At the turn into the twentieth century, American culture witnessed related literary and political shifts through which marginalized voices gained increased strength despite the severe racism that informed US laws and social interaction. Many authors and literary critics saw connections between literary content and social influence. For example, in *Criticism and Fiction* (1891), William Dean Howells, proponent of nineteenth-century American realism, warns readers to avoid sentimental or sensational novels, which he claims “hurt” by presenting “idle lies about human nature and the social fabric.” He reminds us that “it behooves us to know and to understand” our people and our social context “that we may deal justly with ourselves and with one another” (94-95). He argues that the writer of fiction is obligated to write that which is “true to the motives, the impulses, the principles that shape the life of actual men and women” in the US (99). His is both a demand for aesthetic standards in fiction and an insistence that the failure to achieve “true” representations of American people will result in the disintegration of national humanity and, consequently, of national unity. The irony of Howells’ standards is that despite this impulse toward national unification, his own tenets of American realism have for years served to exclude from the canon those writers who were greatly interested in creating “true” representations of American characters in order to promote a society in which Americans could finally “deal justly with ourselves and with one another.”

One artist who wrote with the goal of creating an America where we would “deal justly” with one another was turn-of-the-century Eurasian journalist and fiction writer Sui Sin Far. In an essay entitled “The Chinese in America,” Sui Sin Far laments western literary depictions of the Chinese that portray them as “unfeeling” and “custom-bound.” “[F]iction writers seem to be so im-
bued with [these] ideas that you scarcely ever read about a Chinese person who is not a wooden peg,” she protests (234). She argues that in general the Chinese “think and act just as the white man does, according to the impulses which control them. They love those who love them; they hate those who hate; are kind, affectionate, cruel or selfish, as the case may be” (234). Through this comparison Sui Sin Far decenters whiteness as the standard of what is “human,” a move that is in fact central to much of her work, as Annette White-Parks has argued in an essay entitled “A Reversal of American Concepts of ‘Otherness.’” Sui Sin Far’s characters are often people who resist assimilation, and through them she depicts Chinese communities in North America populated with characters rich and diverse in their complexity. This study builds on White-Parks’ conclusions by exploring the role of genre manipulation in Sui Sin Far’s literary and political innovations. In addition, I will argue that Sui Sin Far’s specific focus on the position of biracial and bicultural individuals (both in autobiographical and fictional representations) is a major strategy in her redefinition of “race” as a category in American thought.

Like Howells, Sui Sin Far demands in fiction a truthful depiction of Americans; her rewriting, however, represents an adaptation of mainstream realism because it focuses on Americans who had, before she wrote, little voice in American literature. Amy Ling characterizes Sui Sin Far’s writing as among one of “the earliest attempts by Asian subalterns to speak for themselves” (“Reading” 70). Offering alternative perspectives on American identity and culture, Sui Sin Far, along with many of her contemporary writers of color, actively challenged mainstream readers’ preconceptions and contributed to a social climate in which increasing numbers of writers of color made their voices heard in print. In doing this, she engaged a shift from margin to center that posited the “Other” as speaking voice, thereby dramatizing the injustices that plagued race relations in North America.

Current critical approaches to turn-of-the-century American realism locate within the project of national identity-building a trend of revolutionary revision, through which marginalized writers disclose the inequalities in US culture and show the establishment of a unified and “true” American identity to be impossible while racism continues to enforce social exclusion and hierarchy. At the
same time, literary critics are rethinking the genre of sentimental romance to better understand the ways in which women writers employed and subverted this genre and the rhetorical devices it employs in order to dramatize (and put an end to) social injustice. Drawing from elements of both realism and sentimental romance, Sui Sin Far uses short stories, articles, and essays to pioneer the act of self-representation for a people who existed in late nineteenth-century mainstream American imagination and literature as uncivilized, heathen foreigners. In her short stories, articles, and autobiographical essays Sui Sin Far achieves far more than her modestly stated goal “of planting a Eurasian thoughts into Western literature” (288). Her fiction challenges and shifts socially constructed definitions of Chineseness, constructions that enact what Judith Butler would term the “regulatory norms” that inflict exclusion upon marginalized peoples (2).

A focus on Sui Sin Far’s depiction of Eurasian characters and on the subject of interracial marriage illustrates her multifaceted understanding of the crisis in US race relations. Through the treatment of these subjects, she enacts a revolutionary revisioning of race differences. The stories found in Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings, including “Pat and Pan,” “Its Wavering Image,” along with excerpts from “The Story of One White Woman who Married a Chinese,” “Her Loving Husband,” and Sui Sin Far’s autobiographical essay, “Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian,” exemplify the artistic and psychological complexity of Sui Sin Far’s treatment of the biracial character and of interracial marriage. In particular, by addressing these themes, Sui Sin Far deconstructs Orientalism by dramatizing the destructive ways in which North American culture defines the Chinese as inhuman “Other” in order to prevent interracial understanding and maintain profitable power structures. Sui Sin Far’s fiction and essays illustrate the lengths to which members of the dominant culture will go to preserve a notion of racial purity based on hatred and ignorance, and she explores the terrible effects that racism has on its victims.

Of course, writing from a marginalized stance as Sui Sin Far did was, and continues to be risky, as Ammons notes:

To permit people other than straight white men to tell their own stories and tell them on their own terms constitutes a serious threat to
fundamental, hegemonic, white male constructions of and rules about sex, race, gender, culture, order and disorder, and subservience and dominance in the United States. ("Men" 31)

But despite that risk and the resistance she met from mainstream culture, Sui Sin Far, like many women writers of color at this time, applied her literary craft to efforts for political reform, recognizing, as Butler has noted, that "the force of regulatory law can be turned against itself to spawn rearticulations that call into question the hegemonic force of that very regulatory law" (2). These "rearticulations" are what Butler has identified in her discussion of performativity as enactments of subversion within repetition, or "repetition with a difference," a phrase she uses frequently in Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex.

One way the act of repetition within literary work is regulated is through conventions of a given genre. For example, according to Howells and other proponents of realism, American literature should attempt to depict real or "true" American characters and experiences through the use of concrete detail and objective narration, to tell the story of the common man, and to celebrate American progress. Sentimental romance often repeated related plot structures that cast innocent heroines as threatened by unscrupulous villains in order to communicate a moral lesson. Seeming at moments in her fiction to work within the literary conventions of realism on the one hand or sentimental romance on the other, even to the extent of appearing to include the stereotypical characters a white audience expected, Sui Sin Far actually revises (and thereby transcends the confines of) genre and stereotype to "rearticulate"—to revise, rewrite, and refashion—the predominant notions of racialized and sexualized identity that served to oppress her by defining Chinese-Americans only as Other.

