

# The Chinese Lady and China for the Ladies

## Race, Gender, and Public Exhibition in Jacksonian America

John Haddad

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### INTRODUCTION

In 1830, Harriet Low, the niece of a China trader, strolled through the narrow streets of Canton, China. Though this activity may seem routine, she was actually acting in bold defiance of a Qing law that forbade the presence of Western women in China. Not surprisingly, Low attracted a crowd of Cantonese onlookers, most of whom had never before seen a White woman. In her journal, Low commented on their behavior: "I think the Chinese are much more civil than either American or English people would have been if a Chinawoman with little feet had appeared in our streets, dressed in the costume of her country. Why, she would be mobbed and hooted at immediately!"<sup>1</sup> Four years later, her prediction was tested when a merchant vessel arrived in New York Harbor conveying just such a passenger. When shipping news columns in the city papers announced her arrival, the curiosity of New Yorkers was piqued. In the days that followed, they would scour the dailies for updates on Afong Moy, the young woman who would come to be known as "the Chinese Lady."

This article tells the story of Afong Moy, focusing on the shrewd marketing scheme that brought her to New York, the American views of China she faced and helped reshape, the intense public interest her exhibition generated, and her extensive tour of the United States.<sup>2</sup> Moy visited some of America's largest cities after departing New York, drawing crowds everywhere she went. In Washington, she even provided President Andrew Jackson with a private performance in the White House. Yet "performance" may not be the appropriate term, for performing was conspicuously absent in the exhibition of Afong Moy. Indeed, the following list of Boston-

area amusements hints at the difference between Moy and some of the other popular attractions of Jacksonian America:

Mr. Maelzell burns Moscow in an improved style.—The eastern Magician, Bahad Marchael, astonished crowds by raising and laying ghosts, and shows himself to be the most expert professor of legerdemain and necromancy that has ever visited the city.—The Chinese lady, Afong Moy, has arrived there from the south—and last, as well as *least*, there is an exhibition of trained fleas.<sup>3</sup>

Unlike most acts from this period, Afong Moy did not juggle, work with trained animals, or profess to communicate with the dead—yet American audiences did not seem to mind. For they required only that the Chinese Lady be exactly that: authentically Chinese and a woman of affluence, elegance, and refinement.

Indeed, Afong Moy's nationality, gender, and class were absolutely crucial to her popularity, because without each of these, she would not have possessed the remarkable physical feature that set off a firestorm of interest everywhere she went: her diminutive feet. Like many Chinese women, Moy had undergone the painful process of foot binding as a child. During her exhibitions, men in the audience tended to fixate on her small feet, deeming them inexhaustible sources of anatomical fascination, moral disgust, or erotic pleasure. While women also studied Moy's feet, they were equally drawn to her surroundings—a luxurious setting composed of Chinese home furnishings and decorative objects. In other words, the Chinese Lady appealed to men and women alike, but their consumption of her performance tended to be actuated by different desires and concerns. While the male gaze was motivated by impulses we could classify as moral, physiological, and sexual, the female gaze was often driven by commercial and aesthetic concerns.

We can best understand the highly gendered response to the Chinese Lady by situating her exhibition in its larger economic, cultural, and historical contexts. As Americans flocked to see the exotic Asian beauty with the tiny feet, their behavior in her presence and subsequent written accounts were, to a large degree, shaped by sweeping changes transforming American life: the market revolution and rapidly industrializing economy, the rising tide of religious revivalism and reform movements, and the advent of new gender

roles in a reconfigured home. One reporter from Baltimore was keenly aware of the peculiar American behavior Moy was witnessing daily; he reported in jest that she was considering publishing her observations on the “domestic manners of the Americans”! His joke underscored an important irony: the exhibition of the Chinese Lady, while offering some insight into Chinese civilization, shed plenty of light on American society in the age of Jackson.<sup>4</sup>

### THE RAREST OF SIGHTS

Though Afong Moy was not the first Chinese person to touch American soil, she was probably the first Chinese woman.<sup>5</sup> This fact is not surprising, given the closed nature of China before the Opium War (1839–42). Back in 1760, Emperor Qianlong, desiring to control the empire’s foreign intercourse, had adopted a highly restrictive policy regarding the movement of Westerners in China. The latter were confined to the southern port of Canton and banned from traveling to other parts of the country.<sup>6</sup> If China was largely unknown to the West, affluent Chinese women were utterly enveloped in mystery. Since wealthy Chinese men sequestered their wives and daughters from the public, these women seldom ventured onto the streets, leading an existence that was almost exclusively domestic. The ancient practice of foot binding, which became widespread in the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), further intensified their seclusion by inhibiting their mobility.<sup>7</sup>

In Canton, women with small feet were so hidden from view that Americans residing there treated their attempts to see one like a game. “A Chinese lady I have never seen,” wrote John Latimer, a trader, in the 1820s. “They never walk, indeed I believe they cannot owing to the barbarous custom of confining the feet while young.” He added that a Chinese friend had promised him a pair of shoes, 3½ inches long, once worn by that individual’s wife. Brantz Mayer, a travel writer who visited Canton in 1827, described the “well-born lady” in China as “a hot-house plant, grown under glass and watched as carefully as the choicest bud”; her “paleness” was a symptom of her “concealment” and “seclusion.” At the time of writing, Mayer had successfully secured a pair of the sought-after tiny shoes. According to Osmond Tiffany, another travel writer, foreigners’ intense fascination with foot binding eventually reached the awareness of Cantonese shopkeepers, who, eager to profit from this curiosity, began to sell clay models of “contracted feet, painted flesh color and set into shoes.”<sup>8</sup>

By the time of Afong Moy’s arrival in 1834, this image of the Chinese woman as a delicate flower, hidden from society, had already filtered into Americans’ collective consciousness. In 1831, James Kirke Paulding (1778–1860), a member of Washington Irving’s literary circle, composed a story for the *New-York Mirror* entitled “Jonathan’s Visit to the Celestial Empire.” Since Paulding had never visited China, he almost

certainly gathered the raw materials for his fictional travelogue from the published accounts of missionaries and merchants. In the story, Jonathan discovers wild ginseng growing in his native Salem and decides to sell it to the Chinese. After voyaging to Canton, he enjoys several adventures, one of which involves his accidental intrusion into the inner sanctum of a Chinese home. Once inside, he becomes privy to the rarest of sights—a genuine Chinese lady.

He approached her still nearer, took up the guitar, and begged her to play him a tune. . . . Jonathan was . . . as handsome a lad as might be seen; tall and straight, with blue eyes, white forehead, and red cheeks, a little rusted to be sure with the voyage. The pretty creature with the little feet, whose name was Shang-tshee, ventured at last to look at this impudent intruder, and, sooth to say, he did not appear so terrible at the second glance as at the first. She smiled, and put out her small foot for Jonathan to admire. She then took her guitar and played him a tune.

Jonathan’s chance meeting with a Chinese lady provides both parties with an erotic encounter. Though nothing becomes of their flirtation (when he gets too close, she scratches his face with her long, sharp fingernails), Paulding’s story nevertheless foreshadows Afong Moy’s relationship with many of the men in her audience: she would sing to them and show off her small feet as they gazed upon her with thinly veiled sexual curiosity.<sup>9</sup>

With Chinese women being so tantalizingly difficult to see, it is not surprising that Westerners treated them almost like mythic creatures. They yearned to witness one in the flesh. After all, to look upon one, as Jonathan does in the story, was to have access to a sight that was doubly forbidden: a woman secluded from society inside a country sealed off from the world. Clearly, an individual who could smuggle a woman with small feet out of China and exhibit her in America stood to benefit financially. Yet the Chinese Lady, unlike many of the so-called human curiosities displayed in the United States, was not the creation of a showman like P. T. Barnum. Rather, her story is interwoven within the larger economic tapestry of Jacksonian America.

### A NOVEL PLOY FOR A NEW ECONOMY

When Captain B. T. Obear of Beverly, Massachusetts,<sup>10</sup> sailed the ship *Howard* from Canton to New York in 1832, Nathaniel and Frederick Carne, the vessel’s owners, placed the cargo of Chinese goods up for auction. Though this event perhaps seems rather ordinary in the mercantile world, it actually signaled a new development in the China trade. Prior to the *Howard*’s venture, the Carnes had specialized in importing luxury goods from France intended for New York’s upper-class consumers. However, a change in the economic climate prompted the Carnes to place a stake in the China trade. Before the Jacksonian era, the market for Chinese goods had possessed only two tiers: luxury goods, including high-grade porcelain and fine teas, for wealthy Americans and low-grade

ceramic wares and cheaper teas for everyone else. However, when the market revolution of the 1830s effected an expansion in the middle class, more Americans than ever before possessed some disposable income.<sup>11</sup>

To profit from the new customers, the Carne brothers proposed adding a third tier to the China trade: fancy but affordable items for the emerging middle class. Affordability was crucial because these customers had been known to practice frugality in the past. Seeking cheaper goods, the Carnes turned from France to China as their locus of production. In the early 1830s, the Carnes sent samples of French goods to Canton, where Chinese craftsmen attempted replicas. Satisfied with the results, the brothers hired the Chinese to manufacture the same items in bulk. While transacting business with China, the Carnes also became enamored with articles of genuine Chinese finery. Convinced of the commercial potential of the latter, the brothers had both kinds of goods—imitation French and authentic Chinese—shipped to New York on the *Howard*.<sup>12</sup>

Because the auction catalogue for the *Howard*'s cargo survives, we can examine a list of the exact items the Carnes imported. Missing are many of the standard items that had come to characterize the China trade. One sees neither the exquisite luxury items coveted by the wealthy—such as fine porcelain, silver, and jade—nor the inexpensive ceramics used by lower-income American families. Instead, the catalogue presents an assortment of affordable goods that one would classify as fancy non-necessities: pongee handkerchiefs, crape shawls, colored window blinds, fireworks, silk boxes, lacquered backgammon boards, ivory chessmen, snuffboxes, feather dusters, colored paper, walking canes, lacquered furniture, baskets, and multiple varieties of fans.<sup>13</sup> With products such as these, the Carne brothers endeavored to fill the new niche in the market.

