

■ Whiteness in Another Color: Winnifred Eaton (Onoto Watanna) and Intra-Racial Citizenship*

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Abstract

This article explores the global formations of race and politics of Asian American identity through Winnifred Eaton's Japanese writings. Drawing upon Colleen Lye, Helen Jun, Julia Lee, and Susan Koshy, this article shows how Eaton's work emblemizes the idea of American citizenship as an "intra-racial" construct by vying various racial subjects against one another for political and economic inclusion. In particular her Japanese fictions, Eaton represents her Japanese heroines as a desirable subject and an embodiment of the ideal femininity and citizenship. This construction of Japanese superiority was contingent upon Japan's ascending role as a new power and its competition with European and American empires for dominance in the Asia-Pacific region in the early twentieth century. Eaton's work builds on global discourses of race and empire to challenge domestic racial violence and exclusion of Asian immigration in the United States. In her argument for Japanese eligibility to citizenship, Eaton posits the Japanese as a superior race, model citizens, and a decolonizing force, which made them appear "whiter" than African Americans,

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Chinese Americans, and Irish Americans, who were rendered perverse and degenerated in her work. By endowing the Japanese subjects with a new strain of American values, Eaton expands and also counteracts whiteness as the defining feature in shaping American citizenship. Nonetheless, her claim to the superior subject position for the Japanese betrays her complicity with Japanese and American expansionist logics, showing the fact that her articulation of a Japanese American identity is made possible by displacing otherness to another race. Thus, in analyzing citizenship as an intra-racial construct, this article urges for the need to examine the politics behind inclusion as we uncover alternative expressions of belonging and community membership in the United States.

Keywords: Asian American racial formation, intra-racial citizenship, Japanese American identity, anti-essentialism, early twentieth-century Japanese and US empires

No one was white before he/she came to America. It took generations, and a vast amount of coercion, before this became a white country.

—James Baldwin, “On Being White and Other Lies”

[W]hiteness has been a dynamic constitutive category of national belonging, . . . forcing a renegotiation of its forms in order to buttress its hegemony. I contend that a crucial effect of this renegotiation was the morphing of race into ethnicity in public discourses about national belonging, social difference, economic inequality, and global competitiveness.

—Susan Koshy, “Morphing Race into Ethnicity”

I. Introduction: Race for Citizenship

In 1922, the US Supreme Court upheld Japanese ineligibility for citizenship in a landmark case that stood unchallenged until the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act abolished racial restrictions for immigration and naturalization. The case involved a Japanese immigrant, Takao Ozawa, who petitioned for naturalization after living a respectable life in the US for twenty-eight years. He landed in San Francisco in 1894, working while putting himself through Berkeley High School and the University of California. In 1906, he moved to Honolulu, where he worked for an American company, married a local woman, also a Japanese immigrant, and had five children, all brought up speaking English. In his brief to the Supreme Court, Ozawa highlighted his and his family’s complete Americanization: he and his family had lived continuously within the US territories for many years; they had no ties to Japan or any Japanese institution in Honolulu; he married a native speaker of English, and the whole family attended exclusively American churches and schools (Ichioka 11). Ozawa fulfilled all of the naturalization requirements except one—his race. The Japanese was judged to be neither “white” nor African in racial terms, a prerequisite for immigrants seeking naturalization as prescribed by the earlier statutes of the Nationality Acts of 1790 and 1870. Yet, in ruling the Japanese as a member of the “Asiatic” race and thus “ineligible for citizenship,” the Ozawa case, as Mae M. Ngai has rightly observed, epitomized in the anti-Asian exclusionary practices of the US legal institutions of citizenship, which was constituted primarily through and against the “racial unassimilability” of immigrants from Asia (37-38).

While the Ozawa ruling reveals whiteness as a privileged identity for claiming to be an American, it also raises the vexed question: who was “white” in America? A central issue in Ozawa’s case was whether a Japanese could be considered a “free white person” based on the existing Naturalization Acts. The Act of 1790 had

established whiteness as a precondition for full citizenship by restricting the right of naturalization to “white persons” only. After the Civil War, in 1870, Congress extended the right to naturalize former slaves, making “persons of African nativity or descent” eligible for citizenship, whereas American Indians and Asians still remained disqualified (Ngai 38). Even though the legal status of African Americans was significantly enhanced, their social and economic conditions within the framework of the United States as a white nation improved only marginally. If, as scholars have argued, the early twentieth-century discourses of citizenship have not just constituted “white persons” but have also constituted various “differently racialized” subjects, how may we articulate citizenship in terms of both inclusion and exclusion, and assimilation and resistance? How do the ambiguously included subjects articulate themselves in relation to not merely whiteness but to blackness as well? How can this inclusion/exclusion of the Asian subjects in some way reconfigure the black-white binaries of race in the United States?

This article examines the global formations and politics of Asian American identity¹ in the work of Winnifred Eaton. As a highly popular and prolific writer on the turn-of-the-century American literary scene, Eaton published nearly a novel a year between 1890 and 1930, and wrote numerous short stories, magazine articles, and screen plays. In much of her work, she chose to represent interracial romances with spunky Japanese or Eurasian heroines and white American men, and most of these Japanese fictions were published under a Japanese pseudonym, Onoto Watanna. According to her autobiographical novel, *Me* (1915), she created these tales out of her “mother’s land” (176), while, in reality, she was born in Canada to a Chinese missionary mother and British merchant father. She repeatedly claimed a Japanese ancestry in the press and interviews, and occasionally wore a kimono and a Japanese hairdo for the frontispieces of her Japanese romances (Ferens 138-9). Given this disguise of her true identity, modern critics have found it difficult to situate Eaton’s writings in relation to other Asian American texts, for fear that such a comparison may indulge in the “good Asian/bad Asian” dichotomy (Ferens 2; Lee 81; Oishi “Introduction,” xi). This article proposes to read Eaton’s Japanese writings not as an issue of authenticity but rather as a testimony to the intertwined histories of US and Japanese imperialisms. It brings attention to what Setsu Shigematsu and Keith L. Camacho call the “inter-imperialist competition” between Japan and

