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Crossing the Century: Cross-Dressing in Turn-of-the-Twentieth-Century San Francisco

“San Francisco is a peninsula. It’s surrounded on three sides by water and on one side by reality.” –

Joseph Torchia, *As If After Sex*¹

In 1863, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed a law that made it a crime for one to appear in public “in a dress not belonging to his or her sex.”² This should be seen as somewhat surprising, given the fact that cross-gender expression vis-à-vis one’s dress had not necessarily been marked as a sexually “inverted” or “deviant” activity at the time. “Rather,” Susan Stryker and Jim van Buskirk write, “it was an unremarkable feature in many parades, costume balls, vaudeville routines and... might be part of Sunday afternoon socializing with friends and family.”³ Why did San Francisco, along with many other cities across the country, begin criminalizing cross-dressing practices in public in the latter half of the nineteenth-century? One might think that anti-cross-dressing laws are simply antiquated rules leftover from a more restrictive past, but as Clare Sears has shown, “Far from being nineteenth-century anachronisms, cross-dressing laws had remarkable longevity and became a key tool for policing lesbian, gay, and transgender communities [until] the mid-twentieth-century.”⁴

This paper explores cross-dressing in the San Francisco Bay Area at the turn-of-the-twentieth-century (c.1890-1910) and narrates the extraordinary lives of Edward James Livernash and Milton Matson, two individuals who were arrested on cross-dressing related charges in 1891 and 1895/1903 respectively. Livernash was a well-respected newspaper editor. Matson worked in real estate and conned others for money. By examining the full-embodied lives of Livernash and Matson, and bolstering the narrative of their lives with the stories of So Git and Lillie Hitchcock Coit, I

¹ As quoted in Les Wright, “San Francisco,” in *Queer Sites: Gay Urban Histories Since 1600*, edited by David Higgs (New York: Routledge, 1999), 164.

² Clare Sears, *Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law, and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 2.

³ Susan Stryker and Jim van Buskirk, *Gay by the Bay: A History of Queer Culture in the San Francisco Bay Area* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996), 17.

⁴ Sears, 4.

attempt to show how the criminalization of cross-dressing was closely intertwined with the rise of modern sexuality. I argue that anti-cross-dressing laws operationalized the policing of bodies, the creation and maintenance of (fictionalized) fixed sexual identities, and the reassertion of male power. These shifts in how the state defined and regulated bodies bolstered the emergent dimorphic models of sex and gender identity. By way of a thorough historical examination and close-encounter with “cross-dressers” at the turn-of-the-twentieth-century, I believe that historians and queer theoreticians will be rewarded with a rich understanding of how gender, race, and class were all essential axes on which modern sexuality was formed. Such knowledge can help us deconstruct the hegemony of female/male, feminine/masculine, and homo/heterosexual binaries and highlight the impossibility of categorization itself.

The remainder of this introduction is dedicated to providing readers with the background context to turn-of-the-century San Francisco. The next section explores some of the theoretical frameworks that will be employed throughout this paper, such as Clare Sears’ approach of “trans-ing analysis,” the methodological process of “thinking queer” as proposed by Matt Houlbrook, and the potentiality of spaces of “category crisis,” which Marjorie Garber once highlighted. Building off of the theoretical background section, I quickly clarify the terminology employed throughout this paper before moving onto the pivotal question: “what is cross-dressing”? A brief section follows on the methodological challenges and archival silences faced by research topics such as the one examined in this paper. The main body of this paper narrates the lives of Edward James Livernash and Milton Matson. The Livernash section draws particular attention to the racialization of gender deviance, the promotion of public vigilance towards gender nonconformity as a precondition for responsible citizenship, and the class-based differences in adherence to gender ideals. With regards to Matson, this paper focuses on parental influence vis-à-vis the “progress narrative,” newspaper characterizations of Matson as a “New Woman,” and the myriad ways in which one can read

Matson's identification with heterosexual White manhood. I conclude with thoughts on how the stories of Livernash and Matson give us both a better understanding of how anti-cross-dressing laws in turn-of-the-century America inconsistently policed bodies vis-à-vis binaries, and clearer insight into how modern sexuality emerged unevenly along the axes of gender, race, and class.

The time and space of this research topic holds considerable analytical potential. First, in terms of the time scope of this paper, countless historians have shown how the turn-of-the-twentieth-century was a time of immense sociocultural change across the nation. For one, the gender order was being radically reconfigured. By the end of the nineteenth-century, changing economic conditions and severe economic downturns led to the drastic decline of "traditional" sources of Victorian manhood, particularly in regards to self-employment and the assumption of breadwinning positions in patriarchal households.⁵ Parallel to this decline was the rise of the "New Woman," a category of women we will examine in the Matson section. As Victorian manhood became increasingly untenable for the average working-/middle-class White man, ideologies of masculinity began taking shape. Gail Bederman marks this shift by distinguishing Victorian *manliness*, which lauded moralistic male behavior exemplified by "civilized" upper-/middle-class men such as chivalry and honor, from *masculinity*, a more fluid term that celebrated everything from "rough working-class" values (e.g. "physical prowess, pugnacity and sexuality") to pastimes that used to be seen as off limits to men (e.g. leisure and shopping).⁶ The shift from manliness to masculinity, Bederman argues, is intimately tied to the deployment of "civilization" discourse and the rise of millennialism, Social Darwinism, and racialized constructions of gender.⁷

⁵ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 12.

⁶ Bederman, 16-19; Woody Register, "Everyday Peter Pans: Work, Manhood, and Consumption in Urban America, 1900-1930," in *Boys and Their Toys?: Masculinity, Technology, and Class in America*, edited by Roger Horowitz (New York: Routledge, 2001): 199-224; Mark A. Sweincicki, "Consuming Brotherhood: Men's Culture, Style, and Recreation as Consumer Culture, 1880-1930," *Journal of Social History* 31, no. 4 (1998): 773-808.

⁷ Bederman, 20-42.

Changing conceptions of gender, race, and class were also well reflected in sexology, the pseudo-scientific study of human sexuality that became immensely popular around the turn-of-the-century. Through complex classifications of sexual identities and preferences, sexologists systematized bodies and put them within strict hierarchies in relation to one another, resonating with the Social Darwinist impulses of the time. In 1893, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, for instance, introduced the term “hetero-sexual” to many Americans in his influential book *Psychopathia Sexualis*. “Hetero-sexual,” as used by Krafft-Ebing, was used to refer to a healthy, but unconscious, procreative, sex-differentiated, and erotic “sexual instinct.” Krafft-Ebing’s “hetero-sexual” signified erotic normality, whereas the term “homo-sexual,” used to denote same-sex desire, signified erotic pathology because of its non-reproductive character.⁸ It is important to note here that sexology bore close ties to theories of scientific racism, an idea that will be expounded upon later within this paper.

The modern system of sexuality emerged within these contexts around the beginning of the twentieth-century. Sharon Ullman explains that “modern sexuality” generally refers to:

[T]he twentieth-century redefinition of sexuality as a means of self-realization rooted in pleasure and unconnected to reproduction. A new value system revolving around desire and sexual fulfillment became prominent; sexual discourse emphatically entered the public realm, and the entire framework for sexual understanding came loose from religious and proscriptive moorings. This dramatic revisioning made sexuality central to personal identity and even to the definition of a successful life.⁹

This “dramatic revisioning” of sexuality vis-à-vis personal identity, however, did not occur evenly across the board. As this paper will show, different expressions of gender identity and sexual desire were granted varying levels of legitimacy, be it from the state or from public commentators, and some expressions of identity were more heavily policed than others.

Turning to the question of space, one might ask: Why San Francisco? First and foremost, San Francisco has a long and rich history of general openness towards sex and lawlessness. Nan

⁸ Jonathan Ned Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (New York: Dutton, 1995), 21-22.

⁹ Sharon Ullman, *Sex Seen: The Emergence of Modern Sexuality in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 3.

Alamilla Boyd observes, “San Francisco is a queer town not simply because it hosts disproportionately large gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities, but because a queerness is sewn into the city’s social fabric.”¹⁰ Indeed, San Francisco has a uniquely incomparable history. Yerba Buena was originally a frontier town made up of Spanish settlers before it became part of Mexico’s northern territory with Mexican independence from Spain in 1821. Following the Mexican-American War and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848, in which the United States acquired California, Yerba Buena was renamed San Francisco.

The Gold Rush of 1849 transformed San Francisco into a booming commercial center practically overnight. Young men from all over the country, and the world, raced to California in search of gold, and the population of San Francisco remained disproportionately male throughout the latter half of the nineteenth-century. In the 1850s, men made up roughly 90 percent of the population, by the 1890s it was about 60 percent. The astonishingly unbalanced sex ratio likely resulted in a flourishing of same-sex subcultures, as they did in other predominantly male subcultures (e.g. men in prison and sailors at sea),¹¹ but we have scant evidence of this claim due to the destruction of innumerable documents with the 1906 earthquake and fire. There are however, as Stryker and Buskirk tell us, “apocryphal tales of all-male square dances, where the man dancing the woman’s part wore a red bandanna on his arm – the precursor of the modern hanky code according to contemporary gay folklore.”¹² As a hub for immigration with countless overlapping cultures and communities, San Francisco quickly developed a “live-and-let-live sensibility,” according to Boyd.¹³

In addition to being a “wide-open town,” San Francisco is sometimes conceptualized as a city that stood in the midst of the “closing of the Frontier” – the victory of White manliness in

¹⁰ Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Wide-Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 2.

¹¹ Regina Kunzel, *Criminal Intimacy: Prison and the Uneven History of Modern American Sexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 4.

¹² Stryker and Buskirk, 18.

¹³ Boyd, 203; Stryker and Buskirk, 13-18; Neil Larry Shumsky and Larry M. Springer, “San Francisco’s Zone of Prostitution, 1880-1934,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 7, no. 1 (1981), 71-73.

Western America – an idea put forth by the historian Peter Boag. Throughout early American history, the Frontier was a place “out West” said to be the edge of civilization itself. The Frontier, as an imagined space, is perhaps best exemplified by President Roosevelt’s *The Winning of the West* – an ambitious four-volume history of the late eighteenth-century Frontier written during Roosevelt’s early political career. *The Winning of the West*, Bederman elaborates:

Depicts the American West as a crucible in which the White American race was forged through masculine racial conflict. By applying Darwinistic principles to the Western tradition, Roosevelt constructed the frontier as a site of origins of the American race, whose manhood and national worth were proven by their ability to stamp out competing, savage races.¹⁴

In the eyes of Roosevelt and many of his contemporaries, the Frontier was a space to be venerated as the pinnacle of untamed manliness. At the turn-of-the-twentieth-century, however, the Frontier was closing. Savages had been tamed, homesteads became cities, and civilization – represented by cities such as San Francisco – took the Frontier’s stead. Frederick Jackson Turner, a professor of history at the University of Wisconsin, declared in his 1893 article “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” that the Frontier had effectively disappeared in 1890.¹⁵ Because the Frontier was considered the pinnacle of White manliness, indeed the site in which White manliness had triumphed over savagery, nonwhite folx were habitually imagined outside of this particular time-space.¹⁶ In the section on Livernash, this paper will further detail how this phenomenon applied to the racialization of gender deviance and the erasure of gender nonconformity practiced by members of nonwhite communities.

Although this paper focuses primarily on the city of San Francisco, the stories of Livernash and Matson sometimes take us out of the metropolis and into then-rural areas like Los Gatos and Cloverdale, small towns considered part of the larger San Francisco Bay Area. In part, this

¹⁴ Bederman, 178.

¹⁵ Peter Boag, *Re-Dressing America’s Frontier Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 7, 3-4.

¹⁶ For instance, despite making up 80 percent of the Central Pacific Railroad Company’s workforce, Chinese railroad workers were left out of the most iconic image of transcontinental railroad and more often than not had their labor erased within historical memory. See: Shelley Sang-Hee Lee, *A New History of Asian America* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 63-65.

simultaneous geographic boundedness and boundlessness works against what Jack Halberstam has termed “metronormativity,” the tendency for academics to locate queerness within “accepting” metropolises while portraying small towns as hostile to queers.¹⁷ This geographic un/focus also has the specific advantage of letting one explore the full lives of Livernash and Matson, and not just their arrests in San Francisco, demonstrating the possibility of mobility. Furthermore, through this approach, one gains a better understanding of how nonconforming folx have existed in a multiplicity of time-spaces.