Though we cannot state for certain how the cargo of the *Howard* fared in the marketplace, we do know that the arrival in 1834 of the Carnes' similarly laden vessel, the *Thomas Dickinson*, coincided with an economic slump. As a result, the Carne brothers were unable to collect a high return on their investment. In addition to the sorts of commodities brought by the *Howard*, the Carnes were now also importing patterned silks and watercolor paintings by Chinese artists. According to Walter Barrett, a clerk who later wrote a book about New York's merchants, the Chinese silk weavers not only had imitated European varieties "to perfection," but had actually "improved on the patterns." As for the paintings, Barrett reported that they came bound in silk albums, each containing about twelve pictures, and covered a wide array of Chinese subjects. Though the Carnes may have been disappointed with the cargo's overall sales, they were encouraged to learn that when these paintings reached consumers, "they took amazingly."<sup>14</sup>

Undeterred by the market downturn and buoyed by the success of Chinese watercolors, the Carne brothers became determined to avoid a repeat of the *Thomas Dickinson*'s trou-

bles with their third cargo, carried by the *Washington*. Toward this end, they apparently worked with Captain Obear to develop a marketing ploy to draw attention to the new kinds of Chinese goods being introduced. Their strategy involved exhibiting a Chinese woman in New York before a luxurious background of Chinese decorative objects and home furnishings. People would come to see the exotic Chinese woman with small feet, they hoped, and in the process develop a taste for Chinese fancy goods—which, conveniently, would be for sale elsewhere in the city.<sup>15</sup>

Though the plan was clever in theory, execution promised to be difficult given the previously noted closed nature of China and confinement of Chinese woman. Though the exact story is not clear, newspaper accounts and promotional materials explain how Obear succeeded in reaching an agreement with Afong Moy's father, described as "a distinguished citizen" of China "residing in the suburbs of Canton." In addition to receiving "large sums of money," Moy's father extracted from Obear the promise to bring his daughter home on the captain's very next voyage to Canton, planned to be on the *Mary Ballard*. According to this agreement, Afong Moy would be apart from her family and away from China for a span of roughly two years, a good portion of which would be spent at sea.<sup>16</sup>

Though one can understand how pecuniary considerations might convince a father to release his daughter for an extended length of time, it is harder to comprehend the latter's willingness to go. One American reporter who apparently possessed at least rudimentary knowledge of Confucian piety speculated that it was "filial love" or "the pure love she bore her father" that convinced Afong Moy to "violate a fundamental law of the empire" and "consent to be smuggled out . . . on board an American ship" to secure wealth for him in a distant land. This same reporter also cited the "chivalrous" and "dauntless" character of Moy as a factor. Her "natural fire and vivacity, rather than patient submission to her destiny," he wrote, had "buoyed up her spirits, and screwed her courage to the resolution of so bold a voyage." Her bold gamble ought to awaken in Americans "the strongest desire to make her exile as happy as it is possible to render it."<sup>17</sup> How did Americans treat the Chinese Lady?

#### CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF CHINA

Afong Moy's mostly positive experience in America was unique, the product of a set of propitious circumstances that would vanish mere years after her arrival. Students of Chinese American history are quite familiar with the racial antagonism confronted by thousands of Chinese living and working in the United States, and particularly out West, during the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup> Though Afong Moy visited the United States only a handful of years prior to the start of Chinese immigration in the late 1840s, these were pivotal years during which Americans' collective opinion of

China underwent a dramatic—and unfortunate—reversal. In the 1950s, Harold Isaacs, as a part of a larger project examining American perceptions of China and India, attempted to identify and label the major trends of the past. Americans, he discovered, were anything but consistent in their thinking on China; as if following a sine curve, China periodically rises and falls in popular estimation over the course of two centuries. Employing Isaacs's general framework, we can place Afong Moy's 1834 arrival on the top portion of a bell-shaped arc that is about to enter a precipitous decline. The Chinese Lady, in short, caught the end of a generally favorable time period that Isaacs called "the Age of Respect."<sup>19</sup>

Several factors contributed to Americans' early fondness for China. In the eighteenth century, leaders of the American Enlightenment, most notably Benjamin Franklin, had admired Chinese civilization from afar and had appreciated the harmonious social order espoused by Confucius.<sup>20</sup> In addition, China's near seclusion from Western nations produced a void in knowledge, an empty intellectual space, that conferred undue relevance on the outdated accounts of Catholic missionaries. Written back in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, these accounts often portrayed China as a benevolent despotism governed ably by a ruling class of educated elites. For example, in 1556, Gaspar da Cruz, a Dominican friar, augured success for Christian missions in China because "the Chinas exceed all others in populousness, in greatness of the realm, in excellence of polity and government, and in abundance of possessions and wealth."<sup>21</sup>

While Franklin's writings and the accounts of European missionaries reached mainly a small and highly educated audience, two more potent streams of imagery effectively entered and influenced the minds of ordinary Americans during the early decades of the nineteenth century. First, one of the most popular literary works of the era offered magical descriptions of the Chinese empire.<sup>22</sup> For any literate child, *The Arabian Nights* was almost standard reading. According to the preface to an 1848 children's edition, "the Arabian Nights are to our childhood what . . . the writings of Shakespeare are in after life."<sup>23</sup> Though we often associate the stories with the Middle East, several tales are actually set in China, a fact not missed by nineteenth-century readers. They knew that Aladdin was Chinese, as was of course the famous "Princess of China," of whom Afong Moy may have seemed a living incarnation.<sup>24</sup> Many young readers may also have believed that these wonderful tales, far from being pure fancy, imparted legitimate cultural information about Eastern countries. Indeed, the introductions to some of the early editions told them as much. "The *Arabian Nights*," proclaimed the translator of one popular edition, "is more descriptive of the people, customs, and conduct of Eastern countries . . . than any existing work," and travelers to those countries have confirmed "the correctness and authenticity of this work."<sup>25</sup>

Second, the United States imported vast quantities of inexpensive Chinese ceramic bowls, cups, and plates, which

brought blue and white landscape scenes into countless American homes. Thus, as ordinary Americans consumed their daily meals or sipped their afternoon tea, they enjoyed gazing upon a splendid vision of China—one composed of bountiful fruit trees, meandering streams, fishermen on Chinese junks, and picturesque pagodas.<sup>26</sup> One should note here that the traders who conveyed cargoes of Chinese ceramics from Canton to various American ports often harbored ambivalent feelings, if not outright disgust, for the Chinese.<sup>27</sup> Yet because any given trader communicated his views primarily through letters and spoken conversations, his ideas found only a small audience. In contrast, the flood of ceramic objects that he unleashed onto the marketplace reached thousands of Americans and presented them with an enchanting vision of China that they could only adore. Afong Moy—exotic, delicate, and beautiful—seemed to step right out of this "Oriental" wonderland.

Finally, the historical timing of Moy's visit contributed heavily to her positive reception because a critical event, the Opium War (1839–42), had yet to take place. Though Americans did not participate in the war, coverage of the Anglo-Chinese conflict in the American press convinced many Americans to downgrade their opinion of China. Prior to the war, Americans had assumed that the Asian colossus must possess a powerful military, one befitting such an old, proud, and populous nation. Yet in the pages of the daily newspapers, Americans read of a surprisingly ineffectual and outdated Chinese military that failed in repeated attempts to repel the smaller but far more technologically sophisticated British forces.<sup>28</sup>

In the eyes of many, China had been exposed, and the popular conception of China began to deteriorate rapidly as a direct result. The American missionary Samuel Wells Williams observed this disturbing shift in American perceptions. Williams had first embarked for China in 1833, mere months before the arrival of Afong Moy. Upon returning to the United States in 1845 after a twelve-year residence in Canton, he was alarmed by the mockery and ridicule ordinary Americans now expressed in casual conversations when discussing China. China, he wrote, had become "the object of a laugh or the subject of a pun." In particular, Williams was bothered by a derogatory poem that, to his annoyance, people seemed fond of repeating in his presence:

Mandarins with yellow buttons, handing you conserves of snails;  
Smart young men about Canton in Nankeen tights and peacocks' tails.  
With many rare and dreadful dainties, kitten cutlets, puppy pies;  
Birds nest soup which (so convenient!) every bush around supplies.