¹ In recent years, the term “Asian American” has become more commonly in use than “Asian-hyphen-American” in academia. This is mainly because “Asian American,” by rendering Asian into an adjective, indicates a clear historical process through which the Asian becomes an American, whereas the hyphenated “Asian-American” (two nouns) shows Asia(n) and America(n) as discrete and mutually exclusive (Feng 18). While I use “Asian American” throughout this article, I am aware of, and seeking to emphasize, the historically confrontational relationships between Asia and America as people migrated from one to the other.

the United States in their co-edited collection, *Militarized Currents* (5). Situated within such a comparative framework, Eaton's articulations as a Japanese American and her claims for Japanese racial superiority shed light on the rivalries and resemblances between early twentieth-century US and Japanese empires and further complicate what was seen as Asian as opposed to that of American.

This article also addresses how the relationships among white, Japanese, and other racial subjects in Eaton's work emblemize the idea of citizenship as an "intra-racial"² construct formulated by Colleen Lye, Helen Jun, Julia Lee, and Susan Koshy. As one of the pioneering efforts to move beyond race as a matter of black and white, Koshy conceives of whiteness as a Foucauldian "productive" system of power-knowledge that recognizes "the dialectical relationship between the meanings of whiteness, blackness, and Asian Americanness" (156). While Koshy rethinks whiteness as a persistent yet porous category in shaping American citizenship, Lye and Jun advocate "intra-racial" analyses of Asian American identity and citizenship to undercut whiteness as a privileged framework to regulate American racial formations. As Lye argues, it is within an "intra-racial" model that we can unveil "the multiplicity of racial logics and racisms" rather than merely evoke Asian American as "a third term to trouble [the black-white] binary habits of racial classification and analysis" ("Afro-Asian Analogy" 1733). Jun's "black Orientalism" provides another insightful case making evident how the discursive construction of nineteenth-century African American identity, which operated to secure black political rights and citizenship, was articulated through the exclusion and displacement of the Chinese. Mindful of these cautions against an uncritical "Afro-Asian" or "pan-Asian" analogy and solidarity, this article argues that Eaton's Japanese fictions complicate the binary thinking of American racial formations by envisioning the Japanese as an equal to white Americans in the global context of the US and Japanese imperial rivalries and expansions in Asia. By portraying the Japanese as a new model to assimilate or racialize the Chinese, Africans, and the Irish inside and outside the United States, Eaton's work challenges whiteness as a norm for thinking US citizenship and national belonging.

Importantly, through unraveling Japanese identity and American identity as intersecting in Eaton's work, this article aims to demonstrate how her dealing in the global contexts of war and racial reorganization allowed her to reflect critically on US domestic racial formations and notions about citizenship. Scholar-

² I use the term "intra-racial" construction of citizenship to emphasize the way in which the tensions and contradictions between racialized groups are made central to current scholarship of twentieth-century American citizenship. This emphasis enables a more nuanced study of race and citizenship and eschews the hierarchical structure implicated in the term "inter-racial," which often refers to "black-and-white."

ship on Eaton's work has read her texts within these larger contexts of war and colonialism to show what Gretchen Murphy calls "a greater understanding of the alchemy of whiteness by suggesting that American racial reconstruction took place in a more complicated international milieu" (161). While Murphy's main point of contention is that Eaton's Japanese identity "seem[s] whiter . . . [by] fight[ing] alongside [white] Americans against questionable ethnicity" (161), I suggest instead Eaton's vision of Japanese superiority borrows from a rivaling Japanese imperial rhetoric to counteract American expansionism in Asia. As such, Section II reads her Japanese writings in the global context of Euro-American and Japanese competition over influence in Asia. In this context, Eaton's assertion of the extension of equal treatment to Japanese Americans as white Americans finds authority in Japan's global status as a new power. To further this idea that Japanese (and) American identities seem more cohered abroad than at home, Section III illustrates how her Japanese characters serve as a new racial model to assimilate and racialize some questionably "white" immigrants, such as the Irish. In challenging the reading of Eaton's Japanese identity as a sign of her internalization of the dominant values, Section IV examines how her work vies the Japanese against the Irish for being the "desirable" subject while simultaneously denaturalizing race by revealing the constructedness of these racial categories, including whiteness, through her "freak-show" characters. Lastly, this article extends the metaphor of racial "freaks" to bring up the issues of authenticity raised by Eaton's work and discuss briefly the strength and stake of taking the performativity of race as a strategic anti-essentialism for Asian American struggles for equality and political inclusion.

II. Mapping Japanese America: An "Inter-Imperialist" Formation

The turn of the twentieth century witnessed an "inter-imperialist" formation of Japanese expansionism in Asia and to America. After the US opening of Japan in 1859, Japan underwent an array of rapid economic, political, and military modernization efforts aimed to compete with the West in the global hierarchies of race and nation. No sooner had the Meiji emperor been restored in 1868 than imperial expansions were launched internally and externally, leading to the colonization of Hokkaido in 1869 and Okinawa in 1879, the seizures of Taiwan in 1894, south Sakhalin in 1905, and the Guangdong provinces of northern China (關東三省) in 1905, and then the annexation of Korea in 1910 (Azuma 17). Especially with its defeat of China in 1895 and Russia in 1905, Japan quickly emerged as a regional power in the Asia Pacific, and became ever more ambitious to pursue an equal footing among Western powers by gaining the right of extraterritoriality from Great Britain

and the United States in 1899. On top of this ambition was Japan's "eastward expansionism," an ideology which held America's West Coast as a frontier to the Japanese empire and was characterized by the massive labor migration from Japan to Hawaii (Azuma 10). This eastward expansion movement coincided with America's westward expansion, bringing the two empires to vie over dominance in Hawaii, the Philippines, and Guam in the 1890s. Japan held a privileged position in these Pacific struggles. As Gerald Horne points out nimbly, the racial regimes of British and American imperialisms had allowed Japan to claim the position as a "liberator" rather than colonizer in the region, which posed a significant ideological threat to white supremacy. By framing its expansionist policy as an anticolonial and antiracist campaign, Japan was able to fashion itself as a "protector" of race, and goaded many Asian countries under Western rule—including India, China, Malaya, Singapore, Burma and so on—to look up to it as a decolonizing model (Horne 31). What does this imply about the racial status of the Japanese globally, particularly in America?

