

From Slave Girls to Salvation

Gender, Race, and Victoria's
Chinese Rescue Home,
1886–1923

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On November 29, 1896, at the age of fifteen, “Emily” entered the Chinese Rescue Home (the Home).¹ The Chinese Rescue Home, later called the Oriental Home and School, began as a project to rescue Chinese prostitutes and slave girls from those who held them captive. When the Home was started in 1886, nearly three thousand Chinese lived in Victoria, British Columbia, making up about 18 percent of the total population of 16,841.² While the vast majority of Chinese immigrants during this period were men, the women who did immigrate were targets of both suspicion and concern. According to McLaren, “in a minority community that was overwhelmingly male and in which women were regularly bought and sold, it was assumed by their detractors that, with limited exceptions, any Chinese girl or woman who came to Canada must already be a prostitute or destined for that role.”³ Although the Home’s mandate was initially to rescue prostitutes, it quickly expanded, and, between 1886 and 1923, over four hundred women took shelter there. The number of women who passed through the Home suggests a significant minority, and in the early years likely the majority, of Chinese women and Japanese women stayed there. Emily was one of these women.

According to the Home’s records, Emily had grown up in an orphanage after having been placed there by her “Indian” mother, her father being Chinese. After leaving the orphanage, she lived with her sister for a time; however, after quarrelling with her, Emily entered the Home. Over the next two and a half years, Emily would run away from the institution on numerous occasions, prompting those who operated it to propose installing a wire screen on the window of her room. Although her multiple entries into the Home were explicitly framed as voluntary, Emily was, at least on one occasion, escorted back to the institution by police. In fact, despite the many references to the voluntary nature of her stay, her multiple attempts to leave are evidence that Emily was, in fact, not as free (or as grateful) as the records seemed to imply.

The first time Emily left the Home was in March 1897. In April of the same year, Emily returned to the residence on an errand. Although the purpose of her visit was not clear, she did not have any intention of re-entering the institution as a resident. She was brought in before the advisory committee, which happened to be holding its monthly meeting at the time, and “the Chairman addressed to her some wholesome advice.” According to the minutes, however, she seemed “not to be much affected by the advantages of the training she would receive in the Home, and the fact that Miss Bowes [the matron] was willing to receive her and forgive

her for the past did not seem to make the slightest impression upon her.” While Emily was then allowed to leave, the minutes went on to state that the advisory committee was “fully alive to the importance of retaining such girls in the Home where they are under good influences but how to manage it against their will is the difficulty.”⁴

The following month, the minutes of the advisory committee showed that Emily had returned again “of her own free will.”⁵ A month later, she was once again the topic of discussion. The report states that Emily “is now giving ‘good satisfaction’ and is working cleaning rooms for 1.50/month.” By September of the same year, Emily had left once more. This time she went to her sister’s home, which was located four miles from the Home. When her sister refused to take her in, she was taken in by the reverend “and in his house was served tea. A lady being there who had seen Emily before recognized her as one of the girls of the home and offered to accompany her and the Police to the House the evening of the same day.”⁶ This time, Emily stayed in the Home only two months before again running away. Each of Emily’s attempts to flee was met with an increasing amount of intervention, and this time was no exception. The day after she left the Home, “Mrs. Chapman had made very diligent search for her but [she] was nowhere to be found.”⁷ The “next day one of the House board ladies rode out with the Chinese Police to see if she was at her sister’s but she had not been there.” They then visited the homes of some of the married women who had previously resided in the Home, but Emily was not to be found.⁸

Although the searchers were unable to locate Emily, the following day the matron received a postcard from a local convent requesting that she call on them. Finding Emily there, the matron was unable to convince her to come back to the Home. The matter, however, was not dropped. The matron informed the members of the advisory committee of the circumstances, and they then discussed what their next course of action should be. According to the minutes, it was the committee’s opinion that Emily *belonged* “to the Home, [and that] the Convent should not have detained her, accordingly it was proposed and carried that Mrs. Chapman as representing the Home immediately write to the Convent demanding the return of Emily to the Home, and emphasizing [their] authority in the matter.”⁹

One week later, the advisory committee called a special meeting to discuss a letter regarding Emily that had been received from Sister Superior at the convent. The minutes do not mention what the letter said, only that

it should be answered in “as conciliatory manner as possible.”¹⁰ Further, the committee appointed a subcommittee to consult with a lawyer “as to what steps if any, should be taken to bring Emily back to the home.”¹¹ The lawyer subsequently informed the committee that it had no recourse other than to use “persuasive measures.” He indicated that “he thought it wise to call on her once more to see if she had changed her mind,” which the committee did, but to no avail.¹² Despite the convent’s plan to send her to an orphanage in Cowichan, Emily rebuked all attempts to persuade her to return to the institution. However, in July 1898, the matron once again brought Emily back to the Home, this time from Vancouver.

A special meeting was once again called to consider Emily’s case, and it was at this juncture that “it was decided to put a wire screen to the small front bedroom and have Emily occupy that room till further arrangements be made.”¹³ It is clear that the advisory committee was unwilling to take any more chances where young Emily was concerned. These measures, it seems, were successful as Emily did not leave the mission again until her marriage in April of the following year. The last entry for Emily was found in a journal that bears the title “Bad Women” and that lists by name certain women who were considered to be immoral. Emily’s name was on this list, followed by the date of her marriage, with a note on the opposite page explaining that she had “left her husband and lived with [a] white man.”¹⁴

The story of Emily highlights the Chinese Rescue Home’s three related mandates. In keeping with its name, these were race, rescue, and domesticity. First and foremost, the purpose of the Home was to deal with a particular racial problem. That the word “Chinese” (and later “Oriental”) was part of the Home’s name is not surprising as managing race was one of its primary goals. The institution’s claim to Emily was based on her (partial) Chineseness. It was this that led the Home to insist that Emily “belonged” to it, not to the convent or the orphanage. Here, racial concerns are expressed not by exclusion, which was the case throughout much of the province, but, rather, by inclusion. Although Chinese women and men were, at different periods, excluded from Canada, the Home’s mandate was to include – to transform and to domesticate these women so that they could eventually be assimilated. This leads us to the Home’s second mandate – rescue – which was premised on notions of benevolence and transformation through moral regulation. Clearly, the relationship between race and religion is a complex one. On the one hand, the mission saw its focus on race as a matter of benevolence; on the other hand, it wanted to dissolve race by transforming the women

under its care. When Emily ran away, she was repeatedly welcomed back to the fold. The matron and the advisory committee may have gone to extreme measures to keep Emily in the Home, but they did so because of their faith that she could be saved and transformed. Sarah Bowes was the matron of the institution during a particularly troubling time for Emily. Of Emily, she wrote: "I continue to bear her up on the wings of faith and prayer trusting that the labor and care bestowed may yet bear fruit for Jesus. In every way I endeavored to be a mother to Emily."¹⁵ In fact, motherhood and family were common themes in the Home's records.