It is here – during a time of diminishing Victorian manhood, popularized sexology, and emerging modern sexuality; in a “wide-open town” that represented the “closing of the Frontier” – we meet Edward James Livernash and Milton Matson: two very different individuals who share close to nothing besides the exceptional similarity of being arrested on cross-dressing related charges in 1891 and 1895/1903 respectively. Livernash was a French-Canadian reporter who was arrested in 1891 for masquerading in female attire. When arrested, Livernash was donning blackface. Less than a month after he was released from jail, Livernash killed a seventy-year-old man in Cloverdale who had been an old friend. This did not stop him, however, from carving out a successful political career for himself. In 1902, Livernash was elected as a representative from California’s Fourth Congressional District and served in the Fifty-Eighth U.S. Congress of 1903-1905.

Matson was born in mid-nineteenth-century England. He was born Luisa but assumed the identity of his twin brother Milton, who died at four months old, and lived the rest of his life as a man. He spent most of his early twenties and thirties working in Australian hospitality and real estate. In 1893, Matson met a young schoolteacher from the Bay Area who was vacationing at the summer resort that he was managing. The two got engaged and Matson moved to San Francisco shortly thereafter. Two years later, Matson was arrested for passing bogus checks. While Matson was in

¹⁷ Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 12, 15.

County Jail, suspicious telegrams led to the revelation of his “true sex,” causing a media frenzy. When Matson was released, numerous dime museum freak shows attempted to cash in on his notoriety and offered him various jobs; he eventually agreed to perform as “The Bogus Man” for five weeks. Matson continued to live his life as a man after leaving the freak show. He was arrested again in 1903 for attempting to obtain money under false pretenses. He died poor four years later.

I first came across Livernash and Matson when I read Clare Sears’ *Arresting Dress*.¹⁸ The two fascinated me, and I wanted to find out more about their stories. Expanding upon the research already done by Sears, I quickly found more newspaper stories about Livernash and Matson via searches on the California Digital Newspaper Collection of the University of California, Riverside’s Center for Bibliographical Studies and Research.¹⁹ When I learned of a particular “storyline,” such as Livernash killing Ethridge, I combed through hundreds of local newspapers online within the rough time period surrounding the storyline. I chose Livernash and Matson on purpose. Defaulting to problematic binary thinking, one might conceive the two as opposites: one a well-off man who cross-dressed as a woman as a one-off, the other a less-well-off “woman” who cross-dressed and permanently lived their life as a man. And yet, as I hope readers will agree with by the end of this paper, there are no such things as stable binaries.

Theoretical Background

Cross-dressers and cross-dressing practices have existed since the founding of the American republic.²⁰ Serious scholarly efforts to study cross-dressing, however, only arose in the late 1970s and 1980s with the maturation of the lesbian and gay studies movement. Scholars of the movement were

¹⁸ Sears, 74, 92, 95, 103-106; Boag also briefly mentions both Livernash and Matson in *Re-Dressing: Boag, Re-Dressing*, 48-50, 129, 141.

¹⁹ “California Digital Newspaper Collection,” *UC Riverside Center for Bibliographical Studies and Research*, <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc>.

²⁰ For more, see, for instance, Daniel A. Cohen, *The Female Marine and Related Works: Narratives of Cross-Dressing and Urban Vice in America’s Early Republic* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997).

true pioneers, carving out critical space in academia to study gender and sexual nonconformity throughout history. In two short decades, they managed to unearth a wealth of previously untapped archival sources and demonstrated that numerous people have transgressed gender and sexual norms for as long as those norms have existed. Nevertheless, lesbian and gay scholars had the particular goal of attempting to reclaim a shared and recognizable past, and this approach had its analytical limitations. As Sears comments, “the imposition of contemporary gender and sexual identities onto past cross-dressing practices rests on the assumption that past experiences can be accurately understood in terms of present-day categories and concepts.”²¹ We know, of course, that this is not the case. One after another, scholars have meticulously shown how conceptions of gender and sexuality have changed throughout time and space, how each and every term we use to describe people’s identities and behaviors have stood to represent distinct meanings in different contexts. For instance, Susan Stryker has demonstrated how the term “transgender,” which was coined in the 1980s, did not adopt its contemporary meaning until 1992. Moreover, the term “transgender” has a vastly different history from the terms “transvestite” and “transsexual,” which were popularized in the 1910s and 1950s respectively.²² Given the contextual nature of terminology surrounding gender, sex, and desire, it becomes crucial for us to define our terms and to use them carefully.

This paper does not make a clear distinction between sex and gender. Although one could critique the ambiguity created by such a move and argue this would create theoretical confusion and general sloppiness, the decision is a deliberate attempt to refute categorization itself. It is typically assumed that sex is biologically determined, gender is culturally constructed. And yet, as many scholars have shown, cultural conceptions of sex have varied throughout time just as much as constructions of gender. Judith Butler, for one, has suggested we consider sex itself a gendered

²¹ Sears, 7.

²² Susan Stryker, “(De)Subjugated Knowledge: An Introduction to Transgender Studies,” in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, edited by Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 4.

category.²³ Jeanne Boydston, in her critique of Joan Scott's seminal article, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," argues that conceptualizing gender as cultural differences between the sexes merely *displaces* our analysis from the *naturalized* body to the *perceived* body, keeping both sex and gender binaries in tact.²⁴ Since part of our goal is to refute hegemonic binary thinking, this paper problematizes the sex-gender distinction by discussing them in concert with one another.

The notion of cross-dressing inherently assumes the existence of a two-sex (female-male) system and a corresponding two-gender (feminine-masculine) system. In order for one to "cross" into another's dress, there must be an oppositional category – be it "female-to-male" or "male-to-female" – for one to cross into. Must we accept faulty binary logics in order to analyze cross-dressing practices? On one hand, one could argue that it is necessary for scholars to accept faulty dimorphic thinking, at least for analytical purposes, since the individuals featured in this paper are likely to have conceived of themselves in relation to popularized sex/gender binaries. Indeed, the prominence of sexology and the codification of bodies ensured that there were plenty of terms to refer to people, even if they had "mismatched" senses of identity. By way of illustration, the "sex invert" referred to a manly woman or an effeminate man who typically dressed as the "opposite" sex and had sexual desires for, respectively, a feminine woman or a masculine man.²⁵ Matson was likely considered a sex invert, and may even have fashioned his own identity according to prominent models of sexology.²⁶ Though Matson challenged the two-gender system by "crossing" gender-based divisions, the flexibility of binary thinking kept the bimodal two-sex and two-gender systems intact.

²³ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (10th anniversary edition) (New York: Routledge, 1999), 6-7.

²⁴ Jeanne Boydston, "Gender as a Question of Historical Analysis," *Gender and History* 20, no. 3 (2008), 563. See also: Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1053-1075; Joanne Meyerowitz, "A History of 'Gender,'" *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 5 (2008): 1346-1356.

²⁵ Peter Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs: Constructing and Controlling Homosexuality in the Pacific Northwest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 4-6.

²⁶ "George Chauncey, for instance, has provided an invaluable discussion of the ways in which medical paradigms of sexuality shifted according to changing ideologies of gender between 1880 and 1930. He notes a gradual change in medical models of sexual deviance, from a notion of sexual inversion, understood as a reversal of one's sex role, to a

On the other hand, one could also argue that because there has never been a firm sex or gender “boundary” to cross, in light of the constantly changing nature of sex and gender norms, it would be imprudent to consider these individuals “cross-dressers” at all. After all, how can one rightly call these individuals “cross-dressers” if one is unsure what line is being crossed? Later in this paper, I return to this problem as I address terminological considerations and complications regarding discussions of gender and gender nonconformity. For now, though, we should first complicate our analysis of cross-dressing with respect to gender by, at the very least, moving away from framing cross-dressing *figures*, and shifting our locus of attention toward how individuals broke incipient gender *standards* that were slowly being codified into law.

The critical approach of “trans-ing analysis,” as provided by Clare Sears, can be fruitfully employed for this analytical shift. Sears invites us to think less about stable individual identities and more about dynamic identity-related processes “by excavating the sexual meaning and dynamics of phenomena that are not transparently sexual... to shift attention – at least provisionally – away from the recognizable cross-dressing *figure* to multiple forms of cross-dressing *practices*.”²⁷ Sears also introduces us to the concept of “problem bodies,” a term used to collectively identify “the multiple sets of bodies that local government officials defined as social problems and targeted for intervention.” Utilizing trans-ing analysis as a methodology, in addition to thinking about individuals as “problem bodies,” allows us to better understand how normative gender was constructed and policed, producing “new definitions of normality and abnormality.”²⁸

Sears’ approach is one of the ways in which one can think queer. Within queering history, one can generally delineate between two approaches. First, just as the lesbian and gay scholars of the

model of homosexuality, defined as deviant sexual object choice. These categories and their transformations, argues Chauncey, reflected concurrent shifts in the cultural organization of sex and gender roles and participated in prescribing acceptable behavior, especially within a context of White middle-class gender ideologies.” From Siobhan B. Somerville, *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 16.

²⁷ Sears, 9.

²⁸ Ibid, 10, 13.

70s and 80s had done, one can unearth the history of people and spaces that contemporaries can recognize as “queer.” I call this *doing* queer history. The second approach is to queer history itself and, following Matt Houlbrook’s suggestion, shift “our definition of queer from a position to a process.”²⁹ Houlbrook calls this method “thinking queer,” a process that “forces us to simultaneously reconfigure and leave uncertain the subjects of historical knowledge (the *who* of our writing) and generates precisely these disruptive effects. It crystallizes not a crisis of categorization but its impossibility [and] draws attention to points at which our analytic structures are not quite working.”³⁰ In other words, instead of looking for subjects ahistorically bound to identities preemptively defined by contemporaries, one should pay closer attention to how individuals we might label as queer defined their own subjectivities – subjectivities that never quite “became” fully developed but, rather, were in the endless process of becoming.³¹ For example, instead of looking for subjects to label as “cross-dressers,” we can, following Sears, shift our focus to looking at the multitude of cross-dressing practices associated with “problem bodies.” Moreover, one can seek to narrate the full-embodied subjectivities of nonconforming folx and speak to some of the broad cultural forces that resonate with their actions, without ascribing their actions to stable notions of identity. Failure to do so would not only hinder the analytical potential of queer history, but also flatten the lived experiences of queer individuals into their queerness – as if everything about them could be explained by stable identities associated with sexual and gender nonconformity.³²

Another way for us to think queer is to reflect upon how the folx in this paper might have viewed the world around them. In *Vested Interests*, the first major work to highlight the relationship

²⁹ Matt Houlbrook, “Thinking Queer: The Social and the Sexual in Interwar Britain,” in *British Queer History: New Approaches and Perspectives*, edited by Lewis Brian (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 134.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 139

³¹ I use “becoming” here as “both an ontological and an ethical position that involves movement from stable, “molar” entity to indeterminable, “molecular” nonidentity, extending beyond the limits of conceptual logics”: Trish Garner, “Becoming,” *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 1-2 (2014), 30.

³² To be clear, this does not mean that we should label cross-dressers around the turn-of-the-twentieth-century as “queer,” a term that has only recently been reclaimed as an umbrella identified for nonconforming folx: Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996).

between transvestism and cultural production, Marjorie Garber insists that there has been a tendency amongst cultural critics to look *through* rather than *at* cross-dressers, thus avoiding the “close encounter with the transvestite.”³³ Garber believes that such a close encounter would highlight spaces of “category crisis,” where definitional distinction between categories becomes permeable and the epistemology upholding binaries turn impossible. Garber insists that the space of possibility demonstrated by transvestism is a “disruptive element that intervenes, not just a category crisis of male and female, but the crisis of category itself.”³⁴

I agree with Garber that looking *at* cross-dressing practices can lead to “category crisis,” but I would also like to propose looking *with* “cross-dressers”: looking *with* them at their sociopolitical context and the categories that were facing them – be it rooted in gender, sex, desire, race, or class. For example, later in this paper we can look *with* Livernash at some of the cultural influences that may have informed his decision to don blackface as he cross-dressed. Doing so would assert that the categories of “black” and “woman,” as “othered” categories, can be imagined closer to one another than one might believe, and deconstruct the notion that these categories were entirely distinct from one another. Looking *with* “cross-dressers”, and seeing how they were able to see spaces of possibility for themselves, can also bring about the crisis of category itself.