Despite Japan's ascending role as a new power, anxiety over the "yellow peril" which could overturn white dominance remained strong in the United States. In California, newspapers ran sensational headlines warning against the "Japanese invasion," charged the Japanese with "crowding out" white Americans, and appealed to the extension to the Japanese of the Chinese Exclusion Act. The Asiatic Exclusion League on the West Coast, for instance, advocated the passing of a bill that prohibited Chinese and Japanese children from attending the same schools as white children. This escalating anti-Japanese outcry reached an apex in the 1906 San Francisco School Board's decision to deny the entry of Japanese students. Eaton captures this public sentiment in her essay, "The Japanese in America." Published in 1907 in *Eclectic Magazine*, this essay critically responds to a *New York Times* editorial authored by a female writer, known as M.E.C., who clearly sides with the stance in favor of segregation. M.E.C.'s essay begins with a heated discussion among passengers on the train she rode one night. Obviously siding with segregation herself, M.E.C. notes a man's warning that mixed education can encourage sexual relations between Japanese men and white women, and that the Japanese man may aspire to attend university and "crowd the white man out" (7). She also notes that Japan's recent military and diplomatic success has convinced many Japanese that they should be treated as white Americans. This "egoism," to use her word, has prompted a Californian Japanese to appeal to the State Court for the rights of naturalization granted to white immigrants only. As she speculates, the problem with the Japanese immigrants is not that they were like the Chinese but that they were *not* enough like them: the humble Chinese knew their place as servants in the US, whereas the Japanese man "[would] not take his place with the Chinese" (7). She then concludes that Asians remained an "inferior

race” in America: “it is simplified to some extent when one is the dominant race and the other the definitely subjected one—the latter the servant class, and content to remain so” (7).

In “The Japanese in America,” Eaton sets out to argue that the Japanese were much less different from white Americans than white Americans themselves would believe. As she asks rhetorically: “Conceit Japan certainly has. What race has not? What of the conceit which makes the bland statement that because of its peculiar skin-color, a race is superior? Since when did the Oriental nations become the slaves or servants of the Caucasian race?” (*HC* 175).³ Countering the popular imagery of the Japanese as the “yellow peril” overrunning the white people, Eaton characterizes them as a new breed of servants, whose “self-respecting, clean, and decent” dispositions “elevated the station of the servant” in America (*HC* 176). To disassociate the racialized imageries from the domestic workers, Eaton compares the role of white women to that of Japanese servants and asks: “why is the work of a home, the cooking, the ministering to our personal wants and needs, not to be esteemed?” (*HC* 177). Drawing an analogy between the subordinated status of women and that of servants at home, Eaton encourages her white female readers to sympathize with Japanese servants just as they take pride in their house-keeping role. In her defense of the equality and inclusion of Japanese people in the US, Eaton also evokes Japan’s recent defeat of Russia and China as evidence of Japanese superiority, stating: “[Y]es. Japan is ‘bursting with conceit’ . . . crowned with her new war laurels, Japan’s vanity is more apparent at the present time. How was America after the war with Spain? At such a time would it have been well for another nation to speak sneeringly of it as an ‘inferior nation?’” (*HC* 175). By comparing the prideful Japan to “America after the war with Spain,” Eaton draws upon the militarized American racial discourse to construct a virile and bellicose image of the Japanese as worthy of citizenship as their white counterparts.

Although Eaton’s argument for Japanese inclusion mounts a trenchant critique of white racism, this claim which plays up the militant racial attributes of the Japanese and Americans reinforces the Japanese/American expansionist ethos at the expense of the rights of the Chinese under the shadow of the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). More than a war fought in Asia, the Sino-Japanese war significantly influenced the life of the Chinese and the Japanese in America, as the relationships between the two deteriorated rapidly in war time (Azuma 129-130; Ngai 172-173).

³ Eaton, *“A Half-Caste” and Other Writings*, edited by Linda Trinh Moser and Elizabeth Rooney (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2003): 175. Unless otherwise noted, all of the citations from Eaton’s work in this article are excerpted from this edition and cited as *HC*.

The war inspired a broad range of patriotic sentiments in both Chinese American and Japanese American communities. Nationalist supporters of each side considered their work as complementary to their struggles for American inclusion, and their rhetoric often intensified interracial oppression and antagonism. The Japanese Patriotic League in San Francisco (1888-1906), for instance, published an essay explaining why the Japanese were more eligible to American citizenship than the Chinese:

How do the Japanese in America and the Chinese in America differ? First, the Chinese in America represent the lower-class of the Chinese race, and the Japanese in America the upper-class of the Japanese race. Second, the Chinese are so backward and stubborn that they refuse the American way. The Japanese, on the other hand, are so progressive and competent as to fit right into the American way of life In no way do we, energetic, and brilliant Japanese men, stand below those lowly Chinese. (qtd. in Azuma 37-38)

According to the essay, whereas Chinese immigrants, composed mainly of the labor class, were “backward and stubborn,” and thus unfit for inclusion, Japanese immigrants, composed mostly of students and merchants following the 1908 Gentlemen’s Agreement signed between Washington and Tokyo, were more “progressive and competent as to fit right into the American way of life.”⁴ Insisting that the Japanese were more akin to Americans culturally and psychologically than to the Chinese (despite the fact that both the Chinese and the Japanese were judged as the Mongol race in legal and scientific discourses at the time), the *Issei* nationalist supporter adopted an imperialist notion of race, class, and family, wherein the colonized were perceived as feminine, backward, and unchanging, so as to construct the colonizer as masculine, civilized, and progressive.

