

**“Virtues do not all belong to the whites”: The Portrayals of Americanization and
Miscegenation in Sui Sin Far’s *Mrs. Spring Fragrance***

The works of Sui Sin Far, who is widely recognized as the first Asian-American writer, revolve around questions of identity that capture the dissenting voices surrounding Asian-American immigration. This portrayal of identity is especially intriguing because of the nuance and contradiction inherent in Sui Sin Far’s body of work. Scholars have grappled with these complex portrayals in an attempt to decipher the social, historical, and political implications of her literature. A biracial woman of Chinese and English descent, Sui Sin Far writes from a variety of perspectives in order to paint a picture of race relations between Chinese and Americans during a time of intense Sinophobia in the United States. This paper will consider how several of the stories in her collection *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*, which was published in 1912, showcase central dilemmas of immigration and assimilation. Critics have examined Sui Sin Far’s portrayal of assimilation, but not through the comparative lenses of Americanization and miscegenation. These lenses, however, help elucidate the contradictory nature of her presentation of race. Americanization entails the sharing and appreciation of American values, customs, and culture while miscegenation is characterized by the mixing and interbreeding of different races. In *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*, white characters tend to view Americanization favorably but regard miscegenation with horror and disgust. Chinese characters are encouraged to Americanize and assimilate themselves but are strongly discouraged from pursuing intimate relationships with white characters, especially white females. Across several of Sui Sin Far’s stories in *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*, white women and Chinese men are stigmatized for pursuing romantic relations. Moreover, biracial children of both Chinese and white descent are regarded with confusion and even repulsion. A consideration of miscegenation therefore reveals yet

another contradictory impulse in Sin Far's writings. She not only captures the pressure to assimilate felt by Chinese immigrants but also the severe repercussions of taking assimilation to the level of miscegenation. Americanization necessitates a subsuming of Chinese identity into white culture, but miscegenation, especially as manifested in interracial marriage and biracial children, places the two racial identities on equal ground. Through miscegenation, white identity mixes with, rather than dominates, Chinese identity. Indeed several of the racist discourses surrounding miscegenation contend that this phenomenon pollutes pure, white bloodlines. These tensions illuminate the difficulties that Chinese immigrants needed to navigate and survive in America. In *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*, Americanization is often encouraged by whites because it entails an *effacement* of Chinese heritage, but miscegenation is discouraged because it instead implies an *equality* of this same Chinese heritage. This paper will turn to the stories of "Mrs. Spring Fragrance," "The Story of One White Woman Who Married a Chinese," and "Her Chinese Husband" to examine the contrasting portrayals of Americanization and miscegenation and their implications for forming American culture and society.

Before investigating Sui Sin Far's works, it is necessary to contextualize them with regards to miscegenation and postcolonial and Chinese-American history. Several scholars of Sui Sin Far invoke Homi Bhabha when discussing her works, as Bhabha's ideas of hybridity and mimicry are apt for deciphering themes of assimilation and biracialism. Bhabha's concept of mimicry, which involves the perception of the colonized or minority as desiring to perform the identity of the dominant culture but ultimately realizing that he or she is "almost the same, but not quite," is especially useful for my analysis of Americanization and miscegenation (86). Chinese immigrants constantly find themselves caught in this predicament, as they appear almost the same as the Chinese or even whites but cannot quite identify with either culture. Biracial

individuals are perhaps even more acutely aware of this liminality as their “almost the same, but not quite” status is physically evident as well as emotionally experienced (Bhabha 86). As Ichun Wang, a Sui Sin Far scholar who draws upon Bhabha’s theories in his article “Space and Identity: Hybridization and Boundary Crossing in Sui Sin Far’s Poetics of Diaspora,” asserts, “Sui Sin Far’s characters are always on the threshold of two different realms and two different cultures” (279). Whether these characters are on this threshold because of immigration, interracial marriage, or biracialism, they nevertheless feel the same effects of being “almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha 86).

