Cultural Identity Revisited: Early Twentieth-Century
Women's Work of Cultural Preservation
(María Cristina Mena, Humishuma, Sui Sin Far &
the Daughters of Hawai'i)

By

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Ph.D., University of Kansas, 2007

Submitted to the graduate degree program in English and the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Kansas
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Date defended_____

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Date approved_____

ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on the work of cultural preservation and self-representation by a group of women from the cultural "periphery." As I explore the works of María Cristina Mena, Humishuma (Mourning Dove), Sui Sin Far (Edith Maude Eaton) and The Daughters of Hawai'i, it becomes clear that "cultural preservation" can mean cultural "creation" and/or "reinvention", depending on the cultural desires of the writers doing the "preserving," but also on those in control of the editorial and publication processes. The level of achieved success in terms of the "purity" of any represented culture also often depends on the dominant culture's fantasies and determinations of what is culturally acceptable and believable. The works by the women I study in this project: Mexican-American, American-Indian, Chinese-American, and non-indigenous as well as indigenous Hawaiian, all show the tension between submitting to the pressure to play into fantasies of cultural domination and the desire to resist. As the products of colonial tensions, caught in the uncertain time and space of cultures in transition, forced to move between epistemological borders, these women engaged in a cultural repositioning that defied the mainstream cultural narratives of the time. It is through the border-crossing element of these women's work that the complex nature of cultural preservation and their common fight for cultural ownership and self-representation are thus appropriately highlighted.

Cultural Identity Revisited:
Early Twentieth-Century Women's Work of Cultural Preservation

PREFACE

As I started the writing process in 2002, I was struck by the similarities in the U.S.'s cultural atmosphere in the early 20th and early 21st centuries. The level of anxiety that colonial or neo-colonial matters, as well as immigration concerns, generate today parallels that of the late 1800s and early 1900s. At the same time, the continuous work of preservation by various institutions and groups suggests a celebration of difference. The peculiar tensions and paradoxes of these mirrored historical moments are certainly worth exploring.

As a non-American-Indian, Chinese-American, Hawaiian or Mexican-American subject, my taking on the study of these cultural communities may seem to be an act of appropriation. As an immigrant from Spain, however, I find that I am an "Othered" subject in the U.S.'s cultural mainstream. I turn to the words of Samoan critic Albert Wendt both to clarify and justify my work:

> I am not saying that … the *papalagi* (Euro-American in Samoan) should not write about us, or vice versa. But the imagination must explore with love, honesty, wisdom and compassion… Writers must [respect] the people they are writing about. (quoted in Lyons 16)

My "imagination" as critic is not the only one at stake: one of the central issues posed in this project is the extent to which the women authors I study write from

experience or imagination. And if they are employing imagination, whose imaginative landscape are they tapping into? Do they create and recreate rather than record? Do they respect the cultures they are preserving? My dissertation illustrates the shaky grounds on which "cultural preservation" stands.

As I explore the works of María Cristina Mena, Humishuma (Mourning Dove), Sui Sin Far (Edith Maude Eaton) and The Daughters of Hawai'i, it becomes clear that "cultural preservation" can mean cultural "creation" and/or "reinvention", depending on the cultural desires of the writers doing the "preserving," but also on those in control of the editorial and publication processes. The level of achieved success in terms of the "purity" of any represented culture also often depends on the dominant culture's fantasies and determinations of what is culturally acceptable and believable. The works by the women I study in this project: Mexican-American, American-Indian, Chinese-American, and non-indigenous as well as indigenous Hawaiian, all show the tension between submitting to the pressure to play into fantasies of cultural domination and the desire to resist.

INTRODUCTION

> If one is constructed in one particular kind of language, what kinds of violence does it do to one's subjectivity if one then has to move into another language and suppress whatever selves or subjectivities were constructed by the first? (Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic* 63)

By the turn of the 20th century, the United States had become the stage of a turbulent historic moment. The period spanning from the late 1800's to the first third of the 1900's represents an era of cultural questioning and political undermining of social norms. The attempt to redefine standards—particularly those generated by white, middle-class men holding social, economic, and political power—was sparked by the growth of the working class and the possibility of more social fluidity, U.S. imperial enterprises, increased immigration and the resultant push toward colonial assimilation, and brought with it an obsession for cultural preservation.

Social and cultural change created an atmosphere of hysteria that became especially violent in terms of race. The national debate generated by North America's colonial endeavors both within and outside its borders, as well as the influx of immigrants these endeavors sparked, found its way into dominant cultural discourses and triggered the creation of political and social programs (i.e. American Indian Boarding Schools, the Colonization Movement, Anglo-Saxonism, the Exclusion Act of 1882) to counteract the threat that "other" cultural groups were allegedly posing. Pseudo-scientific racial theories and studies began to appear in widely-read publications. Even magazines such as *Century*, which targeted a more progressive, educated white middle-class,

became a forum for anti-immigration rhetoric: "It is fair to say that the blood now being injected into the veins of our people is 'sub-common'" (Ross, *Century*, Feb. 1914). Edward Alsworth Ross, Chair of the Sociology Department at the University of Wisconsin, became a regular conservative voice in *Century*, with a series of articles underlining the main tenets of Anglo-Saxonism[1].

In this time of social schizophrenia, of change and fear of change, of renovation and stubborn adherence to ideas of cultural monoliths, some women writers from the cultural periphery sought the opportunity to defy the master narratives of the mainstream/mainland audience, opening the doors for a subtle cultural revolution. Of diverse ethnic backgrounds and social classes, Humishuma (American Indian and working class), María Cristina Mena (Mexican-American and upper-class), Sui Sin Far (Chinese American and middle-class), and the women's circle Daughters of Hawai'i (initially from missionary stock), all took on the intellectually and politically complex work of challenging the cultural center: they were well aware that their works would be at odds with the master narratives of this cultural mainstream, which depicted the indigenous cultures of Mexico, North America and Hawai'i[2] as on the verge of extinction, and, in other instances, as in the case of the Chinese and Chinese-American communities in the U.S., as sites of dangerous political, economic and cultural autonomy. As Bill Ashcroft argues in *The Empire Writes Back*, dominated cultures, or cultures in the periphery, have a "tendency towards subversion," not only in terms of proclaiming

[1] "The Old World and the New: Economic Consequences of Immigration" (November 1913), "Immigrants in Politics: The Political Consequences of Immigration" (January 1914), "Racial Consequences of Immigration" (February 1914), "Origins of the American People" (March 1914)].

[2] In the case of the Daughters of Hawai'i, as I explore on Chapter IV, what the Daughters perceived as resistance, can in fact be seen as a form of acquiescence to such master narratives.

themselves "central and self-determining," but also by "challenging the world-view that can polarize center and periphery in the first place" (32). They thus not only resist dominant epistemologies, but, most importantly offer their own paradigms and reclaim ownership of self-representation. As Mary Louise Pratt explains, "cultural survival . . . implies being *in possession of* a degree of collective freedom, autonomy and identity" involving "a position of *proprietorship* over herself, her culture and her history (60).

As the products of colonial tensions, the women writers I present in this dissertation engaged in a cultural repositioning that defied the mainstream narratives. These women were caught in the uncertain time and space of cultures in transition, forced to move between epistemological borders; They all participated in what Paula Gunn Allen describes as "border-crossing"[3]:

> The process of living in the border, of crossing and re-crossing boundaries of consciousness is most clearly delineated in the work by writers who are citizens of more than one community, whose experiences and languages require that they live within worlds that are markedly different from one another." ("'Border-Studies': The Intersection of Gender and Color" 305)

Not simply defined as belonging to two nations (as is the case of Sui Sin Far) and thus traveling across geo-political boundaries, this border-crossing is "fundamentally a matter of the essential experience of non-Western modes of consciousness" (307), moving between epistemologies that not only remain at odds, but maintain an unbalanced relationship of power, defined in terms of "Otherness."

[3] Directly connected to Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*, this representation brings to the foreground the precariousness of these women's cultural position. Although Anzaldúa's "mestiza" creates a new cultural consciousness that moves beyond tension by encompassing ALL tension, the idea of a cultural "crossfire"as described by Anzaldúa is still apparent in the work by the women in my project.

As "Othered" subjects, each of these women writers, willingly or unwillingly, adopted the role of cultural interpreter, mediator between cultures whose task was to introduce the "peripheral" culture to the mainstream in ways that would not defy the master narratives of peripheral subjects. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak discusses in "Imperialism and Sexual Difference," this is the role of the "true native" (or "subordinate other"), who does not challenge the audience's expectations of reified exoticism. This "othered" voice is typically heard through the mediation of an "investigator or field worker," which creates a peculiar objectification of the "other's" discourse.

The tension becomes apparent in varying degrees throughout the textual production of these women as they attempt to engage in cultural preservation and representation: Mena, an upper class writer living in New York, became the voice of the Mexican *Indios*; Sui Sin Far, both British and Chinese, met with resistance from potential editors when her stories directly addressed and challenged mainstream narratives of Chinese and Chinese-American cultural experiences. Mourning Dove enlisted the help of a white "collaborator" and editor, Lucullus Virgil McWhorter, fueling dozens of articles and studies regarding the real authorship of her novel, stories and even autobiography; and finally, the Daughters of Hawai'i—themselves descendants of white American missionaries—engaged in the colonial practice of preserving a "dying" culture with unexpected historical and cultural effects, especially as they revisit their own history of cultural preservation one hundred years later.

As they engaged in a cultural border-crossing, these women were able to move beyond the limitations of their assigned cultural role as "true natives" and became what María Lugones calls "borderdwellers," coming to understand "through a jarring, vivid

awareness, . . . that the encasing by particular systems of meaning is a process one can consciously and critically resist or accept" (88). As resisting "othered" subjects, these women created, in varying degrees, new epistemological narratives to counteract the narratives of domination that culturally defined them.

In Chapter 1, I investigate the tension in Mena's short stories, as her class bias informs the ways in which she constructs her identity—at times she highlighted her social status in order to become an acceptable voice; at others minimized it to appear an "authentic" cultural mediator or in order to emphasize her national and cultural bonds with the *Indio* communities. As she embarks on this socio-economic border crossing to depict the *Indios* as a dying culture of picturesque qualities, the awkwardness of her heartfelt, if oftentimes misconstrued, attempt to make the plight of this group heard by wealthy white American audiences who lived with a fear of their neighbors to the South becomes quite evident. Despite her attempts to generate understanding, Mena's voice typically betrays her class affiliation and her distance from her object of study. Her unwillingness or inability to resolve the conflict that her stance creates reflects the paradoxical need to feed the tourist desires of her U.S. readership, while still debunking the cultural stereotypes these tourist fantasies foster.

In a similar way, Humishuma/Mourning Dove seemed to engage in desperate anthropological endeavors to record her culture before it was "lost" for future generations. In Chapter 2, I reflect on her role as "informant native" (to use Spivak's

terminology), as well as the interest that the cultural mainstream had at the time for anything related to the "Vanishing American." Mourning Dove's work seems to walk a fine line between participating in the colonizing tendencies of recording that which is being destroyed and the defiance of a voice that refuses to die. I will examine the extreme to which she took her role as "interpreter" in my study of *A Salishan Autobiograph*y, in which she radically defies Euro-American ethnographies of Salish life and reclaims ownership of her own culture.

Chapter 3 relates how Sui Sin Far's essays, newspaper articles and stories become the clearest example of cultural border-crossing. Seeing herself as a bridge between cultures, Sui Sin Far acknowledges the tension this position creates in her autobiographical piece *Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian.* The daughter of a British merchant and a Chinese mother who was educated in the mission system, Sui Sin Far/Edith Maude Eaton embodies the conflict of identity that comes from belonging to more than one culture, where one culture holds political and cultural power over the other. Sui Sin Far's lifelong struggle to find out where she "belonged" culturally becomes the core representation for all these women as agents of cultural change: "After all I have no nationality and am not anxious to claim any. Individuality is more than nationality. 'You are you and I am I,' says Confucius. I give my right hand to the Occidentals and my left to the Orientals, hoping that between them they will not utterly destroy the insignificant 'connecting link.' And that's all" (*Independent*, 21 January 1909; qtd. in *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings* 230).

Even more complex is the cultural work of the Daughters of Hawai'i, which I consider in Chapter 4. A group of women who were descendants of white missionaries,

the Daughters of Hawai'i decided in 1903 to record and preserve Hawaiian cultural artifacts—elements of a culture that, as was the case of the North American Indians, appeared to be becoming irreparably assimilated. Directly connected to the colonizing forces, but attempting to cross cultural borders in their preservation work, the Daughters of Hawai'i are currently involved in a project that transverses borders between two eras of colonial enterprise: they are still recreating their own cultural and political history in their book *Nâ Lani Kaumaka. Daughters of Hawai'i. A Century of Historic Preservation*, which was published in 2006. This contemporary history is connected to a more extensive history of indigenous Hawai'i and the struggle for ownership of cultural production and self-representation.

By examining the works by these women, we can discover a common cultural thread that highlights the fact that their texts are the products of colonial experiences, both past and present, as they engage the master narratives that forced—and still do—cultural representations that defined them as "other." However, as AnaLouise Keating points out, those who engage in cultural border-crossing are able to "expose the limitations in the existing paradigms and create new stories . . . of cultural critique and individual/collective transformation" (6). It is through the border-crossing element of these women's work that the complex nature of cultural preservation and their common fight for cultural ownership and self-representation are thus appropriately highlighted.

CHAPTER I
"The Love of Country that Won Our Independence": María Cristina Mena and Colonial Anxiety

The work of Mexican exile María Cristina Mena (1893-1965) embodies the complex intersections of gender, class and ethnicity at a time of volatile relations between Mexico and the U.S. Born in Mexico City, Mena was sent by her family to New York at the age of fourteen to protect her against the increasingly tense political atmosphere which culminated in the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Coming from a powerful and influential upper-class family who flourished under Porfirio Díaz, Mena was invited to move within the exclusive literary and social circles, becoming friends with the literary and politically liberal-minded Aldous Huxley and D.H. Lawrence, who read and edited some of her stories.

If her unique position as a Mexican turned Mena's voice into that of the cultural interpreter and mediator for an audience who felt increasingly threatened by their neighbors to the South, her class affiliation gave Mena an advantage in the literary and magazine worlds; her stories found an outlet in several popular magazines catering to the upper- and middle-classes, such as *Century*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Household*. The fact that she came from the upper-class and had been forced to leave her home under the looming threat of a populist revolution created a bond between audience and writer that made Mena's a "non-threatening" voice. With the advantage of being a woman *and* a single voice, Mena's positioning also brought with it the potential to pull Mena into the role of "token" Mexican, the "exotic" other, at a time when white audiences were certainly curious about Mexican culture, in spite of their political fears.

The fact that Mena had been away from Mexico for years only added to her inclination, at times, to offer a somewhat idealized view of her native country, especially her exploration of Mexico's indigenous identity. Those of Mena's stories that deal with the *Indio* community, as well as those that explore the consequences and effects of the U.S. imperial presence, however, can be read as powerful anti-U.S. messages. Part of the power of these stories lies in the manner in which she manages to bring some delicate cultural and political issues to the public arena, ranging from the destruction of the Mexican traditional way of life by the increasingly forceful U.S. cultural colonization of the nation, to the economic influence of U.S. capitalism in the country. As Tiffany Ana López points out in her article "María Cristina Mena: Turn-of-the-Century La Malinche, and Other Tales of Cultural (Re)Construction":

> An increasingly colonial stance and controlling "open door" policy by the United States toward Pan-Americanism was seeking to take more Mexican territory (as well as other Latin American territories) than acquired through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Platt Amendment, among other political pacts, all of which had been designed to expand U.S. business into an easily controllable and highly profitable foreign trade. For political reasons Mena found herself in the United States, yet culturally her Mexicanness was always with her, as most clearly exemplified in her stories, which always centered on Mexican culture and people. (24)

Thus, even when she is able to present some of the complexities of the relations between the two countries to her American audience, Mena clearly emphasizes her "Mexicanness" in her stories.

Mena's upper-class upbringing has created a position among scholars that, despite the author's earnest interest in making a significant cultural narrative available to her white audience, her elevated social position and class alliance with her readers render Mena irrelevant and politically ineffectual. I would argue that this emphasis on Mena's role as subservient voice to the dominant culture undermines the author's awareness of her own political role. The dismissal by critics such as Amy Doherty and Tiffany Ana López finds its roots in Raymund Paredes' "The Evolution of Chicano Literature," published in *MELUS* in 1978. Paredes's central argument is that Mena "aimed to portray Mexican culture in a positive light, but with great decorum; as a consequence, her stories seem trivial and condescending" (85). If Paredes taps into Mena's cultural conflict as she tries to "depict her characters within the boundaries of conventional American attitudes about Mexico" (85), he fails to address Mena's rewriting and reconstructing of such stereotypical depictions, as well as her indictment of arrogant and ignorant U.S. attitudes towards Mexican culture.

Ramón Saldívar's *Chicano Narrative, the Dialectics of Difference* (1990) offers a theoretical context that helps shift perspective. As Saldívar argues, the presentation of Chicano narrative as "contrastive other of the dominant culture" has also been "potentially liberating when as the contrastive other, Chicano culture has produced a consistent and highly articulated set of oppositions to the dominant cultural system surrounding it" (4). Saldívar's study of Chicano narrative focuses on contemporary text production, but it offers a theoretical frame that helps us better understand Mena's early-twentieth-century cultural narrative. Exploring the political function of Chicano narrative, Saldívar states that "[its] task is not simply to illustrate, represent, or translate a particular

exotic reality, nor even a certain conception of reality. . . . Instead, it serves to realize the agency of thematic figures in the process of demystifying the old world and producing a new one" (4). Thus, Chicano textual production does not aim to solve conflicts but rather to provide models for engaging with them. The struggle itself is given relevance: "In opting for . . . conflict over resolution and synthesis, in proclaiming its very difference, the function of Chicano narrative is thus to produce creative structures of knowledge to allow its readers to see, to feel, and to understand their social reality" (Saldívar 7). Within this context, we can understand Mena's struggle with the creation of an alternative cultural reality to the one offered by the dominant culture (and her readers); Her desire to present a Mexican reality that does not fall into a subservient role is at the forefront of her artistic struggle; even as she lost some of the battles with the *Century* editors, she was also aware of the revolutionary power of her writing to expose the violent effects of U.S. cultural and economic imperialism.

"The True Picture of a People": Mena's Editorial Struggles

As mentioned above, *Century* was one of the most popular periodicals at the time to cater to the white upper- and middle- classes. In *Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (1964), Theodore Peterson points out that these upper-class publications "seemed curiously remote from the dramatic changes then taking place in American life" (3). *Century*'s odd blend of topics certainly mirrored the wishful "remoteness," as well as the confused political state of the American middle-class; articles such as "How Modern Men

Can Please Modern Women" appear close to heated debates on foreign policy and specifically Mexico's dangerous political situation. Some of the political and social topics, including immigration, women's rights, and social unrest, that were explored on the pages of *Century*, at times appeared in rather reactionary terms. The fear of an uncontrollable influx of immigrants from Mexico, Asia and some European countries, and the subsequent "pollution" of American blood became the subject of numerous articles and pseudo-scientific "racial" studies. As Amy Doherty explains, although the initial threat of immigration was seen as originating in Southern and Eastern Europe, "the Mexican Revolution was at hand: hundreds of thousands of Mexican immigrants were fleeing North from the depressed economy and loss of land brought on by social upheaval, lured to the U.S. by the promise of work in agriculture, industry, and railroad construction" (*The Collected Stories of María Cristina Mena* xix).

The gradual shift in attention towards this new economic and political "threat" and the subsequent colonial anxiety intensified the interest in Mexican subjects. The result was the continuous publication of articles on Mexico's delicate political climate, focusing on "the Mexican question," which had become more and more the center of this colonial anxiety. Simultaneously, *Century* kept offering essays and photographs that maintained the image of Mexico as quaint, exotic and conveniently remote. As part of this practice, Mena's stories appeared at times in the same issue with political pieces that reflected the national paranoia regarding immigration and American foreign policy. For instance, the political piece by W. Morgan Shuster, "The Mexican Menace" and Mena's "John of God, The Water Carrier" both appear in the November 1913 issue. In fact, this narrative mismatch seems to afflict the very lay-out of Shuster's article. The author

contemplates the possibility of military action by American (and other) forces in Mexico: "Warning should be given in the ultimatum that failure to accept these terms would be followed by an international expeditionary force which would take the country under military control pending such time as order could be restored and valid elections held" (*Century* 602). However, the picture chosen to accompany such harsh political indictment is a photo of the Old Jesuit Temple at Guanajuato, rendered in postcard fashion with obvious tourist appeal: "The whole edifice is of *magnificent* proportions and is surrounded by adobe houses on the uneven hillside, for Guanajuato is built on *picturesque* terraces"(*Century* 592; my emphasis).

The strong reliance on local color amidst politically anxious pieces served to reinforce an iconography that was considered less threatening to the readership, but it also reflected the complex nature of the readership's attitudes towards Mexico: a confused combination of attraction and fear, of tourist curiosity and anxiety towards this advertised political and national threat. Amy Doherty identifies some of the stereotypes that this strategy generates: "The photographs, stories, and illustrations often focus on the stereotypes of the inept lower-class Mexican *peon* or the seductive, inscrutable, upper-class Mexican woman" (*The Collected Stories of María Cristina Mena* xx). Perhaps the latter helped feed the audiences' fantasies of Mena as an author *and* an upper-class Mexican woman, increasing the curiosity about her stories. The presentation of Mena's work as tourist material seems reinforced by the fact that F. Luis Mora's accompanying illustrations emphasize the local-color quality of each story, casting Mexico as an exotic and remote tourist attraction and thus responding to readership curiosity rather than the anxiety over Mexico's political instability. Clearly, as part of this editorial climate, Mena

found herself in the delicate situation of utilizing the images that the magazine's audience was already familiar with and indeed expected, while subtly attempting to subvert those images and create an unexpected (to her readers) political message.

Mena's letters to *Century*'s editors clearly bring to light the challenges she had to overcome in order to negotiate and defend her artistic, cultural and political vision of her country. One of her main concerns was the negative capitalistic and imperialistic practices of the U.S. on Mexico, all under the guise of modernization and progress. Mena's focus on the loss of the indigenous culture and traditional ways of life, as well as her interest in the plight of the Indios, as she calls them, especially created some tension in her communication with the editors of *Century*. Mena responds quite powerfully to their suggestion that such localized subjects as water carriers and peasants be cut down: "Could it be that the water carrier's lowly station in life made him a literary undesirable? Then what of Maupassant's Norman peasants, Kipling's soldiers and low-caste Hindoos . . . and many other social nobodies of successful fiction?" (Letter to Yard [March 1913]; qtd. in Doherty xxii).

The conflict intensifies as Mena reveals a tendency to embrace and yet distance herself from her subject, This move has caused some of her critics to accuse her of "revealing her own upper-class bias" (Doherty xxii):

> I expect to write more stories of Inditos than any other class in Mexico. They *form the majority*; the issue of their rights and wrongs, their aspirations and possibilities, is at the root of the present situation in my unhappy country, and will become more and more prominent when the immense work of national regeneration shall have fairly begun; and I believe that American readers, with

> their intense interest in Mexico, are ripe for a true picture of a people so near to them, *so intrinsically picturesque*, so misrepresented in current fiction, and so well worthy of being known and loved, in all their ignorance. (Letter to Yard [March 1913]; qtd. in Doherty xxii)

Mena's conflicted voice can be clearly seen in this passage. A condescending tourist attitude can be felt in her description of the Indios. However, she also defends not only her freedom as an artist with a legitimate vision, but also her strong political purpose and message that validates the struggles of an oppressed people. Under the guise of local-colorism, Mena is able to maintain her position as the voice for a section of the population who had been silenced and clearly subjected to social injustice under the rule of Porfirio Díaz.

Emphasizing Mena's connection to the trickster figure of popular and traditionally oral cultures, Tiffany Ana López explains Mena's role and literary production as engaging in acts of increasing resistance: "[Mena's stories] follow a very clear trajectory, beginning with colorful narratives about quite pious, devoted, and hard-working Mexican people and then developing into works that can be read as allegories for the political tensions of the period between the United States and Mexico" (24). I would argue, however, that Mena's early stories also display a resistant edge as they delve into the creation and recreation of social and cultural types with the purpose of directly counteracting those created by the U.S. mainstream cultural imagination. In "The Gold Vanity Set" for instance, Mena takes pains to upset the racist and sexist stereotype of promiscuous Mexican female identity with her depiction of a pious, shy and devoted young wife in direct opposition to her aggressive American counterpart. In this story she

also creates honest, hard-working lower-class characters that clearly oppose the popular and racist view of Mexican workers as lazy and easily corrupted. Mena's radical message of resistance is certainly present from the beginning, and gains forcefulness through years of textual production.

It is true that, inherent to this attempt to disrupt cultural stereotypes, lies the danger of idealized characterization. Yet, it is important to point out that Mena's function as "cultural mediator" takes her into a realm of cultural and political analysis as well as cultural reinvention, rather than the study or exploration of a singular character; complex character presentation would clearly interfere with the main focus of Mena's work, that of introducing a reluctant readership not only to the political and cultural nuances of the Mexican identity, but also to the most disturbing aspects of the destructiveness of the U.S. capitalist practices forced upon her country. Character development is, thus, sacrificed to political message.

The anti-U.S. message that permeates Mena's work becomes apparent in "John of God, Water-Carrier," first published in November 1913. The sweeping iconographic purpose of the story informs the title itself—the readers are introduced to a main character who is a legend, a saint, in the making; not just a simple man, an *Indio*, who leads a traditional life as an *aguador*, the epitome of a way of life that is on the verge of extinction.

