted the locale's macadamized drives and thoroughfares, and streets within the city always made the newspapers when they were macadamized. This likely stemmed from San Francisco's beginning as an instant city. Originally its paths, roads, and walkways were dusty, mud-covered, sandy, and completely unpaved. The paving of roads signified the city's progress and commitment to becoming a modern metropolis. For examples of suburban homes and their surrounding roads being advertised as having macadamized roads, see 'Advertisements, Column 9', *Daily Alta California*, volume 19, number 8002, 7 March 1867, p. 5; 'Advertisements, Column 8', *Daily Alta California*, volume 29, number 9841, 18 March 1877, p. 3; 'Advertisements, Column 8', *Daily Alta California*, volume 29, number 9914, 30 May 1877, p. 3.

¹⁵ 'Kearny Street Widening', *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 21, issue 72, 2 January 1866, p. 3.

¹⁶ The streets were an important social playground in nineteenth century cities. David Scobey's research on the function of thoroughfares highlighted how men and women's genteel bearing was enhanced, status was confirmed, and bourgeoisie values were practiced and solidified during prearranged times for 'promenading' in New York. The practice assisted in creating class hierarchies in the city and exuded domestic refinement. See David Scobey, 'Anatomy of the Promenade: The Politics of Bourgeois Sociability in Nineteenth-Century New York', *Social History* 17 (May 1992), pp. 203 – 227.

¹⁷ For pictures of some of the nineteenth-century mansions erected on Van Ness Avenue, see F. Marriott, *Artistic Homes of California, issued with the San Francisco News Letter 1887 – 8* (San Francisco, 1888).

avenue ‘resolved to plant a row of trees along the sidewalks, then a strip of grass-plot, and then a double line of trees’. Like the widening of Kearny Street, such work would make Van Ness one of ‘the great promenades of the city’ and would ‘present somewhat the appearance of the Champs Elysees of Paris’. There was no reason, the approving *Bulletin* believed, that with city-wide improvements like this, ‘San Francisco should not become one of the handsomest and most attractive cities in the world’.¹⁸ To help it along, another improvement was touted for Van Ness Avenue in 1879. This time, the *Bulletin* suggested the avenue should be ‘parked’, by ‘narrowing of the roadway, and devoting a few feet...on each side next to the sidewalk, to grass or flowers, or to both’.¹⁹ Urban designs, which show the seeds of the City Beautiful movement that would leave its mark on several American metropolises over the following decades, had one thing in common: the introduction of flora, verdant space, and nature into the brick-and-mortar landscape.²⁰

Improvements to urban streets bolstered San Francisco’s reputation and encouraged reflections on progress under U.S. rule. Members of the Grand Army of the Republic, visiting in 1886 when San Francisco hosted the group’s yearly encampment, were gushing in their praise of the city’s magnificent appearance. One declared that no other city had ‘such fine pavements as San Francisco’. H. H. Wyatt of Iowa had not seen San Francisco since he departed for the Civil War two decades earlier and claimed to barely recognise the city, and J. H. Lippincott of Illinois, an early miner, thought the transformation during his thirty-six-year hiatus from the city was ‘wonderful’. Many others lavished praise on the ‘width’, ‘cleanliness’,

¹⁸ ‘A Judicious Improvement’, *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 41, issue 156, 6 April 1876, p. 2.

¹⁹ ‘Van Ness Avenue’, *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 48, issue 16, 24 April 1879, p. 2.

²⁰ On the City Beautiful movement, see John W. Repts, *The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States* (Princeton, 1965). Judd Kahn’s study of city planning in San Francisco tells the interesting story of the preparation that went towards San Francisco’s City Beautiful transformation. Those plans were scuppered after the earthquake of 1906, and the city was largely built back along the same lines. See Judd Kahn, *Imperial San Francisco: Politics and Planning in an American City, 1897 – 1906* (Lincoln, 1979).

and ‘elegance’ of the thoroughfares, the impressive structures, and the beauty of the new Golden Gate Park.²¹

Perhaps the most telling measure of the city’s domestication, though, was the explosive growth of San Francisco’s suburbs. Suburban life in the late nineteenth-century mapped the domestic ethos onto metropolitan space. Single family homes, far removed from the chaos and corruption of downtown business and politics, would nourish their residents under the stewardship of true women and with the blessings of nature and fresh air in abundance.²² In San Francisco, a municipal government capable of financing improvements to streets and water supply, the development on unfavourable terrain of a street cable car system, and easy communication across the Bay via ferries provided the mechanisms for suburban outmigration. But suburbs had not always been the realm of the successful, upwardly mobile middle-class. For centuries, to live beyond the walls of European cities especially was to be beyond the bounds of civilization, and a preference for proximity to sites of business and culture persisted in the mostly unfortified urban centres of North America. Indeed, suburban stigma persisted in Gold Rush San Francisco as miners made the city’s environs their residence. In 1849, for instance, the *Alta* referred to the struggles of ‘those who reside in tents in the suburbs of the city’.²³ Its suburbs, then, began their career as a home for the poor and transient.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, though, suburban homes became desirable for middle class domestic families who could afford to make the move out of the city.²⁴ Initially, however, American women proved more reluctant pioneers.²⁵ For domestic writers

²¹ ‘Veteran Views’, *San Francisco Chronicle*, volume XLIV, number 23, 7 August 1886, p. 1.

²² San Francisco’s suburbs and the emergence of nature and fresh air as crucial to the domestic canon are both discussed in more detail further on in the chapter.

²³ Untitled article, *Weekly Alta California*, volume 1, number 41, 11 October 1849, p. 2.

²⁴ For histories charting the rise of the American suburb and the idea of *suburbia*, see Gunther P. Barth, *City People: The Rise of Modern City Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, 1980), pp. 40 – 42 esp.; Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York, 1985), pp. 3 – 20 esp.; Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York, 1987); John R. Stilgoe, *Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1820 – 1939* (New Haven, 1988).

²⁵ Margaret Marsh, ‘From Separation to Togetherness: The Social Construction of Domestic Space in American Suburbs, 1840 – 1915’, *The Journal of American History*, 76 (Sept. 1989), pp. 506 – 527.

the location of the home and family rarely featured prominently. Whether the home was urban, suburban, or rural made little difference so long as the woman who managed it fully understood her role as one of the Republic's civilizers. And middle-class women had gained much by moving to cities with their dense associational networks, economic opportunities, and removal from rural isolation.²⁶ A larger suburban house promised less interaction and more labour, especially given wealthier San Franciscans suffered from a seemingly perennial shortage of domestic servants.²⁷

Middle-class men, schooled in the transcendentalist faith in the invigorating power of nature and retaining their foothold in the city through work, therefore proved the more eager embracers of the suburban ideal.²⁸ That ideal still placed the home at its centre, but crucially, its naturalistic locale mattered more than the female influence so prized by Farnham.²⁹ That is certainly not to say that men in the second half of the nineteenth century who championed the suburban ideal suddenly rejected notions of domestic ideology inside the home. Rather, it highlights the rise of the perceived power of the natural environment as a civilizing force. Though they began on the cultural fringes of Jacksonian America, the works of two of the two best known Transcendentalists, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, undoubtedly influenced Andrew Jackson Downing's *Country Houses*, which became a bestselling blueprint for rural living.³⁰ Downing equated rural homes, families surrounded by nature, and distance

²⁶ Marsh, 'From Separation to Togetherness', p. 507.

²⁷ Discussion of the 'servant problem' was frequent in San Francisco, where the relative scarcity of white women drove up wages. See, for example, 'Chinese Question', *San Francisco Chronicle*, volume XII, number 115, 8 November 1875, p. 2.

²⁸ Transcendentalism was an ideological belief that championed nature. It promoted interaction with natural surroundings as a way of connecting with God. Transcendentalists were critical of urban living and materialism.

²⁹ A body of literature grew up around this notion that was started, of course, by Andrew Jackson Downing. Just two works that promoted the suburban home as a place in which to experience nature as a civilizer were Frank J. Scott, *The Art of Beautifying Suburban Home Grounds of Small Extent* (New York, 1870); Jacob Widenmann, *Beautifying Country Homes: A Handbook of Landscape Gardening* (New York, 1870).

³⁰ These people's main works on transcendentalism are Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* (Boston, 1836); Henry David Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (Boston, 1854). Andrew Jackson Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (New York, 1859).

from cities as the necessary recipe for a strong America.³¹ The leading historian of U.S. suburbia, Kenneth Jackson, calls Downing ‘the most influential single individual in translating the rural ideal into a suburban ideal’.³² Downing’s work influenced California suburban design in the Gilded Age. *Picturesque California Homes*, an 1884 handbook for aspiring homeowners and builders that went through several reprints, followed its lead.³³ The homes such volumes extolled drew value from their semi-rural location as much as their form.

Around San Francisco Bay few spots illustrated the benefits of suburban living more than Alameda, which lay just across the water from the city proper, and by 1891 had become, in the estimation of the *Call*, a commuter suburb. Alameda, the paper reported, was marked out by the natural beauty the Transcendentalists had extolled. It had ‘gardens and groves’, ‘bright skies and balmy airs’, ‘flowers... in profuse abundance’, and oaks, pines, ‘and other indigenous trees’ which developers had done their best to preserve in order to ‘reproduce the old Roman idea of *rus in urbe*’. All of this provided a fitting setting for ‘the cosy homes of happy people,’ and made San Francisco’s suburb ‘pre-eminently a city of homes’. Indeed, Alameda’s housing stock, the paper reported, were ‘of the better sort’, with ‘fine grounds’, wide frontages, and ‘[e]vidences of culture and refinement’. Yet strikingly absent in such discussion was any mention of women or a wider civic culture. The suburban setting itself would provide the moral regeneration that for Farnham could only come through women’s domestic labour.³⁴

As San Francisco’s suburbia grew, then, it remained closely tied to celebrations of home life, but its boosters placed far less stress on the vital role women would play in its uplift. Removed from the corrupting influence of the city, and situated in verdant, airy surroundings, suburbs would morally regulate themselves. Yet their growth and exclusivity reflected two, sometimes contradictory, strands of thinking in Gilded Age America: first, the determinative

³¹ Downing, *Country Houses*, p. vi.

³² Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, p. 63.

³³ Samuel and Joseph C. Newsom, *Picturesque California Homes* (Los Angeles, 1884).

³⁴ ‘In Beautiful Alameda’, *San Francisco Morning Call*, volume LXIX, number 147, 26 April 1891, p. 8.

power of the environment to shape character, and second, the supposed dangers posed to the urban environment by racial mixing. Seemingly a world away from Alameda, yet just a few miles across the Bay, lay the antithesis of the suburban ideal: the first Chinatown in the United States. As one of the most scrutinised districts in the Republic, it was here that those contradictions became most evident.

The Chinese in California and San Francisco

Chinese immigrants began to travel to California in earnest in 1849 upon the discovery of gold. That immigration, like all others to the Far West around mid-century, was characterised by one key metric: its overwhelmingly male cast. San Francisco's gender disparity lessened through the 1860s and 70s, and as the LSFS shows, a women's sphere of reform and activism had taken root. The city's Chinese population, however, remained heavily skewed towards men. In 1860, the Chinese population in California was 95 percent male. In 1870 it was 93 percent, rising a fraction in 1880 to 96 percent.³⁵ In the initial stages of immigration, this was of course not unusual: in the United States and elsewhere in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, voluntary migration has generally begun with men, with female compatriots following sometime later.³⁶ Yet, as late as 1920, less than ten percent of the Chinese population across the whole of the U.S. were female.³⁷ The huge imbalance carried on up to at least the dawn of the Second World War.³⁸ White critics of immigration did not echo Farnham's old idea that an influx of women would stabilise the community and nourish moral improvement. The few Chinese women who did come to California, indeed, were seen as just as problematic as

³⁵ Daniels, *Asian America*, p. 15.

³⁶ David Ward, *Cities and Immigrants*; Daniels, *Asian America*, p. 17.

³⁷ Daniels, *Asian America*, p. 16.

³⁸ Sucheng Chan, 'The Exclusion of Chinese Women, 1870 – 1943', in Sucheng Chan, eds., *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882 – 1943* (Philadelphia, 1991), p. 94; Huping Ling, *Surviving on the Gold Mountain: A History of Chinese American Women and Their Lives* (Albany, 1998), pp. 1 – 3; Shah, *Contagious Divides*, p. 13.

Chinese men. They were cast as debased, incapable of performing the roles women needed to shoulder.³⁹ Thus, though a heavily male immigrant population troubled white San Franciscans, barely any saw a solution in the introduction of Chinese women.⁴⁰

Even without large numbers of women, the Chinese population in San Francisco grew substantially over the first few decades of U.S. rule. Early arrivals were few enough in number for one historian of Asian Americans to term the process a ‘trickle’; only around 300 Chinese reached San Francisco in 1849.⁴¹ While reliable figures are hard to ascertain, though, the population across the whole state of California exploded in a similar way to that of other nationalities who journeyed to the region in pursuit of riches: in 1850 only 450 Chinese were recorded as resident; by 1852, there were 20,026.⁴² Gold, it seemed, called to the Chinese as persuasively as it did to the rest of the world.

From 1860 to 1900, the number of Chinese men in San Francisco rose in line with the population of the wider city, despite exclusionary legislation. The 1860 census reported 2,719 ‘Asiatic’ residents in San Francisco, only 406 of whom were women. Exactly how many of those ‘Asiatic’ residents were Chinese is unclear: Japanese, Filipino, and other East Asian residents were recorded under the same heading.⁴³ A decade later, the Chinese had become numerous enough to merit their own category in the census records, perhaps hinting at the anxiety amongst Anglo-American residents at the presence of a large ‘Celestial’ presence as migrants from the well-connected southern province of Guangdong fled the dislocation caused by the Taiping Rebellion.⁴⁴ By 1870, the Chinese population stood at 12,022 in San

³⁹ Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California*, p. 17.

⁴⁰ The chapter will expand on American’s perception of both Chinese men and women shortly.

⁴¹ Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850 – 1943: A Trans-Pacific Community* (Stanford, 2000), p. 38.

⁴² Shah, *Contagious Divides*, p. 20.

⁴³ That the Chinese made up most of this number is almost certain. Later census records that made a distinction between East Asians show that the Chinese were by far and away the largest group from that region. See United States Census Bureau, ‘Classified Population of the States and Territories, By Counties’, *1860 Census: The Eighth Census of the United States* (Washington, 1864), p. 28.

⁴⁴ As well as the Taiping Rebellion, the loss of the Opium Wars against the British, and latterly France, also created inequitable living conditions for many Chinese. The Punti-Hakka Clan Wars raged from 1855, too, ensuring continued instability for residents in the Guangdong region. On factors that ‘pushed’ Chinese men

Francisco.⁴⁵ Over the following decade, after the Burlingame Treaty had abetted the movement of labour across the Pacific, Chinese residents almost doubled to 21,790. By 1890, by which time federal proscriptions were having an impact, the Chinese population had only increased slightly to 25,833.⁴⁶ But even as the growth of their community slowed, the Chinese were consistently – and by a considerable distance – the largest minority group in San Francisco throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.⁴⁷

White San Franciscans rarely welcomed the presence of an increasingly large foreign population in the city and state. In 1850, for example, one worried newspaper reported that the number of arrivals from China was ‘enormous’.⁴⁸ Frank Soulé’s *Annals of San Francisco* announced that by April 1852, the level of immigration from China had ‘greatly increased’. ‘Considerable apprehension began then to be entertained’, Soulé reflected, ‘of the supposed bad effect which their presence would have on the white population’.⁴⁹ Chinese men arrived in California and quickly left San Francisco to head to the gold fields. There, they worked side by side with white American miners. Whilst the proximity may have been close, the relationship between the two communities was not. Numerous Chinese miners were forcefully

towards California, see Elmer Clarence Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Urbana, 1939); Ta Chen, *Emigrant Communities in South China: A Study of Overseas Migration and Its Influence on Standards of Living and Social Change*, ed. By Bruno Lasker, (New York, 1940); Kung-Chuan Hsiao, *Rural China: Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century* (Seattle, 1967); John Kuo Wei Tchen and Arnold Genthe, *Genthe’s Photographs of San Francisco’s Old Chinatown* (New York, 1984), p. 4; Judy Yung, Gordan H. Chang, Him Mark Lai, *Chinese American Voices: From the Gold Rush to the Present* (Berkeley, 2006); Shah, *Contagious Divides*, p. 20. There is also some research on the ‘other side’ of Chinese immigration to America, too, which argues that later in the nineteenth century, the United States actively tried to secure cheap migrant labour for massive industrial projects such as building the railroad and telegraph line. See Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, 1979); Gary Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle, 1994).