Lisa Lowe, an eminent scholar of Asian-American studies, examines these racial phenomena specifically within Asian-American literature and culture. In her book *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*, Lowe posits race as “a contradictory site of struggle for cultural, economic as well as political membership in the United States,” and examines this struggle with regards to Asian immigration to America (ix). Lowe contends that:

In the last century and a half, the American *citizen* has been defined over against the Asian *immigrant*, legally, economically, and culturally. These definitions have cast Asian immigrants both as persons and populations to be integrated into the national political sphere and as the contradictory, confusing, unintelligible elements to be marginalized and returned to their alien origins. (4)

Here Lowe articulates the perils of the process of Americanization for Asian immigrants which Sui Sin Far illustrates in *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*. Lowe acknowledges the contradictory impulses to integrate immigrants into America and also to discriminate against and marginalize them as other. This observation is manifested in the contradictory reactions to Americanization and miscegenation in Sui Sin Far’s stories. The “Asian *immigrant*” can be almost the same as,

but not quite an “American *citizen*.” Lowe’s version of Bhabha’s “almost the same, but not quite” seems to be her use of the term “foreigner-within” (Bhabha 86, Lowe 5). She holds that:

A national memory haunts the conception of the Asian American, persisting beyond the repeal of actual laws prohibiting Asians from citizenship and sustained by the wars in Asia, in which the Asian is always seen as an immigrant, as the ‘foreigner-within,’ even when born in the United States and the descendent of generations born here before.” (5-6)

This “national memory” and characterization of the Asian as a “foreigner-within” are perhaps the roots of the racism present in *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*. No matter how Americanized an Asian immigrant becomes, he or she is still in some ways a foreigner who is subject to discrimination because he or she is not white. By coining the “foreigner-within,” Lowe usefully adds to Homi Bhabha’s theoretical groundwork. Lowe also mentions hybridity, a term in which Bhabha is greatly invested. Lowe is careful to note that “hybridization is not the ‘free’ oscillation between or among chosen identities. It is the uneven process through which immigrant communities encounter the violence of the U.S. state” (82). This definition of hybridity is particularly applicable to the forces at work in *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* because hybrid identities and experiences in this collection are often not liberating and are indeed victims of the violence of white ideology.

Sui Sin Far’s title story “Mrs. Spring Fragrance” serves to introduce these racial forces. This story perhaps best articulates American society’s cultivation of the drive to assimilate. Both Mr., and especially Mrs., Spring Fragrance are described as “what is called by the Westerners, ‘Americanized,’” Chinese immigrants (Sin Far 17). They are defined by and deferent to America. Mrs. Spring Fragrance’s charm is clear in both Sui Sin Far’s story and the scholarship about Mrs. Spring Fragrance. It is important to note, however, that Mrs. Spring Fragrance’s

allure is in part due to the fact that she is Americanized. For instance, when Carman, the Spring Fragrances' white neighbor, tells Mr. Spring Fragrance that Mrs. Spring Fragrance "is just like an American woman," Mr. Spring Fragrance feels "somewhat flattered when this remark had been made. He looked upon it as a compliment to his wife's cleverness" (Sin Far 24). Here, Mr. Spring Fragrance explicitly links cleverness with being American. A large part of his wife's appeal, therefore, appears to be a product of her Americanization. As I-chun Wang asserts, "Mrs. Spring Fragrance is a woman who dares to mimic, enjoys her hybrid culture and embraces assimilation policy...Mrs. Spring Fragrance was proud of being an American and was confident that she had already crossed the boundary of ethnicity" (275). The positive representation of Mrs. Spring Fragrance's aspiration to embrace American culture illustrates the desirability of Americanization. Sean McCann also communicates this desirability in "Connecting Links: The Anti-Progressivism of Sui Sin Far when he calls Mrs. Spring Fragrance "Far's paragon of all virtues." It is significant that the kind-hearted, "paragon of all virtues" is an Americanized Chinese woman. Virtue seems to be specifically linked with assimilation in "Mrs. Spring Fragrance."

