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Guardians at the gate: quarantine and racialism in two Pacific Rim port cities, 1870–1914

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the ambivalent relationship that San Francisco and Darwin developed with Asia during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On the one hand they presented themselves as gateways that facilitated trade with Asia. On the other hand they acted as sentinels that protected Europeans from Asian immigration. This quirky behaviour is encapsulated in the quarantine regulations that were applied in both ports to Asian commodities and people. The two case studies suggest a broader paradox in the history of port cities. Their prosperity and vitality rested upon the free flow of goods and people, but those flows generated enormous frictions.

The historical development of port cities in North America and Australia rests upon a paradox, and that paradox can best be illustrated by looking at the ambivalent relationship that these cities developed with Asia. The European nations that took root in the New World were entrepreneurial free market societies that vigorously sought to integrate themselves within global commodity flows. They regarded their port cities as economic gateways to this global trading system, and referred to the shipping routes that these cities straddled as 'the World's Great Highway'.[1] However, while promoting the uninterrupted flow of marketable goods, these societies sought to control the movement of peoples different to themselves. Trade with Asia was to be encouraged, but Asian culture and Asian people were to be kept at a distance. This paradox is explored using two case studies from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: San Francisco and Darwin.

It is a seemingly odd comparison. The two places are scarcely comparable in terms of population size and economic transactions. San Francisco was already by 1870 a significant port city, with large shipping volumes and commodity flows. Some 150,000 people lived there in 1870, increasing to almost 300,000 by 1890, and to 417,000 people in 1910. By 1914

[1] *Forty-Third Annual Report of the Chamber of Commerce of San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1893), 3.

San Francisco comprised some half a million people, and in its bustling harbour maritime quarantine officials inspected 629 vessels during the year.[2]

Darwin, by contrast, was a tiny settlement with only intermittent shipping contact with the outside world. In 1870 the place was only several months old as a European settlement, and comprised a South Australian government party of under 50 people. A decade later it had increased to 200 European inhabitants and almost as many Chinese and Malays. Darwin's population rose to almost 5,000 people in 1890, boosted by the Northern Territory gold rushes, but declined to under 1,000 permanent residents by 1910. Its population did not increase significantly until after the Second World War. Shipping volumes were likewise a fraction of San Francisco's. During the 1870s Darwin was visited on average by only one steamer per quarter; by the early 1880s ships from three steamer lines docked in Darwin at three-weekly intervals. Complaints were still being aired during the early twentieth century about the long intervals between visits by mail steamers, which from 'a business point of view [were] most inconvenient and unsatisfactory'.[3]

But Darwin, although tiny, had significance out of proportion to its size in national debate about Australian federation and the future direction of economic development. In 1899 it was called 'undoubtedly the front door of Australia'.[4] Darwin distils and highlights the essentials of my argument. And in so doing, it overlaps interestingly with San Francisco. Darwin and San Francisco display remarkably similar viewpoints, aims and emphases.

Bustling San Francisco and tiny Darwin were both acutely conscious of the global commodity flows and trading networks upon which their development rested. They had to tap into those flows in order to prosper. Both therefore encouraged and celebrated the *closeness* of their contacts with overseas destinations, and the rapidity of the exchanges that new technologies and business methods made possible. Darwin was a key repeater station on the Overland Telegraph Line that, completed in 1872, linked Australia to the world. Rapid communication hinged upon its single copper wire, and increasingly the verb 'to wire' replaced that 'to write' in government and business correspondence files as the staccato narrative forms of the telegram replaced that of the letter. The new dynamics were still more evident in San Francisco. In 1886 the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce revelled in the city's position as 'the great commercial and manufacturing city on the Pacific Coast, . . . in immediate and close communication with all the domestic and foreign commercial

[2] Excellent historical overviews of San Francisco are provided by W. Issel and R.W. Cherny, *San Francisco 1865–1932: Politics, Power, and Urban Development* (Berkeley, 1986), and G. Barth, *Instant Cities: Urbanization and the Rise of San Francisco and Denver* (Albuquerque, 1988).

[3] *Adelaide Advertiser*, 7 Sep. 1909, 'Northern Territory'.

[4] *Ibid.*, 12 Jun. 1899, 'Across the continent'.

centers bordering the Pacific'.[5] At the turn of the century, promoters of Darwin marvelled that the latest steamers and railways had collapsed the time needed to travel between London via Singapore to Darwin to the 'incredibly short' time of 14 days.[6]

For both cities, this *connectedness* with the outside world was especially emphasized in terms of trade with Asian port cities. In 1887, for example, the South Australian Government Resident (the chief executive officer) in Darwin advised the Minister for the Northern Territory that 'Geographical position gives Pt. Darwin commanding position on north coast Australia and in connection with Eastern Asia & Islands.'[7] The governor of South Australia later called Darwin 'the key to the East'.[8]

Although embracing close trading links, both cities were ambivalent about Asian migration. In San Francisco the Chamber of Commerce, which in 1886 applauded the closeness of trade contacts with Asia, simultaneously passed a resolution calling for tougher Chinese immigration restriction laws.[9] At its annual banquet in 1887 the Chamber's president, W.W. Morrow, expressed disappointment that Congress had not enacted tougher laws, and urged that the Chamber should 'protest against this country being made the dumping-ground for refuse and bad material, coming either from Asia or Europe'.[10] In South Australia, one of the parliamentary representatives for the Northern Territory likewise sought in 1896 to develop the cattle trade through Darwin to Asian markets, while simultaneously declaring that the 'proximity of the Eastern nations, with their teeming populations, to the uninhabited Northern Territory, was a danger to the rest of Australia'.[11]

Thus San Francisco and Darwin had two contradictory roles: they were simultaneously gateways and sentinels. When Morrow in 1887 urged the enactment of legislation to exclude Chinese, he pledged that 'California *stands guard* on the Pacific shore.'[12] In 1887 the *Adelaide Register* likewise called Darwin 'the *sentinel* guarding the anti-Chinese interests of the whole of Australia'.[13]

[5] *Thirty-Sixth Annual Report of the Chamber of Commerce of San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1886), 25.
[6] S. Newland, *Land-Grant Railway across Central Australia. The Northern Territory of the State of South Australia as a Field for Enterprise and Capital* (Adelaide, 1902), 7.
[7] J.L. Parsons to J.F.C. Johnson, 28 Jan. 1887, State Records of South Australia (SRSA), GRS 1 (Letters Received in the Office of the Minister Controlling the Northern Territory), unit 32, item 93/1887.
[8] Newland, *Land-Grant Railway across Central Australia*, 8.
[9] *Thirty-Sixth Annual Report*, 27–8.
[10] *Thirty-Eighth Annual Report of the Chamber of Commerce of San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1888), 43.
[11] 'Mr. Griffiths, M.P., on the Northern Territory', 20 Oct. 1896, Newspaper Cuttings Relating to the Northern Territory, SRSA, GRS 9, vol. 5.
[12] *Thirty-Eighth Annual Report*, 41–4 (my italics).
[13] *Adelaide Register*, 19 Aug. 1893, 'The Chinese Question' (my italics).