In sum, this paper employs three interrelated theoretical frameworks: 1) Sears’ “trans-ing analysis;” 2) Houlbrook’s methodology of “thinking queer;” and 3) my proposal, building on Garber, to look *with* cross-dressing individuals at the sociopolitical contexts and categories they interacted with on a day-to-day basis. This paper will also deploy the useful concepts of “problem bodies” and “category crisis,” provided by Sears and Garber respectively.

³³ Marjorie B. Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 9.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

Terminology

Throughout this paper, I utilize they/them/their(s) as universally applicable gender-neutral singular pronouns. As opposed to the dimorphic pronouns she/her/hers and he/him/his, they/them/their has the specific advantage of keeping people's gender identity ambiguous and serves to suggest the fluidity (or, at least, the potential of fluidity) of gender expression and identity.³⁵ When statements from the individuals in question are available, I try my best to adhere to the pronouns they used to describe themselves. Matson, for one, strongly identified as "male" and referred to himself as "a man." Hence he/him/his pronouns, and the usage of Matson's chosen name Milton, are the most appropriate for the section on Matson. At times, I use different pronouns depending on the context in which a person is being described. For instance, the section on Matson primarily uses he/him/his and they/them/their pronouns, but she/her/hers pronouns are sparingly used in describing newspaper accounts of Matson's arrest and subsequent sentencing. The contrasting use of pronouns is used to highlight the time-space sensitivity of gender performance and expression. Matson, case in point, strongly identified with manhood and masculinity when speaking to reporters, but would (allegedly) appeal to feminine notions of womanhood in their interactions with judges and law enforcement.

Another term that may perplex readers of this paper is "folx." As far as I could tell there is a dearth of scholarly takes on the term "folx," a word that seems to be primarily used by queer and trans people of color. The efficacy of this term, particularly for the purposes of this paper, lies in how it vaguely refers to anti-binary gender nonconformity or neutrality without affixing any sort of permanent social identity onto a given individual. As the self-proclaimed "radical copyeditor" Alex Kapitan put it: "it's basically a coded way of saying 'folks like us' – that is, a within-community expression used by people who are radically nonconforming in terms of gender and/or sexuality and

³⁵ Desmond Meagley and Youth Radio, "All Your Questions About Gender-Neutral Pronouns Answered," *Teen Vogue*, 17 October 2018, Accessed 22 November 2018, <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/they-them-questions-answered>.

for whom their identities are deeply, radically political.”³⁶ In light of “the radically political” and “radically nonconforming” nature of the individuals explored in this paper, the productivity of this term becomes readily apparent.

What is Cross-Dressing?

We now turn to the most problematic term used in this paper: “cross-dressing.” Who are cross-dressers? What kinds of material practices can be identified as cross-dressing? Can we even speak of cross-dressing without reifying sex and gender binaries? Deceptively benign, these questions can be notoriously difficult to answer. As Alicia Gilbert, professor of Philosophy at York University and lifelong cross-dresser, has pointed out: “Cross-dressing [in the contemporary male imagination] covers a huge range and can go from donning one or two items of women’s clothing... to spending days or weeks living and performing as a woman. It is quite remarkable that these widely different activities fall under the same umbrella.”³⁷ One seemingly obvious answer to these questions would be self-identification: if someone identified themselves as a cross-dresser, then they are a cross-dresser (and the acts they identify as cross-dressing must, therefore, constitute cross-dressing). Even if we were to accept this model, despite its flaws,³⁸ it would be of little use to historians. Very rarely do we get to hear the unmediated voices of “cross-dressers” in history – typically what is available are government documents and sensationalist newspapers, not diaries and memoirs.

Another problem this paper must address is the general tendency to disregard the potential subversiveness of nonconforming acts and to explain them away by way of using a “progress narrative.” Such narratives appropriate transvestism as a “stage of life” and normalize cross-dressers,

³⁶ Alex Kapitan, “Ask a Radical Copyeditor: Folx,” *Radical Copyeditor*, 12 September 2016, Accessed 22 November 2018, <https://radicalcopyeditor.com/2016/09/12/folx/>.

³⁷ Miqqi Alicia Gilbert, “Cross-Dresser,” *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 1-2 (2014): 65-67.

³⁸ One is quickly reminded of Judith Butler’s seminal insight that gender identity should not be thought of as a “substance” you can “have.” Rather, following the Nietzschean notion that “the deed is everything,” Butler asserts: “gender proves to be performative, that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed.” From Butler, 25.

most notably in cases of “female-to-male” cross-dressers, by explaining that individuals cross-dressed for the sake of personal advancement and better opportunities (employment, security, desire etc.). A prime example of this storyline is portrayed in the 2003 movie *The Ballad of Little Jo*. Based on the real story of Joe Monahan, *The Ballad of Little Jo* tells the story of Josephine Monaghan, an east coast society woman who is forced to fend for herself in the Wild West after bearing a child out of wedlock. In fear of sexual violence and facing the startling lack of employment for women out on the Frontier, Monaghan adopts the name “Jo” and lives as a man for the rest of their life.³⁹

One might be tempted to read the two individuals highlighted in this paper via progress narratives. The story goes, I take it, that Livernash cross-dressed *merely* for the sake of committing a crime, and Matson cross-dressed *solely* for the sake of personal advancement by accessing male power. This simplistic reading would be misguided, as it would erase the incredibly subversive potential, albeit to different degrees, of the two individuals’ cross-dressing acts. Garber contends that presenting cross-dressing through such renditions is “to a large extent a refusal to confront the extraordinary power of transvestism to disrupt, expose, and challenge, putting in question the very notion of the ‘original’ and of stable identity.”⁴⁰ Instead of explaining away cross-dressing, argues Garber, one should tackle the disruptions caused by cross-dressing head-on, and seek to deconstruct the very notion of stable identity.

One framework is to shift away from looking at identities and bodily practices, in and of themselves, and towards thinking more about discourses around them. The oft-cited Michel Foucault asks us to think about sexuality not as bodily practice and sexual desire *per se*, but rather as speech acts through which power can be constructed. Foucault’s notion of power is defined by ubiquity and omnidirectionality: “Power is everywhere,” Foucault says, “not because it embraces

³⁹ *The Ballad of Little Jo*, DVD, directed by Maggie Greenwald (New Line Home Video, 2003).

⁴⁰ Garber, 16.

everything, but because it comes from everywhere.”⁴¹ Sexuality, for Foucault, is a particularly dense transfer point for relations of power. As Foucault observes: “The deployment of sexuality has its reason for being, not in reproducing itself, but in proliferating, innovating, annexing, creating, and penetrating bodies in an increasingly detailed way, and in controlling populations in an increasingly comprehensive way.”⁴² Using Foucauldian insights in the case of cross-dressing, one could analyze the ways in which power is constructed vis-à-vis cross-dressing bodies: what practices are legitimized and rejected? Where and how are bodies policed in public? And in what ways are discourses of cross-dressing deployed for the ends of “controlling populations”? But the issue we encounter here, again, is the rather limited resources we have available to us and whose voices they can claim to represent. As Sears notes, the documents that remain today “reflect a particularly narrow and elite set of voices.” They reveal “virtually nothing about cross-dressing practices that did not result in official investigation or newspaper scandal, nor about the subjective experiences of people who broke the law.”⁴³ At the very least, via the documents that are still available to us, we can establish what some elite voices may have contributed to a much more expansive discourse of cross-dressing.

What about the rest of the discourse? Although we may not have direct historical evidence, I think we still have plenty of options within our imaginative possibilities. Many historians have demonstrated how the use of fiction could be used to speak truth to unspeakable realities and to construct narratives that do not readily exist in archives.⁴⁴ Bruce Dorsey, for instance, maintains “not entirely imagined” renderings or “responsible conjecturing” can be extracted from historic documents that do not speak to specific episodes.⁴⁵ In moving our conception of queer history from

⁴¹ Michel Foucault *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1954), 93.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 107.

⁴³ Sears, 15.

⁴⁴ See, for instance, Tiya Miles, *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), which blends together the story of the Afro-Cherokee Shoe Boots family with passages from Toni Morrison’s novel *Beloved*.

⁴⁵ Bruce Dorsey, “‘Making Men What They Should Be’: Male Same-Sex Intimacy and Evangelical Religion in Early Nineteenth-Century New England,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 24, no. 3 (2015): 345-377.

position to process, I would like to suggest that we can continually make “responsible conjectures” as to how cross-dressers viewed themselves and lived in their times by consistently posing questions to ponder, rather than making definitive statements about stable acts or identities. This, I believe, is one way in which we can look *with* cross-dressers, and not just look *at* them.

But none of what we have said so far answers the question: what is a “cross-dresser”? Following Sears, and in line with the processes of queering history, I do not hold that any of the individuals within this paper would ever have considered “cross-dresser” as a consistent identity that they held. Rather, “cross-dresser” more so refers to the dressing practices and behaviors that members of the public and the state were constructing as emblematic of “cross-dressing.” Readers of this paper should think less about stable queer identities, and focus more on the ways in which the policing of cross-dressing bodies helped construct normative standards of gender and sex along race- and class-based axes. By looking *with* “cross-dressers” at the society and the imaginative possibilities around them, my hope is that we can begin to see how standards of categorization, which we now take for granted, have inconsistent internal logics and uneven applications.

In other words, cross-dressing, like gender and sex, proves to be performative. That is to say that no “identity category” has any naturally occurring substance that one can own or embody. Rather, as Butler famously told us about gender, these identities are performative in the sense that they are always “constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed.”⁴⁶ For Butler, “identities,” such as the “cross-dresser,” are naturalized products of discursive practices and manifestations of power.⁴⁷ This paper, following Butler, uses the term “cross-dresser” to refer to a broad array of practices embodied by individuals who have actively produced and performed what it means to be a “cross-dresser.”

⁴⁶ Butler, 25.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 18.

Silent Archives

As a study of San Francisco conducted from the east coast of America, this paper contains certain methodological constraints. For one, municipal documents that would have significantly contributed to my research such as codebooks, arrest records, and court proceedings are typically only made available for in-house use throughout the Bay Area archives. As a result, I was chiefly only able to draw upon digital resources that have been made available on the Internet – a skewed selection of digitized papers along with other select primary source documents such as congressional testimony and labor union reports. Fortunately, with the invaluable help of Swarthmore College Libraries' staff, I was able to procure additional newspapers and first hand testimony necessary to my research through interlibrary loans.

Given the limited first-hand sources that I worked with throughout this paper, readers should be wary of the biases inherent to the documents available. Boag reminds us that American journalism at the turn-of-the-twentieth century proved “less a science than an entertainment,” and that reports on cross-dressers were typically manufactured out of “tidbits of alternately priggish and racy information.” Sometimes, entire stories were fabricated.⁴⁸ Furthermore, as Clare Sears has noted, “[newspapers] overwhelmingly focus on White cross-dressing criminals and overlooked Chinese and Mexican offenders. These news reports played a key role in the operations of cross-dressing laws, establishing gender normativity as the property of Whites.”⁴⁹ In other words, cross-dressing laws functioned to define normative gender along standards of Whiteness. Meanwhile, newspapers operationalized this implicit norm by discounting and erasing people of color's nonconformity by attributing their difference to the color of their skin, and not to their gender or sexual identity. I have tried to remedy these distortions, where possible, by supplementing primary sources with secondary sources and the important insights provided by other historians' analyses.

⁴⁸ Boag, *Re-Dressing*, 41.

⁴⁹ Sears, 16.

Even if one had access to all of the materials in the world, however, one would still run into the issue of archival silences. The overwhelming destruction of local government documents by the 1906 earthquake and fire is well known to San Francisco historians. The unavailability of police records and court documents, Sears says, is “made particularly frustrating by references to extensive record-keeping practices.”⁵⁰ Newspapers were relatively decent in reporting details of cross-dressing related arrests and court hearings, but are more often than not incomplete in information. Gaps have been filled with questions and “responsible conjecturing” for readers to ponder.