As Ling explains, the Chinese immigrant was, in the imagination of mainstream white culture at the turn of the century, seen as "alien and unassimilable" ("Reading" 69). In Sui Sin Far's autobiographical essay, "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian," we learn that the predominance of anti-Chinese sentiment in late nineteenth-century America excluded her constantly. In that essay, Sui Sin Far shows that the Chinese were believed to be, as her employer described them, other than human. "I cannot recon-
cile myself to the thought that the Chinese are humans like our-

selves,” he comments to Sui Sin Far, whose racial identity is un-

known to him; “They may have immortal souls, but their faces

seem to be so utterly devoid of expression that I cannot help but
doubt” (224). In the dialogue that ensues, Sui Sin Far’s boss and
neighbors, who represent mainstream thinking in the essay, be-
come the soulless and uncivilized by their ignorance and hatred:

“Souls,” echoes the town clerk. “Their bodies are enough for me. A
Chinaman is, in my eyes, more repulsive than a nigger.”

“They always give me such a creepy feeling,” puts in a young girl
with a laugh.

“I wouldn’t have one in my house,” declares my landlady. (224)

As this last line exemplifies, Sui Sin Far uses dramatic irony to il-
lustrate the speakers’ ignorance, but she then shifts to a matter-of-
fact tone in order to emphasize the level of risk she takes in an-
nouncing her identity: “I am in a Middle West town. If I declare
what I am, every person in the place will hear about it the next day.
The population is in the main made up of working folks with
strong prejudices against my mother’s countrymen” (224). Sui Sin
Far indicates in “Leaves” that because she is biracial, a Eurasian
woman who can pass for white, she often hears such racist com-
ments from white speakers who, she comments, never dream “that
I too am of the ‘brown people’ of the earth” (225).

In this narrative moment, Sui Sin Far uses her status as invisible
Other, her border identity, to place white readers in the conscious-
ness of one suffering objectification and racism. She speaks out,
informing her boss and coworkers: “The Chinese may have no
souls, no expression on their faces, be altogether beyond the pale
of civilization, but whatever they are, I want you to understand that
I am—I am a Chinese” (225). Sui Sin Far simultaneously jars
white readers and forges a connection of shared experience with
readers of color by dramatizing her “miserable, cowardly feeling”
and the “great effort” it takes for her to speak, which is emphasized
by her faltering declaration (225). Her decision to “declare what [I
am]” initiates a shift in perspective that jars her white neighbors, as
seen in their initial silence and subsequent rush to apologize. In
speaking out, Sui Sin Far has illustrated to the white townsfolk,
and by extension to her white audience, the fallibility of the racial
categories through which they see the world and themselves. In doing so, she minimizes the distance between the perceived Other and white readers’ sense of self, calling into question their claim to privilege and deconstructing the Orientalist notions that preserve that privilege. At the same time, speaking out on behalf of “the brown people of the earth,” she provides readers of color with a sense of communal experience in the face of prejudice.

Elsewhere in her fiction and essays, Sui Sin Far communicates a sense of shared suffering with other Eurasian Americans, empathizing with their border positions in order to further forge a community of consciousness through experiential connections. For example, in the final paragraph of “The Story of One White Woman Who Married a Chinese,” the white woman of the title, named Minnie, reflects on the future of race relations in America, embodied quite literally in the person of her son by her Chinese husband Liu Kanghi: “as he stands between his father and myself, like yet unlike us both, so will he stand in after years between his father’s and his mother’s people. And if there is no kindliness nor understanding between them, what will my boy’s fate be?” (77). The echo here between the position of Minnie’s Eurasian son and Sui Sin Far’s own bicultural position is important. By writing and re-writing her own experiences as a woman positioned on the borders of conflicting racial identities, Sui Sin Far “rearticulates,” rethinks in order to resolve, the social constructs that keep her from finding full acceptance in America.

Along with many writers on the margins, Sui Sin Far realized that the versions of her self, of Chinese- and Eurasian Americans, she saw presented in mainstream cultural expression constructed her as outside the bounds of “civilized” American society. She also understood that such exclusionary social constructions enabled those in power to create images of themselves that maintained the existing power relationship. The evidence of this knowledge can be found throughout Sui Sin Far’s fiction and articles where she depicts the variety of forms this exclusion takes. In his discussion of Orientalism, Said identifies the empowering role such exclusionary self-definition serves for the dominant culture: “European culture gained strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (3). His claim holds true for nineteenth-century America as well, where that “un-
derground self;" what Butler calls "abjection," was projected onto people of color within the United States in an attempt to create a common American identity. Butler defines abject beings as "those who are not yet ‘subjects,’ but who form the constitutive outside the domain of the subject”; the abject are safely located in "those ‘unlivable’ and ‘uninhabitable’ zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by social groups who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the ‘unlivable’ is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject" (3). We learn in Sui Sin Far’s fiction and essays that, in keeping with an exclusionary project of national identity-building, the desire to establish a monolithic American identity motivates those in power to rely on an Other for definition, to define an American in terms of what she or he is not.

The collection of short stories Mrs. Spring Fragrance (1912), when read as a whole, provides a multifaceted and, remarkable for its time, realistic view of Chinese culture in America as well as a critique of the multiple ways in which turn-of-the-century American society imposed upon that culture suffering, exploitation, and silence. Beyond its political purpose, the collection offers stories that portray human suffering and triumph sometimes with poignancy, sometimes with humor, often with sharp irony, and all with nuanced characterization. Sui Sin Far was one of a number of marginalized writers at the time who, due to economic constraints, published collections of previously published stories and essays rather than writing novels. Of such collections, Ammons claims that "each creates out of accumulated short sections an extended narrative that does not conform to familiar, western, climax-oriented, dramatic structure yet does have its own internal drama, rhythm, and coherence" ("Men" 25). This claim certainly holds true for Mrs. Spring Fragrance, which creates the coherence Ammons describes through various connections between stories. These connections—echoes of themes, names, and circumstances—are subtle and might otherwise go unnoticed had the previously published and newly written works not been collected in one text. Through these connections, we find further evidence of Sui Sin Far’s use of a kind of trickster trope, as Annette White-Parks has argued, or of what I believe to be variations on a theme,
or "rearticulations," that reinforce her critique of American racism, classism, and sexism.

