

Dear Elise,

Thanks again for your submission to the *Urban History Review* special issue on Emotions and the City. We have now received two blind evaluations of your article, and I am delighted to inform you that it has been accepted for publication, provided you make some revisions, which I hope you will not find too onerous. The evaluators enjoyed your article, noting that it is “accessible, original, and well-anchored in the relevant historiography” (Reader B) and that it offers “an entirely new way to look at the history of Toronto’s Chinatown and, by extension, other urban enclaves” (Reader A). Both readers did point to certain issues that do need to be addressed before proceeding, which I outline below.

One issue raised in the reports has to do with the connections your article is making with the history of the emotions. Reader B notes that because this article is destined for a special issue on the history of the emotions, it needs to speak more explicitly to this specific body of scholarship. While this does not imply that you restructure the entire argument, it would be useful if in your introduction you could refer to this literature in defining how the intimate sentiments such as love and affection you are working with function as emotions, as social and cultural phenomena contingent on the particular historical context in which they are produced. As Reader B points out, William Reddy’s recent *The Making of Romantic Love* may be helpful in this regard, as might Elizabeth Povinelli’s *The Empire of Love* or Claire Langhamer’s *The English in Love*. Reader A also points you to a collection on “racial-sexual boundary crossing,” which might also be helpful in this aspect of your revisions.

Both readers also suggest caution in making certain empirical claims, though they do so in different ways. Reader B asks that certain “statements about quantity, tendencies, measurements, degree ... need to be quantified, inasmuch as is possible.” By the same token, Reader A expresses “scepticism” in some places where you do cite figures. As s/he notes, it is difficult to quantify intimacy, suggesting that the larger points you are making are not necessarily strengthened by numbers, the value of which can sometimes be difficult to ascertain. One way out of this might very well be, as Reader A proposes, to address this issue straight up, recognising that at least some of the evidence may be “speculative and partial,” while at the same time tempering the “sweeping claims” that would seem to call for numerical grounding that Reader B brings to light.

Finally, Reader A offers some relevant insights about the “interpretive strategy” with which you approach the tabloids you use in the article, pointing out that even the seemingly mundane “facts” they are reporting are shaped by the “politics of representation” driving these periodicals. In making your revisions, it might be worth briefly explaining your critical approach to this intriguing source. The Reader also suggests a map might help in emphasising the “spatialization of interracial relationships.” Would you have one that you could include in the article?

I have pasted the two sets of comments below, and I invite you to take a look at them to see how the reviewers elaborate on the points highlighted above. I very much look

forward to seeing the final version of your article. The editorial committee asks that you submit your revised article by **4 March**. A reminder that papers should contain between 6000 and 10,000 words. When preparing your final draft, please follow the Review's guidelines available at: <http://urbanhistoryreview.ca/guideenglish.html>

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to be in touch if you have any questions.

All the best,

Nicolas

## READER A

### **Review of “Sex, Intimacy, and Desire among Men of Chinese Heritage and Women of Non-Asian Heritage in Toronto, 1910 to 1950” for *Urban History Review*, article ID: 355**

The history of urban enclaves is typically written from the perspective of a single group. In the case of the Ward in Toronto, it figures in separate monographs on the history of Jews, Italians, and the Chinese. A few studies do consider several communities, but generally in order to track the ‘successive waves’ of immigrant groups which moved in and then out of the neighbourhood, effectively treating them, again, as discrete groups.

One of the great strengths of the article under review is its insistence on the interaction among peoples of different races and ethnicities within the Ward/Chinatown, and, significantly, it is the terrain of sex and intimacy that brings the history of this urban intercourse into view. The article effectively challenges the hypostatization of race and ethnicity all too common in the existing literature on the history of immigrant, urban enclaves, as well as furnishing a much-needed critique of that historiography’s normalizing impulses, especially transparent in its earlier development.

These accomplishments, along with the introduction of some fascinating oral histories, more than merit publication. What follows are several areas the author may wish to consider as s/he thinks more about this very valuable project.