In her analysis of the warring relationship between Japanese and Chinese immigrants, Colleen Lye has written potently about “the significance of intra-Asian differences, differences whose elision is also an aspect of American Orientalist discourse” (“The Sino-Japanese Conflict” 158). Taking the example from the 1973 internment memoir, *Farewell to Manzanar*, by Japanese American writer Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, Lye argues that Houston’s “racial phobia,” as indicated in her fear of being recognized as a Chinese American, triggered by the childhood memory of her father’s threat that he would “sell [her] to the Chinaman” if she misbehaved (qtd. in “The Sino-Japanese Conflict” 157), epitomizes such contrapuntal formations of Japanese American and Chinese American subjectivities, which, as Lye notes, betrays the author’s participation in American anti-Chinese discourses.

⁴ The 1908 Gentlemen’s Agreement between the US and Japan agreed to limit the importation of laborers and permit only merchants, students, and spouses of current Japanese residents to immigrate to America, which was an alternative to the outright exclusion the Chinese faced; see Azuma 41.

Lye thus argues for the importance of examining “the specificity of the experience of racialization from the standpoint of the racialized” to address ways in which the articulation of an Asian American subject often entails entanglement with or displacement of Asian and other Asian American subjects (“Sino-Japanese Conflict” 158). Viewed within the comparative framework of Asian American identity politics, Eaton’s opting for a Japanese identity seems particularly troubling. On the one hand, her passing as a Japanese American writer may be a self-serving choice made out of the cult of *Japonisme* spread widely in the United States between the 1890s and 1920s. By passing as a Japanese, she shifted her status from an alien to a desirable immigrant at a point when Congress stepped up pressure to contain Chinese immigration. On the other hand, her attempt to pose as a member of the colonizer, to view from a postcolonial perspective, raises the deeper questions about the locus of agency, the power of mimicry, and the productivity of hybridity in her texts, which prevents her readers from quickly dismissing her as an opportunist writer. Eaton kept silent about her Chinese ancestry throughout her writing career. It was not until the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japanese aircraft in 1941 and the outbreak of World War II that she confessed publicly that she was Chinese, and was quoted in an interview as saying, “I’m ashamed of having written about the Japanese, I hate them so” (qtd.in Ferens 140). What can we make of such a confession at a specific historic moment, besides regarding it as an issue of her cultural authenticity?

While Eaton’s “the Japanese in America” tries to answer this question by marshaling a militarized Japanese identity counter-balancing whiteness, her 1915 biographical novel, *Me*, constructs an identity that cannot be achieved without combatting with blackness. *Me* covers the young adult life of Eaton’s alter ego, Nora Ascough, who claims to descend from an aristocratic Japanese mother and British merchant father, and like many of Eaton’s heroines in her Japanese romances, is portrayed as a young, attractive, and plucky maiden struggling in her debut in the world to be married. While it is written in a romantic convention (with a young naïve heroine, who must overcome many ordeals and tribulations to win her true love), *Me* shows a tremendous overlap between Eaton’s experiences and Nora’s. Like Eaton, Nora leaves her family in Montreal to take up a job as a journalist in Kingston, Jamaica; like Eaton, Nora moves to the United States to try her hands at fiction and playwriting; near the end of her story, Nora relates to the readers her aspiration to become a successful writer, the kind of success that Eaton enjoyed throughout her professional life. In keeping with the norm of “true womanhood” established in nineteenth-century American women’s writing, the novel further dramatizes Nora’s encounter with Afro-Jamaican men as if she were a white woman. In her attempt to construct an ideal Asian American woman-

hood, Eaton turned to representing black rapists as many of her white counterparts did. Her memoir shows, not so delicately, that if the cult of “true womanhood” in early twentieth-century United States is mainly defined by the white woman and the whole cultural fantasy surrounding her sexuality in relation to the black man, in order to become “white,” and obtain the privileges of the white woman, she must be coveted and frightened by the black man.

In *Me*, two scenes most clearly illustrate the imagery of the black rapist: the scene of Nora’s arrival in Jamaica and that of her departure for America. Upon arrival, she is overwhelmed by the sight of a large number of black inhabitants in the city. As Nora narrates:

I was amazed to find that this crowd was made up almost entirely of negroes. We have few negroes in Canada, and I had seen only one in all my life. I remember an older sister had shown him to me in church—he was pure black—and told me he was the “Bogy man,” and that he’d probably come around to see me that night. I was six. I never took my eyes once from his face during the service, and I have never forgotten that face. (*Me* 19)

Julia H. Lee has ably demonstrated how this scene reenacts the trope of the classic colonial encounters, where the natives’ “blackness, shame, and guilt” serve an important purpose of signifying the Western explorers’ “whiteness, innocence, and privilege” (91). As Lee notes, Nora frames her first sight of the island through the binary axes of the colonial discourse; once she is empowered to “name the negroes,” she is entitled to the claim of a “white” colonizer’s position while simultaneously disavowing her own racialized status (91). Nora’s memory of her childhood encounter with blackness recalls Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston’s fear of being “[sold] to the Chinaman” (qtd. in Lye, “The Sino-Japanese Conflict” 157). Similar to Houston’s protagonist, who holds a Japanese prejudice against the Chinese, Nora’s fear stems from the stain of “slavery” inscribed in the black body in a distinctively US racial history. Because of this irredeemable historical trauma which blackness evokes, Eaton’s text draws attention to the ways that different intra-racial encounters may reflect the more intricate and subtle forms of racism resulting from Euro-American colonialism or orientalism. For instance, in her study of American naturalization history, Susan Koshy notes, in the fifty-two cases brought to state and federal courts from 1870 to 1952, all, except one, applied for naturalization by identifying themselves as white, although, after 1870, citizenship could also be claimed by those who were black (166-67). As Koshy astutely observes, the fact that all Asians seeking citizenship by trying to petition as white suggests a disturbing racist mentality: petitioning as white, Asian immigrants could be offered the “compensation of viewing themselves as superior to Negroes,” even if they were denied citizenship (167). Self-identifying as a white woman, Eaton’s Nora finds

her voice and authority in the silence and sexual threat of the black man. The accusation of sexual excess of the black figure not just establishes Nora as a white colonialist subject with the power to rule, but it further establishes her as an especially *American* subject, whose anxiety over black sexuality carries the double overtones of both white and Asian prejudices.

