

# Migration, Masculinity, and Mastering the “Queue”: A Case of Chinese Scalping



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IN 1906 a South African newspaper, *The Prince*, published a picture of a Chinese man’s scalp, which it had bought from an ex-prisoner. According to the original newspaper account and the subsequent government investigation, staff and prisoners were scalping Chinese men in the morgue on demand since at least May 1906, and selling them to colonial officials.<sup>1</sup> “Queues” were also being taken from living Chinese prisoners.<sup>2</sup> The one sold to the newspaper was traced back to the execution of two Chinese prisoners at Pretoria Jail. When exhumed, both had been scalped. Prisoner witnesses attested that the

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<sup>1</sup> *The Prince*, 29 September 1906, 1116 had a photograph of the scalp (the front page), and 1118–1119 the story. See also 22 September 1906; 13 October 1906, 1166; *Truth* (Western Australia [WA]), 27 October 1906, 7; South African National Archives, Transvaal Foreign Labour Department (FLD) 7/147/20/20. Conclusions from Affidavits taken in connection with statements in *The Prince* regarding removal of a Chinaman’s Scalp; FLD7/147/20/20, Frank Oldrich Wheeler’s statement; FLD7/147/20/20, Alfred W. Sanders, District Surgeon, to Deputy Governor of Pretoria Prison, 9 October 1906; FLD7/147/20/20, Secretary, Law Department to Private Secretary, Acting Lieutenant-Governor, 16 November 1906; Warder Kidby’s statement; C. J. Hanrette, Director of Prisons, to Secretary of Law Department, 10 October 1906; FLD7/147/20/20, Secretary, Law Department, to Private Secretary, Acting Lieutenant-Governor, 16 November 1906; C. A. Mynott, Detective, to the Chief Detective Inspector, Criminal Investigation Department, 1 October 1906.

<sup>2</sup> “Queue” remains the most common term used, in English, French and amongst Chinese scholars translating into English. However, because of its strong racial connotations, this article has chosen to refer to the hairstyle as a braid throughout, unless to do so would be anachronistic. In contrast with the ready acceptance to use the word “queue” within current scholarship, there has been a long historiographical interest in the origins of ‘coolie’, and a recognition of its racialized meanings. See Lydia Potts, *A History of Migration*, translation by Terry Bond (London: Atlantic Books, 1990), for a history of ‘coolie’. See below for more details on the origins of “queue” and ‘pigtail’.

practice was common and the prison photographer was clearly implicated,<sup>3</sup> but as all of the witnesses were prisoners, no further official action was taken and no further bodies exhumed.<sup>4</sup>

How is one to understand this, both the scalping itself and the alleged collecting by colonial officials? Drawing on newspapers, photographs, and illustrations of the Chinese 'queue' from the 1600s, as well as the official investigation into the scalping incident and the ensuing press coverage, this article reflects on the intersection of settler colonialism, race, and manhood embodied by the Chinese braid. This article will specifically focus on three points. First, it will explore the history of Chinese hair and its social meanings and connect that to work on the body, what Burton and Ballantyne have called 'the most intimate colony'.<sup>5</sup> Bodies were already commodified in colonial contexts: race and gender were used to 'differentiate between humans whose worth was constructed as beyond price or "price-less" and humans who became exchangeable and valued commodities'.<sup>6</sup>

Related to this, it will explain why there was a commodification of Chinese hair at all. Arjun Appadurai has famously written about 'the commodity potential of all things', that 'consumption (and the demand that makes it possible)' send social messages, something he particularly links to elite consumption.<sup>7</sup> As this suggests, it is significant that Chinese hair became commodified, allegedly collected by working class British colonials for elite colonial officials. While we may not ever know the details of the specific exchange, we can still understand the historic context that made Chinese hair a commodity. Anthropologists and archaeologists have studied the collection and commodification of human remains, but this is normally 'recorded as a distant and past tradition belonging to the prehistoric Indigenous "other", not easily or readily associated with current Western trends'.<sup>8</sup> This case study offers a critique of such silences, by drawing attention to the collection of hair and

<sup>3</sup> FLD7/147/20/20, Alfred W. Sanders, District Surgeon, to Deputy Governor of Pretoria Prison, 9 October 1906.

<sup>4</sup> *The Prince*, 22 September 1906.

<sup>5</sup> T. Ballantyne and A. Burton, "Postscript: Bodies, Genders, Empires: Reimagining World Histories," in *Bodies in Contact, Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History*, eds. Ballantyne and Burton (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 406.

<sup>6</sup> Michele Mitchell and Naoko Shibusawa, with Stephan F. Miescher, "Introduction: Gender, Imperialism and Global Exchanges," *Gender and History* 26, no. 3 (2014): 393-413.

<sup>7</sup> Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 13, 31.

<sup>8</sup> Richard J. Chacon and David H. Dye, eds., *The Taking and Displaying of Human Body Parts as Trophies by Amerindians* (New York: Springer, 2008), 7.

other body parts within settler societies, and places this within the broader literature of what Simon Harrison has called ‘human trophyism’.<sup>9</sup>

Third, this article explores the ways newspapers in South Africa, Britain, Australia and New Zealand covered this story, situated within recent scholarship about the increasing globalisation of news coverage within the English-speaking world.<sup>10</sup> South African newspapers were largely created by British or Australian male migrants, with a huge increase in the number of English-language newspapers in the 1890s and 1900s, especially concentrated in the mining areas. The increasing reliance on news services like Reuters disseminated news stories and spread out the expense of telegrams amongst several newspapers. This meant that many stories were duplicated in Britain and South Africa, and stories about the Chinese were also frequently repeated in United States, Australian and New Zealand newspapers.<sup>11</sup> This ensued that the scalping incident was a global story, which fit within broader Yellow Peril discourse. ‘Yellow Peril’ was a term originating in Germany in 1898, but was widespread by 1900, and often became associated with fears of an ‘Asian’ invasion, spurred on by the rise of Japan as a global power, increasing Chinese migration abroad, and the 1900 Boxer Rebellion.<sup>12</sup> The fact that China and Japan remained uncolonised by Europe was also a significant factor. Despite the small Chinese population of just over 2,000 in 1903, South Africans were fascinated with China and the Chinese hairstyle.<sup>13</sup> The fluid colonial population on the Transvaal gold mines in particular fostered sustained networks of

<sup>9</sup> Simon Harrison, “Skull Trophies of the Pacific War: Transgressive Objects of Remembrance,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12 (2006): 817–836. See also A. G. Morris, “Trophy Skulls, Museums and the San,” in *Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen*, ed. P. Skotnes (Cape Town: University Press, 1996), 67–79; Ricardo Roque, *Headhunting and Colonialism: Anthropology and the Circulation of Human Skulls in the Portuguese Empire, 1870–1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 8, 88–90; Shruti Kapila, “Race Matters: Orientalism and Religion, India and Beyond c. 1770–1880,” *Modern Asian Studies* 41, no. 3 (2007): 471–513.

<sup>10</sup> Simon J. Potter, *News and the British World: The Emergence of an Imperial Press System, 1876–1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> See Rachel K. Bright, *Chinese Labour in South Africa: Race, Violence and Global Spectacle* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), esp. chapters 3 and 5.

<sup>12</sup> For a history of Yellow Peril, see David Glover, “Die gelbe gefahr, le peril jaune, the yellow peril: the geopolitics of a fear,” in *Fear: Essays on the Meaning and Experience of Fear*, eds. Kate Hebblethwaite and Elizabeth McCarthy (Dublin: Four Courts, 2007), esp. 49–50; Ross Forman, *China and the Victorian Imagination: Empires Entwined* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), esp. 98–129; Gregory Blue, “Gobineau on China: Race Theory, the ‘Yellow Peril,’ and the Critique of Modernity,” *Journal of World History* 10, no. 1 (1999): 93–134.

<sup>13</sup> Figures for the 1904 Census were published in *Indian Opinion*, 8 October 1904; John P. R. Maud, *City Government: The Johannesburg Experiment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), 384.

communication between settler colonies, especially with regards to contemporary debates about Asian migration. By 1904, at the height of Yellow Peril discourse, there were over 5,000 Australians on the Witwatersrand (Rand) region in the Transvaal, and a couple thousand Americans, 'bringing with them a strong union tradition and marked antipathies to Asian and "coolie" labour'.<sup>14</sup> When, in 1904, the unelected Transvaal government, with British approval, allowed the controversial importation of Chinese indentured labour despite strong local opposition, the entire settler colonial world took notice. Overall, 63,695 Chinese were imported between 1904 and 1907 within the 40 square miles of the Rand, equivalent to 5 percent of the estimated Transvaal population in 1903.<sup>15</sup> It was these Chinese who were allegedly being scalped.

Throughout 1905–1906, newspapers reported weekly accounts of the Chinese who would escape their compounds and go raiding, particularly targeting isolated farms. Several farmers were killed and a few women and children seriously injured, despite increased (expensive) police cordons and increased security on the gold mines themselves. 'Chinese Outrage' was a common headline in British and South African newspapers, appearing at least once a week in most papers, and such stories spread globally via Reuters. In these stories, the Chinese were depicted as threatening South Africa's future as a 'white man's colony', economically, sexually and violently.<sup>16</sup> Those stories often combined all of the most sensational aspects of tabloid journalism with all of the racialized and gendered imagery of the Yellow Peril.

The scalping story appeared in an assortment of newspapers in South Africa, Britain, Australia and New Zealand throughout September, October and November 1906. Telegrams allowed the story to appear simultaneously in Britain and South Africa, and most newspapers simply duplicated what the editor wrote in *The Prince* or copied his telegrams, sent to several leading newspapers in Britain. As was the case in Britain, 'the populist coverage of crime' was partly justified as a journalistic creed to 'expose the "truth"' and this meant that journalists increasingly investigated crimes 'rather than simply report its revelations in the courtroom'.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Brian Kennedy, *A Tale of Two Cities. Johannesburg and Broken Hill: 1885–1925* (Johannesburg: Melbourne University Press, 1984), 1–2.

<sup>15</sup> Bright, *Chinese*, Table 1: Number of Chinese Labourers Imported Annually, 91.

<sup>16</sup> See Bright, *Chinese*, esp. 95–140.

<sup>17</sup> Judith Rowbotham, Kim Stevenson, and Samantha Pegg, *Crime News in Modern Britain: Press Reporting and Responsibility, 1820–2010* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 101.

While *The Prince* clearly considered itself a more serious weekly newspaper, it imbibed many of these new tabloid traits, with the focus on the journalist single-handedly investigating crimes a key component of much of the newspaper. The motto of the newspaper throughout 1906 suggests the centrality of this ‘mission’: ‘Fearless and Just, the Prince of Critics’ appeared at the top of each issue. Indeed, *The Prince*’s controversial editor, George Webb Hardy, had already been imprisoned in 1905 for indecency after publishing sensational material from his investigation into an allegation of ‘Black Peril’, involving a black gardener seducing white girls at a Natal school.<sup>18</sup> Hardy is only remembered now because of his subsequent 1912 novel, *The Black Peril*, loosely based on the articles.<sup>19</sup> Little is known about Hardy’s life before arriving in South Africa, although he is listed as a Cambridge Law graduate in 1892, and seems to have travelled at least to Australia, New York, and through parts of Alaska and Canada, before arriving in Natal in 1901 and founded *The Prince* as a weekly newspaper.<sup>20</sup> This was a popular, if risky, venture at the time. Independent newspapers were ‘either treated with suspicion by officialdom, or (more frequently) simply ignored’.<sup>21</sup> Several editors were jailed during the Boer War in particular.<sup>22</sup> Despite this, Hardy consistently demonstrated a ‘willingness to thrust his rhetorical rapier into public officials and to employ unrestrained language in describing both them and public institutions’.<sup>23</sup> As a result, his residence in South Africa was marked by a high readership, a degree of infamy and an increasingly acrimonious relationship with local authorities. This was his final exposé, as his newspaper folded upon his return to Britain in early 1907.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *The Prince* (Transvaal), 7 October 1904; additional articles were published on 14 October 1904, 4 November 1904, 11 November 1904, 17 February 1905; see also Hale, 30.