From the onset of the story we see Juan as a hard-working young man, "an Indian boy" of twelve (Mena 12) whose brave actions both result in the death of a woman after an earthquake and the saving of her little baby daughter Dolores, whom Juan decides to adopt. With an intended audience of white upper-and middle-class U.S. readers, Mena

describes in painstaking detail the atmosphere and setting, emphasizing the emotional, the quaint, and the exotic of this remote world inhabited by fervently religious *Indios*:

> Most of the inhabitants were still on their knees in the middle of the street, praying that there might not be a repetition of the trembler. Others were searching anxiously for divine symbolism in the earthquake's handwriting of crossed and zigzagged crackings in adobe walls. (Mena 12)

From the first lines, the readers are transported into a world of religious symbolism and superstition, a highly spiritual world that apparently has little in common with the market-driven world of the capitalist U.S.. The generosity and spirituality of the *Indio* community is reinforced when Juan's family agrees to adopt Dolores without hesitation and welcomes her into their already crowded hut. This generous spirit explains Juan's ultimate sacrifice at the end of the story, when he decides to abandon the secular world and become the *aguador* to pilgrims on their way to the Virgen de Guadalupe[4].

Mena's purpose in the story is clearly set after only a few pages; she immediately tries to placate any feeling of danger that the intended audience might feel towards the choice of literary subject by dismantling the most pervasive stereotypes of the time regarding Mexican culture and offering a new image of Mexican identity. Juan de Dios, the representation of the entire indigenous community, is an earnest, hard-working,

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[4] Mena's pains to explain all religious imagery and paraphernalia to an audience unfamiliar with the culture clearly inform the flow of the storytelling, as the narrative voice editorializes and bridges the language and idiomatic gaps, and ultimately stresses Mena's role as a cultural interpreter:

> [Dolores] developed a strong affection for the household altar which stood in one corner and was touched by no one but Juan de Dios. It consisted of an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe stamped on a large piece of leather and decorated with delicate white plumes, at its feet an earthen dish of oil in which a butterfly was always burning—not a real butterfly, of course, but one of those little contrivances of a short wick stuck in a float called by the same name, *mariposa*. (Mena 15)

The story's plot is often interrupted by this kind of cultural interpretation and description: a detailed explanation of Juan's job as an *aguador*, his method of saving and keeping the money he earns, the religious gifts he buys for Dolores.

devout *Indio* who is naturally generous, loving and self-sacrificing, deeply rooted in his community, never overstepping social or political boundaries.

In terms of genre, however, Mena offers a familiar format to her audience by developing the expected love-triangle storyline of the romance of popular fiction: As Dolores grows up, it is assumed that she will marry Juan, who goes to the capital, Mexico City, to earn the money necessary to start a family with his future bride. The complication is brought by Tiburcio, Juan's younger brother, with whom Dolores falls in love, prompting the final confrontation between brothers and Juan's absolution of the couple, as well as his renunciation of the secular world.

Although Tiburcio fulfills an essential role as plot device in the romance narrative, it is through his character that Mena presents her political critique. From the beginning, we see Juan de Dios earning his money by hard work, carrying water for the rich families in town and later in the capital. In striking contrast, Tiburcio's demeanor and tricks give him an edge with the "*señores* on the trains when they bought his pomegranates or purple passion fruit" (Mena 16). Tiburcio understands the market; he is a cunning salesman and knows how to take advantage of each situation as it arises. If Juan de Dios embodies the traditional values of hard work and sacrifice, or the "old world" (as hinted by Mena, the old *Indio* world), Tiburcio represents a new spirit of commerce, of capitalism; a spirit brought upon Mexico by U.S. colonization, as seen in the technology owned by the upper classes. Readers a meant to interpret this as a spirit that will bring about the destruction of the traditional ways of life of the *Indio* community, and will ultimately make this community culturally obsolete.

Mena's skillful reversal of types (Tiburcio, closer to the American ideal of progress, is a joker, a bit obsessed with appearances, and primarily interested in material gain; Juan, the traditional *Indio*, is industrious and honest; and neither brother is a thief or a drunk) becomes more pointed when both brothers work in Mexico City. Mena describes the capital as an "elegant woman" (i.e. upper-class, and thus descendant of the Conquistadores and more open to U.S. "advances") (18) who makes the traditional Indio feel out of place:

> The Capital, as sensitive of its reputation as an elegant woman, has a code of manners for *Inditos* and enforces it in times of peace, peremptorily though kindly. Juan de Dios learned that in the City of Mexico one may no longer enjoy the comfort of going barefoot, and dutifully he taught his feet to endure the encumbrance of leather sandals. He learned that the city *aguador* may not blow his whistle to halt the traffic while he gravely crosses the street, but must wait for the passing of many vehicles, some with horses and some outlandishly without. From early morn to the fall of the afternoon he would go from fountain to fountain and from portal to portal, his lean body so accustomed to bending that he never thought of straightening it, his head bowed as if in prayer. (18)

Through the use of a third person indirect-speech narrative voice, this passage poignantly establishes the clash between cultures and social classes, the struggle between opposing worlds, as it shows Juan's cultural shock and his obvious repudiation, or lack of understanding of progress and modern technology. But the passage also exposes, in rather emotional overtones, the injustice of the displacement of the Indio as well as hinting at his inevitable demise through assimilation or isolation. This personification of the Capital

as an "elegant woman" gives way to the real *señoras*, who, as Juan warns Tiburcio, do not want the Indio servants to talk because they do not want "[their parrots] to learn our manner of expressing ourselves" (21), once again emphasizing the class chasm.

Although, through his continuous hard work, Juan de Dios is able to save a considerable amount of money in the course of five long years, his mindset becomes antiquated; he does not have a market-driven disposition. The narrative clearly establishes Juan's traditional views as what will eventually render him obsolete in this new world of Capitalist venture. Juan's concern about the loss of social intercourse and his indictment of progress as the work of magic and a threat to his spiritual integrity is painfully illustrated in the following indirect-speech monologue:

> And then there was a new and mischievous spirit in the air, a spirit named "modern improvement," and it now possessed and agitated one of the houses on his route (. . .) The plumber—worker of evil and oppressor of God's poor—had been exercising his malign spells. (. . .) No! He would not so endanger his soul. With firmness he had refused to serve the strange gods of the plumber. And the owner and tenants of the building, liking well their patient and apostolic-looking *aguador*, and understanding perfectly his prejudices, had murmured "*Mañana!*" and allowed the highly painted and patented American force-pumps in the three patios to rust in unlovely idleness. (Mena 19-20)

This passage brings to light the different layers of Mena's commentary. By refusing to fill the tanks, Juan seems to be taking a political stand (if unbeknownst to him) against the imported instruments of his own economic destruction. Mena's narrative voice clearly emphasizes the superstitious nature of Juan's stubborn refusal to cooperate with progress

and modernization, but the subtext remains intact: the U.S. imported plumbing system is overwhelming the Mexican economy and making the Mexican people dependant on this new technology while allowing (and causing) the destruction of a traditional way of life. The followers of the "old ways"—the working-class and the *Indio* population—become victims, abandoned at the hands of progress.

As Tiburcio enters the plot again the message becomes even clearer. As Juan decides to give Tiburcio his business and start a family with Dolores, the readers are confronted with a different kind of *Indio*; this is a modern man, elegantly dressed, and ready to take on the Capital (20). As the upper-class customers discover that the new *aguador* is willing to pump for them (finally putting to use a system they were previously willing to let completely rust out of sheer indolence) they are more than ready to take advantage of the situation: "Meanwhile the news that an aguador who would pump was on the premises had spread to the second and third patios, and so flattering were the overtures made to him that Tiburcio, concealing his fatigue, addressed himself with zeal to the other two force-pumps" (22). Tiburcio, the epitome of the Mexican ready to assimilate, goes from modern man to instrument of progress to finally becoming a victim of it, lying in excruciating pain by the end of the day. As Juan finds out that Dolores is in love with Tiburcio, he curses his brother for his betrayal: "For his sorceries with which he hath bewitched thee, that God may cripple him!" (24). Behind this dramatic "curse" device, the political message becomes slightly more intricate; regardless of what stance the *Indio* community chooses to take—cooperation or resistance— U.S.-imported technological progress will displace and ultimately destroy it. The paradox in the story's final message is that, despite Tiburcio's eagerness to please and become an active part of

the modern world, the modern world, still anchored in class and racial [Indio vs. Euro-Mexican] differences, cripples him. It is Juan, the embodiment of the most traditional *Indio* ways, who must restore him back to health by carrying him on his shoulders while walking on his knees on a pilgrimage to the Virgen de Guadalupe.

Mena's religious message seems to regain strength in an odd merging of narrator and character. In a world of confused values, a world where mankind has chosen to idolize the gods of capitalism, traditional religious beliefs and even miracles can bring order and meaning. What makes this religious theme even more fascinating is the use of the Virgen de Guadalupe. The center of the indigenous community's beliefs, La Virgen Morena (the dark virgin) is the embodiment of the coming together of traditions, a syncretic form that merges together Catholicism, the rituals of the colonizers, with indigenous traditional rituals from the worship of Coatlicue[5].

The full extent of the political message lies in the ending: If Juan has become the representation of moral superiority or pureness of values, he is still obsolete, relegated to political and social irrelevance. Juan's last words to his brother and new bride are clear: "I now comprehend that I do not serve this world . . . . I will remain in this saintly place . . ."(28). On the other hand, Dolores and Tiburcio seem to represent the only future available to the *Indio* community—willing assimilation at the price of the devastation of traditional ways of life.

[5] As Gloria Anzaldúa points out, la Virgen de Guadalupe's appeal goes beyond the religious; it has become a political symbol against oppression, unifying all exploited social and cultural groups: "La Virgen de Guadalupe is the single most potent religious, political, and cultural image of the Chicano/*mexicano*. She, like my race, is a synthesis of the old world and the new, of the religion and culture of the two races in our psyche, the conquerors and the conquered" (*Borderlands/La Frontera* 30)

"The Gold Vanity-Set," also published in November 1913 by *American Magazine*, stages a similar confrontation between worlds. The U.S. modern way of life, characterized by a blunt ignorance of, and an intense disregard for, other cultures, is pitted against the traditional values of the *Indio* culture. In this story, the political condemnation of the alliance between the U.S. colonizing force and the Spanish-descended *hacendados* (landlords), an alliance clearly established to exploit the *Indio,* becomes more forceful. The political struggle here takes shape in the form of the two main female characters: the obnoxious American tourist whose attitude demonstrates a conventional tourist curiosity and sense of entitlement towards Mexico, and the shy, devout Christian *India*, the embodiment of economic and cultural exploitation. In this story Mena presents a new trope: the *Indio* as tourist attraction.

"The Gold Vanity-Set" presents the recurrent theme of sexual exploitation as allegorical representation of the U.S. economic/political/ /social/cultural exploitation of Mexico. The emphasis placed on the rapacity of the U.S. colonizing practices, as we see by the arrogance of the American tourist in "The Gold Vanity-Set" and later in "The Education of Popo" critiques U.S. conceptions of Mexican men and women as tourist attraction[6].

As "The Gold Vanity Set" opens, the readers are introduced to a picturesque scene—the Indio/Mexican family. The narrative voice effectively mirrors an unfamiliar U.S. readers' perspective of both curiosity and apprehension, creating a layered narrative

[6] Although the discussion of tourist narratives is central to my final chapter on Hawai'i, the core argument of this commodification of culture is worth mentioning here: "The point, of course, is that everything in Hawai'i can be yours, that is, you the tourist, the Non-Native, the visitor. The place, the people, the culture, even our identity as a 'Native' people are for sale" (Mamiya 24). Within the context of "The Gold Vanity-Set" we see this reification of the Indios, both by the Maxican upper-class of *hacendados* and by the U.S. tourist class.

frame: Miss Young—narrator—Mena's intended audience—knowing reader, aware of the irony of the heavy-handed layering of stereotypes. Petra, the young *India,* becomes the object of this layered gaze; Miss Young describes her with the intensity of the tourist's gaze:

> [Petra] grew tall and slender, as strong as wire, with a small head and extremely delicate features, and her skin was the color of new leather. Her eyes were wonderful, even in a land of wonderful eyes. They were large and mysterious, heavily shaded with lashes which had a trick of quivering nervously, half lowered in an evasive, fixed, sidelong look when anyone spoke to her. The irises were amber-colored, but always looked darker. Her voice was like a ghost, distant, dying away at the ends of sentences as if in fear, yet with all its tenderness holding a hint of barbaric roughness. The dissimulation lurking in that low voice and those melting eyes was characteristic of a race among whom the frankness of the Spaniard is criticized and unpolished. (Mena 1)

This description seems to fulfill all the cultural requirements that an American white audience would expect, including the jab at the Spaniard race—especially effective after the recent war against Spain for the American colonies (from April 25 to August 12, 1898.) This beautiful "barbaric" girl is married to an abusive man—stereotypically passionate, guitar-playing, emotional, heavy-drinking Mexican—whose profession is the "most adorable of professions, playing the miniature guitar made by the Mexican Indians" (1). The irony of the narrative voice, however, reaches its peak as it moves into cultural generalizations: "Most Mexicans, to be sure, have music in their fingers" (2).

When Miss Young invades their village, the stage is set for a cultural war: "One afternoon the pueblo resounded with foreign phrases and foreign laughter in foreign voices" (2). A clear symbolic representation of U.S. invasion/colonization of Mexico, the tourists are described in less than appealing terms: "as a flock of birds appeared their chatter and their vivacity to the astonished inhabitants. American fashion, they were led by a woman" (2-3). Miss Young, leading her army of tourists, immediately attacks Petra with her camera: "Oh, what a beautiful girl! I must have her picture!" (3). Stripping the *Indios* of complex human qualities and relegating them to a tourist attraction and a curiosity, Miss Young (and thus Mena's intended audience) comes armed with a camera and a travel-guide, the new weapon and imperial narrative.

This enemy of the *Indito* community, however, has a willing ally in the rich *hacendado*, the *Patrón*. As Don Ramón assures Miss Young, "The house is yours" (3); we witness the effect of this statement as the "natives" give forced greetings to Miss Young, making their desperation palpable to the tourist: "like marionettes pulled by one string [they] scrambled into rank as a reception committee" (8). In presenting the social injustice of such an invasion, Mena defends the Mexican/*Indio* mind: "Manuelo's father looked a little resentful at these inquisitive strangers occupying the benches of his regular customers, who obsequiously folded up their limbs on straw mats along the walls. To be sure, much silver would accrue to the establishment from the invasion, but business in the Mexican mind is dominated by sentiment" (3). The appeasing effect of the last line does not undermine the initial sense of frustration at the manipulation of the *Indio* community.

The representation of Petra as artifact illustrates the use of the *Indita* as a resisting object of the colonizing forces, comparable to Juan de Dios resisting the force of U.S.

technological invasion. As it highlights the misappropriation and exploitation of indigenous cultures by the U.S., Petra's reaction to Miss Young's attack has a clear political dimension: "Petra rebelled—rebelled with the *dumb obstinacy* of the Indian, even to weeping and sitting on the floor" (4). If the words reveal Mena's potential frustration with the servant class, even as she champions their cause, Petra's form of rebellion is politically powerful in itself as non-violent protest. The response creates a commotion that ends with Manuelo hitting his wife, don Ramón hitting Manuelo, and the tourists abandoning the inn. Although her description of Petra's and Manuelo's reactions seem to be overly emotional, Mena is clearly introducing the extreme response that the constant cultural abuse and exploitation by this new wave of invaders has on the Indio community.

Petra's taking of the American tourist's vanity set becomes an act of empowerment, a territorial revenge of sorts. The action is reversed, however, as she looks at her own image in the mirror, a symbolic act, replaying the American's colonizing gaze. An act of self-inflicted ethnic stereotyping, Petra looks at herself through the eyes of the colonizer and loses her cultural identity under the power of this gaze:

> A mirror! Novelty of novelties to Petra! Two things startled her—the largeness of her eyes, the paleness of her cheeks. She had always imagined that she had red cheeks, like the girls in Manuelo's songs, some of whom even had cheeks like poppies. Feeling saddened, she opened one of the smaller caskets. It contained a little powder of ivory tint and a puff (. . .) She caressed the back of her hand with it, perceived an esthetic improvement (. . .) And then the third box. A red paste. . . . She rouged a large patch on that cheek, then one on the other, with a nice

> discretion partly influenced by her memory of the brilliant cheeks of the American *señorita* of the brave looks, the black box, and the golden treasure. (4-5)

Petra's self-transformation into her American counterpart painfully underscores the cultural misappropriation taking place, and displacement of alternative models of beauty to the Anglo ideal of white skin, clear eyes and rosy (powdered) complexion. To Petra's own eyes, "the golden treasure had yielded that which made her lovely in the eyes of her beloved" (9). The narrative voice presents Petra's cultural assimilation as an odd combination of a joyous awakening to her own sexual powers and a religious experience:

> Her eyes—how much larger they were, and how much brighter. She looked into them, laughed into them, broke off to leap and dance, looked again in many ways, sidelong, droopingly, coquettishly, as she would look at Manuelo. Truly, the gold treasure was blessed and the red paste was as holy as its smell, which reminded her of church. (5)

Even though the context of the event might have some readers interpret this as the ruin of Petra's innocent beauty by a U.S. imported instrument of cosmetic enhancement, Petra's own reaction as well as Manuelo's when he sees his wife could not be more clear: In an odd combination of the erotic and the religious, Manuelo expresses his adoration for Petra, and, in a moment of devotional fervor, as the entire family falls to their knees and pray to the "Mother of Guadalupe" for protection, Manuelo promises not to drink again. The perversity of Mena's choice of plot development lies in that she allows an instrument of U.S. colonization to become the catalyst of the conflict resolution within the *Indio*

family, to the extreme that Petra believes the vanity set is blessed and, accordingly, leaves it at the feet of the image of the Virgen de Guadalupe.

Mena once again underscores the voicelessness of the Indio community by giving Don Ramón the role of cultural interpreter. His misrepresentation of the *Indio* community's cultural behavior is emphasized in the oversimplified explanation of the theft in terms of cultural and economic difference; by now, however, the readers know how to read Mena's cultural irony: "The girl has an innocent heart—yes; but that proves nothing. These are children of the youth of the world, before the limits of 'mine' and 'thine' had been fixed. When an *Indito* finds lost treasure, he believes that he receives a gift from God" (7-8). Don Ramón's misrepresentation of the *Indio* continues with a series of ethnic generalizations that underscore the stereotyping of the indigenous peoples by the U.S. and Mexican upper-classes as uncivilized, emotional, irrational and child-like:

> The ways of the *Indito* are past conjecture, except that he is always governed by emotion". . . . "You may observe that we always speak of them as *Inditos*, never as Indios,' he said. 'We use the diminutive because we love them. They are our blood. With their passion, their melancholy, their music and their superstition that have passed without transition from the feudalism of the Aztecs into the world of today, which ignores them; but we never forget that it was their valor and love of country which won our independence. (10)

The passage clearly presents the nonchalant avoidance of cultural responsibility regarding the sociopolitical situation of the *Indio* community by Don Ramón. Mena creates here a cultural instability in the multi-layered interpretation of *Indio* identity, which remains quite open by the end of the story. After all, Don Ramón becomes a rather unreliable

voice due to his complicity in the social and economic exploitation of the Mexican lower classes and the *Indio* community, as an *hacendado* at the service of U.S. colonial advances.

Within the frame of this recurrent theme of colonization and exploitation of Mexican economy and culture by the U.S., the ironically titled "The Education of Popo" (published in March 1914) explores the cultural clash from an upper-class perspective. The political message gains satirical focus as Mena's narrative voice concentrates on the effects of the U.S.'s influence on the willing upper-classes.

"The Education of Popo" is an exploration of sexual exploitation in cultural/ethnic and gender terms. The servility of the members of the Mexican upper-class towards their U.S. counterparts is made obvious from the beginning of the story, as Governor Fernando Arriola and his family show an exaggerated concern for the impression they will make on their American guests: "[these American ladies] by all means must be given the most favorable impressions of Mexican civilization" (47). Mena's voice becomes clearly critical of both hosts and guests, as she exposes both the obsession of the Arriolas to impress the Americans, and the arrogance and entitlement these American "ladies" display. Alicia Cherry's frivolous seduction of the fifteen-year-old Popo embodies Mena's disapproval of the American independent woman, the "New Woman" figure that was already creating a gender revolution of sorts in the U.S., and who, according to Mena's portrayal, appears too conspicuous and aggressive, forgeting her "place" in the rituals of social intercourse. Popo's naïve social commentary points at Mena's critique: "Popo found it almost impossible to believe that they were mother and daughter. By some magic peculiar to the highly original country of the Yanquis, their

relation appeared to be that of an indifferent sisterliness, with a balance of authority in favor of the younger"(49).

The social and cultural critique expands to reach into the Mexican social order. Throughout the story, the narrative voice underscores Mena's criticism of the Mexican upper-class and political ranks' greed and shameless idolization of and willing cooperation with American corrupt power against Mexico's own economic advantage; the centerpiece of the story is the ball the Governor organizes to entertain the Cherry family, whose patriarch is giving him deals under the table:

> The wife and daughter of that admirable *Señor* Montague Cherry of the United States, who was manipulating the extension of certain important concessions in the State of which Don Fernando was governor, and with whose operations his Excellency found his own private interests to be pleasantly involved, their visit was well-timed in a social way, for they would be present on the occasion of a great ball to be given by the governor. (47)

The pompous tone creates a satirical effect as the third person indirect speech reproduces the Governor's dubious motives behind such an elaborate celebration.

Popo's naïve infatuation with the older Alicia Cherry seems to echo the irresponsible fascination of this Mexican upper-class with the newness of the U.S. ways and rituals, to the detriment and undermining of Mexican culture and traditions. Popo's reaction to Alicia's beauty is phrased as a betrayal of his own culture: "Never before had he seen a living woman with hair like daffodils, eyes like violets, and a complexion of coral and porcelain. It seemed to him that some precious image of the Virgin had been changed into a creature of sweet flesh and capricious impulses, animate with a fearless

urbanity far beyond the dreams of the dark-eyed, demure, and now despised damsels of his own race" (49). By clearly employing the discourse of racial superiority as emphasized by Christian iconography, Mena is setting up an ironic use of the virgin/whore paradigm that will come to full force at the end of the story. Alicia Cherry takes full advantage of her sexual power over Popo; in a combination of the attraction of the tourist and the aggressiveness of the conqueror, she takes in the exotic scenery and charming "natives" as a form of entertainment and an escape from her own social conflict:

> With a deep breath she expelled everything disagreeable from her mind, and gave up her spirit to the enjoyment of finding herself for a little while among a warmer, wilder people, with gallant gestures and languorous smiles. And the aromatic air, the tantalizing music, the watchful fire that glanced from under the *sombreros* of the *peons* squatting in colorful lines between the benches—all the ardor and mystery of that unknown life caused a sudden flutter in her breast . . . (51)

This sense of entitlement seems to be emphasized by Popo's decidedly naïve servility and self-effacement towards his guest, a clear example of Mena's condemnation of Mexico's hand in its own cultural and economic demise: "his head was up somewhere near the moon, while his legs, in the proud shelter of their first trousers, were pleasantly afflicted with pins and needles as he moved on tiptoe beside the blonde *Americana*, a <u>page beside a princess</u>" (50; my emphasis). Thus, by using the format of popular romance, Mena cleverly masks a political and cultural debate anchored in class difference, under the guise of a traditional love-story plot. The need to define and explore Mexican culture within the tourist narrative underscores the aggressiveness of this colonial practice for the

purpose of fantasy fulfillment: "The notion of service [is connected] to what the Mexicano will *naturally* provide in connection with the image of the Mexicanos outside of the window as part of the journey's destination, as part of the service to be received" (López 28). While López accurately points out that Mena herself becomes "implicated in this system of service for the pleasure of Anglo viewers in her role of commissioned 'authentic' Mexican voice," her final analysis of "The Education of Popo," however, seems to ignore Mena's implied criticism of American practices. López states: "it is an immature relationship in which the white subjects of the story can be read positively while at the same time sympathy is evoked for the adolescent Mexican male through the universal emotion of love" (López 26). This reading of the story dismisses Mena's efforts to expose the corrupt practices of the upper-classes from both Mexico and the U.S., and, most importantly, her pains to allegorically depict the abuse and exploitation that a naïve Mexico (Popo) endures at the hands of the U.S.'s arrogant and exploitative colonizing force (Alicia).

Popo's misinterpretation of Alicia's romantic intentions appears to symbolize not only the Mexican elite's infatuation with the U.S., but also the U.S.'s manipulation of this eager section of Mexican society. After seeming receptive to the boy's advances, Alicia betrays her "lover" when her ex-husband—a true representation of "the ideal toward which their race is striving" (58)—enters the stage. Mena's racial discourse becomes heavier as she prepares her readers for the final confrontation. These representatives of Anglo-America ultimately show no compassion, sympathy or a sense of justice towards their "victim," as their words clearly demonstrate. If Mena is trying to manipulate her readers into an emotional identification with Popo's lovesickness, I would also argue that

she is very effectively creating a rather unsympathetic cast of American characters; Alicia Cherry and Edward P. Winterbottom are clearly not an exception to the "racial" norm of white perfection, but rather, the very epitome of their race's arrogance and ethnocentric tendencies, as we see from the descriptions throughout the story.