One pair of stories that furthers our understanding of Sui Sin Far's critique of race relations and sexual politics is "Pat and Pan" and "Its Wavering Image," both of which depict the experiences of a female protagonist named Pan. This explicit connection between the two stories directs us to read the adult Pan's story in "Its Wavering Image" as related, if not literally then figuratively, to the betrayal and learned hatred in the children's story "Pat and Pan." In both stories, the Orientalist beliefs and practices of a powerful white character sever or threaten to sever Pan's relationship to her Chinese family and community. In both, the narrative point of view immediately shifts from white readers' perspectives of the Chinese community as marginal to a perspective that centers Chinese characters and culture. In both, Sui Sin Far offers a critique of the social construction of Chineseness by dramatizing the suffering that results from the exclusion such racism mandates.

Amy Kaplan observes in realist narratives an engagement with social context that I would argue also holds true for authors of sentimental romance who aim to achieve social reform. Kaplan describes this process as one of "actively constructing the coherent social world [the authors] represent, and they do this not in a vacuum of fictionality but in direct confrontation with the elusive process of social change" (9). Sui Sin Far's use of repeated, related names and scenarios in "Pat and Pan" and "Its Wavering Image" is a tactical revision of the genre conventions available to her at the time. Working within the conventions of the short sketch, she performs a subtle kind of repetition with a difference, developing and strengthening the force of her social critique through reiteration of similar dramatized experiences as she subtly manipulates the conventions of both realism and sentimental romance.

Sui Sin Far frames "Pat and Pan" in such a way as to set up dramatic tension between the perspective of the white missionary Anna Harrison and the perspective of the Chinese adults and children whose lives she enters and changes drastically. As "Pat and Pan" opens, Harrison is in an urban Chinatown and spies the young white boy, Pat, who has been adopted by a Chinese family, and his Chinese sister, Pan, "[lying] there, in the entrance to the joss house, sound asleep in each other's arms" (160). Puzzled by the
presence of a white boy so intimately positioned within this Chinatown setting, Harrison inquires about his identity, and an old Chinese vendor tells her that the boy is “of Lum Yook.” “But he is white,” asserts the puzzled woman, unable to reconcile the boy’s race and his location within a Chinese family and community. The vendor answers, “Yes, him white; but all same, China boy” (160). When Harrison learns that the boy speaks only Chinese, she is horrified at the idea of a “white boy in America talking only Chinese talk”! (161). The Chinese vendor, on the other hand, sees racial identity as a matter of family allegiance and community membership.

In this brief exchange, Sui Sin Far uses Harrison’s character to evoke the perceived threat that Chinese immigrants represented in the imaginations of many turn-of-the-century white Americans. Often framed as an imminent invasion, Chinese immigration was frequently imaged as the “yellow peril” in mainstream media. Chinese immigrants became the target for US racism, and fear of a Chinese invasion prompted race riots in California Chinatowns and the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. Occupying a defining role related to that of the “abject being,” the Chinatowns of US urban centers served as the “uninhabitable zones” that Butler identifies as playing a necessary role in the act of racial differentiation and subsequent exclusion. She explains that this

zone of uninhabitability will constitute the defining limit of the subject’s domain; it will constitute the site of dreaded identification against which—and by virtue of which—the domain of the subject will circumscribe its own claim to autonomy and to life. In this sense, then, the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection. (3, my emphasis)

The Chinese-American was constructed in mainstream imagination as embodying physical abjection and inhabiting the geographically uninhabitable. Therefore, mainstream representations of Chinatown and the Chinese in America were characterized by the projected fears and fantasies, the “underground self,” of the mainstream.

Pat’s existence in a Chinese family and community locates him in the realm of the “abject being,” and Anna Harrison is thrown into a racist panic as she simultaneously identifies with the boy based on his perceived “racial” identity and distinguishes herself
from the unfamiliarity of the joss house shrine, the vendor’s “Chinese fruits and sweetmeats,” and Pat’s Chinese language. She “determines” to remove Pat from this setting in which he does not belong, this “site of dreaded identification,” because “[f]or a white boy to grow up as a Chinese was unthinkable” (161). Sui Sin Far places Pat and Pan in front of the joss house, in a Chinatown setting, in an effort to disrupt the social construction of racial identity, the imposition of Otherness on Chinese- and Eurasian Americans. By contrasting the children’s contentment in the setting with Harrison’s horror, Sui Sin Far creates a narrative tension between the children’s loving relationship and the socially constructed perspective of Harrison, who represents the viewpoint of “American civilization.” To the not yet assimilated children, they are “naturally” brother and sister.

Racialization, then, is what is unnatural in “Pat and Pan.” White-Parks describes the powerful racism that forms the context for this story as “a climate where innocent details of one’s biological inheritance are bent to a continual process of ‘racialization’ that keeps people of non-European descent on the bottom” (“A Reversal” 28). She links childhood and the “natural” as well: “That such a system is created by humans, not nature, is demonstrated through characterizations of children who, innocent as their author when she was a toddler in England, co-exist in peace until society, usually White, wedges in racial barriers” (28). The creation of this narrative tension between natural human connection and artificially imposed separation serves to demystify the idea of mutually exclusive racial identities. In fact, it was Sui Sin Far who first used the term Chinese-American, which acts as a linguistic disruption of the binary opposition upon which race-based definitions of identity rely.

The opening scene can also be read as a symbolic commentary on the anti-miscegenation laws in place at the turn of the century. Annette White-Parks has noted the eroticized imagery of the children’s embrace: “the Mission woman sees the two children ‘asleep in each others arms’ in what, if we did not know their ages, could be the pose of adults after lovemaking” (“We Wear” 14). Of course, we do know the ages of the children, but, as White-Parks notes, their posture raises the possibility (much dreaded by many white Americans at the time) of interracial marriage, which threat-
IDENTITY IN SUI SIN FAR

ened mainstream readers with the image of a future devoid of racial categories, where distinctions will blur. White-Parks argues that the motivation for the white missionary’s removal of Pat from the Chinese family who raised him is based on threat of interracial marriage: “In this girl and boy from different and conflicting races lies the potential for sexual relations, childbearing, and marriage. This is... the fear of which no one dares speak, and the reason, implicitly, why the Mission woman believes she must save Pat for ‘white’ culture” (“We Wear” 14). Interracial marriage was portrayed in the US press as monstrous. Racial blending, after all, renders impossible the delineation of boundaries between subject and “abject,” between dominant self and Other, and thus leads to the deconstruction of the binary system upon which Orientalism is based.