⁴⁵ United States Census Bureau, ‘Population of Each State and Territory, by Counties’, *1870 Census: The Ninth Census of the United States* (Washington, 1872), p. 16. The actual figure reported for San Francisco’s ‘Chinese’ category was 12,030. A footnote declared that 8 of these were in fact Japanese.

⁴⁶ United States Census Bureau, *1880 Census: The Tenth Census of the United States* (Washington, 1883); United States Census Bureau, *1890 Census: The Eleventh Census of the United States* (Washington, 1894). Also see Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, p. 55; Shah, *Contagious Divides*, p. 46 for discussions on Chinese population statistics during the second half of the nineteenth century.

⁴⁷ Douglas Henry Daniels, *Pioneer Urbanites: A Social and Cultural History of Black San Francisco* (Berkeley, 1990), p. 13; Shah, *Contagious Divides*, p. 46.

⁴⁸ ‘Interesting Items’, *Placer Times*, volume 1, number 42, 2 March 1850, p. 2.

⁴⁹ Frank Soulé, John H. Gihon, and James Nisbet, *The Annals of San Francisco* (New York, 1855), p. 378, 380-381.

evicted from claims by U.S. citizens, and unprovoked violence against Chinese miners became common.⁵⁰ These Chinese gold seekers found that they had no choice but to search for gold in areas already turned over by other miners. When, on occasion, they met with success in such unpromising spots, they encountered further resentment from their white rivals.⁵¹

The hostile reception Chinese miners received extended beyond the diggings, too. Legislative discrimination in the form of the 1852 Foreign Miners' Tax – the first of numerous ordinances and punitive laws directed at the 'Celestials' – made mining prohibitively expensive for the Chinese, after similar legislation from 1850 had been repealed for the likes of Australian, Chilean, and Mexican miners.⁵² Though the 1852 measure targeted all non-citizens, it was disproportionately applied to East Asians, so much so that Mark Twain reported the tax was 'usually inflicted on no foreigners but Chinamen'.⁵³ One newspaper even discussed the legislation under the heading 'The Chinese Law'.⁵⁴ The measure was just one front in a broader campaign of state-sanctioned eviction, violence, and imprisonment.

When they were driven out of mining, Chinese men sought other forms of work. Thousands provided the labour that consolidated U.S. power in its western empire by working on ranches, extending the telegraph network, and blasting the Pacific Railroad through the Sierra Nevada between 1866 and 1869.⁵⁵ Others returned to San Francisco from the early

⁵⁰ Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labour and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley, 1971), p. 3; Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, p. 246. See also 'The Tax on Foreign Miners and the Policy of Expulsion', *Daily Alta California*, volume 3, number 135, 15 May 1852, p. 12; 'Sacramento News', *Daily Alta California*, volume 3, number 141, 21 May 1852. On at least one occasion, the *Daily Alta* received word that Chinese miners had been evicted by Americans after they had allegedly attacked the American right to the claim. The *Daily Alta* was wholly unconvinced by the story and suggested that it had been invented to make the eviction seem fair. Despite this, the subheading of the article – 'Difficulties with the Chinese' – still appeared to place blame on the Chinese. See 'Difficulties with the Chinese', *Daily Alta California*, volume 3, number 135, 15 May 1852.

⁵¹ Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, pp. 244 – 246.

⁵² *The Statutes of California, 1850*, Chapter 97, pp. 221 – 223. In support of the Tax, see 'Foreign Miners', *Daily Alta California*, volume 1, number 83, 5 April 1850, p. 3. In support of its abolishment one year later, see 'Repeal of the Foreign Miners' Tax Law', *Daily Alta California*, volume 2, number 101, 20 March 1851, p. 2.

⁵³ Mark Twain, *Roughing It* (Hartford, 1895), p. 393.

⁵⁴ 'The Chinese Law', *Placer Herald*, volume 4, number 17, 5 January 1856, p. 1.

⁵⁵ Saxton, *Indispensable Enemy*, p. 4; Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement*, p. 15; Judy Yung, et al, *Chinese American Voices*, pp. 2 – 4.

1850s, where they gathered around the region that would soon become Chinatown, though was known colloquially in the early period of Chinese immigration as ‘Little China’.⁵⁶ Such ethnic enclaves would become a feature of U.S. cities in the second half of the nineteenth century and provided shelter, employment, and social and cultural opportunities to their inhabitants.⁵⁷ From just a few blocks, Chinatown spread, eventually becoming the district bounded on the north and south by Broadway and Sacramento streets, and Kearny and Stockton streets on the east and west.⁵⁸

Once back in San Francisco, the Chinese largely entered self-employed work, which often allowed the city’s more prosperous residents to enjoy domestic comforts. Shops, selling predominantly Chinese products and clothes, became a common site to find work, as did Chinese restaurants. But laundry work proved perhaps the most notable and enduring ethnic niche. Hard evidence for why is elusive: Chinese men had not been responsible for laundry in their homeland, and the methods they adopted in America differed from Chinese practices.⁵⁹ But their eviction from the mines, the low numbers of white middle-class women, and the problems the city’s wealthy faced in securing household servants led to an influx into an industry that might elsewhere have been dominated by live-in Irish-born ‘Biddies’.⁶⁰ The preponderance of Chinese men in labour that was traditionally confined to the ‘woman’s sphere’ offered a double blessing for white San Franciscans. The ‘humiliating’ action of carrying out women’s work reinforced American ideas of racial superiority and Chinese

⁵⁶ Soulé, *Annals*, p. 381.

⁵⁷ David Ward, *Cities and Immigration: A Geography of Change in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, 1971), p. 105 – 109.

⁵⁸ Descriptions of the boundaries of Chinatown vary in contemporary guidebooks and literature. Generally, Broadway and Sacramento Streets always form the northern and southern boundaries of the district. The biggest point of difference in descriptions of the location of Chinatown is its western edge, which is sometimes pushed as far into the city as Powell Street. The boundaries given in this work form the very heart of San Francisco’s Chinatown.

⁵⁹ Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, pp. 125 – 126.

⁶⁰ See Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, pp. 92 – 93; Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, pp. 125 – 126; Paul Ong, ‘An Ethnic Trade: The Chinese Laundries in Early California’, *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 8 (Winter 1981), pp. 95 – 113; Joan S. Wang, ‘Race, Gender, and Laundry Work: The Roles of Chinese Laundrymen and American Women in the United States, 1850 – 1950’, *Journal of American Ethnic History* 24 (Fall, 2004), pp. 58 – 99.

inferiority yet was also vital in providing home comforts given the scarcity of other female labour.⁶¹ Indeed, the work of Chinese men in the city's laundries helped to prop up San Francisco's domestic sphere despite their exclusion from domesticity's supposed blessings. So too, in the later nineteenth-century did their labour in domestic service. With the cost of Black and white female servants especially high on the West Coast, homebuilders began to turn to Chinese men.⁶² By employing those men first in women's work at reduced rates, San Franciscans propped up their racial and domestic orders whilst simultaneously excluding the Chinese from the benefits.⁶³

Such contributions to building an empire of the home in San Francisco went unacknowledged. Instead, white Californians commonly regarded the Chinese as a lesser race and decried their presence as a threat to civilizational order. As Ronald Takaki outlines, Chinese men were quickly labelled 'heathen, morally inferior, savage, childlike, and lustful'.⁶⁴ These claims could seem self-evident to white San Franciscans from the 1850s. Frank Soulé, for example, matter-of-factly declared that '[t]he manners and habits of the Chinese are very repugnant to Americans in California...inferior in most mental and bodily qualities, the Chinaman is looked upon by some as only a little superior to the negro, and by others as somewhat inferior'. Anyone who spent time with 'celestials', he explained, would before long begin to feel 'an uncontrollable sort of loathing against them'. Such was Soulé's conviction that they were the inferior race, he claimed that Anglo-Americans would 'only laugh in derision if even a divine were to pretend to place' whites and Chinese 'on an equality'.⁶⁵ White San

⁶¹ The 'feminization' of Chinese men in California started in the mines. See Takaki, *Iron Cages*; Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, pp. 35, 245 – 246 esp.

⁶² Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, p. 100.

⁶³ For more on Chinese men working in traditionally female roles in the West, see David M. Katzman, *Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* (New York, 1978), pp. 45, 55 – 56, 221 – 222, 257 – 258. For more on Chinese men being paid less than women for the same work, see p. 307. See also See Barbara Berglund, *Making San Francisco American: Cultural Frontiers in the Urban West, 1846 – 1906* (Lawrence, 2007), pp. 16 – 57.

⁶⁴ Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, p. 101.

⁶⁵ Soulé, *Annals*, p. 378.

Franciscans also turned to biblical, apocalyptic imagery to describe the Chinese. Arrivals from Guangdong were labelled a ‘swarm’, a ‘plague’, and a ‘pestilence’ akin to the widely reported swarms of locusts that in the mid-1870s ravaged the Western Plains.⁶⁶ Even as the Chinese population serviced the homes and laundered the clothes of a white middle class, then, they were depicted as hostile foreign bodies invading the Republic and destroying livelihoods.

Beneath this mingling of racism and religion lay gendered anxieties about Asian manhood and womanhood. The purported lustfulness of Chinese men, for instance, appeared as a particular menace to San Francisco’s domestic order. Where white miners and sailors might be tempted into sin by their situation and were therefore believed to be reformable if subject to better influences, the ‘Chinaman’ seemed beyond redemption. Chinese men, like their African American counterparts in the North and South, were branded as predatory threats to white American women. Those who transgressed such boundaries faced severe censure. Newspapers often referred to white women and Chinese men living together as one of the most ‘disgusting features’ of Chinese immigration.⁶⁷ But aside from the claimed dangers of racial mixing, such cohabitation presented another problem. Women were pure, virtuous, and domestic; Chinese men were not. Influence here would work in reverse, as the unreformable ‘heathen Chinese’ corrupted pure white womanhood.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ For examples of each word in use, see ‘Town Talk’, *Daily Alta California*, volume 25, number 8423, 20 April 1873, p. 1; ‘The Small Pox’, *California Farmer and Journal of Useful Sciences*, volume 45, number 17, 14 September 1876, p. 132; ‘Shasta Courier’, *Shasta Courier*, volume 19, number 23, 27 August 1870, p. 4. These terms were also common in other materials besides newspapers, too. For examples, see Samuel Bowles, *Our New West: Records of Travel between the Mississippi River and the Pacific Ocean* (Hartford, 1869), p. 394; Pierton W. Dooner, *Last Days of the Republic* (San Francisco, 1880), pp. 206, 209, 251; Willard B. Farwell, *The Chinese at Home and Abroad* (San Francisco, 1885), pp. 51, 62, 67, 87; Washington M. Ryer, *The Conflict of Races* (San Francisco, 1886), p. 12. On insect infestations in 1874, see ‘Forty Thousand Square Miles Destroyed by Grasshoppers in Kansas’, *Sacramento Daily Union*, volume 47, number 7294, 20 August 1874, p. 1; ‘The Grasshopper Pest’, *Marysville Daily Appeal*, volume XXX, number 56, 4 September 1874, p. 2; ‘The Grasshopper’, *Santa Barbara Weekly Press*, volume VI, number 47, 5 June 1875, p. 7.

⁶⁷ ‘Our Chinese Population’, See *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 60, issue 89, 21 July 1885, p. 2.

⁶⁸ ‘Heathen Chinese’ was a disparaging term used for the Chinese in nineteenth-century newspapers that became more and more prominent throughout the 1870s as unemployment rose and the Chinese were blamed by white workingmen in California. Near the end of that decade, the WPC exploded on the scene with their anti-Chinese rhetoric. See ‘The “Heathen Chinese” is Peculiar’, *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 31, issue 15, 25 October 1870, p. 3; ‘The “Heathen Chinese”’, *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 31, issue 109, 13 February 1871, p. 4; ‘The Heathen Chinese’, *Daily Alta California*, volume 27, number 9324, 14 October 1875, p. 1.

Chinese women appeared less frequently in anti-immigration discourse largely because there were fewer of them in California. Men tended to migrate alone leaving wives to tend to in-laws. But those who did cross the Pacific were just as unwelcome as their male counterparts. Middle-class Americans, often avid consumers of Orientalist culture, looked on the Chinese household as an anti-domestic order that stood in stark contrast to their own.⁶⁹ Chinese customs, influenced by millennia old Confucian teachings, prescribed strict roles for men and women in China. Confucianism, one historian has said, ‘provided an ideological system in which women were believed to be inferior and therefore they had to subject to male domination’.⁷⁰ Part of this domination took the form of restricting Chinese women’s social movement; women’s access to the public sphere was heavily restricted and convention saw them spend most of their time in the home.⁷¹ Even women of higher social status had little public freedom, and though not completely restricted to the upper classes, the practice of foot-binding ensured Chinese women’s physical manoeuvrability was also severely constrained. A Chinese publication that outlined ‘doctrines’ for women confirmed that this was the practice’s primary function: ‘Feet are bound not to make them beautiful as a curved bow’, it clarified, ‘but to restrain the women when they go outdoors’.⁷² American domesticity, with its emphasis on female stewardship in the home and benevolence beyond, shared with this Confucian ideal the conviction that woman had a distinct sphere. But to U.S. observers, at least, the sphere in China reduced women to a purely submissive role.

And yet, for critics of East Asian immigration, the main threat posed by Chinese women lay in their purported presence in sex work. This Anglo-American perception stemmed from

⁶⁹ See Kristin L. Hoganson, *Consumers’ Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865–1920* (Chapel Hill, 2007).

⁷⁰ Ling, *Surviving on the Gold Mountain*, p. 18.

⁷¹ Sandmeyer, *Anti-Chinese Movement*, p. 13; Yung, *Unbound Feet*, p. 18; Ling, *Surviving on the Gold Mountain*, pp. 18–19.