The fear of black sexual excess is imbued with specific cultural connotations in American society during the Reconstruction age. Writing incisively about racial stereotypes, sexual violence, and lynching in American literature of the 1890-1912 era, Sandra Gunning observes that the imageries of the black rapist “proved particularly useful for white Americans seeking to come to terms with post-Civil War anxieties over national unity, black emancipation, altered gender roles, growing labor unrest, European immigration, and the continued evolution of the United States into an increasingly multiethnic nation” (6). This stereotype, as Gunning explains, expresses not only white male anxiety over the political consequence of black emancipation, but it also reinforces the white woman’s sexual-political significance. As slavery had restricted the identity of the black woman’s child to follow his or her mother’s condition, regardless of the father’s racial status, it appeared necessary that only the white woman should represent the preserver of the color line. Eaton calls up this cult of white womanhood to bolster Nora’s claim to a “white” and “American” identity. In *Me*, when an Afro-Jamaican man courts Nora, she reacts with feelings of shame and indignation. The man, Burbank, active in politics and the press, is an influential man on the island. When they first meet, despite being well-dressed and refined in character, Burbank is said to have an “ingratiating” face and manner which frighten our heroine. This fear proves well-grounded, for, while one day alone in the statehouse where Nora works as a journalist for the local newspaper, Burbank comes in, and suddenly proclaims his love and proposes marriage. He then kisses her before she can stop him. To this sudden show of love Nora reacts wildly exactly like a white woman who is accosted by a black “rapist”:

I screamed like one gone mad. I fought for my freedom from his arms like a possessed person. Then blindly, with blood and fire before my eyes and burning in my heart, I fled from that terrible chamber. I think I banged both my head and hands against the door, for later I found that my forehead and hands were swollen and bruised. Out into the street I rushed. I heard Verley Marchmont call to me. I saw him like a blur rise up in my path, but behind him I fancied was the other—that great animal who had kissed me. (*Me* 55)

The dramatic tension of this scene is reminiscent of the historical “rape” in D. W. Griffith’s landmark film, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), released in the same year as Eaton’s novel. Stalked by an ex-slave, the film’s heroine, Flora Cameron, leaps to

her death from a mountain ridge. This tragedy galvanizes a series of retributions and massive killings of blacks by the Ku Klux Klan, who perceive their actions as heroic deeds trying to protect the integrity of white womanhood and the Southern states from the ravages of black men. In a strikingly similar anti-black sentiment, when Roger Hamilton, Nora's American benefactor, is told about Burbank's intention, he declares: "Down South we lynch a nigger for less than that" (*Me* 75). Burbank is more than a black man. He is the racial phantom, conjured to solidify Nora's desirability as a white woman and then transformed into a rapist, a monster, or the "Bogy man" in Nora's childhood memory, in order to prove her racial purity and superiority. Thus, recasting Nora as Griffin's tragic heroine, indeed, by having her protector vow that the attack on her would result in lynching, a practice that is historically associated with the punishment of African Americans, Eaton's text successfully marks Nora as a white American woman while displacing her own otherness to the black Jamaican man. In doing so, Eaton's autobiographical novel showcases a complex articulation of Asian American agency for inclusion by triangulating her subjectivity across multiple racial (black-white-Asian) and national (Japanese-American-Jamaican) borders.

III. Contesting Irish America: Irish "Blackness" and Japanese "Whiteness"

Just as Eaton's notion of Japanese superiority relied on the colonialist (both Japanese and American) anti-Chinese and anti-black racisms, her representations of Irish Americans reflected a similar tactic, which mobilized the global war and realignment of race to reshape American domestic racial discourses. The Irish occupied an unstable racial space in early twentieth-century America. As a subjugated people under British rule, the Irish were often represented as "not quite white," or perhaps "black," in transatlantic circulation of culture, body, and politics. When they arrived in the United States, the Irish, not unlike many Southern and Eastern European immigrants, strived to construct their "whiteness" by allying with racist campaigns targeting African Americans, Native Americans, and Asian and Mexican immigrants (Roediger 184). The following section exemplifies how the linking of the Irish with blackness resulting from their colonized condition abroad largely shaped their racial status within the United States. Eaton's Japanese fictions captured the struggles Irish Americans faced for seeking independence abroad and equality in the United States. She also exploited ideas about Irish incivility and inferiority to facilitate her claims to Japanese cultural superiority and assimilability. By triangulating the racialization of the Japanese with those of "white" Anglo-Americans and "black" Irish Americans, Eaton allows us to see the con-

This tendency to portray the Irish with a stereotypical simian-like physiognomy, while popular in England, also became familiar to nineteenth-century American readers at a time when the population of Irish immigrants soared. Thomas Nast's "The Ignorant Vote: Honors Are Easy," which appeared on the cover of *Harper's Weekly* in 1876, derided the Irish vote as an ineffective one as the black vote (Fig. 2). Although represented in white face, the simian-featured Irishman was literally balanced out by the black man on a scale, implying that the counting of the two groups' votes might undo American democracy.