A final note on the archival silences we face – the public sources that we do have only tell the stories of those whose “true sex” was “discovered.”⁵¹ It is possible to imagine that there have been countless more individuals who were “successful” in passing as the gender they were performing, and who are unlikely to have left any account of their “true sex.” Similarly, we know that countless individuals who practiced sexual and/or gender nonconformity throughout time have been misgendered in death and have had their nonconformity violently erased from the historical record by family and community members. Their stories are, sadly, likely one of the many narratives we have lost to the oblivion of history.⁵²

Not all stories are lost, however. Though this paper only mentions four individuals, my research has led me to countless other gender nonconforming “cross-dressers.” The next section focuses on the life of Edward James Livernash, with focus drawn to his 1891 arrest, and is supplemented by the stories of So Git and Lillie Hitchcock Coit. We then explore the life of Milton Matson, before concluding this paper with some thoughts on the relationship between the policing of cross-dressing bodies and the rise of modern sexuality.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 151, n29

⁵¹ Emily Skidmore, *True Sex: The Lives of Trans Men at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 1-5.

⁵² Boag, *Re-Dressing*, 51-52; Simon Davis, “Transgender People Are Misgendered Even in Death,” *Vice*, 21 January 2015, Accessed 28 November 2018, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/exm3v4/transgender-people-are-misgendered-even-in-death-120.

Edward James Livernash – “A Sight Well Worth Gazing Upon”

Edward James Livernash was born on February 14, 1866 to French-Canadian parents in Lower Calaveritas, a California mining camp near San Andreas. He quickly developed a reputation for himself amongst Californian journalists and writers in his early years. By the age of fifteen, he was a printer.⁵³ The following year, the *Sonoma Democrat* touted Livernash as one of their “most valued correspondents” before reporting that Livernash had moved north to Cloverdale to start his own newspaper, the *Pacific Sentinel*.⁵⁴ Since Cloverdale already had a popular and well-regarded paper, the *Reveille*, the *Sentinel* probably did not gain much traction.⁵⁵ It is likely that Livernash met Darius Ethridge during this time, a character that we shall return to later in Livernash’s story. In 1888, the young Livernash had found his way to San Francisco, starting and editing a new weekly paper entitled *The Saturday Gazette*.⁵⁶ By 1891, Livernash was a prominent editor for both the *San Francisco Examiner* and the *Livermore Herald*. Throughout the 1890s, Livernash got more and more involved with labor union politics and became a well-known socialite who advocated on behalf of the average working man. In 1897, during a labor strike against dangerous work conditions and food shortages, a committee of Yukon miners from Dawson City, Canada chose Livernash to represent them as special commissioner to the Canadian governor general.⁵⁷

In 1902, Livernash rose to political prominence as the Union Labor-Democratic nominee for U.S. Congress in California’s Fourth District.⁵⁸ After a hotly contested race involving multiple recounts, court battles, and congressional investigations spanning over a year, Livernash won the contest with a tremendously slim margin of a little over one hundred votes and served in the Fifty-

⁵³ “Livernash, Edward James, (1866-1938),” *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, Accessed 6 November 2018, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=L000365>.

⁵⁴ “Local Notes,” *Sonoma Democrat*, 3 June 1882, p. 3.

⁵⁵ “Local Notes,” *Russian River Flag*, 8 June 1882, p. 3.

⁵⁶ “Press Notes,” *Sacramento Daily Union*, 28 April 1888, p. 1.

⁵⁷ “Canadian Regulations are Now a Matter of Greater Interest to the Klondike Miners Than the Question of Food,” *Los Angeles Herald*, 29 December 1897, p. 1; “Latest From Klondike: Livernash Cautions the Public Against Rosy Reports,” *(Santa Barbara) Morning Press*, 23 January 1898, p. 1.

⁵⁸ “San Jose Attorney Vouched For Wynn,” *San Jose Evening News*, 23 September 1902, p. 5.

Eighth U.S. Congress of 1903-1905.⁵⁹ We know little of Livernash's legislative accomplishments while he was in congress, but one can speculate that he would have been extremely vocal about Chinese exclusion, a hot-button issue of the time. In 1902, Livernash had testified before Congress insisting that one should look towards the Chinese peoples "with apprehension and suspicion," and argued that the state of California had the "right" to bar entry to the Chinese.⁶⁰ The congressman was re-nominated as the Union Labor-Democratic nominee but lost his seat to Julius Kahn in the 1904 election.⁶¹ After losing his seat in congress, Livernash returned to newspaper reporting and became a vocal critic of the California state legislature. In 1907 the legislature went so far as adopting a joint resolution to expel Livernash from the assembly floor as a response to his well-documented disdain for the California state body.⁶² The historical trail for Livernash runs rather thin at this point, but what we do know is that Livernash got divorced and changed his last name from Livernash to the proper French spelling (De Nivernais) in 1909, practiced law for a short period of time, and died in his San Mateo retirement home in 1938 after battling an illness for several years.⁶³

What is particularly remarkable about the documentation of Livernash's political career (and post-1891 life in general) is the fact that none of it addresses how Livernash had infamously been arrested for cross-dressing in 1891. On 26 September 1891, one Sergeant Kavanaugh on duty at the entrance to the Oakland ferry began suspecting that an "ebon-hued belle" was not who they had

⁵⁹ "San Francisco Returns," *San Jose Evening News*, 5 November 1902, p. 4; "Pardee's Plurality Safe," *San Jose Evening News*, 5 November 1902, p. 4; "Livernash Has the Most Votes," *San Jose Evening News*, 20 November 1902, p. 4; "Plurality Wiped Out," *San Jose Evening News*, 28 December 1902, p. 1; "Kahn-Livernash Contest," *San Jose Evening News*, 12 April 1903, p. 1; "Livernash to Keep His Seat," *San Jose Evening News*, 22 January 1904, p. 8. The entire contest by Julius Kahn and Livernash, down to a notary of every single vote and how they were marked, is documented in: United States Congress, *Contested Election Case of Julius Kahn vs. Edward J. Livernash, from the Fourth Congressional District of California* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903).

⁶⁰ "Claims Exclusion as the Right of California," *Los Angeles Herald*, 26 January 1902. See Appendix A for a sketch of Livernash produced in the *Herald*.

⁶¹ "Livernash is Nominated," *San Francisco Call*, 21 September 1904; "Registrar Completes the Count," *San Francisco Call*, 10 November 1904, p. 5.

⁶² "Edward J. Livernash Expelled From Senate; House to do Likewise," *San Jose Evening News*, 24 January 1907, p. 1; "Eviction of Livernash," *San Jose Evening News*, 25 January 1907, p. 4.

⁶³ "Ex-Congressman to Change Name," *San Francisco Call*, 23 March 1909; "Livernash Divorced and Name Changed," *San Jose Mercury News*, 23 May 1909, p. 5; "Former Editor of Enterprise Dies in Belmont," *Healdsburg Tribune, Enterprise and Scimitar*, 6 June 1938.

appeared to be. Kavanaugh grabbed the woman by the arm and stated: “You are a man, sir, masquerading in female attire.” Wearing a blue sateen dress, black gloves, and a black veil, everything about the suspect in question “was of inviting newness.” The accused retorted: “How dare you attempt to insult me, Mr. Officer? *I am a lady, if I am black.*” The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported, “That settled it, her last hope of escape was gone. The voice was too unmistakably masculine to deceive even a policeman.”⁶⁴

Two days later, the *Evening Bulletin* declared Livernash “a strange freak.”⁶⁵ The *Chronicle* agreed that the prisoner was “a sight well worth gazing upon.” At the city prison, Livernash gave his name as George Jones. Prison officials found nothing on Livernash’s person, but “created a sensation” upon searching his satchel. In the satchel, prison guards found a pound of chloroform, two unopened one-pound bottles of prussic acid, two hotel keys, four satchel keys, “\$82.45 in money, a lady’s gold watch, a razor, a pocket knife, a package of black grease paint, a paper of hairpins and other minor articles of utility, some used by the sterner sex and some by the gentler.” When asked about these items, Livernash claimed that he uses the chloroform upon himself for sleeping purposes but produced no explanation for the prussic acid (an extremely poisonous toxin). It is unclear why Livernash was assigned to a “bird cage,” a cell usually occupied by female prisoners, given that the opposite logic was often followed by prison authorities who sought to strictly “determine” the sex of their prisoners and assign them to sex-segregated cells accordingly. It seems possible though, as the *Chronicle* suggests, that such a decision was based on “facetiousness” and prison authorities were trying to have some “fun” with their prisoner.⁶⁶

In a written statement sent to the *Chronicle*, Livernash maintained that the whole incident was part of an elaborate joke. Supposedly, the editor thought that it would be funny “to dress as a

⁶⁴ “In Female Attire: A Masquerader Captured at the Ferry,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 27 September 1891, p. 12; emphasis added. See sketch of Livernash’s arrest in Appendix B.

⁶⁵ “A Strange Freak,” (*San Francisco*) *Evening Bulletin*, 28 September 1891, p. 1.

⁶⁶ “In Female Attire: A Masquerader Captured at the Ferry,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 27 September 1891, p. 12.

negress and apply for service to a lady friend.” The prussic acid, Livernash explained, had been purchased at a wholesaler for the purposes of “plating silver with gold,” and he did not wish to leave it on his bureau top and risk injury to his family.⁶⁷ Livernash offered this explanation to the police court to no avail, and was convicted of “masquerading in female attire” three days after being arrested.⁶⁸ After having his sentencing postponed, Livernash was found guilty one week later by Judge Joachimsen who gave him the option to pay a fine of \$100 or serve fifty days in county jail.⁶⁹

Less than a month after his conviction, Livernash traveled to Cloverdale and killed Darius Ethridge, a local capitalist who had been Livernash’s old friend. Reportedly, Livernash commanded Ethridge to make out a will leaving his entire estate to Livernash. When Ethridge refused, Livernash shot at Ethridge seven times, with four hitting the mark, killing the seventy-year-old man. Later, Livernash stated that he had gone to Cloverdale to settle his grievances with Judge Joachimsen, and that he had mistakenly imagined the old Ethridge as Joachimsen. Following medical examination by physicians, Livernash was committed to the Napa Asylum and seems to have stayed there for two years. In 1893, Livernash appeared in front of the Santa Rosa court and was found not guilty of assault and murder after pleading that he had been under the influence of hypnotism when he killed Ethridge.⁷⁰

What does one make of Livernash? It is tempting to think of his cross-dressing incident as an incidental one-off. After all, it would not be hard to deduce from the Ethridge episode that Livernash did not have a full command of his mind. We have ample evidence that Livernash had a propensity for violence. Moreover, as numerous historians of Western America have shown, cross-

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ “Editor Livernash Convicted,” (*San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, 29 September 1891, p. 3.

⁶⁹ “Sentencing of Editor Livernash Postponed,” (*San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, 1 October 1891, p. 3; “Editor Livernash’s Lark: He is Sentenced to Pay a Fine or Go to Jail,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 3 October 1891, p. 3; “The Lady in Black,” *Sonoma Democrat*, 3 October 1891, p. 3.

⁷⁰ “Pacific Coast Items,” (*San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, 30 October 1891, p. 1; “Hypnotic Livernash,” *San Francisco Call*, 14 April 1893, p. 2; “The Cloverdale Tragedy,” *Sonoma Democrat*, 31 October 1891; “The Livernash Trial,” *Healdsburg Tribune, Enterprise and Scimitar*, 27 April 1893.

dressing and blackfacing were common tactics used by criminals to conceal their identity since the early days of the Frontier.⁷¹ But subsuming Livernash's cross-dressing act into violence or insanity would be misguided, particularly given the potential to reinforce the false equivalency between nonconformity and psychosis. There is, I would like to argue, a lot we can glean from a close encounter with Livernash and looking *with* him at the social circumstances around his cross-dressing, even if we are to concede that Livernash may have cross-dressed and donned blackface for the purposes of committing a crime. The remainder of this section is structured around three questions: Why a black woman and not a White woman? Why was the policeman so astute in trying to discern the "proper" sex and race of a person? And why did locals so willingly forget both Livernash's cross-dressing incident, and his killing of Ethridge, and elect him to U.S. congress a decade later?

