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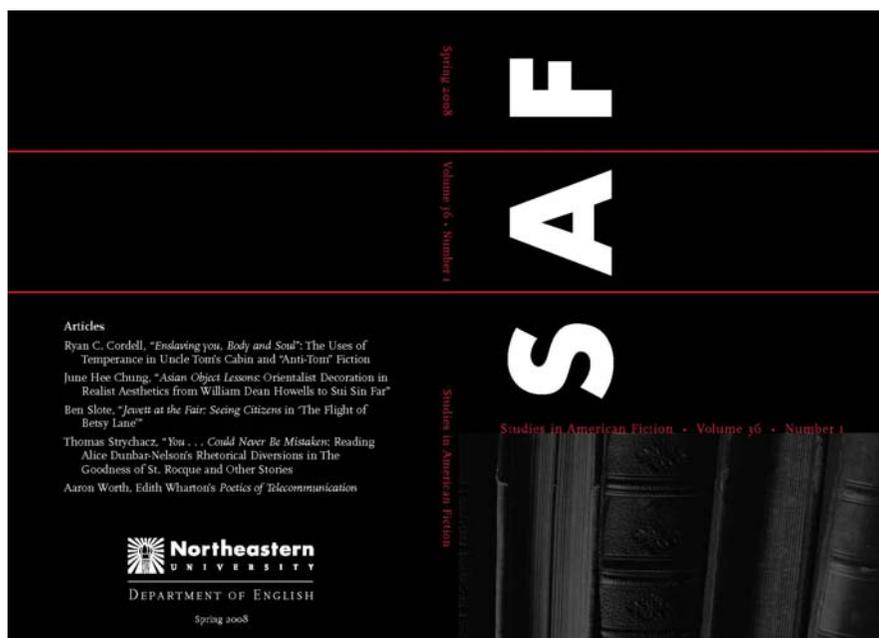
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June Hee Chung, *Asian Object Lessons: Orientalist Decoration in Realist Aesthetics from William Dean Howells to Sui Sin Far*

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**ASIAN OBJECT LESSONS:
ORIENTALIST DECORATION IN REALIST AESTHETICS
FROM WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS TO SUI SIN FAR**

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It has been well established that despite differences in American realists' and naturalists' political philosophies, these writers nonetheless shared aesthetic principles that were informed by their interest in representing the nation's democratic masses. In particular, both movements aspired to a simplicity in style and a transparent treatment of their subject matter. Thus William Dean Howells, champion of the United States' middle class, was also one of the few writers of his day to defend striking immigrant laborers in Chicago's 1886 Haymarket tragedy. In his December 1887 "Editor's Study" column for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, Howells joined his sympathies for America's working and middle classes to his aesthetic values when he asserts that "hitherto the mass of common men have been afraid to apply their own simplicity, naturalness, and honesty to the appreciation of the beautiful."¹ Elitist Frank Norris also advocated a straightforward style, but he did so to apply Social Darwinism's scientific principles of objectivity to the working and lower-middle classes. Writing in November 1901 for the *Boston Evening Transcript* on "Novelists of the Future: The Training They Need," Norris called for a prose form that goes "straight into a World of Working Men, crude of speech, swift of action, strong of passion, straight to the heart of a new life, on the borders of a new time. . . ."²

But even among the democratic masses, all groups were hardly treated equally: progressive-era zeal tended to fall short when it dealt with nonwhite immigrant laborers, especially if they were found to be competing with the "native" workforce for jobs. Examining representations of one such group, Asian-American immigrants, this essay traces the entanglement of Orientalism with realist and naturalist aims in fiction from the fin-de-siècle period, entanglements that resulted in the subordination of ethnic interests to those of class.³ In particular, I explore the stories of one contemporary writer, Sui Sin Far, who recognized the peculiar character of this bias and raised the question of whether Orientalist representations weakened the force of realism's aesthetic claims as well.

Unlike the well-established Howells and Norris, the relatively unknown Edith Maude Eaton (1865–1914), whose pen-name was Sui Sin Far, wrote short fiction about the lives of Chinese immigrants in West Coast Chinatowns between the 1880s and the early decades of the twentieth century. Born the eldest daughter to a Chinese mother and an English silk merchant who emigrated to New York, Montreal, and then Quebec, the peripatetic Eaton—whom I will refer to by her professional name hereafter—patched together a living as a stenographer and a journalist for regional magazines and newspapers in Canada, the western and eastern United States, and Jamaica to help support her thirteen siblings when her father had trouble finding work after they left England. As a writer who could pass as white and whose status was positioned on the margins of both middle-class white America and the Chinese-American working class communities on which she reports, Sui Sin Far was especially sensitive to how Chinese immigrants were commodified and to the racial prejudices and stereotypes resulting during a period of growing hostility towards these workers.⁴

Although most scholars therefore understandably analyze Sui Sin Far's work for her representations of Chinese individuals, rare during a period which tended to view immigrants in the abstract or as a group if at all, her representations of Chinese material culture also served to identify and distinguish an Americanized version of Orientalism that emerged in contemporary realist and naturalist literature. Recent scholarship has begun to explore Orientalism's presence in the United States and not just in western Europe. In general, these studies have concentrated less on distinctions and more on continuities with and refinements to Edward W. Said's famous thesis that "[t]he Orient was almost a European invention"—a "Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" by characterizing Oriental peoples as a defeated, irrational, and emasculated race.⁵ In this essay, however, I suggest that the Orientalisms of Europe and of the United States differ because it is the nations associated with Orientalism's "Far East," such as China and Japan, rather than those identified as the "Near East" (today's Middle East) that have played a prominent role in America's historical experience. In the U.S. imagination, a more radical movement away from European Orientalism than recent scholars have proposed arose with the closing of the geographical gap separating the American West from Asian countries. In contrast to western Europe's relatively more proximate relationship with Middle Eastern regions, thousands of

Chinese and Japanese workers immigrated to the United States beginning in the 1850s, due to the concurrent rise of big business and corporate capitalism. Where European Orientalism established a position of authority over physically adjacent territories, American Orientalism is a reaction to the perceived threat from the Eastern Other's invasion of U.S. home territory.