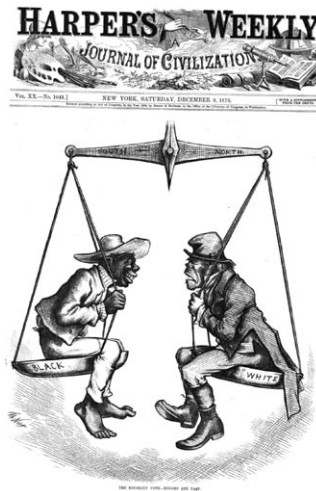


Fig. 2. "The Ignorant Vote—Honors Are Easy,"
by Thomas Nast, *Harper's Weekly*, 1876.

In America, anti-Irish prejudice not only placed the Irish in the position of the freed blacks, but such prejudice also inscribed in itself a nativist fear of the nation's fast-growing immigrant populations. The classification of the Irish as "freed blacks" or "second-class" citizens proved convenient for American abolitionism in support of a new form of labor to cope with the economic and social collapse after the abolition of slavery. Thus, more than an extension of British racism, American anti-Irish prejudices pitted domestic laborers such as freed blacks, Asian "coolies," and Irish workers against one another for marketplace and political inclusion while securing the dominance of the white Anglo-Americans by occasionally absorbing the variously racialized immigrant subjects. Paradoxically, as Eaton's texts unfold, it is through this racialized inclu-

sion of the Irish as “freed blacks” that her articulations of the desirability and superiority of Japanese American subjects are most strongly asserted.

The Irish are deemed as irrevocably inferior to the Japanese, both culturally and physically, in Eaton’s “The Wrench of Chance” (1906). In the story, Michael Lenahan, an Irish sailor and fugitive hiding from the English law, seeks refuge in a small town in Japan. Finding himself alone among a race of people he calls “ooglyhaythens,” (sic) (*HC* 78), Lenahan makes the best of his situation by teaching English to the townspeople, who are “ambitious” to adopt Western learning (*HC* 79). While he is hired as a “Professor of English” at a high school, Lenahan changes his title to “Professor of Irish” (*HC* 79). Twenty years pass, and Lenahan, growing used to his life in Japan, decides to apply for Japanese citizenship and take a Japanese bride. Both of his requests are granted promptly. His bride, Yugiri, a student on whom he has fixed his fancy, is forced to “[m]arry the beast of the town” (*HC* 80). Yugiri is portrayed as a classic Japanese lady: dainty, demure, and docile. Secretly loathing Lenahan, Yugiri nonetheless submits to her parents’ order and marries him. After their marriage, she becomes a faithful and caring wife, even though Lenahan treats her like a “slave” (*HC* 80-81). When, one day, Lenahan discovers that the man he thought he had killed is alive, and that he has fled home for nothing, he decides to return to Ireland immediately. Yet, too cowardly to tell his wife, he invents a convenient lie: that he is leaving to fight for Japan, his adoptive country, against “Roosia” (*HC* 83). His wife is overjoyed to hear this, thinking herself married to a self-sacrificing soldier: “I am the wife of one both brave and noble, who will give his life for honorable Dai Nippon! . . . I had misjudged my husband. The gods made him a hero—not a beast!” (*HC* 85).

Throughout the story, Lenahan is represented as the very opposite of heroism which Yugiri comes to embody. The story blatantly exhibits an array of physical and cultural dissimilarities between the two, thereby rendering the Irish man an inferior one: Lenahan corresponds to the imageries of a savage, with “fiery red hair . . . big knotted fists . . . [, and] great ungainly feet” (*HC* 78), whereas Yugiri bears “the features of the Japanese woman of patrician blood—small mouth, thin nose, high brow, pointed chin, and inscrutable eyes” (*HC* 82); Lenahan is “a bad and cruel husband,” occasionally making his wife endure his “vile tongue and heavy fist” when he is drunk, whereas Yugiri is “a good wife,” always waiting upon her husband “as if he [were] a helpless baby” (*HC* 82-83); Lenahan is an unfaithful citizen who lies about his leaving to join the war while in fact planning to desert his wife to return to Ireland alone; in contrast, when her husband sets off, Yugiri, a “true Japanese woman,” orders the national flag of Japan to be set on the roof of their house, a gesture “signifying to the world that this [is] the home of a Japanese soldier” (*HC* 84). Not only is Lenahan por-

trayed as a bad spouse and citizen, but he is also a clumsy soldier. While Lenahan loudly and drunkenly celebrates his departure with a few Irish sailors in a teahouse, two Japanese soldiers passing by overhear him, and force him to join the army as he promises his wife. Lenahan's physical differences even mark him in the army: he is a giant, while Japanese soldiers are little and fast; he snores, while Japanese soldiers sleep quietly; when he fights, he sings Irish songs "as though he were a boy playing some joyous game" (*HC* 94), while Japanese soldiers fight silently and vigilantly. According to Eaton, when fighting alongside the Japanese soldiers, Lenahan resembles more the fluttering Chinese and grunting Russians on the battlefield. Compared to the Chinese or Russians, the Irish are rendered coarse, timid, and treacherous, making the brave and dutiful Japanese people become more desirable.

While this story endorses a gendered nationalism, it suggests that it is the Japanese woman, rather than the Irishman, who can take up the responsibilities and embody the values of patriotic citizenship. In the story, Yugiri signifies not just the female sphere of power located in domesticity and womanhood, but she also wields her power in the masculine domain characterized by war and patriotism. A daughter inheriting her samurai father's spirit, Yugiri is depicted as a "true" Japanese woman, a patriot willing to sacrifice her personal interests and happiness for the glory of her family and nation. She represents an ideal citizen who can facilitate racialization and assimilation of her Irish husband. Indeed, Yugiri seems to "redeem" Lenahan by making him a hero. As the story unfolds, Lenahan, "this shivering refugee, this wife-beater and drunkard, in the face of an actual torrent of battle plunged into the heart of it, with never a thought of fear in his heart, and on his lips a song" (*HC* 95). The Irish melody Lenahan sings reveals his colonized status under British imperialism: "Oh, Paddy dear, an' did you hear/The news that's going round?/The Irish are forbid by law/To walk on British ground" (*HC* 94). By having the Irish man fight for Japan, his country of adoption, Eaton represents Japan as a place of "freedom" and a symbol of the decolonizing force to help "liberate" the Irish people from the oppression of the British empire. The "civilizing" gesture of the story becomes clear near the end of the story. After he is fatally wounded, Lenahan, instead of clamoring in his usual Irish way, dies calmly whispering love and remorse to his wife: "I'm coming back for you. Giri—my girl—my wife!" (*HC* 95). In this final scene, the act of confession of love by the dying Irish man to his Japanese wife is significant because it demonstrates the Irish man's complete assimilation into the Japanese culture. Having the Irish man die a reformed man, a loving husband, and a Japanese soldier at the end, Eaton's story argues implicitly that the Japanese are more tolerant to racial differences than the British or American people.