Transformation and moral regulation were to be achieved through the Home's third mandate – domesticity. The role of white women was paramount here as it was in the *home* that the work of transformation was to be accomplished. As a gendered project, the transformation of Emily was to be measured by her adherence to proper domesticity. The success of her transformation was measured first by her domestic service and later by her marriage to a Chinese man. Despite the many times she ran away, Emily's ultimate failure occurred when she left her Chinese husband to live with a white man. Here, Emily displayed her rejection of both Christian values and the racial boundaries that such values implied. Thus, whiteness and domesticity are seen to be intertwined with religious values, informing and producing the cross-racial relationships that were forged in the Home.

This case study of the Chinese Rescue Home provides an important analysis of an institution that, although iconic in British Columbia's history, has yet to be fully explored. Although other historians and historical sociologists have pointed to its significance in Victoria and in British Columbia more generally,¹⁶ none has offered a sustained or detailed analysis. *From Slave Girls to Salvation* offers a detailed empirical study of the Home, thus adding to the historiography of British Columbia. Uncovering the organizational hierarchies, the institutional schematics, as well as the religious and racial tropes that infused the Home is crucial to understanding how it came to hold such an important place in the historical imaginings of the province. Further, these hierarchies and inner workings also illuminate how whiteness and domesticity came to be imagined and asserted in relation to and through interactions with a racialized Other.

By viewing domesticity as spatial, psychic, and corporeal, and the Home as a geographically situated site and embodied practice of moral regulation, *From Slave Girls to Salvation* moves beyond explanations that focus primarily on racial exclusion. Domesticity is central to these more

inclusionary processes as it informs how space was conceived, how identities were forged, and how bodies were disciplined. Foregrounded, then, is the importance of domesticity both in its material and in its imaginative geography.¹⁷ The Home might be likened to the hearth of the nation. Not only does the hearth represent the home and domesticity and their association with women, but it is also a symbol of welcome. It is a space for those coming in from “outside.” In the case of the Chinese Rescue Home, the welcome was not unconditional. Yet the hearth offered a space for some outsiders to find openings into a world in which they were otherwise seldom welcome. The hearth also represents a place of transformation: it is here that the fire turns a cold room into one filled with warmth. It is a space where outsiders are not only welcomed but also affected and transformed. The transformation of the Other through regulation threads itself materially and discursively into the very fabric of the Chinese Rescue Home. Deconstructing the processes and practices of its benevolent work uncovers the complex relationship between whiteness, domesticity, and religion.

As a religious institution, the Home straddled the public/private and national/global divides. Run by women, the mission was a space informed by gender hierarchies, just as it was informed by racial ones. It occupied a unique space in which (gendered and racialized) national and domestic spaces overlapped; thus, a critical discussion of the institution offers us a clearer understanding of how these relationships informed institutional practices while also providing us with insights into the state’s investment (and interventions) in the domestic realm. Although my analysis focuses on a single institution, as Sangster argues, the treatment “accorded a small number of women reveals a much broader web of regulation shaping the proper definitions of sexuality, the family, and gender roles for *all* women.”¹⁸ Prioritized here is a discussion of the tensions and contestations that arose from the overlap between the national and the domestic, and between the public (which was largely the domain of men) and the private (which was largely the domain of women).

The examination of these tensions is exemplified in the photo that opens this chapter. Although this photo was taken approximately twenty years after the first “rescue” of a Chinese woman from what was assumed to be a brothel, I chose it because of its symbolic and material significance. It was taken during the construction of a new home for Chinese and Japanese women and children. The new building is evidence of both the success of a twenty-year project and a promise for the future. This photo represents the building of a local home and domestic space, but it

also represents citizenship and nationhood – and the challenges that Chinese and Japanese people posed to them. The significance of this photograph lies not only in what it shows but also in what it conceals. It is the white women who ran the Home who pose on its veranda, while the Chinese and Japanese women, without whom there could be no Home, are absent. Although the stories of Japanese and Chinese women and their recollections of the Home are an important piece of Asian Canadian history, this is not the history that I address. Rather, I address the history of an institution, of the intersections between whiteness and domesticity, and the ways in which these were produced through the Home. By focusing on spatial metaphors and material spaces, I theorize the Home as an active site of production. This includes the production of racialized and gendered spaces, behaviours, discourses, and ideologies.

The relationships that were forged within the material spaces of the Home were neither strictly familial nor economic but both. Building on insights from geography, sociology, and history, I use a spatial focus to analyze these spaces as embedded in, constructed through, and productive of power relations. The Home is a unique and rich site for reconsidering women's roles both inside and outside the home. As it existed at the interstices of the public and the private, and of the foreign and the domestic, the Home offers a productive space for exploring how and why Japanese and Chinese women were discursively constituted as domestically delinquent. This discursive constitution materially and imaginatively contributed to the construction of the domestic realm that "housed" the Home as well as to how these material spaces themselves contributed to the practice of power. Those who ran the Home interacted with and produced imaginative geographies that were informed by gendered and racial hierarchies. Those outside the Home, including judges, police officers, and the public, also drew upon domestic discourses in the regulation of "foreign" and female bodies and in the disciplining of white men who dared to interfere with or intervene in the domestic relations of the Home. State practices informed and shaped the types of cross-racial domestic relations that were possible inside the Home and outside it, as discourses of domesticity were taken up by state institutions (such as the courts) in ways that both undermined and cemented the legitimacy of the domestic workings of the Home and the authority of the white women who staffed it.

This book explores an institutional space that took the form of a domestic space, troubling both the binaries of private/public and of foreign/

domestic. In order to consider the material and imagined geographies of the Chinese Rescue Home, I build upon a recent body of work in geography that examines the “house and home, the household and the domestic world.”¹⁹ Geographers take many approaches to studying the home. For instance, structuralists and phenomenologists are particularly invested in delving into the relationship between the house, the mind, and emotions. This relationship is captured in Tuan’s “notion of ‘topophilia,’ or love of place.”²⁰ The links between the home and emotion are not limited, however, to love. In fact, many scholars productively take up the links between home and loss, fear, and danger.²¹ The domestic realm is also a site of intervention for geographers and others who are interested in the material ways that the home informs gender and gender relations. Many who take this approach view the domestic as part of the “private” realm and juxtapose it with the male-dominated public realm. Others chart women’s movements both inside and outside the domestic realm, troubling the boundary between the private and the public in significant ways.²² While some postcolonial scholars trouble the space of the home as itself a site of exclusion from which the Other is debarred, others show that colonial relations and exclusions occur *within* the home as well. Most of these studies focus on how white women gained authority and autonomy through their relationships with the racial Other both inside and outside the private spaces of the colonial home.