Mrs. Spring Fragrance's role in demonstrating the value of Americanization appears quite clear, but the relationship between America and Chinese immigrants is further exemplified by the Spring Fragrances' relationship with their white neighbor, Carman. Just as Mrs. Spring Fragrance is linked to Americanization, so Carman is a symbol of America as a whole. Whenever the Spring Fragrances have questions about American culture, they look to Carman, who "had not the slightest doubt that he could explain the meaning of all things in the universe" (Sin Far 19). Carman gladly explains everything from "American" poetry to love, and he happily accommodates Mr. Spring Fragrance's desire to learn more about and assimilate to

American culture. Carman also portrays America in a very positive light, saying that “all Americans are princes and princesses, and just as soon as a foreigner puts his foot upon our shores, he also becomes of the nobility—I mean, the royal family” (Sin Far 23). Here Carman articulates a version of the illusory American dream which holds that opportunity and riches are available to all people who come to the country. America is similarly, albeit perhaps ironically, praised throughout the story. Overall this story portrays Americanization as highly desirable, if not necessary. Sui Sin Far may be critical of this impulse, as evidenced by her ironic treatment of white American values, but regardless “Mrs. Spring Fragrance” showcases the pressure to assimilate experienced by many Chinese immigrants at the time.

While the adoption of an American identity and way of life is promoted, interracial relationships are not. The pursuit of white ideology is encouraged, but the pursuit of white women seems to be a step too far. An embodiment of Bhabha’s “not quite” perhaps precludes the acceptance of interracial relationships (86). “Mrs. Spring Fragrance” serves as an ideal first story in Sui Sin Far’s collection because it introduces American expectations and boundaries for Chinese immigrants that the rest of the stories interrogate. “The Story of One White Woman Who Married a Chinese” and the sequel “Her Chinese Husband” are two such stories that specifically highlight how interracial intimate relationships fit into Americanization. Unlike in “Mrs. Spring Fragrance,” Sui Sin Far writes from a white woman’s center of consciousness in these two stories. The stories detail the white protagonist Minnie’s marriages first to an unlikeable white man named James and then to a caring Chinese man named Liu Kanghi. Minnie’s interracial marriage to Kanghi is portrayed as much more fulfilling but much less socially acceptable. In the two stories, the dominating American ideologies are once again articulated by the white characters, especially white males. Just as Carman serves as the voice of

American culture in “Mrs. Spring Fragrance,” so James Carson, Minnie’s white first husband, represents the same voice in the “Chinese Husband” stories. Minnie’s love for Kanghi is captured amidst a background of prejudice that appositely underscores the profound pushback against white and Chinese miscegenation.

It is useful to first examine Minnie’s destructive relationship with James Carson in order to better understand Minnie’s eventual decision to pursue a relationship with Kanghi. *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* features several stories about Chinese marriages, but “One White Woman” is one of Sui Sin Far’s few stories that provide an in depth rendering of white marriage, which is certainly not portrayed in a positive light. James encourages Minnie to become more progressive in their marriage, but looks down upon her with disgust and rage when she makes the progressive move of marrying a Chinese man after divorcing him. While James’ and Minnie’s marriage is initially loving, Minnie explains that it did not take long for the enchantment to fade. James desires for Minnie to adopt a more progressive way of life which would ostensibly subvert gender norms by requiring her to work and assume more independence. As the story unfolds, however, it becomes clear that James only wants Minnie to adopt these ideals so he does not have to work and can finish a book he is attempting to write. He rudely asserts:

“Give it up, Minnie,” said he. “You weren’t built for anything but taking care of kids. Gee! But 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.”
(Sin Far 68)

This interaction illuminates James’ antagonistic character and selfish values. He wishes to “develop himself” and could care less what Minnie would have to do or give up in order for him to reach his goals. He undermines Minnie’s selfless efforts to educate herself in business and

politics to please him, telling her to simply “give it up,” and does not appreciate the sacrifices or efforts she has made in order to support his dreams.