As subscriber to such binary thinking, Anna Harrison believes she must remove Pat from the Chinatown setting in order to replace him within the hegemonic cultural practices of white America, within the “domain of the subject.” Her desire to teach him his “mother tongue” reveals her blindness to the fact that his mother is Mrs. Lum Yook, who has raised him for five years, and in response to whose call Pat “jump[s] up with a merry laugh and [runs] out into the street” (161). Similarly, Harrison refuses to see value in the cultural traditions of Pat’s Chinese community, where she only knows that they celebrate “some kind of Chinese holiday” (162). Meaningless also in Harrison’s eyes are the family bonds between Pat and his sister—the two are inseparable—or his parents who love him as their own. All of these connections, Harrison believes, must be subordinated to the ultimate goal of preserving the separations that maintain racial purity and delineate her idea of what an American is.

Also significant in the story is the adopted white boy’s name. At the turn of the century, popular print media and political cartoons depended on racial stereotypes to portray US race relations and current legislative debates relating to civil rights and immigration controls. In their portrayal of Irish immigrants, such cartoons and editorials often used the label “Pat” to represent Irish men as they would use “John Chinaman” to represent Chinese men. This stereotypical portrayal occurred at the same time that economic depression and unemployment rates escalated in the 1870’s, spur-
ring antagonism from white labor groups toward the Chinese that erupted into violent protest. In labor demonstrations, “the cry ‘The Chinese Must Go!’ reverberated throughout the West Coast” (Choy 85). The Irish were one of the groups most in competition with the Chinese for menial jobs, so the interracial conflict between Irish and Chinese was especially severe (Choy 112). As a revision of the one-dimensional stereotyping that labels like “Pat” imply, Sui Sin Far offers a realistic portrayal of the children’s characters and struggles through concrete detail. Suggesting the labor competition that divided Irish and Chinese immigrants, Sui Sin Far evokes similar competition in the children’s classroom. In response to Pan’s academic success, Pat responds, “I hate you, Pan!” (163). Sui Sin Far’s decision to give the adopted white boy a name used in reductive racial labeling expresses a challenge to the interracial conflicts that defined Chinese-American existence in the US West at the turn of the century.

Pat was born to a nameless white mother who was, for unstated reasons, a social outcast from the white community. Pat was taken in by the Lum Yooks, a loving couple who treated him “as their own” and “bestowed upon him equal love and care with the little daughter” (164). By characterizing Pat’s Chinese mother in keeping with Victorian ideals of motherhood, Sui Sin Far appeals to readers’ emotions through a conventional strategy of sentimental fiction. But that the mother’s love for her child spans racial categories is a revolutionary adaptation of this convention through which Sui Sin Far shows the possibility of interracial love. “If Mrs. Lum Yook showed any favoritism whatever, it was to Pat. He was the first she had cradled to her bosom; the first to gladden her heart with baby smiles and wiles; the first to call her Ah Ma; the first to love her” (164). This use of sentiment enables Sui Sin Far to emphasize the strength of the familial bond between Mrs. Lum Yook and Pat.

Before the story can be dismissed as overly reliant on pathos, however, Sui Sin Far interposes with a reminder of the ability of “regulatory law,” of public opinion, to tear asunder the interracial bonds, the potential for healing, that this mother and son represent. “The son of the white woman is the son of the white woman,” comments Mrs. Lum Yook, who realizes the power of race categorization to uphold or disrupt social hierarchies (164). Anna Harri-
son has alerted the white community to Pat’s “unnatural” position as member of a Chinese family, and Mrs. Lum Yook knows “there are many tongues wagging because he lives under our roof” (164). Public opinion does, of course, win out in the end. The Lum Yooks are powerless to resist Pat’s removal, and a white couple adopts the boy. In a mix of realism’s and sentimentalism’s conventions, Sui Sin Far depicts the very true, concrete realities of US law and social policy at the turn of the century while disclosing the inhumanity of such policies through the use of pathos.

When Pan meets her beloved brother a year later, she invites him back to Chinatown to visit his family and friends there. Pat’s response, “I can’t, Pan” (165), shows that in his year within the white community, his new family, teachers, and peers have taught him the boundaries of American identity, boundaries which exclude the Chinese and their customs, culture, and humanity. In their discussion, Pan realizes that Pat has forgotten the details of his life with the Lum Yooks: “Pat, you have forgot to remember!” she exclaims sadly (165). In their second meeting, some time later, Pat, in a group of white friends, turns on his sister with hate, shouting at her to get away from him. “Poor Pat!” laments Pan, “he Chinese no more!” (166). The sequence of narrative tableaux that make up “Pat and Pan” comprises a progressive separation between the children based on vivid moments of realistic dialogue. The concrete details of “Pat and Pan” remind us that this story, though fiction, could happen because it is based on the very real “motives, impulses and principles,” to use Howells’ terms, that force human separation in America.

Anna Harrison would tell this story quite differently, and it would be framed as a happy ending. Seen from Pan’s perspective, however, her brother’s increasing remoteness is the result of learned behavior and thought in white America. White-Parks concludes that this moment in the story “measures the acquisition of knowledge in one cultural world with its loss in another” (“We Wear” 15). Pan’s white brother has been taught to hate her and to hate all Chinese. Pat has, in Pan’s eyes, been taught whiteness, a lesson that Sui Sin Far shows us will render impossible the creation of an American “family” comprised of a nation of “brothers and sisters.” In Pan’s understanding of race, being Chinese is not a matter of biological essentialism but rather a matter of membership
in the Chinese community, which reflects all that she has been raised with: happiness, family connection, and community acceptance. Mainstream America offers Pat these essentials only if he will also learn hate, the necessary prerequisite in an identity politics of exclusion.

In Sui Sin Far’s quest to offer America a model of interrelationships based on love rather than hate, she participates in the-turn-of-the-century nation-building effort, but she performs her participation in that effort with a difference by focusing on the lives of characters not usually considered deserving of center stage attention. In order to suggest such subversive ideas at a time so racially charged as the turn of the century, Sui Sin Far had to create realistic Chinese characters with whom a white audience could empathize, and Pan’s character achieves this purpose because of her innocence and family loyalty, both qualities attributed to domestic heroines in American fiction. White-Parks comments on Sui Sin Far’s use of fiction to disrupt established mainstream perceptions: “in depicting a Mission woman (heroine of the Progressive Era) as villainous and a Chinese family as heroic, in ‘Pat and Pan,’ Sui Sin Far upsets conventional ideas of ‘Other-ness’” (“We Wear” 15).