⁷² Quote taken from Yung, *Unbound Feet*, p. 15. Yung’s book on foot binding in Chinese culture explores the practice both domestically in China and overseas and investigates the lives of women whose feet were bound.

the fact that, amongst the very small numbers of Chinese women in California during the second half of the nineteenth century, the majority did indeed work – albeit unwillingly – in the sex trade.⁷³ Lucy Cheng Hirata’s statistical analysis of census documents found that in 1860, around 556 Chinese women – or around 85 percent of the whole – may have been forcibly contracted to Chinatown’s sex industry. In 1870, this figure was around 71 percent, dropping to 21 percent in 1880.⁷⁴ Americans generally understood that Chinese women were forcibly trafficked to San Francisco to undertake sex work, or that they were otherwise coerced by Chinese men who saw an opportunity to make money. It was not uncommon, for example, for Chinese men to return to China and marry, before taking their new wife to San Francisco under the pretence of a new life in an exciting country. Upon arrival, the woman would be sold into the sex trade.⁷⁵

Widespread knowledge of this forced labour among Anglo-Americans – while adding to the charge sheet documenting the crimes of Chinese manhood – did not allay the stigma Asian women suffered for their involuntary participation in that ‘most shameful commerce’.⁷⁶ Instead, women’s sex work was naturalised as an aspect of race and culture. ‘In China’, James Buel wrote in 1883, ‘prostitution is a legally recognized custom, one which is invested with legitimate privileges, not in conflict with the best society’.⁷⁷ San Francisco’s Special Committee of the Board of Health saw this tendency playing out in Chinatown. ‘[T]he relations

⁷³ This is certainly true for the years between 1850 and 1875, after which the numbers of Chinese women whose occupation was listed as ‘prostitute’ in the census records drastically dropped.

⁷⁴ This drop by 1880 is presumably the result of the Page Law taking effect. See Lucie Cheng Hirata, ‘Free, Indentured, Enslaved: Chinese Prostitutes in Nineteenth-Century America’, *Signs* 5 (Autumn, 1979), p. 24.

⁷⁵ Perhaps the most well-known example of this coercion is the story of Wong Ah So in the early twentieth century, who married a self-professed laundryman and was sold into prostitution soon after arriving in San Francisco. See ‘Story of Wong Ah So – Experiences as a Prostitute’, in *Orientalism and their Cultural Adjustments: Interviews, Life Histories and Social Adjustment Experiences of Chinese and Japanese* (Nashville, 1946), pp. 31 – 33. Another mode of coercion was Chinese women being told of marriage arrangements to rich men in San Francisco. Contracts signed for the woman’s passage – often she was unable to read them – stated that the debt would need to be worked off on arrival. The type of work would not be specified. For a discussion on these contracts, see Yung, *Unbound Feet*, pp. 27 – 28.

⁷⁶ Soulé, *Annals*, p. 412.

⁷⁷ James W. Buel, *Metropolitan Life Unveiled: Mysteries and Misereries of America’s Great Cities; embracing New York, Washington City, San Francisco, Salt Lack City, and New Orleans* (St. Louis, 1883), p. 277.

of the sexes [in the district] are chiefly so ordered as to provide for the gratification of the animal proclivities alone', it declared in 1885. Whenever the investigators encountered women in the neighbourhood, they were found to be 'in a state of concubinage merely to administer to the animal passions of the other sex...or else to follow the admitted calling of the prostitute'.⁷⁸

The casting of Chinese women as debased, uncivilized, and anti-domestic set them in harsh contrast to Americans of their sex. They were made home wreckers rather than home builders. Where those middle-class American women, seen as paragons of virtue, spread moral values and tamed wild men, Chinese women did not. Benjamin E. Lloyd made a similar point too in his 1876 sketch of the city: 'few family circles have been formed among them [the Chinese] in San Francisco. Woman, the important link in the sacred chain, is not here; or if she is here, she is in that infamous pursuit that is the great destroyer of homes'.⁷⁹ Here, Lloyd inadvertently described the scene that Farnham and others of her ilk had believed to be developing in San Francisco during its early years. The absence of 'family circles' and, as Farnham saw it, the right kind of women, had galvanised the domestic reformer to devise her plan to bring middle-class white women to solve this societal malaise.⁸⁰ We have seen, however, that though the population was described in much the same way, the same reforming urge was not aroused.

This, though, was because Lloyd was almost certainly not talking about Chinese homes being destroyed, but those of the city's white population. The concerns surrounding Chinese women's involvement in sex work rarely addressed the damage it would do to irredeemable Chinese families. The worries of white San Franciscans instead revolved around the effect sex work had on the white population. Easy access to prostitution had long troubled domestic reformers; for them, home attractions offered a way to pull young men out of the orbit of sin, and the efforts of organisations like the LSFS often paralleled campaigns to eradicate

⁷⁸ 'Report of the Special Committee' in Farwell, *The Chinese at Home and Abroad*, part II, pp. 8 – 9.

⁷⁹ Lloyd, *Lights and Shades*, p. 219.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

prostitution altogether. But it was the alleged impact of Chinese women on young boys rather than bachelors and husbands that proved especially troubling. Dr. Toland – founder of the Toland Medical College, which later became the medical department of the University of California – gave testimony to the Special Committee during their investigations of Chinatown. He reported having treated young boys only ‘eight to ten years old with diseases they told me they had contracted on Jackson [S]treet’, and that ‘the worst cases of syphilis I have ever seen in my life occur in children not more than ten or twelve years old’.⁸¹ As it was widely assumed that even the most morally depraved white women working in San Francisco’s sex trade would not consent to the custom of children, Chinese women were assumed to be the source of the problem. Toland ‘suppose[d] nine-tenths’ of the diseases he treated were a result of being ‘with Chinawomen’.⁸² Another doctor, J. C. Shorb, painted a similar picture to Toland in his testimony. Cheap Chinese labourers, the medics implied, did not just undercut the wages of American men, but also their physical wellbeing.⁸³

The identification of Chinatown and sex work made the district a threat to the health, civilization, and domestic order of the white settler metropolis.⁸⁴ Where maternal influence in good homes served to raise upstanding republican citizens, contemporaries believed that in Chinatown, young American men instead came under the spell of diseased and depraved Asian women, who would leave them physically and morally debilitated. White San Franciscans who made the district the object of their gaze stressed the incapability of Chinese women to introduce morality and virtue into the lives of, not only their families, but also the U.S. boys

⁸¹ Jackson Street was a central thoroughfare in Chinatown. ‘Report of the Special Committee’, in Farwell, *The Chinese at Home and Abroad*, part II, p. 12

⁸² *Ibid*, p. 13.

⁸³ There are two salient features to this reasoning. The first is the assumption that white American prostitutes could charge more when selling their bodies. Both Toland and Shorb, as well as many others, always referenced the cheap cost of sex in Chinatown in comparison to white prostitution in the city. Second, it outlined another way in which cheap Chinese ‘labour’ was undermining and threatening American lives – this time in terms of health rather than livelihood – in San Francisco and wider California.

⁸⁴ Lloyd, *Lights and Shades*, p. 219.

and men who they were accused of tempting. In short, Chinatown was understood by San Francisco's residents to poison both bodies and politics.

While the diagnosis of Chinatown as a hub of vice and moral corruption might have made the district a focal point for benevolent reform and systematic philanthropy, this did not happen. In contrast to white sex workers, there were almost no sustained reform efforts aimed at the rescue and uplift of 'fallen' Chinese. The one exception – the San Francisco Chinese Mission Home – did aim to help women, but focused mostly on stopping trafficking across the Pacific, and faced sustained opposition, most notably from the male leaders within the church the Mission was a part of.⁸⁵ Language barriers and hostility to outside interference certainly played a part, as did proscriptions against white women interacting with non-whites, but above all the project of domesticating San Francisco hit a roadblock in the form of race-based preconceptions about the Chinese incapacity to form good homes. Domestic ideologues, as Amy Kaplan has argued, urged American women to assimilate the foreign through their homebuilding and reform.⁸⁶ But the Chinese were vilified as perhaps the most unassimilable foreigners in the late nineteenth-century republic. The opinions held about Chinese culture, men, and women – that they were fundamentally different from Americans – restricted their entrance into domesticity, unless in a service capacity, and stopped Americans from trying to use domesticity to reform the perceived issues. Chinese women's confinement to the home, their perceived status as debased and degraded sexual beings, and the apparent absence of motherhood all contrived to mark them as irreconcilable with American domestic values.

⁸⁵ See Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874 – 1939* (New York, 1990), pp. 13 – 17. Most of the research done on the San Francisco Chinese Mission Home has been focused on the long-serving matron, Donaldina Cameron. See Carol Green Wilson, *Chinatown Quest: The Life Adventures of Donaldina Cameron* (Stanford, 1931); Mildred Crowl Martin, *Chinatown's Angry Angel: The Story of Donaldina Cameron* (Palo Alto, 1977); Julia Flynn Siler, *The White Devil's Daughters: The Women Who Fought Slavery in San Francisco's Chinatown* (New York, 2020)

⁸⁶ Amy Kaplan, 'Manifest Domesticity', *American Literature* 70 (September 1998), pp. 581 – 606.

Chinese women were seen as incapable of performing the civilizing roles that American women were burdened with. The same attitudes prevented men from being reformed, too.

Instead of a sustained campaign of domestication, white San Franciscans pushed for exclusion. Reform, after all, might have been read as an invitation to remain in the city, and few advocated for that. Introduced in 1875, the Page Law forbade immigration, and even the crossing of state boundaries, for the purpose of prostitution.⁸⁷ Though the measure ostensibly applied to all nationalities, far more effort was put into stopping Chinese women – ‘the most indecent and shameless part of the population’ – from arriving in San Francisco than restricting other ethnicities.⁸⁸

While historians have often focused on the labour conflicts over immigration that spawned the California Workingmen’s Party, a gendered reading of San Franciscan nativism illustrates how ideas about manhood, womanhood, and homes made the presence of ‘Celestials’ unacceptable even to committed reformers. Chinese men were painted as sexually deviant threats to the moral, as well as the economic, landscape of the city and were regularly targeted by white mobs. Chinese women fell far short of the standards expected of ‘good’ American women: they were impure, incapable of influencing their own families positively, and threatened the sanctity of white family life. And the ills they brought with them, critics insisted, were all too evident in Chinatown’s anti-domestic space.

Chinatown’s Anti-Domestic Orders

In the urban milieu, moral environmentalism could work two ways. Environment, urban reformers in nineteenth-century America believed, could shape character. San Franciscans, as

⁸⁷ For discussions of the Page Law, see George A. Pepper, ‘Forbidden Families: Emigration Experiences of Chinese Women Under the Page Law, 1875 – 1882’, *Journal of American Ethnic History* 6 (Fall 1986), pp. 28 – 46; Chan, ‘Exclusion of Chinese Women’, pp. 105 – 109; Hirata, ‘Free, Indentured, Enslaved’, p. 10; Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, p. 47; Ling, *Surviving on the Gold Mountain*, p. 28, 88; Yung, *Unbound Feet*, pp. 32 – 33.

⁸⁸ Soulé, *Annals*, p. 384.

we will see, embraced such logic wholeheartedly in their efforts to create parks and leafy suburbs. Conversely, though, character could leave its mark on an environment. In Gilded Age depictions of Chinatown, this became apparent. The supposed racial flaws of Chinese men and women were said to have left an imprint on the space they occupied, and that space, in turn, threatened to corrupt the wider city.

San Francisco's Chinatown – the first district to be named as such across the Republic – initially extended a few blocks around Dupont Street and was known informally as 'Little China'.⁸⁹ As evicted miners arrived from the gold fields, Little China's population exploded.⁹⁰ Bounded by Broadway and Sacramento streets on the north and south, and Kearny and Stockton streets on the east and west, Chinatown occupied around twelve blocks in the centre of the city. On its eastern side, it merged into the notorious Barbary Coast, another vice district, and a popular haunt of mariners.⁹¹ Decried for its overcrowding and filth, its teeming 'inferior' population, and the substandard quality of its housing, Chinatown appeared as a blot on an otherwise improving city. The overcrowded, male-dominated, tenement-style housing in which the Chinese lived, then, was about as far from the idealised version of a private home, managed by domestic woman, as it was possible to be. Indeed, one of the many San Francisco detectives tasked with investigating the condition of Chinatown claimed the district 'was worse in point of moral degradation than the most degraded places of New York'.⁹²

In this respect Chinatown offered a contrast not only to the idealised American home but also to the American Republic itself. When the LSFS acquired their sailors' house, they did so in a spot refreshed by sea breezes, secluded from a large population, and well away from the temptations of taverns and gambling dens. White observers agreed that Chinatown stood in

⁸⁹ Soulé, *Annals*, p. 381.

⁹⁰ Another increase in Chinatown's population occurred when the Pacific Railroad was complete, and up to 10,000 Chinese labourers found themselves out of work.

⁹¹ Herbert Asbury, *The Barbary Coast: An Informal History of the San Francisco Underworld* (New York, 1933) is an enjoyable introduction into San Francisco's vice district.

⁹² 'Oriental Immigrants', *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 42, issue 7, 15 April 1876, p. 4.

stark juxtaposition to such a setting. It appeared to them full of people who found work and shelter in narrow streets and alleys that lacked sunlight, fresh air, and the cleanliness domestic reformers saw as the outward mark of inner purity. Public space was misused for private ends and the district had none of the grandeur that nineteenth-century urban boosters aspired to attain. Family homes were almost non-existent; instead, old businesses – hotels, restaurants, shops, and theatres – had been turned into rough tenement housing.⁹³ No homes meant no families, and instead, Chinatown was seen as a hive for lascivious men and depraved women. In Chinatown, then, its inhabitants supposed barbarism, heathenism, and immorality all became manifest. Its very existence in the heart of the developing American city represented to white onlookers a rejection of the Republic’s cherished culture and society. ‘[T]he Chinese, with their singular customs and alienship’, one writer observed, ‘seldom become naturalized’.⁹⁴

The Chinese, in sequestering themselves in the middle of an American metropolis – and filling that enclave with foreign sights, sounds, and smells – agitated nativist San Franciscans. Among those nativists was Hinton Helper: a rare white southern critic of slavery, yet a strident proponent of white supremacy. The North Carolinian lived in California and San Francisco for three years. Writing in 1855, Helper thought that the isolated nature of the city’s Chinese population made them ‘more objectional than other foreigners’.⁹⁵ Helper saw in the enclave a

⁹³ For but one example, see G. B. Densmore’s discussion of the Globe Hotel, a once prestigious retreat for hopeful miners arriving in San Francisco during the initial stages of the gold rush. G. B. Densmore, *The Chinese in California: Description of Chinese Life in San Francisco, Their Habits, Morals, and Manners* (San Francisco, 1880), pp. 25 – 26.

⁹⁴ James W. Buel, *Metropolitan Life Unveiled*, p. 268.

⁹⁵ Hinton Helper was a contradictory man. Though an ardent abolitionist, he argued for the liberation of enslaved peoples because he believed that the South’s economic inertia was caused by the presence of slavery. He was also for the abolition movement because even in such a hierarchical structure as slavery, he believed the races should not mix. Furthermore, he was patriotic to the extreme. His apparent anger at the Chinese’s ‘refusal’ to integrate into American society would suggest that his patriotism and belief in American Exceptionalism outweighed his view that white Americans should not mix with other races. For Helper, this was a decision to be made by Americans, not foreigners on American soil. Helper laid out his ideas on abolition and his belief in racially pure societies in Hinton Rowan Helper, *The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It* (New York, 1860). For analysis of Helper’s writings on slavery, see Harvey Wish, *Ante-Bellum: Writings of George Fitzhugh and Hinton Rowan Helper on Slavery* (New York, 1960); Hugh C. Bailey, *Hinton Rowan Helper: Abolitionist – Racist* (Montgomery, 1965); David Brown, *Southern Outcast: Hinton Rowan Helper and The Impending Crisis of the South* (Baton Rouge, 2006).

people who did not ‘identify their lives and interests with the country’, and who lacked the public spiritedness to make useful citizens. The district’s architecture, Helper argued, was proof positive that they ‘neither build nor buy, nor invest capital in any way that conduces to the advantage of any one but themselves’.⁹⁶ Helper was certainly not alone in his assessment of the Chinese and their neighbourhood. Twenty-five years later, Pierton W. Dooner, an anti-Chinese author, characterised the city’s ‘Celestials’ as ‘Differing in manners, dress, habits of life, religion and education, and widely in their physical aspect, as well as physical requirements’. He believed them ‘incapable of assimilation, or of social intercommunication’ and assured readers that they had shown no ‘tendency or disposition to court a closer relationship’ with others in the city.⁹⁷ In 1885, Willard Farwell, a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, also lamented that ‘the Chinaman transported to other lands than his own, is the Chinaman still, with all his native habits and inclinations, with all his filth, with all his clannishness, with all his diseases, with all his hideous vices’.⁹⁸ The city’s press held this line, too. ‘Our civilization [has] left no impression’ on them, one paper bemoaned in 1880. The Chinese ‘never changed their habits of their own native soil, though twenty years have passed since their arrival here’.⁹⁹ American influence, it appeared, had not rubbed off.