Minnie prefers domesticity; she enjoys the roles of wife and mother and would rather dedicate her time and energy to these aspirations. Sui Sin Far has been accused of being conservative and anti-feminist for championing typical female gender roles through Minnie, but I argue that Sui Sin Far is instead exposing the hypocrisy, selfishness, exclusiveness, and racism of the feminist movement through the character of James. If James is representative of progressivism and the feminist movement, there does not seem to be room for such women as Minnie or Mrs. Spring Fragrance who are more interested in affairs of the heart than in business affairs. Thus, James serves as another white male character that demands the adherence to certain American ideals that appear rigid and selfish. Scholars perhaps misinterpret the message of the story because they focus exclusively on gender performance without a consideration of race. If Minnie and, by extension, Sui Sin Far appear anti-progressive in their gender implications, they certainly subvert this characterization through their conceptions of race in the story. It is significant that Minnie’s marriage to a white male is oppressive, but her subsequent marriage to a Chinese man is fulfilling.

Whereas Minnie’s marriage to James is considered horrific in the private sphere but condoned in the public sphere, Minnie’s marriage to Kanghi is conversely fulfilling in the private sphere but frowned upon in the eyes of the public. As McCann aptly articulates, Minnie “can either risk interracial marriage and gain a securely conservative home, or she can return to a progressive white husband who will bring her little but suffering” (82). Minnie ultimately chooses love and domesticity with Liu Kanghi, but her decision does not come without its consequences. When Minnie first meets Kanghi, she is grateful for his gentle and kind character

which juxtaposes James' aggressive and selfish nature. Interestingly, Minnie describes Kanghi as "wearing American clothes, wore his hair cut, and, even to my American eyes, appeared to be a good-looking young man" (Sin Far 72). This description posits Kanghi as the epitome of "almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 86). Kanghi looks American in appearance, but still identifies and is identified as Chinese. In this way, Kanghi also can be categorized as a "foreigner-within" (Lowe 5). Minnie accepts Kanghi's offer to have her stay with a Chinese family whom he knows well until she regains her strength. The two of them grow closer, and Kanghi offers Minnie a job at his store as an embroiderer once she is well. Minnie much prefers this job to that of a stenographer, which was a job James encouraged her to pursue. This preference can perhaps be attributed to embroidery's closer relation to domesticity. She contentedly pursues her work and watches "with complacency my child grow amongst the little Chinese children" (Sin Far 74). Minnie and her daughter are pleased to live with their Chinese friends, and Minnie realizes "that the virtues do not all belong to the whites" (Sin Far 74). In fact most of the virtue in the story is attributed to the Chinese characters. Kanghi shows a kindness and acceptance towards Minnie that James never possessed. As a result, Minnie confesses that she "lost altogether the prejudice against the foreigner in which I had been reared" (Sin Far 74). Here Minnie admits that she had been taught to regard foreigners as different and inferior and was only able to shed this prejudice by immersing herself into their world. This change in Minnie is admirable, but it is not shared by American society as a whole.

Minnie's epiphany and relief are disrupted by the reappearance of James. James signals a reassertion of white prejudice against foreigners that Minnie thought she escaped. James runs into Minnie and she ignores him, but he persists by sending letters which force Minnie to move to her own house for the safety of her child and the Chinese family. James is determined to win