In Williams's mind, these demeaning verses portraying the Chinese as laughably foppish and grotesque epitomized the new attitude toward China.<sup>29</sup> Clearly, the "Age of Respect," to

use Isaacs's terminology, was over by the 1840s, and the "Age of Contempt" had begun.<sup>30</sup> But in the autumn of 1834, this shift had not yet taken place, and so a young Chinese woman could still inspire the benign curiosity of Americans.

#### A RECEPTION IN NEW YORK

When the *Washington* sailed into New York Harbor on October 17, 1834, New Yorkers reading the shipping news could see that the cargo included some tea and the expected assortment of fancy non-necessities that had become the Carnes' stock-in-trade.<sup>31</sup> But what made this ship's arrival extraordinary was one of the passengers, who received special mention in the *New York Daily Advertiser*: "The ship *Washington*, Capt. Obear, has brought out a beautiful Chinese Lady, called *Juila Foochee ching-chang king*, daughter of *Hong wang-tzang tzee king*. As she will see all who are disposed to pay twenty five cents. She will no doubt have many admirers."<sup>32</sup> A short article in another paper, the *Commercial Advertiser*, printed her name as "Miss Ching-Chang-foo" and provided a detailed description of the practice of foot binding, which caused a Chinese woman "to twaddle about all her life."<sup>33</sup> Though the young woman had yet to appear in public, the press was already beginning to circle her.

After Moy's arrival, her handlers moved quickly to make the necessary preparations. From the time of the *Washington's* arrival, Captain Obear (and presumably the Carnes as well) required only three weeks to secure an exhibition hall at No. 8 Park Place; ornament it with appropriate objects, furnishings, and wall hangings; and have the Chinese Lady ready to entertain visitors. Park Place was known for its resident "bourgeoisie," which meant that Afong Moy was conveniently situated in a neighborhood populated by the exact class of people targeted by the Carnes as future customers.<sup>34</sup>

During this three-week period, odd rumors involving the Chinese Lady appeared in the newspapers. For example, the *New York Journal of Commerce* recounted what transpired when the Chinese Lady witnessed a person sewing with her left hand. Having "never before seen a left-handed person," she gazed for some time "to comprehend the mystery," then "burst into an immediate fit of laughter." Apparently, the Chinese Lady aroused such curiosity that newspaper editors deemed the most trivial incident newsworthy.<sup>35</sup> Other newspapers, however, printed more sensational stories, with one even claiming that the Chinese Lady was missing. According to the *Commercial Advertiser*, guns fired during a political rally frightened her into absconding. Strangely, the very same issue of the paper reported that her handlers had removed her to Boston.<sup>36</sup> However, both of these rumors apparently lacked validity as, at this time, preparations were being made for the first day of her exhibition.

On November 6, when the first of many lengthy advertisements began to appear in city papers, two changes were

apparent. Admission had risen to fifty cents, and the Chinese Lady had dropped her lengthy Chinese moniker, adopting the simpler "Afong Moy." These advertisements also offered the first physical description of the Chinese Lady. She was nineteen years of age, four feet ten inches in height, and "dressed in her national costume," and she possessed feet that were "but four inches in length," the result of her having worn "iron shoes" in childhood. Starting on November 10, the general public was welcome between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., and then again from 5:00 until 9:00 p.m.<sup>37</sup>

When that date arrived, Captain Obear allowed in a crowd of curious ticket holders by opening the front doors, adorned with large gilt Chinese characters.<sup>38</sup> Included in this group was a reporter dispatched by the *Commercial Advertiser*. He described his experience in a rather lengthy article that, when it appeared several days later, stood out in a newspaper that ordinarily dispensed the news in small capsules of text. At ten o'clock, he wrote, Afong Moy emerged from her quarters and discovered that "a number of ladies and gentlemen were already occupying her drawing rooms." The reporter described Moy as a "princess," wearing a costume befitting a lady "of her rank," who "resembles a healthy, bouncing girl of 14."<sup>39</sup>

The reporter then proceeded to offer a detailed account of the activities undertaken by Afong Moy that were intended to show off her most remarkable physical feature—her small feet. At first, she did little more than sit upon a "throne of rich and costly materials," displaying her feet by elevating them on a cushion. As she wore special shoes or slippers, her feet were not directly exposed to the audience. As women in the audience approached her to take a closer look at her feet, Moy would bow her head approvingly and smile. However, when males made similar advances, she was less accommodating. "[W]e saw on her brow," the reporter observed, "a frown of indignant rebuke." The reporter also described the advances of a "professional gentleman" in the audience, presumably a medical doctor, who harbored an intense desire to examine "the anatomical distortions of the foot" uncovered by a shoe or slipper. Regarding the removal of footwear as a violation of her privacy, Moy summarily rejected his request.

Though Afong Moy did not speak English, visitors could communicate with her because she was accompanied by her interpreter—a Chinese man named "Atung."<sup>40</sup> Since audience members wondered about her life in China, the practice of foot binding, her long voyage to America, and her impressions of New York, Atung fielded such questions and translated them into the Cantonese dialect for Afong Moy. Atung also made sure Moy did not remain seated for long; every few minutes, he would say a few words in Chinese, prompting Moy to rise from her chair and hobble with difficulty across the room before returning to her seat.

Though scornful of the custom of foot binding, the reporter was, on the whole, enchanted by the novel spectacle

he witnessed on the Chinese Lady's first day of exhibition. He concluded his article by stating that he did not need to write any more to "induce our citizens to attend." As it was, Afong Moy was already "receiving more calls every day, than any other young lady of our acquaintance," and the reporter doubted that the public's curiosity would be sated during her sojourn in the city. Despite his endorsement, not all New Yorkers flocked to see the Chinese Lady. Some viewed the public display of a woman, regardless of her country of origin, as blatant exploitation. The *New-York Mirror* published an editorial explaining why the magazine had elected not to cover the Chinese Lady in its pages: "We have not been to see Miss Afong Moy, the Chinese lady with the little feet; nor do we intend to perform that universal ceremony, unless we should find the notoriety which the non-performance must occasion inconveniently burdensome. . . . The lovely creatures were made for anything but to be stared at, for half a dollar a head." That this editor bothered to print his justification for *not attending* is indicative of the tremendous public interest her exhibition sparked in New York.<sup>41</sup>

#### TO WASHINGTON AND BEYOND

While Afong Moy's display in Manhattan was ongoing, newspapers across the nation frequently reprinted articles from New York's papers or summarized their contents.<sup>42</sup> Yet if most Americans' initial encounter with Moy was through the print medium, her subsequent national tour solidified her fame. After departing New York, Moy embarked on an odyssey that took her to some of the country's largest cities: New Haven, Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore, Richmond, Norfolk, Charleston, New Orleans, and Boston.<sup>43</sup> In fact, Moy became so visible on the American landscape, both in person and in print, that when Samuel Goodrich, the popular author of juvenile literature, wrote about China in his children's periodical, he could assume with confidence that his young readers knew of her. Writing under the pseudonym "Peter Parley," Goodrich wrote, "You have heard of Miss Afong Moy, the Chinese lady who has lately been showing herself and her small stunted feet, in some of our cities. Perhaps you have seen her. We have told you . . . that a great many of the females in China have these small feet. . . . Miss Afong Moy would charge you twenty-five or fifty cents, I suppose, for a view of hers."<sup>44</sup> After only several months in the United States, Afong Moy had become a household name.

Though her performance varied little from one venue to the next, Moy eventually added Chinese songs to the program and started to use the English she was studying. As for Atung, he began writing the names of guests in Chinese characters; for a modest fee, one could depart Moy's saloon with this paper souvenir.<sup>45</sup> At the nation's capital, Moy met with members of Congress and even paid a visit to President

Andrew Jackson in the White House.<sup>46</sup> According to the *Washington Globe*, Moy harbored extremely high expectations for her interview with the American head of state. Though he did not sit on a regal throne and lacked "outward grandeur," she nevertheless enjoyed his "kind and courteous manner." Jackson was "a very good man," she stated through her translator, "but not so fine an Emperor as they have in China." As for Jackson, he "expressed himself much pleased with the interview."<sup>47</sup>

Since the above account is all that survives from Moy's encounter with the president, we do not know what concerns motivated Andrew Jackson to request a meeting with her in the White House. He may simply have regarded the Chinese Lady with bound feet as an intriguing diversion from more pressing matters of state. That said, the growing importance of the China trade within the larger American economy perhaps played some role. In the first half of the century, nearly all Americans drank tea, and all tea came from China. While American consumption habits meant that tea would always be in demand, Afong Moy's arrival coincided with a major surge in tea imports: between 1830 and 1834, the amount of tea entering the United States more than tripled, going from just over five million pounds annually to over sixteen million pounds.<sup>48</sup>

For the Yankee traders who carried tea cargoes from Canton, Americans' love for the beverage could translate into stunning profits. However, it also presented a practical dilemma: what could be exchanged for tea at the port of Canton? To answer this question, resourceful Yankee traders hunted for things that the Chinese would find attractive. They found some success with sandalwood from Hawaii, bêche-de-mer (sea slugs), edible birds' nests, and furs from the Pacific Northwest. Additionally, some entrepreneurial traders tried to sell American ginseng in China, a fact that did not escape the notice of James Kirke Paulding, who worked it into the aforementioned short story. Unfortunately, these sorts of products were not nearly enough to offset the enormous sums spent purchasing tea and, to a lesser extent, ceramic tablewares and silks. In the 1833–34 fiscal year, the trade imbalance reached a record high: the United States imported nearly \$8 million in Chinese goods but exported to China goods worth just over \$1 million. Yankee traders covered the alarming gap of nearly \$7 million by sending boatloads of silver specie to Canton. Thus, when Afong Moy arrived in the United States, silver was steadily flowing out of the American economy and into the Chinese, at least temporarily.<sup>49</sup>