Sui Sin Far revises the conventions of romance plots and happy endings in “Its Wavering Image,” which tells the story of a romantic relationship between a white man and a Eurasian woman named Pan. In writing the story, Sui Sin Far borrows from the conventions of sentimental romance, but in this case there can be no happy ending because Mark Carson, the man who woos Pan, forces her to choose one racial self-identification, and she chooses to assert her Chinese identity. In “Its Wavering Image,” Sui Sin Far uses the sentimental romance as well as elements of realism, as she did in “Pat and Pan,” to illuminate North American race relations.

As in her depiction of Anna Harrison’s perception, Sui Sin Far also explores in “Its Wavering Image” how the white gaze is used to construct racial barriers and unequal power relations. Pan’s bi-racial identity is threatening to Carson because she disturbs the racial categorization on which the stability of his own identity relies; Pan represents to Carson “the spectre of racial ambiguity that must be conquered” (Butler 172). Pan “puzzles” Carson, who asks “what was she? Chinese or white?” (61). As for Pan’s self-
perception, “It was only after the coming of Mark Carson,” the
narrator tells us, “that the mystery of [Pan’s] nature began to trou-
ble her” (61). Her budding desire for Carson and his demand that
she abandon her allegiance to the Chinese and create of her iden-
tity a wavering image that she must actively bring back into focus.

In keeping with the sentimental romance plot that so often relies
on the contrasting characterizations of innocent heroine and das-
tardly villain, Sui Sin Far portrays Carson as a predator and un-
scrupulous ethnographer, posing a double threat of sexual and cul-
tural violation. His gaze places Pan as sexual object and as Other,
and Sui Sin Far connects that gaze with the “curious scrutiny” of
other whites Pan encounters. The comparison of their scrutiny to
“the sharp edge of a sword” is later echoed when Pan and her peo-
ple have been misrepresented by Carson’s words. She will define
that betrayal as “the sword which pierced her through others” (65),
linking his power to harm her through false representation (the pen
is indeed mightier than the sword) with a rape-like enactment of
betrayal. In the act of investigating and exposing the Chinese, Car-
son enacts Orientalism, which Said describes as something that
“not only creates but also maintains; it is, rather than expresses, a
certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control,
manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or
alternative and novel) world” (12). Carson’s will to incorporate
Pan into dominant white culture threatens to erase her place in
Chinese-American culture, and his interactions with her negotiate
an uncomfortable tension between desire and fear of difference.

From the beginning of “Its Wavering Image,” Sui Sin Far de-
picts Carson’s impressions of Pan as limited and inaccurate. At
first, Carson, a man who would “sell his soul for a story” (61),
scrutinizes Pan with the tactical eye of a hunter assessing his
quarry. He clearly approaches her as sexualized object with only as
much restraint as will benefit his objectives: “he found her bewil-
deringly frank and free with him; but he had all the instincts of a
gentleman save one, and made no ordinary mistake about her”
(62). By the end of the story, it seems Carson lacks more than one
instinct of a gentleman, but here the focus is on Carson’s sexual re-
straint in contrast to his lack of journalistic scruples. Sui Sin Far
suggests that, had Carson not possessed this restraint, he would
have assumed Pan’s frankness indicates a sexual freeness (often
associated in turn-of-the-century mainstream media and legal practice with the Chinese woman\(^{15}\) of which he would be quick to take advantage.\(^{16}\)

In order to dramatize Pan’s humanity and show the complexity of her “motive and impulses,” Sui Sin Far uses a multiplicity of narrative viewpoints. Shifting quickly from Carson’s observer-perspective, Sui Sin Far focuses the third-person narration on Pan’s place within her community. This shift shows readers that, in actuality, Pan’s freeness reflects the trust she has learned from her father and as a part of the Chinese community, a trust she bestows willingly on Carson, who “was her first white friend” (62). As someone who has until now been uncomfortable with whites, Pan is drawn in by Carson’s careful approaches. Carson nearly convinces Pan that she “had lived her life alone” before meeting him (62), which implies that he does not wish to see her as a Chinese woman at all but rather as a white woman abandoned among foreigners. In this cultural blindness, Carson dismisses Pan’s Chinese family and community as well as her own Chinese identity as non-existent and therefore equal to isolation.

“Its Wavering Image” is a story about looking and seeing; in particular, it is about the blinders that racism puts on Carson’s perception. We learn that Carson’s “clear eyes perceived” Pan’s character and situation quickly (62). We learn too that he sees the Chinese as completely foreign to white Americans, as the “unlivable,” to use Butler’s term. Pan offers Mark Carson an insider’s view of Chinese culture, religion, and ritual. She serves the role of ambassador, and the Chinese welcome him into private ceremonies and settings. But Carson’s “clear eyes,” unfortunately, are only able to perceive Chinese people and Chinatown culture as “unbeautiful” (63). This perception, however, poses a problem for Carson. He desires Pan, and his desire for the “abject body” demands that he redefine and reclassify Pan as white. Because her proximity to other Chinese, her Chinatown surroundings, and her cultural practices mark her as abject, as Other, Carson must remove her from association with the Chinese in order to locate his desire for her within the realm of the licensed, and so legitimate it. This removal is represented by the isolated rooftop space they inhabit together, overlooking Chinatown’s streets.
On the rooftop, where both characters are removed from the community that marks Pan as Chinese and Carson as outsider, there is an illusion of equality, of possibility: the illusion that these two young people have the opportunity to pursue their desire without concern for racial identity. That illusion is quickly shattered by Pan’s voice as she defends her community from Carson’s insults: “Perhaps it isn’t very beautiful, . . . but it is here I live. It is my home” (63). Pan’s declaration disrupts the narrative of their relationship as Carson would like to write it. He responds to Pan’s declaration of love for the Chinese people with disgust in an attempt to reassert his control over the situation through language.

“Pan,” he cried, “you do not belong here. You are white—white.”

“No! No!” protested Pan.

“You are,” he asserted. “You have no right to be here.” (63)

Carson’s assertion, his declaration of “right,” reminds us in concrete and realistic terms that his is the voice of regulatory discourse. His words, spoken and written, enact the hegemonic rule that defines the Chinese as “abject beings” rather than subjects.

The two then debate the nature of Pan’s “real self” (63), which, in a move that echoes the young Pan, she defines in terms of where she was born, raised, and loved, and which he defines in terms of literacy and access to the dominant discourse that connects her to mainstream culture. What connection do the Chinese have, he asks, to “the books you read—the thoughts you think”? (63). Carson sees Pan, the object of his desire, as separate from the Chinese, “who form the constitutive outside the domain of the subject” (Butler 3). He demands of Pan, “you have got to decide what you will be—Chinese or white? You cannot be both” (63). Pan clearly will not be forced to give up her Chinese identity or community, despite her desire for Carson: “Hush! Hush! . . . I do not love you when you talk to me like that,” she replies (63). Pan is in the act of resisting Carson’s conditions for love when their debate is interrupted by an intruder through whom Sui Sin Far shows us the nature of Carson’s racialized perception.