IV. Staging Irish-Japanese-American Triangles: De-naturalization of Race

If, in “The Wrench of Chance,” Eaton suggests that citizenship is made available through the assimilation of the immigrant by eliminating his differences, these differences become the very reason why the global racial actors acquire citizenship in her turn-of-the-century story, “The Loves of Sakura Jiro and the Three Headed Maid” (1903). Set in a New York freak show, this story represents a group of racial performers who display physical anomalies for public entertainment. The story plot revolves around a love triangle that involves Jiro, the Japanese student; his rival, Kelly, the working-class Irishman; and their love interest, Marva, the white American woman. When the story opens, Jiro, to avoid conscription in Japan because he is “a poet, a dreamer, no swallower of blood,” travels to America to pursue his study of the “barbarians,” to whom he refers to as Americans (*HC* 60). Eight months later, when the remittances from home stop coming, he finds himself out in the street and penniless. While wandering in the New York streets, Jiro is struck by a glaring poster, with a fire-breathing man on it. He then joins a host of other “freaks” in the dime museum. The museum is composed of four performers, each with different brands of tricks. Jiro performs Oriental feats and illusions depicted as “subtle” and “delicate” (*HC* 63). He takes a platform beside the tobacco-chewing and fire-breathing juggler, Kelly, billed as “Ostero, the Spanish juggler.” In a distant corner of the room is the “three-headed maid” performed by the white American woman, Marva. Next to her stands the female snake charmer, Yido, whose ethnicity is left unspecified. The museum manager is overjoyed to hire Jiro, whom he thinks can double up with Kelly to fit an ethnographic exhibit. As he proclaims, “it will be the East and the West, side by side, [each] exploiting the best of their characteristic civilizations” (*HC* 63).

The “freakishness” evoked by these racial performers can be read as a veiled critique of the social stereotypes imposed on the immigrant bodies. Current scholarship on American freak shows has stressed the subversive role the “freak” played in a specific historic context. Thomas Fahy and Cynthia Wu, for instance, have demonstrated how “freaks” can generate multiple, often intersecting, narratives of race, gender, sexuality, disability, and nation, exposing how certain subjects were marginalized or monsterized within the United States. As Fahy notes, the success of the “freak” lies in his or her ability to “represent what the audience [is] not,” and to simultaneously “challenge and reinforce binaries about gender (male and female), race (white and nonwhite), and bodies (able and disabled)” (2-3). Writing from a related context of Asian American exclusion, Wu examines the cultural work performed by the famous “Siamese twins,” Chang and Eng Bunker, and explores how

the Bunkers emerged as a literary trope for narratives about the conjoinment of the North and the South and about the conflation of Chinese origins and racial “disability” that in turn justified the anti-Chinese exclusion laws in postbellum America. Cast as “freaks,” Eaton’s characters learn to perform exaggerated versions of race, gender, and nationality, as each of them deals with different brands of tricks and must differentiate themselves from one another: Marva represents a dutiful housewife with three heads; Yido can switch between an Oriental snake charmer and a regular servant in a flash; Kelly shows off working-class manhood by chewing tobacco and breathing fire; Jiro works on dizzying Oriental magic. These “freaks” are both familiar and unfamiliar, enticing while threatening to the viewers. They mimic the roles and perform social and cultural expectations that define ordinary social actors such as the housewife, servant, laborer, and student; yet by functioning as “freaks,” they lay bare the constructedness of the performed racialized and sexualized identities.

While “freaks” can denaturalize race, Eaton shows that there are certain social hierarchies that even her versatile and chameleon characters cannot transcend. “Ostero, the Spanish juggler,” who stands higher than the Asian man on the turn-of-the-century racial scale, “had only to put a quid of tobacco in his mouth, with his Gaelic grin, and shoot balls of flame to move the triple-necked lady to admiration” (*HC* 63). Jiro, whose tricks have won him the glorious epithet the “Japanese wonder” in the business, receives yet a rather cold response from her: “just like any lady that happened to be born a Hindu could do; but there’s nothin’ manly ’bout them” (*HC* 63). Desperate to win Marva’s love, Jiro takes Yido’s advice “to do something more in Kelly’s line, but something better than he can ever do” (*HC* 64). He first inhales gas, and then blows it into the tube connected to the kitchen burner to cook breakfast. When the breakfast is done, Jiro faints, not onto the floor but into the chest of Marva, who cries out in tears, “He did it for me, he did it all for me!” (*HC* 66). In conducting this feat, Jiro proves himself “manly” enough even in the kitchen—for if a woman cooks, he can make fire. Pitting the effeminate Asian student against the hyper-masculinized Spanish-Irish working-class man for the white woman’s attention, the story seems to reinforce the Orientalist notions of race, class, and gender, and claims it is the Asian man who should learn to play the white man’s game to win over the white lady. It also suggests that while all the other characters need to perform a “fake” identity to survive (Kelly shows off his “Spanish” muscle power and belching; Jiro invents subtle Oriental tricks; Yido acts mysterious and obscure), the white woman, Marva, keeps her place by showing exactly who she is: blond, aloof, and desirable. One may wonder: how is Eaton’s work any different from that of a white woman?