The Chinese Rescue Home and those associated with it comprised a very small portion of the work carried out by the Methodist Missionary Board and the Woman’s Missionary Society. While it had a small constituency, the Home presents a compelling case study for a number of reasons. First, while missions that were undertaken abroad strove to improve the spiritual lives of those they evangelized, racial “problems” were seen to originate (and thus to remain) outside the West. Occupying a space that was between the inside and the outside of the nation, the Home was a space not only of evangelism but also of assessment and appraisal.²³ Second, a spatial analysis of the Home provides insight into the ways in which it was situated between the public and the private. Third, by moving outside the space of the Home, I provide a valuable study of the disparate ways in which moral regulation functioned. While an analysis of the Home interrupts binaries of gendered realms, moving outside the Home further extends our understanding of how moral regulation functioned in other ways. While many scholars argue that moral regulatory projects function as technologies of social control (and the work of the organization certainly supports these claims) the Home did not exist in a

vacuum.²⁴ In fact, it was its positioning as an in-between space that gave it its legitimacy. It was situated on the edge of the nation and yet was firmly within it. It was a space of domesticity that functioned in the public realm. It was also a site that blurred the lines between state and non-state institutions. It is these tensions and ambivalences that make the Home an ideal point of departure, allowing for a deeper discussion of the private/public, state/non-state, and national/domestic than these binaries, in and of themselves, allow.

It is important to understand the (often spatially defined) gendered private/public divide in moral reform projects. The women who ran the Chinese Rescue Home were able to do so precisely because their mission was seen as an extension of the private realm. Thus, it is imperative to move beyond this public/private dichotomy in two ways. First, I challenge the notion that moral reform was about reinscribing the divide between private and public spheres. I do this by arguing that the Home was a place where both white women and their Chinese and Japanese charges could aspire to something more than domesticity. Second, I challenge the public/private divide by subjecting it to a spatial analysis, thereby locating the Home in its physical form, as a space that was situated on the threshold between the public and the private, infringing on both but totally inhabiting neither. Analyzing both spatial and discursive concerns means relying on a large number and array of sources (despite which many stories remain untold). For this reason, I now discuss these as well as my methodology.²⁵

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

From Slave Girls to Salvation explores the intersections of race, gender, religion, and nation in Victoria, British Columbia. Although my analysis focuses on Victoria, I also refer to relevant material from other cities in the province, including Vancouver. Both Vancouver and Victoria were entry points for Japanese and Chinese populations coming from the United States as well as directly from Japan and China. The period of study begins in 1886, when John Vrooman Gardiner and Reverend John Edward Starr first began “rescuing” Chinese girls,²⁶ and it ends in 1923. This closing date is significant for two reasons. First, the bulk of the records from the Methodist Woman’s Missionary Society, British Columbia Conference Branch Fonds, are dated from 1904 to 1923. Second, it was in 1923 that the Chinese Immigration Act shifted from exclusionary

policies such as the head tax to an even more expansive and systematic process of exclusion. Although the Chinese Rescue Home continued to run until 1942, the objectives and the demographics of its mission changed significantly during this period. More Japanese women and children began to enter the residence, and the focus, while still largely evangelistic, shifted to education, especially of young children. This shift in demographics and concern is important and worth further investigation, but it is not my focus.

What I offer is a case study of the formative period of Victoria's Chinese Rescue Home. The Home, as a case study, offers the opportunity for an in-depth analysis of relations of power that often (but not always) mirrored those in Canadian society. As Iacovetta and Mitchinson argue, case studies "offer us a rare window on human interactions and conflict. Complex power relations play themselves out at the local level, sometimes with unpredictable outcomes."²⁷ With all of its diversity of artefacts – from formal reports to letters, to legal documents and carefully worded press releases and beyond – this case study offers a wealth of information about institutional practices, especially as they were applied to "deviant" women. The case study, according to Berg, "aims to uncover the manifest interaction of significant factors ... But in addition, the researcher is able to capture various nuances, patterns, and more latent elements that other research approaches might overlook."²⁸ Thus, as a case study, the Chinese Rescue Home opens up possibilities for studying institutions both as they affect personal relations and as they are informed by them. The Home provides a compelling study not only of race relations but also of the complex relationship between the national and the global, the state realm and the domestic realm, and the roles of race and religion in each of these. Many case studies are concerned with "deviant" populations. As such, they shed light on the intricacies of disciplinary practices and forms of surveillance. The documents that I uncovered provide interesting insights into the experiences of and relationships between white, Chinese, and Japanese women that transpired inside the Home as well as how these were perceived outside it. I also pay attention to the Home's material form as the experiences and relationships that were forged within it were solidified through its physical/institutional/domestic space.

Borrowing from cultural geographies of the home, I attempt, as Alison Blunt suggests, to move "beyond binaries such as public and private space and imaginative geographies of 'self' and 'Other'" in order to investigate the "interplay of home and identity in terms of spatial politics."²⁹ Gendered discourses of domesticity informed the type of physical space

that was built and from within which the institution operated. Instead of working from a strictly institutional space, those who ran the Home created it as a domestic space within which they could domesticate their charges. These spaces were determined by religious and gendered discourses of domesticity, and they also *reproduced* discourses of domesticity as they dictated the acceptability of only certain types of practices. Thus, a case study that focuses on material spaces illuminates how domesticity, as a discourse, was reaffirmed through the spatial organization and performance of feminine roles and practices such as sewing, cooking, cleaning, and mothering.

As a historical project, *From Slave Girls to Salvation* is informed by the debates over voice and history. In “The Selectivity of Historical Representation,” David Wishart explains that “the historian does not have access to that past, only to accounts of it, and that those accounts describe only a fragment of what took place.” What is most often lost are the “accounts of the people most directly affected.”³⁰ This is certainly the case with respect to the Japanese and Chinese women who lived in the Chinese Rescue Home. It would be a grave mistake to claim that I have compiled a history of Japanese and Chinese Canadian women as only glimpses of their stories are evident through the narrow lens of formal institutional records, letters, meeting minutes, official reports, Royal Commissions, and newspaper accounts. Motivations for entering the Home are recorded only from the perspectives of the white matrons who painstakingly catalogued each entrance and exit. While we may never know the motivations of the Japanese and Chinese women, especially those who entered the Home voluntarily, throughout I attempt to draw on secondary sources, including literature and biography, that may provide some spaces from which to consider their stories. At best, however, this attempt is piecemeal and incomplete. While it is likely that most of the women who entered the institution during the period studied have died, future studies might yet uncover the stories of residents who entered and left the Home between 1924 and 1942.