As if the hemorrhaging of silver were not bad enough, the economic situation seemed even more distressing when American officials considered that the ultimate home for the country's precious metal was England, not China. Like Americans, the English enjoyed their Chinese tea; however, English merchants, unlike their American counterparts, did not need to scour the earth for commodities the Chinese might like to buy. England, after all, enjoyed a monopoly on all

opium grown in India, and so English traders could always use opium as their medium of exchange. While American traders also trafficked in opium (purchased in Smyrna, Turkey), estimates indicate that the drug constituted only a tiny fraction of America's total imports to Canton. Yet for English traders, opium dominated the ledger. In fact, since China's appetite for opium exceeded England's demand for tea, the Chinese ended up transferring silver obtained in the American trade to English merchants to cover the difference. In sum, Americans purchased vast quantities of Chinese tea mostly with silver specie, some of which eventually found its way to America's foremost rival in global trade.<sup>50</sup>

Clearly, the China trade played a role in determining America's overall economic health. Though we do not think of Andrew Jackson as a president who devoted much attention to Asia, he is on record as supporting the little-known diplomatic efforts of Captain Edmund Roberts of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in the early 1830s. Under the auspices of the U.S. government, Roberts sailed to Cochin China (Vietnam), Siam (Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and the Malay Peninsula), and Japan to create opportunities for trade and formalize relations. President Jackson even provided Roberts with letters and gifts to be presented to Asian monarchs. After returning in the spring of 1834, Roberts tried to convince Jackson and Congress to back another mission to Asia, one that would include a visit to northern China. Roberts, it seems, quite boldly sought to open up new Chinese markets for American merchants. Jackson eventually supported the new trade mission, and Roberts set sail for Asia a second time. Unfortunately, he contracted malaria along the way and died in Macau in 1836 before achieving his objectives.<sup>51</sup>

Returning to the Chinese Lady's visit to the White House, we can safely assume that Jackson did not hold out any serious hope that Afong Moy could do anything to enhance America's trading prospects in Canton. After all, she was a traveling performer, not an official envoy. However, Jackson's support of Edmund Roberts's far-flung diplomatic efforts suggests that the president had not dismissed Asia as distant and irrelevant. That the China trade was on his mind perhaps sheds some light on the interest he took in the Chinese Lady.

#### UNBOUND POCKETBOOKS

Though Captain Obear and the Carne brothers certainly profited in the short term from revenue generated by ticket sales, the more lasting gains were to be made in the long term through the sale of Chinese fancy goods. As has been explained, the Carnes believed that Afong Moy's exhibition would stimulate consumer desire in the early stage of their commercial experiment; she could help create a vogue for the sorts of Chinese imports that the Carnes were beginning to introduce to the marketplace. Toward this end, Moy appeared before audiences not in a spare or sterile environ-

ment but rather as ensconced in a rich and lavish Chinese setting.

More than merely providing Moy with an exotic "Oriental" backdrop, these Chinese handicrafts and decorative objects formed an integral part of the presentation. Advertisements for the Chinese Lady stated as much: "At the same place are also to be seen various objects of Chinese curiosity, in themselves well worthy of the attention of the curious."<sup>52</sup> One New York reporter described his initial encounter with the novel decorative scheme: "We were received with great civility by Capt. Obear, under whose protection she is, and who ushered us immediately into the apartments which he has so beautifully furnished *a la Chinoise* for her accommodation." The reporter commented at length on the "rich dazzling colors" and "elaborate workmanship of Chinese furniture and ornament," and enumerated the many attractive objects on display: hanging lamps, illustrated screens, paintings, porcelain vases, cushioned chairs, mirrors, ornamental boxes, and models of pagodas and junks.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, the *Commercial Advertiser* called Moy's temporary home a "fashionable mansion" that was "furnished in a style becoming a princess of the 'celestial empire.'" It was the epitome of "oriental magnificence."<sup>54</sup>

However, along with enjoying Chinese decorative objects, guests were encouraged to purchase them and transport them into their own homes. After all, the Carnes were concurrently putting similar Chinese goods up for sale. And in New Orleans, the broadside specifically stated that one could purchase on the premises the same sorts of Chinese paintings that were on display alongside Moy (fig. 1). In this way, American women encountered not only a Chinese woman of affluence but also a Chinese ornamental style and art aesthetic that would have been excitingly exotic and novel to them. Those who were willing to open their pocketbooks could bring the elegant world of Afong Moy into their own homes.

The timing of the Carnes' commercial experiment was advantageous, to say the least. The Jacksonian era marked the first period in American history in which middle-class women, especially those residing in large cities like New York, would collectively turn their attention to the tasteful decoration of the home. This new focus on interior decorating took place for reasons that were both economic and cultural. First of all, the advent of superior utensils—kitchen tools and cleaning implements—freed up a housewife's time by rendering chores less onerous. Second, factories were now mass-producing some of the staples of everyday life, such as soap and cloth, which families previously had made by hand. Third, the period witnessed a dramatic rise in the employment of domestic servants, who, by providing help around the home, allowed wives and mothers to engage in other pursuits. Taking these developments into consideration, cultural historian Glenna Matthews has concluded that "nineteenth-century American women had more time for tasks that were ornamental or ceremonial."<sup>55</sup>

**FOR ONE WEEK ONLY,**  
(Owing to other engagements.)

**Unprecedented Attraction,**  
In the large HALL of the  
**NORTH AMERICAN HOTEL,**  
Corner of Bienville and Levee streets,  
Commencing Monday, March 28, and to close,  
positively, on Saturday, April 2d.

Exhibition to commence each evening at 8 o'clock  
Tickets ONE DOLLAR, children half price.

**THE CHINESE LADY,**  
**AFONG MOY,**

Lately exhibited in Mobile, Providence, Boston, Salem, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Richmond, Norfolk, Charleston, New York and New Haven, will have the honor of appearing before the Company in a splendid

**CHINESE** fitted up with **SALGON,**  
rich Canton  
Satin Damask Chinese  
Paintings, and Cu-  
riosities.

AFONG MOY is a native of Canton city, about sixteen years of age, mild and engaging in her manners; addresses the visitors in English and Chinese, and occasionally WALKS BEFORE THE COMPANY, so as to afford an opportunity of observing her

**ASTONISHING LITTLE FEET!**  
For which the Chinese Ladies are so remarkable. Afong's feet is FOUR INCHES and an eighth in length, being about the size of an infant's of one year old. She will be richly dressed in

**The**  
**CHINESE**  
**Costume.**

And in order to give the audience an idea of the Language and Cadence of her country, she will sing  
**A CHINESE SONG.**

AFONG MOY is at present under the care of the Lady of the conductor of the exhibition, and is making rapid progress in acquiring the English language. Various Chinese curiosities will be shown and explained to the Company, and every pains taken to satisfy the curious, as to the manners and customs of these singular people

She was brought to this country by Captain Ober, of the ship Washington, under a heavy guarantee to return her to her parents in two years and is now on her way to New York for that purpose, to embark for Canton in the *Mary Ballard* just arrived from China. The conductor of the exhibition, consequently, can remain but a very short time in each city going up the river, by the way of Pittsburg, and confidently hopes, the same liberal patronage shown in other cities, will not be withheld in this, after travelling so many thousand miles to solicit the favor.

37—A small quantity of beautiful Chinese Paintings, on rice paper, for sale.

Fig. 1. "The Chinese Lady, Afong Moy." Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

Along with the luxury of additional time, many American women also had compelling social incentives to engage in decorative work. Members of the rising middle class saw the importance of presenting a prosperous face to the world. Indeed, what better way was there to show off one's improving class status than to engage in what Jean Gordon and Jan McArthur have called "consumption that is self-consciously upwardly mobile"? According to Gilda Lerner, middle-class women also viewed consumption as a way to separate themselves from working women. Since America's industrialization took place during a labor shortage, factories depended on the labor of women and children. Leisure activities like home decorating provided a middle-class woman with the means to send an unmistakable signal to society that she was a "lady."<sup>56</sup>

The Chinese decorative objects also proved attractive to creative and curious women who felt that their mobility and free expression were stifled in the home. When Alexis de Tocqueville, the French aristocrat, toured the United States in the 1830s, he observed a well-defined separation of men and women. "In no country has such constant care been taken as in America to trace two clearly distinct lines of action for the two sexes," he wrote. "I do not hesitate to avow that although the women of the United States are confined within the narrow circle of domestic life, and their situation is in some respects one of extreme dependence, I have nowhere seen women occupying a loftier position."<sup>57</sup> In 1832, Frances Trollope, touring America from England, described the woman's sphere in more extreme terms. Were it not for church services, she wrote, "all the ladies . . . would be in danger of becoming perfect recluses."<sup>58</sup>