Sui Sin Far shifts the point of view of the narrative voice to that of Mark Carson in this scene, showing us a Pan who appears to embody the stereotype of the demure and diminutive Chinese
woman. This shift causes a wavering or displacement of perception on the readers’ part, which causes readers to question the act of perception and the biases that inform that act. Pan’s struggle with her own wavering sense of self is contrasted by the seemingly fixed perception of Mark Carson. While other passages in “Its Wavering Image” disclose Pan’s thoughts and feelings, those details are noticeably absent in the distancing and objectifying narrative that portrays this tableau.

The intruder upon their intimacy is a “little Chinese boy” who has brought them tea and saffron cakes. Carson’s reaction to him and the narrative description of the boy draw attention to the role Orientalism plays in Carson’s perception. Simultaneously, Pan’s reaction to the boy illustrates the extent to which she is unaware of how deeply imbedded Carson’s prejudices are. In this scene, as throughout the story, the narration is third-person limited, but that limited perspective shifts, or wavers, from moment to moment. When the boy enters, his Orientalized description indicates Carson’s perspective. The boy “was a picturesque little fellow with a quaint manner of speech. Mark Carson jested merrily with him, while Pan holding a tea-bowl between her two small hands laughed and sipped” (63). Here the boy inspires a positive reaction from Carson for telling reasons: he is a boy, not a man; he is enacting the role of servant; his quaintly “picturesque” manners fulfill Carson’s stereotypical expectations, which permit him to locate the boy safely in the realm of the Other “abject being.”

More foreboding is the momentary image of Pan’s “two small hands” holding the tea-bowl, a gesture that is probably indicative of the Chinese custom of receiving objects with two hands, and therefore “natural” to her. Yet Sui Sin Far presents the image decidedly from Carson’s perspective, so that Pan’s small hands create an image wherein she is linked metonymically with the small boy as another picturesque “abject body.” The narration thus creates a sudden shift from a woman who has just demanded the right to name herself to the image of a silent woman placed in stereotypical posture. Despite Carson’s insistence that Pan claim only her white identity, that she pass into mainstream culture, this moment on the rooftop indicates that Carson’s image of Pan is informed by his own stereotypes about Chinese culture. He seems both attracted and repulsed by the exoticized version of her that he imagines. We realize that Pan is unaware of Carson’s motivations.
realize that Pan is unaware of Carson’s motivations as she laughs at him and the boy. Pan mistakes Carson’s friendliness toward the boy for a genuine affection for the Chinese, and by association she imagines the possibility he will accept her connection to the Chinese community. Her perception, we learn later, has been blurred by the “wavering image” of the moon, symbolically linked to Pan’s desire for Mark Carson and the temptation of his “irresistible voice” (64).

The temptation to forswear her Chinese community to gain Carson’s love is cast in a passage suggesting Eden and the fall, which begins as Carson’s singing causes Pan to break down and weep because “she was so young and happy” (64). Carson’s response, “Oh, Pan! Pan! Those tears prove that you are white”(64), offers her again the terms of their romantic involvement, an acceptance of Carson’s exclusive Orientalist vision. The scene’s denouement is a deal sealed with a kiss, which we are informed “was the first time” (64). Pan’s loss of innocence is followed by an ambiguous silence suggesting sexual exploitation. The final line of the section reads: “Next morning Mark Carson began to work on the special-feature article” on Chinatown culture (64). At this point the reader remembers that Carson is known to his colleagues as one who would “sell his soul for a story,” and the motivation behind his manipulation of Pan becomes clear. In portraying Carson as soulless manipulator without allegiance, Sui Sin Far casts him as a satanic figure evocative of sentimental romances’ most evil villains (61).

Equating personal betrayal with harmful representation, Sui Sin Far portrays Pan’s discovery of Carson’s words, which come to represent the dangers of Pan’s wavering sense of identification and allegiance. Now, in “the clear passionless light of the afternoon” (64), Pan reads Carson’s article, which “cruelly” and “ruthlessly spread before the ridiculing and uncomprehending foreigner” the sacred beliefs and traditions of her people (65). We are reminded here of Sui Sin Far’s objections to stereotypical and uncomprehending portrayals of Chinese characters in fiction. In writing about a Chinese-American character’s emotional response to such depictions, Sui Sin Far shows the human cost of such abusive uses of written discourse. In this passage, Pan compares her horror and shame for her unwitting role in this betrayal of her people to having “her own naked body and soul. . . exposed” (65), reinforcing
the image of sexual violation suggested in the kiss of the previous section.

This reference to the soul is a recurring note in Sui Sin Far’s canon. In “Leaves,” Sui Sin Far’s employer questions whether the Chinese have souls, only to expose the shallowness of his own. In “Pat and Pan,” Anna Harrison’s role as missionary woman causes readers to question the nature of her soul, and the story ultimately discloses the hypocrisy of a so-called Christian woman. In “Its Wavering Image,” Sui Sin Far metonymically links Carson’s readiness to sell his own soul to Pan’s identification with the Chinese whose traditions she equates with her soul. In creating this link, Sui Sin Far suggests a moral contrast between the two characters, a contrast that shows Carson’s typically American quest for individual gain as threatening to an inclusive national unity. That unity, Sui Sin Far suggests, depends on the kind of community loyalty Pan exhibits. In her repetition of these echoed soul-searching moments among the short stories and essays in Mrs. Spring Fragrance, Sui Sin Far encourages readers to question their own souls and the extent to which they have dealt justly with their fellow Americans.

An additionally important enactment of difference in this scene occurs in the wording of Pan’s outrage at Carson’s betrayal, in which she casts mainstream white culture as “uncomprehending foreigners,” a narrative shift that demands from white readers a shift in world view positioning the experiences and viewpoints of the Other as center.18 Pan’s act of reading Carson’s article “help[s] her to lucidity” (64), to a rereading of her subjectivity, by forcing her to understand her position as object of socially constructed Otherness. Carson, as her one adult contact with white culture, has taught her that claiming her white identity would locate her as both betrayer and betrayed. The glare of the “curious scrutiny” Carson’s article exemplifies enables Pan to refocus the formerly wavering image that her self-identification had become under the influence of her desire for Carson.