San Francisco

In 1899 the president of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce called the city 'our principal port upon the Pacific and the gate-way to the Orient'.[14] The San Francisco Board of Trade elaborated upon this characterization in 1901, calling the city the nation's 'Western Gate' and its 'natural gateway to the Orient'. The Board asserted that 'As New York is the gateway on the Atlantic side, so San Francisco is the gateway on the Pacific side, and the greater portion of the vast commerce of the Pacific is destined to pass through the Golden Gate.'[15] Such rhetoric was grounded in hard-headed economics: the quest to dominate market flows of commodities, overshadow competitors in other cities, tap overseas markets and make them dependencies. The San Francisco Merchants Exchange, in its first report in 1902, explicitly stated that its aim was to achieve a 'dominating position' in global commodity flows, so as to make San Francisco 'one of the greatest, if not the greatest commercial city of the world'.[16]

San Francisco's business leaders worked tirelessly to achieve that object. They lobbied effectively to boost the volume of shipping using the port, to expand the city's handling facilities and to fine-tune quarantine procedures so as to expedite the flow of commodities. When it became evident in 1887 that the city's wharves were insufficient to handle speedily the increasing volume of cargo, the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce stressed that the wharves must be urgently enlarged: 'Economy in the movement of merchandise is an absolute necessity . . .; a trifling difference in this respect will determine the highway of commerce, and make or mar the commercial prosperity of any seaport.'[17] The Merchants Exchange likewise emphasized in 1907 that the 'future of our city is very largely dependent upon the commerce that seeks and leaves our harbor, and every effort must be brought towards enabling this to move expeditiously and economically'.[18]

This entrepreneurialism was mediated (and limited) by cultural influences. It was grounded in a sense of superiority towards, and disdain for, the Asian nations with whom they sought to trade. This stance is highlighted by the Merchants Exchange, which announced in 1902 that San Francisco 'is the outlet and gateway for our whole country to the trade of the Pacific islands and the Oriental countries, teeming with six hundred millions of people, emerging from their seclusion, soon to adopt the improved customs developed in the more enterprising and progressive countries of Europe and the United States'.[19] Such arrogance

[14] *Fiftieth Annual Report of the Chamber of Commerce of San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1900), 20.
[15] *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Trade of San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1901), 20.
[16] First Annual Report of the Merchants Exchange (San Francisco, 1902), 11–12.
[17] *Thirty-Eighth Annual Report*, 4.
[18] Annual Report of the Merchants Exchange for the Year Ending Jun. 30, 1907 (San Francisco, 1907), 8.
[19] *First Annual Report of the Merchants Exchange*, 12.

was embedded in the broader culture of the city. Bigotry towards Asian culture was deep-seated. It is most evident in the characterizations of San Francisco's Chinatown as an underworld.[20] After the outbreak of bubonic plague in 1900, Chinatown was equated with New York's most notorious slum, Five Points, and there were widespread calls for large-scale slum clearance so as to achieve 'the dispersion of the human scum' who crowded there.[21]

San Francisco business leaders championed modern scientific quarantine methods as the means of facilitating trade with Asia while containing Asian immigration and culture. The immediate objective of quarantine control was disease prevention. Trade routes doubled as passageways for infection, and port cities bore the brunt (in terms of sickness and death, and also disruption to business) of epidemic diseases.

Infectious disease was seen by Americans as a *foreign* threat. The National Board of Health cautioned in 1885, as it monitored the spread of epidemic cholera through Europe, that 'the modern emigrant ship is a fertile field for the cultivation of pestilence'.[22] Whereas East coast port cities worried about diseases imported mainly from Europe, the Pacific coast worried about Asia. The San Francisco Chamber of Commerce cautioned in 1889 that ships carrying disease frequently arrived in the city, and from there the overland railway network could broadcast infection across the nation.[23] These words of warning had been triggered by a major disease emergency in San Francisco, starting in 1887, when smallpox was brought to the city from Hong Kong. Over 600 cases were admitted to the city Pesthouse during the epidemic. The San Francisco health officer asserted in 1888 that 'China ... is a hot-bed of disease, and against infection from that country we must be continually on our guard.'[24] A memorial from the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce in April 1888 likewise labelled China 'the home of small-pox'.[25] Anxieties at a national level about the likelihood of a cholera pandemic spreading from China and eastern Europe led to an emergency presidential quarantine proclamation in 1892 that, in the words of the *New York Tribune*, 'has shut the gates of every port in the United States against the cholera'.[26]

[20] See for example C. Abel-Musgrave, *The Cholera in San Francisco. A Contribution to the History of Corruption in California* (San Francisco, 1885), 4, 5, 17. See Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850–1943: A Trans-Pacific Community* (Stanford, 2000).

[21] *San Francisco Chronicle*, 1 Jul. 1900, 'Widen streets of Chinatown and purge place of its evils'. See A. Mayne, *The Imagined Slum: Newspaper Representation in Three Cities 1870–1914* (Leicester, 1993), especially ch. 3.

[22] *Annual Report of the National Board of Health for the Year 1884* (Washington, DC, 1885), 23.

[23] *Thirty-Ninth Annual Report of the Chamber of Commerce of San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1889), 19.

[24] Health Officer's Report, 1 Jul. 1888, in San Francisco Board of Supervisors, *San Francisco Municipal Reports, 1887–1888*, 469.

[25] *Thirty-Ninth Annual Report*, 19.

[26] *New York Tribune*, 2 Sep. 1892, 'A bar at the gate'.