Such talk of un-assimilability was hardly unique to anti-Chinese politics. The charge had been levelled at Irish Catholics in the 1840s and would be hurled again at Southern and Eastern Europeans in the early twentieth century. Depictions of San Francisco’s Chinatown, moreover, often echoed the ‘sunshine and shadow’ genre of urban sketch journalism which turned similar ethnic enclaves in East Coast and Midwestern cities into salacious subjects designed to titillate readers. But Chinatown offered a more extreme and (to white San Franciscans) troubling case,

⁹⁶ Hinton Helper, *The Land of Gold: Reality versus Fiction* (Baltimore, 1855), p. 93.

⁹⁷ W. P. Dooner, *Last Days of the Republic* (San Francisco, 1880), p. 15.

⁹⁸ Willard B. Farwell, *The Chinese at Home and Abroad* (San Francisco, 1885), p. 59.

⁹⁹ ‘Moving on their Works – Health Officer Dr. J. L. Mears Notifies the Chinese to Set Their Houses in Order’, *San Francisco Examiner*, volume XXX, number 46, 24 February 1880, p. 3.

and in part, that owed to an anti-domestic geography rooted in the racial character of its people. One report conceded that whilst ‘great cities have their slums and localities where filth, disease, crime and misery abound’, San Francisco’s Chinatown must nonetheless ‘stand apart, conspicuous and beyond them all in the extreme degree of these horrible attributes’. The report concluded it was ‘the rankest outgrowth of human degradation’.¹⁰⁰ Others claimed the city’s Chinese district was the Republic’s premier ‘cesspool of vice’.¹⁰¹ Whether it was disease, immorality, or cultural differences – Chinatown was always, it seemed, on the verge of leaking its inadequacies into the rest of the city.

The insalubrious conditions found in the Chinese district revealed another supposed ‘character trait’ of the Chinese: a natural proclivity towards slovenliness rather than cleanliness. Missionary writers who had visited China helped to plant the view of a dirty Chinese race in the minds of American readers.¹⁰² Other authors, many of whom had never visited China and provided no evidence to back up their claims about the country, piled on, helping to build what historian Nayan Shah has called a ‘knowledge’ of the Chinese and Chinatown that emphasised the absence of hygienic standards.¹⁰³ This ‘knowledge’ was produced through repetition until it became a cliché. G. B. Densmore’s assessment was typical: ‘the filthy habits engendered in youth and matured in manhood, acquired in his own country, have been brought here’.¹⁰⁴

Such ideas took root during decades in which ideas about hygiene, civilization, and American domesticity became ever more intertwined. Domestic writers had been propagating a gospel of cleanliness from early in the 1800s. Despite this, attachment to public health as a

¹⁰⁰ *Report of the Special Committee*, in Willard B. Farwell, *The Chinese at Home and Abroad*, part II (San Francisco, 1885), p. 5.

¹⁰¹ B. E. Lloyd, *Lights and Shade in San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1876), p. 258.

¹⁰² See George Smith, *A Narrative of an Exploratory Visit to each of the Consular Cities of China, and to the Islands of Hong Kong and Chusan* (New York, 1847); Justus Doolittle, *Social Life of the Chinese*, vol. 1 (New York, 1865). In both these books, as well as many others, the authors described China’s major cities in similar terms to San Francisco’s Chinatown: dirty and overcrowded, with narrow streets and alleys.

¹⁰³ Shah, *Contagious Divides*.

¹⁰⁴ There is no evidence to suggest Densmore ever visited China, where he might have seen this accused characteristic being developed. See, G. B. Densmore, *The Chinese in California*, p. 22.

municipal concern did not really gain any momentum until after the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865. Sanitary precautions, except as emergency measures during epidemics, were rare before the conflict. Sewers, running water, and baths were all scarce in towns and cities across the Republic. Hand washing was uncommon, whilst spitting and urinating in public was perfectly normal. Clothes were rarely changed throughout the week, let alone washed regularly.¹⁰⁵ Up until the 1850s, diseases and epidemics were more likely to be seen as punishments from God than anything else. Sinners – particularly prostitutes and drunkards – were the only ones who truly had anything to fear from disease.¹⁰⁶ Advocates of miasma theory, which held that disease emanated from rotting matter, did worry about the risks posed by dirty cities, and the nascent field of epidemiology – inspired by John Snow’s detective work tying cholera to the wells of 1850s London – meant that by the eve of the Civil War, the stirrings of a new science of public health were evident.¹⁰⁷ The conflict provided another fillip. The need to care for injured soldiers, sanitise field hospitals, and the evidence that infection and disease killed long after physical wounds had healed, brought hygiene’s importance to the fore, and after the guns fell silent, women added cleansing the nation to their already not-inconsiderable list of responsibilities.¹⁰⁸ With the struggle for the Union linking hygienic practices to patriotism and American power, advocates of public health now enjoyed considerable clout.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ For a comprehensive survey of how dirty people were (in comparison to modern, twenty-first century standards) prior to the Civil War, see Suellen Hoy, *Chasing Dirt: The American Pursuit of Cleanliness* (New York, 1995), pp. 3 – 16 esp. For an example of some of the everyday practices contrary to personal and public health that occurred in public life during the nineteenth century, see Nancy Tomes, *Gospel of Germs: Men, Women, and the Microbe in American Life* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), p. 3. For more on public health in nineteenth century cities, see John Duffy, *The Sanitarians: A History of American Public Health* (Urbana, 1990); Martin V. Melosi, *The Sanitary City: Environmental Services in Urban America from Colonial Times to the Present* (Pittsburgh, 2008). On the linking of immigrants and urban disease in America, see Alan M. Kraut, *Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the “Immigrant Menace”* (New York, 1994).

¹⁰⁶ Charles Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (Chicago, 1962).

¹⁰⁷ See Sandra Hempel, *The Medical Detective: John Snow and the Mystery of Cholera* (London, 2006).

¹⁰⁸ On the Civil War’s impact on the rise of public health in America, see Hoy, *Chasing Dirt*, pp. 29 – 58 esp. Two studies that examine women’s central role in the health of the nation are Kathleen M. Brown, *Foul Bodies: Cleanliness in Early America* (New Haven, 2009) and Emily K. Abel, *Hearts of Wisdom: American Women Caring for Kin, 1850 – 1940* (Cambridge, MA, 2000). Beecher also published instructions for women on the successful care of family. See Catharine Beecher, *Miss Beecher’s Housekeeper and Healthkeeper* (New York, 1873).

¹⁰⁹ Hoy, *Chasing Dirt*, pp. 29 – 58 esp.

San Francisco's Board of Health, which took particular interest in Chinatown, dated back to 1850, but it was strengthened in 1865 and then again in 1866.¹¹⁰

Public policy, though, was only catching up on the work of American domestic writers, who had been working hard to inculcate the value of cleanliness for some time. Catharine Beecher and Eliza Farnham provide two examples. Both Beecher and Farnham equated cleanliness with civilized society. As such, they saw women as vitally important in creating a clean environment to inhabit. Beecher proved particularly interested in personal hygiene. Her *Treatise* devoted a whole chapter to refuting the early nineteenth-century notion that dirt was good for the skin and for children's wellbeing, too. 'It is the fresh air and exercise, and not the dirt', she wearily insisted to those who compounded the two, 'which promotes the health'. She also linked bodily health with personal cleanliness – an idea that was certainly not self-evident in the mid-nineteenth century – and equated purity with piety. It was perhaps this notion that most strongly resonated with white San Franciscans when they viewed the dirty conditions of Chinatown. Neglecting 'the laws of health', Beecher told her readers, was a sin equal to 'thou shalt not kill'. 'He is as much displeased', she said of God, 'when we injure our own interests, as when we injure those of others'. Without directly using the phrase, Beecher was promoting the maxim often attributed to the preacher John Wesley: 'cleanliness is, indeed, next to godliness'.¹¹¹ When applied to Chinatown, the supposedly filthy conditions became easy to equate with the heathenism of its residents, who in turn threatened the Christian population through their sin.

Eliza Farnham also tied cleanliness to civilization. Like Beecher, she saw hygiene as integral to a good household, and if anything was even more militant in her demands. In her writings, she sets out to deep clean every house, 'shanty', or tent she stayed in, and records the

¹¹⁰ *San Francisco Municipal Reports for the Fiscal Year 1865-6, Ending June 30, 1866*, p. 413.

¹¹¹ Quote taken from James G. Donat and Randy L. Maddox, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 32 (Nashville, 1984), p. 53.

ablutions administered with pride: floors on the Illinois prairie, for instance, were ‘visited with another deluge of hot water and soap’ after an already vigorous clean.¹¹² As with Beecher, the message was unequivocal: civilized people did not reside in filthy places. Beecher, indeed, found vindication for her prescriptions in the Classical world, where the Greeks and Romans she admired bathed regularly and provided communal facilities for their citizens. But even contemporary Europe was ahead of America in its attitudes towards hygiene and health, she said.¹¹³ Cleanliness here became another civilizational yardstick. And after 1865, domestic ideology and a new science of public health would become powerful weapons enlisted against San Francisco’s Chinese population.

The focus of these attacks would be Chinese dwellings. The Gilded Age witnessed a long-running moral panic over the state of Chinatown’s habitations. James W. Buel, a prolific writer of US history, biographies, and Western outlaws, stressed the unknowability of such places in 1883. ‘[O]nly a vague idea of their squalor and inspissated, fummy, reeking condition can be given’, he argued. Buel believed that no one ‘can hope to convey a distinct picture of Chinese quarters’ in writing. Those who wanted to truly understand would need to visit, he counselled, but ‘must first be prepared to encounter odors so rank and pungent as to render the Augean stables sweetly scented by comparison’.¹¹⁴ If other contemporary critics found describing Chinatown’s dwellings hard, they nevertheless tried to do so. Overcrowding proved a particular concern in these accounts. One paper’s ‘characteristic view of China Town’ illustrated by means of an engraving how the Chinese ‘make their abodes as much as possible like those in their native land’. Discussing the Chinese propensity to gather in cities in characteristic

¹¹² Eliza Farnham, *Life in Prairie Land* (New York, 1847), p. 149-150.

¹¹³ Beecher, *Treatise*, p. 120. As seen in chapter one, Farnham’s linking of cleanliness and hygiene with ideas of civilization were much more racially motivated, evidenced in one example by her night spent at the *rancho*.

¹¹⁴ The Augean stables came from Greek mythology. King Augeas’ stables had never been cleaned and were so filthy, the story told, that they required Hercules to redirect a whole river to wash through them, thus cleaning out the filth. Buel’s imagery here was clear: Chinatown was in such a contaminated state, San Francisco needed divine intervention to deal with the problem. See James W. Buel, *Metropolitan Life Unveiled* (St. Louis, 1883), p. 270.

‘swarms’ – an action ‘not exactly appreciated by more civilized nations’ – the paper insisted it was an instinct ‘born in all their race’.¹¹⁵ The *Chronicle* agreed: ‘We hear much of Chinese overcrowding, but overcrowding is the normal condition of the Chinese’.¹¹⁶ Another piece, which termed Chinese living quarters ‘Satan’s Death Nurseries’, presents a typical example.¹¹⁷ ‘The result of crowding so many dirty human beings into so small a compass may be vividly imagined and need not be described’, it began, before promptly moving on to do so in lurid detail. ‘It is hard to conceive’, it continued, ‘of a place so absolutely filthy and disgusting as a regular Chinese lodging-house’. ‘It is a well known fact that hundreds of Chinese lodging-houses contain fifty or sixty lodgers in one room, and sometimes more’. The berths for sleeping ‘are arranged one above another along the walls, and also rise in some instances from the center of the room’.¹¹⁸ This was certainly not how middle-class, white Americans slept in their homes.

Living arrangements of this kind made maintaining boundaries between the sexes impossible. As the Special Committee put it, ‘Women and children seem also to be stowed away in every available nook and corner, without reference to any special accommodation being provided for them’.¹¹⁹ It questioned such women’s capacity to manage a domestic environment. ‘There are apparently in Chinatown few families living as such, with legitimate children’, its report informed. The Committee included a brutal and unsympathetically worded table to illustrate their findings. In it, they broke down the domestic situations of Chinese women and children. They discovered 57 women and 59 children said to be ‘living as families’. However, there was a far greater number – 761 women and 576 children – found ‘herded together with apparent indiscriminate parental relations, and no family classification, as far as

¹¹⁵ ‘The Chinese Quarter in S. F.’, *Pacific Rural Press*, volume 6, number 13, 27 September 1873, p. 1.

¹¹⁶ ‘Chinese Traits’, *San Francisco Chronicle*, volume XLVII, number 172, 5 July 1888, p. 3.

¹¹⁷ Other derogatory names for Chinese lodgings included ‘dens of disease’, ‘hovell[s]’, and ‘Chinese kennels’. For each, see ‘Nearly a Fire’, *Hydraulic Press*, volume 3, number 49, 27 July 1861, p. 3; ‘Local Matters’, *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 21, issue 88, 20 January 1866, p. 5; ‘Property-Owners Wax Wrathful’, *San Francisco Call*, volume 80, number 67, 6 August 1896, p. 5.

¹¹⁸ ‘Satan’s Death Nurseries’, *San Francisco Chronicle*, volume XVII, number 126, 21 May 1873, p. 3.

¹¹⁹ ‘Report of the Special Committee’, in Farwell, *The Chinese at Home and Abroad*, part II, p. 7.

could be ascertained'. Perhaps the most damning indictment of Chinese domestic arrangements was to be found in the final category of the table: 'Professional prostitutes and children living together'. This, the Committee said, was 'the most revolting feature of all'. They feared that the children were 'perhaps the protégés [sic] of the professional prostitutes' and in one tenement, claimed to have found nineteen prostitutes living with sixteen children.¹²⁰ Such lurid claims turned Chinatown's lodgings into the moral antipode of the good American home.

Many white accounts of Chinatown rested on such implied, but well understood, differences between Chinese living arrangements and the American domestic ideal. At times, such residences resembled the worst kind of boarding house or oceangoing vessel. Charles Nordhoff, for example, described those on ships staying 'in a crowded and miserably dirty hole, the stench arising from which was enough to make any one sick'.¹²¹ Such vignettes that emphasised crowding could be found in the city's press, too. The *Alta*, for instance, described Chinese rooms as being 'occupied by shelves a foot and a half wide, placed one above another on all sides of the room, and on these from twenty to forty Chinamen are stowed away'.¹²² The WPC's infamous report that declared Chinatown a 'nuisance' also gave numerous examples of overcrowding. Their most outrageous discovery – from a long list of candidates the Workingmen were not shy in emphasising – was a room twenty by forty feet, and nine high. Inside that room, the report claimed, were two hundred Chinese men, eating, sleeping, and 'perform[ing] the operations of nature'. Altogether, the building was claimed to house over a thousand Chinese immigrants.¹²³ G. B. Densmore, typically forthright in his criticisms of the

¹²⁰ 'Report of the Special Committee', in Farwell, *The Chinese at Home and Abroad*, part II, p. 9. For the final category, the numbers were 567 women and 87 children.