Minnie back, claiming that she is “prettier than ever—and much more of a woman” (Sin Far 74). He may believe that Minnie is “much more of a woman” because she works or because she has become independent, or perhaps he is simply lonely or bitter, but eventually James’ determination escalates and he shows up at Minnie’s home. He demands remarriage and to see the child, and he also threatens to mention her relationship with Kanghi in court if she does not acquiesce. Minnie replies that there is nothing shameful about working for a Chinese merchant, which James seems to acknowledge, but he then asks what the judges would say about her “walking in the evening” with Kanghi and “living for over a year in a house for which he paid the rent” (Sin Far 76). This conversation suggests that it may be acceptable to work for a Chinese merchant, but to imply an intimate connection between a white woman and a Chinese man would be seen as a disgrace. Lowe helps shed light on this contradiction when she reasons that “The United States have placed Asians ‘within’ the U.S. nation-state, its workplaces, and its markets, yet linguistically, culturally, and racially marked Asians as ‘foreign’ and ‘outside’ the national polity” (8). In this way, Lowe’s logic elucidates the fact that Asians may have been accepted economically or in the workforce—which is why it is not shameful for Minnie to work with a Chinese man—but that acceptance is not evenly spread to all social and cultural spheres. It does not, for example, apply to miscegenation. This selectivity is the reason why Minnie cannot refute James’ accusation suggesting the harmful potential of a romantic or sexual relationship between Kanghi and her; it also implies the seriousness with which American society viewed Chinese and white miscegenation. After being rejected, James exclaims “‘Ah! So you have sunk!’—his expression was evil—‘The oily little Chink has won you!’” (Sin Far 76). James’ hateful racial slur illustrates the contempt and disgust whites feel with regards to miscegenation. To be sure James feels affronted because he has lost Minnie to another man, but

he seems to be even more enraged because this man is Chinese. The implication that the Chinese man is superior to the white man in any way is profoundly insulting to James. Minnie responds to this expression of hate by further insulting James' masculinity in comparison to Kanghi's manhood by asserting that Kanghi is honorable and "a man" and James is "six feet of grossness" with a "small soul that cannot measure up to [Kanghi's] great one" (Sin Far 76-77). This offense to James' masculinity and Minnie's confession of love for Kanghi drives James to leave without another word. Minnie marries Kanghi and never hears from or about James again until she reads about his death in a newspaper. James finally leaves Minnie alone only after she communicates his total inferiority to Kanghi. James' disgust for Minnie's love of a Chinese man is enough to forever deter him from visiting her. This love triangle aptly highlights attitudes towards interracial marriages in America. If James is a representation of American ideology just as Carman is in "Mrs. Spring Fragrance," then his rejection of and repulsion towards miscegenation speaks volumes about the profound prejudice encountered by interracial couples.

This prejudice in "One White Woman" is not only manifested by James, but also by American society in general. Minnie tells the reader that "it is true that there are many Americans who look down upon me for so becoming [Kanghi's wife]," but she does not regret her decision regardless of the fact that "men cast upon me the glances they cast upon sporting women" (Sin Far 77). Minnie is looked down upon and perceived as a prostitute because of her decision to marry a Chinese man, which suggests a disbelief that any white woman could enter into a relationship with a Chinese male of her own volition. To white men, the only reason she could be pursuing this relationship is because she was forced, which is reflective of the stigmatized status of interracial coupling. Similarly, in "Her Chinese Husband," Minnie explains that "women did not know that I was [Kanghi's] wife. Once a woman in rich clothes gave him

her card and asked him to call upon her” (Sin Far 80). Kanghi is therefore subject to the same disbelief and prejudice about his marriage to Minnie. Society assumes that white women and Chinese men would not marry and continually acts on this prejudice.

Minnie makes it clear, however, that she is happy with her role as an “American wife of a humble Chinaman in America” because “the happiness of the man who loves me is more to [her] than the approval or disapproval of those who in my dark days left me to die like a dog” (Sin Far 77). In other words, Minnie values her love for Kanghi, even if it is unconventional, more than she values the approval of American society. Minnie experienced misery and hatred in her marriage to a white man and feels that white society abandoned her “to die like a dog.” It is Chinese society and its values that rescued Minnie and provided her with care. Thus, Sui Sin Far presents the virtues of an acceptance and understanding of Chinese culture—and even miscegenation—but she also realistically captures the forces that prohibit love between Americans and Chinese.