The fact that Livernash donned blackface and attempted to pass as a black woman, rather than foregoing the blackface and masquerading as a White woman, may indicate how gender deviance and blackness were inextricably linked at the turn-of-the-twentieth-century. If, like other would-be criminals, Livernash had already decided that he was going to cross-dress for the purpose of committing crime and evading arrest, it is possible that he may have conceived of putting on blackface as part of the same type of deception. Siobhan Somerville has shown how the construction of racial difference (scientific racism) and the pathologization of queerness (sexology and the invention of categories such as "invert" and "homosexual") mutually reinforced one another at the turn-of-the-twentieth-century. "Importantly, analogies between gender and race structured the logic of hierarchal rankings of bodies."⁷² Both scientific racists and sexologists at the time assumed that the body was a legible text that could be ranked and ordered according to stages of evolutionary "progress." For example, they consistently located racial difference in the black female clitoris, which they considered unusually large. The literalized "abnormality" of the black female body

⁷¹ Peter Boag, *Re-Dressing*, 37-38, 44-45, 70-71.

⁷² Somerville, 21.

became understood as a sign of sexual inversion and gender ambiguity. With allusions to the “Cult of True Woman,” constructing racial difference in physical and sexual terms had the effect of normalizing the White body as standards of ideal gender and positing deviations from that standard as “sexually inverted” and pathological.⁷³ In short, the black woman should not be considered a “true” woman at all because she was black.

Perhaps Livernash had thought that he would be more successful passing as a black woman, as opposed to a White woman, given the prevailing attitudes that considered black women as gender-ambiguous. Or, perhaps crossing the “gender line” seemed to intuitively necessitate crossing the “color line.” The cultural production and rise of mass culture icons tells us as much. As Marjorie Garber reminds us, vaudeville female impersonators of the early twentieth-century owe their historical roots to the minstrel show of the nineteenth-century, which “was for all intents and purposes a transvestite theater.” Though some White female performers had blacked their face and performed in the minstrel show, most troupes were all male – some of whom would dress up as “plantation yellow girls,” the tragic mulatto figure. “The female impersonators were double crossover figures, men playing women, Whites playing blacks.” It should come as no surprise that the most celebrated female impersonator of his time, Julian Eltinge, started his career with touring minstrel shows.⁷⁴ Although minstrelsy and female impersonation both had the potential for subversion, its overwhelming effect was White men gaining the privilege to define acceptable blackness and femininity.⁷⁵ Inasmuch as they can be termed as separate acts, female impersonation and minstrelsy are likely to have existed side-by-side and closely related to one another within the popular imagination. With this understanding of how minstrelsy and female impersonation related to

⁷³ Ibid., 25-29.

⁷⁴ Garber, 276.

⁷⁵ Ullman, 45-61.

one another, one can begin to imagine how Livernash might have considered donning a woman's dress and blacking his face as congruous parts of the same type of performance.

Another way for us to think about the racialization of gender deviance is to consider newspaper accounts of nonwhites who were arrested on cross-dressing charges. Namely, when it came to nonwhite cross-dressers, everything became about their race. Take So Git as an example. Git was arrested on the outskirts of Oakland Chinatown on July 22, 1908 for violating a city ordinance forbidding men to appear in female attire in public. The *San Francisco Examiner* commented that Git was made up in a "perfect imitation of a Chinese girl of the better class":

His cheeks were painted and his coiffure was complete in its oily smoothness and wealth of bejeweled hair pins. His dress was of the finest texture and vied with the rainbow in its iridescent hues, his features were small and even in the natural state might easily have been mistaken for a woman's. He made no effort to resist arrest and laughed gaily when charged with his masculinity.⁷⁶

The *Chronicle* reported that the prisoner was "party to a plot to palm himself off as a bewitching slave girl."⁷⁷ The next day, the *Chronicle* further speculated that Git might be part of a Chinese gang turf war.⁷⁸

The reporting of Git's arrest stands in stark contrast to the reporting surrounding Livernash's. Git is portrayed as the paradigm model of the feminized Chinese male – the "small," "gay," and "smooth oriental." From the perspective of Whites, Chinese men had long been marked as feminine. Their outward appearance – small stature, smooth skin, long hair, flowing dress – largely aligned with what Whites had associated with women. Moreover, Chinese men, largely due to job discrimination within "men's work," frequently held employment associated with woman, such as domestic service and other service work (in restaurants and laundromats for instance).⁷⁹ Git is

⁷⁶ "Chinese Arrested in Female Dress," *San Francisco Examiner*, 23 July 1908, p. 8.

⁷⁷ "Chinese Arrested in Woman's Dress," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 23 July 1908, p. 4.

⁷⁸ "Disguised Chinese May Be Tong's Lure," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 24 July 1908, p. 4.

⁷⁹ Midori Takagi, "Consuming the 'Orient': Images of Asians in White Women's Beauty Magazines, 1900-1930," in *Sexual Borderlands: Constructing an American Sexual Past*, edited by K. Kennedy and S. Ullman (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2003); Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton:

basically described using only stereotypical terms. He is small. He has a happy gay demeanor. He is servile. His arrest even prompted newspapers to speculate about grandiose stories of gang activity.⁸⁰ In other words, Git is a caricature of deviance. Readers are encouraged to conceptualize Git as a stereotypically strange Chinese individual – to the extent where his cross-dressing behavior is directly correlated with, indeed perhaps even a direct result of, the fact that Git is Chinese. The totality of his deviance is, therefore, encapsulated in racial terms.

In *Re-Dressing America's Frontier Past*, Peter Boag hypothesized that “male-to-female” cross-dressers in the American West had to be racialized and erased from the historical record because they stood in opposition to what the Frontier had come to symbolize. Boag argues:

The public imagination by the end of the nineteenth-century came to associate male-to-female cross-dressing and male effeminacy more generally with nonwhite/non-Anglo races. Accomplishing this stripped the male-to-female cross-dresser from America's frontier history along with its Asians, Mexicans, Indians, and other nonwhite/non-Anglo peoples. This rendered America's frontier past not only a White place and time, but a heterosexual one as well.⁸¹

Just as Sears highlights how newspapers and anti-cross-dressing laws operationalized gender normativity as the property of White/Anglo peoples, Boag here speaks to how the public imagination associated nonwhites with gender abnormality. Such aberration, as Boag argues, had to be erased from history to ensure that the Frontier remained a White and heterosexual place and time. America's racist queer-phobic propensity to posit sexual and gender nonconformity onto nonwhites had, in fact, earned the country a reputation that preceded itself. The German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld once commented that America loves to blame “one or the other ethnic group for homosexuality.”⁸²

Princeton University Press, 2009), 28-29; Robert G. Lee, *Oriental: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 29.

⁸⁰ The speculations are not completely unfounded. When Git was arrested, he gave his name as Ching Ling. It is rumored that Git did this in an effort to disgrace the Ching Ling family. See: “Masquerading Boy Stirs Up Chinese,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 24 July 1908, p. 8.

⁸¹ Boag, *Re-Dressing*, 6-7.

⁸² As quoted in Boag, *Re-Dressing*, 147.

It is telling how Livernash had tried to defend himself by asserting “I am a lady, if I am black” – as if the gender performance of being a lady depended on Livernash’s performance of racial blackness. Looking *with* Livernash at contemporary linkages of gender deviance and blackness, between female impersonation and blackface, one begins to understand why Livernash could have made the connection between the acts of cross-gender-dressing and blackface. In this way, anti-cross-dressing law could be seen as a way in which a hierarchy of bodies was established. Bodies that conformed to respectable gender standards, coded as White, stood as legitimate “normal” bodies. Nonconforming bodies that did not lend itself to legibility and clear gender identification, coded as nonwhite, were “problem bodies” that needed to be disciplined. Policing the boundaries of legitimate and illegitimate bodies, therefore, helped establish Whiteness as normal and non-Whiteness as abnormal. Livernash knew full well that his “masquerade” would push him into the realm of illegitimacy, and it would not be a surprise if we were to find out that Livernash had deliberately chosen to disguise himself as a black woman, as opposed to a White woman, having conceptualized the standard-bearer of abnormality as the gender-deviant black body.

So why was Livernash caught? Why would Sergeant Kavanaugh, while on duty at a crowded ferry entrance during one of the busiest times of day, be on the lookout for cross-dressing of all things? As Sears points out, the mere existence of anti-cross-dressing law necessitated police to constantly be on the lookout for cross-dressing criminals. “As defined by law, cross-dressing was a peculiarly visual crime that rested on the ostensible disjuncture of gendered clothing and sexed body. To detect a cross-dressing offense, then, the police had to look for and uncover the body underneath.”⁸³ This necessitated law enforcement to assume the body to be a legible text from which one can read a knowable, binary gender. As demonstrated by the forceful way in which Sergeant Kavanaugh grabbed Livernash and tore off his veil, anti-cross-dressing ordinances, for all

⁸³ Sears, 80.

intents and purposes, warranted the coercive investigation and regulation of bodies, positing the notion that maintaining gender-legibility and restricting nonconformity were under the legitimate authority of the state.

In fact, police officers were not the only people looking for cross-dressers in public. Concerned citizens joined the act as well. So Git, for instance, was only caught because fellow countryman Sam Kee, “a wealthy merchant who belongs to the peace element,” likely a member of a public vigilance committee, grew suspicious of Git and went to the police station to report him.⁸⁴ Newspapers did important cultural work in this regard, promoting vigilance to cross-dressing deviants as a sort of public good. The papers did this in one of two ways. They could either praise good, astute individuals, like Sam Kee and Sergeant Kavanaugh, or they could mock those who failed to spot cross-dressing offenders in their midst. Especially in light of the rise of sexology and the medicalized study of bodily difference, public commentators oft assumed that members of the public should have been able to pick up the telltale signs of deviants the like of “sexual inverts” and “hermaphrodites.”⁸⁵ By, as Sears puts it, “framing gender suspicion and scrutiny as a precondition for competent urban citizenship,” public vigilance to gender deviants became part of the performance of being a good San Franciscan citizen.⁸⁶ Cross-dressing laws therefore also had the distinct effect of construing public skepticism of illegitimate bodies, and encouraging the competence to “read” gendered bodies, as a requirement for responsible citizenship.

None of what we have explored so far can explain why people in the San Francisco Bay Area, evidently, erased Lovernash’s cross-dressing incident and murder of Ethridge from their memories and elected him to Congress. Scant evidence exists to back up this claim, but Whiteness and class appear to be obvious candidates for explaining the short-term amnesia. As aforementioned,

⁸⁴ “Disguised Chinese May Be Tong’s Lure,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 24 July 1908, p. 4.

⁸⁵ Katz, 17-23.

⁸⁶ Sears, 83-85.

gender normality was coded as a White enterprise. In addition to this, one cannot ignore how gender ideals consistently adhered to upper-/middle-class standards. Throughout American history, White upper-/middle-class women and men have invariably held themselves as exemplars of “true” gender expression – legitimizing their own practices as markers of healthy gender comportment.⁸⁷ These well-off individuals had some liberties when it came to acting in defiance of specific gender norms. This is not to say that upper-/middle-class individuals did not also have to live up to constantly evolving gender norms in order to be accepted by their social circles. Rather, given the elite status of these individuals, some were able to get away with norm-defying behaviors that others would ignore at risk of offending said individual of higher status.