The extent to which American literature of the fin-de-siècle reflected this fear by promoting anti-Asian stereotypes of immigrants has been studied extensively by scholars of Asian-American literature such as William F. Wu, Robert G. Lee, and Limin Chu.⁶ More recently, Colleen Lye has examined how literary naturalism also fabricated indirect representations or "racial forms" that characterized the Asian American only in abstract or collective terms, stereotyping the immigrant as a hyper-rational and efficient worker. Such images contrasted with the Asian of European Orientalism who was viewed as an irrational primitive, assumed to be incapable of trade and business.⁷ In addition to such indirect forms of stereotyping, William Dean Howells and Frank Norris also represented in their fiction a second kind of economic exchange between the United States and Asia, the trade in art objects. Nor were they alone; the literary device of cataloguing Asian decorative ornaments also appears in works by, for example, Gertrude Atherton, Harry M. Johnson, and Mary E. Bamford.⁸ The popularity and persistence of this strand of Orientalism is evidenced by its twentieth-century presence in movies such as Cecil B. DeMille's *The Cheat* (1915) and D. W. Griffith's *Broken Blossoms* (1919). Asian domestic ornaments in fiction in film served, I argue, as a potent *meme* to disseminate fears about the United States' economic relations with Asia beyond the working class to the middle class—that is, to a class whose contact with Asia was limited primarily to consuming Asian art commodities rather than competing with immigrants for work.

While documenting U.S. exposure to Asian culture via the decoration crazes of *Chinoiserie* and *Japonaiserie* that swept both western Europe and the United States, such stories helped instigate fears that a "Yellow Peril" was infiltrating private domestic spaces. The first section of this essay explores early scenes from William Dean Howells's novel *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1890) and Frank Norris's short story "The Third Circle" (1897) as examples of realist and naturalist literature that conflated American society's anxieties about the influence of the influx of Chinese immigrants with that of East Asian imports.⁹ In contrast to other naturalist stories or muckraking non-fiction such as Jack London's *Tales of the Fish Patrol* (1906) or Jacob Riis's *How*

the Other Half Lives (1890) that also represented Chinese individuals or Chinatown but not their furnishings, this version of American Orientalism deviates from characterizing Asian immigrants as barely human or as obsessive profit seekers. While Riis declares that “Chinatown as a spectacle is disappointing” and that cash “will buy anything in Chinatown,” fiction that focuses on domestic life sees Asians primarily as a danger to the nation’s consuming middle class rather than to its producing working class.¹⁰ For Howells, realism’s prized honesty and transparency gives way to a superfluous and wasteful materialism when the work of art is treated as a mass-produced commodity. In “The Third Circle,” Norris also associates Asian *objets d’art* with corporate capitalism, but rather than characterizing the style as just excessive, he represents Asian art as actively distorting reality, resulting in a dehumanized standardization of consumers’ thinking patterns and behavior.

The stories of Sui Sin Far allude to the Orientalist literary devices Howells and Norris exploit, illustrating how widespread and persistent this form of racialized aesthetics became. In “Lin John,” for example, Sui Sin Far refers to an Orientalism like that in Howells’s novel, which mixes the work of art’s status as art and as commodity, when she represents Chinese decorative ornaments that overtake the space of the middle-class home. Yet she suggests that these qualities are not so much intrinsic to Chinese art as they are an Americanized interpretation of Chinese culture that has historically commodified it. In “The Story of One White Woman,” Sui Sin Far represents her white characters as obsessed with the acquisition of economic power, notwithstanding their claims to promote equality between the sexes and classes.¹¹ She represents the aims of American Orientalism as less concerned with providing an authentic representation of Asian culture than with fearing the loss of the United States’ developing economic dominance. She questions whether naturalist representations of Chinese immigrants as an abstract economic force reflect, ironically, a standardization of thought among the period’s reformers and intellectuals.

Sui Sin Far’s criticism of American Orientalism is especially evident in her mimicry of these mainstream realists’ and naturalists’ style to expose stereotypes like those in Norris’s story of Chinese immigrants as merely dehumanized purveyors of degenerate art-commodities, objects that have lost any capacity to function on an intellectual or spiritual level. Although her literary style is realist in tone—her words construct a transparent narrative window that contrasts with the sensuality of her representations of Asian art—her seemingly

simple prose undermines the claim of a neutral point of view by offering up an alternative art form that points out the deficiencies of the realist style. In other words, the writer practices a logic of infidelity to demonstrate the shortcomings of mainstream culture, a practice that other racially marginalized contemporaries of Sui Sin Far, such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Zitkala-Sa, adopted as well.¹² In her “Sequel to ‘The Story of One White Woman,’” Sui Sin Far undermines realism’s promotion of the traditional Western ideal of mimesis in the arts, whose principles retain an assumption that the acts of the mind and body work against each other. Instead, she documents changing views during the early twentieth century of how art as a material object mediates human experience. The beauty of Asian house decorations expresses abstract ideas in concrete forms; materiality need not hold a binarized and inferior position in respect to the spiritual strivings of humanity.

Realist Orientalism, Corporate Capitalism, and the Rise of Material Culture in the United States

Although the age of psychological realism produced few texts that explicitly represent Asians as individuals, late nineteenth-century fiction more commonly represented Chinatown furnishings as well as the interiors of middle-class homes decorated with imported Asian objects. John Kuo Wi Tchen and Mari Yoshihara have documented that by the 1870s and 1880s a “popular” (Yoshihara’s term) or “commercial Orientalism” (Tchen’s coinage) spread beyond the homes of America’s wealthy and into those of its middle-class families.¹³ Besides Isabella Stewart Gardner and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller who collected Asian textiles, Japanese noh costumes, and ukoyo-e prints, their less wealthy counterparts purchased imports from Asian factories tailored to the tastes and purses of the American mass market as well as “Asian” style imitations manufactured in the United States. Citing the popularity of Gorham Manufacturing’s “Japanesque” silverware, “Jap Rose Soap” distributed by Chicago’s James S. Kirk & Co., and “Jap-a-lac” varnish from Cleveland, Yoshihara attributes this interest in Asian-style arts and crafts to the spread of the Aesthetic movement from Europe to the United States among upper- and middle-class white women, as well as to public spectacles such as the world’s fairs at the Philadelphia Centennial of 1876 and the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893.¹⁴

Asian ornaments—one result of America’s increased global trade activity—had become such a popular house decorating fashion in the United States that William Dean Howells could poke fun at this fad in *A Hazard of New Fortunes*. When the protagonist Basil March and his wife Isabel go apartment-hunting in New York City, even this couple whom Howells in his 1909 preface characterizes as “people of such moderate means” (3) can’t escape encountering a cramped railroad flat that the owner Mrs. Grosvenor Green has furnished with, among other household objects, cheap ornaments from various Asian countries:

The radiator was concealed by a Jap screen, and over the top of this some Arab scarfs were flung. There was a superabundance of clocks. China pugs guarded the hearth; a brass sunflower smiled from the top of either andiron, and a brass peacock spread its tail before them. . . . (49)

Howells represents the threat of Asian culture’s proximity in the excessive abundance of imported ornaments that overtake the physical space of the apartment, suggesting synecdochally that an Asian decorating aesthetic has taken occupation of the apartment’s owner as well as its renters. The Asian decorations that clutter the apartment may not actually represent human beings, but Howells animates the household objects to expose how these ornaments dehumanize the flat’s occupants. The Asian ornaments encourage consumers to fetishize what were originally just domestic tools: subjects yield control to the objects they own. Initially, “a Jap screen” appears only indirectly responsible for concealing the radiator, no more active or alive than “some Arab scarfs” that “were flung” over the screen or “a superabundance of clocks” that, Howells implies, the absent owner has selected to display. But in the following sentence, the verb tenses emerge out of passive hiding, and objects such as the “China pugs” that “guarded the hearth” become increasingly bolder and more direct in their usurpation over the originally ordinary household tools of the rented space.