I rely on a framework that Foucault refers to as “effective history.”³¹ Jennifer Terry explains that effective history “involves what Foucault calls ‘historical sense’ – a strategic awareness of points of emergence or ‘possibilities’ existing at particular historical moments in the formation of particular discourses.”³² My goal is to provide a systematic and historical account of the Chinese Rescue Home and to point to the ways in which racial and gendered truths and practices were formed and challenged through this site. As Foucault explains, “History becomes ‘effective’ to

the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being – as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our body and sets it against itself.”³³ The discontinuities that I trace here are found in the interstitial positioning of the Home and in the ambivalences of the private/public and national/global divides.

Given that archival records are often written by those in positions of power or authority, I adopt two strategies to lessen the “top heaviness” of the sources. First, I use multiple and diverse sources. For instance, [Chapter 2](#) draws extensively on two Royal Commissions, a report/letter compiled by Reverend Starr, and numerous Methodist reports and publications. [Chapter 3](#) focuses largely on records of the Methodist Woman’s Missionary Society, but it also includes architectural, document, and image analysis. [Chapter 4](#) relies heavily on newspaper accounts of court cases that reference “friends” of the Home and explores the multiple roles of the press in documenting and (re)framing court cases. [Chapter 5](#) focuses on both Woman’s Missionary Society records and court documents in order to examine “custody” (habeas corpus) cases and the state’s role in determining guardianship over Chinese girls placed in the Home. This approach offers a multifaceted and more nuanced understanding of not only the form and function of the Home but also the social, legal, and national context in which it was constructed. Although this still offers a “view from above,” it is, nevertheless, a more nuanced view. While the history I offer is in no way complete, it is an institutional history of the Home that is able to provide important insights into the functioning of power.

I also endeavour to uncover points of emergence, or Foucauldian “possibilities,” by providing a subversive reading of history and questioning how these dominant accounts come to stand as truth. In this operation, an archivist/reader reveals that the dominant account is never fully capable of containing the subaltern it launches, nor is it fully able to stabilize itself.³⁴ Reading subversively, or “against the grain,” is a strategy that offers a richer analysis than does reading “with the grain,” but it is not a substitute for the latter. As Stoler, in her discussion of the colonial archive, contends, we also need to read the archive “for its regularities, for its logic of recall, for its densities and distributions, for its consistencies of misinformation, omission, and mistake – *along* the archival grain.”³⁵

Building on Stoler, I submit that all archival collections depend to a greater or lesser degree on hierarchies of power and therefore can and should be read as not only reflecting power hierarchies (such as hierarchies of race, gender, class, and sexuality) but also as producing them.³⁶

Church archives, for instance, are littered with official reports made by missionaries and church officials at various levels of church governance, most of whom are white, upper-middle-class men. The misinformation, omissions, and mistakes that Stoler refers to are important indications of existing power hierarchies both inside and outside church structures.³⁷ Not all of the sources in church archives were penned by men, however: women's missionary groups most often reported directly to male supervisors, which means that there are many extant reports written by these women. Despite the fact that many of these women had more autonomy than did many other white women, their claims to power were often limited to supervising or reforming those who were perceived as racially or culturally inferior. Reading these texts both with and against the grain can tell us much about the complex interplay of race, gender, and class.

Providing a critical and systematic analysis is imperative, as I rely on a diverse corpus of documents that includes published texts, photos, maps, official documents of churches and religious governing bodies, personal letters, record books, newspapers, court documents, and Royal Commissions. Although these texts are largely from British Columbia, a number of reports and texts also deal with missionary work in China and Japan. Chang and Mawani offer detailed discussions of the ways in which racial knowledges are routinely transported within and across national borders.³⁸ Thus, it is not surprising that my sources highlight the ways in which the "Chinese and Japanese problem" was always already outside the nation. Therefore, even within "home missions," missionaries and church organizations often borrowed from racial knowledges and practices that were imported from other national contexts.

The archives themselves, as well as the documents held there, are the products of cultural, social, political, economic, and moral influences. I draw from a number of sources to uncover how religious discourse intersected with racial and gendered discourses to produce specific understandings of Chinese and Japanese women as foreign and as potentially transformable through practices of moral regulation. Given that racial and gendered discourses played such a central role in the Chinese Rescue Home, discourse analysis is an important method for understanding how one comes to make sense of race, sexuality, and gender.³⁹ Critical discourse analysis sees discourse as forming a dialectical relationship with the social world, and it strives to understand the relationship between both the concrete material world and the abstract discursive world. For example, the physical (material) structure of the Home was embedded

in – indeed constructed through – gendered, racial, and colonial discourses, and these material structures fed into and reproduced these same discourses within the Home.

Thus, discourses affected white, Japanese, and Chinese women's lives in material ways. Discourse and ideology are neither neutral nor static. Ideology is embedded in social and cultural practices, and, just as these practices change and (d)evolve over time, so also do the knowledges that they produce. These discourses, therefore, shape the everyday lives of individuals through shaping both social identity and social relations. The archival sources used here must be understood as both material evidence of discursive practices and as the discursive practices themselves. Jorgenson and Phillips contend that "discourse is both constitutive and constituted."⁴⁰ In other words, discourse not only shapes social meaning and identities but is also shaped by the social world. The texts that I chose are not separate from the historical and social specificities that informed them, nor are they distinct from the policies and practices that resulted from them. Further, religious discourses cannot be understood as singular or cohesive but, rather, must be understood as developing out of and in response to counter-discourses. Discourses of race, nation, regulation, and domesticity are central to this book. As such, it is necessary to discuss how these discourses informed and were informed by the spaces of the Home.

RACE, PLACE, AND NATION

As a racial project, the Chinese Rescue Home must be understood as a productive space. Here, race itself was produced in complex and ambivalent ways. Taking a critical approach to race means acknowledging that both race and whiteness are social constructions and not biological facts. Three points are important here. First, race and whiteness are socially constructed through processes of racialization, whereby meaning is assigned to biological manifestations of "race": these meanings, in turn, help to shape institutions and structures so that racialization is not only concerned with racial bodies but also with the institutional practices that govern and create them.⁴¹ Omi and Winant argue that "racial formation is a process of historically situated *projects* in which human bodies and social structures are represented and organized."⁴² The Home was just one of many racial projects, and, as I show, racial projects in this case both

sustained and interrupted hegemonic ideas and practices for, as Omi and Winant claim, hegemony “is tentative, incomplete and ‘messy.’”⁴³

The shifting meaning of race can be seen as a part of racial projects that arise out of and inform state practices. The state does not simply define race: rather, the state and race are in a constant (in)formative dialogue.⁴⁴ Thus, understandings of race are understandings of the ways in which state and non-state institutions build upon and produce racial knowledges.⁴⁵ I rely on understandings of race as intrinsically tied to space. Influenced by the work of Lefebvre, Anderson, Razack, and Mawani in particular, I view race as both constitutive of and constituted by space.⁴⁶ Buildings and landscapes are not just objective and neutral; they are also subjective representations of past and present beliefs and practices.⁴⁷ Thus, my focus on space is attentive to ways in which race was always already constituting and constituted by these spaces and how values and social relations became embedded in buildings and landscapes. Although race, as a set of relations generated by the state and other institutions, informs space, it does so in distinctly relational ways that intersect and produce gendered, classed, and sexualized meanings.