<sup>19</sup> Gareth Cornwell, “George Webb Hardy’s *The Black Peril* and the Social Meaning of ‘Black Peril’ in early twentieth century South Africa,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 22, no. 3 (1996): 441–453.

<sup>20</sup> *The Prince* appeared to be named in commemoration of the recent visit of George, Duke of Cornwall, and York, later Prince of Wales, to Natal, and began very imperialistic in tone, but becoming more critical with time.

<sup>21</sup> Donal McCracken, “The Imperial British Newspaper, with special reference to South Africa, India and the ‘Irish model,’” *Critical Arts: A South-North Journal of Cultural & Media Studies* (2015): 10, 16, 20.

<sup>22</sup> See T. E. G. Cutton, *A History of the Press in South Africa* (Cape Town: NUSAS, 1935).

<sup>23</sup> Hale, 28.

<sup>24</sup> It is not clear why he returned to Britain, given the apparent success of his newspaper. The inquest into his suicide in 1922 raises more questions. His brother stated that he had had a nervous breakdown ‘about twenty years ago’ which suggests that either his arrival in Durban in 1901 was a therapeutic change of scenery after this breakdown, or that his departure in 1907 was due to the breakdown. See *Dundee Evening Telegraph* (UK), 17

Focusing on the actual scalping incident, and situating it within wider media coverage of the Yellow Peril, illuminates a key tension within Sino-Western historiography and colonial scholarship. Inspired by Edward Said's *Orientalism*, scholars such as Willy R. Berger have argued that European images of China were never about real places, peoples or events.<sup>25</sup> European knowledge creation about China ignored 'China as a real country'.<sup>26</sup> Certainly, this article will highlight many instances of objectifying China and Chinese people. However, it is incorrect to read this objectification as itself a sign of Western power over the 'orient'. While the scalping incident seems highly unusual, this case reflected a broader problem at the heart of colonialism. For both white men and the colonial state, power was 'dominant but never quite hegemonic'.<sup>27</sup> Hegemonic masculinity idealises stereotypes, meaning that, 'while men as a group may be dominant and powerful, most men *as individuals* do not feel powerful'.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, the colonial state's power was never absolute, and can be seen as especially fragile in South Africa after the Boer War. Scholars such as Robert Morrell have demonstrated how important re-affirmations of white male unity were in racially and class divided societies like South Africa.<sup>29</sup> Thus the hegemonic dominance of the colonial state and the 'white' male was always relational and 'always contestable'.<sup>30</sup> The Chinese were not colonised, were considered hard working, and were numerous. The objectification of Chinese men in Yellow Peril discourse was both a sign of colonial male power and weakness. This apparent contradiction can be explained by considering the trophy collecting of the scalps.

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October 1922, 6; *Bridlington Free Press* (UK), 7 February 1913, 3; *Yorkshire Evening Post* (UK), 4 February 1913, 5.

<sup>25</sup> Willy R. Berger, *China-bild und China-mode in Europa der Aufklärung* (1990), 25–26, quoted in Stefan Gaarsmand Jacobsen, "Chinese Influences or Images? Fluctuating Histories of How Enlightenment Europe Read China," *Journal of World History* 24, no. 3 (2013): 639.

<sup>26</sup> Nicolas Standaert, "Seventeenth-century European Images of China," *China Review International* 12, no. 1 (2005): 258.

<sup>27</sup> Tony Ballantyne, "Colonial Knowledge," in *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*, ed. Sara Stockwell (London: Blackwell, 2008), 189. See also Homi Bhabha, "In a Spirit of Calm Violence," in *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements*, ed. Gyan Prakash (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 332.

<sup>28</sup> Jamie R. Abrams, "Enforcing Masculinities at the Borders," *Nevada Law Journal* 13 (2013): 567.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Morrell, "Of Boys and Men: Masculinity and Gender in South African Studies," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24, no. 4 (1998): 619, 629.

<sup>30</sup> R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 76, note 15.

This article particularly draws on Homi Bhabha's argument that nations need to create a shared history, which gives them a shared ideology and legitimacy, a sense of 'deep, horizontal comradeship'. It cements who 'us' is, that feeling of groupness, and who is excluded. That history has to be constantly performed to maintain that groupness. If that performance ever ceases, then that groupness also ceases to exist. This constant performance, however, allows exclusion and inclusion to constantly be renegotiated, and means that real coherence and groupness is never attainable. Each performance of the nation is an attempt to end the debate, to cement the power and unity of the nation, but each performance actually opens the debate about who is in the group anew.<sup>31</sup>

Bhabha's ideas were specifically about nations, but can be applied equally well to the precariousness of South Africa as a 'white' settler colony. In this context, it is about the performance, not of national identity, but of white male colonial power. Whiteness was a category that constantly needed to be performed, precisely because who to include and exclude was never clear-cut. Afrikaners and British had fought a brutal war for almost three years; anti-Semitism was rife, but some saw them as a welcome addition to the overall 'white' population; and there was growing anxiety about *bywoners*, or poor whites.<sup>32</sup> Whiteness, male hegemony and settler colonial rule were equally fragile and in need of constant performance. And for a variety of reasons I shall discuss, that performance of white male colonial identity increasingly focused on the Chinese other, an other often represented by their hair.

## A SOCIAL HISTORY OF CHINESE HAIR

In most societies, hair has been used by individuals to express themselves and by societies to regulate themselves.<sup>33</sup> The Mandarin

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<sup>31</sup> Homi Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 139–170.

<sup>32</sup> See Rachel K. Bright, "A 'great deal of discrimination is necessary in administering the law': Frontier Guards and Migration Control in Early Twentieth Century South Africa," *Journal of Migration History*, 2018.

<sup>33</sup> Many customs and rituals globally have involved hair. Styling one's hair could be a means of social and self-expression, while imposing hairstyles, or even being a "leader" of hair fashion, all denote elements of power relations within society. See E. R. Leach, "Magical Hair," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 88 (1958): 153; C. R. Hallpike, "Social Hair," *Man* 4 (1969): 254–264; W. Cooper, *Hair: Sex, Society, Symbolism* (London: Aldus, 1971); Raymond Firth, "Hair as Private Asset and Public

Chinese name for the braid hairstyle was bianzi, 辮子, and had been used to describe any braided hair on males or females since at least the ninth century.<sup>34</sup> The Manchus imported the specific braid hairstyle when they invaded China in 1644.

One of their chief means of forcing the population to submit to colonial conquest was by requiring all Chinese men to shave off all hair at the front of the head above the temples and the rest of the hair would be braided at the back of the head. Refusal was punishable by execution. While there was much initial resistance to this hair style, by the nineteenth century it was ubiquitous.<sup>35</sup> It had become a physical symbol of one's gendered and national identity. Even if the braid was removed without the owners' consent, the loss of it could cause considerable social distress and ostracism, as Philip Kuhn has shown during a queue-cutting panic in 1768.<sup>36</sup>

Hair was also an important part of the way the Chinese identified and judged 'others'. Seventeenth century Chinese accounts of European traders or missionaries focused on 'their beards, which were

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Symbol," *Symbols: Public and Private* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1973), 289; P. Hershman, "Hair, Sex and Dirt," *Man* 9 (1974): 274–298; G. Obeyesekere, *Medusa's Hair: An Essay on Personal Symbols and Religious Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 271; Ashraf Zahedi, "Concealing and Revealing Female Hair: Veiling Dynamics in Contemporary Iran," in *The Veil: Women Writers on Its History, Lore, and Politics*, ed. Jennifer Heath (London: University of California Press, 2008), 251; Esi Sagay, *African Hairstyles: Styles of Yesterday and Today* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983), 1–44; Kobena Mercer, "Black Hair/Style Politics," in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, eds. Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Min-ha, and Cornel West (London: The MIT Press, 1990), 248–249, 252–254.

<sup>34</sup> The coming of age rituals for men and women involved dressing the hair in a formal, often intricate, knot on top of the head. Furthermore, 'caring for and protecting hair was a component of Confucian rites' since it was given by parents to their children, as laid out in the *Analects*. The *Analects* also specified that only barbarians wore their hair 'unbound'; increasingly elaborate hairstyles became symbols of Chinese civilization. Various Chinese folklores attributed magical powers to hair as well, and a useful (if dangerous) ingredient in spells. Zhikun Zhang, "The Fate of Black Hair: Hair in Rites of Passage in China," in *Hidden Dimensions of Education: Rhetoric, Rituals and Anthropology*, eds. Tobias Werler and Christoph Wulf (Munster: Waxmann, 2006), 165; Philip A. Kuhn, *Soulstealers: The Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768* (London: Harvard University Press, 1990); Michael R. Godley, "The End of the Queue: Hair as Symbol in Chinese History," *China Heritage Quarterly* 27 (September 2011).

<sup>35</sup> There was no such regulation for female hair styling, emphasizing how the body politic of Chinese nationhood at this time was decidedly masculine. Firth, 262–298 contains speculation that such male-centred hair-styling reflected the more overtly public social roles of men in 'Oriental' societies. While his comments remain some of the most thoughtful interpretations of hair's social significance, his classifications of 'Western' and 'Oriental' invite further study.

<sup>36</sup> Kuhn, 1–29. Losing one's braid could result in being banned from one's village and disowned by one's family, so seriously was the matter taken, especially in rural areas. Zhang, 165–181.



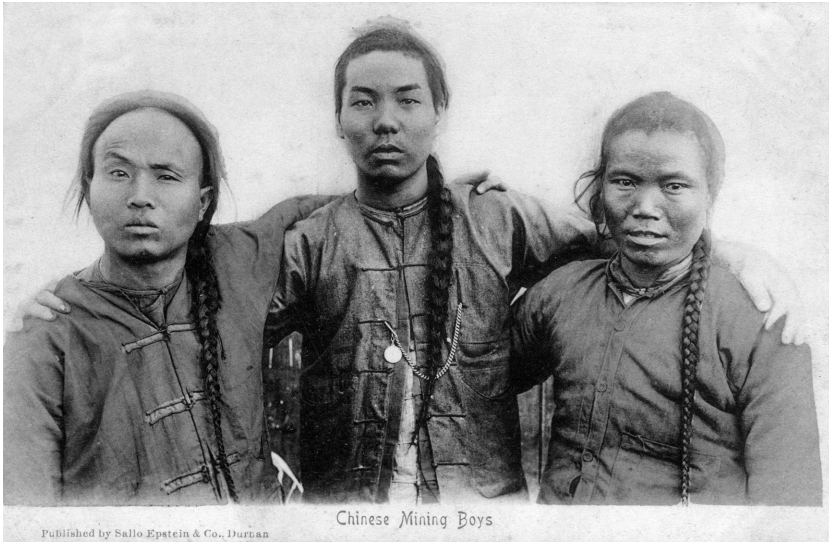


FIGURE 1. Postcard of 'Chinese Miners' (Sallo Epstein & Co., Durban. c. 1904). Courtesy of Alamy.

negatively contrasted with the careful grooming and smoothness of Chinese men'. The hairiness of Europeans was also depicted as transgressing 'boundaries of age... since the long beard was a symbol of seniority in the Confucian universe', and boundaries of gender, with European women often depicted as having hairy faces.<sup>37</sup>

At the end of the nineteenth century, a small but growing number of educated Chinese men cut their hair while studying abroad, particularly in Japan. The **queue** style, a source of foreign ridicule and insults, such as "pigtail", "the tailed lackey", and "half-shaved monk", was apparently detrimental to China's international prestige.<sup>38</sup> Diaspora communities also increasingly adopted 'Western' hairstyles; in South Africa, written and visual sources suggest that the **queue** was very rare by 1900. For these men, cutting the braid became a symbol of the birth of Chinese modernity and removed a cause of international ridicule, while the idea

<sup>37</sup> Frank Dikotter, "Hair Barbarians, Furry Primates, and Wild Men: Medical Science and Cultural Representations of Hair in China," in *Hair: Its Power and Meaning in Asian Cultures*, eds. Alf Hildebeitel and Barbara D. Miller (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 52–54.