Though multiple factors contributed to the placement of American women within the "circle of domestic life," the changing economy certainly played a major part. As American families began to turn away from agriculture and toward industrial and commercial pursuits, the middle-class home, once the center of production, assumed a new function in society. Its emphasis necessarily shifted away from the production of goods (such as vegetables, wheat, eggs, and soap) and toward the production of *good people*: men who could resist sin and temptation while seizing opportunity in the commercial and political spheres, boys who could compete in the growing industrial economy while demonstrating proper Christian virtues, and daughters who were well trained for their future roles as wives and mothers. The home, in short, was to become an incubator of individualism, Christian morality, and a proper work ethic.<sup>59</sup>

The burden of creating this wholesome domestic environment fell on the shoulders of women. By the 1830s, religious literature, magazines, and sentimental novels had begun instilling in middle-class women a belief that their proper sphere was the home. Instead of participating in the "masculine" spheres of commerce and politics, women

would transform their homes into wholesome sanctuaries, insulated from the sins and temptations of the outside world. In this “haven of stability,” they could raise their children and perform their wifely duties in a safe and moral environment. Barbara Welter famously referred to the middle-class American woman’s new mission as the “cult of true womanhood,” and she cited “piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity” as the “four cardinal virtues” that society expected women to embody.<sup>60</sup>

While Welter convincingly laid out a system of domesticity that, she claimed, defined many homes before the Civil War, other scholars have subsequently challenged some of her core assertions.<sup>61</sup> Though Welter’s paradigm no longer remains entirely intact, the general consensus remains that middle-class women experienced an increased and intensified presence in the home. For those women who accepted their new role, but did not feel entirely comfortable with its restrictions, what better way was there to make the domestic space more palatable than infusing it with an international design motif? Thinking in this way, *Godey’s Lady’s Book* taught women how to decorate plain household objects “in the Chinese style” three years before the arrival of Afong Moy.<sup>62</sup> In other words, if societal mores prevented a mother or housewife from engaging the outside world to her satisfaction, the opportunity to adorn one’s home using Chinese objects meant that she could bring an exciting portion of that world into her home, alleviating, at least somewhat, the doldrums of domesticity.<sup>63</sup>

#### BOUND FEET AND CONSTRICTED WAISTS

While Americans flocked to see the Chinese Lady for many reasons, tremendous interest swirled around her diminutive feet. Though we can assume foot binding intrigued female as well as male observers, descriptions of and reactions to Afong Moy’s feet flowed exclusively from the pens of male writers. This fact is especially unfortunate when we consider that the female reaction had the potential to offer more nuance than the male response. For when American men gazed upon Afong Moy and her small feet, they primarily saw difference. Seated before them was a young woman from a distant land who adhered to customs they deemed strange; because her life bore no relevance to their own, she presented them with little more than an exotic curiosity, an intriguing distraction from the mundane. American women, on the other hand, might have been more apt to discern subtle similarities between Afong Moy’s experiences and their own. After all, their lives, like those of upper-class Chinese women, increasingly revolved around the home and often included an artificial measure intended to alter the body’s natural form—the tight-fitting corset.

Concerning the former, female audience members were more likely than men to understand the role foot binding played in the domestic confinement of Chinese women. According to cultural historian Dorothy Ko, the custom of foot binding was “born of male fantasy” in that it satisfied a prevalent sexual fetish for small feet. However, it evolved over time to perform a crucial function within the larger framework of “the Confucian cult of domesticity.” Chinese culture during the Qing dynasty, she writes, “placed the highest moral value on domesticity, motherhood and handwork,” and the “binding of feet created a woman who fit these ideals.” In similar fashion, Wang Ping describes foot binding as a “secret . . . knowledge transmitted from mother to daughter” that “teaches the daughter about the mapping and discipline of the female body in a patriarchal environment, and that prepares her for her sexuality, marriage, reproduction, motherhood.”<sup>64</sup> Thus, in the 1830s, American and Chinese cultures employed parallel systems of domesticity. Though the Chinese version was underpinned by Confucian principles and its American counterpart by economic forces and Protestant ideals, the two resembled one another in the most basic sense: both worked to intensify the woman’s experience in the home.

The women in Moy’s audience might also have recognized the strong similarity between foot binding and corsetry. Like the binding of feet, the corset allowed a woman to reconfigure her body’s natural dimensions, bringing them into closer alignment with society’s ideal of feminine beauty, which prized the narrow waist. Corsetry also reinforced existing power relationships between men and women by serving as an outer manifestation of the wife’s submissiveness or, in Helene Roberts’s words, her “willingness to conform.” Class also factored into the corset’s appeal in that the fashionable device, like its Chinese counterpart, provided a woman with the means to display a visible sign of her family’s social standing. The corset, according to Leigh Summers, “crafted the flesh into class-appropriate contours.”<sup>65</sup>

Given such similarities, it is not surprising that the two body-distorting practices were frequently linked in the public discourse. In 1833, the author of *China in Miniature*, after describing the deleterious effects of foot binding, indicated that corsets were substantially worse: “The Chinese only cripple their women, but the corset-users destroy the lives of theirs.” In similar fashion, a newspaper correspondent asked the following question after viewing Chinese shoes in a cabinet of curiosities: “Which of the two evinces the greatest degree of civilization and refinement, the Chinese lady, who lightly compresses her foot, or the American *Belle*, who as closely compresses her waist! Let the untimely death of many an American youth answer this inquiry.” Finally, Catherine Beecher railed against the injurious practice of tight corseting in her massively influential guide to household management, *Treatise on Domestic Economy*. “The folly of the Chinese belle,”

she wrote, “who totters on two useless deformities, is nothing, compared to that of the American belle, who impedes all the internal organs in the discharge of their functions, that she may have a slender waist.”<sup>66</sup>

Though we cannot state for certain how American women reacted to Moy's feet, we can, for a couple of reasons, assume that ample amounts of disapproval lay embedded within the female silences. First, women were often the most energetic members of the reform societies that prospered in this period; when confronted with Moy's feet, these crusaders could be expected to condemn the cultural practice that produced her disfigurement.<sup>67</sup> We also know that nineteenth-century female missionaries were appalled by the treatment of women in China. In fact, the very first American woman to proselytize in China, Henrietta Shuck, referred to Chinese women as “the degraded female sex.” Shuck, whose term in China (1835–44) coincided with Moy's stay in the United States, deplored foot binding most of all. Those who followed Shuck in China shared her strong views. Helen Barrett Montgomery, church leader and advocate for women's rights, excoriated foot binding in *Western Women in Eastern Lands*, her study of female American missionaries in Asia. “The binding of the feet,” Montgomery concluded after reading numerous missionary accounts, “is but an outward and visible sign of the crippled lives and energies of one-half of the Chinese people.”<sup>68</sup>

#### THE MALE GAZE

With their own lives and bodies shaped, respectively, by domesticity and corsetry, American women could perhaps identify with Afong Moy. Not so American men, who clearly viewed Moy through an ethnographic lens: her performance provided them with a rare look at the racial and cultural “other.” And more than any other custom, foot binding seized their attention and compelled them to comment. At the risk of overgeneralizing, male responses to Afong Moy's feet tended to fall into three categories: moral censure, erotic attraction, and scientific interest.

While male observers did not witness Afong Moy's feet and immediately draw a parallel with corsets, they were not callously unmindful of the injustice done to Moy and countless other Chinese women. Many men did object—often vociferously—to the Chinese custom. The sight of Moy hobbling across the stage inspired one newspaper reporter to pen a diatribe against the “cruel process to which she has been subjected.” Chinese women lived in “vassalage to the lords of the other sex,” he wrote, who “tortured and deformed” their bodies and simultaneously kept their minds “in a state of ignorance.” The observer expressed his sincerest hopes that missionaries bringing the gospel into China could effect the emancipation of the country's female population.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, another author claimed that there were “few persons in America” possessing an awareness of Chinese foot binding

“who have not exclaimed against the folly and the cruelty of parents in thus disfiguring their own offspring. . . . Such an impression . . . must have been strongly felt by all who examined the feet of *Afong Moy*.”<sup>70</sup>

The didactic authors of children's literature dwelled on Moy's feet because these provided a useful negative or cautionary example necessary to communicate proper values to the next generation. The *Youth's Companion*, a periodical published in Boston, presented young readers with a fictional dialogue between a father and a daughter on the subject of China. The latter expresses her desire to visit China, but adds, “I shouldn't like to have my feet so small that I couldn't walk about. How do they make them so small?” In answering, the father explains the process through which the feet of a newborn girl are confined with tight bandages. The unfortunate infant “must suffer all this torture till its feet have ceased to grow.” After the daughter responds with the hoped-for exclamation (“Oh how cruel!”), the father invokes Afong Moy: “I see by the papers that Miss ‘Afong Moy,’ the Chinese Lady who has been traveling about to show her little feet, is now in the city, and I intend to take you . . . to see how deformed she looks.”<sup>71</sup>

Similarly, Samuel Goodrich, the influential children's author, used Moy to warn his young readers about the dangers of confining any part of the human body or mind: “[I]f you wish to have your body, or limbs . . . or brain, become large and strong, you must not bandage or confine them, but use them.”<sup>72</sup> Even Andrew Jackson voiced his objection. In the White House, the president echoed Goodrich's point regarding stunting natural human development. Before Moy departed, he “wished her . . . the power to persuade her countrywomen to abandon the custom of cramping their feet, so totally in opposition to Nature's wiser regulations.” Afong Moy, he hoped, would learn something from her American sojourn, and return to China ready to speak out against the oppressive custom.<sup>73</sup>

We can comprehend much of the male protest by linking it to the spirit of reform pervading much of the nation in the 1830s. The byproducts of the religious resurgence known as the Second Great Awakening, reform movements attracted thousands of followers, most of whom held the powerfully optimistic belief that the collective efforts of the virtuous could eradicate sin from the earth. Though these movements attacked a wide variety of social problems, the largest followings coalesced around the causes of temperance, abolitionism, public education, and prison reform.<sup>74</sup> In short, this was a period in which many Americans, sharing the conviction that the ills of the world could be cured, surveyed society for instances of injustice. It is not hard to imagine such people denouncing foot binding after witnessing Afong Moy's strained efforts to walk.