Such a slamming shut of the gates of US port cities was the last thing that shippers and traders wanted. History showed them that heavy-handed 40-day quarantine prohibitions on the movement of suspected ships paralysed trade, and that hastily contrived disinfection and detention measures were ineffective and costly to business. They remembered that during the 1870s commerce had been disrupted in the Mississippi and Gulf states by the hotchpotch of 'shotgun quarantines' that had been imposed by local authorities in inept response to epidemics of yellow fever, and which left New Orleans 'hermetically sealed, its commerce destroyed, its industries paralyzed'.[27] Californians hoped to avoid a repetition of that disaster. As the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce complained during the smallpox crisis in 1888, 'Commerce has been and is seriously hampered; travel impeded, and the public health constantly endangered, by the absence of proper Quarantine at this port.'[28] When this smallpox emergency was almost immediately followed by the threat of epidemic cholera, the president of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce observed in 1891 that the city's existence rested on commerce, 'but its usefulness may be greatly sacrificed and diminished by hampering its commerce with unwise and oppressive laws and regulations'.[29]

No quarantine regulations existed in California until 1865, and during the 1870s and 1880s were applied intermittently by city and state authorities. The costliness and ineffectiveness of these measures were demonstrated in 1876 and again in 1880. In 1876 a smallpox epidemic in San Francisco, blamed on Chinese immigrants, resulted in a quarantine crackdown and the detention of 28 ships. In 1880 smallpox – again brought to the city by Chinese immigrants – ignited an epidemic of some 500 cases in Chinatown and caused over 90 deaths. In the absence of adequate quarantine facilities, the shipping companies were obliged to shoulder the expense of hiring detention hulks for Chinese immigrants and crews, and of fumigating the quarantined ships. The *San Francisco Western Lancet* railed that quarantine protection had failed because the 'law has been allowed to remain a dead letter, no money having been appropriated for the purpose . . . , and [this] entails a heavy and unfair expense upon the steamship compan[ies]'.[30]

This unsatisfactory state of affairs was repeated in 1887. Shippers and merchants had had enough. In 1888, against a backdrop of warnings that cholera had become epidemic in Hong Kong and other Chinese ports, a crisis meeting was organized between the city and state health authorities,

[27] *Democrat*, 15 Apr. 1879, 'The Board of Health and the Sanitary Association'; *Times*, 18 Apr. 1879, 'National quarantine', both in New Orleans Auxiliary Sanitary Association, Cuttings from Newspapers, vol. 1 (1879–80), National Library of Medicine (NLM).
[28] *Thirty-Ninth Annual Report*, 19.
[29] Forty-First Annual Report of the Chamber of Commerce of San Francisco (San Francisco, 1891), 7.
[30] *San Francisco Western Lancet*, vol. 9 no. 1 (Mar. 1880), 'Our quarantine'.

the Board of Trade, the Board of Commerce and Federal representatives. They agreed to request the Federal health authorities to establish a national quarantine station in San Francisco Harbour. Enabling legislation was passed in August 1888, a site on Angel Island was eventually selected and construction work began in 1890. The station was opened, still incomplete, in April 1891, just in time to process ships arriving from China and Japan that were believed to be infected by cholera.

San Francisco businessmen applauded this development, and carefully monitored the station's operations to ensure that it would 'facilitate commerce instead of retarding it, or placing impediments in its way'.[31] They later urged upgrades and expansion of the quarantine station to facilitate the smooth flow of commodities. The US surgeon-general called the resulting high-tech quarantine facility at Angel Island 'one of the most complete quarantine establishments in the world'.[32] When bubonic plague appeared in San Francisco during 1900–04, and reappeared in 1907–09, the city's business and political elite turned to the Federal health authorities based at Angel Island to restore the reputation of a port that was 'being advertised throughout the world as a pest-ravaged city'.[33] The resulting development of streamlined methods and technologies for the rapid inspection of shipping, and if necessary the speedy treatment and unloading of their cargoes, cemented Angel Island's reputation as a model example of scientific quarantine methods. Angel Island showcased the precautionary procedures that port cities needed in order to keep the gateways open, and the commodity flows moving freely to market. But the cultural blinkers towards Asia persisted, notwithstanding the legitimization of Federal quarantine in the names of science, commerce and modernity.

Ambivalence to Asia is evident in part in the manner quarantine officials dealt with the importation of commodities that had a marginal place in European markets. This can be seen in the perplexed interchanges between medical officials during the 1890s and early 1900s regarding appropriate fumigation procedures for commodities intended for Asian residents in the USA. These products included ginger, yams, lily bulbs, dried ducks, dried fish and dried ducks' gizzards. In January 1900, for example, the surgeon-general asked his officers in San Francisco, 'Are you disinfecting water chestnuts, salt eggs packed in black loam, yams and lily bulbs, and similar fresh fruit produce from China and Japan?'[34] In December 1903

[31] Goodall Perkins and Company (for Pacific Coast Steamship Company) to W. Wyman, 17 Jul. 1896, enclosure in M.J. Rosenau to W. Wyman, 7 Aug. 1896, Marine Hospital Service: Incoming Correspondence, San Francisco, National Archives, box 120.

[32] W. Wyman to the chairman of the US Senate Committee on Appropriations, 20 Apr. 1896, in National Archives RG 90, file 16090, box 784.

[33] *San Francisco Chronicle*, 19 Apr. 1908, 'Many opposed to rat crusade'. See *ibid.*, 22 Mar. 1900, 'Health Board brings calamity on this city'.

[34] W. Wyman to J.J. Kinyoun, telegram, 18 Jan. 1900, in National Archives RG 90, box 14, vol. 2.

the medical officer commanding the Angel Island Quarantine Station, Dr Hugh Cumming (who would become US surgeon-general in 1920), noted laconically in the station journal that he had inspected the hold of one ship and uncovered 'uncertified "Yokohama Curios"'.[35] However as the US market for such curios grew, treasury officials began to worry that the prohibition applied by San Francisco quarantine officials against Asian imports was hurting city businesses by switching this emerging Asian trade to ports in Oregon and Canada.[36]

Ambivalence towards Asia was expressed most clearly in the treatment of people – as opposed to commodities – from Asia. The threat of a global pandemic of cholera in the early 1890s led the US to establish screening facilities at the ports of embarkation. At Hong Kong, Shanghai and Amoy, and the Japanese ports of Kobe and Yokohama, right through to the First World War I, all steerage passengers were medically examined by US Public Health Service (PHS)[37] doctors, and compulsorily bathed. Their clothing and baggage were simultaneously disinfected (initially by sulphur fumigation; from 1900 by high-pressure steam). The PHS surgeon in charge at Hong Kong conceded in 1904 that these intrusive measures were 'a valuable public-health measure . . . But the examination unintentionally embarrasses native-born and naturalized Chinese citizens of the United States.'[38]