In “Her Chinese Husband,” Minnie explains that her marriage to Kanghi was plagued by: the constant irritation caused by the assumption of the white men that a white woman does not love her Chinese husband, and their actions accordingly; also sneers and offensive remarks. There was also on Liu Kanghi’s side an acute consciousness that, though belonging to him as his wife, yet in a sense I was not his, but of the dominant race, which claimed, even while it professed to despise me. (Sin Far 81)

Minnie is burdened by assumptions that she does not love her husband because of her superior racial status, and Kanghi is troubled by an inherent inferiority that he believes is predetermined by his race. The couple clearly must face constricting and pervasive racial norms in their own relationship and constant offensive remarks, especially, as Minnie mentions, from white men

who appear much like James with regards to their arrogance and ignorant assumptions. Jane Hwang Degenhardt, a scholar who engages extensively with miscegenation in *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*, interestingly posits Liu Kanghi and “the Chinese immigrant as a recuperative agent and protector of the debilitated white family” and “against anxieties about white emasculation,” white female liberated sexuality, and black male hypersexuality because of Kanghi’s dedication to patriarchal values and gentleness (656, 658). In this way, Degenhardt believes that Sui Sin Far attempts to demonstrate that the white woman/Chinese man couple does not threaten but perpetuates the dominance of white marriage values, however problematic these values may be, and cultivates a kind of conservative nostalgia. Degenhardt holds that Sui Sin Far strategically characterizes the Asian male “as an inappropriate target of racism” because “the Chinese-white union constitutes a beacon of progress, offering a vision of a future America that transcends national boundaries, yet simultaneously elicits nostalgia for a patriarchal past” (665, 666). While certainly provocative, Degenhardt’s argument seems to misinterpret Sui Sin Far’s intentions as conservative and defensive and does not account for the explicit disapproval of white society in the “Chinese Husband” stories mentioned above. Minnie’s and Kanghi’s perpetuation of patriarchy in their marriage does not in fact overcome racism. Feelings of emasculation and racism are still overtly manifested by James and other white male characters in the stories. Degenhardt too readily conflates gender and racial implications. Appearing conservative or sympathetic to white ideals in the sphere of gender does not necessarily translate into the scope of race. Ultimately Kanghi’s assimilation might in fact be condoned like it was for the Spring Fragrances, but his pursuit of a white woman is certainly not accepted by James or by the white society James represents.

Prejudice does not stop with the couple but is even transmitted to their mixed race children as well. Minnie reveals that only when the son of Kanghi and her

lays his little head upon my bosom do I question whether I have done wisely. For my boy, the son of a Chinese man, is possessed of childish wisdom which brings the tears to my eyes; and as he stands between his father and myself, like yet unlike both of us, so will he stand in after years between his father's and his mother's people. And if there is no kindness nor understanding between them, what will my boy's fate be? (Sin Far 77)

Minnie seems to recognize that she has a choice to subvert societal expectations, but her son will not have that choice. His status as a product of miscegenation will be carried with him everywhere. Sui Sin Far herself wrote an article for the *Montreal Daily Star* entitled "Half-Chinese Children: Those of American Mothers and Chinese Fathers" in which, among other things, she writes about an interview she had with a white woman who was married to a Chinese merchant who said that biracial children "are not by any means to be envied, for the white people with whom they come in contact that is, the lower-class, jibe and jeer at the poor little things continually, and their pure and unadulterated Chinese cousins look down upon them as being neither one thing nor the other—neither Chinese nor white" (187). These sentiments are reflected in Minnie's anxieties. Both Sui Sin Far and Minnie articulate the distress a biracial individual must feel over not unwaveringly belonging to one race or the other. Minnie identifies two levels of conflict which her son will have to navigate. Not only will her son feel the tension of being caught between white and Chinese cultures in his private affairs and identity, but he will also be subject to society's prejudices in the public sphere. In his article, Wang describes the distain for miscegenation at the time. He notes that anti-miscegenation laws in America were not struck down until the 1967 *Loving v. Virginia* case which allowed mixed-race partnering.