In contrast to their coldness, Popo exudes an overflowing of emotion when he shows Alicia a secret and sacred Edenic spot, prepares the readers for a symbolic reading of this landscape: "they turned . . .into the green depth of a little *cañon*, at the upper end of which a cascade resembling a scarf flung over a wall sang a song of eternity, and baptized the tall tree-ferns that climbed in disorderly rivalry for its kisses" (55). The virginal landscape becomes a symbol of the boy's innocent nature and of Mexico's unspoiled beauty, both of which are being pillaged by the oblivious colonizing force, Alicia. Her frivolous response to Popo's highly emotional moment underscores her cultural and racial arrogance:

> Alicia, a confirmed matinée girl, wished that all her women friends might have seen her at that moment (*she had on a sweet frock and a perfectly darling hat*), and that they might have heard the speech that had just been addressed to her by the leading man. He was a thorough juvenile, to be sure, but he had lovely, adoring eyes and delightfully passionate tones in his voice; and, anyhow, it was simply delicious to be made love to in a foreign language. (56; my emphasis)

The effect of dramatic irony established by the narrative voice in this passage is underscored by the emphasis on Alicia's tourist attitude, as well as her interest in consumption. At the story's conclusion Mena manages to display her white characters' cultural shortsightedness by allowing them to voice their own ethnic self-importance. If

Mena's readers fall short of seeing Alicia and Edward's arrogance, the joke is ultimately on them; even as Mena seems to dutifully fulfill her role of "cultural interpreter", she is able to get away with criticizing the very audience she is entertaining and "serving." Alicia becomes a rather condescending cultural interpreter as she pieces together for her ex-husband, and thus for the readers, the inner workings of the cultural clash she has helped exacerbate: "[T]he summer flirtation of our happy land simply cannot be acclimated south of the Rio Grande. These people lack the necessary imperturbability of mind, which may be one good reason why they're not permitted to hold hands before the marriage ceremony" (59). Alicia's ethnocentrism does not allow her to see the absurdity of this cultural premise: frivolity and romantic or sexual exploitation are deemed to be appropriate social games, and must be spread on to other cultures who are seen as "lacking." In the end, Alicia can brush off this incident as an educational experience for the Mexican boy: "After all, I told him that he should thank his stars for the education I had given him, in view of the fact that he's going to college in the U.S.A." (62). Alicia's total lack of cultural understanding comes into full focus as she retells how she offered the boy "a few kisses" to restore his self-respect. The equally offensive final conversation between (ex-)husband and (ex-)wife brings us to the climactic point of Mena's satiric denunciation of the U.S.'s utter ethnic and cultural arrogance:

> "That young fellow," said Mr. Winterbottom, taking off his hat and wiping his brow, "is worthy of being an American."
>
> "Why, that was his Indian revenge, the little monkey! But he was tempted, Ned."

"Of course he was. If you'd only tempted *me*! O Alicia, you're a saint!"

(62)

The language is this final passage is loaded with insulting racial epithets that clearly undermine the effect that the characters' congratulatory words have on each other.

Mena's narratives of cultural reconstruction move into the realm of traditional oral tradition and storytelling in "The Birth of the God of War," published in May 1914. Here Mena recreates a historical time that takes the readers back to pre-contact, pre-conquest Mexican history. This is the closest the author ever gets to indigenous storytelling, a form of discourse that, in this particular case, separates her from her readers. If in previous stories Mena attempts to bridge the cultural gap with her audience, in "The Birth of the God of War," she clearly emphasizes this gap for political purposes. In her use of the first person protagonist/narrator, Mena's narrative voice offers an autobiographical immediacy that brings to life her cultural tradition. By anticipating the inability of the American audience to understand traditional forms of storytelling, Mena construes a direct attack against the dominant culture's dismissal of the transmission of knowledge within those cultures based on oral tradition:

> It was not mythology to me; no, indeed. I knew that *mamagrande* was marvelously old—almost as old as the world, perhaps—and although she denied, doubtless from excessive modesty, having enjoyed the personal acquaintance of any gods or heroes, I had a dim feeling that her intimate knowledge of the facts

> connected with such unusual events as, for instance, the birth of Huitzilopochtli, was in its origin more or less neighborly and reminiscent. (Mena 64)

Even behind the mask of the child narrator's naïve approach to history, Mena, the storyteller remembering her childhood, clearly emphasizes the power of the spoken word to bring the historical past to the present, a practice at the core of oral tradition.

As Amy Doherty points out in her introduction to Mena's collection of stories, "Mena contributes to a vision of Mexico as a community independent of U.S.'s projections of its own desires and ideals" (ix). More important still, I would add, is the fact that Mena becomes an active part of history creation, connected to the practice of oral tradition, by telling the story of Huitzilopochtli, the god of war, just as her grandmother had done in the past, thus continuing the cycle of storytelling and becoming herself a keeper of the culture: "those epic narrations, often repeated, engraved a network of permanent channels in the memory-stuff of one small child" (Mena 63). As important as the art of story-telling is, the creation of a connection between the *mamagrande* as teller and the child as listener is even more crucial to the preservation of cultural material. Mena clearly brings the emphasis to the act and cycle of storytelling itself, a cycle without beginning or ending: "But I had better begin at the beginning, as my grandmother always did, after lighting her first cigarette, and while adjusting the gold pincers in a hand like a dried leaf" (Mena 64). In so doing, Mena makes this a relevant alternative historical narrative, undermining the dominant culture's dismissal of oral tradition as mythology or fairytale.

At the core of this traditional way of transmitting history is Mena's emphasis on the females' cultural role—the story told by the *mamagrande* is one of female courage,

sacrifice, strength and endurance; it is a story that goes beyond the confines of the La Malinche/La Virgen de Guadalupe paradigm, creating an alternative reading of female cultural identity that precedes the colonizers' religion. The storytellers are both female and Mena's first person narrative voice points at the loss of the female elements of the traditional religious beliefs under the weight of Catholicism: "Once I voiced the infantile view that the fate of Coatlicue was much more charming than that of the Virgin Mary, who had remained on this sad earth as the wife of a carpenter" (Mena 69). The *mamagrande*'s anxiety at her grandchild's "heretic" thoughts seems weak in comparison to her own knowledge of the religious traditions of her past.

Mena's retelling of the story of Coatlicue through the *mamagrande*'s voice, following Aztec tradition, reclaims an Aztec cultural and religious voice despite centuries of Catholic presence: "On Sunday, when *papacito* carries thee to the cathedral, fix it in thy mind that the porch, foundation, and courtyard of that saintly edifice remain from the great temple built by our warrior ancestors for the worship of the god Huitzilopochtli" (Mena 69). Mena becomes here a keeper of traditional culture through the traditional means of storytelling, by offering an alternative to the predominantly Catholic dominant culture's narrative.

Once the attention shifts from the U.S. empire to the Mexican revolution, Mena's political stance seems to shift somewhat, even though she maintains a thematic constant: the defense of the lower classes and their revolt, even to violent extremes. "The Sorcerer and General Bisco," published in *Century Magazine* in April 1915, and "A Son of the Tropics," published in *Household Magazine* in January 1931, present two different versions of Mexican revolutionary times. Both stories, political allegories of Mexico's

troubled times during the Revolution of 1910, offer Mena's vision of violence as inherent (and necessary) to radical political change. Even if Mena's upper-class bias partly informs her romantic/uncomplicated depiction of the lower and laboring classes (especially in her depiction of revolutionary characters as easily influenced, rough and ignorant), she does justify the use of violence as the only means to break with Mexico's political corruption and end the abuse and exploitation of the laboring classes, victims of a brutal capitalist rule that has rendered them voiceless, landless and powerless. Her political intention is to address "the wrongs of the people, dating from the time when their lands had been ravished from them under the placid but infamous regime of Don Porfirio, and themselves reduced to a state of virtual slavery at the mercy of the masters" ("A Son of the Tropics" 146-47).

Written and published in the span of over a decade, these two stories present an evolution in Mena's narrative of the Mexican revolution, even if the overall political and social message remains virtually unchanged. "The Sorcerer and General Bisco" presents a fascinating allegory of the economic exploitation and liberation of the laboring class, symbolized by Don Baltasar Rascón's hypnosis of El Bisco, the revolutionary leader of the *peon* uprising. As Tiffany Ana López points out, it is hard to miss the correlation between El Bisco and Don Rascón and their historical counterparts: Pancho Villa and Porfirio Díaz. Hypnosis accordingly becomes a metaphor for the government's manipulation of the laboring class: "As a landowner, Rascón understands precisely what hypnosis is all about: the seduction of the consumer and the creation of the dependent subject. The act of hypnotism in this story serves as a metaphor for images of colonial conquest" (López 36). Mena's political commentary is a powerful condemnation of the

Mexican government's distracting practices to keep the public unaware of ongoing social and political corruption; the story becomes a more subtly disguised indictment of U.S. government impulses to do the same:

> At the time Mena's story appeared, a very paternalistic United States government sought to turn American attention away from domestic problems, which took the form of monopolies, workers'strikes, and growing dissatisfaction with labor conditions nationwide; the government used international conflict to create a safety valve for explosive domestic class conflict. Once foreign markets were seen as important to prosperity and "American safety," expansionist policies, even war, were projected to have wide appeal. The hypnotic package disguised colonial expansion as "good will" and a sharing of American democracy with the rest of the world. (López 37)

Within the political context of the U.S. government's illusionary tactics and the Mexican government's eagerness to open itself to economic colonization, Mena's narrative is directed both at her American readers and the government of her native country. The fact that Mena's message is unequivocally condemnatory clarifies her pro-revolution stance, taken to a bloody extreme at the end of the story, as El Bisco shoots his oppressor, Don Rascón, finally freeing himself from his spell.

Published sixteen years later, "A Son of the Tropics" revisits the theme of revolution but the strong political support of extreme political action seems to be diluted by issues of class. Although Rosario, the fierce and passionate revolutionary, is able to emotionally move his people into action, this power comes from the assumption that their leader is one of them. The revelation that Rosario is, in fact, the illegitimate son of Don

Rómulo, and thus part of the ruling class, transforms his fight into a farce and him into a fraud to his own political cause, now unable to affect change. The revolutionary leader is turned into the sacrificial victim of the system he was fighting to dismantle: "Disarmed and dishonored, his leadership made a mockery, his very blood polluted with tyranny" (Mena 149). The only path left for him is self-immolation, which he does in the most dramatic fashion, blowing himself to pieces.

The social chiasm becomes comically evident when Dorotea, the daughter of the *hacendado* who has been kidnapped by the revolutionaries, offers a plea for the *peones*' political cause: "'Do not be angry with these, our people. Although they are a little mad, I find they have excellent hearts. I supplicate thee to forgive them. . . . Also I supplicate thee… to let them have a little land. Poor creatures! They have a great desire to grow things for themselves'" (Mena 147). The foolishness of her tone brings the unfairness of the *peones*' situation into clearer focus.

Mena's use of the naïve upper-class Dorotea to voice the injustice suffered by those who were robbed of their land by the *hacendados* is in stark contrast to her description of the lower-class woman, Tula, the dynamite bomb-maker, who becomes the instrument of Rosario's death when he uses one of her bombs to kill himself[7]. Mena's gender message seems to shift as she creates a more active role for lower-class women, who have a chance to become politically active as *soldaderas*, or fighters in the revolution. Mena's evolution as a writer comes full circle, as she seems to revisit some of the narratives of earlier stories. Overall, what informs Mena's cultural and political explorations remains virtually unchanged in her fundamental political message: an anti-

[7] Tula is described on page 145 as sitting on the ground, building dynamite bombs from doorknobs and making "atrocious faces" to anyone monopolizing Rosario's attentions.

U.S., anti-imperialist stance, as well as an indictment of the Mexican government's corruption. These views are complicated in later stories by her depiction of the Mexican Revolution, which she seems to deem necessary to end the exploitation of the *peones* and *Indio* communities, but which she also satirizes, thus betraying her class alliances.

II. Humishuma and the Art of Auto-Ethnography

I. Humishuma, "the Vanishing American" and the Boarding School Experience

American Indian voices have historically been suppressed as producers of U. S. culture. As Eduardo Galeano clearly points out:

> Throughout America, from North to South, the dominant culture acknowledges Indians as objects of study, but denies them as subjects of history—The Indians have folklore, not culture, they practice superstitions, not religions; they speak dialects, not languages; they make crafts, not arts. (quoted in Allen, *Spiderwoman's Granddaughters* 1)

This historical tendency, especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to consider Indian religion as superstition, Indian history and literature as myth and children's tales has been a part of the redefining practices of the defining cultures, in an attempt to reinforce the effects of its own assimilation tactics.

This ethnocentric view of culture is of course crucial in the study of any non-white community's acts of cultural production, which in themselves represent acts of socio-political resistance when counteracting the dominant narrative. So is the case of American Indian cultural production, especially in the early twentieth century, because its very existence is the embodiment of cultural survival and thus, a challenge to the narrative that defines Native American identity through "The Vanishing American" iconography. As Patricia Erikson points out, the Vanishing American paradigm reinforces the notion that "First Nations and their members are perpetually on the brink of biological extinction and cultural assimilation"(1). Since its creation as signifier of the

recording practices by white ethnographers, the Vanishing American construct embodies the relentless effort to redefine Native cultures and peoples "as culturally and biologically extinct" under the weight of "American civilization" (Erikson 2). As Vine Deloria, Jr. states in *Custer Died for Your Sins*, even the term 'Indian' has been "defined by whites for many years. Always they have been outside observers looking into the Indian society from a self-made pedestal of preconceived ideas coupled with an innate superior attitude toward those different from themselves" (quoted in "Transforming American Conceptions about Native America: Vine Deloria, Jr., Critic and Coyote" 274).

By focusing on the study of Native American culture from this ethnographic perspective, scholars have emphasized the image of the Native American "as a phenomenon of the past, as having long since vanished because of government policies of conquest, programmed assimilation, and Manifest Destiny" (Talamantez 274-5). This attitude had its roots in the basic belief of the superiority of the "immigrant American mind," of the "progress of civilization over savagism" (Talamantez 279). The "Indian" thus became a

> noble and virtuous hunter, a brave warrior, possessor of freedom to roam unhindered, and a simple and childlike predecessor of a civilized America. As a savage and pagan, 'the Indian' was to be feared for his cunning and cruelty, disdained for resisting civilization and Christianity, pitied for the inevitable loss of his land and culture and his probable extinction. (Talamantez 279)

The obvious purpose of this oversimplified, and at times paradoxical, recreated version of Indian identity was to aid in justifying the institutional work of cultural—and literal—extermination sponsored by the U.S. government; a practice that helped redefine any

behavior outside this "norm" as an anomaly, preventing American Indians from the possibility of a complex cultural identity outside the white dominant narrative. Thus, as Philip Deloria reiterates, outsiders, and not insiders, have created the "ideological frames that have explained and contained Indian actions" (7).

It is within this cultural context that Humishuma, also known as Mourning Dove[8], (1885? -1936)[9] fought her battles as a writer of fiction, history, and autobiography. Her repeated acts of cultural defiance—to break the silence of the nobel savage stereotype and create a voice of authority—are further complicated not only by her well-documented relationship with her editor, Lucullus McWhorter, but also by her not-so-well documented act of self-reinvention in ethnic and cultural terms in *A Salishan Autobiography* (not published until 1990). Humishuma's struggle embodies the centuries-long struggle for the cultural survival of an entire people, which she took upon herself to document. In spite of this, she has been dismissed by some critics for what they see as her inability to assert herself as an author.

The fact that Humishuma felt compelled to record the history and religion of her nation would seem itself to be a reaction to the belief that cultural dissolution was imminent. In fact, Chief Standing Bear painfully states in the Foreword to Humishuma's *Coyote Stories* (1925) that "[s]ince the old Indians in whom these folk-tales are vested are passing away from us, it is good that we bestir ourselves and salvage at least a part of our inheritance" (Humishuma 5). This statement partially represents the devastating effect of

[8] Mourning Dove is actually Humishuma's "spelling of the onomatopoetic Okanogan name of this bird" (Miller xvii).
[9] Jay Miller explains that Humishuma, born Christina Quintasket, "was first named on the tribal census of 30 June 1891," listed as eight years old, and later appeared on the roll of 1893 under the same age (*Coyote Stories* vi). Miller has come to the conclusion that she was most probably born in 1885.

the internalization of the dominant culture's discourse of indigenous cultural extinction, a tendency that Humishuma fought against throughout her entire literary career.

The view by critics that Humishuma's authorial stance and voice are inconsistent has led to an overwhelming dismissal of her political and cultural relevance as a writer. The critical perception of her as the dubious creator of her own narrative is due to what scholars consider an overtaking of her voice by her white editors. For instance, in his Introduction to *A Salishan Autobiography*, Jay Miller considers her an unreliable narrator[10]; Elizabeth Ammons[11] believes that Humishuma's voice is thoroughly weighted down by the ethnographically-charged language of her white editors; other critics, finally, accuse her of being too eager to please her white audience[12]. However, this seems an oversimplification of the rather subtle techniques Humishuma manages to employ in the process of crafting her narrative. In fact, it is my contention that, rather than illustrating Humishuma's internalizing of the dominant culture's definition of American Indian selfhood, the apparent indeterminacy of her self-definition and her recreation of cultural identity point to a conflict between two forces: on the one hand, her initial battles with her editors in efforts not to compromise her integrity; on the other, her continuous and progressively more successful efforts to assert her voice. This conflict is ultimately resolved in a powerful self-defining moment with *A Salishan Autobiography*, as we will see later in the chapter.

Humishuma's most studied work, the novel *Cogewea, The Half-Blood* (1927), offers a politically powerful framework for one of her major struggles as an author

[10] For a detailed discussion of Jay Miller's Introduction to *A Salishan Autobiography* see pages 21 & ff. of this chapter.
[11] For Elizabeth Ammons' comments see pages 17-18.
[12] For a discussion of Alanna K. Brown's work on Humishuma see page 24 & ff.

involved in the work of cultural preservation and the exploration of cultural identity. Humishuma's editor, Lucullus McWhorter, sets the intended readers at ease in his preface to the novel, "To The Reader," by making a clear attempt to emphasize the ethnographic value of the author's work: the recounting of "an era forever past" (*Cogewea* 11) that urgently needs to be recorded before its cultural demise. However, throughout the novel, the narrative voice seems to struggle between two opposing creative stances: one, a tendency to reduce characters to cultural artifacts, relics of a vanishing culture worthy of study; the other, an undermining of the first narrative, achieved by portraying these same characters as powerful agents of culture or history. This conflict can be summed up in the novel's paradoxical representations of ethnicity. If, for instance, the character of the Stemteemä, the grandmother, is described from the onset as "lingering pathetically in the sunset of a closing era" (*Cogewea* 41), it is the Stemteemä who holds the narrative's central power—through storytelling and divination–at the end of the novel. Even if perhaps still responding to a stereotypical depiction of the Native elder as mysterious and mystical, it is the Stemteemä's ancient traditional knowledge that saves Cogewea's life from the hands of a greedy and evil white man.

The ending, I would argue, stages resistance in the guise of compromise—a characteristic that defines much of Humishuma's authorial voice in this first stage of her literary career. As mentioned above, the old grandmother becomes the holder of the novel's central truths, but she is old and about to die. Cogewea herself is a "half-blood" and thus trapped between two worlds, but she seems to regain her connection to the Native peoples and traditions, finding love not with the white man, but with Jack, another "half-blood." Indeed, this marrying of two mixed-race people appears to mirror and

contain the larger U.S. anxieties about miscegenation. However, Native traditions seem alive and well at the end of the novel, despite the overall discourse of extinction included in the most edited sections of the text.

Cogewea herself opens an alternative narrative, not only pointing at survival, but also at future cultural relevance and political power, in a clearly sarcastic tone: "'The day will dawn when the desolate, exile breed will come into his own; when our vaunting 'superior' will appreciate our worth'" (95). Louis Owens maintains that the end of *Cogewea* does nothing to "resolve the dilemma of the mixed-blood poised between red and white worlds" (*Other Destinies* 48). I would contend, however, that we just need to notice the mystical and spiritual rituals performed by Jack and Cogewea at the end of the novel to perceive how Humishuma disrupts the overall narrative of native cultural demise. It is Jack, a "half-blood," who knows how to build a sweatlodge for the Stemteemä, and Cogewea hears a voice in a buffalo skull—another being on the verge of extinction— which returns to her a connection to nature lost after her traumatic encounters with white society. If these two characters are only part American Indian (and so "polluted" by white blood, as well as ostensibly polluting it) in terms of racial "purity," they have definitely chosen sides spiritually.

Throughout *Cogewea* the textual tension between the author's and her editor's voices becomes painfully obvious. McWhorter's descriptive sections seem to offer anthropologically-inclined information that constantly disrupts the narrative flow and, in many ways, undermine Humishuma's authorial relevance. That Humishuma was quite unhappy with this narrative tension is obvious from her correspondence with McWhorter:

Dear Big Foot[13],

> I have just got through going over the book *Cogewea*, and am surprised at the changes that you made. . . . I felt like it was some one elses <sic> book and not mine at all. (Cogewea xv).

It is this unresolved narrative tension that places Humishuma, not unlike María Cristina Mena, in the position of unwilling mediator between cultures: seemingly eager to offer an alternative, less threatening version of the American Indian (or Indio in Mena's case), while still disrupting the official cultural narrative. However, unlike Mena, Humishuma had to deal with the effects of her own boarding school education, a process meant to assimilate and destroy native cultures; a process that resulted in making many of those who were coerced into the system agents of their own cultural destruction; but also a process that, ironically, generated in many a clear sense of pride in their Native identities.

Thus, any discussion of Humishuma's work as well as her motivation to see it published must be understood within the historical context that shaped early-twentieth-century Native Americans' sense of identity and cultural relevance. At its most damaging, Humishuma's ethnographic work—what she perceived as her mission of collecting the Okanogan culture for historical preservation—could be perceived as perpetuating and reinforcing the representations of Native American identity as created by official cultural narratives. It can also be seen, however, as an act of transgression, of cultural self-definition and survival.

The practices of reshaping Native identity underwent a subtle evolution from the 19th-century construct of the Vanishing American to an early-20th-century narrative

[13] This epithet illustrates the deep bonds between McWhorter and Humishuma's people, who had adopted the editor and given him a name in gratitude for his preservation efforts.

brought about by the effects of the relentless machine of cultural extermination that was the boarding-school system. The "ideological formations . . . clustered around ideas that Indians were invariably violent" turned to the "near certainty of Indian pacification" (P. Deloria 13). The basis of this shift has its roots in the overall plan to "civilize" the "primitive" Indian cultures, a code-word for forced assimilation and cultural extermination. The idea of "civilization" "served as a legitimizing rationale for the hegemonic relationship that had come to characterize Indian-white relations. . . . [I]t served as a compelling justification for dispossessing Indians of their land" (Adams 12-13). Education became another code-word for extermination, disguised as the cultural enlightenment and uplifting of a "primitive" culture: "Indians must be taught the knowledge, values, mores, and habits of Christian civilization;" this practice, of course, implied that Indians were incapable of becoming "civilized" on their own (Adams 18).

As an integral part of the process, the network of boarding schools was set up to ensure that the students, often young children, would be far away from their communities—extreme and absolute separation from family and culture was paramount; the ultimate goal was to prevent and severely punish any attempt by the students at preserving their cultural roots, native language, traditions, social and religious rituals and beliefs[14]: "[T]he boarding school . . . was the institutional manifestation of the government's determination to completely restructure the Indians' minds and personalities" (Adams 97). In fact, as Louis Owens explains, Humishuma herself was a victim to this brutal educational process in the 1890s; at Goodwin Catholic Mission, she

[14] An illustration of the extreme institutional measures can be seen in the work of General Richard H. Pratt, a nineteenth-century assimilationist who "vigorously campaigned for off-reservation boarding schools" (K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light* 3). Case in point, his famous motto "Kill the Indian, Save the man" (Lomawaima 145).

"shared the common Native American experience of being punished for speaking 'Indian' instead of English" (*Other Destinies* 41).

This systematic process of cultural eradication did spur a strong Pan-Indian movement of resistance in direct challenge to the ultimate purpose of these schools, and thus ironically enabled the creation of the cultural entity that the U.S. government feared the most, a Pan-Indian identity:

> boarding schools . . . unconsciously structured "interaction between tribes and promoted a pan-Indian sentiment. A variety of tribal groups came into prolonged contact in these educational facilities. Tribal identity retained its significance and, at the same time, an inter-tribal, 'Indian' identity emerged as an important cohesive concept." (Sally McBeth qtd. in *They Called It Prairie Light* 129)

For others, the boarding school system resulted in a "grudging acceptance of the institutional pressure for compliance, the need to go through the motions and bide one's time until the ordeal was over—resistance in the guise of accommodation" (Adams 240). Resistance was not practiced across the board, however. Some of those who went through the process became accepting of assimilation—some even actively cooperating with the system (Adams 240), which they viewed as the only path to cultural—and perhaps physical—survival; there is a clear danger of self-inflicted adaptation as the pressure to conform becomes more intense; as Adams explains: "some [individuals] internalized the ideological underpinnings of the school program—the civilization-savagism paradigm" (255). In these cases, individuals embraced the "opportunity" to "climb the ladder of civilization" and abandon a past of "savagery," "ignorance" and "superstition" (256). It is my contention that Humishuma was able to move beyond the confusion of two

conflicting messages: the knowledge that came from traditional bonds with culture and community versus the "educated" (i.e. assimilated) writing persona that her editors, such as McWhorter, and her publishers, wanted her to become. The extent to which Humishuma freed herself from this binary becomes evident as we move from her embattled acts of self-editorializing in *Cogewea*, to her more rebellious acts of cultural self-invention in *A Salishan Autobiography*.

II. The Struggle for Cultural Survival: A Salishan Autobiography

As mentioned above, Humishuma's formal education, as consisting of "eight fragmentary years at various mission schools and two years of clerical training at Calgary college" (Owens, *Other Destinies* 41), could have encouraged her to internalize the belief in the apparent and imminent "vanishing" of her culture, which would in turn explain a potential cultural instinct to record and preserve all the knowledge that would most certainly be lost. However, there is another way to look at this process. As Mary Louise Pratt explains, to the oppressed, this sense of urgency to preserve self and culture is fueled by a more powerful need: "Resistance and survival become fundamental axes of culture, consciousness, and identity. In the face of genocidal conditions, there is nothing sentimental about this commitment to culture. (. . .) It is often synonymous with the very will to survival" (*Teaching and Testimony* 60).