Upon arrival at San Francisco the passengers were again lined up and inspected as the ships steamed into port. As the *San Francisco Post* reported in 1911, 'The first thing a transpacific passenger has to do after a big Oriental liner arrives in the port of San Francisco is to stick out his tongue'! Waiting for this new hurdle, 'Patiently he stands while the deft digits off the inspecting officer snap back his eyelids, feel for enlarged glands, and hold his twitching tongue while they explore the caverns of the larynx.'[39] Any suspicious symptom, and they were sent to Angel Island for further inspection. Here Asian steerage passengers, mostly Chinese, Japanese and Koreans, were routinely bathed and their belongings were again disinfected. Almost 17,000 people were inspected by San Francisco

[35] San Francisco Quarantine Station, station journals, vol. 1, 20 Dec. 1903, in NLM MS F 81.
[36] Special Agent J.D. Power to secretary of the treasury, 29 Aug. 1900, National Archives RG 90, file 5608, box 645.
[37] The US Marine Hospital Service became the instrument of federal maritime quarantine regulation during the 1870s. It became the Public Health and Marine-Hospital Service in 1902, and was renamed the Public Health Service in 1912. In this article I use the term PHS throughout.
[38] Assistant Surgeon M.J. White in *Annual Report of the Surgeon-General of the Public Health and Marine-Hospital Service of the United States for the Fiscal Year 1904* (Washington, DC, 1904), 221.
[39] *San Francisco Post*, 14 Aug. 1911, 'It's good night with Mr. Germ when he falls in with Uncle Sam's fumigators.'

immigration officers during 1914, and over 6,000 of them were sent to Angel Island for further examination.[40]

Angel Island was the hub of a quarantine system that had been designed to handle commodities, not immigrants. Its facilities were primitive for the accommodation and treatment of Asian crews and steerage passengers who were quarantined during disease emergencies. It was not at all equipped to process the regular flow of Asian immigrants.

When the quarantine station opened in 1891 it was equipped only for the disinfection of commodities. There was nothing for people. But by June 1891 the officer in charge reported that the station was 'very much over crowded with immigrants'.[41] Early in 1892, with steamers continuing to discharge hundreds of potentially infected passengers at the station, the Occidental and Oriental Steamship Company provided a hulk and built primitive barracks to house them. The officer in charge reported late in the year that 'The greater number of those held in quarantine at this station are Chinese and Japanese immigrants, and the accommodations have largely been made for the use of this class. Good buildings with fine finish are not needed by these people, as they soon deface and disfigure them. Cheap structures of plain material are better suited for their use.'[42] These facilities were taken over by the government in 1893, but were not equipped with adequate bunks till 1918. Eating facilities were also an afterthought. It was reported in 1900 that 'A shed has ... been erected ... which serves the purpose of a dining room for the Asiatic steerage passengers. Previous to the erection of this shed the Chinese took their meals in the open air, offtimes in a pouring rain.'[43] A purpose-built Immigration Station – likened to New York's Ellis Island – was opened on Angel Island in 1910. Even then, conditions were spartan. Protests about 'lousy food' and 'concentration camp' conditions led to federal troops being called in on several occasions during the 1920s.[44]

A scattering of other references to protest suggests that, although barely conceded by Americans, Asians frequently contested and subverted San Francisco's quarantine regime. American ambivalence was answered by Asian activism. The interruptions to Asian commodity imports by quarantine inspection triggered ongoing resentment by Asian merchants in San Francisco. The delays caused by the routine disinfecting of

[40] *Annual Report of the Surgeon-General of the Public Health Service of the United States for the Fiscal Year 1914* (Washington, DC, 1914), 220.

[41] P.H. Bailhache to W. Wyman, 2 Jun. 1891, in National Archives, Marine Hospital Service Incoming Correspondence, San Francisco, box 118.

[42] 'Report on National Quarantine Station, San Francisco', 18 Nov. 1892, in *Annual Report of the Surgeon-General of the Marine-Hospital Service of the United States for the Fiscal Year 1892* (Washington, DC, 1893), 84.

[43] *Annual Report of the Supervising Surgeon-General of the Marine-Hospital Service of the United States for the Fiscal Year 1900* (Washington, DC, 1900), 641.

[44] *Angel Island Immigration Station. Interviews with Chris Chow, Mr. Yuen, Ira & Ed Lee, 1977* (Combined Asian American Resources Oral History Project, and the Regents of the University of California, no date), Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.

'oriental' mails also caused 'much complaint on the part of merchants and others.'[45] In 1901 J.J. Kinyoun, the PHS surgeon in charge at Angel Island, conceded that Chinese importers had become 'very resentful' of the quarantine procedures, and 'use all the subtleties of their race in attempts to run the gauntlet of the quarantine without detection'.[46] Formal protests, clearly, were only one of various strategies used in opposition to quarantine procedures. Chinese anger came to a head when the outbreak of bubonic plague triggered still tougher quarantine restrictions. One Chinese merchant house complained to the secretary of state that Kinyoun had 'caused a big rumpus here in all business circles', because notwithstanding Chinese protests 'he still quarantines our goods coming from China and causes us much annoyance and expense, all unnecessarily'.[47]

The mistreatment of Asian passengers disembarking in San Francisco intensified this ill feeling. The Chinese consulate had protested in 1893 that passengers' baggage was 'burned to a crisp and ruined' by the disinfecting staff, and claimed $10,000 in damages.[48] The robust medical examination of passengers, especially during the bubonic plague, further antagonized Asians. The Japanese consul general in San Francisco complained in 1900 that Japanese immigrants were 'subjected to great inconveniences and humiliation' by the 'extremely harsh' quarantine treatment to which they were subjected.[49] Japanese and Chinese officials, and the Chinese Merchants Exchange in San Francisco, contacted the secretary of state and the president and alleged that medical inspection 'was brutal and disgusting without regard to the feelings of the passengers'.[50] The powerful Chinese Six Companies sought court intervention to overturn federal quarantine. The PHS fumed in turn that the Chinese were undermining plague eradication, and labelled the Chinese consul general as 'the ringleader' behind these efforts.[51]

Eurocentric disdain was briefly discomforted when quarantine treatments reserved for Asians were mistakenly applied to Europeans. In September 1900 the British steamship *Coptic* arrived in San Francisco from Honolulu and its first-class passengers found themselves subjected to the same treatment as steerage passengers:

> the gentlemen were formed in line and requested to take their trousers down and either remove their shirts and undershirts altogether or make easy and complete access to the arm pits available . . . The . . . indignity was felt in the fact that the Dr. examining the gentlemen went from one man's groin to another man's back or arm

