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REVIEW**

**Challenges of Identity Formation**

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# The National Association for Ethnic Studies

Ethnic Studies Review (ESR) is the journal of the National Association for Ethnic Studies (NAES). ESR is a multi-disciplinary international journal devoted to the study of ethnicity, ethnic groups and their cultures, and inter-group relations. NAES has as its basic purpose the promotion of activities and scholarships in the field of Ethnic Studies. The Association is open to any person or institution and serves as a forum for its members in promoting research, study, and curriculum as well as producing publications of interest in the field. NAES sponsors an annual spring conference.

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ESR



# ETHNIC STUDIES REVIEW

The Journal of the  
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## Challenges to Identity Formation

Editor: Otis L. Scott

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## **EDITOR'S NOTE**

At first glance the articles in this volume of ESR appear as disparate entities connected only by so much glue and binding materials as necessary to construct this volume. But this is not the case. Not that there must necessarily be a nexus between the pieces, but the fact of the matter is, that there are several points of conceptual convergence between the articles contained in this volume. It is also more than a little interesting that where there is subject matter convergence it occurs at research and instructional junctures long capturing the attention of ethnic studies teacher-scholars. The works included here again turn our attention to the important subjects relating to identity formation, the socialization processes of acculturation-assimilation-nationalism and how these dynamics effect our sense of who we are and our understanding of our individual and group place in this space called the United States.

The opening article, "Being Ourselves, Immigrant Culture and Self Identification Among Young Haitians in Québec," provides a case in point as to how young Haitians living in Francophone Québec attempt to develop a sense of identity given the many challenges they encounter in a host nation that is predominately Anglophone and a host city that is predominately Francophone. On this point, the article's author, Scooter Pégram, provides an interesting and challenging study of a clash between forces of assimilation, exclusion and resistance. In this article we are informed of the responses by young Haitians to societal pressures

to conform to the dominant culture. And yet, when polled, most young Haitians –mostly males- believed that the society was not as inclusive as it should be. Consequently, the clear majority of young males developed an ethno national identity. That is, they saw themselves as Haitians first. The observations contained in this article have important implications for how multiethnic societies approach the highly sensitive matters relating to incorporating different cultural groups into the body politic.

In “Beauty, Borders and the American Dream in Richard Dokey’s ‘Sanchez,’” Kenneth Hada, brings to the fore some of the cultural and emotional challenges facing many Chicanos in the United States who choose to pursue the “American Dream.” Hada provides an multilayered analysis of the protagonist, Juan Sanchez’s, struggles to achieve material well being in a society whose values are in opposition to Sanchez’s indigenous values. Can “happiness” be gained at the expense of one’s cultural values? What cultural costs does one pay when one crosses into another’s cultural space and adopts the value orientations of that space? Who do we become when we chase the dreams of others?

Similar questions and concerns are raised in Reinaldo Silva’s “The Ethnic Impulse in Frank X. Gaspar’s Poetry and Fiction.” Exploring representative works of poetry and fiction by Frank X. Gaspar, Silva challenges us to consider the role of ancestral culture in shaping our self identity. This is especially crucial when the ancestral is confronted by the forces of Americanization. We are urged to consider the extent to which these forces distance us from those cultural forms more familiar to that of our parents and their parents. And in this process who do we become if in adopting the new we display -consciously or not - a discomfort with the ways of our mothers and fathers? By drawing a portrait and presenting an analysis of some of Gaspar’s poetry and fiction, we are confronted by questions of identity and place as we try to better understand how acculturation forces in this society shape one’s sense of identity.

Larry Shinagawa’s essay, “Towards First - Rate Ideas,” challenges ethnic studies scholars to make a careful examination of the changing nature of ethnic group relations. The author sets forth a compelling case exploring the highly complex nature of



ethnic identity in this post civil rights era. One dimension of the complexity is framed by the tendency - in the first and second generation youth born of inter ethnic marriages - to subscribe to multiple identities. Shinagawa argues that this society has not developed a descriptive and analytical language to accurately explain the complexities of identity formation in the contemporary United States. And because we have not done this, we cannot adequately, that is, authoritatively explain -much less understand - contemporary ethnic relationships.

Shinagawa challenges ethnic studies scholars to do the scholarly work necessary to better understanding the social, cultural and other factors which shape ethnic identity in contemporary American society.

Each of these articles drawing from different disciplinary tools provides a salient comment of what it means to live in a multicultural cultural space. Each article should provoke much thought and conversation.

Otis L. Scott

## CONTRIBUTORS

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## **BEING OURSELVES: IMMIGRANT CULTURE AND SELF-IDENTIFICATION AMONG YOUNG HAITIANS IN MONTRÉAL**

**Scooter Pégram**  
**Indiana University Northwest**

Since the early 1960s, large numbers of Haitians have emigrated from their native island nation. Changes in federal immigration legislation in the 1970s in both the United States and Canada enabled immigrants of colour a facilitated entry into the two countries, and this factor contributed to the arrival of Haitians to the North American continent. These newcomers primarily settled in cities along the eastern seaboard, in Boston, Miami, Montréal and New York. The initial motivator of this two-wave Haitian migration was the extreme political persecution that existed in Haiti under the iron-fisted rule of the Duvalier dictatorships and their secret police (popularly known as the “tontons macoutes”) over a thirty year period from the late 1950s to the mid 1980s.