<sup>38</sup> Translated and quoted in Weikun Cheng, "Politics of the Queue: Agitation and Resistance in the Beginning and End of Qing China," in *Hair*, eds. Hildebeitel and Miller, 129. See also Tsou Jung, *The Revolutionary Arm. A Chinese Nationalist Tract of 1903*, quoted in Godley.

that short hair was more hygienic also spread.<sup>39</sup> The braid hairstyle was became intrinsically linked to the idea of modernisation and was banned, on pain of death, during the Wuchang Uprising in October 1911.<sup>40</sup>

However, such 'queue' cutting was very much the exception. In 1906, men who cut their braids were largely limited to overseas Chinese, students and Christians.<sup>41</sup> It was also common for them to purchase fake braids to wear in public. Chinese men who cut their braids were not always allowed back into China and could be severely ostracised, as several of Lu Xun's short stories from the early twentieth century recall.<sup>42</sup> Legally, the punishment of execution still existed, although this was no longer actually implemented. Chinese scholars debate how quickly the general population embraced shorter hair, and it is clear that for both sides, the hair was a declaration of competing images of Chinese nationhood and male identity.

The Chinese I am discussing were poor indentured labourers, mostly from Shantung, a poor and northern region of China, and photographs suggest most retained their braid hairstyles while in South Africa.<sup>43</sup> This may have simply reflected the fact that their migration was temporary and would be repatriated, unlike the permanent Chinese population, who had strong links to the Chinese nationalist movement headed by Sun Yat-Sen.<sup>44</sup>

## THE "QUEUE" AND "PIGTAIL"

From the earliest days of modern interactions between Europeans and Chinese, Europeans were mesmerised by the braid hairstyle.<sup>45</sup> It

<sup>39</sup> Cheng, 130–131. See also Godley; Frank Dikotter, *Sex, Culture and Modernity in China: Medical Science and the Construction of Sexual Identities in the Early Republican Period* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 55–69, 139–141, 165–179; Dikotter, *Imperfect Conceptions: Medical Knowledge, Birth Defects and Eugenics in China* (London: Hurst & Co, 1998).

<sup>40</sup> Godley; Cheng, 130.

<sup>41</sup> Godley; Cheng, 130.

<sup>42</sup> The various versions of the story of a man going to Japan for education, getting his hair cut, and coming back to China but wearing a fake queue, are all based on his own personal experiences. See Eva Shan Chou, "A Story about Hair: A Curious Mirror of Lu Xun's Pre-Republican Years," *Journal of Asian Studies* 66, no. 2 (2007): 421–459.

<sup>43</sup> See Tu T. Huynh, "Loathing and Love: Postcard Representations of Indentured Chinese Laborers in South Africa's Reconstruction, 1904–10," *Safundi* 9, no. 4 (2008): 395–425. Compare with pictures in Melanie Yap and Dianne Leong Man, *Colour, Confusion and Concessions: The History of the Chinese in South Africa* (Hong Kong, 1996).

<sup>44</sup> Man and Yap, 92–93; Marie-Claire Bergere and Janet Lloyd, *Sun Yat-sen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>45</sup> There are numerous references in Johann Neuhof, *An Embassy from the East India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham* (1673), 79, 181–182, 254, 264.

became a representation of Chinese superstition, as well as a visually striking feature ripe for caricature. The very terminology used to describe the Chinese and their hair denoted this. The French term 'queue', or tail, became the standard Western term.<sup>46</sup> Although similar in meaning, 'pigtail' was decidedly slang and insulting. Both words fell into widespread use in the eighteenth century to describe hair gathered at the nape of the neck and hanging either in a braid or as a low ponytail, usually by European soldiers or sailors.<sup>47</sup> It is less clear when the Chinese hairstyle started being called this,<sup>48</sup> but both 'queue' and 'pigtail' were clearly widespread in English by the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>49</sup> The traffic of Chinese indentured workers became known as the 'pig trade' and the Chinese themselves were commonly known as 'pigs' or 'pigtailed', even in places like South Africa with a tiny Chinese population before the 1904 indenture scheme began.<sup>50</sup> The *Natal Mercury* in 1881 claimed: 'our police court reports are already beginning to tell of a dozen of the pigtail wearers being fined for gambling on a Sunday morning'.<sup>51</sup> The Chinese were not people as such, they were 'The gentlemen of the pigtail'.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>46</sup> "Queue," OED Online (this entry has been updated (OED Third Edition, December 2007), <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/156382?rskey=WIHhA&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>, last accessed 16 December 2016).

<sup>47</sup> In Prussia, it was required for noble officials and known as the 'soldiers' queue' (soldatenzopf); this was banned in 1807 and the fashion generally disappeared from Europe and the United States after the Napoleonic Wars. For more on the history of the hairstyle in Europe, see Joyce Asser, *Historic Hairdressing* (New York: Pitman, 1966, 1970), 73–4; Richard Corson, *Fashions in Hair: The First Five Thousand Years* (London: Peter Owen, 2005, 8th ed. [1977]), 181–182, 272, 278–279, 284, 296–297; L. G. C. Laughton, "Seaman's Pigtail," *Blackwood's Magazine* (Oct. 1929), 551–561; Joachim Hayward Stocqueler, *A Familiar History of the British Army, from the Restoration in 1660 to the Present Time* (London: Edward Stanford, 1871), 103–104; Robert Wilkinson-Latham, *The Royal Navy, 1790–1970* (Bloomsbury: Osprey Publishing, 1977), 34; Elizabeth Harriot Hudson, *The Life and Times of Louisa, Queen of Prussia With an Introductory Sketch of Prussian History: Volume II* (1878), reprinted by Adamant Media Corporation (2001), 214–215.

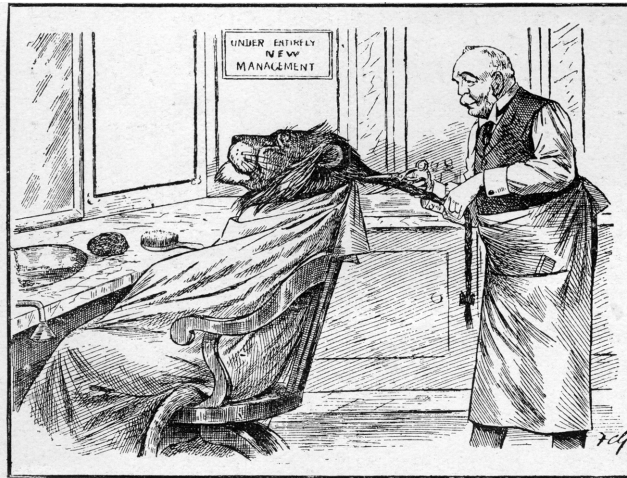
<sup>48</sup> "Pigtail," OED Online (this entry has been updated (OED Third Edition, March 2006), <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/143748?redirectedFrom=pigtail#eid>, last accessed 16 December 2016). Their earliest cited reference to the Chinese 'pigtail' is quite late, in 1874. A quick search on various digital newspaper archives reveals numerous earlier uses.

<sup>49</sup> Henry Yule, *Hobson-Jobson: A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms, Etymological, historical, Geographical and Discursive* (new ed., London: J. Murray, 1903), 710.

<sup>50</sup> The phrase is roughly "Mai-mai ch'u-ch'ai". See Yap and Man, 111; P. C. Campbell, *Chinese Coolie Emigration to Countries within the British Empire* (London: King, 1923), 95ff; Potts, 88.

<sup>51</sup> *Natal Mercury* (Natal), 28 October 1881.

<sup>52</sup> *The Prince*, 20 October 1906, 1181. See also Dorothy Mackenzie's account in Clair Robertson, ed., *Remembering Old Johannesburg* (Johannesburg: AD Donker, Craighall, 1986), 42–43; G. K. Chesterton, *All Things Considered* (London: The Library Press Ltd, 1926



THE UNCOMFORTABLE PIGTAIL

SIR H. C.-B.: We had better have a bit of this pigtail off, Mr. Lion—it doesn't suit you at all.

FIGURE 2. Francis Carruthers Gould, 'The Uncomfortable Pigtail', *The Sphere*, 21 July 1906. Courtesy of Mary Evans Picture Library.

The term 'pigtail' was also applied to people associated with Chinese stereotypes, such as being 'old-fashioned, pedantic, or excessively formal'. For instance, in the run-up to the 1906 general election, the term 'pigtail Tory' was popularised because of their introduction of the Chinese labourers into South Africa. The term was not a compliment.<sup>53</sup> Image 2 shows a British lion having his braid cut off by the prime minister, Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who stopped the importation scheme to South Africa upon taking office. A sign in the background announces that the barber is 'under entirely new management'. Much of the 1906 election campaign focused on the idea that unionists put profit before national and racial honour.<sup>54</sup> The hair here clearly symbolises the idea that Britain itself had become contaminated racially and morally through using Chinese indentured labour.<sup>55</sup>

[1909]), 20; See also *Graaff Reinet Herald* (Cape), 18 October 1882, 2; *Rand Daily Mail* (Transvaal), 11 December 1906, Major L. Forsyth Allan campaign speech, 9.

<sup>53</sup> "Pigtail," OED Online.

<sup>54</sup> See Bright, *Chinese*, chapter 4: "A Matter of National Honour".

<sup>55</sup> *The Prince* (Transvaal), 13 January 1906, 50: "What is the value of British honour compared with the gold wrung from the stones, less hard than their own consciences, by the

The 'queue' was often singled out for special mention in descriptions of the Chinese in the nineteenth century. The Treaty of Tianjib in 1858 meant that missionaries could go into China's interior and there was a huge increase in popular writings about China, especially from missionaries. They often described the Chinese' lack of facial hair as a moral and racial failing; while European and American hairiness was held up as signifying 'physical and moral strength, manly dignity, a higher state of culture, and individual freedom', the apparent inability of Chinese men to grow beards indicated a racial and moral inability to be proper men. This notion was exacerbated by the 'queue', which was deemed 'unnaturally feminizing'.<sup>56</sup> The queue became 'not merely the outward mark of subjection, but the cause of a subdued and broken will power'.<sup>57</sup> So ingrained was the link between the hairstyle and race that Robert K. Douglas, professor of Chinese Studies at Kings College, London, and a Chinese expert for the British Museum, thought it denoted 'the character of the people'.<sup>58</sup> George Orwell's famous essay on 'Boy's Weeklies' in 1940 reflected a visual imagining of Chinese men which had been firmly in place within the English-speaking world since at least the mid-nineteenth century (and which had ceased to exist in reality since the 1911 revolution).

The assumption all along is not only that foreigners are comics who are put there for us to laugh at, but that they can be classified in much the same way as insects. That is why in all boys' papers... a Chinese is invariably portrayed with a pigtail. It is the thing you recognize him by, like the Frenchman's beard or the Italian's barrel-organ.<sup>59</sup>

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aid of the Chinese? Small, indeed, it must be when a British Administration connives at the degrading of its own subjects." Here, the Chinese presence is specially associated with the loss of British masculine and national esteem. They are 'degraded' and 'insulted' by the Chinese presence.

<sup>56</sup> Eric Reinders, *Borrowed Gods and Foreign Bodies: Christian Missionaries Imagine Chinese Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 184–185.

<sup>57</sup> Samuel Isett Woodbridge, *Fifty Years in China: Being an Account of the History and Conditions in China and of the Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, there from 1867 to the Present Day* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1867 [1936]), 112. Missionaries like Woodbridge frequently referenced 1 Corinthians, 11: 14–15: 'Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given for her covering'.