Indignant outrage stands as easily the most common male response to Moy's feet. However, a few men expressed their attraction to Moy and her pedal abnormality, though they

may have been troubled by their fixation on the latter. The comments of one observer emanated out of the divided mind of one who was simultaneously attracted to and repulsed by what he witnessed. She is “a very pleasing girl in appearance,” he wrote. “[H]er person is small, but well-proportioned . . . with skin slightly tinged with copper, but sufficiently transparent to exhibit that ‘roses are blooming beneath it.’” After describing Moy’s shapely female form and pleasing complexion, he then turned to her “*little feet*.” They “are by far the most novel and interesting feature of her appearance,” he observed, “although we confess there is something painful in the reminiscence of the torture she must have endured in infancy.” This author’s mind was conflicted: though his conscience required that he disapprove of the injurious custom, he could not suppress his attraction to the beautiful Moy and her small feet.<sup>75</sup>

Other visitors who appreciated Moy’s physical beauty did not even bother with a perfunctory condemnation of foot binding. One writer wrote that, “though very small and delicate in figure, she possesses all the charms of person and complexion that belong to the damsels of her brunette race.” Eschewing the moral problem of foot binding, he saw only beauty in the anatomical peculiarity: “her feet are of exquisite beauty and diminutiveness, not exceeding *three inches* in length.” Given both her physical attributes and her “gay and sprightly disposition,” the Chinese Lady, he wrote with relish, had been aptly called “*a perfect little vixen*.”<sup>76</sup> Similarly, another observer described “her ladyship” as a “lioness,” one “imported expressly . . . for exhibition.” The “feet of the Chinese fair,” he continued, “are points of beauty.” He proceeded to explain, as best he could, the process through which the “the toes of the foot . . . are forced underneath the sole,” leaving the foot “so compressed and bound as to prevent its growth.” “If the sweet creature is *very beautiful*,” he added, implying that Moy was exactly that, “she is left to twaddle about all her life.”<sup>77</sup>

Another writer was positively smitten by Moy’s elegant attire, appealing appearance, commanding presence, diminutive feet, and seductive charm:

At length her ladyship . . . presented herself in the rich costume of a Chinese lady—an outward mantle of blue silk, sumptuously embroidered, and yellow silk pantalets from beneath the ample folds of which peeped her tiny little feet, not over *four inches* in length. . . . Her head has a profusion of jet black hair, combed upward from her fine forehead and brunette temples, and filled on the top with bouquets of artificial flowers and large gold pins, which dress we suppose will be henceforward quite the *ton*. . . . Her features are pleasing, her forehead high and protuberant, and her face round and full with languishing black eyes placed with the peculiar obliquity of the outer angle, which characterizes the *Mongolian* variety of the human race. . . . She then walked without seeming difficulty to her cushioned chair . . . and there sat in . . . quiet repose for us to gaze at.<sup>78</sup>

One would be hard pressed to find a mainstream newspaper in the 1830s offering this much graphic description of a

young female form. Quite astoundingly, the author actually disassembles the Chinese Lady in language and then catalogues her body parts in a fashion that recalls Petrarchan love sonnets. Of course, he could justify his suspiciously thorough physical description by pointing out that the extreme rarity of a Chinese person in America—and a lady, no less—demanded that extreme attention be paid to detail. Despite his scientific-seeming insight that the “peculiar obliquity” of her eyes “characterizes the *Mongolian* variety of the human race,” his interest in the Chinese Lady was almost certainly erotic in nature. Yet by camouflaging his mildly pornographic description in the garb of ethnographic observation, he could elude moral censorship.

From the same author’s account, we receive a portrait of Afong Moy as confident and composed, presiding over a room packed with nervous and excited spectators. Her “quiet demeanor and imperturbable composure,” he wrote, “overpowered” all in attendance. And while Moy expended only minimal amounts of energy in performing, the men in the audience exerted themselves strenuously in their efforts to please her. “Miss Moy stood motionless . . . smiling graciously,” he wrote, “while we, with our multiple bows, and attitudes and gesticulations, seemed quite ludicrous in an attempt to be excessively polite.” Many male spectators, not unlike the protagonist of James Kirke Paulding’s story, tried hard to please the Chinese Lady.

This portrayal of Moy as being firmly in command of the exhibition space raises the question of performer control: how much influence did Afong Moy possess over her own presentation? Evidence suggests that her input mattered and that she was not at the mercy of her handlers. Recall that, in New York, a “professional gentleman” who made known his desire to view her feet uncovered was summarily rebuffed, an incident that underscores Moy’s ability to reject audience requests. In other cities, however, Moy relented when pressured to show her feet in the flesh. In Philadelphia, a group of physicians expressed interest in seeing the effects of foot binding on the human anatomy. Not completely satisfied by the model of a small foot presented by Obear, the physicians approached the latter asking that Moy’s feet be uncovered in the interest of science. Surprisingly, their request was granted, as a newspaper explained: “The foot of the Chinese Lady was this morning examined, divested of its covering, by several eminent physicians of this city, in company with some of their friends, by invitation of the conductors of the exhibition.” A transcription of the official medical document, signed by eight doctors and providing precise pedal measurements, appeared in the newspaper.<sup>79</sup>

One journalist watching events in Philadelphia unfold viewed the physicians’ obsession with Moy’s feet as absurd and therefore as ripe for a spoof. He penned an article for *Atkinson’s Evening Post* devoted entirely to Afong Moy’s feet. “Our readers may perhaps be disposed to regard a lady’s foot as a very extraordinary subject for a paragraph,” he wrote,

“but we can assure them that . . . many paragraphs have already been written on Miss Afong Moy’s pretty *understanding*.” After dispensing with the obligatory pun, he proceeded to mock, in playful fashion, the physicians’ intense interest in her feet. “The public owe much to these ‘medical gentlemen,’” he stated facetiously, “for the pains they have taken to settle disputes in relation to Miss Afong’s foot, for until their certificate appeared many persons believed that the diminutive mem[ber] was full one-eighth of an inch longer.” He concluded by disingenuously recommending that the doctors both publish their finding in the transactions of the American Philosophical Society and preserve a copy for posterity by safely immuring it inside the cornerstone of the next building to go up.<sup>80</sup>

Moy’s closed-door meeting with Philadelphia’s physicians was reported in the *Southern Patriot*, a prominent newspaper in Charleston, South Carolina. Not surprisingly, when Moy arrived in Charleston three months later, she was asked to expose her feet a second time. While this showing would also take place at the urging of doctors, attendance would not be limited to the medical community: anyone holding a ticket would be granted a viewing. According to the newspaper, Moy harbored strong reservations: “It is with considerable difficulty she has been persuaded to expose the naked foot, being in direct opposition to the delicate customs of her country.” In the end, Moy did perform an act that made her extremely uncomfortable; however, the more important point to stress here is that the decision appears to have been entirely hers. In fact, the newspaper went on to state that proceeds from this event were “to be exclusively appropriated to her Benefit.” Recognizing the intense desire of the general public to see her feet uncovered, Moy had made the highly calculated decision to trade personal privacy for personal profit. And, quite shrewdly, she doubled the price of admission for this special showing to one dollar.<sup>81</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In April 1835, less than one year after the *Washington’s* arrival in New York, B. T. Obear embarked for Canton on the *Mary Ballard*. Afong Moy was not onboard. A rumor held that she was “so well content with America” as to be “in no hurry to return to the celestial empire.” Regardless of the rumor’s validity, Afong Moy did remain in the United States, where she continued to attract attention for years. In 1836, a man named his racehorse Afong Moy, perhaps believing the famous Chinese Lady would bring his gray filly luck. The *Boston Morning Post* quipped in 1838 that one of the Siamese Twins had proposed to her. In 1839, John Kearsley Mitchell, a physician who had visited China, published a humorous poem of 145 lines, “To Afong Moy.”<sup>82</sup>

Though many Americans associated Afong Moy with either good fortune or good humor, some evidence indicates

that she fell on hard times. The *Monmouth Enquirer* reported that she was “residing in a very poor and obscure family” near Freehold, New Jersey, her state of misfortune casting “suspicion on the agent who had her in charge.”<sup>83</sup> We do not know any more details or even if this report is accurate. However, if Afong Moy’s handlers did mistreat her, mismanage her tour, or abandon her altogether, this would explain why she was still displaying herself for money well over a decade after her initial appearance. We find her back in New York in 1847, when a British sea captain sailed the Chinese junk *Keying* into the harbor. According to one account, when several Chinese members of the *Keying’s* crew stumbled upon the Chinese Lady, they were utterly dumbfounded to discover a Chinese act that predated their junk.<sup>84</sup> In 1848, Afong Moy shared an exhibition space in New York with Tom Thumb, then under contract with P. T. Barnum. Like so many popular acts in antebellum America, Moy had apparently drifted into the orbit of the Great Showman himself.<sup>85</sup>