Race is relational in the sense that the racialized Other is constructed as raced *by* the white subject and in the sense that he or she is raced in opposition to a seemingly unraced (white) subject.⁴⁸ Thus, in order to understand the process of racialization and its effects, one must also consider how whiteness itself is a product of racial institutions and state practices.⁴⁹ Although whiteness studies have become prominent in recent years, Fanon’s work reminds us that the study of whiteness was always a part of anti-colonial and anti-racist scholarship and activism.⁵⁰ The recent studies of whiteness, however, reemphasized its importance. Twine and Gallagher argue that it is often at the local level that “whiteness as a form of power is defined, deployed, performed, policed, and reinvented.”⁵¹ Drawing from this literature, I understand whiteness as historically grounded and socially produced. This allows for an analysis that is attentive to the slippages that take place in defining not only the “racial problem” but also the instability of whiteness itself. A critical assessment of the ways that whiteness is itself constructed allows for a destabilization of the binaries of self and Other by exposing the instability and fluidity of both.

Power relations based on race, gender, class, and sexuality do not occur in isolation from each other. For this reason, I take an intersectional approach to analyzing the Home. Thus, I interrogate not only how white

women, as well as Japanese and Chinese Canadian women, were framed in terms of their “race” but, in particular, how they were also, at the same time, framed in terms of nationalism, citizenship, sexuality, class, and gender. In addition, white women were also subjected to gendered and racialized forms of power, and an examination of the Home highlights some of the ways these facilitated and constrained their aspirations. Whiteness, like other racial categories, is produced on multiple registers and thus is not monolithic. Central to my argument is the understanding that the Chinese Rescue Home was a space that both challenged and interrupted discourses of white (national) superiority. Whiteness, here, must be understood as relationally formed. For instance, global constructions of whiteness informed (and were informed by) local discourses. National discourses that privileged whiteness did not exist in isolation from other racial taxonomies. Therefore, it is important to take into account the ways in which national discourses of whiteness (and other racial categories) were themselves transnational processes.⁵² National discourses and processes of inclusion and exclusion were often influenced by discourses from inside the nation as well as by imperialist relationships that were forged outside the nation.

Understanding how racial and religious projects functioned in Victoria during this time necessitates an understanding of the complex processes of colonization and nation building that were then ongoing. “Nation building,” as used here, refers to an ongoing and always incomplete process that includes, but is not limited to, formal state processes, “settlement,” and hegemonic ideation, which, in British Columbia, included at its core anti-Asian racism. Speaking of the relationship between First Nations and anti-Chinese racism, Timothy Stanley argues: “Local anti-Chinese racism grew out of the racism that was behind colonization. Both racisms established the power and privilege of the same people: those of European origins. Racism against one group was often even expressed in conjunction with racism against the other, and racist restrictions on people from China were often simultaneously enacted against First Nations people.”⁵³ The making of a nation was about much more than settlement: it was also about the construction of a people. That the term “Canadian” was often equated with whiteness is well documented by Stanley and others. Although Canada has often been imagined as a settler society, this notion must be *unsettled*. The making of Canada as a nation was not simply a process of settlement; rather, it was a process that required both the dispossession and the disenfranchisement of Indigenous peoples and non-white settlers.

The colonization of what is now British Columbia was unique in that it was one of the “last territories to be earmarked for European settlement.”⁵⁴ Thus, the logics and processes of colonization were already deeply entrenched and well-practised. However, the colonization of this territory was also unique because of the numbers of Chinese that were also entering the area. In 1855, the white population of the Colony of Vancouver Island was 509, while a “conservative estimate would place the First Nations population at the time at 100,000.”⁵⁵ When, during the Fraser River gold rush (1858), some thirty thousand Chinese entered the area, the white population was certainly outnumbered. However, as Stanley points out, “despite the seeming tenuousness of European resettlement, the political, cultural, economic, and demographic transformation of the people and the lands that became British Columbia was already underway.” Further, Stanley argues that power continued to be “created through a combination of statecraft (diplomacy, alliances, use of First Nations customs and culture), economic incentives (trade goods, gifts), and military force (gunboats, punitive expeditions, collective reprisals, police actions).”⁵⁶ In this way, nation building and colonization were linked to global and imperial power relations outside the territory. In fact, empire, as I argue in [Chapter 3](#), was literally built into the structures that would become home to the Chinese and Japanese women who would reside in the Chinese Rescue Home.

Exploring the relationality between the national and the global is necessary if one is to examine how inclusion and exclusion worked during this period. Chinese and Japanese women were neither fully incorporated into the nation nor entirely excluded from it. Situated within the borders of the nation, they continued to be framed as foreign. This being the case, discussions that rely on binaries such as inside and outside cannot fully explain how it was that women missionaries could remain within the nation at the same time as they evangelized women who were always already “foreign.” While other scholars trouble the relationships between religion and nation, both in terms of foreign mission work and (more narrowly) with regard to home mission work, the vast majority of studies of home mission work focus on the nation as the site of intervention and analysis.⁵⁷ Pascoe, for example, takes such an approach.⁵⁸ She examines a mission in San Francisco that was similar to Victoria’s Chinese Rescue Home, and her discussion revolves largely around how Chinese women were regulated so that they might be assimilated into the nation, especially through education.⁵⁹ But Victoria’s Chinese Rescue Home cannot

be adequately explained through a focus on the nation alone. In British Columbia, the process was much more complex than it was in California. While the goal of the institutions in both Victoria and San Francisco was assimilation, the former also became a site within which some women were expelled from the nation. For example, immigration officials placed women in the Chinese Rescue Home while their claims were being assessed. The matron of the institution provided these officials with her recommendation as to the fitness of the women to remain in the country. Those who were categorized as unable or unwilling to undergo the transformations that were deemed necessary were, accordingly, expelled from the Home and, upon the matron's recommendation, sometimes from the nation.