<sup>58</sup> R. K. Douglas, *Society in China* (London: A. D. Innes, 1895), 362. See also the discussion of John Thompson, "Illustrations of China and Its People (1873–1874)," in *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire*, ed. James R. Ryan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 161–167.

<sup>59</sup> George Orwell, "Boy's Weeklies," *Horizon* (London, 1940), reprinted in *Shooting an Elephant: And Other Essays* (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2003), 131.

Attempts were even made to tax the hairstyle in the United States, Australia and Canada, as a way to discourage Chinese migrants.<sup>60</sup>

Many commentators, especially in Britain, emphasised the comedic nature of the hairstyle. Erasmus Doolittle wrote in 1830 that one's first impulse was to laugh at the 'spaniel's tail'.<sup>61</sup> The ridicule of the Chinese in this way was perhaps most obvious in theatrical portrayals of the Chinese. Anne Veronica Witchard has argued that comic drawings combined with stage representations of the Chinese in Britain so that, by the mid-nineteenth century, 'the image of the Chinese was inseparable from their pantomime representation, while the reality of China was thought quite as ludicrous as its stage counterpart'.<sup>62</sup> Sean Metzger has made a similar argument about stage depictions in the United States, with performances full of 'joke' jokes'.<sup>63</sup> In fact, he claims that it 'appears more than any other signifier in various nineteenth-century visual portrayals of Chinese immigrants' in the United States.<sup>64</sup> Such depictions emphasised the clearest representation of the difference between United States and Chinese respective civilisations and masculinities. By referring to the braid and the Chinese in such a derogatory manner, and comparing them with animals, they became an object of amusement and curiosity rather than a threat to 'white' male dominance; it demeaned and trivialised Chinese cultural and physical traits, much like when African hair was called 'wool'.<sup>65</sup> Fear and comedy were often combined in frequent depictions of violent assaults targeting the braid in nineteenth century

<sup>60</sup> See, for instance, Patricia Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia, Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858–1914* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989); Sean Metzger, *Chinese Looks: Fashion, Performance, Race* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014), 37; Markus, 63.

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in S. C. Miller, *The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese 1785–1882* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 29. See also "The Chinaman," *Puynams* 9 (1857) 337, quoted in Anne Veronia Witchard, *Thomas Burke's Dark Chinoiserie: Limehouse Nights and the Queer Spell Chinatown* (London: Ashgate, 2009), 81; A. H. Smith, *Chinese Characteristics* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1894), 99; *Evening Star* (UK), 25 February 1908, 2; "A Chanson for Canton," *Punch* (UK), 10 April 1858; Forman, 176.

<sup>62</sup> Witchard, 61.

<sup>63</sup> Sean Metzger, "Charles Parsloe's Chinese Fetish: An Example of Yellowface Performance in Nineteenth-Century American Melodrama," *Theatre Journal* 56 (2004): 628. Further examples are identified in Floyd Cheung, "Anxious and Ambivalent Representations: Nineteenth-Century Images of Chinese American Men," *Journal of American Culture* 30, no. 2 (2007): 303.

<sup>64</sup> Metzger, "Charles Parsloe's Chinese Fetish," 635.

<sup>65</sup> See Shane White and Graham White, "Slave Hair and African American Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of Southern History* 61, no. 1 (1995): 45–76; Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1968).

plays and stories, moments of light relief and white male physical power. In one short story, copied widely from the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 'How We Bested the Chinkies: An Australia Experiment', one of the heroic male protagonists grabbed a 'Chinaman by his pigtail', threw him 'to the ground', and called him a "“monkey-faced lisper”".<sup>66</sup> Such humour was always easier in Britain, which felt less threatened by any imminent invasion of Chinese men, although it could be found in the settler colonies as well.

The associations with the braid were not always so light-hearted, however. As hundreds of thousands of Chinese men were migrating to California, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, depictions of the 'queue' were directly linked to fears of *real* Chinese men.<sup>67</sup> An Australian newspaper thought: 'Their huge pigtailed hanging well below their waist make them appear like some terrible man-animal'.<sup>68</sup> In Australia and the United States in particular the visual imagery often played on the idea of the braid as a rope, either for the Chinese to ensnare colonials or for colonials to control the Chinese.<sup>69</sup>

In Image 3, a Chinese 'coolie' with rotting pointed teeth is seen using his braid to strangle a man with 'South Africa' written on his shirt. His bony legs with pointed toenails are wrapped tightly around the figure, who sweats (and who bears a resemblance to Alfred Milner, the High Commissioner of South Africa at the time). A gold mine can be seen in the background. The use of the braid in this way reflected a tradition in the United States and Australia since at least the mid-nineteenth century, one which was becoming increasingly widespread.<sup>70</sup>

Probably the first Yellow Peril novel was M. P. Shiel's highly successful *The Yellow Danger* (1898). When the hero, John Hardy, fights

<sup>66</sup> From the *Pall Mall Gazette* (UK), copied in the *Perth Daily News* (W. Australia), 12 December 1906, 4. See also Shiel, 207–209; Forman, 116; John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats, *Yellow Peril: An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear* (London: Verso, 2013), 348.

<sup>67</sup> Adam McKeown, "Conceptualizing Chinese Diasporas, 1842 to 1949," *Journal of Asian Studies* 58, no. 2 (1999): 306–337; "Global Migration 1846–1940," *Journal of World History* 19, no. 2 (2004): 155–189.

<sup>68</sup> *Maryborough Chronicle, Wide Bay and Burnett Advertiser* (Queensland), 29 September 1906, 6. See also *New Zealand Truth* (NZ), 5 January 1907, 5.

<sup>69</sup> Scalpel was Constance Penstone. See Vivian Bickford-Smith, E. Van Heyningen, Nigel Worden, *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century: An Illustrated Social History* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1999), 18.

<sup>70</sup> The drawings of Thomas Nast and George Frederick Keller in the United States have become the most famous, although it is worth noting that they had very different personal political views of the Chinese. Nast criticized their poor treatment, while Keller promoted exclusion. See the excellent introduction to both at <https://thomasnastcartoons.com/> (last accessed 30 June 2017).

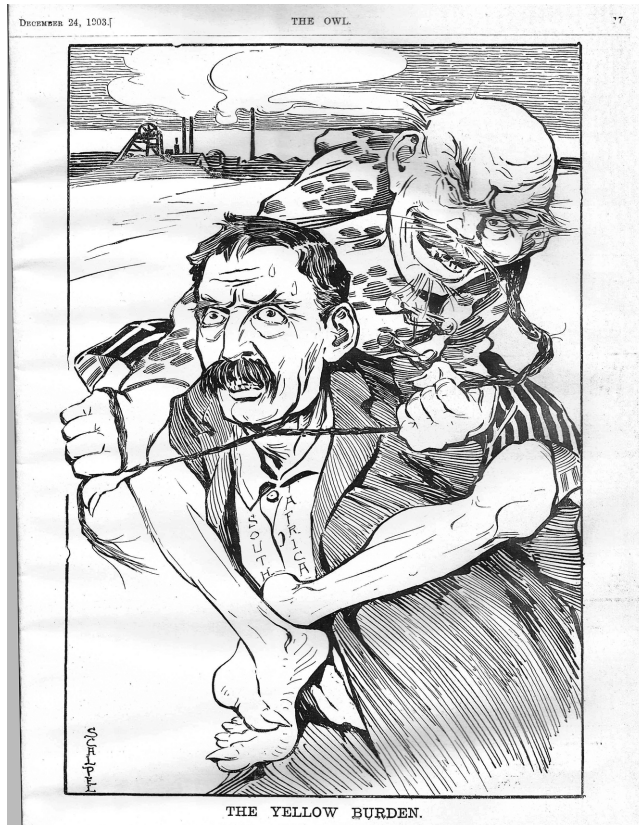


FIGURE 3. Scalpel, 'The Yellow Burden', *The Owl* (Cape), 24 December 1903. Courtesy of the British Library.

the villain, Dr. Yen How, it is described as a 'contest of strengths... a resemblance – of the larger national contest which was impending'. Hardy wraps the 'pigtail... in a single coil tight around Yen's throat'. In Hardy's 'right hand was a revolver, representing the Science of Western Civilisation, which, however, Yen's grip rendered ineffectual; and in his left hand was Yen's pigtail, representing the barbarism, the superstition, the repulsive soul of the East. Yen's face darkened... The rat was being suffocated by its own tail. The West was strangling the East'.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>71</sup> M. O. Shiel, *The Yellow Danger* (London: Grant Richards, 1898), 126–127, 289. For more on Chinese super-villains, see Glover, 57.





FIGURE 4. Thomas Nast, 'Pacific Chivalry: Encouragement to Chinese Immigration', *Harper's Weekly*, 7 August 1869. Courtesy of Illustrating Chinese Exclusion, <https://thomasnastcartoons.com/2014/02/25/pacific-chivalry-7/> [last accessed 30 June 2017].

Ross Forman has argued that such fictional depictions acted as a symbolic castration, although the motives could be more diverse.<sup>72</sup> As Image 4 demonstrates, 'white' residents could also use violence directed at the queue to critique ideas of manhood within settler societies. Here Thomas Nast is portraying the brutal assault of a Chinese man by 'California', a hairy, angry man with a whip (who himself resembles Nast's racialized drawings of Irish men). Such violence towards the Chinese is here partly comic, relying on an over-exaggerated stereotypical Chinese appearance, contrasted with a rough, uncivilised western manhood. This is less about dominance over the Chinese as a critique of direct violence towards the Chinese; such debates about how much violence colonial men could use without jeopardising their 'civilising mission' were commonplace in American and European

<sup>72</sup> Forman, 99.

empire-building, and were frequently highly gendered, with class and religion featuring prominently.<sup>73</sup>

In addition to a growing body of fantastical Yellow Peril fiction, there was a greater awareness that there were real Chinese men with real hair, not just a vague idea of Chinese people far away. Sean Metzger has described how a panic erupted in the United States around the making of wigs and hair pieces from Chinese hair, with such headlines as 'Death Lurks in Chinese Pigtails'.<sup>74</sup> He has argued that this caused anxiety because it was 'the literal integration of Chinese hair into American industrial production, even as the rest of their bodies were increasingly filtered out of this project during the first decades of the twentieth century'.<sup>75</sup> My own research shows that this trade, and the ensuing panic, was not unique to the United States. During this same period, Britons also became aware that some hair pieces were made with Chinese hair. In a widely reported inquest in Bradford, England, a woolcombing factory worker died of anthrax. When he fell ill, the deceased had just opened a bag containing human hair from China, "just as if it had been cut from a Chinaman's head and rolled up" and still 'in pigtails', presumably taken from dead bodies, and possibly suffering from 'horrible disease', according to the factory foreman.<sup>76</sup> On the coroner's orders, the inquest was adjourned for a fortnight so the hair (and two other deaths from anthrax at the same premises) could be investigated.<sup>77</sup> Less widely reported was the coroner's eventual conclusion that the Chinese hair was fine.<sup>78</sup> Most newspapers retained sensational and misleading headlines like 'CHINESE PERIL. Anthrax in Pigtails'.<sup>79</sup> This commercial use of Chinese hair in women's wigs

<sup>73</sup> See, for instance, Edward Berenson's chapters on Henry Morton Stanley and Charles Gordon in *Heroes of Empire: Five Charismatic Men and the Conquest of Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

<sup>74</sup> *San Francisco Chronicle*, 16 January 1906. See also *New York Times* (USA), 22 June 1908. Both quoted in Metzger, *Chinese Looks*, 27.

<sup>75</sup> Sean Metzger, *Chinese Looks*, 71.

<sup>76</sup> *Newsletter: An Australian Paper for Australian People* (NSW), 6 January 1906, 22; *Edinburgh Evening News* (UK), 19 October 1905, 3.

<sup>77</sup> *Derby Daily Telegraph* (UK), 19 October 1905, 4.