[45] M.J. Rosenau to W. Wyman, 12 Apr. 1897, in National Archives RG 90, file 16090, box 784.
[46] J.J. Kinyoun, 'Bubonic plague', reprint from *Occidental Medical Times*, Aug. 1901, 6, *ibid.*, file 5608, box 627.
[47] Wing Chong Wo & Co., 26 Nov. 1900, enclosure in V.W. Foster to L.J. Gage, secretary of the treasury, 30 Nov. 1900, *ibid.*, box 645.
[48] W. Wyman to D.A. Carmichael, telegram, 7 Feb. 1893, *ibid.*, box 13, vol. 1.
[49] Count Mutsu to Dr J.M. Williamson, 21 May 1900, *ibid.*, file 5608, box 638.
[50] A.J. Marcus to consul general, 20 Dec. 1900, *ibid.*, box 639.
[51] J.H. White to W. Wyman, telegram, 7 Oct. 1902, *ibid.*, box 624.

pits and then back to his throat without once washing his hands, also the smoking room door was wide open onto the Promenade Deck so that any one passing from one side of the deck to the other could not fail to see what was going on inside the smoking room.[52]

The PHS was momentarily embarrassed, but the quarantine procedures remained in force. San Francisco developed a reputation for enforcing much stricter medical examinations than did other Pacific coast ports, and in 1911 one PHS insider conceded that the Japanese in particular 'are irritated that they are subject to restrictions here that are not required elsewhere'.[53] Protest continued to be paralleled by other strategies. A secret government investigation in 1910 revealed that 'for a long time past' immigration inspection at San Francisco had been compromised by bribery: a Chinese agent was 'openly engaged in soliciting Chinese clients for whom he agrees to secure the passage of the medical examination by their arriving friends at a price ranging from $50 to $100, according, as he states, to the seriousness of the disease'.[54]

The PHS surgeon Kinyoun once remarked intemperately that the Chinese were unique for their 'craftiness, deceit, and for "pure cussedness"'.[55] Like many of the American sentinels who guarded the Golden Gate, he felt challenged by Asian difference and competitiveness. Kinyoun quoted Rudyard Kipling:

O, East is East and West is West!
And never the twain shall meet.[56]

Ambivalent words to apply in San Francisco, a city that Americans called their 'gateway to the Orient'.[57]

Darwin

Australia's tiny northern capital highlights the contradictions (and the impediments to economic development that result from cultural barriers to free exchange) that have been glimpsed at San Francisco. Port Darwin (Palmerston as it was first called) was established by South Australia in 1869 as its capital in the Northern Territory. South Australia administered the Northern Territory from the 1860s until its take over by the Commonwealth of Australia in 1911.

[52] J.H. Rinder to C. Pickersgill, 19 Dec. 1900, enclosure in acting secretary of state to secretary of the treasury, 5 Jan. 1901, *ibid.*, box 639.
[53] M.W. Glover to L.E. Cofer, 11 Oct. 1911, *ibid.*, file 16090, box 785.
[54] Immigrant inspector L.C. Steward to commissioner-general of immigration, 3 Feb. 1910, *ibid.*
[55] J.J. Kinyoun, 'Bubonic plague', reprint from *Occidental Medical Times*, Aug. 1901, 14, in *ibid.*, file 5608, box 627.
[56] Quoted in *ibid.*
[57] *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report*, 20.

In the early years of the twentieth century Darwin was predicted to become 'the future emporium and gateway of Australia' because of its proximity to Asia.[58] During the 1880s Langdon Parsons, first as South Australia's Minister for the Northern Territory and later as its Government Resident, predicted that Darwin 'was destined to become the great entrepôt of commerce, the great port of import from the East and of export for Australian products'.[59] It would, he said, become 'the port of first call for all steamers coming to Australia by the north *route*' from Asia.[60] Many had dreamed thus since South Australia first sought to develop the Northern Territory, but the dreams would not be realized during South Australia's administration (nor indeed long after). The Northern Territory's population growth stalled, trade remained stagnant and both public and private debt soared.

Darwin's economic development rested upon its hinterland, and its capacity to channel the products of that hinterland to southern Australian and overseas markets. The hinterland produced two marketable commodities: gold and cattle. However, the goldfields, discovered at Pine Creek in 1871, struggled to attract large-scale company operations to such a distant place and by the mid-1870s had been largely taken over by Chinese prospectors. The cattle industry was pioneered by southern Australian investors during the 1870s and 1880s. As the Government Resident reported in 1877, the pastoral districts were being leased by 'bona fide capitalists', and the beef that they were producing 'would take a prize in Adelaide'.[61] The problem, however, was how to get it there! When South Australia's governor, Lord Kintore, undertook the arduous first-ever vice-regal transcontinental crossing of Australia from Darwin to Adelaide in 1891, he remarked to the residents of Darwin that 'interest in your fortunes and concern at your slow progress of development have very much to do with my visit'.[62]

The unrealized potential of gold mining and pastoralism was the result, in part, of insufficient transportation infrastructure and services. Growth depended upon linking Port Darwin by transcontinental rail to Adelaide, and upon providing incentives for shipping companies to include Darwin as a regular port of call in their inter-colonial and overseas trading networks. Overland explorers from Queensland arrived at Darwin in 1879 and expressed 'surprise at finding such a noble harbor'. The party's leader, Ernest Favenc, 'stated he felt sure that when railway communication was

[58] Newland, *Land-Grant Railway across Central Australia*, 8.
[59] J.L. Parsons, 17 Aug. 1883, 'Palmerston and Pine Creek Railway Bill', in SRSA, GRS 9, vol. 1.
[60] Government Resident's Report on the Northern Territory for the Year 1887, in *Proceedings of the Parliament of South Australia*, 1889, vol. 3, no. 53, 15.
[61] E.W. Price to the Minister for Education, 19 Dec. 1877, SRSA, GRS 1, unit 12, item 42/1877.
[62] 'Lord Kintore at Port Darwin', 24 Apr. 1891, in *ibid.*, GRS 9, vol. 2.

available, Port Darwin would be the Port through which would pass the Queensland trade with Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore'.[63]

A railway from Darwin to the Pine Creek goldfields was opened in 1889, and the southern railway from Adelaide was extended northwards as far as Oodnadatta (in the arid far north of South Australia) in 1891. Many schemes were then proposed to complete the transcontinental railway between these two points. As the *Anglo-Colonial Notes* remarked in 1900, Port Darwin was on a par with Sydney harbour in terms of its natural advantages, and 'when railway communication with it was carried through from the east and south immense new markets within easy reach of the port by sea would be opened up'.[64] That expectation would not be realized for over a century. The railway was extended to Alice Springs in 1929, but the transcontinental railway from Adelaide to Darwin was only completed in 2004.