¹²¹ Charles Nordhoff, *Nine Years a Sailor: Being Sketches of Personal Experience in the United States Naval Service, The American and British Merchant Marine, and The Whaling Service* (Cincinnati, 1857)

¹²² 'Local Intelligence: The Chinese Quarters', *Daily Alta California*, volume 22, number 7360, 16 May 1870, p. 1.

¹²³ Workingmen's Party of California, *Chinatown Declared a Nuisance* (San Francisco, 1880), p. 4. According to the rule of the Cubic Air Ordinance – to be discussed shortly – a room of this size should have contained less than 15 people.

Chinese and Chinatown, gave a stark description of their lodgings. They live, he simply said, like ‘sardines in a box’.¹²⁴

Chinese lodgings, then, stood in opposition to San Francisco’s emerging domestic sphere. They were dirty, cramped, and predominantly filled with young, single men. The few women that were present were believed to be anything but beacons of morality and arbiters of cleanliness. No matter how they had got into the situation, they had become complicit in Chinatown’s moral crimes. White San Franciscans – whether domestic reformers, public health experts, or working-class populists – saw no possibility of republican motherhood, no civilizing female presence in the Chinese district. And here they ignored the coercion, racism, and economic hardship that made such conditions possible and determined that racial character had moulded a depraved, unhygienic environment.

White San Franciscans did not see themselves as immune to the dangers Chinatown supposedly presented. The moral contagion of the sex trade intersected with fears for public health. The district’s overcrowding, and the miasmas said to result from its unsanitary condition, provided a constant threat to the public health of San Francisco. Citizens feared that so-called Chinese diseases – predominantly smallpox, ‘Chinese leprosy’, and the ‘Asiatic cholera’ – would escape the confines of Chinatown and infect the rest of the city.¹²⁵ Here, they drew on a new understanding of the importance of ventilation, which had been advocated by figures like Downing as well as public health professionals.¹²⁶ Downing’s case for fresh air

¹²⁴ Densmore, *The Chinese in California*, p. 25.

¹²⁵ ‘The Health Officer – A Sporadic Case’, *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 24, issue 96, 29 July 1867, p. 2; ‘Chinese Leprosy’, *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 36, issue 65, 21 June 1873, p. 3. On smallpox as a ‘Chinese’ disease, see Susan Craddock, ‘Embodying Place: Pathologizing Chinese and Chinatown in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco’, *Antipode* 31 (1999), pp. 351 – 371.

¹²⁶ It was not just domestically themed literature that began promoting air flows and regularly using the word ‘ventilation’. From mid-century onwards, newspapers regularly opined the absolute vital necessity of ventilation in a home, often with especial emphasis on parlour rooms, where large numbers of people would gather, and bedrooms, where people ‘spend one-third of their lives’. Quickly, good ventilation in a home became as significant a marker of domesticity as stoves, wardrobes, neatness, and order. For examples of discussions about fresh air and ventilation in home from San Francisco newspapers, see ‘Necessity of Pure Air in Churches and Other Places of Public Gathering’, *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 3, issue 132, 12 March 1857, p. 1; ‘Air Poison’, *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 10, issue 136, 14 September 1860, p. 4; ‘Conditions of Health in Rural Homes’, *The*

rested on mathematical calculations on the capacity of lungs, the make-up of gasses after every inhalation and exhalation, and long passages on the merits of specific brands and types of chimney-valves, ventilation stoves, and hot-air furnaces. ‘The house itself must *breathe*’, he told readers, who in San Francisco might have contrasted his ideal to Chinatown’s densely packed lodgings which ‘do not receive the benefit of any stray breath of air which may accidentally pass along the passage’.¹²⁷ Ventilation, Downing maintained, was ‘the greatest possible improvement in a dwelling-house’, far more so in his opinion than furniture. He even went so far as to echo Beecher’s moral dimension of cleanliness: a man who did not ventilate his family home properly ‘will be looked upon as little better than he who should more openly undertake to poison his family and friends with a brazier of charcoal’.¹²⁸ It was perhaps not incidental that this firm warning was the final line in Downing’s near 500-page book.

Only natural advantages saved San Francisco from the worst consequences of ill-ventilation. God and providence, the Workingmen’s Party declared in 1880, kept the city safe by ‘open[ing] the Golden Gate and pour[ing] the cleansing breezes of the sea’ over the city.¹²⁹ The *Daily Evening Bulletin* agreed: ‘The entire Chinese district is reeking with filth, which in any other large city would breed a pestilence. The strong sea breezes and clear sunshine of San Francisco cannot be overcome even by Chinese nastiness’.¹³⁰

Not everyone was so sanguine. Few doubted the notion that disease originated in Chinatown’s benighted environment. ‘The chief plague spots of the city, as it is well known,’

Pacific Rural Press, volume 15, number 7, 16 February 1878, p. 103. The LSFS’s Sailors’ Home was complimented for ensuring its bedrooms were ventilated in 1877, see ‘The Sailor’s Home’, *Daily Alta California*, volume 29, number 9805, 10 February 1877, p. 2. Quote in footnote above taken from ‘Fresh Air’, *Daily Alta California*, volume 18, number 5865, 1 April 1866, p. 1.

¹²⁷ Downing, *Country Houses*, p. 481. Italics in the original; ‘Scenes in Chinatown’, *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 43, issue 58, 14 December 1876, p. 1.

¹²⁸ Downing, *Country Houses*, pp. 465, 484.

¹²⁹ Workingmen’s Party of California, *Chinatown Declared a Nuisance!* (San Francisco, 1880), p. 4.

¹³⁰ ‘Concentrated Nastiness’, *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 36, issue 146, 25 September 1873, p. 1. Visitors to the city helped spread this idea around the Republic. A congressman from Maine believed Chinatown ‘would cause a pestilence in almost any American city’. That it did not, he claimed like many others, was due to ‘the winds from the ocean [that] sweep across the city...and cleanse out the poisonous atmosphere’. ‘A Congressman Shocked’, *Truckee Republican*, volume XV, number 37, 28 April 1886, p. 3.

a paper in 1866 wrote, ‘are the abodes of the Chinese population’. Those ‘miserable broken-down rookeries of filth and disease that abound in that vicinity’, it declared, were ‘a disgrace to the city’. Not unlike other commentators, the author attributed the absence of an epidemic to the ‘continued prevalence of cool weather’, without which Chinatown ‘would have long since bred a pestilence’.¹³¹ A few months later the same daily revisited the theme. The most ‘prolific source of disease [in the city] is the crowded and filthy condition of our Chinese population’, it claimed. ‘So long as they are permitted to occupy the miserable and rickety old shanties’, the paper continued, there would ‘be an injury to public health and a shock to decency’.¹³²

The *San Francisco Chronicle* was unequivocal in its condemnation of Chinese lodging houses and the threat they posed to the city. ‘Every week these dens are allowed to exist’, the paper insisted, ‘the safety of public health is endangered’. It described the ‘exhalations arising from filthy bodies’ that ‘mingled with noxious fumes of opium, punk and tobacco’. The miasmas released would spread disease across the metropolis. Just like the Workingmen and countless other journalists, physicians, and health officials the *Chronicle* believed that the ‘seeds of pestilence’ fostered in Chinatown ‘only wait certain atmospherical [sic] changes to spring into life and overrun the city’. ‘The dreaded scourge of cholera once fairly started in the Chinese quarter’, it warned, ‘would stalk out of its stronghold, armed in the fullness of its strength, and scatter a blight of death in thousands of our *homes*’.¹³³ The inadequacies of the Chinese domestic sphere, then, risked destroying its American counterpart.

The condition of Chinatown in San Francisco therefore came to be presented as a very real threat to the American institution of home, and with it, the nation. Whether through sex,

¹³¹ ‘Our Augean Stables – What is to be Done with Them!’, *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 21, issue 79, 10 January 1866, p. 3.

¹³² ‘Local Matters – Health Officers Report’, *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 23, issue 10, 18 October 1866, p. 5.

¹³³ ‘Satan’s Death Nurseries’, *San Francisco Chronicle*, volume XVII, number 126, 21 May 1873, p. 3. Italics added for emphasis.

disease, or not infrequently both, the supposedly ‘natural’ way of life of the Chinese threatened to pollute the Republic. The *Daily Evening Bulletin*, after declaring Chinatown a ‘nuisance and a standing menace to the health of the city’, told San Franciscans it was a ‘duty’ to sort out the problem. That duty was owed ‘not only to ourselves, but to civilization’.¹³⁴ But what to do was a difficult question, and exclusion or demolition featured far more heavily than calls for moral reformation. As one visiting observer commented, Chinatown was ‘a blot on the fair face of the city and ought to be removed’.¹³⁵ With demolition expensive and impractical, though, discriminatory legislation was tried instead. The Cubic Air Ordinance of 1870, which mandated that ‘sleeping apartments for human beings shall contain not less than five hundred cubic feet of air to each individual sleeper’, marked the principal effort to regulate domestic space.¹³⁶ Plenty of white lodgings did not meet the criterion, and the *Sacramento Daily Union* was scathing toward San Francisco’s poorly disguised attempt to target the Chinese. To have such a law, it argued, was to ‘decree that nineteen-twentieths of the community shall enlarge their domiciles’.¹³⁷ But like the earlier tax on miners, the measure was almost wholly applied to Chinatown, where the city press urged vigorous enforcement. All policemen in the city, one paper suggested, ‘should carry a carpenter’s rule and a night lantern, and penetrate the dark recesses of the *Chinese* lodging houses at midnight, and there and then apply the “Five Hundred Cubic Feet Ordinance” to the actual condition of the inmates’.¹³⁸ So many Chinese lodgers were apprehended on one occasion that the *Russian River Flag* dryly noted that the very law they were arrested for had to be broken to house all the prisoners.¹³⁹ The *Bulletin* noted a similar irony. Sixty-nine Chinese had been arrested and placed in jail in one night with the paper

¹³⁴ ‘The Old Plague Spot’, *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 53, issue 64, 21 December 1881, p. 2.

¹³⁵ ‘Veteran Views’, *San Francisco Chronicle*, volume XLIV, number 23, 7 August 1886, p. 1.

¹³⁶ ‘Five Hundred Cubic Feet of Air’, *Russian River Flag*, volume V, number 29, 29 May 1873, p. 2.

¹³⁷ ‘The Cubic Air Humbug’, *Sacramento Daily Union*, volume 2, number 229, 16 November 1876, p. 2.

¹³⁸ ‘The “Five Hundred Cubic Feet” Ordinance’, *The San Francisco Examiner*, volume 11, number 22, 27 July 1870, p. 3. Italics in original.

¹³⁹ ‘Five Hundred Cubic Feet of Air’, *Russian River Flag*, volume V, number 29, 29 May 1873, p. 2.

reporting ‘less than forty cubic feet of air for every Celestial’. This, it noted, should have been proof to the ‘heathens’ that ‘the ordinance regarding crowded apartments was made for his exclusive benefit’.¹⁴⁰ The relish detectable in such sarcasm missed the way that the law penalised poorly paid migrant workers whose meagre wages and violently enforced exclusion from other parts of the city precluded any alternatives. Where the poor sailor was humanised to make possible his reform, the ‘Chinaman’ was criminalised to enable his expulsion.

Standing beyond the bounds of white San Francisco, and marked by conditions decried as overcrowded, filthy, and vice-ridden, Chinatown – even more than the mining community or the sailing ship – menaced domesticity. As a blight on the landscape, and a threat to the wellbeing of San Francisco, the Chinese district was to many observers the complete antithesis of an airy, hygienic, and moral domestic metropolitan ideal.

Contrasts between the American and Chinese sections of San Francisco gave meaning to both. On a Sunday morning in May 1879, for example, a regular contributor to a Santa Barbara newspaper under the initials E. A. O. awoke in San Francisco and decided to skip church that morning.¹⁴¹ Instead, she resolved to visit Chinatown, hopeful (or rather naïvely optimistic) that she might find some missionaries in need of assistance in reforming the city’s Chinese. As she set off to the Chinese quarter, she noted the ‘glorious sunshine...and fresh healthful breezes’ that were ‘the peculiar heritage of San Francisco’. She doubted if even the early days of Eden ‘held more of beauty...than did this sunshine-gilded Sabbath here by the Golden Gate’. Her journey to Chinatown took her along ‘broad, pleasant streets’ teeming with Sunday morning activity. Church bells rang out over the bay and called San Francisco’s residents to worship, which to her only amplified the agreeableness of the ‘lovely gardens and parks, and shining

¹⁴⁰ ‘Brief Mention’, *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 36, issue 123, 29 August 1873, p. 3.

¹⁴¹ Mrs. Otis was a popular writer. She embarked on a summer tour of the West Coast and Yosemite in 1878, regularly sending letters to the *Santa Barbara Press* describing her experiences and the scenes she saw on her travels. She was widely praised for her writing style and generated a large fan base who enjoyed her descriptions of California. See ‘Tenting on the Golden Shore’, *Santa Barbara Daily Press*, volume VII, number 105, 18 November 1878, p. 2.

fountains' she passed on her route. But this would-be missionary had set up an idyllic image of the city only to shatter it for her readers. As she left the 'daylight and beauty and strength' of San Francisco, which, she insisted, was a glowing example of 'the progress and glory of the nineteenth century', she found herself suddenly 'in the midst of heathenism, and filth, and wretchedness, and foul odors, and unrest'. She had in fact not left San Francisco, at all. Rather, she had crossed the threshold into Chinatown, a place that she, alongside many others in the city, believed had 'no Sabbath, no Christ, [and] no God'.

Immediately, the writer, a Mrs. Otis of Santa Barbara's Women's Missionary Circle, began implicitly drawing stark contrasts with the picturesque section of San Francisco she had journeyed through. 'It seemed', she said, 'as if China must have poured her millions into these streets'. Much of what she wrote could have been lifted from countless other depictions of the district by journalists, sanitarians, and Nativist politicians. The pavements were overflowing with Chinese immigrants and the shops were overcrowded. From above, 'moon-eyed lepers' leaned over balconies that blocked the sun's pleasant rays. She saw entrances to 'windowless cellars' filled with people having their hair styled into queues, vendors set up in the middle of walkways, and cobblers sat on the floor amongst the crowd, cleaning, fixing, and buffing shoes amidst the chaos.¹⁴² Chinese men selling fruit used 'filthy rags' to clean the dirt off their produce, and the 'vile odors' produced by shops selling meat and fish meant holding her breath as she passed them by was a requirement. She needed to do the same, too, when she passed the 'slopmen in the streets', from whose buckets wafted a smell 'no uncovered nostrils could endure'. She saw 'heavy-eyed opium smokers', with 'dull' and 'soulless' faces sprawled in the entrances to buildings. Chinese children 'with not a touch of childish gaiety or gladness in their puny faces' were shoved and moved aside unceremoniously in the crowd. She looked on

¹⁴² A queue was a traditional Chinese hairstyle, in which the head was shaved to the crown. The remaining hair was grown long and worn plaited or braided.