While humorously mocking the popularity of Victorian fussiness and decorative aggression, Howells more seriously registers a fear of proliferating foreign, especially Asian, goods crowding out and penetrating the house, that domain of the private self and thus national traditions. For Howells, the Asian ornaments represent Asia’s dangerous encouragement of American consumers’ materialism, an obsessive act of collecting that demonstrates the loss of self-control. Rather than the Asian objects exclusively symbolizing the Imperial West’s

victorious seizure of cultural spoils during its excursions abroad, the objects also take their captors prisoner in a kind of reverse cultural imperialism. In the Xenophon, their apartment building named after the Greek military leader and historian, the couple find themselves disarmed by the owner Mrs. Grosvenor Green's insistence on the excessive placement and selection of bric-a-brac. The art objects actively take over and occupy the rooms, encroaching on space that could be used for more practical purposes: "every shelf and dressing-case and mantel was littered with gimcracks, and the corners of the tiny rooms were curtained off, and behind these portières swarmed more gimcracks" (49). Necessary furniture gives way to imposing ornaments so that folding-beds must be installed, but to no avail. "Everything had been done by the architect to save space, and everything to waste it by Mrs. Grosvenor Green" (49), making it difficult for the Marches to even turn around in the apartment.

Howells's fear of the influx of Asian art expresses his ambivalence over the flood of immigrants that "swarmed" the United States during this period. On the one hand, he demonstrates his sympathy for the lot of the immigrant in Basil's affection for his old German friend the socialist Berthold Lindau and the Marches' evident enjoyment of visits to various ethnic neighborhoods in Manhattan. At the same time, Basil's trip on the elevated train that occasions "the more public-spirited reveries in which he dealt with the future economy of our heterogeneous commonwealth" (163), allows doubts to surface concerning the "prevailing hideousness" (165) he encounters, "the gay ugliness, the shapeless, graceless, reckless picturesqueness of the Bowery" (165). A similar response characterizes Basil's impression of Chinatown: observing that "[i]t seemed for some reason to be a day of leisure" (165), Basil is mostly struck by the large number of Chinese he finds present in the streets. He can't help worrying that the immigrants are encroaching on American territory: "their numbers gave ethnical character to the street and rendered not them, but what was foreign to them, strange there" (165).

In the house-hunting scene, Howells expresses his fear about the masses of Chinese immigrants with the trope of the infiltration of Asian décor, reinforcing the novel's central conflict over the commercialization of art. Basil initially comes to New York in order to help start a new syndicated arts and literature magazine, *Every Other Week*, whose success is repeatedly threatened by clashes between the business interests of millionaire investor Mr. Dryfoos and publisher Mr. Fulkerson and the artistic standards of Basil as editor and Mr. Beaton as art director. Thus Basil's decision to rent Mrs. Grosvenor Green's

apartment not only coincides with his visit to Lindau, the Bowery, and Chinatown, but also directly precedes the editor learning that his own authority is less than he had assumed because of the magazine's financial backing by Dryfoos. For Howells, the commercialization of American society arose out of changing foreign relations as well as corporate production innovations at home. As economic historians such as Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson have documented, the late nineteenth century up to World War I was an era of globalization comparable to the late twentieth century, as "capital and labor flowed across national frontiers in unprecedented quantities, and commodity trade boomed in response to sharply declining transport costs."¹⁵ Asian art serves as a handy example of modernity's commercialization of art because the large numbers of imported people and things made the rise in international trade especially conspicuous to both the lower and middle classes. Howells thus juxtaposes two instances of economic exchange in the house-hunting scene: one domestic, the housing market in Manhattan, and one that is foreign, the trade for imported Asian goods. The material amenities of the modern urban environment are conflated with examples of the imports that cosmopolitan Manhattan as a port city has made more easily available. The railroad flat decorated with Asian "gimcracks" offers such modern technological conveniences as the electric door bell, steam heat, and elevators; it also displays the latest aestheticism-influenced fashions from Europe such as vaguely William Morris-like wall paper painted with copper "whorls and waves" and the imposing building front with a name plate "cut on the gas lamps on either side of the heavily spiked, aesthetic-hinged black door" (48).

At the same time, Howells's characterization of Asian goods and people in collective terms is also linked to the rise of big business and its need for cheap labor in order to produce cheap goods. Large numbers of Asian immigrants become conflated with large quantities of Asian goods that the immigrants supposedly produce; but, as Howells observes, these supposedly foreign goods uncannily resemble the more familiar mass-produced goods being manufactured in the factories of the United States. Howells paradoxically finds that Asian art, whose original attraction was partly as an antidote to industrialization's standardization, only results in the production of yet more cheap goods that lack distinction. Historically, the cheapness and standardized quality of "Asian" goods was less the result of decisions made by Asian factories than those of U.S. corporations. So-called curio shops were run either by American

companies or a few wealthy Asian merchants, not the ghettoized Chinatown inhabitants whose businesses served fellow Chinese.¹⁶ In Howells's narrative, the apartment owners' efforts to offer cosmopolitan luxuries are undermined by the building's corporate business style: the Xenophon turns out to be one of three buildings under the same management, the others being the Thucydides and the Herodotus (two other great historians of ancient Greece). The Marches discover that the Xenophon has adopted the principles of corporate organization deployed by the period's financial and transportation industries so far as to organize the work responsibilities of the building's doorman, janitor, and superintendent according to the principles of specialization and hierarchy. These managerial processes are then exploited to weaken the bargaining position of potential renters. The superintendent, "a Yankee of browbeating presence in plain clothes," together with the steam heat that "half stifled" the couple, represent the collective authority his company imposes on its inhabitants: the Marches struggle "to keep their self-respect under the gaze of the superintendent, which they felt was classing and assessing them with unfriendly accuracy" (48).