Plans for a transcontinental railway were paralleled by efforts to establish shipping links to Asian markets. Sporadic efforts were made from the late 1860s to develop a market for horses in India. Efforts began in 1878 to establish a subsidized steamer mail service to Hong Kong. In 1891 the South Australian government began a subsidy scheme to encourage shippers to supply frozen meat to Hong Kong, Batavia and Singapore. However, the scheme was discontinued in 1897. As the Adelaide newspapers conceded, 'lately the trade has not been brisk, and some of the steamers have been unable to secure a full cargo of cattle'.[65] By 1897 they admitted that the state-subsidized export cattle trade 'has entirely collapsed'.[66] This collapse was largely the result of Dutch officials banning meat exports to Java because of concerns about tick infestation (shipments only resumed in 1909). Attempts to develop a cattle trade with Singapore in the late 1890s fell through due to opposition by local traders in Singapore. The Spanish-American War briefly gave hope that preserved meat could be shipped to Manila to supply US troops.

The slow pace of economic development rested less upon these problems in developing effective railway and shipping capacity for Darwin than upon European ambivalence about Asia. In San Francisco, the cultural blinkers towards Asia impacted more upon Asian immigrants than they did upon trade, but in tiny Darwin these blinkers fundamentally retarded the development of the port and its hinterland.

At a local level, European ambivalence towards Asia was intertwined with labour policy. Asian migration was encouraged in the Northern Territory during the 1870s and early 1880s, but only as a commodity: 'coolie' labour. The South Australian government experimented with importing Chinese contract labour from Singapore in 1874–75 to work

[63] E.W. Price to the Minister for Education, 20 May 1879, *ibid.*, GRS 1, unit 14, item 261/1879.
[64] *Anglo-Colonial Notes*, 26 Apr. 1900, 'Mr. Walter Griffiths'.
[65] 'The Northern Territory cattle trade', 27 Dec. 1897, SRSA, GRS 9, vol. 5.
[66] *Adelaide Register*, 30 Jun. 1898, *ibid.*

for the gold mining companies at Pine Creek. In 1881 the government sent an advisor to India to negotiate with the British authorities there to import contract Indian labour. Chinese labour was again recruited in 1886–89 to build the Darwin–Pine Creek railway.

Support waned for sponsored Asian labour schemes as increasing numbers of Chinese arrived independently in Darwin during the 1870s and 1880s on their way to the goldfields. The changing demographics of the Northern Territory caused alarm to Europeans. In 1878, for example, the chief warden for the Northern Territory goldfields warned that 'the white population will soon be swamped and the Northern Territory of South Australia will practically become an Asiatic settlement!'[67] From the late 1870s, very large numbers of Chinese gold seekers (up to 500 at a time) began arriving on ships from Hong Kong. The Government Resident telegraphed Adelaide early in 1879 that as a result of this 'influx of Chinese' there were almost 3,500 Chinese in the Territory, and only 460 Europeans. He worried that although the Chinese 'have hitherto behaved well . . . should there be any disturbance I would have to swear in special constables. We are well supplied with arms & ammunition.'[68] Chinese residents still outnumbered Europeans two to one in 1907, as negotiations proceeded between the South Australian and Federal governments for transfer of the Northern Territory to the Commonwealth of Australia.

Not only did the Chinese population in Darwin and the goldfields dwarf the European community; Europeans worried that the Chinese would out-compete them in business. The South Australian advisor on Indian 'coolie' labour reported in 1882 that 'Unlike the Chinese they may be depended upon to remain in the service of their employer, content if they are earning a trifle more than enough to secure the necessities of life, and delighted if they can save a small sum besides.'[69] This was an attitude Parsons shared. His son later commented that 'the Chinese are an independent people, particularly the coolie class, who have come to the Territory, and they are not willing to spend their time working for low wages as agriculturalists when they can make more money as storekeepers, hawkers, or by fossicking on the goldfields for themselves'.[70] Parsons lobbied throughout the 1880s for the enactment of legislation to curb Chinese immigration.

Local calls for restrictions on Chinese immigration were subsumed within national Australian political agendas in the late 1880s, as the momentum of the campaign for the federation of all the Australian colonies gathered pace. South Australia did not have strict anti-Chinese restrictions in place, as did the other colonies, and during the 1870s and 1880s increasing pressure was exerted upon South Australia to fall into line. The

[67] J.G. Knight to G.R. Price, 24 Dec. 1878, *ibid.*, GRS 1, unit 12, item 76/1878.
[68] E.W. Price to the Minister for Education, 14 Mar. 1879, *ibid.*, unit 14, item 95/1879.
[69] J. Fergusson to the Minister for Education, 2 Mar. 1882, *ibid.*, unit 18, item 117/1882.
[70] Herbert Parsons, *The Truth about the Northern Territory* (Adelaide, 1907), 57.

Adelaide Advertiser blamed South Australia's Upper House for blocking restrictive regulations in the Northern Territory, as the result of which 'the front door of this continent has been thrown wide open for admission of the Chinese. It ought to be shut forthwith.'[71] At an inter-colonial conference on 'The Chinese Question', held in Sydney in June 1888, all the colonies agreed on uniform legislation to impose a hefty poll tax on Chinese arrivals. The Queensland government, in particular, worried that Chinese arriving at Darwin would flood into the other colonies. In the aftermath of this conference Chinese immigration restriction legislation was finally passed in South Australia, and further strengthened in the other colonies.[72]

The economic effects on the Northern Territory were profound, and were noted by Lord Kintore when he visited Darwin in 1891. He reported to London that as a consequence of the discriminatory immigration laws, the 'exodus which set in on the completion of the railway still continues; each successive steamer carries away its complement of passengers, while few arrive. Empty tenements in many streets witness to its depletion, trade is stagnant, further decadence must render it moribund.'[73] Newspapers in Darwin and Adelaide queried why the Northern Territory should bear the economic costs of making Darwin 'the *sentinel* guarding the anti-Chinese interests of the whole of Australia'.[74]

Part of Queensland's concern about the absence of immigration restrictions in the Northern Territory was that the Chinese who arrived in Darwin were 'spreading smallpox and disease' across Australia.[75] In 1887 the same wave of smallpox infection from China that had caused a quarantine crisis in San Francisco spread also to Darwin. A series of infected ships arriving from Hong Kong forced the authorities in Darwin to establish a quarantine anchorage for detained ships, set up hospital tents on a nearby island for smallpox patients and provide hulks for the detention of passengers.