Lillie Hitchcock Coit is a glaring example of this phenomenon. Coit is most well known for willing part of her estate to the city of San Francisco, which then used the money to build a 180-foot tower on Telegraph Hill – Coit Tower. Many San Franciscans will speak of Coit’s eccentricity and love for firefighting (hanging out with firefighters from Knickerbocker Engine Co. 5 and becoming an honorary firefighter herself), but few seem to know that Coit regularly dressed as a man. Coit had a deep love for playing poker, smoking cigars, and drinking bourbon, and would often dress up in male attire (also around the turn-of-the-twentieth-century) for the sake of accessing all-male institutions where she could do what she loved. Coit’s parents were not particularly pleased with her behavior, but primarily kept their reservations to themselves. As for others, some firemen who hung out with Lillie were uneasy with her nonchalant adoption of “masculine behavior” but eventually grew to like her. Others just kept their mouth shut. Mrs. Ellen Moon, for instance, was shocked

⁸⁷ For instance, early elite Americans emphasized cleanliness, and the feminine domestic labor of keeping both the home and the family clean, as a way of delineating themselves in opposition to nonwhites and the poor: Kathleen M. Brown, *Foul Bodies: Cleanliness in Early America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.); nineteenth-century America had a moral economy that emphasized ideologies of “passionlessness” and purity, both values emulated by elite White women: April R. Haynes, *Riotous Flesh: Women Physiology, and the Solitary Vice in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015); and pioneering White suffragettes worked extremely hard to construct their movement as the paragon of lily-white, upper-/middle-class womanhood: Lisa Tetrault, *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women’s Suffrage Movement* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2014).

when Coit walked into her inn with her firemen-friends – the last woman who had “penetrated this masculine domain” was a notorious prostitute a decade prior. Lillie had walked in with trousers and a blasé attitude. Yet as shocked as Mrs. Moon was, she did not speak a word in resistance to Lillie’s presence in fear of offending the well-known and well-respected lady of San Francisco.⁸⁸

Just as Mrs. Moon had decided to keep her reservations about Coit’s gender-deviance to herself, San Franciscans might have had a similar reaction in response to Livernash’s scandal. That is to say that it would not be absurd for one to assume that Livernash’s prominence and social status may have prevented further public outcry about his “lark.” Moreover, as a prominent newspaper editor, Livernash was well known within journalistic circles. It is possible, therefore, that Livernash may have encouraged his peers to stay quiet about the incident, or that his fellow journalists elected for furtiveness on their own accord to protect one of their own.

Both Livernash and Coit’s cross-dressing behavior can be explained away via a “progress narrative,” which is to say that one could discount the gender deviance associated with their acts by pointing to the fact that they were attempting to achieve a particular goal – Livernash to commit crime, Coit to access masculine spaces. As such, members of the general public had more reason to overlook the potential subversiveness of their cross-dressing behavior. This is not to say, of course, that the public would have looked over the totality of their criminality. Livernash did commit a murder after all. Rather, what I am trying to argue is that because there is an intervening explanatory factor on which the public can *excuse* Livernash and Coit’s cross-dressing behavior, the cross-dressing act in it of itself becomes less offensive to the everyday San Franciscan. That is to say that contemporaries may have found it easier to stomach someone who cross-dressed *because* they intended to commit a crime rather than someone who cross-dressed *for the sake of dressing as the*

⁸⁸ Gloria G. Harris and Hannah S. Cohen, *Women Trailblazers of California: Pioneers to the Present* (Charleston: The History Press, 2012), 36-40; Floride Green, *Some Personal Recollections of Lillie Hitchcock Coit-5* (San Francisco: The Grabhorn Press, 1935); Helen O’Donnell Holdredge, *Firebelle Lillie* (New York: Meredith Press, 1967), 195-225. A direct reference to Lillie wearing trousers can be found in Holdredge, 214.

“opposite” sex. Again, this is not to say that members of the public would have accepted Livernash’s or Coit’s actions wholeheartedly. It is simply a conjecture as to how one might dismiss the subversiveness of their actions.

Another layer in solving the puzzle of how people “forgot” about Livernash’s cross-dressing incident lay in the fact that Livernash was a man cross-dressing as a woman, an act that was permissible on certain terms. As this section has already highlighted, both minstrelsy and vaudeville female impersonation acts were well accepted as legitimate entertainment, due to the fact that these performances gave White male performers the opportunity to determine appropriate blackness and femininity respectively. One critic made the pointed comparison between minstrelsy and vaudeville: “Just as a White man makes the best stage Negro, so a man gives a more photographic interpretation of femininity than the average women [*sic.*] is able to give.”⁸⁹ Since San Francisco was a must-stop city for all minstrel and vaudeville tours, Bay Area dwellers may simply have grown accustomed to blackface and female impersonation and did not worry too much that a White man (who was prominent and well-off) would try and pass off as a black woman. Such was the male power inscribed into legitimized forms of cross-dressing practice. If the roles were reversed, however, if say a woman dared claim authority to define appropriate White heterosexual manhood, San Franciscans may have had more of a problem.

⁸⁹ As quoted in Ullman, 50.

Milton Matson – “A Good Straight Woman”?

Sometime in the 1850s or 1860s, Mrs. Matson of Kent, England gave birth to twins.⁹⁰ The daughter was named Luisa Elizabeth Blaxland, the son Milton. Four months later, Milton died. Struck with tragedy, the Matson parents hatched an ingenious plan: why not have Luisa take Milton’s place? After all, as Luisa would later record, they had always been “sort of a nondescript.” During a time when few women owned their individual property, making Luisa assume Milton’s identity would also make inheritance matters a lot easier. By the age of seventeen, Luisa’s parents began dressing their child up in “garments about half masculine.” Luisa reported that donning masculine clothing was “natural” from the very beginning, fully adopting the name Milton in their early twenties when they began to “put on the entire male garb.”⁹¹

Milton spent the next twelve years of his life in New South Wales, Australia. During this time, Matson was generally involved in hospitality and real estate – managing a hotel, working for a real estate agency, and keeping a summer resort at Ben Lomond (a village in New South Wales, Australia). While working at Ben Lomond, Matson met Ella Fairweather, a young grammar-school teacher vacationing from San Francisco, and the two immediately took a liking to each other. Soon after, they were engaged. In 1893, the couple moved into 12 Montgomery Street, San Francisco, where Matson resumed practicing real estate.⁹²

In January 1895, Matson was arrested in Los Gatos for passing bogus checks and was put into Santa Clara County Jail. He was charged with obtaining money under false pretenses. It was

⁹⁰ The date of birth has been reconstructed and estimated according to two of Matson’s statements: 1) “I have been constantly in masculine garb for sixteen years and I never was discovered or even in danger of being discovered before.” From “A Secret For Years,” *San Francisco Call*, 27 January 1895, p. 4; and 2) “I was fond of outdoor sports, and before I was 17 years of age I was attired in garments about half masculine. When I became two or four or six and twenty, somewhere around there, I put on the entire male garb.” From “Louisa Has Her Say,” *San Francisco Call*, 28 January 1895, p. 1.

⁹¹ “Louisa Has Her Say,” *San Francisco Call*, 28 January 1895, p. 1.

⁹² “A Secret For Years,” *San Francisco Call*, 27 January 1895, p. 4; “Louisa Has Her Say,” *San Francisco Call*, 28 January 1895, p. 1; “Gave Up A Secret,” *San Jose Evening News*, 28 January 1895, p. 4. Sears, in *Arresting Dress*, calls Ms. Fairweather “Ellen” but all of the sources above indicate that their first name was Ella.

later found that Matson also had a number of debts to their name. On January 22, the prison warden received a telegram reading: “Milton B. Matson, County Jail, Santa Clara County – £28 17s 7d here for Luisa Elizabeth Blaxland Matson. Must be paid to her. Give us address. The Bank of British North America.” A few days later, the Bank of British North America received a written order from Luisa directing them to pay the same amount to Milton B. Matson. This struck bank authorities as odd. How could Luisa have replied so soon? Milton, after all, was in jail and would have had to telegram Luisa, a process that would have taken days if not weeks depending on where Luisa might have been, before Luisa would have had the knowledge to telegram the bank. Was it just a coincidence that they had asked Milton for Luisa’s address and then received a reply shortly thereafter from Luisa herself? Bank authorities contacted the district attorney’s office for help, and they decided on two possibilities: “either the order and previous similar ones were forgeries or Milton B. Matson and Luisa Elizabeth Blaxland were one and the same person.”

On January 26, Milton Matson was brought into the jailer’s private office and was interrogated by Justice Beggs, District Attorney B. A. Herrington, and Sheriff Lyndon. When Attorney Herrington asked Milton who Luisa was, he said that she was his half sister. Upon being asked more questions about his sister, Milton also shared that he had not seen or heard from Luisa in a long time; however, Luisa regularly receives remittances from the estate their parents had left them, which she would then forward to Milton. The three officials then zeroed in on the bank notification telling Luisa that the remittance had arrived. To his own detriment, Matson exclaimed: “There should be an order at the bank now directing that the amount be paid to me.” This was a grave mistake. “And how,” Herrington inquired, “do you know that?” Matson’s story was falling apart. He told the three men that he had received the order from his half sister two days ago. But the prison authorities knew, of course, that this could not have been true. They asked Milton where his half sister was; “Santa Cruz” was the answer. The prisoner was “evidently getting confused.”

In a sudden turn of events, District Attorney Harrington directly challenged Matson and declared: “Matson, those orders are either forged or you and Luisa Elizabeth Blaxland Matson are the same person and you are female.” Matson, somewhat surprisingly, was unfazed. He responded: “Then the question is easily solved, for I am a male.”

At this point, the reporting gets shoddier. *The San Francisco Call* reports that after Matson insisted on being male, “The officers refused to believe this story and at last Matson was compelled to admit that the name Milton B. and her masculine attire were both disguises and that she was Luisa E. B. Matson.” But in what ways did the authorities refuse to believe Matson? How exactly did they compel Milton to admit that he and Luisa were one and the same? And how were the three men so certain that Milton’s masculine attire was a disguise? I think it is telling that the newspaper reporting drops off at this point. Though we are uncertain of what happened in that prison office, we could imagine a number of likely scenarios. Perhaps Matson had to undergo something similar to Livernash and experienced physical intimidation and harassment. Or perhaps Milton saw no way out of his logical inconsistencies and realized that telling prison authorities what they wanted to hear was the only way for him to get out of whatever sort of trap the three men were trying to lay. Whatever the case, on the same day as being questioned (26 January 1895), Matson was “removed from the rabble of tramps and petty larcenists, which the crowded condition of the jail makes it imperative to herd together in the tanks almost like sheep, and placed in one of the more secluded sky parlors of the County Jail and entered on the register as Luisa E. Matson, for the prisoner is a woman.” The rabble of tramps and petty larcenists, of course, were not the type of people for a “proper lady” to hang around.⁹³

⁹³ Most of the information from the proceeding paragraphs can be found in “A Secret For Years,” *San Francisco Call*, 27 January 1895, p. 4. Additional information from: “Louisa Has Her Say,” *San Francisco Call*, 28 January 1895, p. 1; “He Owed Others,” *San Francisco Call*, 24 January 1895, p. 1.

The day after being questioned, reporters from the *San Francisco Call* managed to secure an interview with Matson. The discussion made headlines and took up a third of the *Call*'s front cover when it was published the following day. Matson immediately shared that he was not at all pleased with the publication of his arrest. "It seems outrageous," he declared, "that a *man* cannot have any peace, but must be badgered to death by reporters." When Matson spotted one of the reporters making a sketch of his likeness, he immediately protested: "no likeness in the newspapers. I don't propose to have mine done if I can help it."

Indeed, Matson seems to have been extremely sensitive to whatever reporters were trying to put into the papers. Later on in the interaction, for instance, Matson glanced over at the reporter's notepad and ordered them to strike out a statement purporting that Matson had told Sheriff Lyndon he had been "a good straight woman all her life." When the reporter asked Matson if the statement was incorrect, Matson slyly stated: "It is a shame – I have been straight for seventeen years, and before that doesn't make any difference. I have been straight all my life, and this is the first time I have ever been in trouble." It seems possible, then, that Matson had informed Sheriff Lyndon that he was straight without any mention of his gender identity. The reporter may well have made an honest mistake and assumed Matson's feminine gender identity when they heard that Matson had declared himself heterosexual. Matson further notified the reporter: "When I get out of here I intend to leave America as soon as possible. I shall assume feminine apparel... I have no reason whatever for wearing this garb except those I have named and monetary matters, which are strictly of a family character. I have *no other reason* in the world."⁹⁴

⁹⁴ "Louisa Has Her Say," *San Francisco Call*, 28 January 1895, p. 1, emphasis added. Despite Matson's wishes, the *San Francisco Call* published a sketching of Matson's likeness, which is shown in Appendix C.