While it isn't clear that Howells is necessarily critical of Asian art itself, he is nonetheless unable to disengage the collecting of Asian art from contemporary economic issues of globalized trade, immigration, and incorporation. At stake in these representations of East Asian art is more than simply American consumers' bad taste. At the end of the scene, Basil March dismisses this aestheticism, "calling the bric-à-brac Jamescracks, as if this was their full name" (49). Joining with the novel's protagonist to deflate these objects as decorative superfluity, as excessive, cheap, and showy "gimcracks," Howells's criteria for Western home fashion are hardly politically neutral. Basil fears an overwhelming Asian cultural influence, a Yellow Peril, when he discovers that even the "upright piano . . . was covered with vases, with dragon candlesticks and with Jap fans, which also expanded themselves bat wise on the walls between the etchings and the water-colors. The floors were covered with filling, and then rugs and then skins; the easy-chairs all had tidies, Armenian and Turkish and Persian; the lounges and sofas had embroidered cushions hidden under tidies" (49). Implied here is that these ornaments are showy and unnecessary in that they only function to hide more familiar art objects, such as the piano and paintings; Western art is thus tacitly classed among the necessary furnishings such as the easy-chairs and sofas. Howells's realism links pursuing a particular set of aesthetic principles, fidel-

ity to a transparency in art as a medium, to moral frankness and purity—the link that *Sui Sin Far* will question in her stories.

This interdependence between supposedly mainstream literary styles and American Orientalism survived realism's evolution into naturalism. Within naturalism's focus on abstract economic forces and biologically predetermined outcomes for classes of humans, Frank Norris in his short story "The Third Circle" (1897), like Howells, uses an Orientalist discourse of Chinese "jimcrackerie" to associate San Francisco's Chinatown with corporate power. Norris's tale, like Howells's novel, documents a fear of the Chinese immigrants' geographical proximity to the white majority living in San Francisco. Norris emphasizes that even though Chinatown is a segregated space, it is situated in a spot adjacent to white neighborhoods and therefore presents the threat of miscegenation. This nearness allows Miss Ten Eyck, whose Dutch name hints at her connection with old New York's elite "four hundred" families, to become exposed to and then charmed by a restaurant, which she innocently believes to be a "dear, quaint, curious old place" (14), but behind which lurks a "noisome swamp" (13). Fearing that Chinatown will pollute the city proper, the narrator hopes for a day when "the 'town' has been, as it were, drained off from the city" (13).

To illustrate these hidden dangers that result from exposure to foreign forces, Norris, like Howells, catalogues the restaurant's decorative ornaments. In the unfamiliar Chinese restaurant, Miss Ten Eyck and Tom Hillegas are initially struck by the exotic sensuality of the décor: its "huge hanging lanterns, the gilded carven screens, the lacquer work, the inlay work, the coloured glass, the dwarf oak trees growing in Satsuma pots, the marquetry, the painted matting, the incense jars of brass, high as a man's head, and all the grotesque jim-crackery of the Orient" (15). Norris like Howells evaluates the ornaments as mere "jim-crackery," but where Howells uses the objects synecdochally to signal a fear of Asian art's assault on Western culture's values, Norris characterizes the Asian objects themselves as exotic or unfamiliar due to the art's manipulation of the senses. The items control or impair the viewer's visual judgment: they obscure or heighten one's experience of sight (lanterns, screens) or play with proportion and size ("dwarf oak trees" and even "incense jars of brass, high as a man's head"). Norris characterizes Asian art in decorative rather than practical terms: more style than substance, the objects are to be distinguished for the techniques which are applied. The pieces are "gilded" and "carven," identified as "lacquer work," "inlay work," "coloured glass," "mar-

quetry,” and “painted matting.” Norris conflates Japanese with Chinese decorative styles when he mentions the miniature bonsai trees in Satsuma pots, further making his point about a tainted, hybridized art. Ironically, Satsuma ware was originally high quality porcelain that became popular as a result of trade with Japan and then eventually degraded in quality as mass quantities were produced for Western consumers.

Norris, the naturalist-writer-as-detective, represents himself as telling the “true” story (13), separating the “reality” from what is “dreamed of” (13). Behind all the seeming glitter and excessively ornate Chinese furniture and ornaments lurks a “strange, dreadful life that wallows down there in the lowest ooze of the place—grovels there in the mud and in the dark” (13). Yet the reality Norris claims to document in the story only yields more fiction, a nightmare that reveals prevailing fears of the loss of an independent national identity as figured by the danger of miscegenation. Chinatown’s inhabitants kidnap the sophisticated Miss Ten Eyck when she and Hillegas innocently choose to eat at a restaurant that the guides to Chinatown have not vetted for safety. Norris introduces the young woman as charming with “the fresh, vigorous, healthful prettiness only seen in certain types of unmixed American stock” (16). In contrast, the tattoo artist that the couple invites up (they mistake him for a fortune-teller) is only “part Chinaman, part Kanaka” (i.e., indigenous Hawaiian), which the tattoo artist explains means “all same Honolulu” (17). U.S. territorial expansion peaked in 1897–98 under William McKinley with the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands; Norris’s story links American Orientalism with issues of American imperialism at the end of the nineteenth century by casting biological hybridity as the fearful result of the United States’ aggressive policy of manifest destiny.

Norris’s characterization of Chinatown’s inhabitants as foreign and as impure parallels his account of Asian decorative ornaments’ power over consumers to obscure an objective reality. As the result of mixing blood between East and West results not in a healthy diversity but rather in a dilution of good, pure American stock, mixing the cultures of East and West only pollutes American culture, since Asian art is represented as merely ornamental (i.e., insubstantial). Like Howells, Norris demonstrates a concern about how American art is being influenced by Asian culture which he expresses in figurative terms with Harriett’s almost invisible tattoo of “the prettiest little butterfly” (18). Harriett has the tattoo inscribed on a whim around her wedding ring finger because she

mistakenly believes “it would be so awfully queer and original” (18). Once drawn on Harriett’s hand by the Chinese artist, though, the figure unexpectedly looks like “a grotesque little insect” rather than an image of beauty (18). Norris counters Harriett’s desire for the “queer and original”—because unfamiliar to her—tattoo by suggesting that difference is unnatural and not necessarily synonymous with beauty. Instead, the Chinese artist’s interpretation is represented as a distorted translation of a superior aesthetic ideal, foreshadowing the lovely Harriett’s own mental and physical degeneration after a life of enslavement in a Chinese opium business. Chinese art penetrates both the body and mind of the consumer in the same way that opium operates on addicts.