If we read “Its Wavering Image” as a figurative sequel to “Pat and Pan,” then the young Pan’s cry of, “Pat, you have forgot to remember” (165) resonates in the experiences of the adult Pan, who was temporarily enchanted with Carson as a representative of white culture and with the possibility of dual membership in the
cultures of her father and her mother. In both stories we learn that such blending of racial categories threatens the exclusive subject, and in response to such threat, mainstream culture responds by teaching hate. In “Pat and Pan,” filial love is shattered by taught hate; in “Its Wavering Image,” that taught hate has become an integral part of Carson’s world-view, and it has made interracial love impossible. The conclusions of both stories show little hope for an end to racism and the possibility of dual or multiple community membership. Nevertheless, in exposing the terrible effects of that exclusivity in realistic detail, Sui Sin Far contributes to the strengthening of Chinese-American communities through the voicing of shared experience and suffering.

When Carson meets her again, two months later, Pan (whose clothing was not described in earlier scenes) is dressed in traditional Chinese clothing. She declares to him, “I am a Chinese woman” (66). Not surprisingly, Carson believes Pan “was not herself tonight. She did not even look herself” (66, my emphasis). Here, Sui Sin Far reiterates Carson’s dependence on visual perception to define identity by communicating his discomfort upon discovering that his own perception has wavered. Carson has taught Pan that the promise of the white man is valueless, and she refuses to be associated with the untrustworthy. Her assumption of a Chinese identity recalls the young Pan of “Pat and Pan,” who, recognizing that her white brother’s newly-learned hatred of her and the Chinese people is based on his ability to forget the love they showed him as a child laments, “Poor Pat! . . . he Chinese no more” (166).

Now, in “Its Wavering Image,” we learn that an adult Pan, as part of the collective experience of the Chinese in America, has learned the complexity of the young Pan’s lesson. If part of Anna Harrison’s motivation in keeping Pat away from the Chinese was to prevent the blurring, or wavering, of race categories, then how is the adult Pan’s motivation to resist Carson’s insistence to pass for white, to pass into white society, different? Like Sui Sin Far herself, Pan could pass as a white woman. Her position as a biracial woman locates her on the blurred border between Chinese and white cultures in a segregated America, and Carson’s insistence on placing her within the white community reflects the powerful role of those boundaries in regulating exclusion within a country de-
fined so rigidly by race categorization. Within her own community, Pan’s biracial identity is viewed as a broadening of cultural membership. The Chinese accept her but also grant her the freedom to be different without alienating her. The narrator tells us that Pan was born into her Chinatown community as “a Bohemian, exempt from the conventional restrictions imposed upon either the white or Chinese woman” (62).

Like Sui Sin Far herself, Pan could pass into white culture and live free from the direct racism the Chinese suffer, but her sense of injustice over that racism and her allegiance to the Chinese is too strong to allow her to sacrifice identity for comfort. Mark Carson’s betrayal reinforces for Pat the importance of her Chinese identity, her membership in “the race that remembers” (65). She understands that accepting Carson’s definition of her would amount to forgetting both the love of her Chinese family and community and that community’s history of oppression; it would constitute an acceptance of the Orientalist exclusivity that impedes national justice. Part of what is suggested in the act of remembering is a sense of history and continuance that enables self-identification for the people of a community.

The connections between the childhood betrayal of young Pan and the betrayal the adult Pan suffers from Carson suggest a need to teach the next generation acceptance in order to break the cycle of oppression and exclusion that defines abjection. Sui Sin Far predicts that when hate no longer defines race relations, and “when the whole world becomes as one family,” only then “will human beings be able to see clearly and hear distinctly” (223-24, my emphasis). In contrast to the wavering image of false and harmful perceptions based on essentialist constructions of racial identity, the clear vision that Sui Sin Far describes is possible only through education and interracial contact and exchange. She imagines a more harmonious future when “a great part of the world will be Eurasian” (224). The racial mixing physically embodied in the Eurasian becomes representative of a world vision wherein interracial hatred has ceased to exist.

In portraying fictional characters who resist the exclusive boundaries imposed by mainstream culture, Sui Sin Far explores alternative modes of self-definition for Chinese-Americans, and in doing so she transcends by writing the abjection that defined her
life experiences in North America. By using her fiction to illustrate the damaging effects of the racism that forces biracial characters to choose one culture or the other, Sui Sin Far joined American writers of multiple genre traditions at the turn of the century who envisioned a more ideal America in their work.

In demanding a new, inclusive vision of American identity as made up of multiple differing identities, and in demanding that white readers see for a moment the world from the perspective of those Other marginalized identities, Sui Sin Far engages in what Tiffany Ana Lopez calls “a politics of visibility” (21). Bell hooks also points to the role of language in struggle: “The oppressed struggle in language to recover ourselves—to reunite, to reconcile, to renew. Our words. . . are an action—a resistance” (28). Sui Sin Far understands that the act of writing as resistance is a means by which to insist upon one’s existence, one’s subjectivity, in a culture that denies the writer’s humanity in order to maintain those power structures enabled by exclusion. Sui Sin Far identifies the role of storytellers in establishing a just nation when she celebrates “the true fathers and mothers of the world,” those who “battled through great trials and hardships to leave to future generations noble and inspiring truths” (290).

Ammons notes that the narrative form of a short story collection enables Sui Sin Far to express “a variety of Chinese American experiences and issues” and to present “many different people’s stories, with the cumulative effect. . . of giving us a glimpse into a community bound together by shared traditions and problems but composed of individual lives, no one more important than another” (Conflicting 117-18). This grouped effect, enhanced by the echoing of ideas, names, and circumstances between stories, creates in the original Mrs. Spring Fragrance (1912), and even more so in the recently published collection, Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings (1995), an opportunity to view Sui Sin Far’s short stories, essays, and articles as a unified whole, a written montage that brings to life the Chinese characters who were formerly only portrayed as “wooden pegs” and simultaneously challenges readers to rethink the labels Chinese, Chinese-American, and Eurasian. In her work, Sui Sin Far is engaged, to use Butler’s term, in the “reworking of abjection into political agency” (21). In order to accomplish that reworking, Sui Sin Far transforms the narrative forms and gen-
res to which she had access—short fiction and the essay, realism and sentimental romance—into tools for original artistic creation as well as for subversion and cultural affirmation.

Notes

1. Today, literary historians are beginning to rethink realism in order to appreciate the diversity it encompasses. Ammons even argues that “the most important characteristic of American realism [is] its racial, ethnic, sexual, and cultural range” (“Men” 24).