January 29, 1895, Matson drafts around \$60 to Justice Beggs in order to indemnify his debtors and Beggs agrees to dismiss Matson's case.⁹⁵ Three days later, Matson was released from County Jail and walked free in male attire. After being released, Matson put up at a Los Gatos hotel and suggested that he would go back to Australia as soon as he could arrange to do so.⁹⁶ The next day, on the second of February, Matson celebrated his release from jail "by going on a big drunk" and wound up running into a fence post, giving himself a black eye. Two days later, Matson left for San Francisco.⁹⁷ Around this time, numerous businesspeople attempting to make money off of Matson's story made Matson business offers. One proprietor offered Matson \$50 for a short story of his experiences. Numerous dime museum managers offered him various jobs. In one interview, Matson stated: "I'm getting letters from all sorts of showmen offering good salaries if I will exhibit myself. It amuses me very much... I'm beginning to think it pays to be notorious. It certainly does not seem to be a detriment to the people in America. You Americans are a singular people."⁹⁸ Milton turned down most offers but accepted Frank R. Clifton's offer to perform as "The Bogus Man," sitting on a platform for San Francisco freak show-goers to ogle at for five weeks. Matson became so popular, in fact, that other dime museums began offering cross-dressing performances of "women in men's clothing" in hope of also cashing in on Matson's notoriety. Clifton frequently had to sue these other dime shows for false advertising (one freak show, for instance, deceptively advertised one of their acts as "the only genuine Miss Martson in male attire").⁹⁹

As it turns out, Matson did not end up leaving America, nor did he fully assume feminine apparel as he had promised. Less than a decade later, Matson was again arrested on the charge of

⁹⁵ "Remains Behind Bars," *San Francisco Call*, 30 January 1895, p. 3; "Louisa's Bills," *San Jose Evening News*, 30 January 1895, p. 1.

⁹⁶ "Left in Male Attire," *San Francisco Call*, 2 February 1895, p. 3; "Released From Jail," *Grass Valley Morning Union*, 2 February 1895, p. 1. Word of Matson's case made it all the way to Los Angeles. The story is featured on the front page of the *Herald*: "The Female Man," *Los Angeles Herald*, 2 February 1895, p. 1.

⁹⁷ "Cot on a Howling Drunk," *Grass Valley Morning Union*, 3 February 1895, p. 1; "Leaves Los Gatos: Miss Matson, The Masquerader, Coming to San Francisco," *San Francisco Call*, 5 February 1895, p. 1.

⁹⁸ "A Singular People," *Sausalito News*, 16 February 1895, p. 2.

⁹⁹ "Suit Over a Woman," *Grass Valley Morning Union*, 15 February 1895, p. 1; Sears, 103-105.

obtaining money by false pretenses, this time in San Francisco. Apparently, Matson had gone around the city soliciting donations from storekeepers claiming that he was collecting the money for “James Bryant, a young married man with two children, dying from consumption at 608 Natoma Street.” When Matson’s illicit activity was reported by the president of a local charity, the detective arresting Matson recognized him as the man who had caused headlines back in 1895 and identified Matson as a woman. The detective also communicated to newspapers that Matson’s proposal to Ms. Ella Fairweather was based solely on monetary, and not romantic, concerns.¹⁰⁰

Matson appeared in front of San Francisco Judge Mogan on November 27, 1903. Matson was found guilty of vagrancy, a catchall charge used by judges to put social deviants in jail when other charges were found to be ill-suited to the case at hand. Judge Mogan sentenced Matson to sixty days in County Jail and forced him to give up his masculine attire for “skirts.” One *San Francisco Call* reporter, in what was meant to be a scathing rebuke of Matson’s “unladylike behavior,” declared: “Louisa came closer to being the “new woman” than any of her sex.”¹⁰¹ Unfortunately, I was unable to find any information about Matson’s expected-release in 1904, or what he did with the rest of his life. From what we know of Matson, it is reasonable to expect that he spent his last couple of years smoking cigars, getting drunk, and wearing trousers. It would also not be surprising if we found out that Matson continued involving himself in duplicitous moneymaking schemes. We know, at the very least, that if Matson maintained his streak for obtaining money under false pretenses, he was not very successful. Matson died a poor man in July 1907.¹⁰²

First of all, why had Matson’s parents deliberately dressed their daughter in masculine attire from a young age? One might immediately conjure up some variation of the “progress narrative”:

¹⁰⁰ “Supposed Man Proves Woman,” *San Francisco Call*, 27 November 1903, p. 14; “Masquerading in Male Attire,” *Los Angeles Herald*, 27 November 1903, p. 5.

¹⁰¹ “Masquerading Woman is Brought to Time,” *San Francisco Call*, 28 November 1903, p. 9; “Louisa Matson Fails to Move Judge Mogan,” *San Francisco Call*, 29 November 1903, p. 38.

¹⁰² “Masquerader Dies Poor,” *San Francisco Call*, 13 July 1907, p. 2.

everyone knew that men had more freedom – to travel as one pleased without consistent threat of violence, to gain employment, to pursue hobbies and general fulfillment in life – why would a parent not wish to have the best for their kids and provide them with more opportunities, even if it means forsaking their daughter for a son? Indeed, most people at the time, even men, acknowledged the relative liberty men experienced in relation to women. In Matson’s case for instance, the *Los Angeles Herald* remarked Matson had enjoyed “all the liberty of the sterner sex,” for the past twenty-five years simply because he had been wearing trousers.¹⁰³ Lillie Hitchcock Coit, likewise, “wore the pants of the family” whenever she wished to go out to play poker and drink bourbon with the boys from Knickerbocker Engine Company #5.¹⁰⁴

There may be some truth to this “progress narrative,” but this telling cannot paint the whole picture. If it were universally true, why would some parents dress up their sons as daughters? By way of illustration, Boag tells the story of “M” whose mother was so disappointed that her third child was yet another son that she decided to withhold the truth of M’s sex to her husband and raised the child as a girl. One is tempted to say that such sartorial habits were merely a product of overbearing parents, but doing so would deny the self-fashioned identities and agencies constructed by such individuals. M, case in point, asserts that their “almost uncontrollable desire to wear woman’s attire” was their own, and not their mother’s. They went on to say that when “so dressed, I can always think more logically, feel less encumbered, solve difficult problems in a manner next to impossible under any other conditions.”¹⁰⁵ Such statements, like Matson’s insistence that wearing male garb was “natural” to him, suggest that folx like Matson and M were able to tailor reasonably steady constructions of selfhood vis-à-vis their attire.

¹⁰³ “Masquerading in Male Attire,” *Los Angeles Herald*, 27 November 1903, p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ Harris and Cohen, 36-40; Green.

¹⁰⁵ Boag, *Re-Dressing*, 61.

Matson's determination to continue to dress in male attire, despite all of the unwanted celebrity it had garnered him in 1895, indicates that Matson truly saw himself as male. Not only that, he considered himself a *straight* male. His statements to the press show just as much. Remember Matson had complained "that a *man* cannot have any peace" and "must be badgered to death by reporters" in reference to the *Call* reporting his arrest. Remember, also, how Matson intimated to law enforcement officials that he was straight. It is interesting how Matson's claim to freedom from the press here partially rests on his heterosexual White manhood, as if a woman or any other individual could not rightfully (or would have less legitimacy) in claiming such a right. This appeal to individual liberty speaks to one of the many ways in which citizenship was coded as a uniquely heterosexual White male enterprise, a point that I shall expound upon later in this section.¹⁰⁶ At the turn-of-the-century, however, threats to male citizenship emerged, and chief among those threats was the rise of the "New Woman."

The "New Woman" was a figure constructed in opposition to the Victorian Woman. There was, and is, no standard definition of who constituted a "New Woman." Generally speaking, the term refers to those who pressed for sociopolitical reform (be it through voting rights or against oppressive sartorial customs), pursued economic independence, and sought sexual subjectivity divorced from reproduction. The writer Randolph Bourne once wrote glowingly of the "New Women of New York":

They are all social workers, or magazine writers in a small way. They are decidedly emancipated and advanced ... They have an amazing combination of wisdom and youthfulness, of humor and ability ... They are of course all self-supporting and independent; and they enjoy the adventure of life; the full, reliant, audacious way in which they go about makes you wonder if the new woman isn't to be a very splendid sort of person.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Canaday.

¹⁰⁷ As quoted in Christine Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000), 231.

For some women, living up to the ideal was a source of empowerment. Other women, in addition to a lot of men, thought that a “New Woman” was merely one who had failed to live up to standards of respectable motherhood and abandoned their rightful homemaking duties. Suffragists, temperance reformers, and literally any woman who held a job, could at some point or another be considered a “New Woman.”

One figure that stands out amongst the numerous “New Woman” archetypes is the “mannish lesbian.” The mannish lesbian was a queer subject typically constructed by newspapers and sexologists as mentally unstable and violent. As Lisa Duggan has shown through her analysis of the trial of Alice Mitchell, who, in 1892 at the age of nineteen, murdered her seventeen-year-old lover Freda Ward, lesbian subjects at the turn-of-the-century were predictably pathologized. In Mitchell’s love-murder, for instance, sexologists quickly jumped on the sensational coverage and attempted to utilize the case to bolster their own theories. By way of illustration Havelock Ellis, in the first American edition of *Sexual Inversion*, explained that Alice Mitchell was a “typical invert of a very pronounced kind” and that “there have been numerous cases in America more recently.”¹⁰⁸ In Duggan’s analysis, popular accounts of Ward’s murder and Mitchell’s trial featured remarkably similar structural elements. One key element of this storytelling effort was the theme of cross-gender identification and cross-dressing. Public commentators often implored family members, especially adult women, to recognize these “red flags” of improper gender identification and constrain their daughters within the confines of Victorian Womanhood. Failure to do so would result in a tragic story the like of Mitchell’s love-murder.¹⁰⁹ “The stories were thus structured,” Duggan writes, “to emphasize, ultimately, that no real love story was possible.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Lisa Duggan, “The Trials of Alice Mitchell: Sensationalism, Sexology, and the Lesbian Subject in Turn-of-the-Century America,” *Signs* 18, no. 4 (1993), 794-795.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 798-799.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 808.

With this in mind, let us return to Matson. As one may recall, Matson was chided by the *Call* for being “unladylike.” By way of insult, the reporter insisted: “Louisa came closer to being the “new woman” than any of her sex.”¹¹¹ From the *Call*'s perspective, Matson is the epitome of the mannish lesbian – she was criminal, she stepped out of line from Victorian notions of womanhood, and she had an “inverted” desire for women. As Boag describes it, sexual inversion as a term was “inclusive of a broad range of sexualities and gender identities not in keeping with what was considered “normal,” “acceptable,” and heterosexual.”¹¹² The overriding fear in this case was that the mannish lesbian “might very well sexually transform into a man, casting her spell on other women.”¹¹³ As one might expect, the *Call* went on to lambaste Matson for his engagement with Fairweather: “The fair one actually had the consummate nerve to court a school marm and went so far as to propose marriage... she simply needed money and thought a proposal was the best way to get the coin. Her unladylike conduct brought her within the meshes of the law.”¹¹⁴ In other words, Matson, who the newspaper considered a woman, should not have had the “consummate nerve” to court a woman. Such desire remained squarely within the privileges of proper manhood.

Contemporaries likely considered Matson an invert, a disturbed subject, a “problem body.” Terms of the like all served the purpose of pathologizing Matson’s (and others’) sexual/gender nonconformity. In some ways, such pathologization neutered the troubling effects that Matson’s nonconformity could have on the sexual order. By regarding Matson’s “problem body” as illegitimate, newspapers and law enforcement were able to clearly communicate to law-abiding citizens the parameters of acceptable behavior and the penalties for violating gender/sexual norms. As Sears points out, anti-cross-dressing law and the freak show did similar work in this regard. Both displayed “problem bodies, in courtrooms and police photographs, as criminal nuisances and

¹¹¹ “Louisa Matson Fails to Move Judge Mogan,” *San Francisco Call*, 29 November 1903, p. 38.