This recognition of cultural responsibility emanates from many native peoples' view of the universe and their own cultural heritage. Paula Gunn Allen argues in *The*

Sacred Hoop that, in terms of literature and the preservation of American Indian stories, history and religion, "the purpose of traditional American Indian literature is never simply pure self-expression" but rather "a fulfillment of communal responsibility, an offering of a survival ceremony in an environment inherently destructive to the people" (55). In a tradition based on the oral transmission of knowledge, the possibility of cultural annihilation by white colonizers and later by institutionalized tools of cultural extermination created the urgency to record knowledge (even when it meant that they must use the written word of "the enemy"). This urgency had the potential to become both an internalization of the ethnographic approach the West used towards indigenous communities and their cultures, as well as, paradoxically, a way to survive by finding a new medium to transmit culture in a hostile environment. As Linda Palmer points out, "survival . . . has been a central concern at least since encounters with Europeans first threatened the continuation of [indigenous] cultural traditions" ("Healing Ceremonies;" *Ethnicity and the American Short Story* 97).

It was with this sense of urgency that Humishuma intended to record the history, life, traditions and literature of her people; her artistic purpose can be defined as an act of community survival, which finds its roots in American Indian traditional cultural rituals:

> The web, the world, is fragile, easily rent, for when one strand is torn, the web is weakened, can be shattered, and it is the responsibility of the individual to sustain the community by maintaining the perfect balance of the universe. This is accomplished in part by remembering the stories, the songs, the mythic traditions and using them in healing ceremonies that are life-giving, regenerative. The people are sustained by remembering and passing on what is deep in the

> memory, there to draw strength from. (Palmer, "Healing Ceremonies;" *Ethnicity and the American Short Story* 102)

In fact, as Jay Miller explains in his Introduction to *A Salishan Autobiography*, "Plateau women" are "the recorders and conveyers of tradition" (xxviii). Thus, Humishuma's desire to preserve the stories of her culture clearly reflects her following of traditional cultural rituals of her people, rather than internalizing of the white narrative of the "vanishing" of native cultures. The only change is one of adaptation to a mostly hostile environment, in which the teller uses the written (English) rather than the spoken (Okanogan) word—itself, quite ironically, a clear instance of cultural survival rather than assimilation or annihilation. Humishuma's acute understanding of this linguistic paradox becomes evident in her ethnographic works—*Coyote Stories* and *A Salishan Autobiography*[15].

In the Preface to her *Coyote Stories* (1934), Humishuma makes a powerful point as she exposes the potential loss of Okanogan culture to her intended audience—non-Okanogan readers: "To the younger generations, *chip-chap-tiqulk* are improbable stories; that is the result of the white man's schools. But to the old Indians, the *chip-chap-tiqulk* are not at all improbable; they are accounts of what really happened when the world was very young" (7). Under pressure from her editors, it seems, Humishuma presents the stories in a completely different light by the end of her short Preface—under pressure from her editors. On page 12, Humishuma acknowledges that were it not for her editor's "insistence and encouragement," "these *legends* would not have been set down by me for

[15] Since *Coyote Stories* has been studied in depth by scholars, I will be focusing on *A Salishan Autobiography*, which has been surprisingly omitted from Humishuma scholarship. Only a few comments on Humishuma's editorial struggles will be added to frame her auto-ethnography.

the children of another race to read" (my emphasis; 12). Indeed, Humishuma seems at this point to have surrendered to the pressure of the white narrative of assimilation. She is allowing her knowledge of vital traditional stories to become "legends" with the light purpose of entertaining white children—once again, a painful illustration of the transformation of traditional indigenous culture into an object of white curiosity and consumption. As Paula Gunn Allen points out:

> [Western] students of traditional American Indian literature have applied the terms "primitive," "savage," childlike" and "pagan" to these literatures. Perceiving only the most superficial aspects of American Indian literary traditions, western scholars have labeled the whole body of these literatures "folklore." (*Sacred Hoop* 54).

Not only is Humishuma seemingly adopting a white ethnocentric narrative, but she emphasizes its appeal for a children's audience. This is the very quality that her white readers would associate with American Indian literature. This rhetorical move might have the effect of lessening the threat that this collection of stories could represent as an alternative cultural narrative. This apparent appeasement becomes doubly dangerous, however, when we take into account that the dismissal of Native literatures and traditions by white scholars was not always due to their lack of knowledge, but also their desire to perpetuate the stereotype of the Indian as "savage" and "childlike" in order to justify the government's practices of cultural annihilation and support their own ideas of racial superiority.

To complicate matters, Humishuma seemingly becomes more involved in her role as "informant" when we look at the original title and cover pages that accompany her

Preface. There we find a picture of Humishuma in full Indian regalia[16]--emphasizing her exoticism—her name given in translation first: Mourning Dove, with the addition "The Author," as if to authenticate the exoticism of the experience for the white audiences. The original cover page presents the names and roles of Humishuma's collaborators: "Edited and illustrated by Heister Dean Guie with notes by L.V. McWhorter." Very much like in the case of slave narratives, the publishers felt the need to emphasize the presence of a native author as informant, while still pointing out the presence of white writers/editors/collaborators to serve not only as filters but also as verifiers of the authenticity of the text's value as an artifact worthy of study for white audiences. Thus, a fundamentally American Indian text would seem to fall victim to reinterpretation by members of a dominant culture that does not open itself up to alternative narratives and reinterpretations. Humishuma's work as an author and ethnographer is then a difficult balancing act to unravel. It depicts two forms of discourse that correspond to two extremely different views of the universe: the written word and the sacredness of the spoken word in oral traditions; in a related way, it represents the conflict between the linear perception of time and history and essential circularity.

McWhorter's approach to the editing of Humishuma's work (both in *Cogewea* and *Coyote Stories*) only complicates matters. He seems to rely heavily on ethnographic information, which has been studied by some critics as a fatal blow to Humishuma's authorial relevance and textual or editorial control over her work. Elizabeth Ammons thus argues that "by correcting and managing (appropriating) the story of his dark-

[16] This picture clearly typifies the audience's responses to stereotypical Native American iconography that emphasizes images of the "Indian" as "primitive" and exotic. As Philip J. Deloria points out in *Indians In Unexpected Places*, white audiences at the time expected to see the "Wild West" Indian of movies, theater and dime novels; only those images that matched their recreated view of Indian identity were tolerable (57).

skinned colleague," McWhorter "virtually obliterated Humishuma as a writer" (*Conflicting Stories* 138). If the argument that the privileged white editor takes over and controls the voice of the "native other" seems to apply, at least in part, to McWhorter and Humishuma's relationship, what critics such as Ammons fail to take into account is the fact that, rather than a simple act of textual suicide, Humishuma's published words become the testament of hers and her people's cultural survival by ensuring the transmission of culture in spite of the dominant culture's efforts to extinguish that flame. If the amount of ethnographic information by an over-zealous McWhorter seems disproportionate in early texts[17], Humishuma's voice certainly manages to win the narrative battle in her *A Salishan Autobiography*.

Inherent to interpretations such as Elizabeth Ammons' is the assumption that native cultures did in fact disappear. This assumption ignores the fact that most American Indian communities, far from being completely assimilated, have maintained control over their history, literature and religion even as they have adapted to a continuously hostile environment.

As mentioned earlier, self-representation is a crucial instrument of cultural survival and re-definition for indigenous communities oppressed under colonial rule. Self-representation becomes in this context an act of transgression, a powerful form of

[17] Footnotes consistently interrupt the narrative, disrupting the flow of storytelling (which obviously was meant to emphasize the tone and rhythm of oral storytelling.) One example is the ill-placed geographical information of one of the sites mentioned in the story. Place is a sacred point of reference in traditional Native American storytelling; the teller establishes the connection to place as a spiritual link to the event he or she is about to recount—it is a mystical rather than a specific geographic site. McWhorter's background information about Big Falls on page 33, for instance, is a sad example of the undermining of the power of storytelling rituals. In "Fox, Coyote and Whale," The Water Maidens advise Fox and Coyote to "go over the Big Falls and under the water" in order to find Fox's stolen wife. This narrative is abruptly interrupted by a very long footnote offering geographical detail, clearly irrelevant within the flow of the story: "Big Falls—Kettle Falls in the Columbia River, two miles below the mouth of Kettle River, in Stevens and Ferry counties, Washington" (33). More importantly, this precise geographical information undermines the traditional geography of the indigenous communities, replacing it by the mapping and nomenclature enforced by white colonizers.

undermining of the official narrative of the dominant group, which is historically aimed at suppressing these voices. In an attempt to disrupt the discourse of domination, the indigenous writer of autoethnography is clearly engaging in more than an account of individual experiences. As Sheila Collingwood-Whittick explains in her study of Aboriginal autobiographical writing, this is: "an important counter-discourse to the systematic mis-representations . . . that whites have used to justify the su/o-ppression of . . . indigenous peoples" (110). As defined and used by Mary Louise Pratt in *Imperial Eyes—Travel Writing and Transculturation*, "autoethnography" includes:

> instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer's own terms. If ethnographic texts are a means by which Europeans represent to themselves their (usually subjugated) others, autoethnographic texts are those the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations. (7)

As opposed to the autobiography defined in Western terms, autoethnography does not focus on the discovery of the "I", the experience of the individual, but rather brings attention to the communal experience emanating from the serious social commitment that defines these indigenous cultures' sense of "selfhood" (Collingwood-Whittick 111).

The distinctions between Western and non-Western autobiography as well as between autobiographical and autoethnographic discourses become especially illuminating when we approach Humishuma's *A Salishan Autobiography*. As Jay Miller points out, as opposed to traditional white American autobiography, which "celebrated the intangibles of self-worth, the getting of knowledge and wisdom, the fostering of

virtue, and the various strategies for success," always focusing on individual enterprises, traditional Salish autobiography

> involved the oral recitation of the deeds of past generations of people who held the same hereditary name. Thus the momentary deeds of an individual were subsumed within those of prior namesakes, providing the same kinds of moral lessons as legends and sagas. The emphasis is on the communal and the conventional, not the unique. (Miller, Introduction to *A Salishan Autobiography* xxxviii)

Humishuma's personal narrative is connected to the cultural narrative of her people. Furthermore, it is my contention that the aim of this text is not only to create communal account, but also to construct an alternative ethnographic narrative that would expose the cultural misrepresentations and blatant lies regarding American Indian identity and life, specifically those found Western anthropological studies of Salish and Okanogan cultures.

The study of Humishuma's autoethnography becomes even more fascinating when we take into account the fact that her text did not see publication until 1990. She gave her manuscript to Heister Dean Guie expecting, as Jay Miller explains in his Introduction to *A Salishan Autobiography* a "speedy revision" (xxxii). According to Miller, however, Guie did not seem interested in the text; by the time Humishuma died in 1936, her manuscript was still in the editor's possession. After being found by Guie's widow in the attic of their home years later, and after a long journey of changing hands, it came to Jay Miller in 1981. He worked with the Colville Reservation elders for almost a decade to finally bring *A Salishan Autobiography* to light.

The fact that Miller found the manuscript "the most sustained discussion of Interior Salish life by an insider" that he had ever seen (xxxii) makes its abandonment by Guie puzzling, especially when we are reminded of this editor's obsession with ethnographic accounts. Miller argues that it was just lack of interest in Guie's part; he assumes that Guie was receiving more compelling "folklores" from the author. It is my contention, however, that Guie did read the text (as evidenced by the fact that he started rewriting one of the sections [Miller xxxii]), but the politically charged message of some of the sections of the manuscript made Guie drag his feet. The fact that Humishuma was actively involved in Reservation politics to the point of becoming a deciding factor in the number of agency personnel and the hiring of Indian workers, and even to the extent of making some white reservation officials nervous (Miller xxv), makes the willful silencing of her narrative even more plausible. As Miller describes, these pages were written "in anger" (xii), close to the end of her life, a time when she was most probably disappointed and frustrated by the "editing" process of her work by her white collaborators. Contrary to what Miller and others see as her "mediator" role, it becomes clear when reading the final narrative that Humishuma was more concerned with cultural truth and self-possession than with the appeasement of her audience. *A Salishan Autobiography*, as autoethnography, embodies a final act of resistance after years of textual compromise and partial acquiescence to the demands of her white editors. Hidden and silenced for decades, Humishuma's most radical narrative was only able to resurface again after fifty years; her rebellious voice was simply too much of a cultural threat for the establishment.

In fact, very much contrary to those instances in which some critics have seen her overall obliteration as an author, *A Salishan Autobiography* offers a new persona for

Humishuma as a writer: the author as transgressor. What has frustrated some scholars including Alanna K. Brown and Jay Miller about the text is what the latter considers Humishuma's lack of accuracy in presenting some events and facts of her life, ultimately making her unreliable to these critics[18]:

> Although this [inaccuracy] might be unintentional, since she worked from memory, it is clear that she went to considerable effort to disguise and shuffle events so as to distance her writing from her family, both to shelter them from public scrutiny and to avoid criticism of her literary ambitions. (Miller xii)

This shuffling, however, could very well represent not only Humishuma's attempt to hide, but also her challenge to the obsessive accuracy forced upon her in the past by Guie and McWhorter. Thus in a parodic version of the compulsive and ethnocentric tudies she was constantly measured against throughout her writing career, Humishuma finally takes full control of her self-representation by reinventing herself and ultimately toying with the expectations created by white ethnographies of Native Americans.

That Humishuma has the quality of the transgressor or "shape-shifter" is not only evident in her narrative, but also throughout her life, starting with the different names she used to identify herself. Given the English name Christine Quitasket at birth, she signed her letters Christal, Christina, Catherine, McLeod or Galler (from her two husbands), as well as with the pen-names Morning Dove/Mourning Dove[19] and Humishuma. The

[18] The obsession with the lack of accuracy by these modern scholars ironically places them at the level of Guie and McWhorter in their frustration with what they considered Humishuma's narrative and scientific inconsistencies.

[19] Morning Dove was her pen-name, both "a sign of the dawning of her career and to commemorate the ever-faithful wife of Salmon, in Colville legend, who welcomes his return each spring" (*A Salishan Autobiography* xvii). Jay Miller explains that, during a visit to a Spokane Museum, she saw the name of the bird spelled as mourning dove, and she switched the spelling. Sometimes she used Humishuma, which is "her spelling of the onomatopoetic Okanogan name of this bird" (xvii).

emphasis in her narrative, however, clearly lies with her Okanogan names, as she highlights her deep bond with her traditional upbringing[20]:

> I carried the name Ka-at-qhu for a long time, although my parents still called me Kee-ten. Some years later, a woman shaman of the Okanogan came to visit my parents. One day she prepared my mother's sweat lodge for herself. I helped her carry wood and water from the creek. This pleased her, and she said, "I am going to give you my name before I die. I want somebody worthy of the name Haah-pecha (Striped blanket) to have it (*A Salishan Autobiography* 16).

Even from an early age, her role within her people is made clear. The fact that the woman shaman gives Humishuma her name underscores her calling as keeper of the culture.

This act of traditional Okanogan naming, however, is complicated by her adopting of a white ancestry: "Father's mother was a Nicola Indian, with a strain of Okanogan . . . . His father was a white man, a Scot named Andrew, who at one time was in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company" (*A Salishan Autobiography* 4). Far from being a desperate attempt to appease her white audience, as many critics have dismissed this act (including Jay Miller, in his introduction to the text), Humishuma appears to be engaging in political and racial subversion, by stressing miscegenation and giving the intended audience a parody of what they expect. She offers the minutest detail on her birth, even claiming she was born while her mother was crossing the Kootenay River (13). All these facts have been disproved by the Colville elders and tribal records. I would therefore claim that she is challenging her readers to confront the image of the "Indian" they were accustomed to seeing in the ethnographies—the child born in an

[20] Humishuma later pokes fun at the "naming" practices of boarding school officials, further undermining their effectiveness to reshape identity for Native peoples (see page 33 for my discussion on this issue).

embraced by the wilderness—in part dismantling the stereotype by making herself part white. In the context of such an "ethnographic game", her need to appeal to her white audience—as argued by most critics—does not seem to fit.

As an auto-ethnography, *A Salishan Autobiography* does not constitute a narrative of appeasement, but rather a subversive denouncement of the colonizers' lies and abuses committed against the Native American population. Humishuma uses the Native oral storytelling tradition to undermine and challenge the fallacy that indigenous peoples did not participate in community and social rituals like their Western counterparts: "The care lavished on me by my parents, my doting grandmother, and other relations surely spoiled me. I had everything I wanted: toys, dogs, tame ground squirrels and chipmunks" (10). The description of familial and community rituals serves a double purpose of, first, emphasizing the complexity and sophistication of Native American social systems, and second, dismantling the white premise of Indians as savages with no social order. Rather than emphasizing her individual life account, *A Salishan Autobiography* tells the story of a community bent on survival. Right from the start, the tone of the narrative is clearly set. Humishuma begins the fist section, "My Life," not as the typical personal account of birth and family, but rather with an emphasis on the communal experience, thus focusing on the autoethnographic weight of this account: "In the year 1888 . . . the Indians of my tribe, the Colvile {Swhy-ayl-puh}, were well into the cycle of history involving their readjustment in living conditions. They were in a pathetic state of turmoil. . . . I was born long enough ago to have known people who lived in the ancient way before everything started to change"(3). The themes of loss of land, displacement and forced adaptation that start on this first page create a thread of denouncement of exploitation and abuse by a line

of white colonizers, settlers, and politicians that is woven throughout the entire narrative: "The vast forests that our Indian forebears had jealously guarded from white invasion lay in ruins. The wildlife, staple food for natives, was slowly and surely vanishing each year; all the game was disappearing" (3). It is obvious that Guie might have considered this text too oppositional.

By emphasizing the loss of natural environment and land, and describing traditional practices as legitimate cultural knowledge (as opposed to superstitious or "primitive"), she re-appropriates the process of representation, offering here an alternative narrative that counteracts inaccuracies and legitimizes her own discourse as the only authentic version:

> Being born an Indian gave me the advantage over the average Caucasian who became interested in Indian subjects. My *nationality* gave me the opportunity to know authentically, from personal experience, a fraction of the real, ancient Indian life that existed before the present generation, which is too busy learning from the white man's books to study ancestral history (11-12; my emphasis).

It is important to notice that Humishuma quite forcefully points out a clear political opposition between Indian and Caucasian. This is at a time (as mentioned before) when the idea of an oppositional Pan-Indian identity was gaining force to battle the common enemy to all Native peoples.

Although lamenting the effects of the mission school education practices of forcing the native population to abandon their own cultural roots, Humishuma is quick to undermine the effectiveness of such practices by emphasizing their failure to destroy bonds of culture and community. As a result of her boarding school experience, she lost

the chance to become a medicine woman, a role that she had been "meant to inherit" from her grandmother (48); however, this education failed to force her to forget her roots or her tradition: "My schooling had not led me to scorn the ancient beliefs but had stimulated a desire to learn more about them. Above all, it made me realize the vast difference between white and native cultures and to fear for the inevitable destruction of my own" (81). Within the "Vanishing American" discourse she seems to be drawing from, we can see the rebelliousness of a message that focuses on presenting Humishuma as the only legitimate (auto)ethnographer and thus, not an instrument of white editors and audiences, but rather an agent of survival, a creator of her own ethnographic discourse, restoring power back to her community by remembering and retelling those rituals and stories of her people.

Part of this cultural recovery comes from restoring identity through memory, and telling of a way of life threatened by the effects of colonization. Humishuma brings back to life the world as it used to be when she was a child, all by the power of storytelling, the power of the word. Humishuma moves from an account of the happy, loving family life within the bonds of her community, to a depiction of her traumatic boarding school experience: "The school ran strictly. We never talked during meals without permission, given only on Sunday or special holidays. Otherwise there was silence—a terrible silent silence. I was used to the freedom of the forest, and it was hard to learn this strict discipline. I was punished many times before I learned" (28). This is possibly one of the most moving descriptions of her traumatic experience, but it also illustrates quite strikingly the ultimate purpose of the boarding school system: to impose complete silence on native communities, destroy the bonds the students had with their cultures and finally

enforce an alien culture and system, which would guarantee the total loss of their native cultures.

Connected to the discussion of education and suppression of culture is the suppression of traditional forms of religion and medicine, which Humishuma powerfully denounces as she underlines white ignorance of native beliefs and science. Countering the white practice of considering indigenous practices "superstition," Humishuma focuses on the framework for traditional medicine practices—a legitimate alternative to Western medicine: "Indian *theory* holds that each spirit has the same strengths as its animal counterpart, as judged by close observation of nature and the outcome of actual fights, in 'real' life, between such animals or shamans with their powers" (my emphasis; 37). She further explains the "need" for indigenous peoples to adopt Western medicine not as acceptance of a superior civilization or the substitution of superstition with science, but rather to cure diseases that the Westerners brought with them: "Now most of my people recognize two systems of medicine, one effective against our earlier illnesses and sorcery, and the other curing germ-caused diseases from Europe" (69). As if to re-emphasize the theme of survival even in the face of disease and chaos brought to the natural order of life by the white colonizers, Humishuma goes on to explain the persistence and endurance of the medicine women and shamans, not Western educators, doctors, philosophers or priests, in maintaining order: "What kept them going was the knowledge that everything on the earth has a purpose, every disease an herb to cure it, and every person a mission. This is the Indian theory of existence"(69). She persists in defining these philosophies as theory, based on researchable knowledge as opposed to their dismissal as superstitious rituals and practices by white ethnographers.

Overall, the narrative's tone is one of anger and frustration at the crimes committed by white settlers, and later, the U.S. government, against indigenous communities. With anger and mourning comes disdain, which Humishuma quite effectively expresses as she pokes fun at some of the whites' practices. For instance, her comic treatment of the re-naming of students at the boarding schools is told not only with the frustation that this suppressing and usurping of identity warrants, but also to highlight the white officials' ignorance, inabilities, and the randomness of their practices:

> Before the whites came, we had no surnames. These were given by Jesuits and pioneers for convenience, overcoming the difficulties of pronouncing native words. Some people were named for presidents and great men, others for descriptions of physical features. The sisters at Goodwin Mission also gave out names to students when they enrolled. Often they were given
> the first name of their father as a family name. In this way I once became Christine Joseph. Other families became known as Tom, Peter, Martin, and Alex. They did not have the opportunity to gain the name of someone famous. (96)

Humishuma is laughing at these supposedly educated men and women, and at their utter inability, or unwillingness, to learn their students' names (a sign of their evident lack of interest in the people they were supposed to be helping through education). The last line seems to emphasize the surreal quality of this situation by focusing on the humorous. Throughout the text, she continuously points out the mistakes by white ethnographers' recording of names, rituals, ceremonies, and places, and overturns the discourse of otherness against the oppressor with a clever counter-discoursive tactic: "This [custom]

frequently amuses whites, but some of their customs seem just as odd or foolish to the oldtime <sic> Indians" (20).

The frank exposition and irreverent, often angry tone of this narrative would surely have been cause for anxiety for Guie,[21] leading him to keep the manuscript rather than attempting to publish it. Humishuma does not make apologies for her brutally honest narrative or her political message, especially in what concerns a potentially bloody reaction by her people to whites' crimes against Indian land and livelihood:

> When Fort Colville was established, the traders assured my people they were not after land but only exchanging furs for goods. When some of the company began to farm some of the fertile bottomland, the Indians did not object. There was much trust in the hearts of my people. *If anyone had become suspicious of losing their country, I am sure there would have been a massacre.* (my emphasis; 150).

Her text is a recounting of a history of loss and survival, the counter-narrative to the official version created by the oppressors. She is painfully describing the gradual change from abundance and order to chaos, land loss, famine, mendacity, oppression, suppression, and death as a result of the whites' colonizing practices. Clearly exposing the abomination of such practices, Humishuma is directly attacking and disproving the skewed documented versions of events as well as white misrepresentations of Native Americans—first as primitive savages, and later as weak and superstitious.

The purpose of *A Salishan Autobiography* goes beyond a mere attack against white ethnographies to become a text that is deeply rooted in traditional indigenous practices. Humishuma is "telling story" as autoethnography to counteract and unravel

[21] Guie was concerned not only with scientific/ethnographic accuracy, but also with being considered a part of the white ethnographic community. This text does not seem to lend itself to suppression or silencing as easily as Humishuma's previous work.

narratives of cultural assimilation, rather than simply allowing her textual domination by white editors and publishers. Such a narrative was surely too oppositional to see the light and, in that sense, the dominant discourse was successful at silencing this counter-discourse—although only for a few decades. Regardless, as a Salish storyteller, Humishuma succeeded in restoring order to the universe.

III. "'The Insignificant Connecting Link': Sui Sin Far and Cultural Mediation as a Site of Political Power"

> I give my right hand to the Occidentals and my left to the Orientals, hoping that between them they will not utterly destroy the insignificant "connecting link." And that's all. (Sui Sin Far, "Leaves From the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian" 230)

The role of the cultural mediator brings with it a certain level of anxiety, as we have seen in previous chapters; this anxiety is exacerbated by the expectations that the mainstream audience places on the recipients of the questionable honor of becoming the mouthpiece of a cultural "reality" that is, at its best, a manifestation of the dominant culture's desire to maintain its own fantasies of domination.

Thus, as we have seen, María Cristina Mena and Humishuma experienced, in varying degrees, both the desire to become and the desire to resist this burdensome role. Mena never quite finds her place as an effective voice of resistance and Humishuma is only able to powerfully reclaim her own narrative from the hands of editors and publishers towards the end of her career. Sui Sin Far—otherwise known as Edith Maude Eaton—on the other hand, seems to embrace her role as cultural mediator for the Chinese and Chinese American communities, but with the clear political intention of giving a voice to these culturally oppressed groups. As the epigraph to this chapter clearly illustrates, Sui Sin Far was not only aware of the political purpose of her work, but was also quite blatant about it; her intention was to bridge the cultural, social, racial and political gap that the dominant culture's policies of exclusion had created. As we will see throughout this chapter, Sui Sin Far did not mask or hide her political message of

uncompromising defense of the Chinese community, which she often envisioned as the victim of economic exploitation and cultural and social prejudice[22].