Attention focused on speedily offloading cargo on to lighters for disinfecting and prompt release to shipping agents. Attention was also given to minimizing punitive action against Port Darwin by health authorities elsewhere. When Darwin was proclaimed an infected port in August by the health authorities in the other Australian colonies, an extra sense of urgency characterized the development of quarantine procedures that were designed to allay outside concerns and thus remove impediments to free trade as soon as possible. As the president of the Central Board of Health noted in Adelaide, 'If the disease gain a footing in Port Darwin the interests of the Colony will be seriously endangered

[71] *Adelaide Advertiser*, 31 Mar. 1888, in SRSA, GRS 9, vol. 1.
[72] See C.A. Price, *The Great White Walls Are Built: Restrictive Immigration to North America and Australasia 1836–1888* (Canberra, 1974), 186–98.
[73] 'The Northern Territory', 5 Aug. 1891, SRSA, GRS 9, vol. 2.
[74] *Adelaide Register*, 19 Aug. 1893, 'The Chinese Question'.
[75] *Evening Journal*, 20 Feb. 1888, 'The Chinese and the Northern Territory'.

as no ship thence will be allowed to visit any ports in Australia under 21 days after departure. Ships will pass the Territory rather than submit.'[76] Parsons, at this time the Government Resident in Darwin, repeatedly urged the easing of quarantine measures in Darwin, and the removal of restrictions against Darwin by other port cities. Ongoing quarantine restrictions against Darwin were in his opinion 'outrageous', and he asked ''What is the use of going to the expense of quarantine & isolation if it counts for nothing'?[77] Parsons advised Adelaide urgently by telegram, 'I have it on good authority that unless some relaxation is made steamers from Hong Kong will pass this port going south. Present conditions greatly interfere with trade and progress of Darwin.'[78] Parsons' bluntness raised eyebrows at the Central Board of Health. Its president conceded that 'The question of the protection of Port Darwin with the least impediment to its trade is difficult to meet', but cautioned that if quarantine regulations there were relaxed too early other governments would impose still more severe restrictions upon Darwin.[79]

The wellbeing of *people* in detention received much less consideration. It was not until August 1887, seven months after the beginning of the smallpox crisis, that Parsons telegraphed Adelaide to point out that there was no quarantine accommodation for passengers.[80] The tropical climate, he warned, exacerbated the problem of providing shelter, and he cautioned that 'our condition here [more] nearly resembles an eastern settlement than an Australian town'.[81] As had been the case at San Francisco during the 1870s and 1880s, the steamship companies in Darwin were required to bear the cost of detaining the quarantined passengers in hulks. Shippers were unimpressed. The agent for the China Navigation Company warned early in the emergency 'that they will not hold themselves responsible for expenses occasioned by the non-provision by the Government of reasonable quarantine accommodation'.[82] The company argued that its 'liability should not be greater than it would be if the steamer had been quarantined in any port where the necessary appliances and arrangements were complete'.[83]

With the number of detainees continuing to increase, Parsons recommended the building of a depot on the quarantine island to

[76] President of the Central Board of Health to the Minister for Education, 24 Aug. 1887, in SRSA, GRS 1, unit 33, item 658/1887.
[77] J.L. Parsons to the Minister for Education, telegram, 10 Sep. 1887, *ibid.*, unit 34, no. 728.
[78] J.L. Parsons to the Minister for Education, telegram, 19 Nov. 1887, *ibid.*, item 919/1887.
[79] President of the Central Board of Health to the Minister for Education, 9 Dec. 1887, *ibid.*, item 953/1887.
[80] J.L. Parsons to the Minister for Education, telegram, 22 Aug. 1887, *ibid.*, unit 33, item 653/1887.
[81] J.L. Parsons to the Minister for Education, telegram, 24 Aug. 1887, *ibid.*, item 671/1887.
[82] Adcock Bros to J.L. Parsons, 22 Jan. 1887, enclosure in J.L. Parsons to the Minister for Education, 16 Aug. 1887, *ibid.*, item 693/1887.
[83] Lorimer, Rome and Co. to James Bath, secretary to the Minister for Education, 13 Dec. 1887, *ibid.*, item 966/1887.

house Asian detainees. He suggested that the detainees bear the cost of maintenance and food, perhaps by collecting a tax from emigrants in Hong Kong to cover their 'keep'.[84] The government decided (using a justification that would also be used at Angel Island in 1892) that because the proposed barracks would largely be for Chinese detainees, it should be 'the cheapest class of building possible'.[85]

Thereafter the treatment of Asian detainees began to attract more consideration by government authorities, but the imperative was punitive rather than humanitarian. Early in 1888, with the new barracks still incomplete, the government resolved that all Asian passengers and crew on ships from infected ports would henceforth be quarantined on board ship, but that cargoes could be landed after three days' detention on lighters. As in San Francisco, commodity trade with Asia was one thing, but immigration from Asia was a different matter altogether. The new deterrent policy of shipboard detention had been suggested by Parsons to the government as a means 'to check excessive Chinese immigration & for the health of the port'.[86] The government was receptive, influenced by the pressure coming from the other Australian colonies to restrict Chinese immigration, and calculating that the inconvenience for shippers of shipboard quarantine detention would curb Chinese immigration.[87] The provision of adequate accommodation for detainees at the Quarantine Station faded from attention. When the government medical officer visited the station early in 1890 he reported that 'the buildings & land approaches are so completely overgrown with scrub that it is a matter of difficulty to find them & the sea approach is so rough that in boisterous weather it would be almost impossible to land'.[88]

Quarantine policy in Darwin increasingly overlapped with, and significantly influenced the direction of, the developing national debate in Australia about the 'Chinese Question'. Politicians in other Australian colonies complained that it was 'most uneighbourly of South Australia to leave a door open' to Chinese settlement throughout Australia via the Northern Territory.[89] South Australian officials in Darwin agreed. Parsons confidentially telegraphed Premier Playford, warning that Chinese arriving in Darwin intended to trek through central Australia and 'spread over all the Colonies'. He argued that 'a powerful Syndicate of Hong Kong and Canton merchants exists to pour Chinese into this port so long as it is open. There seems to be a general impression in China that access to East [Australia] is about to be closed [by restrictive legislation]

[84] J.L. Parsons to the Minister for Education, telegram, 2 Sep. 1887, *ibid.*, item 704/1887.
[85] Memo by the Minister for Education, J.C.F. Johnson, 3 Sep. 1887, in *ibid.*
[86] J.L. Parsons to T. Playford, 10 Feb. 1888, *ibid.*, unit 34, item 132/1887.
[87] See memo by Premier Playford during cabinet discussion, 23 Feb. 1888, in *ibid.*, item 147/1888.
[88] L.S. O'Flaherty to J.L. Parsons, 2 Jan. 1890, *ibid.*, unit 41, item 236/1890.
[89] Newspaper cutting of speech by J.F.C. Johnson, 7 Jun. 1888, enclosure in *ibid.*, unit 34, item 147/1888.