V. Conclusion: Is Race Performable?

The question raised above, a question regarding the authenticity in Eaton's oeuvre and her way of treating differences, is a recurring one many critics have strived to answer. In her afterword to Eaton's *Me*, Linda Trinh Moser comments wryly: "The textual silence regarding Eaton's Chinese ancestry makes it difficult to read *Me* as an autobiography, let alone an ethnic one" (*Me* 358). Writing in a less condemning tone, Dominica Ferens reads Eaton as a master performer of ethnic differences like the popular Asian American autobiographers in the later time, such as Maxine Hong Kingston, the author of *The Woman Warrior*. "[B]y perform[ing] the exotic difference that mainstream society inscribed on their bodies," Ferens notes, these writers "tried to maintain a distance that allowed them to always keep in sight and occasionally parody the sexist/orientalist frame within which they posed" (143). Ferens's reading of the performativity of race and gender in Eaton's memoir is an insightful one because it exemplifies a strategic move in memoir studies away from the old debate of authenticity to exploring how a text is written in response to a specific historical, social, and cultural condition shaping the author's identity. But I would like to note further that such a strategy may fall into the trap of what David Palumbo-Liu calls the "uncritical postmodernization of Asian-American literature." This strategy tends to place postmodernist concepts such as mimicry and hybridity at the center of analysis, and thus "elide[s] precisely the constituent historical and conceptual elements of ethnicity" that should be foregrounded in Asian American cultural criticism (Palumbo-Liu 163).

This article has sought to answer how differences performed by Eaton's characters and the author herself participate in the global, national, and racial discourses that have shaped the various racial subjects in the United States. Her work draws attention to the inefficiency in thinking of the early twentieth-century American citizenship merely in terms of the traditional black-and-white binarism; more intricate and entangled "intra-racial" relationships must be delineated and theorized. In specifically the case of Japanese American struggles for inclusion, Eaton shows how such arguments for Japanese racial, cultural, and political strengths may expand and potentially challenge whiteness as an exclusionary construction of American citizenship in the early twentieth century. Yet, in doing so, her arguments posit the Japanese as a superior race, model citizens, and a decolonizing force, and thus "whiter" than African Americans, Chinese Americans, and Irish Americans by wrestling with the West for control and dominance in Asia. Endowing her Japanese fictions with militarized notions of culture and civilization, Eaton is by no means a war lobbyist. In a passage culled from "The Japanese in America," Eaton develops a more cosmopolitan and post-national worldview whereupon

one needs not to be marked by his or her color:

I am not Oriental or Occidental either, but Eurasian. I must bleed for both my nations. I am Irish more than English—Chinese as well as Japanese. Both my fatherland and my motherland have been the victims of injustice and oppression. Sometimes I dream of the day when all of us will be world citizens—not citizens merely of petty portions of the earth, showing our teeth at each other, snarling, sneering, biting, and with the ambition of murder at our heart's core—every man with the savage instinct of the wild beast to get the better of his brother—to prove his greater strength—his mightier mind—the superiority of his color. (HC 177)

Declaring that she is “Irish more than English—Chinese as well as Japanese,” Eaton takes off her usual Japanese persona in public and places herself alongside the colonized people. She also identifies as Chinese, a rare moment in her life, as she claims that she must “bleed for” the “injustice and oppression” the Chinese have suffered. As if to justify why she failed to write about the Chinese and their suffering, her text quickly slips into a hypothetical situation where everyone lives a contented and peaceful life in the world cleared of racial prejudices. Nevertheless, as the text suggests, it is precisely because such a world is yet to come, she has to speak through and against the language of her oppressors in order to pave the way for a more tolerant America to come.

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另一個種族的白人優越性： 溫妮芙瑞德·伊頓（夫野渡名）和 種族分化的美國公民權

摘要

本文旨在探究亞裔美國作家溫妮芙瑞德·伊頓 (Winnifred Eaton, 1875-1954) 的日風作品蒙受全球化種族形塑和亞美身分認同政治學的影響。本文發展亞裔美國評論家賴可嵐 (Colleen Lye)、鍾海倫 (Helen Jun)、李茉莉亞 (Julia Lee)、蘇珊·柯許 (Susan Koshy) 之理論，突顯伊頓的作品如何象徵美國公民權作為「種族之間關係」的一個建構，此建構中，各種族主體必須為獲得政治和經濟上的融入而互相競爭。伊頓的作品再現她的日本女主角成為受歡迎的主體與理想女性和公民的體現。她對日本人優越性的建構是伴隨著日本在二十世紀初作為一個新興勢力並與歐美帝國角逐在亞太地區的霸權而來。伊頓的作品建立在全球化種族論述和帝國論述的根基上，並試圖藉此挑戰美國國內橫行的種族暴力和對亞洲移民的排斥。在她針對美國日本人應具獲取公民權資格的主張中，伊頓假設日本人為優勢民族，視他們為公民楷模，甚至是去殖民的一大表徵，使日本人看起來比非裔美國人、華裔美國人、愛爾蘭裔美國人還要「白」，後者經常在她作品中呈現偏執或墮落的形貌。她的作品賦予日裔主體嶄新的美國價值觀，進而能延展且抵制了白種人作為形塑美國公民權最重要的詮釋特質。然而，伊頓對日本人優越主體性的主張反映了她與日本和美國擴張主義不謀而合之處，透露她在日裔美國人身分建構時，不得不經由轉移其異質性至其他種族身上之謀略。故此，透過分析公民權作為種族之間關係調適與鬥爭的建構概念，本篇文章認為，在發掘其他不同的認同表達和社會屬性之際，更應檢視美國融合背後的政治學之必要性。

關鍵字：亞裔美國種族形塑、公民權、日裔美國身分認同、反本質主義、二十世紀初日本帝國和美國帝國

