

SEARS, Clare – *Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law, and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015. Pp. 202.

In *Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco*, Clare Sears draws out the implications of a little-known San Francisco law that criminalized people appearing in public “in a dress not belonging to his or her sex” (p. 2). Though this 1863 local government order seems like an idiosyncratic detail on which to base the book, Sears uses this law and its subsequent enforcements to show the consolidation of White cisgender privilege in a newly colonized and former disorderly gold-rush town during the second half of the nineteenth century. This is a careful and impressive study of how an anti cross-dressing law had implications for who could participate in urban life, what gender roles were considered normal and abnormal, and ultimately what races would be included and excluded from the nation.

The book begins with two historical chapters, the first setting the scene of gold-rush San Francisco and the second explaining background for the emergence of the 1863 law, before moving into four thematic chapters. Sears gives details that help the reader understand the particularities of the gold-rush in San Francisco—its population explosion, predominantly male society, Chinese immigration, and its annexation as an American state—never going into too much detail, but placing the specifics of this history into a race, class, and gender context while relating to the cross-dressing practices of this period. These chapters give a sense of the continuity and change of cross-dressing practices and the motivations that lay beneath. Sears demonstrates that during the gold-rush era there were multiple places where cross-dressing practices flourished—gold mining camps, masquerade balls, domestic labour, circulating photographs. Sears is quick to analyze how these practices were often used to establish and maintain racial and gender norms. For example, Euro-American men dressing in women’s clothing at gold-rush dances were creating the appearance of heterosexual relations within a single racial category while Indigenous women who were present went unacknowledged by White men, and were thereby dehumanized.

The subsequent chapter outlines the development of the anti cross-dressing law because of various changing historical circumstances at the end of the gold rush. These changes included a demographic shift as more middle-class White women immigrated to the area, large company-driven mining, less racial and class mixing in urban space, and the establishment of a police force. All this led to and was part of a well-known anti-vice crusade whose supporters took over the civic government for 20 years starting in 1856. This campaign and its subsequent law is what set the groundwork for the chapters that follow. Sears expertly and efficiently demonstrates how the rhetoric of the anti-vice campaign established White middle-class women as respectable and averse to seeing and interacting with indecency, and White middle-class men as having the responsibility as husbands and fathers to protect their wives and daughters from vice. These separate-sphere normative gender relations made cross-dressing one manifestation of the broader

offence of indecency, which also included such offences as prostitution, gambling, visiting opium dens, and permitting women in bars after nightfall. Sears' analysis is exemplary, showing the uneven enforcement of the law which targeted Chinese and Mexican prostitutes while ignoring Euro-American prostitutes, and by showing how cross-dressing imagery of politicians wearing women's clothing to represent their weakness and ineffectiveness was used to shame those who were not part of the anti-vice campaign.

The final four chapters are thematically driven, each studying different results of the cross-dressing law. Chapter 3 looks at how the law was enforced turning city streets into gender-normative spaces. The chapter also places the cross-dressing law into the larger context of nuisance laws that dealt with various problematic bodies such as prostitutes, Chinese immigrants, and the disabled. Chapter 4 makes evident the surveillance required to enact and maintain the anti cross-dressing law—police photographs, court sketches, newspaper reports—and shows how the law was used in particular to prosecute White criminals, ignoring Mexican and Chinese cross-dressing; such selectivity established a link between the politics of gender normativity and Whiteness. Chapter 5 explores the alternative spaces of performance and observation that arose in popular culture due to the suppression of cross-dressing on city streets—vaudeville theater, dime museum freak shows, and commercial slumming tours. Chapter 6 looks into the ways that cross-dressing laws interacted with the federal immigration controls of the late nineteenth century to exclude Chinese immigrants. Here cross-dressing of Chinese women traveling alone on a ship could be seen as evidence of their being morally and economically suspect and therefore “likely to become a public charge.” Because of the expansion of the Immigration Act in 1917 some immigrants were deported after cross-dressing arrests.

Readings of the many images of the book are very strong, especially in chapter 6 where Sears analyzes the racial overtones of three political cartoons and one photograph targeting the Chinese population. In a cartoon depiction of two Chinese men trying to get into the country as servants, for example, Sears shows how such visual clues of feminized dress as long hair, long gowns, and ornate fans “framed Chinese immigrants not only as deceptive interlopers... but also as effeminate, deviant men, unable to perform normative masculinity and hence unworthy of inclusion in the nation” (pp. 125).

However, for a book focused on the dress, there is not much material-culture analysis of the clothing being worn, nor is there evidence of material-culture theorists in the secondary sources cited. For example, the discussions of why prostitutes might have worn male clothing could have been developed further with scholars such as Valerie Steele or Jill Fields who write about the reasons behind western cultural distaste for bifurcated leg covering in women as a way of maintaining gender distinction. While the book has relied on important collections of primary sources—government documents, newspapers/periodicals, court cases, police reports, inmate photographs—the *Arresting Dress* might have benefited from visiting clothing collections in museums and private collections allowing for a more thorough analysis of the clothing worn, rather than the imagery of

the clothing, and the rhetoric that surrounds it. Such visits also contribute to the excellent array of stories found by Sears in the more official documents consulted.

There is much to admire in Sears' analysis of this topic, especially in her persistent and convincing analysis of how cross-dressing laws interacted with racial politics at the time—two topics that seem unrelated at first glance. Overall Sears gives a nuanced, sensitive and in intelligent reading of a little-known law and its vast consequences for the culture of the city and the nation.

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TERRETTA, Meredith – *Nation of Outlaws, State of Violence: Nationalism, Grassfields Tradition, and State Building in Cameroon*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014. Pp. 367.

This book is a valuable contribution to the current effort to reframe and reinvigorate our understanding of the nationalist period in African history. It illustrates richly how far our understanding has improved, and pushes us to go farther. The first generation of scholars examining the era of African decolonization celebrated African nationalists donning the mantle of modernity, joining the inevitable triumph of human progress. This gave way, in the post-colonial decades of despair, to accounts which highlighted the multiple, fractured, even self-delusional qualities of nationalist movements. Nationalism and nation-building agendas were in some cases seen as impositions by certain state-linked groups on a general population ignorant of or hostile to this agenda. Terretta offers quite a different picture, telling the story of Cameroonian nationalism led by the popular *Union des populations Cameroun* (UPC). It is not a triumphal story, because the UPC's progressive nationalism was defeated by the colonial French regime and the postcolonial Ahidjo regime which followed it. But it is an account which reveals the nationalist movement here to be far from superficial or imposed.

The story is told in terms of the connections and influences between three layers of activism: the local, the territorial, and the international. Part I examines the history of the Grassfields region of French Cameroon from the nineteenth century through the colonial period. Chieftaincy governance involved different types of power in complex relations: chiefly and notable, visible and invisible. Politics was about, importantly, pursuit of *lepue* (sovereignty) on behalf of the *gung* (chieftaincy/state). As German and then French administrators tried (rather erratically) to manipulate chieftaincies to serve colonial needs, these political ideas adapted. As the French perverted chiefs' power by recognizing only the visible forms of power, notables turned to sacred sites, spiritual knowledge and other invisible forms of power to defend *gung*. As Grassfielders migrated south toward the economic hub of the Mungo Valley in the twentieth century, these politics traveled with them and took on new forms. Many emigrants found modest success