In fact, it is my contention that Sui Sin Far uses this role of cultural mediator not only willingly, but quite forcefully, as a site of political power. The unapologetic approach to her character depiction, especially of whites in positions of power, is clear from the beginning of her career, to the point that she chose not to publish, rather than succumb to the version of "Chinese-ness" that was deemed acceptable by some publishers and editors (even though she has been accused of precisely this cultural crime by some critics). Her correspondence with Robert Underwood Johnson, one of the editors of *Century*, illuminates Sui Sin Far's frustration with the highly specific role editors expected her to fulfill as a part-Chinese writer. Although she desperately tried to get her work published for pressing financial reasons especially during her first years as a writer, the niche offered seemed politically unacceptable to her. Even as she describes her stories as "little" to Johnson (White-Parks 44), her literary and political ambitions are quite evident throughout her writing. In an article published in the *Globe*, she unequivocally, if humorously, describes her intentions: "publishing a book and planting a few Eurasian thoughts in Western literature" (White-Parks 48).

Because of the lack of Asian representations in U.S. literature up to that time, her literary framework seems to be left quite undefined. As S.E. Solberg points out, by "choosing to identify with and write about the Chinese," Sui Sin Far found herself "alone

[22] This defense creates the problem of a potential "reversed racism," of which Sui Sin Far has been accused by some critics. At issue here is how much the emphasis on victimization might reduce the immigrant experience to a simplistic view, and the immigrants themselves as weak, hopeless, childlike creatures at the mercy of the system, all of which ends up perpetuating the racist iconography Sui Sin Far is trying to resist. This conflict is worth exploring in depth and will be discussed later on in the chapter.

in an essentially formless field" (33). She chose not to follow the traditions established by authors like Mark Twain, Henry James, or local color writers[23], but rather seemed to respond to "yellow peril" popular fiction in a manner all her own, as we will see later on. This pervasive cultural tradition of "yellow peril," explored in detail by William F. Wu, can be defined as the "threat to the United States" white America "believed was posed by the people of East Asia" (1)

At times declaring her doubts and dissatisfaction with her work, Sui Sin Far voices her artistic frustration in some of her letters to Johnson; for instance, in a letter dated December 4, 1903, she declares: "I know I am not a fluent or artistic writer" (White-Parks 44). Even after publication, some reviewers did not seem to know what to do with her work. Thus, in a piece in the July 7, 1912 issue of the *New York Times* the reviewer acknowledges Sui Sin Far's accomplishment as a writer but does not quite know how to frame his praise: "Miss Eaton has struck a new note in American fiction. She has not struck it very surely, . . . but it has taken courage to strike it all. (. . .) The thing she has tried to do is to portray for readers of the white race the lives, feelings, sentiments of the Americanized Chinese of the Pacific Coast" (Solberg 34). Clearly, "the thing" Sui Sin Far was trying to do had not yet been attempted, and she had to contend with the racist stereotypes and expectations put forth by the white mainstream culture.

Although some critics have pointed out Sui Sin Far's self-effacement as a sign of compromise, it is my contention that Sui Sin Far was not willing to make such political or

[23] Elizabeth Ammons sees Sui Sin Far as using the local color tradition to enhance her political theories (117). Although it is true that the use of vignettes in a short story frame creates a "cumulative effect" that could help clarify Sui Sin Far's cultural themes (Ammons 117), a structural device that resonates with the local color tradition, I would also like to argue that here is where similarities end. There is no political nostalgia or presentation of an idealized past by Sui Sin Far. Her stories are very much anchored in a rather disturbing cultural present. In fact, the idea of "quaintness" so central to the local color tradition seems to be at odds with Sui Sin Far's dismantling of cultural and racial stereotypes.

artistic concessions. As she explains in a letter to Johnson on December 4, 1904: "I have read many clever and interesting Chinese stories written by American writers, but they all seem to me to stand afar from the Chinaman—in most cases treating him as a joke" (White-Parks 45). Her commitment to social and cultural accuracy was unwavering and seems to have resulted in her publishing only one single story with *Century*, "A Chinese Boy-Girl," which explores the deep conflict in parenting practices as a Chinese father is forced to resort to unusual strategies to protect his son from the Anglo school's aggressive assimilation practices. (I will discuss this story in the final section of the chapter.)

It is worth noting that even colleagues from the publishing world frequently advised her to exploit her ethnicity, defining the images that were considered culturally acceptable for a wide mainstream audience:

> I also meet some funny people who advise me to "trade" upon my nationality. They tell me that if I wish to succeed in literature in America I should dress in Chinese costume, carry a fan in my hand, wear a pair of scarlet beaded slippers, live in New York, and come of high birth. Instead of making myself familiar with the Chinese Americans around me, I should discourse on my spirit acquaintance with Chinese ancestors. ("Leaves From the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian" 230)[24]

Sui Sin Far's sarcastic tone in this excerpt clearly illuminates her stand regarding the degree of "Chinese-ness" with which she was willing to imbue her public persona in order to fulfill the fantasies of an ignorant and mostly prejudiced white audience.

[24] First published in the New York *Independent* in 1909.

Unlike Sui Sin Far's own rejection of the desired Chinese iconography, her sister Winnifred, also a writer, took advantage of another ethnic construct that held more lucrative results: passing as Japanese. Under the name Onoto Watanna, Winnifred was able to publish five novels with Doubleday, Macmillan and Harper. Winnifred's success further illuminates the racist cultural constructs that depicted the Japanese as "exotic, quaint, delicate," while envisioning the Chinese as "mysterious, evil, threatening" (S.E. Solberg 31)[25]. Winifred's choice brings more light to the high stakes of Sui Sin Far's political stance to side with the less appealing, but more accurate, cultural reality; this is a stance that does not, I would argue, fall into the fantasies of the mainstream audience or betray any ambivalence, as some critics have suggested[26]. Instead of catering to the white audience's taste for a brand of orientalism that reinforced their own racist narrative of cultural domination, Sui Sin Far chose to expose the damage these fabricated images were causing. That she was aware of the perhaps less politically dangerous possibility of masking her ethnicity is made obvious by her comment in "Leaves From the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian": "It is not difficult, in a land like California, for a half-Chinese, half-white girl to pass as one of Spanish or Mexican origin" (227): a sad testimony to the fact that even the conditions suffered by Mexican immigrants constituted a more desirable fate than that of Chinese Americans.

[25] The extent to which Winnifred's deceit affected Sui Sin Far even after her death is considerable. In charge of writing her sister's obituary and concerned with maintaining the illusion of her family's Japanese ancestry, Winnifred described Sui Sin Far as "the daughter of a Japanese noblewoman" (Solberg 29), not only further obscuring Sui Sin Far's biographical background but also compromising the authenticity of her role as a Chinese writer dealing with Chinese themes.

[26] Some critics have been quick at pointing out how Sui Sin Far's ethnic background keeps her in a sort of limbo when it comes to making a clear statement with her work. Roger Daniels, for instance, describes her voice as "not a militant one," although he acknowledges that Sui Sin Far moves away from exoticism to depict the members of the Chinese and Chinese American communities as human beings trying to survive (White-Parks, *Sui Sin Far/Edith Maude Eaton: A Literary Biography* i). White-Parks raises the question of whether Sui Sin Far is breaking or perpetuating the popular stereotypes she is confronting (*Sui Sin Far/Edith Maude Eaton: A Literary Biography* 2). These views do not take into account the author's outspoken persona in letters, editorials, articles and stories.

Culturally, both Sui Sin Far and Winnifred Eaton were responding to themes and images created by the mainstream popular culture in the context of the "yellow peril" paradigm, which fueled a whole line of popular fiction with a decidedly racist tone. These conflicting reactions to the "yellow peril" iconography originate in Sui Sin Far's and her sister's own racial and cultural identity. As the daughters of a British father and a Chinese mother educated in the mission-school system, they suffered firsthand the double humiliation of bi-racial discrimination: racism and social ostracism from whites, outright mistrust from the Chinese community. In a tone of intense indignation that permeates her entire work, Sui Sin Far recalls in "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian" the outrage, as well as the confusion, that racism created in the innocent mind of the ten-year-old child, leading her to question her own identity:

> And all the while the question of nationality perplexes my little brain. Why are we what we are? I and my brothers and sisters. Why did God make us to be hooted and stared at? Papa is English, mamma is Chinese. Why couldn't we have been either one thing or the other? Why is my mother's race despised? (221-22)

With her identity defined and limited by the dominant culture's labels, Sui Sin Far understood from a very early age that her cultural discourse would have to be loud enough to fight the force of those in power to silence it.

Her notion of writing as a political fight seemed to become clear early on, as she remembers her racially motivated street fights with white kids: "They pull my hair, they tear my clothes, they scratch my face, and all but lame my brother; but the white blood in our veins fights valiantly for the Chinese half of us" ("Leaves from the Mental Portfolio

of an Eurasian" 219). It is in this moment of acute bi-racial awareness that Sui Sin Far makes a unique commitment that will define her future political vision: to bend her "white half," to side unmistakably with the portion of her identity that belongs to the underprivileged and the exploited; to fight for immigrant causes against white institutionalized racism. This is a commitment that, unlike Mena's or Humishuma's, finds its full expression early on, without much inner struggle; and it is a commitment that makes the young Sui Sin Far intensely proud and her racial theories quite radical: "Whenever I have the opportunity I steal away to the library and read every book I can find on China and the Chinese. I learned that China is the oldest civilized nation on the face of the earth and a few other things. At eighteen years of age what troubles me is not that I am what I am, but that others are ignorant of my superiority" ("Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian" 222). With the "vanity" of a young mind, as she recalls it, Sui Sin Far describes her early racial world view, perhaps unaware at eighteen of the profound political implications of her ideas: "I believe that some day a great part of the world will be Eurasian. I cheer myself with the thought that I am but a pioneer" ("Leaves" 224).

Later on, as she traveled to Jamaica as a journalist, her ethnic and cultural affiliations leave no doubts, as they take a sharply divisive focus, clearly separating white from non-white and siding with the colonized and oppressed by Anglo imperialism: "Occasionally an Englishman will warn me against the 'brown boys' of the island, little dreaming that I too am of the 'brown people' of the earth" ("Leaves" 225). Interestingly enough, Sui Sin Far chooses to complicate her racial stand as she dismantles labels of nationality imposed on her by the dominant culture: "After all, I have no nationality and

am not anxious to claim any. Individuality is more than nationality. 'You are you and I am I' says Confucius" (230). If her loyalties rest with the "brown people of the earth," in direct opposition to white privilege, Sui Sin Far takes great pains to clarify that, beyond the dichotomy white/non-white (imposed on non-whites by the dominant whites), she is unwilling to partake in any further use of ethnic and cultural labels and definitions as generated and propagated by the white dominant culture. It is doubly significant that Sui Sin Far takes from Confucius in order to define identity as individuality, unmistakably following Chinese tradition, and thus opposing colonizer-created, national or ethnic boundaries. This political stand is the more courageous when we take into account the institutionalized racist practices of the U.S. government at the time, not only in the form of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, but especially in light of the progressively racist laws that came afterwards. One of these acts, the Scott Act of 1888, aimed at redefining "the term Chinese to mean anyone of Chinese descent, regardless of citizenship, nation of birth, and nation of residence" (Wu 30). Considering the blatant racist legal maneuvering taking place at the time, Sui Sin Far's refusal to define herself in terms of nationality as defined by the white dominant culture is indeed an act of daring political resistance.

Some critics have interpreted Sui Sin Far's critique of racial and national labels as a sign of her own ambiguity regarding these matters, as well as a reflection of her own bi-racial identity. My argument is, however, that Sui Sin Far refuses to be defined within racial absolutes as enforced by the dominant culture. As Carol Roh-Spaulding points out: "[Sui Sin Far] continually undermines the permanence and singularity of the notion of ethnic identity" (156). This political stance is explained by Sean McCann as Sui Sin Far's "fascination with liminality—an obsession with border states and indefinite conditions . .

. [that] inspired her distrust of every invocation of collective identity" (77). Although this interest partially explains Sui Sin Far's categorical refusal to present herself in national terms, McCann does not address Sui Sin Far's use of Confucius in a clear attempt to define her philosophical background as non-Western (hardly an ambiguous position) as well as in universal terms of humanity and individuality. Even as she counters the stereotypes created by the "yellow peril" construct, in most cases, as we will see, Sui Sin Far manages to provide "no single dominant image of the Chinese" (Roh-Spaulding 159), thus moving, I would argue, beyond simplistic counter-types, while simultaneously establishing a cultural identity that is decidedly non-Western and non-white.

Pseudo-Scientific Racial Discourse and Immigration Anxiety — The Chinese Immigrant Experience

Sui Sin Far's rather premature and violent childhood awakening to the political and social realities of discriminatory and racist practices embodies the effects of a violent history of immigrant anxiety that has always been an integral part of U.S. cultural discourse, intensified with each wave of immigrants arriving to its shores. The need for cheap labor historically justified exploitation and, in some cases, virtual slavery. With this capitalistic lust for immigrant workers came the political, legal and rhetorical framework that would guarantee that these populations remained in effect voice-less and right-less, banned from participating in the social and economic growth that they were, in fact, generating. Pseudo-scientific racial theories, developed to promote a culture of fear

of the immigrant, thinly masked racist narratives under the guise of scientific discourse as they began to appear in widely-read publications. Racial pseudo-scientists sprung up, among them Edward Alsworth Ross, Chair of the Sociology Department at the University of Wisconsin, who became a regular conservative voice in popular magazines such as *Century*, with a series of articles underlining the main tenets of Anglo-Saxonism ["The Old World and the New: Economic Consequences of Immigration" (November 1913), "Immigrants in Politics: The Political Consequences of Immigration" (January 1914), "Racial Consequences of Immigration" (February 1914), "Origins of the American People" (March 1914)]. Arguing for ethnic "purity," Ross described in the February 1914 *Century* article: "It is fair to say that the blood now being injected into the veins of our people is 'sub-common.'" (23).

There is a fascinating paradox illustrative of the inner conflict that the concepts of national and racial identity have always entailed for American culture. If the overly triumphal rhetoric that fed the myth of America as the land of opportunity was meant to entice waves upon waves of eager manual labor, this idiom would end up turning onto itself in a narrative of fear caused by those same immigrants, once they had reached our shores. There seems to be a social schizophrenia of sorts around the turn of the 19th into the 20th century, embodied by the white middle-class attitude towards immigrants; as Richard J. Ellis points out in *To the Flag The Unlikely History of the Pledge of Allegiance* (2005), this conflicting attitude was "powerfully shaped by a celebratory view of America," but coexisting in the social psyche with a "bundle of racial conceits and ethnic prejudices" (43).

This immigration anxiety was widespread in terms of the political spectrum, equally involving intellectuals and politicians on either side of the field. Economic concerns were redirected onto a pseudo-racial discourse the focused on the loss of the country's ethnic "purity." Thus, Francis Bellamy wrote in an editorial for the *Illustrated American*, in August 28, 1897:

> there are races more or less akin to our own, whom we may admit freely, and get nothing but advantage from the infusion of their wholesome blood. But there are other races which we cannot assimilate without a lowering of our racial standard, which should be as sacred to us as the sanctity of our homes. (Ellis 32)

If the economic need for an immigrant population is acknowledged rather backhandedly in the welcoming of new "wholesome blood," it is clear that, for many, as Bellamy himself puts it: "there are immigrants and immigrants" (Ellis 32), referring to the apparently insurmountable ethnic difference of those coming not only from Eastern Europe, but also from Asia and other "exotic" areas of the world. At the core of this fear is the growing awareness of the impossibility of assimilating these new populations. Thus, Representative Henry Cabot Lodge wrote in the *North American Review* in 1891 that these "other" sources of immigration were "bringing to the country people whom it is very difficult to assimilate and who do not promise well for the standard of civilization in the United States" (Ellis 33-34). Others, like Congregationalist minister Josiah Strong, in his book *Our Country* (1885), offered the only practical solution, as he saw it, of "slowing the pace of immigration" (Ellis 35), a measure taken to the extreme in the case of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which directly affected the Chinese immigrant communities.

This unified political front against the immigrant population helped generate a fear in the general public, which was fed by a cultural narrative meant to guarantee the socio-political exclusion of these communities. The sheer numbers of Chinese immigrant workers who entered the United States between 1849, with the beginning of the Gold Rush, and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (nearly 300,000) created a threat to the white dominant culture socially, economically and politically. The fact that business owners and transnational companies preferred this cheap labor only complicated matters. Most Chinese immigrants considered themselves in this early stage migrant workers, or temporary immigrants, hoping to work hard for a few years and go back home to help their families in China[27]. Unlike the European immigrants, their motivation was not so much a "turning away from their homeland, but a defense of the family and village, the only way to preserve the traditional order" (Olson 70). The character Wou Sankwei, from Sui Sin Far's "The Wisdom of the New," illustrates this economic as well as social motivation: "I will work and save money. What I send home will bring you many a comfort, and when I come back to China, it may be that I shall be able to complete my studies and obtain a degree" (Sui Sin Far 43).

Part of what made these Chinese immigrant communities a threat to white dominant culture was the autonomous nature of their social, economic and political networks once they settled in the U.S. As Sucheng Chan points out in *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History*, these were not "normal" communities (63). Unlike traditional

[27] The political and economic situation in China, especially in the Kwangtung Province of Southeastern China, had deteriorated for decades; crop problems, floods, and overpopulation had all contributed to an unsustainable social and political situation. The brutality of European imperialistic practices (the take-over of textile production, enforced missionary education, the Anglo-Chinese and opium wars) forced opening of Chinese ports and subsequent opening to trade and Christian proselytizing, debilitating China politically and creating more social unrest, all of which forced many to find alternative sources of survival, not only for themselves, but also for their families and clans.

social networks in China, there were no family units in the earlier stages of immigration, as most women remained in China, taking care of the extended family, while the men came over to the U.S. to find work. With a majority of men as its population and virtually isolated from mainstream culture and the "outside world", the community relied solely on the institutional structures created to support them in terms of housing, health, work, and social networking. These social and political networks became, in fact, a parallel or invisible government, outside the control of the U.S. legal and political institutions[28] (Olson 74). Highly organized, these networks were set up hierarchically from clans to *huiguans* (associations connecting people from the same districts). To resolve disputes among members of different associations, a *gongsuo* (public hall) was created with representatives members from each *huiguan*. This federation became a crucial political tool for immigrant life, as one of its main functions turned out to be to combat anti-Chinese legislation. Once the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act Law went into effect, community leaders, "feeling the need to present a united front to a hostile outside world" created an umbrella association called the *Zhonghua Huiguan*, Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (Chen 65). That these communities were able to organize, function as an autonomous body, and fight against discrimination in a political climate that was legalizing the perpetuation of these discriminatory practices shows the power of their cultural and political stance and explains the level of fear the local and central governments, as well as the mainstream white population, felt.

At a time when the U.S. was becoming more diverse, fueling theories like Nativisim and Anglo-Saxonism, which were still in full swing and were giving voice to

[28] The fact that the Chinese were not allowed citizenship and therefore could not vote made them invisible to local politicians; with no representative voice in the larger community, they became mostly self-governed and autonomous, with control of their own affairs (Wu 70ff).

the fear of cultural and ethnic intermixing, these Chinese communities became an increased threat. The fact that these immigrants were non-white, non-Christian, and non-Western only made the cultural reaction and the consequent political measures to their difference all the more violent and blatantly discriminatory. Fueled by economic fear (i.e. the Chinese would take all the jobs in the middle of an economic depression), increasingly racist political and legal measures were taken to restrict the Chinese workers' rights and opportunities.

Some of these workers were in fact "slave laborers" or *coolies*, brought to the U.S. by contractors under false pretense and forced to pay a monthly installment of their passage debt, which guaranteed that they would be dependent on that contractor for a long period of time. Their condition as cheap labor coupled with the cultural iconography imported in by missionaries and traders[29], exploited by the mainstream and complicated by the autonomous power of their communities, spurred in a wave of discriminatory practices against the Chinese and Chinese American communities[30]. These practices

[29] American traders and missionaries were mostly responsible for the early creation and adoption of the negative stereotypes that the white mainstream culture later adopted and exploited. The iconography of the Chinese as cruel, immoral, sexually deviant, superstitious, untrustworthy, opium-smoking, and exotic is one of the cultural weapons Sui Sin Far uses to turn the tables on the dominant culture's racist stereotypes.

[30] Racially discriminatory laws during these decades are too numerous to cite in detail, but some of the most flagrantly racist are recorded by James Olson in *The Ethnic Dimension in American History*. They include the legal expelling of Chinese miners from Northern California between 1852-1860; the propagation of anti-Chinese propaganda conducted by labor unions in California during the 1870's; the state legislature's denial of the use of California employment bureaus to the Chinese, and the prohibition from working on dam, levees, or irrigation projects; the frequency of incidents where Chinese witnesses were not allowed to testify against whites (the result of an overturned decision by the Supreme Court), which virtually made it impossible to prosecute whites for anti-Chinese violence, and denied the Chinese population any legal avenues; the 1860 California law that prohibited Chinese children from attending public schools, and the subsequent refusal by local school districts to build new schools for the Chinese children after the state courts ordered "separate but equal" facilities (Olson 76). In some areas, by 1870, all separate classes were terminated due to "low enrollment," and children "of Chinese ancestry, regardless of where they had been born" were forced to take English and Bible classes taught by Missionaries working in Chinatown" (Chan 57). Harassment laws also became common. For instance, one San Francisco law prohibited carrying baskets on long poles; an 1873 ordinance required jailers to give short haircuts to all prisoners, obviously targeting the traditional queues (Olson 76). Perhaps one of the most insidious acts of

became increasingly overt and culminated in the approval by congress of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (prohibiting future immigration from China) and consequent laws, such as the Immigration Act of 1924, which barred "Asian women from entering the country, even if married to United States citizens" (Wu 77). These laws reveal a new U.S. racial stand, revealing a "genuine fear of immigration specifically from China, . . . based on culture and race, not just on politics and economics" (Wu 30). Violence continued to erupt against the Chinese communities, including riots, lynching and shootings[31].

In order to understand Sui Sin Far's rhetorical strategies, we need to pinpoint what she is reacting to: legal discriminatory action, racial theories and an entire tradition of racist popular cultural images and fiction that had generated and propagated blatantly racist, often contradictory, stereotypes of the Chinese and Chinese American communities. This pervasive cultural tradition of "yellow peril," explored specifically in its literary dimension by Wu, mirrors the mainstream fear in terms of some exaggerated political, economic and social threats, "including possible military invasion from Asia, perceived competition to the white labor force from Asian workers, the alleged moral degeneracy of Asian people, and the potential genetic mixing of Anglo-Saxons with Asians, who were considered a biologically inferior race by some intellectuals" (1). The pervasiveness of these images, in spite of the changing nature of the Chinese and Chinese American communities in the U.S., highlights the deeply rooted racial fear that underlined these narratives.

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legalized racism, however, might be the inclusion of language that would keep all Asians from becoming citizens, once the constitution was amended in 1870 to include "persons of African nativity or descent" during Reconstruction reform. Those Asian immigrants who were eventually awarded citizenship had to fight all the way to their state Supreme Courts (Chan 47).

[31] Some of the most violent examples include a riot in Los Angeles on October 23, 1871, where five hundred whites entered Chinatown, burned buildings and lynched fifteen people, and the 1877 riots in San Francisco, which destroyed thirty Chinese laundries. The worst race riot occurred in Rock Springs, Wyoming on September 2, 1885, where white miners murdered twenty eight Chinese workers.

Sui Sin Far's work offers, among other things, a reaction to this tradition of social and racial prejudice. As we will see, her stories, autobiographical pieces, and newspaper and magazine articles show the clear intention of redefining Chinese and Chinese American identity in opposition to the stereotypes imported and propagated by the white dominant culture. In some cases, Sui Sin Far not only seeks to re-define but also reverse these racist practices by turning the tables on the creators and propagators of such images. Some of the stereotypes Sui Sin Far contended with were deeply rooted in the colonial experience first, brought in by missionaries and merchants, and continued with the first waves of migrant workers in the mid-1800s. From first contact to the Exclusion Act period to later years, the Chinese and Chinese Americans were seen as "violent and dangerous people" (Wu 3). Complicated by the intricate nature of the economic relations between the forces in power and the immigrant population (i.e. the need for their work in railroad, wine valleys, and later on in urban communities as servants, domestics and launderers), these images became contradictory at times, and remained in constant flux within a continuous line of racism and prejudice from 1850 to 1940. Thus Chinese Americans were viewed as "inscrutable, wildly excitable, of low intelligence, and of high and complex intelligence. They were described as extremely able workers yet low on the evolutionary scale" (Wu 4).

Sui Sin Far takes on most, if not all, of these images in an attempt to create characters who are not only counter-types, but also fully-fledged individuals struggling with discrimination and institutionalized racist practices. The fact that her stories are populated by intelligent, hard-working, family-oriented Chinese men and women, who are good husbands and fathers, and honorable and generous mothers, is a direct response

to white authors' fantasies, hardly rooted in reality, but highly damaging to the quality of life of these communities; the Chinese characters in these "yellow peril" stories are usually tong killers, child abductors, heartless husbands, female slaves, and torturers, as well as loyal domestic servants, and successful merchants. These types clearly betray the need to perpetuate definitions of Chinese identity that will reinforce the only roles that the dominant culture envisioned as viable for the Chinese and Chinese American populations: criminals and prostitutes, and thus on the margins of the social and political mainstream; members of the bachelor society, typically gamblers, sexually and morally depraved, and thus removed from a more traditional vision of family life, exaggerating the initial conditions of the Chinatown communities, which consisted mainly of male working men; or servile launderers or domestics, the embodiment of the only acceptable social position as imagined by the dominant culture[32].