<sup>78</sup> *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* (UK), 8 November 1905, 8; *Lancashire Evening Post* (UK), 31 October 1905, 3; *Derby Daily Telegraph* (UK), 31 October 1905, 3; *Bolton Evening News* (UK), 31 October 1905, 3; *Dundee Evening Telegraph* (UK), 31 October 1905, 5.

<sup>79</sup> *Sheffield Independent* (UK), 1 November 1905, 7. See also *Aberdeen Press and Journal* (UK), 1 November 1905, 6; *Dundee Evening Telegraph* (UK), 19 October 1905, 2. The only article on the British Libraries Newspaper Archives ridiculing this idea of the hair carrying anthrax was the *Shipley Times and Express* (UK), 3 November 1905, 3, which reported the critique in the *Hairdressers' Chronicle* (UK), and a professional opinion that true hairdressers would never use inferior Chinese products at all.

suggested a hidden biological hybridity, of Chinese incursion into domestic spaces, a corruption of racial and gender purity.<sup>80</sup>

Later that year, several stories appeared in Australian newspapers, almost verbatim, anxiously reflecting on the use of Chinese hair in the making of wigs and hair pieces generally.<sup>81</sup> Such stories emphasised the idea of vulnerable women being contaminated by Chinese men. As one newspaper mused: ‘Fancy patting a hair-frame made up from the plagued combings of a diseased Celestial, and stretching one’s own carefully tilled and garnished tresses over a defunct’s pigtail!’<sup>82</sup> This intersection of comedy and fear embodied why Chinese hair was so often an object of interest, and both why it was commodified and why that commodification was so problematic.

Real-world encounters were often violent (and, despite Image 3, I have only found stories of Europeans using the braids violently, never the Chinese themselves). An anti-Chinese Australian demanded that they should ‘take each individual Celestial by the **queue** and swing him to the depths of the Pacific if he won’t clear out for the asking’.<sup>83</sup> In a few cases in Australia and California, braids were forcefully cut during violent attacks.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, during the Opium Wars, there were reports of victorious British crews cutting off their defeated Chinese opponents ‘tails’, and keeping them as trophies.<sup>85</sup>

In South Africa too, there were such cases. An investigation into allegations that white overseers were brutalising Chinese workers found that the practice of pulling Chinese men by their hair was common.<sup>86</sup> The

<sup>80</sup> See Tracey Rizzo and Steven Gerontakis, *Intimate Empires: Body, Race, and Gender in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), “Combating Hybridity”; Glover, 53.

<sup>81</sup> Sydney *Sunday Times* (NSW), 26 August 1906, 9. The same article also appeared in *Colac Herald* (Victoria), 12 October 1906, 6.

<sup>82</sup> *Bega Budget* (NSW), 28 February 1906, 1.

<sup>83</sup> *Figaro’s* “Yellow Agony” column, quoted in Alison Broinowski, *The Yellow Lady: Australian Impressions of Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 45.

<sup>84</sup> Andrew Markus, *Fear and Hatred, Purifying Australia & California 1850–1901* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1979), 31; Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy, Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (London: University of California Press, 1975), 26, 68.

<sup>85</sup> The removal of Chinese **queues** is recorded by W. H. Hall and W. D. Bernard, *The Nemesis in China: Comprising a History of the Late War in that Country (etc.)* (London: H. Colburn, 1847), 70–71. See also F. McCormick, *The Flowery Republic* (London: John Murray, 1913), 371–372, quoted in Godley.

<sup>86</sup> FLD7/147/20/13, Allegations by Mr. Johnstone of ill-treatment at New Kleinfontein, Compound Magistrate’s Report and Evidence, 24–26 March 1906, day one, Johnstone interview; FLD7/147/20/14, Alleged ill-treatment by Police and Prison Wardens, Copy of Statement dated 22nd April 1906 by Mr. R. H. Witthauer, late Chinese Controller, Consolidated Langaage G. M. re article appearing in *Rand Daily Mail* 17/4/06 “Home Made Horrors”; *Morning Leader* (UK), 29 September 1906, 1; *Johannesburg Star* (Transvaal),

*Daily Mail* alleged in early 1906 that a widely reproduced photograph of a Chinese man being tied up by his hair (used as a rope) and tortured was staged deliberately by a mine manager with a grievance against his employers. However, this denouncement of the photograph as 'fake' was rather problematic, because, regardless of the reasons, the 'Chinaman's hands were tied up with his pigtail', and he was left for ten hours without food or water in order to take the photograph.<sup>87</sup> There were at least two criminal convictions for white miners cutting off Chinese men's hair while drunk; in both cases, large fights ensued.<sup>88</sup> In cases of such violent acquisition, hair was cut partly for trophy purposes, and partly because of the association with Chinese manhood. In this situation, cutting off a Chinese man's hair could be a signifier of European dominance of China itself.<sup>89</sup> However, negative media coverage reflected a belief that the white men were responsible for violent disorder,<sup>90</sup> caused a 'loss of prestige', a loss of respect of coloured men for white men.<sup>91</sup> Here, a playful, comedic attitude towards the Chinese could itself become dangerous and threaten white hegemony.

These portrayals of the 'que' – comic, diseased, an object of violence – all demonstrate how much the imagery of the Yellow Peril was connected to the insecurities of settler societies. In South Africa in 1906, these anxieties were accentuated by a serious economic depression, despite initial promises that Chinese indentured labour would create jobs for white workers. The economic stagnation was a clear threat to male prestige: white men could not provide for their families, maintain a civilised lifestyle, nor could the size of the British population increase while the depression (and the Chinese scheme) continued. In South Africa, as elsewhere, colonial manhood was defined by the ability of men to be independent economically and support a family, as well as strong elements relating to physical health and strength, and an emphasis on natural leadership over women and the 'native' population. There was also a widespread belief that the Chinese were too racially and sexually ambivalent, that they did not fit clearly into the existing hierarchies. White mine managers frequently complained that the Chinese did not

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throughout November 1905 and February and March 1906; FLD225 62/29, Mr Ash Cooper affidavit, re: assault on Chinese prisoner at Krugersdorp prison, 5 December 1905.

<sup>87</sup> This story was much reproduced. See *Sheffield Evening Telegraph* (UK), 21 February 1906, 4; *Lake County Press* (NZ), 22 March 1906, 5.

<sup>88</sup> *Lancashire Evening Post* (UK), 20 March 1906, 2. The two men were fined because, as the paper stated, demonstrating some ignorance: 'It is a deadly insult to deprive a man of his pigtail, as he dare not got back to China until it has grown again'.

<sup>89</sup> The reasons for such violent acquisition are explained more fully below.

<sup>90</sup> *Daily Express* (Transvaal), 17 August 1906.

<sup>91</sup> FLD 179/36/27, Assault by Lax, 19 August 1906, report from a Constable at the scene.

'know their place', and this in turn was often used as a justification for violence towards Chinese men.<sup>92</sup> Even before the scalping story, *The Prince* had a long editorial about the threat that the Chinese posed to white men on the gold mines of Johannesburg:

Side by side with men... of a superior race, they [the Chinese] lounged, their hair tails coiled around their semi-shaved heads-in itself a deadly insult in the East-with scornful demeanour and contemptuous glance at the poor white man... A small thing, perhaps, this lamentable loss of British prestige.<sup>93</sup>

Here, the Chinese presence is directly linked to the loss of British masculine and national esteem. They are 'degraded' and 'insulted' by the Chinese presence. The very way they wore their hair was an insult, since in China (according to this story), it was considered disrespectful to pin up the braid. One Australian newspaper made a similar complaint about this habit of pinning up the hair, comparing this to dogs' tails being erect or relaxed. Pinning the hair up, like an erect dog's tail showed 'combativeness and insolence', something explicitly deemed incompatible with 'White Australia' in the article.<sup>94</sup>

Marilyn Lake has shown how the formation of a federated white Australia in 1901 was fundamentally linked to the image of Australian manhood, civilization and national identity.<sup>95</sup> D. Walker has described white Australian masculinity at this time as a white 'warrior', ready to defeat an Asian invasion.<sup>96</sup> In the United States, Floyd Cheung has shown how 'authentic' American national identity and manliness were partly created through othering Chinese-American men as "not quite" American and "not quite" men.<sup>97</sup> More widely, the desire 'to offset feelings of masculine inadequacy' has been called 'hyper-masculinity', a phenomenon often associated with violence.<sup>98</sup> Violently assaulting the

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<sup>92</sup> See A. W., "Yellow Slavery – and White," *Westminster Review* 161 (5 May 1904), 611; T. Naylor, *Yellow Labour: The Truth about the Chinese in the Transvaal* (1904), 3; H. Samuel, "The Chinese Labour Question," *Contemporary Review* 85 (April 1904): 457; M. A. Stobart, "The Asiatic Invasion of the Transvaal," *Fortnightly Review* 81 (June 1907), 294; L. E. Neame, "Oriental Labour in South Africa," *Annals of the American Academy* 34, no. 2 (1909): 175–178.

<sup>93</sup> *The Prince* (Transvaal), 13 January 1906, 37, 50.

<sup>94</sup> *Punch* (Victoria), 23 August 1906, 6.

<sup>95</sup> Lake, 203.

<sup>96</sup> David Walker, "Australia's Asian Futures," In *Australia's History: Themes and Debates*, eds. Martyn Lyons and Penny Russell (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2005), 71.

<sup>97</sup> Cheung, 293–294.

<sup>98</sup> Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America* 1, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 161.

braided or mocking it as a symbol of Chinese racial and masculine identity was a powerful way of exercising social dominance and white male groupness, although acts of violence could also demonstrate the divisions within settler societies.

White colonists were preoccupied with dominating the Chinese. This dominance could be through acts of violent assault, through mockery or through knowledge acquisition. White South Africans have often been depicted as particularly divided, anxious and fearful during this post-Boer War period. While most research has focused on the Black Peril or poor whites,<sup>99</sup> at this particular moment and time, these issues were embodied by the Yellow Peril. Especially amongst British settlers, this discourse allowed them to feel that their situation fit within a wider battle for white male supremacy, not just in South Africa but also in the United States, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. The language of the 'pigtail' in South Africa fits perfectly alongside such discourses, and was a key part of the performance of colonial manhood, particularly on the Rand gold mines.

This obsession with Chinese hair styles and the broader problem of the Chinese presence in supposedly white settler colonies was strikingly evident in the confidential testimony given during the official enquiry held by John A. S. Bucknill 'into certain allegations as to the prevalence of unnatural vice and other immorality amongst the Chinese indentured labourers employed on the mines of the Witwatersrand' throughout September 1906. It investigated newspaper accusations that the mine owners and government were allowing 'unnatural vice' to occur. The men who gave evidence were all European men who lived in China for a significant number of years (some were born there), and migrated to South Africa to act as Chinese experts. These experts were largely unanimous in believing that they

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<sup>99</sup> For "poor whites", see L. Chisholm, "The Pedagogy of Porter: The Origins of the Reformatory in the Cape Colony, 1882–1910," *Journal of African History* 27, no. 3 (1986): 481–495; C. Bundy, "Vagabond Hollanders and Runaway Englishmen: White Poverty in the Cape Before Poor Whiteism," in *Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850–1930*, eds. W. Beinart et al. (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986), 121; Sarah E. Duff, "Saving the Child to Save the Nation: Poverty, Whiteness and Childhood in the Cape Colony, c. 1870–1895," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37 (2011): 229–245. For more on Black Perils, see Jock McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue: Sexual Crime in Southern Rhodesia, 1902–1935* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000); Gareth Cornwell, "George Webb Hardy's 'The Black Peril' and the Social Meaning of Black Peril in Early Twentieth Century South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 22 (1996); C. van Onselen, "The Witches of Suburbia: Domestic Service on the Witwatersrand, 1890–1914," in *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand 1886–1914. Vol. 2, New Nineveh* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982), 1–73.

could pick out men ‘of this type’ (e.g. sodomites) by ‘the method in which they dress their hair, the appearance of the queue or pigtail and certain peculiarities of dress and general appearance’.<sup>100</sup>