Chinese women, ‘whose womanhood was a dead thing’. Down Chinatown’s ‘dark’ and ‘crooked’ alleys, that glorious May morning produced nothing more than ‘a dimmed [sic] and ghostly light’, blocked as it was by yet more overhanging balconies. In shutting out the light and air, and ‘shutting in foul smells and foetid odors’, she was sure, like many of her contemporaries, the Chinese were inviting ‘pestilence and plague and death’ on the beloved and beautiful city.¹⁴³

Otis’s carefully crafted account bore the hallmarks of the ‘sunshine and shadow’ genre of urban sketch journalism. In melodramatic prose, authors from the 1840s onwards portrayed American cities as places of glaring contrasts between light and dark, good and evil, and wealth and poverty.¹⁴⁴ Sometimes, when writers juxtaposed an aristocratic upper tenth from a labouring lower million, such accounts contained explicit criticism of social hierarchies. More often they served up sensational tidbits designed to appeal to a mass reading public. Otis, in contrast, used one of the staple elements of the genre – the descent from paradise into hell – to inspire Christian evangelism. In doing so, she drew on a series of domestic tropes that compared the Christian city to its heathen neighbour. In one, the Sabbath, the decorum of the street, and the rules of sanitary science were respected. In the other, the Holy Day went unobserved, men and women’s promiscuous commercial activity clogged up the sidewalks, and miasmatic vapours threatened to pollute the fresh air swirling freely through the rest of San Francisco.

Such contrasts did as much to fix an image of white San Francisco as they did Chinatown. The rest of the city was not without its poverty, decrepit housing, and poorly ventilated streets. LSFS members recognised as much with their attacks on the taverns and boarding houses of the port. But by locating these problems squarely in Chinatown, attributing them to the racial

¹⁴³ ‘The Heathen at Home’, *Santa Barbara Weekly Press*, volume X, number 44, 10 May 1879, p. 4.

¹⁴⁴ For a discussion on the origins of ‘sunshine and shadow’ literature, see Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York, 1999), pp. 697 – 700; John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776 – 1882* (Baltimore, 1999), p. 276.

character of the Chinese, then contrasting that neighbourhood to a morally ordered metropolis beyond, white San Franciscans could celebrate their own progress and paper over divisions among themselves. In this respect an un-American Chinese quarter, hated and despised though it was, nonetheless provided a useful function. It allowed those who looked upon it to celebrate – and indeed exaggerate – the progress of their own domestic civilization. If the Chinese were the ‘indispensable enemy’, Chinatown was an indispensable neighbourhood in helping to define white domesticity.¹⁴⁵

In keeping with sunshine and shadow convention, official investigations, city guidebooks, and hundreds of newspaper articles saw American and Chinese San Francisco as starkly bounded districts that could (and, as many believed and wanted, should) have been oceans apart. No liminal space marked out a borderland between Chinatown and its surrounding areas: you were either in it or outside it. When the author E. A. O. sought out missionaries on that Sunday morning in the district, she hinted that she had left San Francisco and entered another place entirely. G. B. Densmore indicated this, too, emphasising the sensory foreignness he encountered. ‘The moment you cross the borders of Chinatown’, he wrote, making the act sound more like a passage across an international border, ‘you experience a peculiar, strange smell...unlike anything else. You cannot get used to it’.¹⁴⁶ Benjamin Lloyd, another writer in the genre, made manifest the difference between Chinatown and San Francisco regularly in his writings. In 1876, he hinted at the existence of an invisible yet clearly demarcated boundary between the anti-domestic streets of Chinatown and the domestically ordered city beyond. It was, he said, ‘but a step from the monuments and living evidences of the highest type of American civilization, and of Christianity, to the unhallowed precincts of a heathen race, where unmistakable signs of a contrasting civilization, are seen on every side’.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Saxton, *Indispensable Enemy*.

¹⁴⁶ Densmore, *The Chinese in California*, p. 23.

¹⁴⁷ Benjamin E. Lloyd, *Lights and Shades in San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1876), p. 236.

The sense of difference, though, did not mean there was no such thing as interdependence. If white onlookers could cross into Chinatown to gaze on an anti-domestic order, the Chinese might go in the other direction in search of employment in American homes. Grudgingly, San Franciscans sometimes acknowledged the importance to the white city of these domestics who left their abodes in Chinatown to work in middle-class residences. '[T]hey act as breakwaters between the mistress and the maid in cities,' wrote the *Chronicle* in 1875, 'and do something towards mitigating the insolence of cooks and chambermaids'.¹⁴⁸ And if both white and Chinese San Franciscans could cross the border, then so could miasmas and epidemics, as so many sanitarians feared.

Yet such overlap only seemed to confirm American superiority. Chinatown, indeed, appeared to present a particularly acute case of degeneration in California. Given the supposedly fixed racial character of its population, this descent could be traced in the built environment as well as in the individual. Once the Chinese crowded into a place, Densmore argued in 1880, its appearance was quickly ruined. Most of the buildings in Chinatown began as 'American architecture', but whenever the 'Celestials' moved in, 'they commence to remodel it and change the appearance of the front, putting up queer signs, painting the balconies fanciful colors, and hanging out curious Chinese lanterns'. After they had 'attacked' the building, he claimed, 'it looks as though it were a hundred years old. The walls become blackened up, filthy, dirty and discolored'.¹⁴⁹ For Densmore, the once-prestigious Globe Hotel provided an example. His recollection, though, appeared to ignore the social conditions of San Francisco that had so alarmed reformers predominantly on the East coast in 1849 and the early 1850s, and instead painted a picture that Farnham, for one, might have had trouble in recognising. In its heyday, Densmore reported, the Globe Hotel had been a refuge for newly

¹⁴⁸ 'The Chinese Question', *San Francisco Chronicle*, Volume XXII, Number 115, 8 November 1875, p. 2.

¹⁴⁹ Densmore, *Chinese in California*, p. 23.

arrived miners before they set out to find their fortune in the gold fields. Promising luxury, its hallways had ‘teemed with the bustle of hurrying porters and busy lodgers’. Its large bedrooms had been filled with ‘white men from the civilized world’. When Densmore visited years later, though, it had ‘but its name to remind one of its former grandeur – nay, of its former use’. He then spent a further three pages outlining the filth and crowded conditions in and around the hotel after the Chinese began using it. Densmore had little interest in domesticity as an ideology, but his depiction of American domestic comforts ruined by squalid Chinese left little to the imagination. Where such immigrants encountered advanced civilization, they would begin a retrograde movement.¹⁵⁰

Densmore might have taken comfort, then, in the exclusion of Chinese residents from San Francisco’s postbellum suburbs. As the city’s suburban districts grew, they provided an example of everything Chinatown was not. Advertisements for lots and cottages offered a stark contrast to familiar tales of overcrowded lodging houses, the dark, narrow streets and alleys, and the unhealthy atmosphere of the Chinese district. Whilst these contrasts were rarely explicit, the proximity of newspaper columns condemning the Chinese quarter and its inhabitants to advertisements for healthy and salubrious suburban regions juxtaposed the two areas of the city for readers and inscribed a clear map of metropolitan geography that separated the domestic from the foreign. The *Pacific Rural Press*, for example, ran in 1873 a front-page picture of a ‘characteristic view in China Town’, which showed overhanging balconies, narrow alleys, and a teeming population. The accompanying text noted the Chinese custom of utilising

¹⁵⁰ Densmore, *Chinese in California*, pp. 25 – 29.

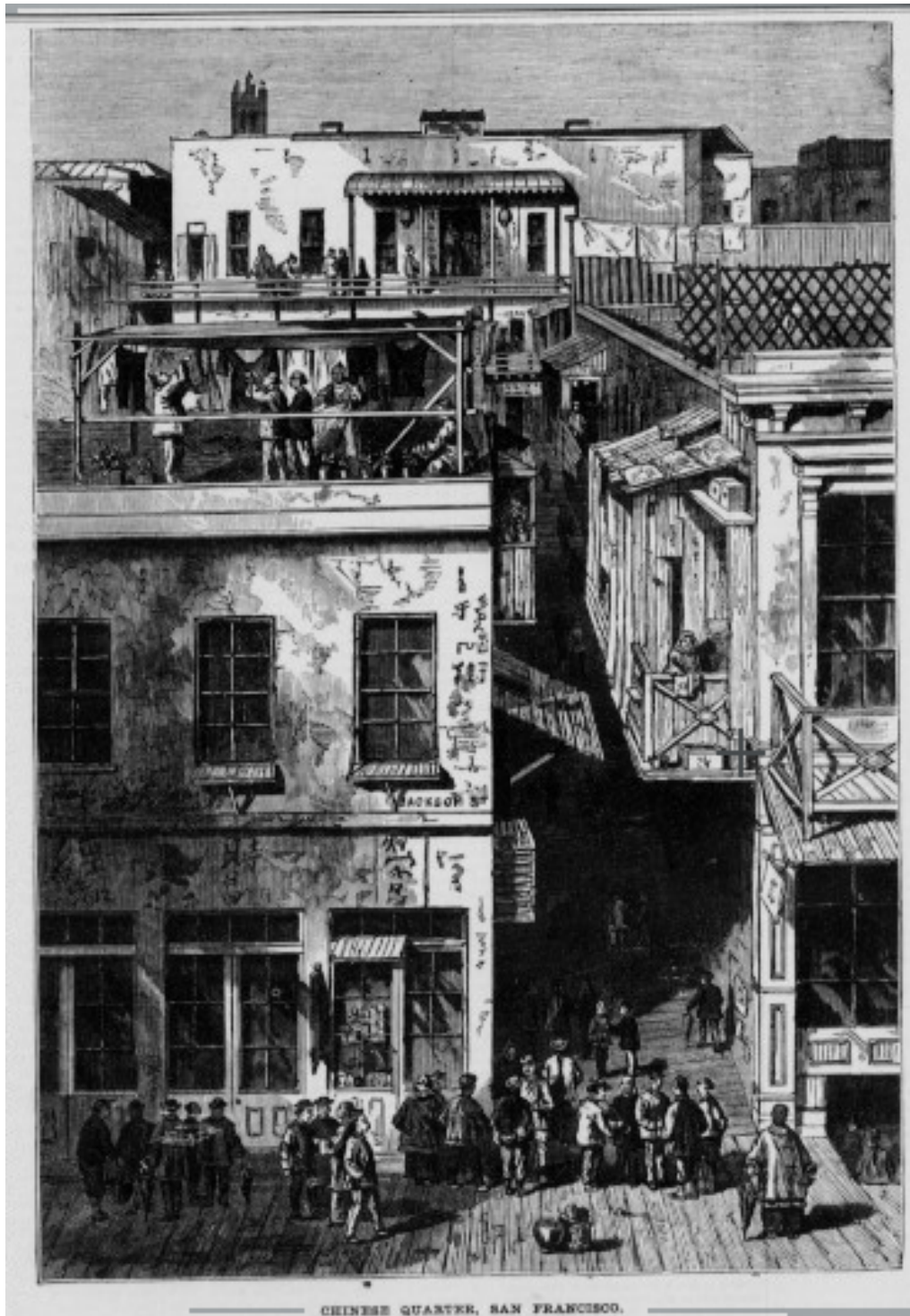


Figure 3 – A ‘Characteristic view in Chinatown’ as shown in the Pacific Rural Press. The image showcases aspects of the Chinese and Chinatown that angered San Franciscans. Once ‘American’ buildings were adorned with Chinese script; balconies that were added to structures overhung walkways and blocked out the natural light; dense crowds gathered and blocked passageways. The accompanying article alongside the engraving was typical in that it stressed how such conditions were conducive to the spread of disease around the city.

‘every atom of room’ and the risk of the spread of disease. On the next page the reader would have found a column titled ‘Rural Homes’ praising the ‘sacredness of domestic sanctity’,

discussing family structure, and referring to the home as a Christian site.¹⁵¹ Given the ubiquity of Chinatown in press coverage, adjacent adverts that spoke of (for instance) ‘a beautiful lake’, ‘splendid macadamized roads’, and the countless trees, shrubs, and flowers that flourished ‘with the slightest care’ in the suburbs reinforced the morally-laden distinction between the two.¹⁵²

By the 1860s, the city’s press was selling San Francisco’s suburban hinterlands as places of retreat away from the more foetid and unpleasant areas of the metropolis. White citizens who could not afford to live in such districts were nevertheless encouraged to visit them: or at least to imagine doing so. Newspapers increasingly printed escapist articles – in many ways mirroring their ethnographic incursions into Chinatown – which invited residents to ‘join’ them on an excursion to the suburbs ‘if even for an hour’.¹⁵³ Writers stressed the sights a sojourning city dweller could behold. Countless ‘delicious’, ‘gorgeous’, ‘delightful’, and ‘attractive’ areas were within reach.¹⁵⁴ More than just praising pleasing views, though, the pieces emphasised the health benefits of an excursion: the same benefits so regularly touted in domestic literature. The *Alta* noted that away from the city’s plague spots – it would take little imagination to work out where the paper might have meant – ‘one can draw a good long breath and feel that it is pure air’, which made a change from ‘the exhalations from dead cats, dogs, and street sweepings generally’.¹⁵⁵ Another told of how upon arrival at a suburban retreat, ‘the city, with all its bustle and burdens...is quite passed away from your thoughts’.¹⁵⁶ Others were more

¹⁵¹ *Pacific Rural Press*, volume 6, number 13, 27 September 1873, pp. 1 – 2.

¹⁵² ‘Feliz Rancho Villa Association’, *San Francisco Chronicle*, volume IX, number 116, 23 May 1869, p. 3.

¹⁵³ ‘Front Street Expatriates on the Pleasures of a Drive to the Suburban Resorts of San Francisco’, *Daily Alta California*, volume 15, number 4995, 1 November 1863, p. 1.

¹⁵⁴ Examples of the use of these adjectives can be found in ‘City Items’, *Daily Alta California*, volume XIV, number 4539, 27 July 1862, p. 1; ‘Local Intelligence – The Willows’, *San Francisco Examiner*, volume 1, number 35, Saturday 22 July 1865, p. 3; ‘Villa Residences in Menlo Park’, *Daily Alta California*, volume 18, number 5948, 23 June 1866, p. 1.

¹⁵⁵ ‘Front Street Expatriates on the Pleasures of a Drive to the Suburban Resorts of San Francisco’, *Daily Alta California*, volume 15, number 4995, 1 November 1863, p. 1.

¹⁵⁶ ‘Villa Residences in Menlo Park’, *Daily Alta California*, volume 18, number 5948, 23 June 1866, p. 1.

direct: ‘The dusty thoroughfares of the city, and the oven-like piles of brick and mortar’ did not provide a relaxing and recuperative day. The suburbs, however, emphatically did.¹⁵⁷

The city’s newly populated suburban regions, already prestigious, healthy, and desirable, were undoubtedly made more so in comparison to the squalor and filth so common in depictions of Chinatown. The city’s rapidly developing network of streets, sidewalks, and public squares were even greater markers of genteel civility and became more alluring, progressive, and domestic when viewed next to their opposite: Chinatown’s dank, dark, dangerous, and diseased alleys and underground passages. Although fresh calls for Chinese expulsion, the destruction of the district, and the tearing down of the most offensive Chinese buildings were common, and certainly more frequent than demands for moral regeneration or economic uplift, Chinatown nonetheless provided a valuable service to the city: its anti-domestic order – worse by far than that of both miners and sailors on account of its fixed racial character – served to bolster American commitment to the proper way of living. Chinatown was evidence of what happened when domestic order was absent. The district indirectly encouraged American commitment to beautifying – and then maintaining – the urban landscape.