By countering these cultural and social stereotypes, Sui Sin Far's work constitutes a direct denunciation of the discriminatory practices of the U.S. government and its institutions, as well as the exposure of the racist cultural constructs that kept these practices legally viable for generations. Her outspoken attitude certainly placed her in some delicate situations. In fact, as we have already seen, Sui Sin Far was the victim of some despicable racist acts that would define her political and literary path directly

[32] Paul Siu explores the limitations of the roles considered acceptable by the dominant culture's expectations and reinforced fantasies about the Chinese and Chinese American communities, studying the account given by the first laundryman in the San Francisco area: "white customers were prepared to patronize him as a laundryman because as such his status was low and constituted no competitive threat. If you stop to think about it, there's a very real difference between the person who washes your soiled clothing and the one who fills your prescription. As a laundryman he occupied a status which was in accordance with the social definition of the place in the economic hierarchy suitable for a member of an 'inferior race'" (quoted in Chan 34).

aligned with the indignities suffered by the Chinese and Chinese American communities[33].

Sui Sin Far's reaction to this racist narrative was complicated. In an incident involving her employer at a newspaper, she felt the fear of retaliation but took a stand nevertheless. As she witnessed the following conversation unfold, her fears mounted:

> "'I cannot reconcile myself to the thought that the Chinese are humans like ourselves. They may have immortal souls, but their faces seem to be so utterly devoid of expression that I cannot help but doubt'" – [. . .]
>
> "'Souls,' echoes the town clerk. 'Their bodies are enough for me. A Chinaman is, in my eyes, more repulsive than a nigger'" ("Leaves" 224).

As Sui Sin Far describes her reaction to these words, there is a clear amount of fear mixed with outrage that silences her at first, for a brief moment of panic:

> A miserable, cowardly feeling keeps me silent. 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. The prospect before me is not an enviable one—if I speak. I have no longer an ambition to die at the stake for the sake of demonstrating the greatness and nobleness of the Chinese people. (224)

If the tone of sarcasm betrays her outrage at the situation, her words also express the sadness at being forced to explain and define herself in racial terms, in order to debunk

[33] Even during her adult life, she had to endure the indignity of being defined by the 'yellow peril" paradigm in rather violent ways. As she recounts in "Leaves From the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian," when working on an assignment for a newspaper in Jamaica), she was taken for a prostitute by a naval officer, who approached her quite aggressively: "I just came because I had the idea that you might like to know me. I would like to know you. You look like such a nice little body. Say, wouldn't you like to go for a sail this lovely night? I will tell you all about the sweet Chinese girls I met when we were in Hong Kong. They're not so shy!" (226).

the ingrained racially and culturally prejudiced iconography of the cultural mainstream. This political passion, as well as the strain[34] it causes her, make her response the more courageous, as well as poignant, as she addresses her employer: "The Chinese people 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 rhetorical strategy is to present a counter-narrative that disrupts all preconceived racial notions her co-workers had.

If Sui Sin Far was critical of the pressure placed on Asian artists to respond to the dominant culture's idea of what "oriental" was expected to be, she was also painfully aware of the fact that the images these expectations generated were pervasively damaging to the Chinese and Chinese American communities. It is my contention that Sui Sin Far's work, and in fact her view of her own writing persona, reflect this awareness, as well as clarify her political stance as one of direct reaction to and attack of those racist images. That Sui Sin Far was attempting to dismantle the 'yellow peril" paradigm is apparent in her letters to editors, as I have already discussed. However, her purpose becomes even clearer when we take a careful look at some of her newspaper articles, as well as short stories, where she is able to move beyond simple counter-types and explores her themes more in depth.

Despite the perceived ambiguity by some of her critics, a careful reading of some of her work will show how strong Sui Sin Far's political vision truly is when set against the context of the 'yellow peril" stereotypes. Her work explores the damage caused by

[34] Sui Sin Far explains the intensity of the cultural burden she felt, even as a child, not just because of who she was, but also because of who she would become: "I had no organic disease, but the strength of my feelings seems to take from me the strength of my body. . . . The doctor says that my heart is unusually large; but in the light of the present I know that the cross of the Eurasian bore too heavily upon my childish shoulders" ("Leaves" 221).

the assimilation practices and institutionalized racism of the white dominant culture on the Chinese and Chinese American communities. As Roh-Spaulding explains: "[Sui Sin Far's] stories complicate traditional narratives of assimilation and amalgamation with tales of failed cultural mixing and conflicted identity" (173), thus upsetting a white mainstream audience whose expectations were defined by their own cultural fantasies of racial harmony through assimilation.

Chinese Working Conditions and Stereotype Reversal

The stereotypes created by the mainstream culture regarding Chinese workers served the purpose of perpetuating a fear towards immigrant labor, who were perceived as an economic threat to the white working- and middle- classes, as well as a potential threat to cultural "purity". While servants, domestics and laundrymen were considered acceptable occupations for the Chinese immigrant communities, those roles that might involve a higher position on the social ladder were seen as a direct threat to the economic and social order. By perpetuating images of Chinese labor exclusively in the service and low-paid fields, the cultural mainstream could easily maintain the perception that these Chinese workers were in fact lower-class and undesirable members of society. The white mainstream popular culture helped spread additional stereotypes of the Chinese communities as violent, corrupted and crime-infested[35].

[35] In the "yellow peril" popular fiction's tradition of exploiting and misrepresenting Chinese communal life, the activities of the *tongs* became one of the favorite topics. These were secret societies with the role of accepting those members of Chinatown who had been disenfranchised for social, cultural or economic reasons. In "yellow peril" fiction, the *tongs* became crime organizations that terrorized the Chinese community and threatened the white communities if they dared to set foot in Chinatown. As William Wu points out, if the *tongs* did participate in some criminal activities, "they were not, as American fiction often claims, normal elements of Chinese culture transplanted in the United States from the old country. They

It is the accurate depiction of the living conditions in the Chinese communities that Sui Sin Far takles, as she dismantles the culturally racist perception propagated by white popular fiction. The fact that she centers some of her stories around members of what could be considered a Chinese middle-class has been interpreted by some critics as a sign of Sui Sin Far's elitism, which ultimately caused her to create an "unbalanced picture of the Chinese-American community" (McCann 82). Although it is true that Sui Sin Far makes a point in some of her stories to specify the upper- or middle-class background of Chinese immigrants to America, as she does in "The Wisdom of the New" and "The Americanizing of Pau Tsu," criticism like McCann's ignores the fact that not all of Sui Sin Far's stories or journalistic pieces deal with middle-class transplantation to the U.S., but rather include hard-working families from a wide social spectrum. It is important to note that in her response to the "yellow peril" vision of the Chinese as violent criminals or servile laborers, Sui Sin Far takes pains to create an alternative vision of Chinatown that is irrevocably diverse: a community that exists parallel to its white counterpart, but that, as opposed to it, thrives in an inclusive social and cultural make-up:

> Streaming along the street was a motley throng made up of all nationalities. The sing-song voices of girls whom respectable merchants' wives shudder to name, were calling to one another from high balconies up shadowy alleys. A fat barber was laughing hilariously at a drunken white man who had fallen into a gutter; a withered old fellow, carrying a bird in a cage, stood at the corner . . . some children were burning punk on the curbstone. (Sui Sin Far, "The Wisdom of the New" 49)

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were indigenous responses to the particular situations that prevailed in Chinatown, many of which were caused by the Chinese Exclusion Act and other forms of legislated racism" (76).

As we move into a detailed discussion of her work, we can easily see that, through the creation of counter-types, as well as the type-casting of white characters, in a counter narrative to the "yellow peril" images, Sui Sin Far presents full-fledged individuals from non-Anglo-white backgrounds who are struggling with the perceptions that white America has of them as a social and political threat.

"A Plea for the Chinaman" creates the perfect platform for Sui Sin Far's social and cultural themes. Through this piece we get a clear sense of the unmistakable political purpose of her writing. Written to the *Montreal Daily Star* on September 21, 1896, the piece is a response to the racist comments regarding the Chinese immigrant population in Canada and the rest of North America, made by members of parliament from British Columbia; these comments expose the generalized prejudice of white America, not only in the U.S., but also Canada[36]. She clearly establishes her cultural and racial connection to the subject of her piece, taking sides, just as she did in her childhood fight: "It needs a Chinaman to stand up for a Chinese cause" (192). The piece of legislation she is writing about was a tax of five hundred dollars that was proposed to be imposed on every Chinese immigrant coming into Canada: "the presence of the Chinese affects the material and moral interests of the Canadian people, that the Chinese work cheap and therefore white men cannot compete with them, that they are gamblers and grossly immoral, that they introduce disease, cost the public much money and delay the development of the country" (192-93). In her response to these racist allegations Sui Sin Far lists all the jobs the Chinese have held and the influence their work has had in the growth of the country, mainly by taking those positions white workers would never agree to take for such low

[36] One of the main comments Sui Sin far is reacting to described the Chinese immigration situation in shockingly racist terms: "No self-respecting people . . . wish to have dumped into their midst the scum of Eastern barbarism" (Sui Sin Far 195).

pay. As she goes on with her arguments, Sui Sin Far exposes the xenophobic undertones of the economic reasons given for this piece of legislation: "The Chinaman stands on his merits; if he were of no benefit to this country he would soon have no reason to wish to remain here, for you may be sure, if incapable of performing the tasks required of him, he would not be given employment, for Canadians do not employ Chinamen for love; they take them for the use they can make of them" (193).

As she moves on to the charges of immorality, Sui Sin Far cleverly overturns the cause of such immoral actions: "It is true some of the Chinamen who have been contaminated by white men and American lawyers, become swindlers and perjurers" (193). Overall, Sui Sin Far explains, the majority of the Chinese workers have to deal with their distrust of whites:

> They are somewhat cynical with regard to the honesty of white men, but that is not surprising when we consider that nearly all the white men with whom they come in contact think of nothing but squeezing money out of them by some means or other. Even the law restricting them from entering America looks as if it was got up for the sole purpose of giving unprincipled lawyers and corrupt Government officers a chance to do some boodling. (Sui Sin Far 194)

Sui Sin Far goes on to attack the practices of enforced assimilation pushed upon the Chinese population through the mission-school system, pointing out the arbitrary nature of the concept of cultural relevance and acceptability, as well as exposing the aggressive proselytizing practices of Christian missionaries: "The Chinaman may be willing to attend Sunday school and learn all that you can teach him, but I am quite certain that it never enters his head to convert you to his way of thinking" (194).

Sui Sin Far exposes the mainstream need to maintain overtly negative images of the Chinese in order to keep the immigrant population from gaining power and becoming active participants of mainstream culture. As she recounts her visit to New York's Chinatown, she makes a point to highlight the warmth, friendliness and hospitality she encountered, as she visited with families, cultural associations and the arts community. She thus dismantles the popular perception of Chinatown by juxtaposing the tale of her visit to the accounts she has heard from her white friends: "Dreadful tales had been told me of what I should meet and see there. I had been told that Chinatown was a dangerously wicked place; I had been warned that if I went in there alone I would never come out alive or sound in mind or body" (196).

In her final arguments, she tries to move beyond labels of race or nationality by offering an alternative narrative of universal humanity, in direct opposition to the racial and nativist discourses of the time: "Let us admire a clever Chinaman more than a stupid Englishman, and a bright Englishman more than a dull Chinaman" (196). Her conciliatory discourse turns out to be brief, however, as she continues on to counter the accusations made against the Chinese (that they come to the U.S. with the sole purpose of making a fortune and going back to their country) with a strong condemnation of the West's imperialistic practices: "if the Chinese come to America seeking fortune, they have learned it from the adventurers who went to China, who "after they have made their 'pile,' . . . will return to their homes—which are not in China" (197).

At the end of the piece, Sui Sin Far comes to what she believes to be the core of the cultural prejudice shown the Chinese community: a prejudice based not so much on economics, but on an outright xenophobia explained in terms of physical difference by

the racial theories that define cultural difference as superiority or inferiority in terms of physical traits: "the real and only reason for all the dislike shown the Chinese people is that they are not considered good looking by white men; . . . that the Chinese do not please our artistic taste is really at the root of all the evil there, and from it springs the other objections" (197). It is in fact the denunciation of this ethnocentric arrogance that becomes the basis of many of the political and cultural arguments Sui Sin Far lays out in her work.

"To Depict as well as I Can What I Know and See about the Chinese People in America": Sui Sin Far's Short Fiction

Guided by an urgency to explore and present complex racial and cultural matters, as well as the accurate depiction of the Chinese community, Sui Sin Far takes on the issue of interracial marriage. In order to understand the extent to which this is a thorny issue at the time she is writing, we need only to remember that by 1880, California expanded its anti-miscegenation law, which prohibited marriage between whites and African-Americans to include "Mongolians" (White-Parks, *Sui Sin Far/Edith Maude Eaton: A Literary Biography* 38). In "The Story of One White Woman Who Married a Chinese" and its sequel "Her Chinese Husband," both part of the short fiction collection *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* (1912), Sui Sin Far cleverly breaks through the already shaky boundaries of race relations to explore the depths of racist behavior and mistrust that characterized both the whites and the Chinese in their dealings with one another. It is obvious from the title that Sui Sin Far was aware that this was a dangerous topic (thus the

"one white woman," as if to not make it a generalized thought). As she plays the "what if" game with her readers, she manages to overturn the labels of "otherness," turning the white characters into the cultural outsiders.

Sui Sin Far does tread carefully as she frames the story within the possibility of a union between these two cultural worlds. Minnie, the first person narrative voice, and the *one* white woman from the title, attacks head-on on the first few lines, the reaction she anticipates her actions will create: "Why did I marry Liu Kanghi, a Chinese? Well, in the first place, because I loved him; in the second place, because I was weary of working, struggling and fighting with the world; in the third place, because my child needed a home" (Sui Sin Far 66-67). Clearly, it is revealing enough that the narrator would feel the need to justify her actions, but the fact that Sui Sin Far makes Minnie's first reason "love," seems in itself a radical racial stand.

As she recounts for the readers the misery of her life as a white middle-class wife, we learn that she finds herself out of place in this social world, due to the fact that she considers herself a rather traditional woman who does not trust women who step into the professional world and abandon their traditional roles as wives and mothers: "I did not admire clever business women" (67); we also learn that she feels neglected and humiliated by the condescending attitude of her (now ex-) husband, who, for all his work of social reform, does not know how to treat his own wife as a equal partner. If Sui Sin Far is creating a gender-traditional heroine (at least at the onset of the story) in a woman who feels that her job is taking her away from her "natural" duties as a mother, the depiction of the husband as a cheating opportunist sets the stage for the introduction of Lui Kanghi, the Chinese husband.

In a rather melodramatic way, her first meeting with Liu Kanghi, whose voice is "unusually soft for a man's" (72), happens when Minnie is about to jump from the docks with her child in her arms, after having abandoned her husband when she discovers that he was trying to get his assistant in bed. After Liu Kanghi saves her life, Minnie immediately trusts and obeys this man, with no concern for his racial background, but rather emphasizing the quality of his manhood, while curiously playing down the sexual angle in the description: "I only knew he was a man, and that I was being cared for as no one had ever cared for me since my father died" (72). It is important to point out that this soft-spoken Chinese man becomes the prototype of manhood in Minnie's eyes, set as the opposite to the bullying, big white man Minnie has left. The political dimension of this comparison becomes even clearer as Sui Sin Far overturns the "yellow peril" stereotype of the Chinese male as predator by making Minnie put her life in Liu Kangui's hands: "I did not recoil—not even at first. It may have been because he was wearing American clothes, wore his hair cut, and even to my American eyes, appeared a good-looking young man"; clearly, this assimilated version of Chinese manhood appears more palatable to a typical white woman, but her response when he offers her a home is nonetheless quite powerful: "I would rather live with Chinese than Americans" (72).

The fact that a working-class Chinese family receives Minnie and her child with open arms and offers her a job in the family business as an embroiderer, while her white friends desert her, goes a long way to dismantle the stereotypes of the Chinese community as heartless, violent and incapable of maintaining a family life. Among these people, she is nurtured not only as a woman, but also as a human being and an artist; she is able to live a peaceful and enriching existence in clear contrast to the stifling effects of

the roles offered by the white middle-class model. The overall message comes to focus: the dominant culture's oppression of women brings to question its status as a "superior" model to other cultures' social structures. It is in fact the Chinese community that offers opportunities that nurture women's development in equal terms with men.

When Liu Kanghi proposes to her, Minnie hesitates, but her need for protection helps her make her decision. Once again, Sui Sin Far is careful to create a realistic picture, as she shows the nuances of the doubt Minnie experiences due to her cultural conditioning; her decision is a liberating step, both personally and culturally, as she proudly announces it to her threatening husband:

> [he has] won me! . . . Yes, honorably and like a man. And what are you that dare sneer at one like him. For all your six feet of grossness, your small soul cannot measure up to his great one. You were unwilling to protect and care for the woman who was your wife . . . but he succored me and saved a stranger woman, treated her as a woman, with reverence and respect; . . . Now, hearing you insult him behind his back, I know, what I did not know before – that I love him." (Sui Sin Far 77).

It is worth noting that Minnie (a traditional wife within the white cultural model) is establishing with her decision a new gender paradigm, redefining the concept of femininity and masculinity to include a level of equality between the sexes that is clearly absent in the white patriarchal model. If the Chinese social structure does present some restricting roles for women in its most traditional stance, Sui Sin Far's use of racial difference gives her an opening to reshape not only gender roles, but the very concept of manhood and womanhood. As she further explains in the sequel to the story, "Her

Chinese Husband," Liu Kanghi is, indeed, the perfect man: "To my Chinese husband I could go with all my little troubles and perplexities; to him I could talk as women love to do at times, of the past and the future, the mysteries of religion, of life and death" (78). Presented as an alternative to the white model of manhood in this sequel, Liu Kanghi represents the "new man;" a man who sees his wife as an equal partner and who respects and nurtures her growth as a human being. The sharp contrast between the two models is explained in clear terms of racial difference by Minnie: "As my union with James Carson had meant misery, bitterness, and narrowness, so my union with Liu Kanghi meant, on the whole, happiness, health, and development. Yet the former, according to American ideas, had been an educated broad-minded man; the other, just an ordinary Chinaman" (79)[37].

The fact that Liu Kanghi is dead at the beginning of "Her Chinese Husband" shows the precariousness of their situation, and it highlights the undercurrent of violence that plagued racial relations at the time. As she accepts her new role as the "American wife of a humble Chinaman in America" (77), Minnie is aware of the difficult path of cultural survival and conflict ahead of them. Far from giving in to the "Love conquers all" cultural cliché, Sui Sin Far takes pains to present a marriage that is not idealized as

[37] Sean McCann sees Liu Kanghi as the embodiment of patriarchal power (and thus a sign of Sui Sin Far's gender traditionalism), "the very image of fast-disappearing Victorian ideas of manly character" (83). I would argue, however that, although it is true that he seems to fulfill Minnie's fantasies of a more gentlemanly husband, Liu Kanghi also disrupts the patriarchal model of separate spheres by becoming highly domestic—as McCann himself acknowledges—in many instances simply taking on the traditional role of the wife by cooking, cleaning and assisting Minnie with her embroidery, all of which I see as a sign of a more modern, more fluid model replacing the Victorian limiting structure. It is in fact ironic that McCann reads some of Liu Kanghi's more domestic actions as a sign of emasculation, thus undermining his own point vis-a-vis Sui Sin Far's traditional gender views. What makes this discussion even more fascinating is that depending on the gender of the critic, Liu Kanghi's behavior is interpreted either as a sign of symbolic castration or as the embodiment of gender liberation. Thus, Elizabeth Ammons reads this interracial union of Minnie and Liu Kanghi (much like myself) as a critique of white political structures on the part of Sui Sin Far, who sees white middle class feminism as a "male rather than a female political project" (115). In contrast to the "arrogance" and "class bias" of the white patriarchal model, Liu Kanghi is in fact presented, according to Ammons, as beyond gender boundaries (115).

the blissful union of two races, but as one that presents the complexities of their precarious cultural and political situation: “There was also on Liu Kanghi’s side an acute consciousness that, though belonging to him as a wife, yet in a sense I was not his, but of the dominant race, which claimed, even while it professed to despise me” (81). The ethnocentric hypocrisy of the “superior” civilization as well as the corrupted nature of its institutions are further questioned by Liu Kanghi: “‘The American people think higher. If only more of them lived up to what they thought, the Chinese would not be so confused in trying to follow their leadership’”(82). As the story ends, the readers discover that Liu Kanghi was shot in the head by some Chinese who “just as [. . .] some Americans . . . are opposed to all progress” (83). What could be read as Sui Sin Far’s attempt at balancing the scales for her white audience, is rather her painstakingly detailed portrayal of the violence that the abusive practices on the part of the dominant culture help generate in the culture that is being subjugated. I would argue that is not so much that Sui Sin Far “kills” Liu Kanghi because she cannot imagine the possibility of a happy interracial marriage; but rather that she is calling the readers attention to the hostility that such a marriage would encounter.

In contrast to the conflicts explored in “The Story of One White Woman Who Married a Chinese” and “Her Chinese Husband,” “The Americanization of Pau Tsu” and “The Wisdom of the New” both deal with the effects of assimilation, either self-imposed or “encouraged” by the dominant culture. Regardless of an initial optimistic picture of harmony and the potential fulfillment of the triumphant dream of immigrant success that both stories begin with, Sui Sin Far moves beyond the myth to explore the unnatural

psychological and cultural pressures placed on the individual to be assimilated, always resulting in conflict and, at times, tragedy.

In "The Americanization of Pau Tsu," Wan Lin Fo, a "well-educated Chinese youth" seems to embody the success of the assimilation tactics of the white culture. A successful businessman, he moves both within Chinese and American social circles. However, it is this eagerness to fit in with the structures of cultural domination that will create the main conflict in the story, as he pushes his wife to assimilate against her desire to do so. In a narrative twist, Sui Sin Far toys with the readers' expectations by questioning this apparent success by representing the pain and suffering it causes on those who are being victimized by the process. Such a conflict moves the readers beyond the "yellow peril" iconography and into the painful results of their own mainstream expectations.

As he awaits his future wife's arrival from China, Wan Lin Fo betrays his infatuation with all things American, including the model of white middle-class womanhood. Adah Raymond, the niece of his white benefactress, embodies this model for the Americanized Wan Lin Fo: "Every time I come to this house, I see you, so good and beautiful, dispensing tea and happiness to all around, and I think, could I have in my home and ever by my side one who is also both good and beautiful, what a felicitous life mine would be! (. . .) When [Pau Tsu] comes I will have her learn to speak like you—and be like you" (84-85). Thus within the romantic frame of a love triangle motif, Sui Sin Far poses a deeper cultural question: what is the cost of assimilation to the identity of those sacrificed. Lin Fo's desire to transform Pau Tsu into a Chinese version of Adah sets the stage for the struggle for cultural survival that ensues.

Displacement becomes a central theme from Pau Tsu's arrival: "The apartments he had prepared for her were furnished in American style, and her bird-like little figure in Oriental dress seemed rather out of place" (85-86). Far from allowing herself to be victimized by her new surroundings, Pau Tsu boldly asserts her cultural identity in this hostile environment: "It was not long, however, before she brought forth from the great box . . . screens and fans, vases, panels, Chinese matting. . . . With these she transformed the American flat into a Chinese bower" (86). Her husband's disappointment at her lack of eagerness to reinvent herself as American right after her arrival greatly disconcerts Pau Tsu, who cannot understand Lin Fo's insistence to forego his own cultural identity, let alone hers, emphasizing the powerful impact of cultural displacement: "She could not understand . . . why it was required of her to learn the stranger's language and adopt their ways. Her husband's tongue was the same as her own . . . It puzzled her to be always seeing this and hearing that—sights and sounds which as yet had no meaning to her" (87). Lin Fo even buys Pau Tsu an American dress, the symbol of absolute assimilation and a final denial of Pau Tsu's Chinese identity.

Lin Fo's assimilation fervor reaches its peak as he forces his wife to be seen by a male doctor in spite of his wife's refusal. It is Adah, albeit a white woman, who understands Pau Tsu's delicate cultural position, creating the possibility on the part of Sui Sin Far to use the theme of universal sisterhood—an understanding of women's conditions which transcends national or cultural borders—to explore deeper racial themes: "I honestly believe that the examination was worse than death to that little Chinese woman. The modesty of generations of maternal ancestors was crucified as I rolled down the neck of her silk tunic" (89). Pau Tsu's debilitating condition symbolizes

the imminent death of her cultural identity at the hands of her husband, who has become an instrument of the dominant culture's assimilation force. It is, however, at this crucial point that Pau Tsu's submission to her husband's cultural demands comes to a breaking point. In an ironic narrative twist, Pau Tsu makes use of divorce, a thoroughly American legal tool, in order to free herself from the cultural tyranny imposed upon her by her husband.

Making use once again of the narrative of trans-national sisterhood, Sui Sin Far turns Adah into a cultural interpreter for a second time, yet she allows the gender matters to take a back seat to the theme of enforced assimilation: "Oh, you stupid! . . . You're a Chinaman, but you're almost as stupid as an American. Your cruelty consisted in forcing Pau Tsu to be – what nature never intended her to be – an American woman; to adapt and adopt in a few months' time all our ways and customs" (91). However, even if Adah becomes sympathetic with Pau Tsu's plight against the patriarchal tactics underlying Lin Fo's demands, Sui Sin Far makes clear that Adah is still a member of the dominant culture and thus complicit in the overall assimilation agenda: "As to Americanizing Pau Tsu – that will come in time" (92).

"The Americanizing of Pau Tsu" ends with conflict resolution, as Lin Fo begins to understand that he must tone down his zeal for acculturation. Thus the critique of self-imposed Americanization is presented on a lighter note, making Pau Tsu the embodiment of rebellion both against gender and racial-cultural manipulation. "The Wisdom of the New," on the other hand, presents a decidedly more somber approach to these cultural themes, as the forces of assimilation ultimately bring tragedy. A longer piece, "The Wisdom of the New" explores the catastrophic consequences of assimilation when

children become victims in the process, a recurrent theme in Sui Sin Far's work, as well as a reversal of the fear the cultural mainstream displayed towards the Chinese immigrant population.