The paper begins with the rather startling claim that at least one-third of men of Chinese heritage in Toronto were married or in common-law relationships with white women, not to mention the many other, more ‘casual’ relations. What is the evidence for this? On p. 28 the author refers to an unidentified 1935 report that 85 men of Chinese heritage were married to white women. We then learn from marriage registers that in four different years prior to 1935 there were 17 such marriages. These are not big numbers, and so to account for the claim that fully one-third of men of Chinese heritage were in relationships with white women, the author suggests we must include “open-ended relationships.” The evidence here would appear to be from Mrs. Adams who was hired in 1937 by the WMS of the Presbyterian Church specifically to work with white women married to Chinese men. She estimated in her first year on the job that there were over 200 mixed marriages, and just two years later, she claimed that number had increased to over 800. It is the 800 figure that appears to be the basis for the claim about one-third of men of Chinese heritage in marriage/open-ended relationships with white women.

Part of the problem is with the sources and the questions they raise. The 1935 report is not cited (unless it is the same report mentioned earlier in a different context and found in Weiss?), so it is difficult to discern how it derived its numbers. With the marriage registers, one wonders why these four years, why only four years, and what are we to think when the author describes this method in a footnote as “imperfect?” With the work of Mrs. Adams, also not cited as far as I can tell, was there a real basis to her estimates? How did she count these up, and are we really to believe that the number of marriages/relationships jumped by 500 in two years? Put another way, would it not have been in the interest of the person hired to do this job to play up the numbers as way of

demonstrating the necessity and importance of her work? And even if some of these numbers were accurate for these specific years, is this a sufficient basis upon which to generalize the one-third claim for the entire period between 1910 and 1950, as is suggested by the use of this figure in the introduction to the paper?

Another part of the problem concerns the function the author wants this kind of quantification to perform. My guess is that it's about demonstrating the historical prevalence of the author's subject, perhaps anticipating someone demanding "show me the numbers." But, short of a more thorough-going quantitative analysis of, say, the marriage registers, I don't think this is necessary; whether there were 80 or 800 such relationships doesn't determine how much we can learn from them. My suggestion would be to soften the quantitative claims. Instead, offer the evidence as speculative and partial indications, and include a discussion of the problems with the registers and Adams. Taking them at face value and using them with the census to arrive at hard percentages only invites skepticism. Intimacy is not quantifiable.

The author has uncovered some terrific material in the tabloids. I wonder, however, about parts of the interpretive strategy. While acknowledging the racist framing of many of the articles, the author tends to treat them as a source from which we can extract the 'facts' of interracial relationships: the people and places involved, and even something about the nature of their intimate relationships. But can we use the tabloids in such a direct evidentiary fashion? What about the representational strategies of the tabloids? In an article, cited in the endnotes, Pon argues that the tabloids deployed dividing or partition metaphors to represent Chinese men as sexually dangerous – curtains and doorways beyond which it was unsafe for white women to venture. The article under consideration here demonstrates that some white women were quite willing to trespass and transgress such thresholds. Acknowledging the contradiction between representation – the tabloids' regulatory efforts to cordon off Chinatown and its establishments to white women – and historical reality might help move us in the direction of a more complicated interpretation of the tabloids.

Closer attention to the politics of representation might also foster more interpretive caution in places. For example, on p. 13 the author quotes from a tabloid which suggests that men of Chinese heritage gave white women "nice clothes to wear [and] lots of money to spend." The author interprets this as the tabloid getting "closer to the truth." While some men undoubtedly 'treated' white women, it's doubtful most Chinese men had the resources to lavish women with clothes and cash in the ways the tabloids repeatedly suggested. I suspect the idea that men of Chinese heritage had lots of money to burn on white women was a rhetorical strategy in keeping with the tabloids' populist and often racist politics to stir the pot by depicting Chinese men as having exceeded their 'proper place' in relation to white men in the city's economic/social/racial hierarchies.

That the tabloid believed its claim to be "a solemn fact" should be enough to give one pause about a source usually treated as a variant of the 'yellow press' (pun unintended) rather than as a repository of unproblematic facts.

The author makes the intriguing argument that attention to relations between white women and men of Chinese heritage, and the way they sometimes served to reconfigure

customary patterns of patriarchal authority, should force a reconsideration of monolithic notions of patriarchy among historians of gender and sex. We learn that men of Chinese heritage attended to white women, particularly in the realm of domestic labour (cooking, childcare), in ways the women would most likely not have encountered with white men. At the same time, however, isn't the fact that many Chinese men could have wives in China *and* wives/girlfriends/lovers in Toronto itself the expression of a kind of patriarchy? Isn't it a form of what the historian Barrington Walker refers to in the history of black masculinity as "residual patriarchal privilege?"