Chinatown’s Antithesis: Golden Gate Park as a ‘Surrogate’ Domestic Space

Golden Gate Park, like San Francisco’s post-war suburbs, showed how the American metropolis stood as the opposite of its Chinese enclave. Officially opened in April 1870, the park symbolised the city’s growing gentility. Not only did it provide an area for San Franciscans to spend their leisure time, but it also invited parallels with New York and its own verdant jewel of Central Park. Its early career marked an attempt to build domesticity into

¹⁵⁷ ‘Local Intelligence – The Willows’, *San Francisco Examiner*, volume 1, number 35, Saturday 22 July 1865, p. 3.

public space. Nineteenth-century American parks, historians have argued, served as ‘surrogate’ domestic spaces, offering some of the attractions of a suburban home life – not least fresh air, natural surroundings, and decorous behaviour – to those who did not have the means to acquire a comfortable house themselves. Golden Gate Park was in this tradition. In this respect, the park’s most important element was the Women’s and Children’s Quarter, which opened in 1888. Primarily a children’s playground, the area nonetheless contained a large country-style residence, from which mothers and nannies could watch over their children, just as they might have done from their own domestic retreats. Stretching to the Pacific Ocean on the city’s western limit, Golden Gate Park showcased San Francisco’s grandeur, modernism, and the domestic development of the city’s public arena. Furthermore, it highlighted city fathers’ commitment to creating a genteel, moral society through environmental uplift, and suggested a very different path to reform than the demands for exclusion and demolition directed against the Chinese and their neighbourhood.

As early as 1855, calls had been made for leafy retreats around the city. ‘Over all these square miles’, Frank Soulé reflected in the *Annals*, ‘there seems no provision made by the projectors for a public park’. Parks were, according to Soulé, ‘the true “lungs” of a large city’, and as such were vital organs for public health. He conceded that San Francisco’s Portsmouth Square, and ‘two or three other diminutive’ plazas, provided breathing room for the city’s inhabitants, but indignantly called attention to the lack of ‘verdant’ space, except, he drolly added, ‘in patches where stagnant water collects and ditch weeds grow’.¹⁵⁸ Soulé’s advice

¹⁵⁸ For histories on the rise of public urban parks in America, see George F. Chadwick, *The Park and the Town: Public Landscape in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York, 1966), pp. 163 – 220; Thomas Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision: Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth-Century America* (Lexington, 1975), pp. 158 – 187; Galen Cranz, *The Politics of Park Design* (Cambridge, MA, 1982); David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore, 1986), pp. 59 – 148; Heath Massey Schenker, *Melodramatic Landscapes: Urban Parks in the Nineteenth Century* (Charlottesville, 2009). On Frederick Law Olmsted, designer of both Central Park and Golden Gate Park, see Witold Rybczynski, *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1999). On the creation of Golden Gate Park, see Terence Young, *Building San Francisco’s Parks, 1850 – 1930* (Baltimore, 2004).

would be heeded after the Civil War, when the new emphasis on hygiene and ventilation, coupled with a faith in the civilizing power of nature, led authorities to invite the renowned Central Park landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted to design a park, which was modified by the first park commissioner William Hammond Hall.¹⁵⁹

As with San Francisco's suburbs, the park offered a stark alternative to Chinatown. It had fresh air, an uplifting naturalistic environment, morally edifying pastimes, and ample opportunities for respectable family leisure. The pleasure ground not only inverted Chinatown's social and physical landscape, but it provided a space for structured, law-abiding behaviour. Though the park was open to everyone, it was portrayed as a world away from the Chinese district's free for all. Domestic order would still rule. To this end, the Board of Park Commissioners, led by the civil engineer and designer Hall, published a pamphlet in 1874 entitled *Organization of the Force*. It set out strict operational procedures and rules for park employees. The domestic undertones within these rules were clear to see. Political canvassing by any park employee, for example, was 'strictly prohibited upon the Park Grounds'. Like a private family home, Golden Gate Park was to be a refuge from the oftentimes messy realities of public urban life. Alcohol and gambling, those champions of San Francisco's early anti-domestic order, were expressly forbidden whilst on duty, also.¹⁶⁰ Like the LSFS's sailors, the employees of Golden Gate Park were expected to act in a manner befitting the ideals of restrained manhood and exemplify the domestic ideal in their work.

But it was not just employees that had to follow the rules inside Golden Gate Park's grounds. Visitors also had to act accordingly. The park was indeed a place for leisure and fun, but 'gangs of unruly boys' still needed to be dealt with in a 'firm and decisive' manner. '[R]iotous, boisterous or indecent conduct or language' was to be policed inside the grounds,

¹⁵⁹ Ironically, Hall had made his fortune through the destruction of landscape as a hydraulic engineer, ensuring San Francisco had a plentiful water supply. He was chosen as commissioner of Golden Gate Park after impressing the city's Board of Supervisors.

¹⁶⁰ San Francisco Board of Park Commissioners, *Organization of the Force* (San Francisco, 1874), pp. 7, 9, 20.

as was anyone driving or riding ‘at a furious speed’. Litter and waste left behind by visiting parties would incur a fine, too.¹⁶¹ Despite Golden Gate Park being a public, outdoor space, the Board of Commissioners were nonetheless committed to enforcing domestically approved morality and behaviour within its boundaries. Park commissioners thus strove to show how the once privately practiced domestic virtues that characterised good, American homes now governed the city at large.

This was most evident in the Woman’s and Children’s Quarter, which opened in December 1888. Its creation reflected concerns that urban environs were especially debilitating to children. Many feared the agrarian virtues of the United States were lost on its youth due to rapid urbanisation.¹⁶² Parks, by injecting nature into the wilderness of brick, offered an antidote. Contained within the quarter was a large playground for the children.¹⁶³ It was surrounded by trees and shrubbery, and was far from the noise, dirt, and dubious morality of the downtown. Alongside this introduction into nature for the children sat an impressive mock-country home, complete with a ‘ladies’ parlour, [and] a spacious lunch room, where ladies and children may be served refreshments’.¹⁶⁴ It also boasted a large balcony from which mothers and nannies could look out over their charges at play. Men and women may have differed over the roots of home influence. Figures like Frederick Law Olmsted, Charles Loring Brace, and

¹⁶¹ Park Commissioners, *Organization of the Force*, pp. 23, 26, 27 – 28.

¹⁶² G. Stanley Hall, perhaps the most well-known pedagogical psychologist in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, published research in 1883 that branded city life ‘unnatural’ for children. Those who grew up without exposure to nature, he concluded, could ‘never be complete or normal’. See G. Stanley Hall, *The Contents of Children’s Minds on Entering School* (New York, 1893), p. 28. See also Jacy L. Young, ‘G. Stanley Hall, Child Study, and the American Public’, *The Journal of Genetic Psychology* 177 (2016), pp. 195 – 208.

¹⁶³ The playground movement of the Progressive Era aimed to provide children with spaces that would encourage their socialisation and encourage moral order. Parks were the natural place for them in cities. On the role of playgrounds in nineteenth century urban planning, see Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820 – 1920* (Cambridge, MA, 1978), pp. 180 – 181, 242 – 251; Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape*; Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca, 1992). Suzanne Spencer-Wood’s research, much like this thesis, seeks to highlight the understudied role of women in establishing playgrounds in city parks. See Suzanne Spencer-Wood, ‘Turn of the Century Women’s Organizations, Urban Design, and the Origin of the American Playground Movement’, *Landscape Journal* 13 (Fall, 1994), pp. 124 – 138.

¹⁶⁴ *Official Guide to Golden Gate Park of San Francisco*, Golden Gate Park – Guides, programs, and souvenirs 1888 – 1945, California General Subjects Collection, CALIF FILES, The Society of California Pioneers, p. 49.

Andrew Jackson Downing believed the home's naturalistic surroundings to be the most crucial element in character formation. Female writers, on the other hand, argued that the home's management was paramount.¹⁶⁵ The Women's and Children's Quarters served as a kind of amalgam between these two theories: natural surroundings alongside a symbolic family home.

The Women's and Children's Quarters provided San Francisco's ladies with a safe, gendered avenue into the public sphere. That avenue was akin to the ladies' tea rooms, restaurants, and department stores in the city, in that it opened the public sphere up for women but in a controlled, gendered way that conformed to domestic roles.¹⁶⁶ Unlike Chinatown's terrain, this was a purposefully crafted space in which society's paragons of virtue would be protected from dishonourable men and immoral values. Moreover, the building inside the grounds resembling a home all but ensured those same values would be applied there, too. In fact, this was mandated by the park commissioners. 'But one requisite is necessary for admittance into these grounds', they announced in the souvenir programme from the playground's opening, 'and that is – decorum'.¹⁶⁷

The Women's and Children's Quarters of Golden Gate Park, then, show how the same civic authorities that identified the Chinese as a threat to American homes simultaneously set out to craft a domestic environment elsewhere in the city. Not only did the Quarter emphasise all the virtues that were supposedly absent in Chinatown, but it also demonstrates how values once confined to the private home and benevolent empire had spilled into the public domain on a large scale. The Quarter had been designed with domestic social roles in mind: women, separated from men, performing their 'natural' role of motherhood in an environment that

¹⁶⁵ See Margaret S. Marsh, *Suburban Lives* (New Brunswick, 1990); Christine Stansell, 'Women, Children, and the Uses of Streets: Class and Gender Conflict in New York City, 1850 – 1860' *Feminist Studies* 8 (Summer, 1982), pp. 309 – 335.

¹⁶⁶ For more on the public segregation of women in nineteenth-century cities, see Mary Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825 – 1880* (Baltimore, 1990), pp. 58 – 94 esp.

¹⁶⁷ *Souvenir Programme, Golden Gate Park, S.F., December 22nd 1888*, Golden Gate Park – Guides, programs, and souvenirs 1888 – 1945, California General Subjects Collection, CALIF FILES, The Society of California Pioneers, p. unnumbered.

resembled a home. Where the park's gendered space promoted civility and order, Chinatown only allowed for people to be crowded together indiscriminately. Where the Quarter venerated women's exalted roles, Chinatown's built environment gave no room for women to exert any influence over the rest of the population.¹⁶⁸ Though the two were rarely compared directly, Golden Gate Park's place in metropolitan geography was defined in opposition to its Chinese antithesis.

Conclusion

American San Francisco and Chinatown, then, were opposites, yet the tension between them in the writings of white journalists, reformers, and investigators made them mutually constitutive, drawing meaning from each other. The city on the far reaches of the American continent had inched towards becoming (in the eyes of its promoters and reformers, at least) a grand metropolis, governed largely by middle-class domestic ideology. Far from its early days as an instant city, San Francisco now boasted wide boulevards, impressive avenues, grand buildings, and the infrastructure and commodities needed for a great city not just to function, but to flourish. It had developed a stable population, largely defined by family structures and private family homes. The domestic ideal had ensured the development of San Francisco's suburbs and induced the introduction of nature – whether a row of trees along a pathway or the more encompassing Golden Gate Park – into the city. Saloons, gambling halls, and taverns selling sex no longer enjoyed the ubiquity they held in the Gold Rush era, consigned instead to the once-infamous Barbary Coast, which was widely agreed to be a shadow of its formerly riotous self by the end of the century. Female involvement in domestic benevolence continued

¹⁶⁸ For a more detailed analysis of the Women's and Children's Quarters in Golden Gate Park, see Heath M. Schenker, 'Women's and Children's Quarters in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco', *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 3 (1996), pp. 293 – 308.

right up to the turn of the century, and beyond. By the end of the 1800s, San Francisco no longer seemed an outlier in an American empire of the home.

This chapter has argued that the city's domestic terrain drew prestige through comparison – both implicit and explicit – to Chinatown. Those narrow alleys, putrid and grimy buildings, improper living accommodation, and the anti-domestic structures within them fell far short of what was expected in San Francisco. But Chinatown nonetheless had an important role to play in the city. Van Ness Avenue, the grandest of the city's streets and visually impressive by any standard across the Republic, became even more so when pitted against the dingy, diseased, and insalubrious walkways that defined white San Franciscan's opinions of Chinatown. The American home – suburban or otherwise – remained influential, aspirational, and necessary to the fortunes of the nation. But the proximity to Chinatown's lodging houses, the evidence of what society looked like without the institution of home, domestic values, and proper relations between men and women, increased the home's sacred and sanitary importance to the city still further. Whatever the Chinese did in their 'homes' was deemed to be wrong; by doing the opposite, Americans were clearly right. In short, the detested anti-domestic order of the Chinese in fact helped to define San Francisco's own domestic identity, and paper over divisions.

Anti-Chinese racism thus helped to construct white domesticity in San Francisco. The racial limits of domestic ideology had been evident from the earliest days of American settler colonialism in California with Farnham's disgust at the Mexican homes she encountered. But those boundaries became harder to cross than ever in discussions of Chinatown. As the natural environment came to supplant home management in prescriptions for a good domestic life, and as a wider cast of characters – the likes of sanitarians and nativist workingmen – began to draw distinctions between Chinese and American homes, benevolent reformers, who rarely showed much interest in unredeemable Chinatown anyway, faded from the picture. Domestic reform,

it appeared, had its limits. Yet those limits had served to define the boundaries between civilization and barbarism, progress and regression, and white Americans and a racialised 'other'.

Conclusion

As the nineteenth century ended and the twentieth beckoned, the vision that met Emanuel Leutze's pioneers in his *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way* mural would have been manifestly different. For one thing, as they made their way around the rockface to meet the West, that vast, apparently virgin land ahead of them would have been peppered with far more white settler communities than at mid-century, a result of the violent crusade waged against the indigenous peoples' culture deemed to be an obstacle to U.S. expansion. In fact, those settlers journeying westward probably would not have rounded the rockface at all; rather, they would have been sitting comfortably on the Pacific Railroad, completed in 1869 and symbolic of Anglo-American expansion throughout the century, which thundered across the U.S., and terminated on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. And if those late-nineteenth-century travellers continued all the way to San Francisco, they would again be faced with a very different landscape. They certainly would not have seen a mining boom town largely constructed of wood, canvas, and scattered 'shanties'. Far fewer men drinking heavily, gambling, and mixing with so-called 'fallen' women in saloons, restaurants, and boarding houses would have been visible, though of course, the city's 'vice' districts had not been entirely eradicated. They would, without needing to travel too far, have been able to find a city largely recognisable from Eastern cities back home, stratified by class and predominantly American in culture. They would have seen far more major streets and thoroughfares, designed to showcase the city's contemporaneity and affluence; an associational landscape, influenced by the women of the benevolent empire; and a politically assertive working-class population, American and foreign, whose labour propped up domestic leisure in the city. The gender ratio was much more even, too, and government departments more established. Family homes, both urban and suburban (and both working- and middle-class) would have largely replaced those 'shanties' and tents.

Churches, schools, and other institutions that proliferated in America's Eastern cities had developed, too. Above all, those westward travellers would have seen a city that was much more domestically ordered than the anti-domestic orders of early San Francisco.

This thesis has told the story of how that development happened through the lens of domestic ideology, women's reforming efforts, and the broader meanings San Franciscans and those who followed developments in the city placed on the category of womanhood. In doing so, it has added to the history of San Francisco's urban evolution. Predominantly, that history was grounded in the Gold Rush, focusing on the high levels of men involved in the acts of mining and migrating.¹ Others focused on the idea of an 'instant city', a designation that most certainly applied to San Francisco during its early, chaotic years when the gender ratio was still far from even, again resulting in literature dominated by male actors.² Others still examined the political development of the metropolis, often tying it to urbanisation.³ Though these political studies often noted San Franciscan and Californian women's mostly unsuccessful campaign for suffrage, that women's sphere of influence – domesticity, homes, family, benevolence, and moral suasion – has been largely marginalised in these histories that were based in urban spheres predominantly dominated by men in the nineteenth century.