The evidence of Charles Duncan Stewart, Inspector Interpreter of Chinese Police for the Transvaal Town Police, exemplifies this. Born in China, he lived there until he came to South Africa eighteen months before with the Chinese. He explained that the ‘bad character [s]’ were ‘very effeminate looking and braid their hair out and wear a fringe’.<sup>101</sup> Similar descriptions were provided by James Edward Cooke, Chinese Interpreter to the chief Magistrate in Johannesburg, who was born in China, travelled throughout Asia for the American Trading Co. and had lived in Australia as well as South Africa. He thought that as many as 60 to 70 percent of all of the Chinese ‘boys’ were practicing sodomy on the mines, an opinion partly based on ‘the way he does his hair up’.<sup>102</sup> Such a man, according to Cooke, ‘has usually more of a woman’s look; he speaks more like a woman than a man; he has not a manly appearance’.<sup>103</sup> A few other ‘experts’ also associated male prostitution with this female hairstyle but argued instead that the Chinese knew such behaviour would be unacceptable (or even illegal) in the colony, so tried to hide their hair in order to hide their sexual identity.<sup>104</sup>

All of the witnesses made a clear link between hairstyle and sexuality. One witness claimed that a Chinese word, written in the evidence notes as ‘zungpientze’, meant both ‘loose queue’ and ‘loose fellow’, indicating an alleged Chinese link between hair and sexual morality.<sup>105</sup> It is difficult to accurately explain this depiction of Chinese homosexuality and there were no Chinese witnesses. Chinese historians have documented a complicated culture of homosexuality which evolved in China, shaped by gender, age and status, in which

<sup>100</sup> British National Archives, Colonial Office Records (CO), CO537/540, 60–87, Strictly Confidential, Report of an Enquiry held by Mr. J. A. S. Bucknill into certain allegations as to the prevalence of unnatural vice and other immorality amongst the Chinese indentured laborers employed on the mines of the Witwatersrand. 20 September 1906.

<sup>101</sup> CO537/540, Bucknill Report, Days 3 and 4, 10 and 11 September 1906, Stewart evidence, 288–289.

<sup>102</sup> CO537/540, Days 3 and 4, Cooke evidence, 310.

<sup>103</sup> CO537/540, Day 3 and 4, Cooke evidence, p.314.

<sup>104</sup> CO537/540, Bucknill Report. First Day’s Sitting, Friday 7 September 1906, Tismar evidence, 210. Cooke also thought sodomy was widespread in Northern China, where also all of the Chinese were from, but they would have considered ‘it as an immoral practice... but they do not know it is a crime’. See also Cooke evidence, 311; Tismar evidence, 208; Ruxton evidence, 197–202. This depiction of Northern China is repeated in R. Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 141.

<sup>105</sup> CO537/540, Bucknill Report. First Day’s Sitting, Tismar evidence, 210.

male prostitution was common.<sup>106</sup> However, there was a social stigma to being the passive partner in a homosexual relationship and it was also increasingly socially condemned as a threat to family unity and reproduction.<sup>107</sup> The suggestion in the Bucknill Report that male prostitutes dressed in a particular way to advertise their services is also difficult to determine, as most Chinese archival records relate to elite actors (indeed, operas were often written to include a number of cross-dressing male roles). It was not uncommon for such actors to dress as women and adopt 'passive' sexual behaviours, but it is simply not clear how widespread such practices were outside of urban wealthy communities.<sup>108</sup> What these comments do suggest is that some Chinese indentured workers participated in a kind of 'gender performativity' at odds with both Western and Chinese gender norms.<sup>109</sup> The fringe described by experts certainly suggests a more typically female hairstyle than the shaved forehead required in China.

Ultimately, the Governor decided that the alleged look of Chinese men could have 'given no more than grounds for a suspicion'; only a full medical examination would prove whether they were homosexuals, which was considered impractical to enforce.<sup>110</sup> The report was kept confidential but the fact that all of the witnesses spent such a large amount of time discussing Chinese hair styles is significant. It is clear the 'experts' involved in the report thought that knowing about the social signifiers of Chinese hair would help them, not just understand the Chinese, but control the Chinese. It reduced Chinese men to easily categorised characteristics. Although the Chinese were not colonised,

<sup>106</sup> Bret Hinsch, *Passions of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 1–2, 10.

<sup>107</sup> See Robert A. Nye, "Kinship, Male Bonds, and Masculinity in Comparative Perspective," *American Historical Review* 105, no. 5 (2000); *AHR Forum: Gender and Manhood in Chinese History*, 18; Dikotter, *Sex, Culture and Modernity in China*, 55–69, 139–141, 165–179; Hinsch, 140, 144, 148, 159; M. J. Meijer, "Homosexual Offenses in Ch'ing Law," *T'oung pao* 71 (1985): 109–133.

<sup>108</sup> See Hinsch, 152–155; Wu Cincun, *Homoerotic Sensibilities in Late Imperial China* (London: Routledge, 2004), 160–162.

<sup>109</sup> See Lisa Blackman, *The Body: The Key Concepts* (Oxford: Berg, 2008), 79.

<sup>110</sup> FLD147/96, Governor to Elgin, Secretary of States for the Colonies, 17 December 1906. Scholars have written widely about the subsequent investigation into African homosexuality. See Ross G. Forman, "Randy on the Rand: Portuguese African Labor and the Discourse on 'Unnatural Vice' in the Transvaal in the Early Twentieth Century," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11, no. 4 (2002): 570–609; T. Dunbar Moody, "Migrancy and Male Sexuality on the South African Gold Mines," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 14, no. 2 (1988): 228–256; Patrick Harries, "Symbols and Sexuality: Culture and Identity on the Early Witwatersrand Gold Mines," *Gender & History* 2, no. 3 (1990): 318–336; Karen L. Harris, "Private and Confidential: The Chinese Mine Labourers and 'Unnatural Crime,'" *South African Historical Journal* 50, no. 1 (2004): 115–133.



colonisers still sought to ‘exercise the authority of western knowledge systems’ to control and contain the Chinese.<sup>111</sup> The uncertainty rife within the discussions, and the ultimate conclusion that ‘seeing’ Chinese sexuality was not as simple as hair, at least legally, embodied a problem of the colonial state, whose power was ‘dominant but never quite hegemonic’.<sup>112</sup> This was, in the end, not about colonial knowledge being used to control Chinese bodies; it was an *attempt* and it failed.

So, in China, the distinctive braid hairstyle worn by men was a marker of national and gendered identity. While some educated elites and migrants had begun to remove it, the poor labourers imported to South Africa seem largely to have retained their traditional hairstyles.<sup>113</sup> Westerners recognised that this hairstyle was significant, although they were not always clear why. The language used to describe this hairstyle embedded a language of superiority into any discussion about China, with its references to superstition and animals. As the most visible sign of Chinese otherness, it was frequently referenced on stage and in stories, often for comedic effect, and it also became an object of violence and commodification. This in turn led to fears of contamination. Underlying all of the ways Westerners read Chinese hair was a tension which also lay at the heart of the colonial project itself. These depictions of the Chinese hairstyle and the violent attacks on the hair were supposed to signify the power of white colonial men and of Western civilisation more broadly. However, they had to assert their authority and dominance through a hyper-masculinity precisely because they felt threatened. What was meant to demonstrate hegemonic power actually signified insecurity, especially in places like South Africa, where Chinese men were seen to threaten the delicate economic and racial advantages of white male settler colonialism. This insecurity meant that there was a constant need to reassert such dominance. A similar process was at work in China itself, with the Manchu assertion of the hair style over the population, followed by the Republic’s assertion of its removal, on pain of death. In both cases, relatively weak colonisers were using the hairstyles to symbolise power (official state power in China, unofficial white male hegemony in settler

<sup>111</sup> Ballantyne, 179.

<sup>112</sup> Ballantyne, 189. See Bhabha, “In a Spirit of Calm Violence,” in *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements*, ed. Gyan Prakash (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 332.

<sup>113</sup> There is similar evidence amongst the ‘coolies’ imported to the Western Front during World War I. See Paul J. Bailey, “‘Coolies’ or *Huagong*? Conflicting British and Chinese Attitudes towards Chinese Contract Workers in World War One France,” in *Britain and China, 1840–1970: Empire, Finance and War*, eds. Robert Bickers and Jonathan Howlett (London: Routledge, 2016), 112.

societies), but this was only necessary precisely because they were relatively weak.

#### COMMODIFICATION

In this context, it is unsurprising that white male mastery became bound up with owning the scalp of a Chinese murderer. The scalp as a human trophy is a good representation of the hyper-masculine need to dehumanise and control, grounded within European habits of collecting, nor is it the only example within colonial historiography. Indeed, rather than treat this case as exceptional, we need to understand how typical such behaviour could be in colonial settings. Karen Dubinsky has noted that one visitor to Niagara Falls claimed to see a “real scalp of an Indian, duly labelled and consisting of a triangular piece of skin” for sale in an Indian bazaar’. Utilising the work of art historian Ruth Phillips, Dubinsky argues that this ‘desire to mimic, consume, and possess that which is despised’ was part of a European process of “ritual displacement”.<sup>114</sup> By taking the **qu**ue, or even just owning the **qu**ue, power could be restored and fear banished.<sup>115</sup>

The men involved seem to have placed a value on the scalps partly for their rarity and supposed ‘authenticity’, compared to other souvenirs. It provided proof ‘that their owners were there’.<sup>116</sup> Such a motivation certainly seems to apply to the myriad postcards and other collectables

<sup>114</sup> Karen Dubinsky, “Vacations in the ‘Contact Zone,’ Race, Gender and the Traveler at Niagara Falls,” in *Nation, Empire, Colony: Historicizing Gender and Race*, eds. Ruth Poach Pierson and Nuper Chaudhuri (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 257–258. She quotes Moses Jackson, *To America and Back: A Holiday Run* (London: McQuordale, 1886), 131; Ruth B. Philips, “Consuming Identities: Curiosity, Souvenir and Images of Indianness in Nineteenth Century Canada,” David Dunton Lecture, Carleton University (1991), 20.

<sup>115</sup> Similar processes can be seen at play in the nineteenth century habit of binding books with the skins of dead criminals. See The Anthropodermic Book Project investigating books purportedly bound with human skin, <https://anthropodermicbooks.org/> [last accessed 14 March 2017]; Jacob Gordon, “In the Flesh? Anthropodermic Bibliopegy Verification and Its Implications,” *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 17, no. 2 (2016): 118–133; Megan Rosenbloom, “A Book by its Cover: Identifying & Scientifically Testing the World’s Books Bound in Human Skin,” *Watermark: Newsletter of the Archivists and Librarians in the History of the Health Sciences* 39, no. 3 (2016): 20–22; Daniel K. Smith, “Bound In Human Skin: A Survey of Examples of Anthropodermic Bibliopegy,” in *The Morbid Anatomy Anthology*, eds. Joanna Ebenstein and Colin Dickey (Brooklyn, New York: Morbid Anatomy Press, 2014). See also Lawrence Thompson, “Human Skin,” *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association* 34, no. 2 (1946).