From its starting point, this story offers a view of the conflicting nature of the myth of America as the land of opportunity, showing both the attraction and the destructive possibilities of such a dream; old Li Wang explains this paradox to Wou Sankwei, ironically fueling the desire for the myth in Wou Sankwei's heart: "For every cent that a man makes here, he can make one hundred there . . .[but if] one learns how to make gold, one also learns how to lose it" (42). If this conversation offers a cultural frame for the causes of immigration (as opposed to the "yellow peril" images), it also foreshadows the theme of loss, both symbolic and literal.

Set up in a series of vignettes, the story explores the gradually destructive effects of cultural assimilation. In the second short section, we find Wou Sankwei after seven years of work as a bookkeeper in San Francisco. Although his economic and social situation appear comfortable enough, we find out later that he was forced to start as a laundryman, a position certainly below his intellectual capabilities and his social status in China, where he was the son of Government official. It is also a comment by Sui Sin Far against the "yellow peril" images of Chinese immigrants as unskilled and socially corrupt. Further countering the "yellow peril" construct, Sui Sin Far presents in Sankwei a man whose motivation goes beyond making money and into a quest for personal improvement: "Self-improvement had been the object of his ambition, even more than the acquirement of a fortune" (43). Sui Sin Far explores once again this theme of "improvement" as a symbolic parallel to greed; very much like Lin Fo, Sankwei is too

eager in his acquisition of culture, reinventing himself as American. As in "The Americanizing of Pau Tsu," this culturally ambitious Chinese young man moves comfortably within American circles; he also sends for his wife, whom he married weeks before coming to the U.S. and left behind in China for seven years. Once again, the meeting between the two sets the stage for the central narrative conflict, a struggle between cultural survival and assimilation. Pau Lin represents everything Sankwei has left behind. The awkward moment of their first meeting (they do not recognize each other) hints at the difficulties of their future life together.

The conflict, like in the previous story, is complicated by the presence of the white American female friend, also named Adah[38]. Like the Adah from the previous story, this Adah seems to offer a romantic (and unpractical) narrative, her comments usually showing her pity for the alien, foreign wife, creating a suspicion of jealousy in the wife's mind. The triangle motif becomes a symbol of the tug-of-war between two cultural forces claiming Sankwei: preservation of cultural identity and assimilation. However, what complicates this story further is the introduction of a child into the assimilation narrative. The fact that Sankwei makes decisions about the child's cultural future without

[38] It is worth noting that Sui Sin Far gives the character of the white young woman the same name in both stories, creating a type in her readers' minds—an ironic reversal of the Chinese types readers were probably used to encountering in popular fiction. It is also worth noting that, while the white characters in both stories are rather similar (romantic young woman, benevolent older woman with no cultural understanding), Sui Sin Far takes pains to create personality nuances in her Chinese characters, emphasizing an intentional narrative contrast between the typifying of white characters and the careful delineation of Chinese and Chinese American characters. There is also a clear understanding by these well-intentioned white characters that the only Chinese worth dealing with is the assimilated Chinese. Not unlike Adah's arrogant cultural comments in "The Americanization of Pau Tsu," Mrs. Dean's reaction to Pau Lin's refusal to take her son to an American school betrays the dominating political agenda at the core of her benevolence: "Here was a man who had benefited and profited by living in America, anxious to have his son receive the benefits of a Western education—and here was this man's wife opposing him with her ignorance and hampering him with her unreasonable jealousy" (52-53). Sui Sin Far trains her readers to see the cultural nuances the white characters miss; by giving her readers the first vignette, in which Sankwei promises his mother to return to China to help his family, we are forced to see Sankwei's decisions as a betrayal to his cultural roots, rather than as enlightened.

consulting his wife becomes the core of the discussion of enforced assimilation. If Sankwei's attitude depicts, on the surface, the workings of a patriarchal structure, most importantly, it also reveals the tactics of the dominant structure's assimilating practices. Elizabeth Ammons points out that the story "records the pain of the Chinese woman in America who is silenced both in the dominant culture and within the Chinese American community" (113). I would qualify this point, however, in that it is precisely the Americanized element of the Chinese American community that ultimately creates an unnatural unbalancing of the social and cultural structures; this imbalance is often created by the Chinese man who has succumbed to the assimilation tactics of the dominant culture, forgetting the connections to his own. Thus Pau Lin's intense aversion towards white culture seems to be proportional to the intensity of her husband's demands for her (and her son's) absolute cultural immersion and assimilation, and creates the battleground for the war to be fought between the two over the future of their child, the site of their opposing cultural visions.

As this cultural war turns fiercer, what was a light treatment of the theme of jealousy in "The Americanizing of Pau Tsu" is here at the core of the conflict. The feeling of betrayal due to her husband's close friendship with the white woman prompts a cultural and racial crisis in Pau Lin: "oh! The humiliation and shame of bearing children to a man who looked up to another woman—and a woman of another race—as a being above the common uses of women" (51). When Pau Lin loses her second child, she automatically blames the white woman, which makes her resolve to "save" her firstborn boy from the destructive force of white culture even firmer: "Sooner would I, O heart of my heart, that the light of thine eyes were also quenched, than that thou shouldst <sic> be

contaminated with the wisdom of the new" (52). Ironically, it is the white woman who makes sense of the conflict (not unlike the previous Adah), invoking once again a trans-national sisterhood: "I do not believe there is any real difference between the feelings of a Chinese wife and an American wife. . . . A woman is a woman with intuitions and perceptions, whether Chinese or American, whether educated or uneducated" (53). The gender matters become, once again, complicated by the cultural and racial implications of Sankwei's assimilated behavior: "Sankwei has some puzzles to solve (. . .) when he tries to live two lives—that of a Chinese and that of an American" (54). At its core, the discussion is not only about what the Chinese immigrants must learn by assimilating to American culture (a rather negative proposition in Sui Sin Far's eyes), but also about how to deal with the cultural loss and personal tragedy that are sure to follow; it is also a question of what the dominant culture must learn, even those well-intentioned members, about the damaging effects of enforcing their cultural model on others, destroying their identities in the process; as Adah confesses to Sankwei in a moment of cultural lucidity quite similar to one experienced by the previous story's Adah, the internalization of the assimilation narrative only serves to exacerbate the already fragile cultural position of immigrants in a new cultural landscape: "You are becoming too Americanized. My aunt encourages you to become so, and she is a good woman, with the best and highest of motives; but we are all liable to make mistakes, and it is a mistake to try and make a Chinese man into an American—if he has a wife who is to remain as she always has been" (57).

The fact that the shockingly dramatic ending comes during Chinatown's Harvest Moon Festival makes Pau Lin's murder of her child a symbolic sacrifice, as well as a

powerful sign of cultural self-assertion against domination. The story's final tragic irony is that the lack of communication between husband and wife has now become the lack of understanding between two cultural impulses (rebellion vs. assimilation); just as Sankwei is gradually more willing to comply to his wife's desire to send the boy to a Chinese as well as an American school, Paul Lin's desire to be heard about the matter stops, as she decides to take more radical action. The eeriness of the final scene of domestic bliss becomes more horrifying as we learn that Pau Lin has killed her son to save him from becoming a victim of assimilation.

The choice of such a dramatic ending to this story, as opposed to the lighter treatment of a similar conflict in "The Americanization of Pau Tsu," shows Sui Sin Far's apprehensions about the welfare and cultural survival of the children of the immigrants who make cultural decisions that ultimately transcend individual choice and involve the lives of their offspring. Sui Sin Far's concern with immigrant or bi-racial children stems, of course, from her own cultural background and becomes a central theme in much of her work. In "The Story of One Chinese Woman Who Married a Chinese," Minnie voices the author's main concern regarding children of interracial couples in an environment that is decidedly and violently hostile to the mix of both cultures: "as [my child] 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?" (Sui Sin Far 97).

Connected to this major theme is the discussion of techniques of assimilation as carried out by the institutionalized racism of the mission-school system. "Pat and Pan," "A Chinese Boy-Girl" and "The Sugar-Cane Baby" all explore the abusive tactics

employed by the dominant culture to achieve a total loss of culture and absolute assimilation of these Chinese and Chinese-American children. Reversing the "yellow peril" stereotype that depicts the Chinese as thieves and child-abductors, Sui Sin Far creates the counter-type of the missionary-school official, generally a woman, engaging in child-theft under the guise of education. The action of physically removing the child from his or her home becomes the physical representation of the stealing of culture and identity by enforced assimilation.

"Pat and Pan" starts with an idyllic picture of racial harmony in the middle of Chinatown: "They lay there, in the entrance to the joss house, sound asleep in each other's arms. Her tiny face was hidden upon his bosom and his white, upturned chin rested upon her black, rosetted head" (160). Purposefully left unexplained in the first lines, the scene seems to involve two lovers, their peaceful sleep a testimony that harmony between cultures might indeed be possible. The clarification of the potential confusion comes in the second paragraph, rather tellingly, through the narrative point of view of a Mission woman who walks by and sees the unusual scene, thus breaking the illusion of racial harmony: "yes, it was a white boy and a little Chinese girl; he, about five, she no more than three years old" (160). As the serpent in the Garden of Eden, the Mission woman brings discord into the children's innocent world. Tempting them with a bag of lichis, she soon discovers the boy's lack of interest in the white world as well as the devotion the two children have for one another: the girl feeds the boy before eating herself (a revision of the Adam and Eve story.)

As the Mission woman inquires about the boy's situation, the readers learn not only that he has been accepted as their own by members of Chinatown, but that he can

only speak Chinese. As an instrument of the dominant culture, Anna Harrison, however, cannot allow such an "unnatural" occurrence. Thus, Pat's second temptation comes not in the form of lichis, but rather of a white education. His commitment to his Chinese friend is unshakable at this point; he accepts the proposition only if Pan is also allowed to go to school. Here is where their symbolic separation starts, as the children are seated in different areas of the classroom. If the context of education seems harmless enough, especially humorous in the irony that Pan learns faster than Pat (the object of the teacher's tactics), the brutality of the system becomes clear in the caning of both children into submission after Pat decides to skip class and the girl covers for him.

The paradoxical effects of the assimilation tactics used by the Mission school are further explored with Pan's apparent eagerness to recite Bible verses, repeating "word by word the verse *desired to be heard*" (163, my italics). It is worth noting that Pan is culturally savvy enough to give her white audience what it expects, creating the illusion that she is being assimilated, civilized and converted. By the end of the story, however, her cultural identity remains intact, and it is Pat who has been culturally transformed by the system, the perfect victim of missionary education. After Pat is adopted by a white family, the final separation between the two children becomes permanent, their connection forever lost. The next time Pat and Pan see each other, the cultural damage is irreparable; distant and indifferent, Pat has learned to ignore and scorn the culture that once was his own. Pan makes a profound statement as she captures the true purpose of Mission education—the permanent removal of his Chinese identity: "Pat, you have forgot to remember" (165); in fact, Pat's rejection of Pan only brings into relief the extent to which he has been assimilated. In one final irony, Sui Sin Far challenges the readers'

emotional reaction of pity towards the rejected Chinese girl. Pan's musings dismantle all cultural types: "Poor Pat! . . . He Chinese no more!" (165). It is Pat who should be pitied because of his loss; after all, it is not Pan's sense of cultural identity that has been annihilated.

"A Chinese Boy-Girl" presents yet another example of the forced cultural assimilation of children, and the resistance to this colonialist practice. Its lighter tone and the humorous thematic exploration of the disturbing theme of family devastation may explain why it is the only story by Sui Sin Far that saw publication in *Century Magazine*. Not unlike "Pat and Pan," we are given an ideal setting of multicultural harmony, threatened by the Missionary official, the only source of cultural discord. Ku Yum, like Pat and Pan in the previous story, is the embodiment of resistance to cultural assimilation, which the child takes to its extremes. Toying with the teacher's expectations, Ku Yum becomes obedient, only to disrupt the norms of behavior dictated by white culture. Artful and cunning, this tiny trickster figure exploits the assimilation principles of the dominant culture to disrupt and create chaos. The light tone of the story gives way to a more somber one when the Mission officers' tactics become abusive, breaking up the family unit and forcing the child to live with a white family, one more shameless example of legalized child-theft. The fact that the Mission teacher feels guilty about causing such a devastation of the family structure serves to underscore the monstrosity of her actions:

> The question as to whether, after all, it was right, under the circumstances, to deprive a father of the society of his child, and a child of the love and care of a parent, disturbed her mind, morning, noon and night. What had previously

seemed her distinct duty no longer appeared so, and she began to wish with all her heart that she had not interfered in the matter. (158)

Although the guilt seems to humanize Miss Mason somehow, it is the reaction she receives from the Chinatown's population that helps stress the betrayal of the Chinese community by the teacher, giving more reason for this community's distrust of mainstream anglo-white culture and its inhumane tactics: "Where formerly the teacher had met with smiles and pleased greetings, she now beheld averted faces and downcast eyes, and her school had within a week dwindled from twenty-four scholars to four" (158). As the members of Chinatown rally together to help hide Ku Yum after the child runs away and comes back home, it becomes clear that these tactics do not necessarily work, and that the Chinese community exists as a legitimate social reality parallel to the white social structure, functioning on its own with or without the whites' interference.

In the final encounter between teacher and pupil the central plot twist is finally revealed to Miss Mason, as well as to the readers, who Sui Sin Far has strung along with the Mission teacher. Ku Yum's father explains that the child is in fact a boy, and that he has dressed him as a girl to protect him from harm. The father's words to Miss Mason illuminate the outright resistance to the dominant culture's interference: "Perhaps you speak too much about Ku Yum alleady . . . Ku Yum be my child. I bling him up as I please" (159). As he proceeds to explain that the cross-dressing was keeping the child from the evil spirits that had taken his other sons (who are dead), it is clear that the father's concern had little to do with the dominant culture. It is at this point that Miss Mason has one of those moments of cultural lucidity that Sui Sin Far confers onto some of her white characters, perhaps to give them a redeeming quality, or simply to use them

as a mouthpiece for her final political statements, thus forcing the readers to pay close attention: “Your father, by passing you off as a girl, thought to keep an evil spirit away from you; but just by that means he brought another, and one which nearly took you from him too” (190). What is different about Miss Mason’s cultural epiphany is that she seems to understand, rather than dismiss as superstition, the father’s actions, describing herself as another source of evil in a cosmogonic narrative that is at odds with her own Christian narrative.

It is perhaps the presentation of a more sympathetic white character that made this story more appealing to the editors of *Century*, a magazine that, as we have seen in previous chapters, had a tendency to encourage the glossing over of deeper political or cultural questions. Once again, by using a gender discussion on the narrative surface, in this case through the cross-dressing motif, Sui Sin Far is able to address themes of racial and cultural prejudice that would otherwise seem unpalatable to her white audience. Not unlike in “The Americanizing of Pau Tsu” and “The Wisdom of the New,” Sui Sin Far creates a thematic layering that requires a deeper, more careful cultural reading.

Within the overall theme of child-theft explored in the stories discussed so far, there is a common thread that reveals and exposes the ethnocentric arrogance of the dominant culture’s legal and religious institutions that practice abuse towards children, families and entire communities under the guise of assimilation and acculturation as positive civilizing tools. “The Sugar-Cane Baby,” published in *Good Housekeeping* in May 1910, offers yet another variation of this theme, but with a more unsettling ending. As she often does, Sui Sin Far presents a harmonious natural setting that is disrupted by the unwelcome white Missionary presence. In this case, Sui Sin Far transports her readers

to an unidentified Asian locale, creating a powerful contrast between the colorful warmth of the farm and the coldness and whiteness of the Sisters of Mercy's physical and symbolic presence, the religious arm of colonization. This contrast generates the main conflict in the story, as the culturally isolated nuns are unable to understand the harmonious coexistence between the human and the natural worlds in the context of the culture that they are colonizing. When they find a baby in a sugar-cane field, lying close to a snake, while her mother is at work on the fields, the nuns immediately see in this a sign of barbarism and lack of maternal instincts: "Oh, these mothers, these mothers! What love have they for their children when they can leave them like this?" (259). The Sisters' reaction to the situation underscores their lack of cultural understanding and the arrogance of their ethnocentric view of the world. As the readers find out later, the snake is there to take care of the child while the mother works in the plantation fields, another cultural irony that shows the nuns' cultural arrogance (and ignorance). As they take the child away—in fact kidnapping him—they create the central conflict rather than solve it. The child is placed in a Mission house room, "in a white crib in a long white room full of other little white cribs" (260). The white uniformity of the room contrasts with the vivid colors of the outside world, clearly symbolizing the deadening effect of the colonizing presence. This effect is explored further as the child becomes ill and on the brink of death after he is placed in the Mission house. Unlike Mission officers in some of Sui Sin Far's other stories, these nuns do not seem to feel any guilt for causing the child's condition after stealing him from his mother, which is an indictment of the cruel tactics of the Christian institutions. Although the nuns allow the child to be reunited with his mother, after they are pestered to do so by a journalist who is researching the story, the readers

are left with the unpleasant feeling that the only reason the reunion has occurred at all is because of the Sisters' fear of negative publicity. The child and mother are reunited in a room full of cribs, with tens of other children who have also been taken away from their families. The horror of this awareness of institutionalized abuse far supercedes the happiness of this single reunion.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of the theme of government-sponsored child-theft appears in "In the Land of the Free." Very much like "The Sugar-Cane Baby," this story deals with the brutal separation of parent and child and the institutions' obstinacy and their unwillingness to solve a problem they have created. Unlike the previous story, however, "In the Land of the Free" does not have a happy ending.

The story starts in a tone of optimism, opening to the possibilities of a new life in a mythical version of America, which is ironically referenced in the title of the story. As the mother and her new son arrive from China to be reunited with their family in America, the anticipation is interrupted quite dramatically by immigration officers, who take the son away from his parents in an absurd bureaucratic turn; the immigration officer's explanation of this technicality makes the situation the more surreal: "I'm afraid . . . that we cannot allow the boy to go ashore. There is nothing in the papers that you have shown us – your wife's papers and your own – having any bearing upon a child" (94)[39]. Once again, the readers witness the devastating scene of the forceful separation of a child from his parents, a de facto legalized child-theft. The happiness of the father at seeing his wife and their new son quickly turns to horror as the child is brutally snatched from his parents' arms. To further emphasize the sad irony of the title, the narrative voice

[39] Legally, immigration officers could take the offspring away if the parents could not prove that it was their son or daughter.

does not spare any anger in an otherwise straightforward tone of factual presentation, "Thus was the law of the land complied with" (94), clearly questioning a legal system that would force the dissolution of the family unit based on technical minutiae. This sentiment is mirrored later in the husband's words to his wife, as they still hope to recover their son (after months of waiting), desperately clinging to the myth of America as the "land of the free": "there is no need to grieve so; he will soon gladden you again. There cannot be any law that would keep a child from its mother" (96). That the readers know the existence of such a law only makes this statement the more rhetorically effective and the U.S. legal practices the more unnecessarily cruel.

Sui Sin Far clearly wants her readers to feel the parents' sorrow, anger and disbelief as they gradually discover the possibility that their child might never return, simply because of a bureaucratic machine precisely put in place to annihilate culture, separate families and assimilate the immigrant population by whatever means at hand. Thus, as the parents run out of options and hire a lawyer who promises to help them, the readers can already sense what might happen. For all his "solicitous" concern, the lawyer cannot be trusted. Sui Sin Far has trained her readers well so they can fully appreciate that the Chinese couple's emotional welfare is far from this lawyer's mind. As it dawns on the mother, it dawns on the readers as well, that his true intention is to scam the family out of their possessions, simply, as the mother notes, like any other white man: "You not one hundred man good; you just common white man" (99). The desperation of the mother's actions, as she gives the lawyer all her heirlooms in order to get her child back, only underscores the cruelty of the lawyer's scamming tactics, to the point that he feels a tinge of remorse, though not enough to stop him from taking what they have to offer: "He

was not a sentimental man; but something within him arose against accepting such a payment for his services" (99).

When the mother and child are finally reunited after ten months of bureaucratic standstill, the damage proves irreparable. Not unlike the Sisters in "The Sugar-Cane Baby," the nun's lack of compassion is glaring: "He had been rather difficult to manage at first and had cried much for his mother; 'but children so soon forget, and after a month he seemed quite at home and played around as bright as a bird'" (101). Far from showing any concern about her rather un-Christian practices, the nun proudly announces the absolute success of their assimilation tactics: making a child forget his identity, culture, and even his family. In order to illustrate her political point more clearly, Sui Sin Far devises a powerful final scene: as the boy sees his mother, he hides from her and screams "Go 'way, go 'way!" (101).

Like much of her work, this story dramatizes Sui Sin Far's denunciation of the systematic devastation of culture and community by the dominant culture, under the guise of an arrogant ethnocentric philosophy of civilization and conversion of "inferior" cultures. Far from masking her political message for the audience, Sui Sin Far seemed aware of her cultural role from a very early age and never wavered in her determination to expose institutionalized government-sponsored racism and the popular mainstream culture that helped carry it on.

Chapter IV
Revising Cultural History:
The Daughters of Hawai'i & the Precarious Business of "Preservation" of Culture

> "This is Hawai'i, once the most fragile and precious of Sacred Places, now transformed by the American behemoth into a dying land. Only a whispering spirit remains." (Haunani-kay Trask 19)

As part of an anti-colonial discourse dated from only a decade ago (1993), Haunani-kay Trask's words in *From a Native Daughter. Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* reflect the continuum of American cultural history as an imperial force and colonizer of indigenous cultures. They simultaneously suggest the rejection of such practices—even if forced underground—by these communities, and their struggle for cultural ownership. Within the context of colonial and anti-colonial narratives, Hawai'i presents an especially intriguing case. The dynamics I have been exploring throughout this project are also visible in this ongoing and contemporary example. Although the discussion in this chapter deals with material culture, my intention is to present the continuum of cultural history as it involves indigenous communities and their struggle for cultural survival. The cultural environment in Hawai'i not only involves various tactics of territorial and political takeover by the U.S., which culminated with the overthrow of Queen Lili'uokalani in 1893 and the annexation of Hawaii in 1898. One must also consider the long-lasting results of that takeover: the suppression of indigenous culture and its recreation for the sake of a flourishing tourism industry.

Hawai'i became the symbol of the exotic, the embodiment of "paradise" at the service of the U.S. economic and tourist whim. Hawai'i's indigenous community's struggle

for cultural survival parallels mainland histories in which a reconstructed narrative was used to silence narratives of cultural identity of colonized communities. As we have seen in chapters I and II, Humishuma attempted to insert a counter-hegemonic voice in behalf of Native American peoples and Mena attempted to do the same for Mexican indigenous communities.

As indigenous Hawaiian cultural critic Paul Lyons explains, a distinction must be made between the "preservation" of culture, "largely a question of museums and monuments," and the "perpetuation" of culture, "with culture as live, ongoing, developing and LIVED" (e-mail conversation, Wednesday 9/28/2005 4:12 p.m.) This distinction allows us to clarify the political and cultural tactics of colonizing forces when they reshape and reinvent Hawaiian culture to suit their needs. The tourist economy and romantic conceptions of edenic, pre-contact landscapes result in a false, constructivist cultural "preservation," not "perpetuation."

The Daughters of Hawai'i's work of cultural preservation mirrors this history of the battle for cultural control and ownership. In November 1903, a group of women—Emma Smith Dillingham, Cornelia Hall Jones, Anne Alexander Dickey, Lucinda Clark Severance, Sarah Coan Waters, Anna Matilda Paris and Ellen Armstrong Weaver—started their cultural club "to perpetuate the memory and spirit of old Hawai'i and to preserve the nomenclature and correct pronunciation of the Hawaiian language" (*Hawaii* 59). All seven women were descendants of missionaries to Hawai'i, "concerned about the decline of the Hawaiian culture that they were witnessing" (*Hawaii* 59). Reflected in their mission statement is the ethnographic desire of the dominant culture to "preserve" what it

is destroying, to palliate the effect of total annihilation[40]. Very much like the Vanishing American construct that prompted Humishuma's ethnographic work of collecting the traditional stories of her elders, the Daughters of Hawai'i recognized the devastating effects of their ancestors' colonial presence; and very much like Humishuma, these women accepted the seemingly inevitable fate of the indigenous Hawaiian culture to disappear into oblivion under the weight of a "superior" and "civilized" presence.

The fact that they were all descendants of missionaries complicates the act of cultural preservation as it lies on the hands of the colonizers and their appropriation of the indigenous culture, as well as the power to redefine it. These women's cultural work was geared towards "saving" a culture thought to be on the brink of extinction, especially after the bans on religious and cultural rituals and practices that had forced much of the active culture as it was lived by the indigenous communities to the underground. The cultural risk that their work ran, and still does today, is that it turns a live and thriving culture into an artifact. Real culture, as it is lived, is forced underground, while cultural "preservers" such as the Daughters of Hawai'i, create a version of culture that responds directly to their own fantasies of loss and cultural control, reducing culture to tourist attraction.

The Daughters of Hawai'i's work thus embodies to perfection the conflicting nature of cultural preservation. On the one hand, preservation requires the transmission of culture free from adulteration; on the other, it can include the perpetuation of myths

[40] As William R. Castle, Jr., grandson of an Eighth Missionary Company businessman states in his 1913 *Hawai'i Past and Present*: "It is a question of only a few generations, before the Hawaiians . . . will be only a memory. In many ways, this disappearance of the race is sad, for the Hawaiians are a people with a past that is often noble. In spite of their weaknesses and their follies they are very lovable" (Doherty 147). The tone of condescension clearly betrays the arrogance of the colonizer as he surveys the loss of an entire culture in rather light terms.

generated by the dominant culture for political and economic purposes—myths meant to fulfill the taste for the exotic of the dominant culture. On the one hand, a powerful possibility of self-representation exists; on the other, there is potential for a feeding of narratives of colonial fantasies and fears. In the end, what makes the Daughters' work of cultural preservation so fascinating is that it continues, in all its political confusion, to this day. Even though in its inception, the group consisted of seven non-Native Hawaiian women, during my visit to their headquarters, Leilani Maguire made a point of showing me the portraits of all chairwomen after 1903, some of which were native Hawaiian. Today, memberships are given depending on proven Hawaiian ancestry: "In order to be a member of Daughters of Hawai`i, a woman must be directly descended from a person who lived in Hawai`i prior to 1880. Membership is presently about 1,400. The Society has been assisted since 1986 by a support group known as the Calabash Cousins. Membership to this group is open to anyone interested in supporting the Daughters' purposes" (www.daughtersofhawaii.com). Although the terms are still somewhat vague and based on residency rather than bloodline, there is a clear effort to legitimize the group's own Hawaiian ancestry.