According to Wang “before this time, miscegenation was condemned and half breed children were considered abnormal and were not accepted by the community” (283). Furthermore, he explains that mixed-race couples had to make decisions about family life that account for public responses while also upholding their own private needs and desires (283). This harsh political climate, which has still not entirely dissipated today, explains Minnie’s preoccupation about the future of her son. Minnie’s son epitomizes Bhabha’s notion of “almost the same, but not quite” with regards to both American and Chinese cultures (86). He will possess characteristics and values of both races but will never fit easily into one culture. As Minnie acknowledges, racial tensions will perpetually hinder her son’s search for fulfillment because of a lack of mutual understanding between whites and Chinese.

It is noteworthy that “One White Woman” ends with this question of kindness and understanding between races and “Her Chinese Husband” concludes with an act of racial violence confirming Minnie’s apprehensions. “Her Chinese Husband” primarily recounts Minnie’s reflections on both her marriages after the death of Liu Kanghi. The story mentions, among other things, how Kanghi found Minnie crying after the birth of their biracial child and attempted to comfort her. Minnie explains that Kanghi believed “that if his own son was brought up to be proud instead of ashamed of his Chinese half, the boy would become a great man” (Sin Far 82). It is significant that white pride is implied, but Chinese pride is far rarer in someone of biracial descent. This distinction further exemplifies the perceived inferiority of Chinese culture. Minnie hopes that Kanghi is right, but holds that “he could not see as could I, an American woman, the conflict before our boy” (Sin Far 82). Minnie is familiar with the racism in America, and—as demonstrated by her musings in “One White Woman”—knows what this hatred might mean for their son. As Wang posits, “Sui Sin Far’s immigrants to the United States and the

mixed-blood second generation are always identified as strangers and they are subjected to the politics of exclusion” (279). Minnie and Kanghi have already experienced prejudice and hatred, and Minnie is able to recognize what Wang highlights here: that their son will be subjected to similar, if not more intense, racism throughout his life. Kanghi might be familiar with Chinese kindness and feel confident that his boy will be accepted into this community if he so desires, but in the end Kanghi’s vision is shot down with him at the hands of Chinese individuals. As Minnie avers, “There are some Chinese, just as there are some Americans, who are opposed to all progress, and who hate with a bitter hatred all who would enlighten or be enlightened” (Sin Far 83). Kanghi “was brought home at night, shot through the head” but still with two red balls in his pocket which were requested by his children (Sin Far 83). Kanghi’s death is tragic and a result of a hatred of miscegenation. His death demonstrates the ubiquity of this abhorrence of miscegenation because the loathing is shown to transcend race; both white and Chinese individuals are guilty of this hate in the “Chinese Husband” stories. McCann argues that “Liu Kanghi dies because he prefers the interracial family to restrictive national identity” (82). Kanghi’s death is highly symbolic as McCann suggests because it illuminates the impracticality of Kanghi’s dream of universal acceptance of interracial relationships and biracial identities. Sui Sin Far depicts miscegenation sympathetically, but she also aptly captures the atmosphere of racism that surrounds this phenomenon and its effects.

What can be gained from reading Sui Sin Far’s collection *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* therefore is a revelation of the profound hypocrisies surrounding Chinese Americanization. The white characters, especially the white males, of Sui Sin Far’s stories seem to encourage the Chinese characters to fully assimilate and adopt a white identity, but these white characters also manifest extreme unease with regards to miscegenation. This standpoint appears hypocritical

because miscegenation can be seen as a type of Americanization. To resolve this pervasive racism towards immigrants, Lowe suggests that America gesture towards “a politics whose vision is not the origin but the destination” (153). Liu Kanghi seems to trust that white Americans have this potential to look to the future rather than dwell on and judge the past, but he also laments: “if only more of them lived up to what they thought, the Chinese would not be so confused in trying to follow their leadership” (Sin Far 82). Kanghi recognizes the profound hypocrisy and inconsistency within white American ideology but also voices his willingness to work together with white Americans—and even follow their leadership—in order to improve the racial climate of the country. Thus, it appears that Sui Sin Far and her critics identify the need for mutual acceptance and understanding among all races that allows for different degrees of assimilation. The only way to achieve this endeavor seems to be to eradicate the misconception of immigrants as pollutants and instead see them as hopeful indicators of peace and progress.

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