<sup>116</sup> Noga Collins-Kreiner and Yael Zins, “Tourists and Souvenirs: Changes through Time, Space and Meaning,” *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 6, no. 1 (2011): 18.

available on the Rand at the time. The infamy of the Chinese murders would lend a particular lustre to such trophies, as would their rarity. Sarah Chenab has argued that ‘hair possesses an almost talismanic quality of authenticity that is lacked by other, nonbiological forms of recording and collecting “race”’.<sup>117</sup> The evidence certainly suggests this idea of racial authenticity was important. Wheeler, the prisoner who confessed to the scalping, allegedly told the photographer that ‘if the scalp were pickled or tanned it would make a cap’. The ticket examiner who overheard this conversation ‘remarked it would be an [excellent] acquisition to a wardrobe for a fancy dress ball’.<sup>118</sup> There was no concern for the dead body; rather the emphasis was on the authenticity and originality of such an item, perfect for performing Chinese identity at a costume party. Similarly, the supposed ability of the scalp to reveal some sort of racialized ‘truth’ about the Chinese was evident in *The Prince’s* coverage. Along with a photograph of the actual scalp, the newspaper widely circulated evidence from two doctors who somehow identified the scalp as definitively ‘Chinese’, using a ‘scientific’ identification process.<sup>119</sup>

This sort of commodification, however, was not available to all white men in the colony. It is worth examining the fact that all the cases of violent acquisition found involved working class men. By contrast, ‘gentlemen’ collected scientific specimens. The back rooms of museums were increasingly filled with pornographic artefacts and human body parts (including over 5,000 pieces of human hair at London’s Natural History Museum), made acceptable because they were collected for ‘scientific’ research rather than merely for public display.<sup>120</sup> Such censorship demonstrated a concern with ‘the “correct” modes of viewing’ and the stereotypical susceptibility of youths, women and working classes to ‘morally ambiguous experiences’.<sup>121</sup> The rumoured private ownerships and viewings of these scalps reflected this class-based separation between the violent acquisition (a working class affair and not quite honourable) and a middle class respectable ownership. Besides, surely one of the attractive elements of owning such an item was its exclusivity as a souvenir, a real ‘pigtail’ from one of the infamous Chinese murderers!

<sup>117</sup> Sarah Chenab, “Roots, Hair and Race,” in *Hair: Styling, Culture and Fashion*, eds. G. Bidder-Perry and S. Cheat (Oxford: Berg, 2008), 27.

<sup>118</sup> FLD7/147/20/20, Frederick Manley’s oath; C. A. Mynott, Detective, to the Chief Detective Inspector, Criminal Investigation Department, 1 October 1906.

<sup>119</sup> *The Prince* (Transvaal), 6 October, 1906, 1142; 13 October 1906, 1166.

<sup>120</sup> Chenab, 27.

<sup>121</sup> Dominic Janes, “The Rites of Man: The British Museum and the Sexual Imagination in Victorian Britain,” *Journal of the History of Collections* (2007): 1, 6.

The hunting analogy works well here. Just as conservation laws being established in the United States and British empire were largely based on assumptions that only the upper white classes could harness and appreciate nature responsibly, so too only upper class men could respectably possess and master the Chinese braid.<sup>122</sup> Simon Harrison has argued that human trophyism is usually associated with societies which celebrate hunting as an integral part of manhood. It is also an important part of marking the enemy as sub-human, of declaring dominance over the conquered foes during warfare.<sup>123</sup> Southern African colonial culture also celebrated masculine hunting and warfare, and they portrayed the Chinese as sub-human. Violence was a prevalent feature of frontier life in Southern Africa,<sup>124</sup> and colonials in their imagery and actions regularly blurred the lines between hunting animals and human conflict.<sup>125</sup> Human trophies, in such an environment, were as collectable as animal ones. Thus there existed long-standing othering practices which allowed the scalping to occur. The violence, or at least violation, inherent in the methods of collecting braids indicates that a degree of dehumanisation was at work.

However, while hunting trophies could be publicly displayed, the scalp's messy origins revealed a confused mess of mastery and ungentlemanly violence. Indeed, the culprits – white working class

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<sup>122</sup> See J. Mackenzie, "The Imperial Pioneer and Hunter and the British Masculine Stereotype in Late Victorian and Edwardian Times," in *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800–1940*, eds. J. Mangan and J. Walvin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 183. See also Karen Brown, "Cultural Constructions of the Wild: The Rhetoric and Practice of Wildlife Conservation in the Cape Colony at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *South African Historical Journal* 47 (2002): 75–95; John Mackenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

<sup>123</sup> Skull trophies collected by American soldiers in the Pacific during World War II offers an interesting interpretation for why something like a braid, or indeed a whole scalp, might have been so desirable, while also being something disreputable or at least to be displayed privately. American racial prejudices against the Japanese fostered such an environment, as did the island settings of warfare and the American celebration of hunting. However, while skull trophies were openly collected and celebrated in the Pacific, people at home more frequently showed distaste with such collecting and so trophies were kept privately. Simon Harrison, "Skull Trophies of the Pacific War: Transgressive Objects of Remembrance," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12, no. 4 (2006): 817–836. See also Janet Hoskins, "Introduction: Headhunting as Practice and as Trope," in *Headhunting and the Social Imagination in Southeast Asia*, ed. Janet Hoskins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 1–49.

<sup>124</sup> William Beinart, "Introduction: Political and Collective Violence in Southern African Historiography," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18, no. 3, Special Issue: Political Violence in Southern Africa (1992): 461.

<sup>125</sup> J. MacKenzie, "Chivalry, Social Darwinism and Ritualised Killing: The Hunting Ethos in Central Africa up to 1914," in *Conservation in Africa*, eds. D. Anderson and R. Grove (Cambridge: CUP, 1987).

men – were already subject to criticism from much of the British administration and press for their violence towards the Chinese labourers and their propensity to drink and swear.<sup>126</sup> Newspapers largely portrayed the men involved as an aberration from the ideal of British manhood: ‘Chinese murderers had been made the playthings of prison officials seeking for trophies for their drawing-room tables’.<sup>127</sup> Scalping itself also clearly recalled the acts of Native American warriors, arguably the most admired ‘savages’ in Victorian and Edwardian adventure stories.<sup>128</sup> A poem entitled ‘The Barber Barbarous’ made fun of the entire situation:

. . . A hero’s published story-  
 Fair taken in fair fight,  
 It [the scalp] belts the brave with glory,  
 Who wears it in their sight.  
 . . . But, Oh! Pretoria Barber!-  
 Corpse-raiding Pig of Pigs!-  
 . . . I tell you for the Redskin,  
 You’re a tenderfoot! – a sham!  
 For I’ve seen that ragged head skin-  
 And you can’t scalp worth a d-n!<sup>129</sup>

This mock heroic poem sends up the perpetrators as ‘shams’ of the Native American-style of manhood. The act of collection becomes both an attempt to attain primal victory over the Chinese foe, and a barbarous act which discredits the British man.

#### NEWSPAPER COVERAGE

The actual reality of scalping a dead body, however, was a story that both newspapers and the government were unsure how to ‘read’. The story appeared in an assortment of newspapers in South Africa, Britain,

<sup>126</sup> Bright, Chinese, 119–122.

<sup>127</sup> *Truth* (WA), 27 October 1906, 7.

<sup>128</sup> See Captain Mayne Reid’s *The Scalp Hunters; or Romantic Adventures in Northern Mexico* (London, 1851); *Punch* (UK), 14 September 1844, 118, advertisement: “Real Scaps! Great Attraction.”

<sup>129</sup> *The Prince* (Transvaal), 29 September 1906.

Australia, and New Zealand throughout Autumn 1906, spread often verbatim via telegram. *The Prince's* sales considerably increased, with it apparently becoming the largest circulating weekly paper in South Africa, and the copying of the story globally suggests there was an appetite for details.<sup>130</sup> However, this story was simply too complex, and few newspapers outside of *The Prince* devoted more than one article to it. One Australian editorial explained that 'nothing is darker than the desecration of the dead and the mutilation of the mortal remains of a brother man', making this 'un-English, a barbarous and an illreligious act'.<sup>131</sup> Still, many also found space to wonder if there had not been some terrible misunderstanding. It was far easier to think of it as a bizarre one-off, or even untrue, as something atypical, rather than reflecting the racial, class and gendered tensions within colonialism itself. An Editorial in the *Transvaal Leader* (a popular uitlander newspaper, owned by the Cape Times Ltd., and renowned for being both sober and imperialistic)<sup>132</sup> even tried to discredit the story, apparently with government collusion. Its editor argued that the Chinese prisoners had voluntarily had their hair cut and claimed to have made 'careful enquiries' with the relevant officials, which 'enabled' the editor 'to state authoritatively' that no scalping had occurred at all. The picture in the newspaper was a fake, they claimed, although prison officials knew the allegations were true by this time.<sup>133</sup> It directly referenced an incident earlier in 1906 when some soldiers sold photographs allegedly of the dead body of Bhambatha, a leader in the 1906 Zulu Rebellion, which later proved to be fake.<sup>134</sup> The official narrative was that, after battle, some British soldiers cut off the head from Bhambatha's body so that they could take it to camp for positive identification. After this was done, the head was returned to the body and both were respectfully buried. However, rumours persisted that he had escaped, or that the British soldiers had treated the corpse

<sup>130</sup> *The Prince*, 6 October, 1906, 1145.

<sup>131</sup> *Truth* (WA), 27 October 1906, 7.

<sup>132</sup> For an extensive overview of the mine ownership of newspapers and its effects on newspaper coverage see A. N. Porter, "Sir Alfred Milner and the Press, 1897–1899," *The Historical Journal* 16, no. 2 (1973): 323–339; Potter, *News and the British World*; L. V. Praagh, ed., *The Transvaal and its Mimes* (London, 1906), 212.

<sup>133</sup> *Transvaal Leader*, 24 September 1906, 7. A similar spin operation is evident in an Editorial about the secret Bucknill Report's findings. See *Transvaal Leader*, 5 November 1906, 7.

<sup>134</sup> Editorial: A Tit-Bit. New Chinese Scandal. Hanging and Scalping Coolies. Anti-Africans Pleased. Sensation and Explanation. From our own correspondent. London, *Transvaal Leader* (Transvaal), 24 September 1906, 7. The comparison to Bhambatha's head is also made by Hardy. See *Truth* (WA), 27 October 1906, 7. For more on the rebellion, see Shula Marks, *Reluctant Rebellion: The 1906–8 Disturbances in Natal* (London: Clarendon, 1970).

disrespectfully, taking photographs and the like. While most photographs produced over the decades have been proven fake, even today it is not entirely clear about all of them.<sup>135</sup>

In fact, the *Leader's* Editorial argued that the Chinese prisoners had voluntarily had their hair cut and so the entire story was a non-story. It certainly seems true that four Chinese men were observed by multiple witnesses having their braids cut off and given to prison staff before their execution (which were later sold), the week before the scalping incident. Whether this was voluntarily done was unclear.<sup>136</sup> *The Prince* was unsurprisingly vocal in dismissing this interpretation, reminding readers that 'high caste Chinamen are now abandoning the pigtail' but not 'the ultra-conservative coolie'.<sup>137</sup> Similarly, the visiting MP for Cirencester, Richard Walter Essex, 'has travelled extensively in China, and knows the customs of the Chinese from A to Z' and 'ridicules the insane theory of the *Transvaal Leader*' that the hair was "clipped" at their own request'.<sup>138</sup> In fact, the story only got widespread coverage internationally once Essex returned to the UK from a visit to South Africa in November 1906 with 'a photograph of the scalp and pigtail'.<sup>139</sup> The picture was presented as 'proof' that the scalping story was true, and more broadly as proof of the Chinese indentured labour scheme's 'failure' and Britain's own moral culpability.<sup>140</sup>

However, the responses to the scalping incident also demonstrates an awareness that the Chinese men were not simply foils for debating British manhood; they really existed. This was the same impulse that made the Chinese comic and scary. A sentence repeated in almost any newspaper coverage of the scalping reflects this: 'The Chinese religion makes this incident one of special significance'.<sup>141</sup> On the one hand,

<sup>135</sup> Jeff Guy, *Remembering the Rebellion, the Zulu Uprising* (Scottsville, SA: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2006), 128–132.

<sup>136</sup> *Truth* (WA), 27 October 1906, 7.

<sup>137</sup> *The Prince* (Transvaal), 29 September 1906, 119.

<sup>138</sup> *The Prince* (Transvaal), 13 October 1906, 1155; *Truth*, 27 October 1906, 7.

<sup>139</sup> "Mr. R. W. Essex's Gruesome Relic," *Gloucester Citizen* (UK), 20 November 1906, 5; "Mr. Essex and Gruesome Relic," *Cheltenham Chronicle* (UK), 24 November 1906, 4; "Mr. R. W. Essex's Gruesome Relic," *Gloucester Journal* (UK), 24 November 1906, 2.