The organization creates a narratological continuum of forced or encouraged assimilation *and* preservation, the terms of which are defined by the dominant culture, as well as a history of cultural resistance that is as strong today as it was in 1903. The Daughters of Hawai'i's efforts to take control over their own history is evident in their collective autobiography *Nā Lani Kaumaka. Daughters of Hawai'i. A Century of Historic Preservation* (2005). This is a text seeped in cultural tension, highlighted by the struggles for narrative control between chairman Leilani Maguire and author Barbara Del Piano. I

witnessed this tension as it unfolded during the text's drafting and revising process. I visited Honolulu and talked with Leilani Maguire in 2004, and later I studied a copy of the manuscript which contained Maguire's notes and responses to Del Piano's writing.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how the work of cultural preservation done by the Daughters of Hawai'i since 1903 affects the group's mission in terms of its confused political and cultural identity. *Nā Lani Kaumaka. Daughters of Hawai'i. A Century of Historic Preservation* is a fascinating example of cultural reinvention, but also self-reinvention by (mostly) white women, descendants of the Protestant missionaries and businessmen who threatened to end a sovereign culture, as they took over a sovereign kingdom. The text reveals the Daughters' urgency in revising their own actions, which some still consider appropriation of culture, and presenting them in a more positive light. The narrative is presented as cultural continuation, rather than exploitation. At the same time, the textual tensions in *Nā Lani Kaumaka* mirror the anxieties of colonial contact and the struggle for ownership of culture. The subtleties of the tension in the textual dialogue between author and editor represent the cultural strain of a colonial exchange and the political stakes of self-representation and control.

Hawai'i: From Colonial Violence to Exotic "Paradise"

Since 1903, the Daughters of Hawai'i have been participants of a history of colonialism that has threatened the integrity of indigenous Hawaiian culture. The 1893 takeover of Hawai'i by the U.S., fronted by pineapple and sugarcane magnates, culminated with the betrayal and overthrowing of Queen Lili'uokalani, who was taken

prisoner in her own palace for nine months. The U.S. government then proceeded to pillage and exploit territory and culture. The forced assimilation of indigenous cultures in the mainland had been repeated for the Hawaiian people from first contact: through missionary schools and institutions, they were forbidden the use of their native language, practice of religious rituals, such as hula, and sacred gatherings. It was not until King Kamehameha III, in a clear gesture of defiance, revived hula dance and "abolished all the puritanical laws in his kingdom except those dealing with theft and murder" in 1832, that a culture that had remained underground was brought back to the forefront of cultural pride (Doherty 62).

By the early 20th century tourism began to be seen as a source of income—not so much for the indigenous population, but rather for the non-native Hawaiian empresarios. Once Hawai'i was opened to the mainland and the world as an exotic escape to paradise in which land and natural resources were exploited, in the 40's and 50's, its cultural identity became commodified, split between what was lived and experienced by the indigenous communities and the official version of exotic Hawai'i – the land of Hula girls and brave warriors of a long-gone past, both images easily obtainable on postcards or posters visitors could take home. This process of commodification of culture is what Haunani-Kay Trask describes in sexual and gender terms as the "prostitution of Hawai'ian culture" ("Tourism & the Prostitution of Hawai'ian Culture" 23): "an image of escape from the rawness and violence of daily American life, … Hawai'i is 'she', the western image of the Native 'female' in her magical allure" (21). Hotel employees are given a modicum of authority by being called "hotel historians" and are "stationed in-

house to soothe the visitors' stay with the pablum of invented myths and tales of the 'primitive'" (23). Trask makes the point clear:

> everything in Hawai'i can be yours, that is, you the tourist, the Non-Native, the visitor. The place, the people, the culture, even our identity as a 'Native' people are for sale (24).

As Christin J. Mamiya points out "it is not simply the locations that are commodified and promoted to an audience of potential tourists, but entire cultures as well" (86).

Throughout the history of U.S. occupation and then colonization of Hawai'i, the tourist industry has reinforced and perpetuated the cultural identity of the indigenous Hawai'ian community as Other, rather than fully "American." Citing the anthropologists Pierre L. van der Berghe and Charles F. Keyes, Christin J. Mamiya identifies this practice as "ethnic tourism": "tourism in which the native is not simply 'there' to serve the needs of the tourist; he is himself 'on show', a living spectacle "to be scrutinized, photographed, tape-recorded and interacted with in some particular ways. . . . The focus is on the construction of a cultural image that is enticing and readily recognized as distinct from that of the average white Euroamerican tourist" (87).The Hawaiian culture as depicted by the tourism industry—including the work of the Daughters of Hawai'i, albeit in subtler ways—might be "primitivized," oversimplified and exotified, all to tantalize the white tourist, who can more easily deal with iconography than real, lived-in, evolving, complex cultural practices.

Paul Lyons explores the narratives that complicate Hawaiian cultural representations and their link to the U.S. narratives of Oceania[41] in *American Pacifism.*

[41] As used by Lyons in *American Pacifism. Oceania in the U.S. Imagination*, Oceania includes most Pacific island nations, including Hawai'i, but excluding Australia and New Zealand.

Oceania in the U.S. Imagination (Dec. 2006). According to Lyons, the basis of this relationship, which spills over into criticism and scholarly works, lies in a lack of respect of Oceanian peoples, as well as a "broad conversion in the U.S. public sphere of complex and violent relations with Oceanians into the stuff of tourism" (3). An explanation for the contradictory nature of the narratives about Hawai'i, is at the core of this discussion: "the islands are imagined at once as places to be civilized and as escapes from civilization" (27). Lyons describes narratives that are "regressive, bifurcating narrative, ambivalent about the inevitability of indigenous demise" (34). The shift from cannibalism to tourism, fed by the increasing appetite for the exotic narratives popular in the early 19th century, facilitated the creation of Hawai'i as commodity, as well as the recreation of its cultural past.

It is within this paradigm that we must look at The Daughters of Hawai'i's work of cultural representation. In it, one can see references to a "primitive" culture (both attractive and feared) that must be civilized and thus sacrificed to progress, as well as the guilt that accompanies the imperial acts of cultural destruction. These narratives, like those described by Lyons, are able to see and represent "indigeneity only as pre-industrial lifeways or their simulated versions" (34).

It is within this cultural ambivalence that we find Leilani Maguire's cultural voice; I was able to witness this delicate balancing act of historical positioning and ownership of culture as she described to me, in a recorded conversation, the foundation of her preservation group. The Daughters of Hawai'i's preservation efforts, thus, become the very tool of cultural confinement that they so vehemently deny.

Keeping the Culture:

A Conversation with Leilani Maguire

In the morning of October 6th, 2004, I arrived at Queen Emma's[42] Summer Palace, The Daughters of Hawai'i headquarters in Honolulu, Hawai'i. Meant as a retreat during the hottest months for Queen Emma, lush gardens surround the main building, protecting it from the view. As it stands today, the summer home is a museum, decorated for the most part with period pieces. A guide takes visitors from room to room, sharing pieces of history, stories of times gone by. Preserved as a cultural artefact, this palace and its grounds are presented to the public as a nostalgic representation of an exotic culture that has disappeared.

As I walked through the rooms that October morning, I wondered how much had been preserved and how much had been recreated or "invented" to respond to the fantasies of the tourists' curiosity[43]. It is, after all, a fact of "ethnic" tourism that the product must be properly packaged in order to be palatable to the audience. In this case, the European influences in Queen Emma's taste fit the purpose of recreating a Hawaiian royalty who knew how to appreciate the refinement of more "civilized" cultural habits, and thus, were less threatening and more easily confinable as cultural history objects[44].

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[42] Queen Emma (1836-1885) was consort to King Kamehameha IV. She converted to Christianity in 1862 and was instrumental in founding the Church of Hawai'i with the help of the Church of England. She was educated at the Royal School in Honolulu, which had been started by missionaries decades before.

[43] I was too, one of those tourists. As I went from room to room, I remember my own wedding, held on Kauai'i, as much a fantasy as what I was walking through now.

[4]This strategy can also be seen at work at the Polynesian Cultural Center on the North Shore of Oahu—a pastiche of Polynesian cultures meant as a quick cultural lesson for those tourists who want the illusion of ethnic authenticity conveniently packaged. Andrew Ross points out that the PCC offers visitors "the islands as you always imagined they would be," with no comment of the fact that those traditional ways of life are still thriving in real communities (44).

This strategy betrays the elitism of cultural preservation in terms of class and culture: Only ali'i and royalty artefacts seem to be worth preserving, as opposed to the general populace's; especially from that aristocracy who happened to cultivate a taste for European "refinement." As Andrew Ross explains: "The global tourist industry's demand that Pacific peoples reify their traditional cultures in order to survive in a modern cash economy has added a new dimension to the representation of local cultural renaissances" (50). Thus, not unlike Maria Cristina Mena's painstaking effort to reproduce the "real-ness" of her cultural objects (the Inditos), the Daughters of Hawai'i have maintained their own version of cultural reality, very much separated from the real culture of Hawai'i as it is lived today.

When I met with Leilani Maguire later the same afternoon, her inviting attitude clearly invoked the earnestness and dedication to her work. My taped conversation with her, which I am reproducing only in part here, offers a clear view of the Daughters of Hawai'i's awareness of the balancing act that their cultural mission represents: we can see the pride of being one of the first groups to become preservation activists in 1903; the fear to invoke the colonial presence so tied into Hawai'i's cultural history; and the defensiveness against the nationalists who criticize the lack of authenticity of their cultural representations.

Maguire's main argument attempts to revise the narrative of conquest and Empire that, in her view, vilifies the role of missionaries:

> It is not a single tunnel story. It was not about missionaries coming here and stealing the kingdom. It had to do with many factors. The location, the middle of

the Pacific… The trade winds, currents naturally bring ships here… you could speculate forever and ever, hadn't it been the Americans, who would have been; and certainly others were trying…(October 2004 interview)

In an ethnocentric view of history supported in her view by scientific evidence, Maguire sees the demise of Hawaiian cultural rule as the outcome of unstoppable contact and genetic predisposition: "It doesn't matter who came here from where… [Hawaiians] were genetically very tight and limited, which contributed to their demise… their lack of their ali'i[45] being able to reproduce because of intermarriage… <sic>" In this context of pseudo-scientific theory, Maguire's view of the missionaries' role as one of enlightenment and salvation, both spiritual and physical, is easily justifiable. The "Stone Age" society that Kamehameha the Great (1758-1819) and missionaries after his death, "saved" from barbarism came from the "swift grasp of Christianity" by the ali'i and later by the rest of the community (Maguire, October 2004 interview).

Very much like the U.S. government's boarding schools set up in the mainland to assimilate American Indians, the missionaries to Hawai'i started a Christian boarding school. The offspring of ali'i were taken away from their families and taught Christian values. The political ramifications of cultural uprooting and assimilation, as well as the irony of the need for cultural preservation by the very agents of cultural destruction seemed to be lost in Leilani Maguire as she explained the "education" process of the children of ali'i:

"[T]hat group of leaders in the mid-nineteenth century are the **transition** group. They feel the ties to their native roots… and yet they go to Europe… meet heads

[45] Ali'i is the hereditary chiefly or noble caste in traditional Hawai'ian society. The ali'i were the highest class, ranking above both kahuna (priests) and maka'ainana (commoners).

> of State. I think [the fact that most Hawaiian ali'i left trusts to Hawaiian causes] came from their Christian education. This is what you do…." (my bold)

The language here betrays the cultural assumption of assimilation and "civilization" as inevitable historical processes that will ultimately benefit the "inferior" culture. The very act of preservation becomes manufactured to validate the supposedly civilizing role of the colonizing force and to fit their fantasies of what Hawaiian culture *is*—as a static concept—and what it should be. In fact, the intent of the Daughters of Hawai'i was never to preserve *all* cultural artefacts and practices: they did not preserve religious rituals. These survived as part of an underground religious movement, very much like the subversive practices of American Indians in the mainland during the Boarding School and assimilation phases. As Maguire explains, the Daughters "were all of Christian Missionary stock." It is quite fitting that when I asked her about the preservation impulse nowadays, she was quick to direct me to cultural performances like the Kodak show on Waikiki Beach, which, as its name clearly betrays, is a series of manufactured hula performances packaged for tourist traffic along Waikiki Beach. As Lyons points out:

> In Pacific contexts, the fact that tourist boards have emphasized both primivitivity and its domestication within modernity forces promoters away from simple nostalgic narratives… and toward double-voiced narratives that celebrate tourism's role in both development and cultural preservation. One obvious "predicament" is that tourism spoils or museumizes the purity it looks for, creating complex scenes of acculturation, which, in its regulatory mode (tourees must match their billing or disappoint), tourism disavows." ("Pacific Scholarship" 15)

The Daughters of Hawai'i's work responds to this discursive ambivalence that turns an imagined cultural "purity" into artefact. It is this kind of preservation impulse that makes them more tourism than culture as "lived." The precariousness of their own political situation was not lost on Maguire, who warned me about the radicalism and "one-sidedness" of certain scholars at the Department of Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawai'i in Honolulu, perhaps referring to Lyons himself. There is another kind of one-sidedness, however, in the decision-making criteria as to what is worth preserving. As previously mentioned, the original Daughters of Hawai'i did not dream of preserving religious rituals; their first mission was to save two palaces and continue the work that the Bishop Museum had started in the mid 1800s. These projects all naturally tied in to the missionaries' goals and their work of assimilation.

A Look at

Nâ Lani Kaumaka. Daughters of Hawai'i. A Century of Historic Preservation

Nâ Lani Kaumaka. Daughters of Hawai'i. A Century of Historic Preservation, written by Barbara del Piano, commissioned by the Daughters of Hawai'i organization and published in early 2006, is a detailed record of such preservation efforts. The title, which means "To look upon our royal treasures with admiration," lays forth the mission of the book: to admire and celebrate, not analyse, the organization's history. Because it was paid for with their own funding, the group has the power of ownership over this narrative of contact, assimilation and preservation. Offering a wealth of photographs and

archival materials, the text expresses the group's century-long cultural commitment. Reading at times like a tourist guide to "Old Hawai'i"'s royal architecture, at others it resembles a political manifesto stating the role that the Daughters had in saving Hawaiian culture from the ruin. At the same time, it consistently glosses over (if not altogether erasing) their connection to a past of occupation and colonization. It is worth noting that the title in the early proofs was *E Mau A Mau*, which can be translated as "To Continue, to Preserve." As if aware of the delicate cultural position of their preservation efforts, the Daughters' change of title points at their eagerness to become one with the culture they are helping "preserve," while simultaneously taking attention away from those preservation efforts.

Certainly, much of what The Daughters of Hawai'i have saved over the decades in terms of architecture and furnishings would have been lost otherwise. In that context, their work is invaluable. The assumption that underlies these efforts, however, seems to perpetuate the idea of Hawaiian culture as an entity at the verge of extinction after contact with a "superior" civilization. The naturalistic view of history that has justified imperialistic practices to this day also informs the overall tone of *Nâ Lani Kaumaka*. From the first pages, we encounter an account of cultural destruction perpetrated by the Hawaiian ali'i, with no mention of the missionaries' (and foreign agents') role in such acts:

> Ka'a humanu and Kamehameha II ordered that the heiau be abandoned and representations of the Hawai'ian gods be destroyed. Kamehameha's own kahuna nui, or high priest, Hewahewa, joined in the destruction (xi).

With this revision of the colonial narrative, responsibility is transferred and obscured, and the Hawaiians become the sole agents of their own cultural demise. In fact, the text suggests that were it not for the missionaries, the language and sacred traditions would be lost: "several important steps were taken to retain some vestiges of the disappearing culture. First, perhaps, was the introduction by the missionaries of the alphabet and a written language, which made it possible to sat down and preserve the ancient history, chants, genealogies, and legends of the Hawaiians" (xii). It is through this narrative revision that the Daughters of Hawai'i, just as the missionaries before them, were able to envision themselves as preservers of indigenous culture rather than as agents of colonial manipulation and appropriation.

Interestingly enough, Barbara Del Piano warns her readers that in 1903 the term "cultural preservation" had not "yet entered the public consciousness". Thus, the Daughters of Hawai'i's mission remained "to perpetuate the memory and spirit of Old Hawai'i"(xv). The language clearly reinforces the idea of recapturing something lost—something that will only remain as cultural artefact in archives, museums and written records as interpreted by the "preservers".

As mentioned earlier, the cultural roots of these "preservers" of culture is relevant: "the founders of The Daughters of Hawai'i were not just close friends when they conceived the idea for the organization. (…) All of them were descendants of missionaries"(4). The fact that none of the original members were indigenous Hawaiian is striking. And even though the women were not missionaries themselves, their cultural reality, experience and worldview were directly connected to the colonizing efforts of their ancestors, who by the early 20th century had become economically prominent and

politically influential, "building financial empires" (4). The Daughters' approach to an alien culture was therefore as artefact, rather than as an alive and fluid process, because, ultimately, it was not their culture. What the Daughters of Hawai'i saw as cultural preservation and progress in the restoration of monuments and buildings and the placing of plaques, can also be seen as the transformation of culture into tourist attraction. As Paul Lyons argues,

> the objects of tourism are regarded not as what has been lost but as what has been saved. In this Euro-American marketing of 'paradise,' Pacific tourism is not so much a narrative of decline as one claiming to recuperate the past and redistribute its 'aura' as a reward of human progress. ("Pacific Scholarship" 16)

It becomes the role of the "superior" culture to "save" that which will be otherwise inexorably lost, thus retaining a position of cultural ownership in terms of re-creation and re-vision of cultural history. It is in this context that the competing narratives in many texts of preservation, such as *Nâ Lani Kaumaka*, highlight the ambivalence of the "preservers"' role: the texts both account for the "loss" of culture, and avoid responsibility for their re-creation of the history of such culture. Thus, Queen Emma's Summer Palace, Nu'vanu, Hulihe'e Palace, Kûkaniloko, all become representations of a "lost" or "Old" Hawai'i that can be visited as a nostalgic history lesson without the guilt that the memory of colonialism would entail. In this account of history, Hawai'i's queen "happened" to be overthrown, Hawai'i "happened" to be annexed and all these emblems of Hawai'i's violent cultural history were saved by a more "civilized" culture who just "happened" to be there.

In every chapter of *Nâ Lani Kaumaka*, each of which is devoted to a site that was restored and brought back to its original splendour, there is a self-congratulatory gesture, a reminder that The Daughters of Hawai'i are saving history, even if this history has to compete with other modern tourist attractions. Hulihe'e Palace in Kailua, along the Kona coast, once home of the High Chief "John Adams" Kuakini, uncle of Kamehameha the Great, is an especially interesting case. A European-style home, it was the residence of several ali'i and later governors. After being sold and its furnishings auctioned in 1914, the house remained empty for a decade. Once saved and restored by The Daughters of Hawai'i, a dedication ceremony was given in 1927. The book states: "At Hulihe'e, history lives quietly amid Kailua's burgeoning visitor trade, with its shops, restaurants, condominiums and hotels. Here, but for the efforts and concern of The Daughters of Hawai'i, a treasure of the Hawaiian kingdom might well have been destroyed" (125).

Interestingly enough, as the restoration of the main grounds was in progress, the Daughters considered cutting an ancient Banyan Tree that had overtaken the property. The reaction of an otherwise silent indigenous community illustrates the disconnect between these preservers of culture and the members of the culture they are purporting to save: "Little did The Daughters anticipate the public uproar that would ensue in the usually sleepy town of Kailua when word spread of impending removal. Citizens vehemently protested the destruction of one of the town's oldest and most visible landmarks and the local newspapers were flooded with indignant letters" (124).

If the conflict between the organization and the indigenous community is underscored in some of their recovery and restoration projects discussed in this text, the struggle for ownership of the Daughters' cultural image comes to the forefront in the

writing and revising process of the text itself. I was able to read the first proof of the volume (dated May 7th, 2004), and the suggestions for omissions point to an undercurrent of tension, political in nature. The author, Barbara del Piano, perceived and defined certain events and facts in a way that contradicted the editor's (in most cases Leilani Maguire's) efforts to separate the group from a history of violent occupation and colonization. Whenever Del Piano engages the history of the overthrow of the monarchy and suggests the missionaries' role in this event, Maguire is clear in her disapproval. The proof reads:

> Lorrin Thurston, grandson of Rev. Asa Thurston, of a pioneer Missionary Company, served in both the House of Representatives and the House of Nobles in the Hawaiian Kingdom. He was one of the chief instigators of the Hawaiian revolution of 1893, in which Queen Lili'ukolani was deposed and the monarchy brought to an end. Subsequently, he spent two years in Washington, D.C., working towards Hawai'i's annexation to the United States[46]. (Proof 4)

On the left margin, the editor notes: "I don't like all this emphasis on missionaries and overthrow. Judds, Doles, Thurstons, had nothing to do with D. of H. <sic>" (4). Although, as pointed out earlier, the founders of The Daughters of Hawai'i were in fact connected to these missionary families who gained political power, the editor's concern is with public perception. Her marginalia reveal her desire to separate the organization's restoration and preservation efforts from the people who brought such

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[46] This excerpt continues by mentioning Sanford Ballard Dole's (Son of Rev. Daniel Dole) active role in the reform movement that culminated in the "bayonet constitution" of 1887, which stripped much of King Kalakaua's power.

need in the first place. Further mention of these families' connection to the overthrow is also questioned by the editor. On page 19, the text depicts "Mrs. Lorrin Thurston (widow of one of the chief figures in the overthrow) and Emma's husband, railroad and sugar magnate". The original marginal note—"is this necessary? You already said that"—was crossed out and a new note was added by it: "these can be cut to save space" (19). Del Piano's insistence on pointing out the connection between The Daughters of Hawai'i and the main players of the overthrow and financial takeover is squashed every time. That Barbara Del Piano herself is a Calabash Cousin, and not a Daughter of Hawai'i only complicates matters further, in terms of Hawaiian cultural perception and re-creation, undertaken by non-indigenous Hawaiians.

And thus a similar concern seems to arise from any emphasis on the cultural or racial background of the founders of The Daughters of Hawai'i. A line crosses out the original text on page 12: "It was clear that the Daughters did not intend to remain a *haole* organization." Del Piano's choice of terminology appears to be a political one; *haole*, which means "non-native Hawaiian," holds a negative connotation in most arenas. In another part of the proof, a question mark appears on the right margin by the following section, which deals with racial difference: "The Hawaiian Monarchy had been overthrown just eleven years before, and some family members would no doubt have been on opposing sides. Thus, the coming together of two races for a common purpose dear to all their hearts shows that wounds were healing" (12). The final version still contains these last lines. The term *haole*, however, does not show in it.

Overall, *Nâ Lani Kaumaka* attempts to serve as a persuasion both to readers and to the Daughters of Hawai'i that this work of cultural preservation was—and continues to

be—what has saved Hawai'i's indigenous culture from oblivion. As if to emphasize the direct connection to the community they are "saving," there are photographs of descendants of warriors and ali'i in each dedication ceremony. Other than these graphic images, however, little representation remains—indigenous voices have hardly been heard throughout over one hundred years of "preservation". The restoration of Hawaiian landmarks is in itself valuable in the overall cultural picture. It is telling, however, that these preservation efforts are still not controlled by the totality of the indigenous community. It is ultimately this cultural disconnect that forces the Daughters of Hawai'i's work to remain, in spite of all their efforts, a product of what Lyons calls "histouricism," a kind of "fetishized history" rather than one of genuine cultural history:

> Histouricism historicizes tourism as the redemptive outcome of the spread of modernity. It does not deny that in the modernizing process "overthrows" occurred; rather, it frames "overthrows" in ways that gloss or justify their costs. (…) such [promotional] narratives represent Americans as "assuming responsibility" and "natives" as needing to and desiring intervention.(Pacific Scholarship 10)

The Daughters of Hawai'i's efforts to legitimize their work culturally within the indigenous community only highlights the impossibility of its fulfilment. As Maguire pointed out in our interview, Hawai'i was overtaken by a foreign culture, but the process was "inevitable." It is the illusion of this "inevitability" that has allowed the Daughters to consider their work necessary, without the guilt of historic responsibility.

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At the heart of the concepts of cultural preservation and representation lies the illusion of the *need* to preserve and represent, brought upon immigrant minorities and indigenous communities by the dominant culture, which throughout this project I have equated to the white, U.S. cultural mainstream, as well as the U.S. government-sponsored racist practices of assimilation and colonization. In the case of María Cristina Mena and Sui Sin Far, the pressure—external or self-enforced—to assimilate into the dominant culture clashes with a counter-narrative of resistance against the mainstream. On the other hand, Humishuma's work, and to some extent, the Daughters of Hawai'i's, represent the fight to survive the imperialistic impulses of the U.S. government to wipe out indigenous cultures, if, by doing so, they fall into the reification of culture they are trying to contest.

As Christin Mamiya points out, "when control over the mechanisms that determine the representation and understanding of a culture . . . is maintained by an outside group, . . . the native population is denied the opportunity to construct a cultural identity that strengthens their self-image and sovereignty" (88). Although referring specifically to ethnic tourism, as discussed throughout this project, this quote helps clarify the scope of this work in terms of the extent to which all these women react to the narratives that the "outside group," or the dominant culture—in both cases white North America—provides for them.

It is fitting then to end this study with a case that illustrates the complexities of such cultural narratives in contemporary terms. That the Daughters of Hawai'i consider themselves "purely" Hawaiian only deepens this cultural riddle. The Daughters continue their preservation efforts seemingly unaware of the fact that native Hawaiian culture is thriving all around them.

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