Norris’s fear of racial and cultural mixing is also evident in his identifying global trade and commerce as a threat to America’s national identity. For example, Norris attributes Harriett’s kidnapping to Hillegas’s becoming distracted and seeking information from a Chinese-American merchant when the restaurant’s workers disappear. In contrast to the tattoo artist, Norris represents this unnamed merchant of tea and raw silk imports as assimilated to Anglo-American culture, speaking a fluent and educated class of English and possessing a “bearing” that “might have been that of Cicero before the Senate assembled” (20). For Norris, however, a Western education does not neutralize the Chinese merchant’s threat to America’s integrity. The immigrant still wields an economic power to which American citizens are susceptible: it is the offer of the gift of an India silk shawl for Harriett, the seduction of Asian material ornaments and the addiction to passive consumption over the hard work of production, that ultimately provides the Chinese immigrants the opportunity to kidnap Harriett. Tom, the American man, is distracted by his business interests from his duty to watch over and protect his fiancée. Like Howells, Norris represents an American society that has abandoned its women and thus its future because it prioritizes economic status over the moral integrity of its native-born citizens.

Norris’s American Orientalism frames Asian immigrants as working in tandem with the nation’s corporations. The unnamed tattoo artist is stereotyped as just another Chinatown immigrant, whose presence is the result of big business’s need for unskilled labor and who has become incorporated and assimilated into America’s economic system. Rather than promoting originality, the racially hybridized Asian man paradoxically breeds sameness among exposed American citizens. Characterized as a cog in this larger machine, he is unable to articulate any individual, private desires; his repeated, mechanical re-

frain to the couple is “all same” (17). Chinese labor is also represented as sowing conflict with other, whiter immigrant populations: back-dating the main action of the story to 1878, Norris alludes to Dennis Kearney, the leader of the working class Sandloters, who in 1877 delivered a speech in front of the railroad barons’ homes on Nob Hill demanding that the Central Pacific Railroad fire all Chinese workers. Yet Norris’s representation distorts the actual historical interactions among Chinese immigrants, big business, and other laborers. Rather than Chinese immigrants being somehow complicit with the spread of corporate power in the United States, historically it was the other way around: corporations exploited not just white workers but Chinese immigrants and produced competition among the potential supply of workers which in turn created hostility and racism against the immigrants. The emergence of Chinatowns on the West Coast during this period documents these immigrants’ victimization rather than their desire to maintain a separate base from which to dominate the Anglo-American population. These Chinatowns, arising as a result of restrictive covenants which prohibited Chinese laborers from occupying or purchasing property along with the rest of the population, ghettoized the immigrants.¹⁷

In Norris’s story, mixing different races and cultures results in only sameness: Harriett forgets her past life and history and thus her sense of a unique self. As prefigured by the tattoo, the artist transforms Harriett into an inferior copy of himself by enslaving her as an opium-addicted factory worker who in turn helps to manufacture only more dreams and dreamers: the Chinese business produces opium-laced pills for San Quentin prisoners. Norris compares Harriett and the other two women who work in the sweatshop to employees in a typical American factory. Victims of the logic of profit maximization, the workers are underpaid but the narrator observes “their fingers twinkling with a rapidity that was somehow horrible to see” (24). Like a machine, Harriett loses her will to think and act independently. Manning points out to her, “you know you can get out of this whenever you want” (24), but Harriett insists “in a voice so faint we had to stoop to listen” that “Like um China boy better. . . . Ah Yee’s pretty good to us—plenty to eat, plenty to smoke, and as much yen shee as we can stand. Oh, I don’t complain” (25). Having forgotten what she once was, she passively accepts her fate; more eerily, her defense for her mental if not physical lassitude echoes the behavior of an exploited factory worker who does not protest her miserable, inhumane work conditions. Emptied of interiority, Harriett exists only as a copy in an identical series of

machine-like workers whose actions are in turn controlled by their Chinese employer, who even gives her a new name, "Sadie." Harriett has become assimilated into their society and is now, like the Chinamen, "all same."

Sui Sin Far's Mixed Blessings and the Logic of Infidelity

Sui Sin Far's very different characterization of Asian culture suggests that Howells's and Norris's version of American Orientalism is less an authentic translation of Asian aesthetics than a response to very contemporary concerns about the state of American culture. In her short story "Lin John," Sui Sin Far identifies as American and not just Chinese a desire to exploit art's status as a commodity to the point that it dehumanizes consumers. Lin John is a Chinese immigrant who has spent the last three years working at menial jobs in order to save enough money to free his sister from her life as a prostitute. But the sister, who has been living luxuriously if immorally, steals the money so that she can buy herself an American-style purse and cloak she covets. The uncharacteristically lavish detail with which Sui Sin Far describes the material circumstances of the sister's home mimics the standard catalogue of excessively sensual Asian ornaments that realists like Howells and Norris evoked. The sister's large apartment is "richly carpeted" with "furniture of dark and valuable wood artistically carved" (118). Moreover, there is a "ceiling decorated with beautiful Chinese ornaments and gold incense burners; walls hung from top to bottom with long bamboo panels covered with silk, on which were printed Chinese characters; tropical plants, on stands; heavy curtains draped over windows" (118).

Sui Sin Far encourages the reader to assume the writer is exploiting stereotypes of Chinese immigrants as inscrutable agents of a "Yellow Peril," but she does so as an act of appropriation. The narrator points out that the material luxury of the sister's apartment exists hidden away from the unsuspecting eye of the American public "in the heart of Chinatown" (118). Like Howells with his catalogues of animated Asian knick-knacks, Sui Sin Far seems to commodify the sister by initially introducing her as part of the apartment's décor, equating the Chinese immigrant to an object to be bought and sold like the Asian ornaments that surround her. So, too, the Asian ornaments seem to crowd out the sister, leeching her of humanity and objectifying her. Thus we discover "in the midst of these surroundings a girl dressed

in a robe of dark blue silk worn over a full skirt richly embroidered. The sleeves fell over hands glittering with rings, and shoes of light silk were on her feet. Her hair was ornamented with flowers made of jewels; she wore three or four pairs of bracelets; her jewel earrings were over an inch long" (118). Unlike her brother and even her servant, she is never given a name; the girl seems almost inconsequential, an afterthought swallowed up by the rest of the room's decoration.