<sup>140</sup> *The Prince* (Transvaal), 13 October 1906, 1155.

<sup>141</sup> *The Prince* (Transvaal), 13 October 1906, 1155, 1166, 1199, "A Chinaman's Scalp: Gruesome Story from the Rand," *Johannesburg Star* (Transvaal), 13 October 1906; "A Chinaman's Scalp: Gruesome Story from the Rand," *London Daily News* (UK), 22 September 1906, 8; "Scalping a Rand Chinaman," *Edinburgh Evening News* (UK), 22 September 1906, 6; "A Chinaman's Scalp," *Dundee Courier* (UK), 22 September 1906, 4; "Scalped For His Pigtail," *Barrier Miner* (NSW), 3 November 1906, 6; "Scalped for Pigtail," *Advertiser* (S. Australia), 10 November 1906, 10; "Scalped For Pigtail. Strange Story about Hanged Chinamen," *The Daily Chronicle* (UK), 22 September 1906, 5.

this statement relied on certain stereotypes about Chinese culture rather than any reality about Chinese religion. The hairstyle was not religious. However, the statement was worth repeating over and over again precisely because real Chinese men might react negatively to the story, and that would have consequences. The Boxer Rebellion was fresh in the public's memory, and such a desecration of Chinese men might have sparked more anti-Western events in China. Furthermore, the Chinese had successfully boycotted U.S. goods in 1905, because of America's restrictions on Chinese migrants. Increasingly western powers had to recognise that offending Chinese national pride could have consequences.<sup>142</sup> It was far easier to think of the scalping as a bizarre one-off, or even untrue.

These newspaper silences, and the possible interpretations of that silence, have parallels with reporting of homosexuality trials both in Britain and Australia. Robert Aldrich has mused that such silence may have reflected 'a moral horror so great that certain crimes could not even be mentioned' or simply an awareness that such cases were not isolated.<sup>143</sup> As with suggestions of homosexuality, this case simply did not reflect the image of masculinity which South Africans and Britons wanted to believe in and project to the outside world. After all, during the 1906 Bhambatha rebellion, similar accusations were made against the Zulu. Zulus reportedly collected body parts from dead British soldiers for *intelezi* medicine. In at least one instance, a British soldier with a particularly magnificent moustache had it removed, along with his penis, left forearm and upper lip.<sup>144</sup> It would be difficult for Britain now to admit to the practice themselves.

The alleged buyers were senior government officials. Senior administrators in the government belonged to the upper middle classes; most of them have become famous as part of Milner's Kindergarten, an elite band of Oxford graduates largely hand-picked by Alfred Milner, the Governor of the South African colonies from 1895 until 1903.<sup>145</sup> Even the less senior officials were primarily British and middle class, with some form of public school education. They were the

<sup>142</sup> Robert Bickers, *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832–1914* (London: Penguin, 2012).

<sup>143</sup> Robert Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality* (Routledge, 2002), 239. See also S. Brady, *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality in Britain, 1861–1913* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 24.

<sup>144</sup> Ian Knight, *The Anatomy of the Zulu Army: From Shaka to Cetshwayo, 1818–1879* (London: Greenhill, 1999), 171–172.

<sup>145</sup> W. Nimocks, *Milner's Young Men: The "Kindergarten" in Edwardian Imperial Affairs* (London: Duke University Press, 1968).



exemplars of what colonial officials should be. To demonstrate that they had collected scalps in such a gruesome manner would have been damaging to their reputations, as well as to Britain's. In the war of civilisations, this was decidedly the wrong image of colonial masculinity and race.

It also seems likely that 'Hardy's image as a maverick in the eyes of the colonial government' probably influenced the ways that the colonial government and newspapers responded to his allegations in *The Prince*.<sup>146</sup> He certainly believed there was a cover-up and several times sent a flurry of cables 'Home to all the leading English papers' to promote the story.<sup>147</sup> Furthermore, the Bucknill investigation into Chinese sexual practices was ongoing and there was little appetite to launch another large investigation.

Initially reluctant to believe the story and pictures in *The Prince*, the Director of Prisons had all prisoners and prison guards interviewed and at least five different ex-prisoners signed sworn affidavits confirming that they had worked with various prison officers to secure scalps from executed Chinese prisoners. However, the prison investigation led to only one arrest warrant, and only after the warder deserted; if he had stayed in place, it seems unlikely that he would have ever been charged. The Prison Board, who had conducted the investigation, were clearly keen to minimise the number of incidents.<sup>148</sup> Significant people were never questioned, like the doctor, although all of the scalpings occurred in his medical room at the prison.<sup>149</sup> The general solution was to stop investigating and dismiss the incident as an aberration perpetrated by working class criminals. The actual investigation's findings were not made public.

## CONCLUSION

As the most visible sign of Chinese difference, the violent conquest and commodification of Chinese hair became about exerting colonial, white male hegemony. Turning the Chinese scalp into a human trophy showed, however, how fractured 'white' settler society actually was.

<sup>146</sup> Hale, 40.

<sup>147</sup> *The Prince* (Transvaal), 6 October 1906, 1142; 13 October 1906, 1166.

<sup>148</sup> FLD7/147/20/20, C. J. Hanrette Report for Prison Board, 25 September 1906; Attorney General's Office response, Blaine to Solomon, 26 September 1906.

<sup>149</sup> FLD7/147/20/20, Frank Oldrich Wheeler's statement includes: "Part of my duty when in the hospital was to cut up the dead bodies for the doctor's examination".

This became a story about anxiety over manhood and race, rather than a story of white male dominance. This insecurity meant that there was a constant need to reassert dominance through an 'us' versus 'them' performance: the 'us' was constructed as modern, white and manly, contrasted with a Chinese 'them', who were depicted as superstitious, backwards, dirty and feminine. At the same time, of course, these discourses also reveal the ruptures, the lack of coherence about who was white and what appropriate manly behaviour was. For some, collecting hair was acceptable but for others, it represented racial decline in the colonies. The various depictions of the Chinese and their hair became foils for differing versions of white manhood to be performed. Mastery and unity had to be asserted precisely because it was always unstable, fractured and contested.

A similar process was at work in China itself regarding the hair, with the Manchu assertion of hair over the population, followed by the Republic's assertion of its removal on the population. In both cases, relatively weak governments were using the hairstyles to symbolise power, but this was only necessary precisely because they were relatively weak.

Ultimately, by focusing so much on the Chinese male hairstyle as *the* defining racial characteristic, Westerners were also signifying that very little separated white from yellow. A few commentators even noted that: 'It is the pigtail and the clothes which mislead us into believing in the exaggerated physical peculiarity of the Chinaman'; without the braided hairstyle, some Chinese men could even pass as a 'better class of Englishmen'.<sup>150</sup> By centralising the Chinese male hairstyle as a marker of racial difference, Europeans also unwittingly made that difference as superficial and impermanent as a hairstyle. This may explain why the image of the Chinese male lasted for decades in the West, long after it had ceased to exist in China itself. To depict the Chinese without their **que** would have further blurred the already fuzzy racial binaries at work in empire.

What is also revealed in the story of the **que** is the ways that settler societies sought to limit agency to themselves. It is clear that an assumption ran through Yellow Peril discourse: only whites had the agency and right to travel and to culturally appropriate. Many missionaries in China adopted fake **ques** as a way to blend in, to look 'Chinese'.<sup>151</sup> Similarly, adventure stories usually depicted the British

<sup>150</sup> "Chinese Who Look Like English Men," *Otago News* (NZ), 11 April 1906, 72, quoting T. Wright in *Chamber's Journal* (UK).

<sup>151</sup> Woodbridge, 83; Lauren Frederick Pfister, "Rethinking Mission in China: James Hudson Taylor and Timothy Richard," in *The Imperialist Horizons of British Protestant*

hero at some point needing to use a fake queue to pretend to be Chinese in order to escape.<sup>152</sup> One witness during the government investigation suggested the scalps would work well as authentic costumes, so Europeans could pretend to be Chinese. While Europeans could dabble with such ‘authentic’ Chineseness, Chinese men adopting Western dress and hair styling was usually met with fear and suspicion. Chinese super-villains would only don Western dress and cut their hair to further their fiendish plots.<sup>153</sup> Similarly, the Chinese caused anxiety precisely because migration was linked to empire-building, to European technological, physical and moral superiority. In the words of Margaret Allan: ‘The mobility of modernity was reserved for those deemed white’.<sup>154</sup> The physical presence of Chinese men in settler societies was a constant proof that white settlers did not have a monopoly on culture or mobility. Settler societies were particularly prone to such anxieties precisely because they had Chinese settlers, almost exclusively male, and because these were places marked out for ‘white’ domination. Such anxieties never took hold in the same way in places like Malaysia, for instance, despite significant Chinese migration there.

There is another story too, of real Chinese men with their own discourses around hairstyling, modernity and manhood at this time. We need to better understand the ways in which the image of the Chinese was constantly contested by Chinese men themselves, as living human bodies in these colonies engaging in this process of continual performance, of negotiation and renegotiation, with hair an important element of that discourse.<sup>155</sup> The debates within China and its diaspora

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*Missions, 1880–1914*, ed. Andrew Porter (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 183–212; George Ernest Morrison, *An Australian in China: Being the Narrative of a Quiet Journey Across China to Burma* (1895), chapter 1; Rev. & Mrs. C. J. P. Jolliffe, “Our Work in China,” undated and Gertrude Jolliffe, album: “queues,” undated, digitised at [http://library.vicu.utoronto.ca/exhibitions/vic\\_in\\_china/sections/life\\_in\\_west\\_china/life\\_in\\_szechwan.html](http://library.vicu.utoronto.ca/exhibitions/vic_in_china/sections/life_in_west_china/life_in_szechwan.html) (last accessed 3 May 2017); Mary Gaunt, *A Woman in China* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1914), 140.

<sup>152</sup> Most of the adventure stories about Boxers, for instance, depicted British boys escaping by dressing up as Chinese, with fake braids. See Forman, 112. See also Sax Rohmer, *The Mystery of Dr. Fu-Manchu* (London: Methuen, 1913), esp. chapters 4–6.

<sup>153</sup> See in particular Shiel, *The Yellow Danger*; Rohmer, *The Mystery of Dr. Fu-Manchu*.

<sup>154</sup> Margaret Allan, “‘Innocents abroad’ and ‘prohibited immigrants’: Australians in India and Indians in Australia 1890–1910,” in *History in Transnational Perspective*, eds. Ann Curthoys and Marilyn Lake (Canberra: ANU, 2005), 124.

<sup>155</sup> I am thinking here particularly of the work by gender and spatial scholars, who have critiqued their fields for being too prone to separate social meaning from physical reality. See Tim Ingold, *Being Alive, Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*; Alexandra Howson, *Embodying Gender* (London: Sage, 2005), 55, 71. See also Tracey Rizzo and Steven Gerontakis, *Intimate Empires: Body, Race, and Gender in the Modern World* (Oxford: OUP, 2016).

about whether to maintain the distinctive hairstyle clearly indicated an engagement with European and settler colonial performative imaginings of the 'queue', and notions of modernity. Most societies consider hair extremely important, and human trophyism, especially the collecting of hair, should not be viewed as 'barbaric', 'ancient', or atypical. In colonial settings, transcultural interactions predicated on raced, may even have made this more common.

Such an examination is particularly important, as it is still uncommon to get world histories which explore issues of gender and/or bodies. And yet the frequency with which hair has featured as a significant social signifier across the world, one highly gendered, suggests that this is an important history which must be seen within a global context. Historians would do well to remember that the histories of empires are primarily the histories of bodies moving around the world and interacting; a history which is inescapably gendered. Charting the history of the 'queue' has been one method of charting that global history, and understanding the power dynamics at play within settler societies in particular.