and they are making for Darwin in shoals.'[90] Playford accepted Parsons' advice. By proclaiming China, Singapore and Java as infected places, the South Australian government – under pressure from other Australian colonies to adopt uniform Chinese restriction laws – used quarantine law as a stop-gap Asian immigration restriction device. As Playford made plain in a confidential return telegram to Parsons, 'if large influx occurs quarantine will hold temporarily pending legislative action if necessary'.[91] The Minister for the Northern Territory, J.F.C. Johnson, later confided in another telegram, 'you are aware that principal object the Government had in view in passing new regulations re Chinese was to throw such obstacles in way of their landing as virtually to stop influx'.[92]

As in California, Chinese reactions to such 'obstacles' are barely recorded in European newspapers and government records. In 1882 15 Chinese merchants in Darwin sent an elaborately decorated memorial to Parsons asking for property and political rights, and asserted 'that had it not been for the influx of Chinese to the Territory, it would not now present the encouraging and prosperous position which it now maintains'.[93] It is likely that many other Chinese residents in the Northern Territory disregarded and acted outside European jurisdictions. In 1888 for example, the inspector of police reported that 'Chinese will not assist police with information which will lead to the detection of crime unless in serious offences committed on their own countrymen.'[94] The detection of several cases of smallpox among Northern Territory Chinese during 1887 had prompted anxieties (mirroring those expressed in San Francisco) that the Chinese community as a whole was concealing smallpox cases. Parsons telegraphed Adelaide that the Chinese community had 'practically admitted' as much, and that he had cautioned 'the leading Chinese merchants[.] I explained to them the danger to their own health & the loss they must sustain by the interruption of business if smallpox is not quickly stamped out.'[95]

Concerns simmered about possible physical confrontations with Chinese residents. Officials worried that the interruption to trade in rice caused by quarantine restrictions would fuel resentments within Darwin's Chinese community. Parsons telegraphed Johnson in September 1887 to warn: 'You must remember we have a large asiatic population here & the sudden stoppage of trade & supplies may involve most serious

[90] J.L. Parsons to C. Todd, for delivery to Premier Playford 'at his private address', 17 Feb. 1888, enclosure in *ibid.*

[91] T. Playford to J.L. Parsons, 27 Feb. 1888, enclosure in *ibid.* See also urgent telegram from J.L. Parsons to T. Playford, 28 Feb. 1888, *ibid.*, unit 35, item 172/1888.

[92] J.F.C. Johnson to J.L. Parsons, 21 May 1888, *ibid.*, unit 34, item 147/1888.

[93] Memorial by Chinese residents of the Northern Territory to Members of the Legislative Assembly of South Australia, 21 Mar. 1882, *ibid.*, unit 18, item 208/1882.

[94] J.L. Parsons to J.F.C. Johnson, telegram, 30 Jun. 1888, in *ibid.*, unit 34, item 147/1888.

[95] J.L. Parsons to J.F.C. Johnson, telegram, 3 Aug. 1887, in *ibid.*, unit 33, item 607/1887.

consequences.'[96] The impost of an entry tax in the Northern Territory in the aftermath of the 1888 inter-colonial conference was likewise balanced by officials against the possibility of Chinese resistance. Parsons advised Playford that 'There are certain people here who are declared supporters of Separation; in constant hostility to Government; and who would back up Chinese to resist anything.'[97]

Violence never eventuated, but Chinese residents continued to resist in other ways. When permanent immigration restrictions were introduced on the back of quarantine restrictions, Chinese merchants in Darwin interceded to pay the poll tax on behalf of friends and associates, and lobbied to be allowed to bring out their wives and families from China. Discrimination would find final legislative form in the White Australia Policy of the newly federated Australia in 1901.

Conclusion

Port cities seem to be almost entirely products of the present day. Ongoing development has swept away the wharves and the merchant houses of the past. Heritage conservation and interpretation is cramped and confined.[98] We can nonetheless learn from the vanished and largely forgotten past.

There is a temptation to consider the historical development of port cities and of the shipping routes that they serviced as though both were simply expressions of abstract, impersonal and inexorable developmental forces, or what Manuel Castells once called 'an economically determined structural logic'. The consequence of such thinking, as Castells pointed out, is that

> people and the state, economy and society, cities and citizens, are considered as separate entities: one may dominate the other, or both may behave independently, but the logic of the analysis never allows them to interact in a meaningful structure. As a result, we are left with urban systems separated from personal experiences; with structures without actors, and actors without structures; with cities without citizens, and citizens without cities.[99]

We must always build the grassroots of social interaction into our understanding of the heartbeat of urban history.

I have used the examples of San Francisco and Darwin to suggest that commodity trade, and still more so the circulation of people and ideas, between cities and regions are powerfully mediated by *culture*. As Castells

[96] J.L. Parsons to J.F.C. Johnson, 'confidential and unofficial' telegram, 8 Sep. 1887, *ibid.*, item 720/1887.
[97] J.L. Parsons to T. Playford, telegram marked 'Urgent', 27 Feb. 1888, enclosure in *ibid.*, unit 34, item 147/1888.
[98] A good example is the Cape Town waterfront. See V. Bickford-Smith and E. van Heyningen, *Sites of History: The Waterfront* (Cape Town, 1994).
[99] M. Castells, *The City and the Grassroots* (London, 1983), xvi.

was well aware, culture exchange is grounded in contestation, and is coloured by mobilization and conflict. Victor Turner carefully analysed how cultures renew and enrich themselves by playing out contending viewpoints over core principles and different scenarios about change and continuity.[100] Historically, though, cultural exchanges have regularly spilled out into social conflict.

In city culture historically, the ports of the New World were regarded as both gateways and sentinels. These metaphors were generally accepted during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries not only by the business, political and professional elites in the port cities of the Pacific Rim, but by new arrivals to these cities. Nevertheless the playing out of these two competing roles generated significant social tensions and social costs. These were the result in part of the volatility of the new settlements: notwithstanding the confident words of the local traders and politicians, these communities were newly formed and fragile in their distance from their parent cultures. These tensions are evident in the negotiations and disagreements that took place between contending elite groups, but they are especially evident when the port city and new arrivals were divided by race. The complicated relationship of San Francisco and Darwin to Asia during the half century between the mid-1860s and World War I highlights this social interplay across culture and economics.

[100] See for example V. Turner, *On the Edge of the Bush: Anthropology as Experience* (Tuscon, 1985).