In response to such characterizations, scholars of Asian-American literature have sometimes criticized Sui Sin Far for exoticizing and orientalizing her subjects. I am arguing instead that when Sui Sin Far directly represents Chinese ornaments in her writing, she recasts Oriental objects as a trope that discourages the manufacture of fiction commodifying Chinese immigrants. Sui Sin Far imitates to parody these popular stereotypes of Chinese immigrants branding them as materialists and sensualists. In "Lin John," Sui Sin Far's mimicry of American and not just Asian luxury goods' sensuality suggests that the sister of the story is trying to assimilate into American society; she is being corrupted by American consumer capitalism rather than the other way around. The writer identifies the sister's fetishization of American dress as an American, not a Chinese, habit: thus the girl "eyed" a "sealskin sacque, such as is worn by fashionable American women . . . admiringly and every few moments stroked the soft fur with caressing fingers" (118). By depicting a young Chinese woman addicted not to opium, but to both American and Chinese luxuries, Sui Sin Far contests American bourgeois anxieties that found in Orientalized art a central trope for an emerging consumer culture.

Sui Sin Far also writes against the Orientalist practices of realist writers like Howells and Norris when she represents the sister's process of assimilating into the ways of American consumer capitalism. In contrast to the "old style" Chinese peasant clothes of the sister's servant, whom Sui Sin Far describes as "a heavy, broad-faced Chinese woman in blouse and trousers of black sateen" (118), the sister wants to dress like the American ladies she sees visiting Chinatown. By resorting to material objects not just to represent herself in public but in private as well, the sister has already learned to behave like these middle-class women. As Sui Sin Far repeatedly points out in the story, the sister believes that to "have a cloak like the American ladies" (118) and to have "a sealskin sacque like the fine American ladies" (119) fulfills her desire to be such a lady, that is, to belong to the middle class, to escape her fear that she is neither American nor a lady at all. Her desire for American goods reveals a slippage between having and being in this consumer society.

Sui Sin Far's characterization of the sister thus shares much in common with other more well-known female consumers in fiction of the period, such as Carrie Meeber in Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* or Lily Bart in Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*. For these characters, collecting things does not necessarily signify their own commodification. These figures are obsessed with luxury goods not because they want to participate in the economic system, but because they believe such goods enable them to escape the tyranny of exchange and utilitarianism. So too the sister in "Lin John" seems uninterested in the economic value of the things she possesses or in being an autonomous agent who participates in buying and selling commodities. But Sui Sin Far shows that these immigrants cannot escape commodification. As the sister insists at the end of the story, "Now, what do I want to be free for? To be poor? To have no one to buy me good dinners and pretty things—to be gay no more?" (119). For her, economic freedom only leads to its opposite, because practically speaking, impoverishment eliminates the power to have and therefore to *be*. Sui Sin Far points out that these immigrants are caught in a paradoxical situation; the irony, of course, is that the sister tries to escape becoming a commodity, a prostitute, through the very act of possessing commodities. It is the force of American consumer capitalism that leeches her of the will power to be free rather than any response inherited from her Chinese past. The Spencerian logic of determinism only seems to hold once she arrives in America, but when it does take hold, it does so with a vengeance: in the sister's determination to be American, she learns to rob even her own brother.

In "The Story of One White Woman Who Married a Chinese" and its sequel, Sui Sin Far again takes up and challenges literary realists' application of Orientalism to their cause célèbre, the ascendancy of big business and capitalism's impact on the lives of ordinary American citizens. She critiques key naturalist themes—the influence of abstract economic forces on the working class, the claim to a scientific objectivity, and the application of social Darwinism to racial mixing represented in Norris's tale. Both this story and its sequel are told in the first person with an unnamed narrator, a white woman married to a Chinese man, Liu Kanghi. Liu Kanghi had saved the narrator from an attempted suicide after the woman divorced her first husband, a white man, whom she caught confessing his love to another woman. Sui Sin Far portrays the first husband, James Carson, and the woman he desires, Miss Moran, as obsessed with political ideals that are inextricably intertwined with

their economic ambitions. At the same time, Sui Sin Far proposes an unconventional route by which capitalism affects these characters: she does not criticize these hard-working Americans as necessarily materialistic and acquisitive. James Carson appears initially morally laudable. Although "his parents had been uneducated working people he had himself been through the public schools" (67), a trajectory typical of the American Dream's self-made man and entrepreneur. Yet rather than pursuing ambitions to move up the business hierarchy, Carson appears to be interested in helping others. The narrator recalls that "he was considered a very bright and well-informed man" and also "an omnivorous reader of socialistic and new-thought literature" (67) who quits his job because he wants to write a book on social reform. He is even interested in women's suffrage and tries to persuade his wife, who originally worked as a stenographer until she married and had a child, to return to work: the narrator recalls, "He would often draw my attention to newspaper reports concerning women of marked business ability and enterprise" (67).

Nonetheless, Carson is still a prisoner to the power and dreams promised by capitalism. His idea of reform is revealed to be doubly self-interested: his promotion of women's rights has to do with his attraction to Miss Moran, who happens to work as a bookkeeper, and his feelings for her appear to be founded on what she might be able to do for him. When he finds that his wife is reluctant to return to work and financially support him so he can write his book, he confesses his admiration for Miss Moran, declaring, "there's a woman at our place who has a head for figures that makes her worth over a hundred dollars a month. *Her* husband would have a chance to develop himself" (68). In a similar fashion, the narrator's husband wants to turn his wife into a money-making machine by having her work as a stenographer on divorce cases. Chiding her for her lack of entrepreneurial initiative and failure to aspire, as a New Woman would, to improve her material condition, he criticizes her as "behind the times" and not "up to date" (70). He complains to her that "if you had had ambition of the right sort you would have perfected yourself in your stenography so that you could have taken cases in court. There's a little fortune in that business" (70). That Carson is for or against capitalism and the prevailing patriarchal system turns out to matter less than that he is so obsessed with these issues. Self-serving, Carson can only think of humans as Marx describes them, in exclusively material terms, or as commodities with a use or exchange value. The husband values Miss Moran as a machine "worth

over a hundred dollars a month” that produces money so he can “develop himself.”

In short, Sui Sin Far satirizes Carson and Miss Moran as Progressive Era reformists influenced, as were naturalist writers, by a faith in maintaining a rational and objective distance from their subjects to resolve social problems. Through the character of Miss Moran, Sui Sin Far again criticizes this philosophy for the totalizing reach of its view of human relations by representing Carson’s object of affection as a New Woman who merely imitates the worst abuses and limitations of a male-dominated business world. Miss Moran has embraced the hegemonic and rationalized discourse of corporate capitalism and patriarchy, and she has developed into a heartless machine conditioned by the environment she works in.