2. Sui Sin Far was born in England to a Chinese mother and an English father, who named her Edith Maud Eaton. The family moved to Toronto when she was six. As Solberg notes, “although her mother was Chinese, Edith was unacquainted with her mother’s native language, except for a few phrases, during her early years; in fact, she had very little contact with Asians or Eurasians, except for her own large group of siblings. Yet when she began to publish stories and articles, she chose to ... [write] under the nom de plume of Sui Sin Far” (27). Xiao-Huang Yin translates Sui Sin Far’s name to mean “narcissus,” which “in Chinese culture symbolizes dignity and indestructible love for family and homeland” (54). That she chose a name announcing her allegiance to China and the Chinese when she could easily have “passed” as European American illustrates Sui Sin Far’s commitment to giving voice to Chinese-American concerns and experiences in the US. Like White-Parks, I will use Sui Sin Far’s full name throughout this essay because, when split into parts, the name does not retain its translated meaning, which “depends on the sequence,” White-Parks argues (Sui Sin Far xvii).

3. Ammons notes that in taking this stance, “a great deal of the large and important body of fiction published at the turn of the century by women and by men of color contradicted [the realist] notion of commonality, particularly its ideal of accepting hierarchy” (“Men” 32).

4. Ling contrasts the reality Sui Sin Far presented with her white mainstream audience’s definitions of the “true” American: “though realism as a literary phenomenon of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a rejection of romanticism and of representations of the unlikely, the idealized, and the fabulous in favor [sic] the real, the ordinary, the everyday, the Chinese, a race generally perceived as alien and unassimilable, were anything but ordinary and everyday for the majority of Euroamericans” in turn-of-the-century North American culture (“Reading” 69).

5. Said’s construct of East and West is a monolithic one, which is not helpful if accepted uncritically. Nevertheless, the generalizations he makes about Western perceptions of “the Orient” help us to understand the prevailing attitudes toward the Chinese in North America at the turn into the twentieth century.

6. Reviewers of Mrs. Spring Fragrance recognized her pioneering work as the first American author to present the Chinese in America as complex characters
in fiction. White-Parks notes that "reviewers recognized that this author was doing something different from simply offering stereotyped portraits of Chinese immigrant life" (Sui Sin Far 200). White-Parks goes on to quote from a review in the Boston Globe, which comments on both Sui Sin Far's effective use of pathos and realistic character portrayal. The reviewer notes, "The tales are told with a sympathy that strikes straight to one's heart; to say they are convincing is weak praise, and they show the Chinese with feelings absolutely indistinguishable from those of white people—only the Chinese seem to have more delicate sensibilities, and more acute methods of handling their problems" (qtd. in White-Parks, Sui Sin Far 201).

7. See for example such cartoons as "The Chinese Invasion" from Puck Magazine, part of the collection in Choy, et al (123).

8. In other stories, Sui Sin Far presents the opposite circumstance: white missionaries or government workers take Chinese children away from their families to be raised by whites or where assimilation threatens to erase Chinese language and culture from children. See "In the Land of the Free" (93) and "The Wisdom of the New" (42).

9. I am indebted to Jacquelyn Lynch for her suggestions on this essay and on this point in particular.

10. This study differs from White-Parks' in the suggestion that Sui Sin Far intentionally creates links between "Pat and Pan" and "Its Wavering Image" so that the former needs to be considered a precursor to the latter.

11. For an example of such representation, see the cartoon "Pacific Railroad Complete" originally printed in Puck Magazine (Choy, et al 134). The cartoon depicts as binary opposites an attractive, properly dressed Victorian white woman, arm-in-arm with a Chinese man possessing monstrous features and dressed in peasant garb; significantly, they stand in front of "The Church of St. Confucius," suggesting an "unholy" matrimony in the eyes of Christian readers. That those binaries suggested in the cartoon depend on visual markers shows the tenuousness of the hierarchical opposition mainstream American rhetoric embraced when it applied such labels as civilized or savage, white or Chinese, Christian or heathen.

12. See, for example, the entire collection of political cartoons relating to Chinese immigrants and immigration legislation in Choy, et al.

13. The structure of Mrs. Spring Fragrance would not immediately suggest a link between "Pat and Pan" and "Its Wavering Image." While the latter appears among a number of other stories dealing with adult themes, the former is included in a section entitled, "Tales of Chinese Children." This classification, White-Parks argues, is part of Sui Sin Far's trickster authorship because the story is clearly not a story meant for children; she suggests instead that the stories therein are "about," or "coming from," Chinese children and offer adults a perspective on the results of adult folly on children. "Through children (the mouths of babes) an adult audience naively accepts what it could not if spoken by its peers," she argues ("We Wear" 15). In this way, then, Sui Sin Far raises
issues in this “children’s story” that she will explore more overtly in “Its Waver-
ing Image,” which I would argue is the adult sequel to “Pat and Pan.”

14. The plot of romantic involvement between Pan and Mark Carson in this story offers some parallels with the plot of Nella Larsen’s *Passing*. Butler’s discussion of the biracial character Clare in that novel offers a useful analysis of the role of both physical and geographical proximity in determining racialized identity. Though the two women’s racial ambiguousness takes on different forms relative to the white men in their lives (Clare lies to her husband and “passes” for white while Pan lives in Chinatown as a biracial woman), both women’s surroundings color the men’s perceptions of them. Chinatown and Pan’s father’s store cause Carson to perceive Pan as alien, while Clare’s presence at a party with other African Americans enables her white husband to see for the first time that she is African American; she “becomes black, where the sign of blackness is contracted, as it were, through proximity, where ‘race’ itself is figured as a contagion transmissible through proximity” (Butler 171).

15. Immigration laws in the late nineteenth century enabled California immigration officers to forbid entry to Chinese women if they were suspected of coming to the US to work as prostitutes (Chan 101).

16. According to Sui Sin Far’s autobiography, this suggestion is at least in part based on her own experiences with white men.

17. This observation was offered by an evaluator of this article for *MELUS*, for which I am grateful.

18. This created shift is part of what characterizes Sui Sin Far as a writer who uses trickster strategies, which Ammons argues, “are not just a way to get ‘in’ or ‘back at’ the dominant culture. Tricksters and trickster energy articulate a whole other, independent, cultural reality and positive way of negotiating multiple cultural systems” (“We Wear” xi). At her moment of discovery, Pan re-focuses her world view by re-centering it in the “independent cultural reality” of her Chinese community.

19. Solberg references photographs of Sui Sin Far to support this claim (27).

20. Lopez characterizes tales that use trickster discourse as stories that “delineate cultural survival in a world that threatens one’s very existence as an individual and as a communal being” (21). The stories collected in *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* certainly enact such means of cultural survival.

**Works Cited**


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