Though working under the savvy Barnum perhaps offered Moy certain advantages, it was not without risks, because Barnum cared far more about his own profits than about the well-being of any single performer. Moy appears to have learned this lesson in painful fashion. In 1850, Barnum arranged for Miss Pwan Yee Koo, whom he dubbed the “Chinese Belle,” to exhibit herself in Manhattan inside the Chinese Museum, which he had recently acquired. In promoting Pwan, Barnum elected to discredit Moy—even though the latter had been performing under his umbrella. According to Barnum’s logic, New Yorkers would not pay to see the Chinese Belle after so many years of the Chinese Lady unless the public could be convinced that the latter was a fraud. Since the Chinese Lady’s status as “Chinese” was of course beyond dispute, Barnum opted instead to assail her claim to be a “lady.” Barnum wrote that Pwan “is the first Chinese lady that has yet visited Christendom” since the “only other female ever known to have left” China was of “apocryphal reputation and position in her own country.”<sup>86</sup> By attacking Afong Moy’s credibility, Barnum was sacrificing an older performer, one who had become expendable, to bestow novelty and vitality on his latest attraction. In this way, Afong Moy was discarded out of mere expedience, a casualty of the ruthlessly competitive world of popular amusements in antebellum New York. At this point, the once-celebrated Chinese Lady vanishes from newspapers forever.

## NOTES

1. Elma Loines, ed., *The China Trade Post-Bag of the Seth Low Family of Salem and New York* (Manchester, Me.: Falmouth Publishing House, 1953), 126.
2. Other scholars have noted the Chinese Lady’s exhibition in America; however, these do not shed light on the circumstances behind her journey to the United States, describe what took place during a typical performance, or explain the sen-

- sation she caused. James S. Moy, *Marginal Sights: Staging the Chinese in America* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993), 12–13; John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776–1882* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 101–6.
3. *New Hampshire Sentinel*, July 30, 1835. Maelzell's exhibition offered a re-creation of the great fire that destroyed much of Moscow during the Napoleonic invasion of 1812.
  4. Since Frances Trollope had recently published *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), the widely read account of her travels in the United States, the reporter from Baltimore was surely playing with her title. His story was cited in *Atkinson's Saturday Evening Post*, March 28, 1835.
  5. The distinction of being the first Chinese people in America probably belongs to the five servants of Everadus Van braam Houckgeest, a merchant and diplomat who, in 1796, departed China and built a Chinese mansion outside of Philadelphia. John R. Haddad, "The American Marco Polo: Excursions to a Virtual China in U.S. Popular Culture, 1784–1912" (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2002), 29.
  6. Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1990), 121.
  7. Lisa Joy Pruitt, *A Looking-Glass for Ladies: American Protestant Women and the Orient in the Nineteenth Century* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2005), 43–45. Foot binding dates back at least as far as the twelfth century. Howard Levy, *Chinese Footbinding: The History of a Curious Erotic Custom* (New York: Walton Rawls, 1966), 40–41; Dorothy Ko, *Every Step a Lotus: Shoes for Bound Feet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 12, 21–22.
  8. Joan Kerr Facey Thill, "A Delawarean in the Celestial Empire: John Richardson Latimer and the China Trade" (master's thesis, University of Delaware, 1973), 42; Brantz Mayer, "China and the Chinese," *Southern Quarterly Review* (July 1847), 22–23; Osmond Tiffany, *The Canton Chinese* (Boston: James Monroe & Co., 1849), 51.
  9. "Jonathan's Visit to the Celestial Empire," *New-York Mirror*, June 18, 1831. One week later, the story was reprinted in the *Philadelphia Album and Ladies' Literary Portfolio*, June 25, 1831. In November 1834, the first month of Afong Moy's exhibition, the story appeared both in the *New-England Magazine* (November 1834) and in book form: *The Atlantic Club-Book: Being Sketches in Prose and Verse by Various Authors* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1834).
  10. *Shipping News, Salem Gazette*, January 3, 1832.
  11. French-themed interiors were the most popular among upwardly mobile New Yorkers, who perceived them as being quintessentially aristocratic. Jean Gordon and Jan McArthur, "American Women and Domestic Consumption, 1800–1920: Four Interpretive Themes," *Journal of American Culture* 8 (Fall 1985), 38–39; Walter Barrett, *The Old Merchants of New York City* (New York: Carleton Publisher, 1862), 39–41; Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815–1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 20–21.
  12. Barrett, *Old Merchants*, 40.
  13. Auction catalogue reprint. Mills, Brothers & Co., New York, "Catalogue of Canton Fans, Grass Cloths, and Fancy Goods Now Landing from the Ship Howard, from Canton . . . June 5th, 1832" (Boston: Childs Gallery, 1968).
  14. Barrett, *Old Merchants*, 44–45.
  15. Nancy Ellen Davis first came across the arrival of a woman from China in a merchant ship while conducting research for her dissertation, "The American China Trade, 1784–1844: Products for the Middle Class" (PhD diss., George Washington University, 1987), 57–60.
  16. *New York Sun*, October 18 and 19, 1834; advertisement, *Maryland American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, March 17, 1835; "The Chinese Lady, Afong Moy" (New Orleans), *American Broad-sides and Ephemera*, series 1, no. 6010. American Antiquarian Society.
  17. "Extraordinary Arrival: The Young Chinese Lady," *Baltimore Patriot*, October 21, 1834. This article first appeared in the *New York Star*.
  18. Scholarly works describing anti-Chinese sentiment in the nineteenth-century American West are too numerous to cite here. However, for a general overview, please see Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1989).
  19. Harold Isaacs, *Images of Asia: American Views of China and India* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1962), 71.
  20. A. Owen Aldridge, *The Dragon and the Eagle: The Presence of China in the American Enlightenment* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 25, 75–84.
  21. Jonathan D. Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent: China in Western Minds* (New York: Norton, 1998), 25.
  22. According to Orville Roorbach, who compiled a record of every book published in the United States between 1820 and 1861, twelve editions of the *Arabian Nights* appeared over these four decades. *Bibliotheca Americana: Catalogue of American Publications*, vols. 1, 2, and 3 (New York: Peter Smith, 1939). Other editions were widely available before 1820, the first year covered by Roorbach. The Rare Books Division at the Free Library of Philadelphia owns five separate American editions of the book published before 1820, with the earliest dating back to 1794.
  23. *Tales from the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, as Related by a Mother for the Amusement of her Children* (New York: Edward Walker, 1848).
  24. The tale of Aladdin begins with the following lines: "In the capital of one of the largest and richest provinces in the kingdom of China, there lived a tailor, whose name was Mustapha. . . . His son whom he called Aladdin, had been brought up in a very careless and idle manner." *Aladdin; or, the Wonderful Lamp* (London: Hardy & Co., 1789), 1.
  25. Edward Forster, trans., *The Arabian Nights*, vol. 1 (London: W. Savage, 1810), x. In the early nineteenth century, when the American publishing industry was in its infancy, the bookselling market was dominated by English publishers and distributors. Though this edition was published in England, it was also sold in the United States.
  26. John R. Haddad, "Imagined Journeys to Distant Cathay: Constructing China with Ceramics, 1780–1920," *Winterthur Portfolio* 41 (Spring 2007): 53–80.
  27. Stuart Creighton Miller, *The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1785–1882* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 16–37.
  28. *Ibid.*, 83–112.
  29. Frederick Wells Williams, *The Life and Letters of Samuel Wells Williams, LL.D.* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1889), 144–46; Samuel Wells Williams, *The Middle Kingdom* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1848), xiii–xvi. In the 1840s, Osmond Tiffany, an American tourist who traveled to China, decried this same rampant mockery of Chinese people: "Their manners, their habits, language, dress, and sentiments, have all been made the butt of witless ridicule." *The Canton Chinese*, 266.
  30. Isaacs, *Images of Asia*, 71.
  31. See advertisement for "FRESH TEAS" and "200 cases China silk goods" from the *Washington* in the *New York Evening Post*, October 17 and 23, 1834.
  32. *New York Daily Advertiser*, October 20, 1834.