In terms of historiography, one branch conspicuous by its absence is the literature that emerged in the 1990s on racial-sexual boundary crossing. One good collection of this writing is *Sex, Love, Race: Crossing Boundaries in North American History* (1999), which includes such pieces as Henry Yu's "Mixing Bodies and Cultures: The Meaning of America's Fascination with Sex between 'Orientals' and 'Whites.'" The author may very well have a critique of this literature, but given its thematic overlap it should probably be addressed.

In more recent work, arising out of queer theory, there is a move to distinguish analytically between sex/uality and intimacy. The author doesn't make such a distinction, yet the range of relationships described in the article, from open-ended relationships to sex work and consent girls, would seem to lend itself quite well to thinking through the differences between the sexual (whatever that may be) and the intimate.

Finally, for a journal of urban history, I wonder if the author wants to make more of the spatialization of interracial relationships? There is already a lot about the importance of place – restaurants, laundries, boardinghouses – so why not a map that plots these locations? To such a commercial geography could be added a sexual geography, if possible, plotting the journeys of the white women from their homes to where they encountered men of Chinese heritage. This could also include the locations where women and/or couples were apprehended by the police. Such a map would nicely compliment one of the author's key arguments – the crucial overlap between the economic and the sexual – and help make sense of the urban geography for those unfamiliar with the Ward/Chinatown in Toronto.

Let me conclude by restating that by assembling some very original research and by bringing into conversation several literatures that do not always intersect – urban history, race/migration, sexuality – the author has given us an entirely new way to look at the history of Toronto's Chinatown and, by extension, other urban enclaves, encouraging us to bid farewell to hackneyed notions of 'bachelor society' and to say hello to a sexually and racially dynamic urban space.

## READER B

### **Evaluation of ‘Sex, Intimacy, and Desire among Men of Chinese Heritage and Women of Non-Asian Heritage in Toronto, 1910-1950,’ manuscript submitted to the *Revue d’histoire urbaine/Urban History Review*.**

This is a very interesting article : accessible, original, and well-anchored in the relevant historiography. It contributes to our knowledge of the history of sexuality in Canada and provides us with a much finer, more nuanced understanding of both male Asian migration to Canada in the early twentieth century and social relations in the neighbourhoods that came to be known as ‘Chinatowns.’ Under normal circumstances, I would recommend that this important manuscript be published with only minor revisions.

I do, however, have one major reservation, related to the fact that this article is being considered for publication in the special issue of the *RHU/UHR* devoted to ‘Emotions in History.’ Nowhere in this manuscript does the author reference the now substantial historiography of emotions. Nowhere does s/he include a programmatic statement about the theoretical or empirical contributions of this article to the history of emotions. And, to be quite frank, I’m not sure which emotions, if any, are studied in this manuscript. Love? Affection? Desire? Is desire an emotion? After a careful reading of this manuscript, I came away with all kinds of new insights into a variety of topics, but I’m not sure that any of these insights were related to the history of emotions.

Because I enjoyed reading this manuscript so much, I am recommending that it be published in the *Urban History Review*. But if the editors wish to include it in the special issue devoted to emotions in history, the author will have to do considerable work to ensure that his or her article is explicitly rooted in the historiography of emotions (s/he might start with the classic texts by Barbara Rosenwein, Peter Stearns, William Reddy, and Piroska Nagy, among others) and to find ways of contributing to this historiography with the material that s/he has here.

#### **Specific comments :**

The author has a tendency to make rather sweeping claims that need to be backed up by numbers : ex. p. 9, ‘no shortage of women willing to violate social convention’; ex. p. 14, ‘Men in Toronto were more likely to dare ... white women were more likely to dare ...’; ex. p. 16, ‘a disproportionately high number were French Canadian.’ All of these claims are statements about quantity, tendencies, measurements, degree ... and need to be quantified, inasmuch as is possible.

p. 27 : on women having to assume the nationality of their husband, see Philip Girard’s recent article in the *Canadian Historical Review*.