The narrator therefore later disagrees with her husband when he calls Miss Moran a “great woman,” objecting that the bookkeeper is “no woman at all” (69). Instead, the narrator characterizes her as a woman in man’s clothing, “standing there in the prime of her life and strength, broad-shouldered, masculine-featured” (69). When the Carsons’ baby becomes sick and James goes to get a doctor, Sui Sin Far describes Miss Moran as emotionally detached, observing the child “with the curious eyes of one who neither loved nor understood children” (69). Her only comment about the suffering child is that “there is no necessity for its being sick . . . there must be an error somewhere” (69). In calling the child’s sickness simply an “error,” she dehumanizes and reifies the child, treating humans as numbers in a column that don’t add up correctly. Like Carson, Miss Moran uses progressive ideals—in this case expressed through a missionary’s religious discourse—as an excuse to promote a philosophy based on a rationalized rather than an ordered moral universe. Lacking the ability to feel, she asserts that “sin, sorrow, and sickness all mean the same thing,” and she insensitively suggests that the child deserved to get sick because “We have no disease that we do not deserve, no trouble which we do not bring upon ourselves” (69). She believes her society operates with the logic of a machine: an individual’s action must automatically result in a single predetermined outcome. The bookkeeper’s rhetorical repetition of the word “no” and her alliteration of “sin,” “sorrow,” and “sickness” with “same” imposes a single meaning on all four words, presenting the absolutist view that sin must produce sorrow and sickness.

It is the provenance of Sui Sin Far’s Chinese characters to remind Americans of the limitations of the cultural logic of capitalism, thus asserting that realist principles should be disentangled from a racist

Orientalism. Where Norris represents a Chinatown that enslaves a white woman, Sui Sin Far provides a Chinese character who heroically saves a white woman. Liu Kanghi happens to see the narrator trying to drown herself and her child after she has divorced Carson but has failed to find a means to support herself. Liu will eventually find her a safe place to stay as well as a job doing embroidery for the Asian ornaments the merchant sells in his Chinatown store. Thus Sui Sin Far distinguishes these objects as handmade rather than manufactured in a factory, items most likely produced for the Chinese community rather than for America's middle class.¹⁸ Although capitalism is a necessary evil for the immigrant, Sui Sin Far emphasizes the possibility of valuing a life beyond achieving merely physical survival and betterment. The kind of work Liu offers is done for payment, but it also brings balance and harmony into the narrator's life, allowing her to care for others and yet express her desire for beauty. As the narrator comments, "Artistic needlework had always been my favorite occupation, and when it became a source both of remuneration and pleasure, I began to feel that life was worth living, after all" (74). Chinese commodities manage to satisfy both the narrator's economic and her aesthetic needs, putting pressure on the binarized Western opposition between commerce and the arts.

Sui Sin Far thus confronts realist writers' anxieties of the loss of art and beauty in a capitalist world, but she denies that trade with China or the influx of Chinese immigrants is responsible for the development of this state of affairs. In her choice of the main setting with which she identifies Liu Kanghi, Sui Sin Far reinforces her point that American Orientalism commodifies Chinese immigrants rather than immigrants being complicit in the emergence of consumer capitalist society. Challenging the popular image of the Chinese merchant surrounded in his store by a randomly organized hodge-podge of imported art objects, Sui Sin Far avoids representing Liu Kanghi at work, that is, as an immigrant pursuing the American Dream on what Chinese immigrants called Gold Mountain, and instead shows him at home with his wife and children. By focusing more on Liu's home-life, Far can portray him in terms of his intellectual and artistic preferences, his interest in literature, religion, and music, rather than in terms of his business prowess (78).

Sui Sin Far also opposes Orientalist representations of Chinese aesthetics such as that in Howells's novel, which characterizes Asian decorating principles as aggressively dehumanizing native domestic traditions. Especially in her "Sequel to the Story of a White Woman

Who Married a Chinese Man,” she instead links the excessive collecting of bric-a-brac to Victorian Anglo-American obsessions with acquisition, again as demonstrated in Howells’s novel. Sui Sin Far is emphatic that the Chinese aesthetic is not one of disorder, random clutter, distortion, and immorality—the commonly held perceptions of Chinatown as witnessed in Norris’s story. Liu Kanghi’s rooms, situated above his store, are described as “large and cool” and their decoration reinforces an impression of sparseness and asceticism: “The furniture had been brought from China, but there was nothing of tinsel about it. Dark wood, almost black, carved and antique, some of the pieces set with mother-of-pearl” (79), so that Liu Kanghi’s white wife is surprised by the “elegant simplicity of these rooms” (79) when she first enters them. In this passage, it is as much what Sui Sin Far doesn’t put in the merchant’s house as what she chooses to include that characterizes the Chinese man as an individual; Sui Sin Far subordinates the decorative objects to focus on Liu Kanghi’s selectivity and taste along with his deeds as a good father and husband, opposing Orientalist representations of Asian art that accuse Asian culture of its dehumanizing influence on Americans.

Sui Sin Far goes further, opposing the realist writers’ Orientalist view of Chinese aesthetics, with its emphasis on cheapness and bright gaudiness, to assert a Chinese aesthetics that promotes discipline as a virtue by emphasizing such qualities as selectivity, subtlety, and preciousness. Thus the narrator can tell that Asian items belong to an old, established set of traditions rather than having been mass-produced. She observes, “On one side of the inner room stood a case of books and an ancestral tablet. I have seen Liu Kanghi touch the tablet with reverence, but the faith of his fathers was not strong enough to cause him to bow before it” (79). Rather than foregrounding their value as commodities or as objects of display, Sui Sin Far represents such material objects as embodying a spirituality and a respect for the past without lapsing into idolatry.¹⁹ Her images of Asian art therefore subvert an earlier American Orientalism that categorized art as either products of the mind (better) or of the body (worse)—or even more dangerous, hybrids that polluted the soul with the pleasures of the body, as Norris’s Asian ornaments were presumed to do. Instead, Sui Sin Far offers a Chinese art style that twists the conventional meaning of a mixed blessing: she envisions a hybridized art form that fully evokes the sensual and spiritual dimensions of human experience.