33. *New York Commercial Advertiser*, October 18, 1834.
34. "The Chinese Lady," *Haverhill (Mass.) Gazette*, November 29, 1834. The *Gazette* borrowed material for this article from two sources: the *Boston Mercantile Journal* and the *New York Star*.
35. *New York Journal of Commerce*, October 25, 1834.
36. Both rumors were printed in the *New York Commercial Advertiser*, October 28, 1834. As for the gunfire, this pro-Whig newspaper reported on all the activities of the rival Democratic Party during the congressional elections of 1834.
37. See advertisements placed in the *Daily Advertiser*, *Sun*, *Commercial Advertiser*, and *Evening Post* starting on November 6 and running through the month. We cannot be certain of Moy's age because an undated broadside owned by the Library Company of Philadelphia lists her as seventeen years old, not nineteen.
38. "Visit to Miss Afong Moy, the Chinese Lady," *New Hampshire Gazette*, November 18, 1834. The article was first published in the *New York Star*.
39. *New York Commercial Advertiser*, November 15, 1834.
40. Some papers referred to him as "Acong." *Baltimore Commercial Daily Advertiser*, March 17, 1835.
41. *New-York Mirror*, December 6, 1834.
42. For example, the following seven newspapers carried the same article on Afong Moy, which first appeared in the *New York Star*: *New Hampshire Gazette*, November 18, 1834; *Richmond Enquirer*, November 18, 1834; *Southern Patriot* (Charleston), November 18, 1834; *Eastern Argus* (Portland, Me.), November 21, 1834; *New-Bedford (Mass.) Mercury*, November 21, 1834; *Portsmouth (N.H.) Journal of Literature and Politics*, November 22, 1834; *Haverhill (Mass.) Gazette*, November 29, 1834.
43. "The Chinese Lady, Afong Moy" (New Orleans), *American Broad-sides and Ephemera*, series 1, no. 6010. American Antiquarian Society.
44. "Manners and Customs in the East," *Parley's Magazine* (January 1, 1835), 71.
45. Advertisement, *Maryland American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, March 17, 1835; "The Chinese Lady, Afong Moy" (New Orleans), *American Broad-sides and Ephemera*, series 1, no. 6010. American Antiquarian Society.
46. *Salem Gazette*, March 10, 1835.
47. "The Chinese Lady," *Washington Globe*, March 12, 1835.
48. Foster Rhea Dulles, *The Old China Trade* (New York: AMS Press, 1970), 211.
49. *Ibid.*, 175–78; Michael P. Riccards, *The Presidency and the Middle Kingdom* (New York: Lexington Books, 2000), 3.
50. Samuel Eliot Morison claimed that opium amounted to between one-fifteenth and one-twenty-fifth of all American imports to Canton. *The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783–1860* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), 278; Dulles, *Old China Trade*, 147.
51. Riccards, *Presidency*, 10–12; Allan B. Cole, "Plans of Edmund Roberts for Negotiations in Nippon," *Monumenta Nipponica* 4 (July 1941), 185.
52. *New Hampshire Patriot*, November 26, 1834. The *Patriot* quotes an advertisement from an unspecified New York newspaper. *National Intelligencer*, Washington, DC, February 25, 1835; Davis, "American China Trade," 58.
53. "The Chinese Lady," *Haverhill (Mass.) Gazette*, November 29, 1834. This article originally appeared in the *New York Star*.
54. Quoted in *Farmer's Gazette* (Barre, Mass.), November 28, 1834.
55. Glenna Matthews, "Just a Housewife": *The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 11–12.
56. Jack Larkin, *The Reshaping of Everyday Life, 1790–1840* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 134; Gordon and McArthur, "American Women," 34, 38–39; Gilda Lerner, "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson, 1800–1840," in *A Heritage of Her Own: Toward a New Social History of American Women*, ed. Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth H. Pleck (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 189–90.
57. Quoted in Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 75 (June 1988), 9–10.
58. Quoted in Gail Collins, *America's Women* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2003), 89.
59. Collins, *America's Women*, 88–89.
60. Matthews, "Just a Housewife," 10; Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1966): 151–74. See also Sellers, *Market Revolution*, 242–43.
61. Cathy Davidson has argued that the "binaric" system of spheres "is simply too crude an instrument" and "too rigid and totalizing" to adequately comprehend the experience of American women. "Preface: No More Separate Spheres!" *American Literature* 70 (September 1998), 445. Mary Kelley has explored the conflicts of women writers as they negotiated between the expectations of domesticity and the demands of the literary marketplace. *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984). Lori Ginzberg has highlighted the highly assertive roles of women who participated passionately in reform movements. *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the 19th-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). Similarly, Julie Roy Jeffrey explains how the abolitionist cause attracted women and taught them how to gain access to the "manly" political sphere through grassroots activism. *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). Finally, Nancy Cott has demonstrated that the popular perception that women were "passionless" beings, totally lacking in lust, accorded them a degree of power by allowing them to resist the sexual advances of their husbands, exert control over intercourse, and limit family size. Nancy F. Cott, "Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790–1850," *Signs* 4 (Winter 1978).
62. "Chinese Painting," *Godey's Lady's Book* (April 1831), 177.
63. Kristin Hoganson, in discussing the Gilded Age, employs the term "cosmopolitan domesticity" to describe the craze for Oriental objects in home decoration. Hoganson argues that American women, by purchasing non-American things, were showing their "appreciation of other peoples' . . . artistic production and cultural attainments" and tacitly expressing their faith in the transnational ideal. Kristin Hoganson, "Cosmopolitan Domesticity: Importing the American Dream, 1865–1920," *American Historical Review* (February 2002), 59–60, 75–77. One can view the interior-decorating motif inspired by Moy's saloon as a precursor to the later movement described by Hoganson.
64. Ko, *Every Step a Lotus*, 15, 44–45; Wang Ping, *Aching for Beauty: Footbinding in China* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 19.
65. Valerie Steele, *The Corset: A Cultural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 1–2; Helene Roberts, "The Exquisite Slave: The Role of Clothes in the Making of the Victorian Woman," *Signs* 2 (Spring 1977), 557; Leigh Summers, *Bound*

- to Please: A History of the Victorian Corset (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 9, 122.
66. *China in Miniature* (Boston: Carter, Hendee, and Co., 1833), 31; "Correspondence of the Eagle," *Brattleboro (Vt.) Eagle* (September 13, 1849); Catherine Beecher, *A Treatise on Domestic Economy, for the Use of Young Ladies at Home, and at School* (Boston: T. H. Webb and Company, 1842), 116. See also "The Use of the Corset," *Littell's Living Age* (October 31, 1846); "Robert Burns," *Macon Georgia Telegraph*, April 9, 1839; and "Chinese Women," *Journal of Health*, Philadelphia (November 9, 1831).
  67. See Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*.
  68. Pruitt, *Looking-Glass for Ladies*, 58; Louis B. Gimelli, "Borne upon the Wings of Faith: The Chinese Odyssey of Henrietta Hall Shuck, 1835–1844," *Journal of the Early Republic* 14 (Summer 1994), 238–42; Helen Barrett Montgomery, *Western Women in Eastern Lands: An Outline Study of Fifty Years of Woman's Work in Foreign Missions* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1910), 48, quoted in Pruitt, 178–80.
  69. *New York Commercial Advertiser*, November 15, 1834.
  70. "Small Feet," *Farmer's Cabinet* (October 21, 1836).
  71. "The Nursery," *Youth's Companion* (July 31, 1835), 41.
  72. "Manners and Customs in the East," *Parley's Magazine* (January 1, 1835), 71.
  73. "The Chinese Lady," *Washington Globe*, March 12, 1835.
  74. C. S. Griffin, *The Ferment of Reform, 1830–1960* (Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 1967), 2–3; Robert Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), vii–ix, 8; Sellers, *Market Revolution*, 237–68.
  75. *New Hampshire Patriot*, November 24, 1834.
  76. "Extraordinary Arrival: The Young Chinese Lady," *Baltimore Patriot*, October 21, 1834. This article first appeared in the *New York Star*.
  77. "A Chinese Lady," *Connecticut Courant*, November 24, 1834.
  78. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, "ton" is synonymous with "style," "fashion," or "vogue." "The Chinese Lady," *Haverhill (Mass.) Gazette*, November 29, 1834.
  79. "We, the undersigned, having inspected the foot of the Chinese lady, Afong Moy, divested of its covering, find the dimensions to be as follows:— Length of foot from heel to end of great toe, 4 3-4 inches; from the heel to the end of the small toe, 2 1-3 inches; round the ankle, 6 6-10 inches; and also certify that the model exhibited to us by the proprietor is a good representation of the general appearance of the real foot." "Novel Examinations," *Southern Patriot*, Charleston, February 5, 1835. The inspection took place in Philadelphia.
  80. "The Chinese Lady's Foot," *Atkinson's Evening Post*, February 14, 1835.
  81. *Southern Patriot*, May 1, 1835.
  82. *New Bedford Mercury*, April 17, 1835; "The Chinese Lady's Foot," *Atkinson's Evening Post*, February 14, 1835; *American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine* (September 1836), 39. The article from the *Boston Morning Post* is cited in the *New-York Mirror*, April 28, 1838. J. K. Mitchell, *Indecision, a Tale of the Far West, and Other Poems* (Philadelphia: E. L. Carey and A. Hart, 1839), 143–52.
  83. The article from the *Monmouth (N.J.) Enquirer* is cited in the *Hudson River Chronicle*, Sing-Sing, New York, April 3, 1838.
  84. *New York Herald*, August 3, 1847. The meeting was somewhat fortuitous, for Moy departed for Boston a few weeks later. *New York Herald*, September 3, 1847.
  85. General Tom Thumb and the Chinese Lady both appeared at 315 Broadway. *New York Herald*, April 13, 1848; A. H. Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 152–53; Arthur Bonner, *Alas! What Brought Thee Hither? The Chinese in New York, 1800–1950* (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997), 1.
  86. P. T. Barnum, *Ten Thousand Things on China and the Chinese* (New York: J. S. Redfield, 1850), 6.