I hope to trouble the nation as an ideology that relies on inside/outside binaries but that is never capable of fully sustaining them. By theorizing the Chinese Rescue Home as both inside and outside the nation, it becomes clear that it challenged national/global boundaries and also threatened race/whiteness binaries as central to defining the nation. This "borderland" approach provides a more nuanced analysis of the policing of racial boundaries, the crossing of these boundaries, and their re-entrenchment.⁶⁰ For if nations are defined by their borders, then understanding the processes that take place at these borders can provide us with a greater understanding of how the nation itself is defined. This approach provides a more nuanced understanding of how the Chinese Rescue Home became both a place that facilitated the integration of some "foreigners" into the nation (by teaching them the value of domesticity) and a place that expelled others.

It is not enough to say "We let them in" or "We kept them out." Binaries of inside and outside are not sufficient to explain how, once inside the nation, Chinese and Japanese women were framed as both incompatible with their new home and integral to its definition. Without Japanese and Chinese women, Victoria's Chinese Rescue Home would have had no foundation. Without these women, Victoria's Woman's Missionary Society would have had no mission. If whiteness was to define the nation through its moral superiority and its benevolent paternalism (and maternalism), then it needed an inferior and a subordinate Other. While it might be claimed that this inferior and subordinate Other was always a part of the national imagining, that this inferiority simply marked a hierarchy within the nation, this does not fully explain *how* the subordinate came to be defined, in the first place, through the production and mobility of racial knowledges.

Mawani and Stoler inform this discussion regarding the mobility of racial knowledges.⁶¹ Stoler contends that racial discourse evolves out of and through its attachment to prior cultural representations.⁶² In fact, these are not only localized representations: they are also built on and mobilized by forms of representation from outside the nation. For instance, racial discourses were mobilized through reliance on examples from the United States as well as from prior missionary contact in China and Japan. Race cannot be understood as singular or static; rather, it must be understood as having the potential to change, evolve, and transform as it attaches itself to other discourses and representations. These representations include narratives of Christian transformation, which can transgress but not fully overturn the boundaries of race. Domesticating Japanese and Chinese women interrupted racial discourses of non-assimilability, yet the need for transformation was contingent on understandings of racial inferiority and white superiority.

In the period under study, whiteness was a central defining component of the nation. White women, in particular, were able to use Christianity to reinforce their moral authority.⁶³ Although the inclusion of racialized populations within the framework of Christianity interrupted the discourses that equated whiteness with superiority, it did not open the door to full equality. Instead, racialized bodies were re-constructed as in need of transformation before they could be included. Paradoxically, in order for racialized bodies to be seen as in need of transformation, they had to be framed as inferior or subordinate. Thus, Christian missionaries often opposed biological racism, but their Christian project produced another form of racism that, just as effectively, rendered Chinese and Japanese as inferior. The discourses that made this construction possible were not to be found within the nation; rather, they had everything to do with how the nation was formed through processes that were always already in conversation with racial knowledge from outside the nation.

Racial knowledge informs the types of exclusionary processes that are a common theme in previous discussions of Chinese and Japanese immigration. The Chinese Rescue Home provides evidence that racial power also operated through inclusion. Many have documented the varied and multiple technologies of racial exclusion that existed in British Columbia, especially with regard to Chinese and Japanese populations. This has sometimes “led to a portrayal of racialized peoples as victims without voice or as people whose identities were externally imposed.”⁶⁴ Recent work has begun to take into account the active role of Chinese and Japanese populations

in resisting and challenging governmental and societal exclusions.⁶⁵ My study of the Chinese Rescue Home examines a context within which government and institutional work took a less exclusionary form. While many in the province were decrying the menace of the “Yellow Peril” and calling for the expulsion of Chinese and Japanese populations – if not always from the nation then certainly from white society and white labour interests – white women were taking a different approach. Although many Christians (and non-Christians) during this time argued that Japanese and Chinese men and women could not (or should not) be assimilated into the nation, the women of the Woman’s Missionary Society (WMS), who would eventually run the Home, were of a different mind. Certainly, the WMS women considered these populations to be inferior; however, rather than focusing only on exclusion, they engaged in what they believed to be transformative projects of inclusion.

The Chinese Rescue Home was a site where white women exerted their moral authority in ways that enhance our understanding of how racial projects functioned in early BC history. The centrality of whiteness and its performative significance is exemplified within the Home, and it is this foregrounding and privileging of whiteness, its assertion and maintenance amidst challenges made by many, both inside and outside the Home, that is of primary concern. Although this was, in part, an assimilatory project, it was not *only* about inclusion; rather, its goals included sending converted women back to Japan or China as missionaries – an indication that racism was more than a way of delineating between self and Other. Racism worked through a contradictory process of inclusion, exclusion, and regulation. Race was used to identify inferiority, as the Other was defined in opposition to the white self. Here, whiteness was deployed as both authority (superiority) and as a model to emulate. Yet, as Constance Backhouse argues, race was impermanent and transmutable. It was also malleable and subject to transformation through domesticity.⁶⁶

The Home illustrates how whiteness was also central to both the state and the domestic realm. *From Slave Girls to Salvation* explores how whiteness was deployed through national and global imaginings, and how these relationships intersected with religious discourses. Thus, my discussion focuses on the Chinese Rescue Home as a religious (Methodist) institution. However, it is important to note at the outset that Methodism, including its roots, factions, and relations to other Christian denominations, is not central to my discussion. Although the records of the Methodist Missionary Society have much to say with regard to how

evangelical missions were conceived, internally as well as in relation to other denominations, I take into account only a very few of these concerns as they comprise a huge field in and of themselves. For those who are interested, others, such as Rhonda Ann Semple, provide comprehensive overviews of the history of Canadian Methodism.⁶⁷

The links between race and religion are central to my concerns. Both race and religion had an uneasy relation with questions of Chinese and Japanese immigration as constructions of the former were formed through national and religious discourses. For religious leaders, discussions around race were complex as they revolved around both global and local concerns. Race was concretized as a target of religious interventions, yet it was also malleable enough to be transformed. Shifting away from a singular focus on exclusion allows for the exploration of the complex relationships between race, religion, and citizenship and how these came together and combined to form discourses of inclusion. Early “contact narratives” have overwhelmingly characterized white/Asian encounters through the lens of racism and anti-Asian sentiment. By focusing on race as an exclusionary project, such work uncovers important functions and consequences of discourses of race. Recently, other scholars have taken a more nuanced and critical approach to cross-racial contact in British Columbia. Renisa Mawani, in *Colonial Proximities*, deals with encounters between whites, Aboriginal peoples, and Chinese migrants and explores how these contacts were informed by and through spatial practices and legal strategies.⁶⁸ Like other postcolonial scholars, Mawani critiques and disrupts the binaries of colonizer/colonized, self/other, and metropole/colony. By moving away from a unitary focus on contact to a discussion of *how* contact(s) informed racial knowledges and spatial and legal practices, Mawani is able to uncover the ambivalent effects resulting from cross-racial contacts.