In contrast, this study has examined the importance of domesticity, ideas of womanhood, and the home in the development of San Francisco, as well as the efforts of predominantly white, middle-class, Protestant women in that development. It has traced the city's urban, social, and moral construction from a loosely ordered 'instant city' dominated by a racially

¹ Rodman W. Paul, *California Gold: the Beginning of Mining in the Far West* (Harvard, 1947); J. S. Holliday, *The World Rushed In: The California Gold Rush Experience* (Norman, 1981). Although much of the work on the Gold Rush was largely centred on men, some did include chapters on the absence of women. Rarer still, some had chapters on women involved directly in the Gold Rush. But two examples of this are Malcolm J. Rohrbough, *Days of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the American Nation* (Berkeley, 1997); Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York, 2000).

² Barth, *Instant Cities*; Lockwood, *Suddenly San Francisco*; Johns, *San Francisco: Instant City, Promised Land*.

³ Just some of these histories are William Issel and Robert W. Cherny, *San Francisco: Politics, Power, and Urban Development* (Berkeley, 1986); Philip Ethington, *The Public City: The Political Construction of Urban Life in San Francisco, 1850 – 1900* (Cambridge, MA, 1994); Stephen McGovern, *The Politics of Downtown Development: Dynamic Political Cultures in San Francisco and Washington D.C.* (Lexington, 1998).

heterogeneous male population that contemporary reformers and observers believed was in desperate need of feminine influence, through to a metropolis governed (at least in part) by the leading value system in America, populated largely by white Americans, and with a network of private family homes.⁴ In examining San Francisco's development, the thesis first followed Eliza Farnham's – failed – gendered migration scheme that had aimed to domesticate the city through the arrival of 'marriageable' middle-class women. Despite this failure, Farnham's writings on her time in the state nonetheless provide an example of how domesticity was adapted to a settler colonial environment, which I have termed frontier domesticity. Frontier domesticity was guided by the same principals as in the East: the domestic efforts of white, middle-class, largely Protestant women engendered morality and civilization in the community. Transported out West, that process would again begin inside homes. But, as we saw with Farnham, the geographic isolation, the lack of a commercial structure providing the material necessities for household management, and the absence of what Nancy Cott has termed 'sisterhood[s]', it often produced visually different results.⁵ That frontier domesticity was still believed to be capable of reforming the anti-domestic orders of the West despite these deficiencies illustrates the strength around ideas of womanhood and women's influence during the nineteenth century.

Chapter two then investigated a domestic benevolent society that aimed to reform one of the nineteenth century's most seemingly homeless groups: sailors. That chapter revealed how the private domestic family home became a template for public urban reform. It also demonstrated how domestic benevolence gave women the opportunity to influence the wider public sphere through their labour. Finally, chapter three examined the wider domestic

⁴ Gunther Barth, *Instant Cities: Urbanization and the Rise of San Francisco and Denver* (New York, 1975); Charles Lockwood, *Suddenly San Francisco: The Early Years of an Instant City* (San Francisco, 1978); Michael Johns, *San Francisco: Instant City, Promised Land* (London, 2018).

⁵ Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780 – 1835* (New Haven, 1977), pp. 160 – 196.

landscape in San Francisco through comparisons with an area perceived to be thoroughly anti-domestic in order. That chapter highlighted the racial barriers of domesticity, with white San Franciscans deeming Chinese men and women incapable of reform, and targeting Chinatown through crowd violence, discriminatory legislation, and calls for demolition. It revealed the paradoxes of domestic ideology, given that the Chinese population, though excluded from domestic reform efforts, were crucial to domesticity's establishment, effectiveness, and continuation. And, as Sarah Josepha Hale pointed out in a discussion on 'Heathen Homes', it examined the ways in which domesticity was largely defined by its perceived opposite.⁶ Here, the anti-domestic order of Chinese homes was enforced through comparison to middle-class American homes, suburbs, and parks, as domesticity itself became more rooted in moral environmentalist discourses that equated the quality of urban spaces with the people who inhabited and used them. That change, from private homes being the predominant site of domesticity to public arenas becoming imbued with genteel domestic values, correlated with the increase of – in the minds of reformers like Farnham – the 'right' kinds of women in the city and state, and the construction of a network of family homes. This echoed Farnham's belief that the establishment of well-managed, domestic homes would result in the influence of those domestic retreats seeping into the urban terrain itself.⁷

This thesis, then, has shown that domesticity and women's part in it played a crucial role in establishing an American empire during the nineteenth century across the contiguous United States.⁸ Understanding the roles women and domesticity had in the colonisation of California and San Francisco helps to develop the overall picture of western settlement in the nineteenth century. Not only does it challenge further the Turnerian view of the West as a place made by

⁶ Sarah Josepha Hale, *Manners; or, Happy Homes and good Society All the Year Round* (Boston, 1868), p. 211.

⁷ The LSFS had similar hopes for their domestic home. Rather than influencing the city structure, though, the lady managers hoped domestic structure would elevate the sailors themselves, who would in turn bring their learned domestic values to ships and other cities they docked in.

⁸ Alaska and Hawaii both joined the Union in the mid-twentieth century, after the decline of domesticity as the leading value system of the nation.

men, but it also helps us to situate domestic ideology into the broader landscape; too often, the leading value system of nineteenth-century America has been depicted as a fixed and immovable ideology, seemingly restricted to localised – predominantly New England and mid-Atlantic – white, middle-class homes. In contrast, this thesis has shown how domesticity, much like the Pacific Railroad, travelled the width of the United States. Furthermore, domesticity was shown to be a much more fluid and malleable ideological framework, one that could be bent and shaped to exert its influence in the West.

Many studies of domesticity focus on its presence inside individual homes, and the roles domestic women adopted inside them.⁹ Whilst this thesis has touched on that aspect of the ideology, it has also addressed a broader remit: the effect women’s domestic efforts had on the creation of an American community on the far edges of the rapidly expanding American empire. The case studies in chapters one and two especially have demonstrated that whilst domesticity certainly began inside homes, women’s redemptive labour was intended to have a profound impact on the development of the urban terrain beyond them. Whether this impact was a result of moral suasion through homebuilding (such as Farnham’s approach), physical additions to, and stinging criticisms of, the city landscape (such as the LSFS’s approach), or the domestic behavioural governance of newly built areas (as in Golden Gate Park), does not matter. The fact that women directly (and indirectly) influenced the forming of city, state, nation, and empire through commitment to, and the implementation of, domestic ideology is an area that deserves further scholarly research.

Domesticity and the efforts of the women who subscribed to it, then, were crucial to the U.S. imperial project. During a period of heightened immigration resulting in heterogeneous communities – perhaps none more so than in California – ‘good’ women of solid, Protestant

⁹ Glenna Matthews, *“Just a Housewife”*: *The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America* (New York, 1987), for example.

stock were needed nationwide to steady the ship. This thesis has argued that San Francisco's development from boomtown to metropolis was at least in part facilitated by the presence of domestic women, their labour towards establishing that domestic sphere, and the effects they had morally, socially, and physically on the urban terrain. But more than just the presence of these women were the assumptions and beliefs surrounding the interconnected nature of 'good' white womanhood and nation building that were held on both the East and West coasts. Domestic homes, managed by 'true' Protestant women, were crucial to the U.S. imperial project in supposedly forestalling the degeneration of pioneering American men in diverse racial, but largely homosocial, settings. Farnham – a self-styled pioneer who wrote extensively about the work of settler colonialism – certainly saw the female-led transformation of San Francisco happening through the introduction of private family homes. The LSFS took a more interventionist approach, criticising the existing *status quo* of the city, and crafting new, ordered spaces that would help usher in the domestic ideal they laboured towards. That the LSFS were able to do this with any level of success also speaks to the pervasiveness of domestic thought across the U.S.: the influence and status women had during the apogee of domestic ideology perhaps inevitably meant that the feminine sphere of influence would expand from the family home to touch upon wider society. San Francisco's physical, moral, and social terrain certainly benefited from the labour and influence of domestic and benevolent women.

This study has also argued that domesticity and race were intimately entwined, never more so than in San Francisco and wider California's racially diverse and heterogeneous society. The domestic vision that many of the women (and, indeed, men who laboured alongside and shared the vision) worked towards was usually specific to a white, Protestant middle-class. Certainly others, like the Mexican family Farnham spent a night with and the widely condemned Chinese population, could be present in that nascent domestic society. But their presence was a supporting role: they would prop up domestic infrastructure, predominantly

through labour in the service industries.¹⁰ True domestic womanhood was a position for Anglo-American women to hold. But this racially hierarchical vision was not just a hallmark of domesticity. Barbara Berglund's subjects who shaped and designed the city were much more comfortable with San Francisco's cultural and social landscape once a hierarchy that was both class- and race-based was established in the sites she terms 'cultural frontiers'. Only once a system of leisure facilitated by the labour of 'others' had been established did San Francisco truly become 'American'.¹¹

Amy Kaplan's manifest domesticity situated the ideology as a tool of imperial civilization, an idea that this thesis has drawn on and supports. Nonetheless, this work has also shown that some nuance is required when positioning the domestic as a tool of civilization in an international setting. Kaplan showed how, in the minds of contemporary reformers, 'the process of domestication...entail[ed] conquering and taming the wild, the natural, and the alien'.¹² The nineteenth-century literature surrounding manifest destiny singled out white women for this work. Those 'less-desirable' elements of society, which in California were found in the heterogeneous and foreign male community, Mexican *ranchos*, and Chinese homes, culture, men, and women, amongst other areas, would be slowly assimilated into the American body politic, the rhetoric of manifest destiny suggested, as white, Protestant women set about crafting their ideal urban landscape. But this work has shown that we do not see this gradual assimilation happening with one significant group of 'others' during the nineteenth century: the Chinese. Their perceived differences created a gap that was too big for reforming domesticity to bridge. Influence and reform certainly had its limits.

¹⁰ Where labour in service industries can be said to 'actively' prop up domesticity, groups such as the Chinese and Mexicans also 'passively' enhanced and supported domesticity through their perceived domestic failings, as defined by a white, middle-class, Protestant population.

¹¹ See Barbara Berglund, *Making San Francisco American: Cultural Frontiers in the Urban West, 1846 – 1906* (Lawrence, 2007).

¹² Kaplan, 'Manifest Domesticity', *American Literature* 70 (September 1998), pp. 581 – 606, p. 582.

This study has examined a select group's efforts to shape the city of San Francisco into a place that was representative of the wider American community. The group that has been the focus of this thesis was largely domestic, reform-minded, middle-class, Anglo-American Protestant women, and to a lesser extent the men who supported them. But their efforts, as important as they have been shown to be, were nonetheless just a small part of the much broader attempt to colonise the West and transform it into a place where the Protestant American family would thrive. The home, as Richard White suggests when he warns against dismissing it as a cliché due to its ubiquity in nineteenth-century literature, remained crucial to this process.¹³ But it was not just the reform-minded citizens who appear in this thesis that employed the home as a means of colonising the West. The Homestead Act, a prime example of the U.S. government tying successful expansion, colonisation, and settlement to the institution of home, was introduced in the 1860s to encourage the rapid settlement of new territory acquired through war, violent indigenous removal, and treaties.¹⁴ As White points out, those homesteaders who took up the U.S. government's offer for land would need the labour of both men and women. That joint labour, the government hoped, would lead to the spread of homes and families across the West.¹⁵

The anti-domestic orders of the West were not confined solely to San Francisco and wider California, either. Polygamous Mormons in Utah, for example, were largely seen to desecrate the sanctity of home and national values. Such was the level of disapproval towards Mormon marriage practices, they, like the Chinese, were often discussed under the banner 'the Mormon

¹³ Richard White, *The Republic for Which It Stands: The United States During Reconstruction and the Gilded Age* (New York, 2017), p. 136.

¹⁴ The Homestead Act of 1862 threw open the vast landmass of the Republic by offering citizens 160 acres of federal land for free, on the proviso that the land was worked and improved by its new inhabitants. After five years of continuous habitation, homesteaders were able to claim the land for their own. For an introductory overview of the 1862 Homestead Act, see Jacob Freund, 'The Homestead Act of 1862: The First Entitlement Program', *Journal of the West* 52 (2013), pp. 16 – 21. See also Hannah L. Anderson, 'That Settles It: The Debate and Consequence of the Homestead Act 1862', *The History Teacher* 45 (2011), pp. 117 – 121; Roger D. Billings, 'The Homestead Act, Pacific Railroad Act and Morrill Act', *Northern Kentucky Law Review* 39 (2012), pp. 699 – 736, see esp. pp. 711 – 729.

¹⁵ See White, *The Republic for Which It Stands*, pp. 141 – 148.

question'.¹⁶ The state again played its hand with the introduction of anti-polygamy over the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁷ So too with the Native American population, where from mid-century, treaties included clauses to divide land into private property 'and use them as a basis for Indian homes with monogamous nuclear families whose gender roles mimicked those of white Protestants'.¹⁸ Home was once again the great civilizer in American minds.

Protestant American homes also had an international reach by the end of the century by way of consumerist habits. Kristin Hoganson's research into women's home-based consumerism argued that the home was 'an arena of imperial contact and contestation'.¹⁹ In importing foreign goods to decorate homes, foods to feed family and friends, and clothes to wear, American women collected the spoils of empire and showcased their privilege, as opposed to the global workers who crafted their consumer goods.²⁰ Though domestic women's redemptive labour inside American homes was crucial to the development of San Francisco, that labour was but one element of the home-centric measures that sat within the broader mission of colonising, civilizing, expanding, and assimilating 'others' during the nineteenth century.

This thesis, then, has focused on that one element of settling a newly acquired colonial outpost on the far reaches of the Republic's western border. Though a broader and more accurate historical understanding of the West emerged with the re-evaluation of the male

¹⁶ Christine Talbot, *A Foreign Kingdom: Mormons and Polygamy in American Political Culture, 1852 – 1890* (Urbana, 2013), p. 1.

¹⁷ Stable and culturally 'American' homes were so important that Utah's application for statehood was declined five times before being finally admitted in 1896 after making polygamy illegal. For more on anti-polygamy laws and the political culture surrounding the movement, see Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, 2002); Talbot, *A Foreign Kingdom*; White, *The Republic for Which It Stands*, pp. 384 – 389.

¹⁸ White, *The Republic for Which It Stands*, p. 151. The adoption of 'Protestant culture' was a key part of Native American assimilation and was largely believed to be achievable through the introduction of 'American' style homes. This process carried on into the twentieth century with institutes for indigenous children. See Kevin Whalen, *Native Students at Work: American Indian Labor and Sherman Institute's Outing Program, 1900 – 1945* (Seattle, 2016).

¹⁹ Kristin L. Hoganson, 'Buying into Empire: American Consumption at the Turn of the Twentieth Century' in *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* (Madison, 2009), p. 248

²⁰ Kristin L. Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865 – 1920* (Chapel Hill, 2007).

dominated Turnerian narrative, there remained a dearth of research on women's activism in crafting and building the West's metropolises. San Francisco was no different. The previous chapters begin to address this, outlining women's roles in the city's evolution, expansion, and (to its boosters) eventual stabilisation. The domestic reform those women engaged with has been shown in this thesis to be crucial to San Francisco's incorporation into a national empire of the home. That reforming labour those middle-class female pioneers carried out surely helped to encourage one San Franciscan newspaper to make a statement Eliza Farnham would have greatly approved of. In response to a report on high levels of home ownership in Philadelphia in 1887, San Francisco's *Daily Evening Bulletin* was able to happily declare that the once male-dominated, highly transient metropolis was now 'largely a city of homes', too.²¹

²¹ 'Home-Building', *Daily Evening Bulletin*, volume 63, issue 130, 10 March 1887, p. 2.

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