¹¹² Boag, *Re-Dressing*, 57.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹¹⁴ “Louisa Matson Fails to Move Judge Mogan,” *San Francisco Call*, 29 November 1903, p. 38.

sensational freaks,” thus having overwhelming “normalizing effects” in articulating what was deemed outside of appropriate conduct.¹¹⁵ It is unsurprising, then, why Matson was recruited into freak show entertainment as soon as he was released from jail. By putting individuals like Matson on display as “criminal nuisances and sensational freaks,” law enforcement officials and dime show managers alike managed to call the public’s attention to a “problem body” deemed outside of proper citizenship.

One could read Matson’s identification with heterosexual White manhood in myriad, contradictory ways. On one hand, Matson’s performance of manhood reinforced emerging understandings of White masculinity and, one can argue, ultimately did not challenge the binary sex/gender systems. In identifying as man, Matson adopted a wide range of mannerisms that were associated with, if not completely cordoned off as being within the exclusive domain of, heterosexual White masculinity. As the *San Francisco Call* had reported in 1895, Matson, while in jail, had shown his “ability to drink the best brands of whisky, let loose at times the artillery of profanity and could tell a racy story with the best of the boys.”¹¹⁶ The *San Jose Evening News* concurred, further adding that Matson loved billiards, took pleasure in fishing and hunting, and had also developed a habit of smoking a pipe.¹¹⁷ As Halberstam once claimed, “Masculinity... becomes legible as masculinity where and when it leaves the White male middle-class body.”¹¹⁸

In some ways then, akin to how vaudeville female impersonators like Eltinge sought to define respectable femininity through their cross-gender performance, Matson may have bolstered dominant constructions of respectable White masculinity through his physical embodiment of manhood. One should recall that Matson predicated his appeal to freedom on his straight White manliness, lamenting: “It is a shame – I have been straight for seventeen years, and before that

¹¹⁵ Sears, 105.

¹¹⁶ “Louisa Has Her Say,” *San Francisco Call*, 28 January 1895, p. 1.

¹¹⁷ “Gave Up A Secret,” *San Jose Evening News*, 28 January 1895, p. 4.

¹¹⁸ Jack Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 2.

doesn't make any difference. I have been straight all my life, and this is the first time I have ever been in trouble."¹¹⁹ The *Los Angeles Herald* put it bluntly: "Matson... adopted the manners of a man."¹²⁰ Indeed, if even Matson's most vocal critics could recognize that Matson had lived up to what it means to "be a man," how can Matson's identification with the male sex subvert the cohesive category of man as sex?

On the other hand, one could read Matson's insistence on being a heterosexual male as an emancipatory project in which Matson was able to demonstrate the fluidity of gender expression and form his own gender-rooted subjectivity – a deeply subversive act that has the potential to destabilize binaries and spotlight the impossibility of categorization. For one, it subverts the notion that only men can define what appropriate gender expression (both feminine and masculine) can look like. Moreover, Matson's ability to achieve the ideal standards of masculinity forced public officials and readers of his story to reflect upon the performativity of gender and contemplate whether their formulation of what acts and behaviors correlate with what sex and/or gender was accurate. If, as the newspapers put it, a woman could so easily adopt the manners of a man, what does it mean to be a man? What does it mean to be a woman, provided that Matson was still a woman? Most newspapers were adamant about referring to Matson as "Luisa/Louisa" and using she/her/hers pronoun, but it seems clear that Matson's identification with manhood deeply troubled gendered assumptions within newspaper coverage. One *San Francisco Call* reporter even slipped into using he/him/his pronouns on one occasion, demonstrating the profoundly disruptive effects Matson's association with manhood had on stable assumptions surrounding gender.¹²¹

Contrary to Matson's wishes, *San Francisco Call* reporters did, in fact, draw a likeness of Matson and published it in their paper. The sketch was titled "Milton B. Matson." Ironically enough,

¹¹⁹ "Louisa Has Her Say," *San Francisco Call*, 28 January 1895, p. 1.

¹²⁰ "Louisa Matson Fails to Move Judge Mogan," *San Francisco Call*, 29 November 1903, p. 38.

¹²¹ "His engagement ...": "Louisa Has Her Say," *San Francisco Call*, 28 January 1895, p. 1.

while disrespecting Matson's wishes to be left out of the papers, the *San Francisco Call* simultaneously honored another one of Matson's wishes – he was left alone, albeit on the front cover of a widely circulated newspaper, as a man. All in all, the *San Francisco Call* seems to agree that Matson was rightfully Milton B. Matson – and Milton B. Matson was rightfully a man.¹²²

Conclusion

Anti-cross-dressing laws functioned to make bodies legible through sex/gender binaries and to construe the regulation, and subsequent disciplining, of nonconforming bodies within the realm of state authority. State regulation of bodily dress vis-à-vis sexual identities bolstered emergent dimorphic models of sex and gender identity, which assumed the body to be a legible text from which one could “read” sex and gender. Without such laws, Sergeant Kavanaugh would have had no grounds to violently tear away Livernash's clothing. Similarly, it is unlikely that authorities would have been so hell bent on determining Matson's “true sex” had such laws not been in effect, positing gender nonconformity as something that the state needed to control.

The different ways in which anti-cross-dressing law was deployed is telling. Why, for instance, was Lillie Hitchcock Coit never arrested on cross-dressing-related charges despite the well-known fact that she frequently dressed as a man? One would be on rather safe ground to speculate that such omission on the part of law enforcement speaks in large part to the class-based (and implicitly race-based) privilege Coit experienced as a well-liked socialite. This speculation would further be evidenced by how San Franciscans, apparently, forgot that Livernash, a prominent newspaper editor of a well-regarded paper, was arrested for masquerading in female attire in 1891 and elected him to U.S. Congress just a little over a decade later. Both Coit and Livernash seem to have been shielded from more intense public scrutiny by virtue of their elite, White social status. The

¹²² “Louisa Has Her Say,” *San Francisco Call*, 28 January 1895, p. 1. See Appendix C for the sketch of Matson.

non-prosecution of Coit, in addition to the mitigated outcry against Coit and Lovernash's acts of "deviance," speaks to one of the insidious ways in which gender normativity was coded as a White upper-/middle-class project. Namely, like the White men who donned black face in minstrel shows and impersonated women on the vaudeville circuit, it appears that one need not face the full force of law with one's acts of "deviance" around the turn-of-the-twentieth-century, so long as one was White and well-off.

One can also see how the deployment of anti-cross-dressing law in the case of Coit, or lack thereof, plants the seeds of the "progress narrative" and begins to enable the deliberate forgetting of sexual/gender nonconformity. Readers may have noticed that Matson was never formally charged with the crime of cross-dressing – in 1895 Matson was arrested and charged with obtaining money under false pretenses, in 1903 Judge Mogan found Matson guilty of the catchall crime "vagrancy." Anti-cross-dressing law functioned somewhat paradoxically in this manner. On the one hand, the law defined Matson and Coit as illegitimate "problem bodies" that needed to be considered outside the realm of proper White middle-class citizenship. On the other hand, the lack of enforcement in these two cases indicates how state authorities may not have considered Coit or Matson true "problems." Perhaps they too recognized the tremendous freedoms experienced by men, and thus did not find the desire to be one all too problematic. In this regard, we must remember that desiring to perform ideal standards of White manhood could bolster the authority of the White male body. Especially in the case of Matson, who predicated his claim to citizenship vis-à-vis being a heterosexual White man, "women dressed as men" signaled to contemporaries that the male body was a source of power and emancipation. Understanding this interpretation can support historians seeking to understand how sexual/gender nonconformity has been naturalized and, subsequently, erased from the historical record.

The divergent tones in which newspapers reported on the stories mentioned in this paper are indicative of race, sex, and gender based divisions along which modern sexuality emerged. The racialized portrayal of So Git stands out, in particular, in how newspapers directly associated Git's cross-dressing act with racialized deviance. As previously argued, gender normality at the turn-of-the-twentieth-century was largely associated with Whiteness, whereas gender abnormality was coded as nonwhite. Anti-cross-dressing laws should thus be understood as one of the ways in which a hierarchy of bodies was established. If one met respectable gender standards (read: straight White middle-class), one was a legitimate citizen of the state. If one's body did not lend itself to legibility and clear respectable gender identification (read: nonwhite, queer), one was disciplined by law. In this way, cross-dressing law and incipient White-dominated gender standards served to create race-based divisions as modern sexuality emerged.

Contrasting the newspaper portrayals of Livernash and Matson would fruitfully reveal the sex/gender-based fissures that surfaced with the emergence of modern sexuality. Matson was lambasted as a "New Woman," depicted by newspapers as an "inverted mannish lesbian." Livernash, likewise, was called "a strange freak" following his arrest at the Oakland ferry entrance. The difference, nonetheless, lay in the details. No newspaper ever questioned Livernash's sexuality or gender identity, whereas almost all of the newspapers went into extensive detail about Matson's "mannish" behaviors. One might discount this disparity by insisting that the scale of newspaper coverage correlates with the perceived "stability" of identity. That would be to say that newspapers had no incentive to question Livernash's gender or sexuality because he was merely masquerading as a woman as a "lark," whereas detailing Matson's masculine inclinations made total sense given that he truly considered himself a man.

While I admit that this could be part of the story of why reporters made the decisions that they did, I would also assert that the discrepancy in how newspapers covered Livernash and Matson

point to a significant sex/gender-based distinction in gender performance. What I am suggesting is that turn-of-the-twentieth-century contemporaries, in light of both the popularity of female impersonation and the unwelcome rise of the “New Woman,” were more likely to accept men performing womanhood than women performing manhood. Following the vaudeville critic who claimed men were the best people to define ideal womanhood, the power to define paradigm gender ideals at the turn-of-the-twentieth-century belonged primarily to straight White men (who were born men). As such, a well-off White male newspaper editor’s act of “larking” as a black woman was fully compatible with his heterosexual White manhood, and thus neither his sexuality or gender identity needed to be questioned. A “woman” living their entire life as a man, however, was overstepping the boundaries of acceptable womanhood and needed to have their sexuality and gender identities called into question.

Historians can learn a lot from looking at the policing of “cross-dressers” like Edward James Livernash and Milton Matson. Through an exploration of their full-embodied lives, I hope I have demonstrated how a close encounter with the “cross-dresser” reveals the impossibility of categorization, particularly vis-à-vis female/male, feminine/masculine, and homo/heterosexual binaries. How would one elect to categorize Matson, for instance? A woman with inverted sexual desire? A homosexual masculine woman? A trans-man (a term that did not emerge until the mid-twentieth-century)? A cross-dresser? But then what “lines” would Matson be crossing?

One of my initial worries in doing this project was that calling the people who appear in this paper “cross-dressers,” when not a single one of them would have referred to themselves as such, would constitute a naming violence. Throughout history, gender and sexually nonconforming folk have all too often become familiar with being misnamed, be it when a stranger uses a derogatory slur (e.g. “fag,” “dyke,” “shemale”) or when family members misgender trans-folk in death. And yet, although it would be misguided to consider any of the individuals mentioned in this paper as a

“cross-dresser,” one cannot ignore how they all “crossed the line” in some way. That is to say that instead of conceptualizing their transgressions as one that defied sex/gender-binaries *per se*, one may be better off contemplating the broad array of manners in which the actions of Matson, Coit, Git, and Livernash breached incipient and interlocking turn-of-the-twentieth-century norms of sex, gender, race, and class.

There are many potential avenues for further research in examining how the modern sexuality system emerged unevenly along the axes of gender, race, and class at the turn-of-the-twentieth-century. For instance, one would suspect that detailed investigation of Chinese “cross-dressers” in the Bay Area might reveal that they were policed in unique ways given the contexts of Yellow Peril and Chinese exclusion. One could also further explore how state authorities and media outlets, outside of sensationalized reports of arresting “cross-dressers,” encouraged public scrutiny in ensuring gender-legibility of bodies. There is, indeed, much more work that needs to be done in our quest to queer history itself.

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Appendix A



Sketch of Edward James Livernash from: "Claims Exclusion as the Right of California," *Los Angeles Herald*, 26 January 1902.

Appendix B



Miss George Jones unmasked.

“Miss George Jones unmasked,” a rough rendering of Livernash’s 1891 arrest from: “In Female Attire: A Masquerader Captured at the Ferry,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 27 September 1891, p. 12.

Appendix C



Sketch of Milton B. Matson from: “Louisa Has Her Say,” *San Francisco Call*, 28 January 1895, p. 1.