Timothy Stanley’s *Contesting White Supremacy: School Segregation, Anti-Racism, and the Making of Chinese Canadians* and Alison Marshall’s *The Way of the Bachelor: Early Chinese Settlement in Manitoba* both offer complex and compelling narratives of racial exclusion and resistance in a Canadian context. Turning to the United States, Nayan Shah draws attention to the links between state bureaucracies and racial formations/constructions as they were applied to the Chinese and how these were informed by discourses of public health.⁶⁹ His attention to the role of the state in producing racial discourses is a useful model for understanding the complex relationships between national institutions, the discourses they produced, and the actions and reactions of Chinese Americans and other public citizens. Here, Shah also points to the complex ways in

which the state intervened in matters of intimacy (the family and the body), which have often been thought of as confined to the private realm.

The state was not the only force governing intimate realms: churches also intervened. How religious institutions approached race differed significantly from how public institutions did so. My focus on religious missions is not meant to imply that white/Asian contact was free from exclusionary discourses and practices; what I show is that contact between white women, Japanese women, and Chinese women was more complex than many have suggested as white women attempted to bring Japanese and Chinese women into a nation that was at once hostile and ambivalent to their presence. In particular, I explore the roles and importance of white women because they provide insight not only into the discourses that informed these relationships but also into the complex relationships between state and non-state institutions. In so doing, I examine the ways that both Christianity and citizenship were projected onto the bodies of Asian women by white women who, themselves, were marginal to national projects. While much of my focus is concerned with white women's roles, I also discuss Japanese and Chinese women's responses to religious interventions. Marshall, in her study of Chinese bachelor societies, argues that religious affiliations between Chinese and whites were about much more than spiritual enlightenment. She explains that many Chinese men converted to Christianity because of the opportunities that this afforded them.⁷⁰ As I discuss in [Chapter 3](#), Chinese and Japanese women were also cognizant of the benefits that conversion might offer.

Building on Mawani's approach, I address the legal and spatial manoeuvrings that informed and shaped relationships between whites, Chinese, and Japanese in British Columbia.⁷¹ By focusing on a single case study, I am able to provide a detailed and systematic study of the ways in which gender and religion coalesced with and undercut state-sanctioned boundaries of both race and domesticity. Like Shah, I emphasize how various levels of government intervened in the domestic realm and how this intervention intersected and collided with/against religious narratives and discourses.⁷²

The Chinese Rescue Home was not only a regional project but also a national one as it sought to include and exclude Asian women not only in and from British Columbia but also in and from the nation. It was a site shot through with discourses of race and gender, which borrowed from global missionary tropes as well as from imperial and national discourses. Numerous scholars, who have studied the work of women missionaries and other moral reformers both in their home countries and abroad, look at how gender intersects with religion and citizenship.⁷³ In *Relations*

of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874–1939, Peggy Pascoe explores the role of women missionaries in the development of women’s moral influence on what she calls “female moral authority.”⁷⁴ I offer a narrower but more in-depth approach, which allows me to consider how women gained moral authority through their work in the Home and how they used discourses and spaces of domesticity to achieve their goals. If women’s status as second-class citizens meant that they reaffirmed their worth through claims to white superiority, it also meant that these claims, and the practices that accompanied them, were curtailed by the dominion of white men. The nation, largely the domain of men, thus significantly curtailed women’s public engagements and opinions. The domestic realm, as a site of state intervention, also fell under the nation’s dominion as the courts and other state authorities weighed in on who might be allowed within the walls of this domicile. White women created spaces of autonomy that were also shaped by the white- and male-dominated Methodist Missionary Society. By focusing on a “foreign” mission located on Western soil, I examine how the domestic realm was produced on three scales: the local, the national, and the global. Examining these scales together allows me to simultaneously examine local practices, national imaginings, and global discourses as well as the practices that threatened and sustained them.

Evangelical nationalism relied on discourses of race, which were predicated on cultural differences.⁷⁵ Whiteness was contrasted not only to those who were non-white but also to *foreignness* itself. Thus, the Chinese Rescue Home not only marked off the public and private as gendered realms but also marked off the domestic and the foreign, which made it crucial to defining the nation and citizenship. It was precisely the mission’s form as a domestic space that allowed for the transmission of Christian morality and its attendant transformative practices. These practices and discourses of morality must also be understood in the context of raced and gendered moral regulation.

MORAL REGULATION AND DOMESTICITY

Domesticity was central to the regulation of Japanese and Chinese women within the spaces of the Chinese Rescue Home. The relationship between race, gender, and domesticity was not only spatial: domesticity also functioned as psychic and corporeal practice of regulation. Understanding domestic spaces as constitutive of discourse *and* of practice, especially as

these discourses and practices relate to moral regulation, is a central goal of my research. According to Alan Hunt, moral regulation projects are a “form of politics in which some people act to problematize the conduct, values or culture of others and seek to impose regulation upon them.”⁷⁶ This regulation operates on local, national, and global scales. While taken up by ordinary citizens, these projects are deeply enmeshed in state practices that are informed by colonial discourses, especially around race.

Due to the complexity of regulating the racial Other, it was important that I adopt an approach that views the nation as contested and contradictory. The discourses that fed this particular strand of moral regulation must be understood as located within larger discourses of gender, race, and religion, which, in turn, drew from knowledges existing outside the nation. The Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration (1885), for example, drew on global knowledges about race from San Francisco and Melbourne. Religious discourses, while largely Western in origin, also built on missionary narratives from Japan and China in ways that informed not only their understandings of Asian populations but also how and where they would evangelize them. In its yearly reports, the WMS, for instance, often discussed strategies for evangelizing Chinese women in China, seeing them as useful models for evangelizing Chinese women in Canada. In addition, religious discourses were also modelled upon British traditions and borrowed from (and sometimes rejected) approaches that had been adopted in the United States.

Within these discourses, the racialized Other is, in many ways, viewed as ungovernable. This meant that, in order for moral regulation to take place, transformative work needed to be done. Thus, transformative work must be seen not as a precursor to moral regulation but as part of the practice of moral regulation itself. Like Nayan Shah, I am concerned with how missionary women worked to transform Asian populations from being inassimilable into being cultural citizens. Shah, for instance, shows how racial boundaries of exclusion were transgressed when missionary women trained Chinese women “in middle-class domesticity.” This “simultaneously made ‘fallen’ women ‘respectable’ and served to transform Chinese society in the United States.”⁷⁷ In the Canadian context, religious missions such as the Chinese Rescue Home were less about bestowing cultural citizenship on their charges than about global citizenship. Proper transformations were as much about the entrenchment of Christian values globally as they were about the transformation of the individual and the nation. The regulation of Chinese and Japanese women was primarily concerned with producing “Bible Women” to spread the gospel in China

and Japan and only secondarily with integrating Japanese and Chinese women into the Canadian cultural community.