Sui Sin Far thus illustrates the irony in American society’s fearing Asian immigrants as contaminating agents—promoters of waste

in Howells's novel, dispensers of poison in Norris's tale—since it is instead the United States' Orientalizing racist fears that spread through and taint American culture. As I have argued here, the dominant literary forms of the time played their part in helping to infect middle-class individuals with that fear when writers resorted to a materialist-inflected Orientalism to buttress their realist ideals. And yet it was some of the principles ascribed to Asian aesthetics that would in the end prevail among modernity's avant-garde in the beginning decades of the twentieth century—although a more accurate sense of Asian aesthetics would not spread to popular culture for still some time. Even as realist writers viewed Asian decorative art as a rival to their reformist objectives against corporate capitalism, the avant-garde modernists would come to defend aesthetic principles linked with Asian art that the realists rejected. Literary modernists would emulate their colleagues in the visual and fine arts to promote the advantages of a subjective and nonmimetic language over those of an objective and transparent prose. To the degree that Sui Sin Far mimicked realism's detail-laden physical description, she anticipates this emergence of modernism by foregrounding how the Chinese art-object challenges realism's assertion that art should divide the corporal sphere from that of intangible ideas.

Notes

¹ William Dean Howells, "Editor's Study," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 76, no. 451 (1887), 153.

² Frank Norris, "Novelists of the Future: The Training They Need," *Novels and Essays* (New York: The Library of America, 1986), 1156.

³ For the purposes of this essay, I collapse the distinction between naturalism and realism although I recognize Norris's desire to distinguish the two movements. Howells was more interested in representing the middle class, and Norris was generally critical of the working class. However, both movements chose not to write exclusively about the wealthy. I primarily concentrate on naturalism and realism's common thematic interest in economic themes and the impact of corporate capitalism on American society.

⁴ See Dominika Ferens, *Edith and Winnifred Eaton: Chinatown Missions and Japanese Romances* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2002); Lori Jirousek, "Spectacle Ethnography and Immigrant Resistance: Sui Sin Far and Anzia Yezierska," *MELUS* 27, no. 1 (2002), 25–52; Amy Ling, "Edith Eaton: Pioneer Chinamerican

Writer and Feminist," *American Literary Realism* 16, no. 2 (1983), 287–98; and Viet Thanh Nguyen's first chapter, "On the Origins of Asian American Literature: The Eaton Sisters and the Hybrid Body," in *Race and Resistance: Literature and Politics in Asian America* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002).

⁵ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 1, 3. Malini Johar Schueller's study of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American literature, *U.S. Orientalisms: Race, Nation, and Gender in Literature, 1790–1890* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1998) accepts but qualifies Said's premise that links Orientalism to Western practices of colonialism and imperialism. Exploring the aims the United States shared with Europe to subdue three groups of Asiatics (the "Barbary" Orient, the Near East, and India), Schueller complicates Said's characterization of European Orientalist discourse as an exclusively male domain by documenting the participation of American women writers (5). In *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2003), Mari Yoshihara examines the role that middle-class white women played in promoting as well as exploiting Chinese and Japanese as well as Middle Eastern material and visual arts during the fin-de-siècle period. Yoshihara concentrates on the impact of Orientalism on the white majority, investigating how the reproduction of Asian domestic objects helped free these middle-class women from the confines of gendered representation (6). She therefore contests Said's binarized characterization of Western culture as masculine and active in contrast to the Orient as feminine and passive.

⁶ Limin Chu, "The Images of China and the Chinese in the *Overland Monthly, 1868–1875, 1883–1935*," diss., Duke Univ., 1966; Robert G. Lee, *Orientalists: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1999); William F. Wu, *The Yellow Peril: Chinese Americans in American Fiction 1850–1940* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1982).

⁷ In *America's Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, 1893–1945* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2005), Colleen Lye demonstrates that "the Orient of the American Century . . . has signified an exceptional, rather than paradigmatic, Other" and that East Asia became associated with "a putatively unusual capacity for economic modernity" (3). The spread of this stereotype was facilitated by naturalist writers with their distinctive manner of representing Asian immigrants as an invisible presence, the unseen power of "social abstraction." Naturalism tied Asian-Americans to the literary form's fundamentally thematic preoccupation with the collective force of corporate business over the individual.

⁸ Besides Norris's *Blix* (1899), see also Gertrude Atherton, *The Californians* (1898); Mary E. Bamford, *Ti: A Story of San Francisco's Chinatown* (1899); Harry M. Johnson, *Edith: A Story of Chinatown* (1895); William Henry Bishop, "Choy Susan" (1885); Robert W. Chambers, "The Maker of Moons" (1896); Hazel H. Havermale, "The Canton Shawl" (1914); The Stevensons, "Chinatown: My Land of Dreams" (1919); and Joseph Hergesheimer, *Java Head* (1919). William F. Wu's book provides a useful compilation of stories referring to Chinese Americans for this period.

⁹ William Dean Howells, *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1976) and Frank Norris, *The Third Circle* (New York: John Lane Company, 1909). Hereafter cited parenthetically.

¹⁰ Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York*, ed. and intro. David Leviatin (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1996), 120, 121.

¹¹ All stories by Sui Sin Far are published in a collection edited by Amy Ling and Annette White-Parks, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1995). Hereafter cited parenthetically.

¹² The figure of the trickster is a common one in Afro-American and Native-American literature, as Henry Louis Gates, Jr. documents in *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1988). On tricksterism in marginalized authors such as Sui Sin Far, Zitkala-Sa, and Charles Chesnutt, see *Tricksterism in Turn-of-the-Century American Literature: A Multicultural Perspective*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons and Annette White-Parks (Hanover: Univ. Press of New England, 1994). According to White-Parks, Sui Sin Far as a writer fashioned a range of masks that functioned subversively in her stories. My essay supplements her claim by examining specific literary devices that undermine realist Orientalism.

¹³ John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776–1882* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1999), xxi. Yoshihara summarizes these pre-existing elitist strands of Orientalism as a “patrician Orientalism” grounded in the luxury goods trade with China and in the mid-1800s Japanese government hiring of American professionals such as William Elliot Griffis, Edward Sylvester Morse, Ernest Fenollosa, and Lafcadio Hearn as teachers and consultants (*Embracing the East*, 8–9).

¹⁴ Yoshihara, 15–43.

¹⁵ Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and History: The Evolution of a Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1999), 5.

¹⁶ Tchen, xxiii.

¹⁷ See, for example, Peter Kwong, *The New Chinatown* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996).

¹⁸ As William F. Wu points out, Chinatown's “small shops” mostly sold to Chinese customers (72). And as Yoshihara documents, middle-class America tended to purchase “Asian” style objects from catalogues of American companies or from a few wealthy Asian merchants.

¹⁹ Although I am claiming Sui Sin Far is not stereotyping the Chinese immigrants in her stories, she nonetheless does exploit the sentimental genre to some degree

here. Sui Sin Far grafts sentimentalism onto realist traditions to exploit the emotive power of sentimentalism's ideology and techniques. Compared to other Orientalist representations from this period, though, I would argue that Sui Sin Far's stories nonetheless try to counter the fear that Orientalism evokes.