Moral regulation was, thus, a complex, spatial project. According to Hunt, moral regulation requires the following elements: a moralized subject, a moralized object or target, knowledge, a discourse within which knowledge is given a normative content, a set of practices, and a “harm” to be avoided or overcome.⁷⁸ While it was clear that the state, the media, and the WMS women all acted as moralizing agents in the Home, and residents were moralized objects, other considerations were also at play. It was not just the “immoral” *practices* – namely, the sexual behaviours of Chinese and Japanese women – that were being targeted. Despite the fact that the institution was meant to be a rescue mission for prostitutes and slave girls, sexuality, while certainly a concern, was not the primary target of regulation. Because white women viewed Japanese and Chinese women as having been largely coerced into prostitution, once freed from their lives of sin, the regulation of their sexuality was seen as largely unnecessary (except in cases in which women were resistant to their interventions). Instead, white women focused their attention on providing Japanese and Chinese women with skills that were in line with (white) classed and gendered expectations. Teaching women to dress, sew, cook, or build a fire the “English way” was intended to teach them to cultivate and to take on their new roles as transformed and whitened subjects. These behaviours were a form of discipline that took place within a domestic sphere. The Home produced Chinese and Japanese women as “docile bodies” who could be “transformed and improved.”⁷⁹ These practices were also lessons in social hygiene.⁸⁰

Although the teaching or controlling of certain practices was linked to a harm that was to be avoided or overcome, in the case of Japanese and Chinese women, this harm was quite diffuse. If it were only prostitution and sexual “licentiousness” that had to be curtailed, placement of the women in the Home would certainly have meant an end to, or overcoming of, potential harm. But the practices and behaviours that were regulated within the residence were about more than simply ending prostitution. Assimilation through moral regulation was seen as inherently unachievable except through transformation: changes in behaviour (regulation) would never be enough. Thus, the WMS approached the problem more broadly as the “Chinese problem.”⁸¹ In other words, moral regulation needed to be not only about the regulation of practices (and the avoidance of harm associated with those practices) but also about transformation. The Home’s mission was not only to transform practices

and behaviours but also to domesticate the objects of regulation. In addition to cultivating new behaviours, mission work was also designed to produce and to cultivate domestic *subjects*.

To be clear, the transformation of racialized bodies into models of whiteness was not a transformation of the Other into the self but, rather, of the Other into another Other. Japanese and Chinese women might be encouraged to aspire to *models* of whiteness, but they would, at best, only inhabit a space between the white self and the Other. If Japanese and Chinese women were able to transgress race and *become* white, this would jeopardize the missionary project itself as it would call into question the superiority of the white self. The *emulation* of whiteness reaffirmed its value. Transformation first meant the removal of the women from their places of domicile and their admission into the Home. Once in residence, the women were then able to become part of the “family of God.” This was a practice in domesticity as evidence of this transformation was to be seen in the women’s ability to learn and to embody not only Victorian moral values but also Christian ones. Thus, the Home was concerned not only with providing training to Chinese and Japanese women so that they would not have to return to lives of immorality but also with (1) transforming them from racial outsiders into “family members” and (2) socializing them into their rightful positions within their new “family” – the family of God. However, this transformation, once complete, did not guarantee their acceptance into Canadian society. Although some were allowed to return to their own communities and others even entered white homes as servants, successful transformations did not always translate into a presumed fitness for assimilatory projects. For some, in fact, successful transformations were not seen as evidence of their fitness to stay within the nation at all but, rather, as evidence that they should be expelled from the nation to be missionaries in China or Japan.

Canadian histories, to the extent that they have included Japanese and Chinese populations, have often framed them as inassimilable or as subjects of white discriminatory practices and policies. In what follows, I use a plethora of sources not to deny such exclusions but to explore how racial power worked through exclusions *and* inclusions and how these processes took place simultaneously, often operating in tandem. By constructing the Chinese Rescue Home as an active space and site of production, I utilize a series of housing metaphors to theorize the domestic and domesticity as practices and processes of power. [Chapter 1](#) begins by building the “foundation” of the Home by providing some historical and geographical context.

In [Chapter 2](#), I identify and explore the four “pillars” of the regulative power of the domestic and domesticity by examining the discourses of nation, whiteness, Christianity, and gender as they operated in the Home. These pillars not only provided the support for the Home but also created it as a necessary intervention, a solution that existed as a space both outside and inside the nation. It was precisely the intersections of the religiosity of the mission and the imaginary of the home that allowed for the transformation of (female) racial bodies into *domestic* bodies (both in a national and in a gendered sense). In [Chapter 3](#), I cross the “threshold” into the Home to examine how domesticity was tightly bound up with motherhood and maternalism. The “threshold” metaphor highlights how domesticity blurred the public/private binary as, in the Home, moral regulation was always acted out on or at the threshold between the private and the public, thus facilitating the constant crossing over between these two domains. The domestic was both materially and ideologically framed through gendered discourses of “home” and “family.” Yet, as an institution, these domestic spaces were used by white women, and to a lesser degree by Japanese and Chinese women, to cross the threshold from the private to the public realm.

In [Chapter 4](#) and [Chapter 5](#), I shift the lens, pointing it outside the Home. In [Chapter 4](#), by focusing on “walls,” I consider how the parameters of the Home were (re)defined not only from within the institution but also from beyond it. I examine newspaper accounts in order to discuss high-profile civil and legal cases that involved key players in the Home. These cases show the importance of domesticity in the moral regulation of Chinese and Japanese women, and they also highlight the importance of state and citizens as moral regulators of those who dared to remove domesticity from the transformation process. In [Chapter 5](#), I use “roofs” and “rafters” as metaphors to complete my “reconstruction” of the Chinese Rescue Home. Here, I explore the state’s role as protector and arbiter in habeas corpus cases. In these instances, the state provides the Home and its charges with a protective covering (roof) that enables it to function as *parens patriae* while also providing the framework (rafters) that enables the institution to take on this surrogate parenting role. The state thus reframes the Home as a site of refuge rather than of “rescue.” The habeas corpus cases enable a deep analysis of the state’s role in delineating the boundaries of cross-racial contact and in defining (national) familial relations. I conclude by returning to the themes of nation, race, and domesticity, linking them to contemporary racial projects.