### **Background**

The first wave of Haitian immigrants to Montréal consisted primarily of professionals from the Haitian élite class. These immigrants spoke fluent French, were often university educated, and many fled or were forced into exile due to intense harrying by

the brutal dictatorial regime of François Duvalier. The total number of these arrivals was quite small, but their contributions to their adopted home were extremely significant as they often assumed the same type of jobs that they had left behind in Haiti; occupying positions that fit their occupational training (Dejean, 1978).

Starting in the mid 1970s, the social demographic of arriving Haitians to Canada began to change. This second wave of Haitian immigrants hailed principally from the working classes, and they fled Haiti in large numbers for many of the same reasons as the first group. However, these newcomers differed starkly from their predecessors, as they were much more diverse in their characteristics. For example, this second group of Haitian immigrants often did not possess the same grasp of French as the first wave; hence they encountered language difficulties and financial hardship which led to downward mobility upon their arrival (Dejean, 1990). While all Haitians speak Créole, this new group of Haitian immigrants spoke that language almost exclusively. While the first wave of immigrants fled Haiti and landed in Canada as business or independent arrivals, the subsequent arrivals were often asylum seekers who lacked the professional skills of their predecessors.

Concerning demographics, the Montréal region serves as the magnet and principal destination in Canada for all arrivals from Haïti. More than 95% of all Haitians in Canada live in Québec, with over 90% of them residing in the Montréal metropolitan area (Dejean, 1990). Haitians labour in many diverse employment sectors in Québec society, from blue collar to professional. Haitians are also extremely visible in Québécois culture: working as journalists and broadcasters in the media, contributing to the arts, as well as contributing to pop culture via the entertainment industry. It is important to note that this type of visibility does not exist in other areas of the North American Haitian Diaspora. For example, there are few, if any Haitians who have achieved similar success in the United States; despite the fact that the New York City area alone has a Haitian population estimated to be over 500,000 people (aside, perhaps, from Wyclef Jean and a few other exceptions).

This diverging detail regarding Haitians in the two countries can be attributed to several factors: higher rates of discrimination against people of colour in the United States than Canada; the Canadian government policy of State multiculturalism that actively promotes diversity in the country; and the fact that Québec is a Francophone society into which Créole speaking Haitians can integrate with relative ease. Concerning the latter reason, because French is the official language of Haiti and is the primary vernacular used by the Haitian élite, it has long been considered as a useful device in order to achieve upward mobility among all Haitians, despite an overall lack of comprehension in French by the vast majority of the population (Dejean, 1978, 1990).

The principal goal of the present paper is to gain an understanding of how identity and an immigrant culture is forged, expressed and ultimately transformed among young Haitians in Montréal. This particular analysis makes references to three factors: self-identification, their attachments to the host (majority) society, and proficiency in the heritage and majority languages.

### **Identity and Immigrant Youth**

Although young Haitians are a very visible part of the Québec mosaic, few studies exist that concentrate on this segment of the community and little interest has been given to the ever-growing Haitian community of Montréal. However, there are some notable investigations involving the integration of young Haitians that merit our attention.

For example, Stepick (1998) researches the large Haitian community of Miami from an anthropological and sociological perspective, examining various social, communal and cultural links between Haitians and Cubans in South Florida. Stepick (1998, 2001) argues that Haitians in Miami suffer from intense discrimination on the part of the three majority cultures surrounding them (Cuban / Latino, white, and African-American), and this social exclusion causes a type of identity crisis among Haitian youth. In his findings regarding young Haitian high school students in Miami, Stepick (1998:62-69, 2001) maintains that the many young Haitians would do anything to avoid being labelled "Haitian," as they felt that this designation would hurt them socially and economically vis-à-vis their peers. While perhaps not every single high school

aged Haitian student adopts this policy of shedding the heritage culture in favour of the majority culture, Stepick (1998, 2001) discovers that the majority of young Haitians indeed become “Americanized” in language and tradition very quickly. Stepick (1998:69, 2001) contends that young Haitians have little social incentive or reasoning to draw attention to their Haitian heritage, as they often prefer to blend in with African-Americans as a means of confronting the immense discrimination and prejudice directed towards them. Simply put, according to Stepick (1998, 2001) it is more desirable for young Haitians in Miami to assume African-American cultural norms and traits than to label themselves as “Haitian” and face possible intolerance from other cultural groups.

In a qualitative survey of Haitian high school students in Miami, Stepick (1998:62, 2001) found that a majority of respondents claim to have been discriminated against in various facets because of their Haitian heritage. Many of these students complained that simply being known as a “Haitian” damaged their social status and proved to be a reason for cultural bias and second-class treatment. Stepick (1998:62-69, 2001) contends that many Haitian high school students in Miami who assimilate into inner city African-American culture are reluctant concerning this decision. Consequently, an identity crisis occurs due to the fact that these youth are not fully certain to which culture they belong. Due to these facts, Stepick (1998:78) argues that within a few short years, in their struggle for social acceptance, young Haitians in Miami will achieve what for other groups took three generations: rejecting their cultural roots and embracing American culture, especially African-American traditions.

The city of Montréal is the second most important French-speaking municipality in the world (after Paris) and is Québec’s largest and most important urban area. Montréal plays a major role in the development of Québec; the sole area of North America where French is spoken as the principal language. That said, Montréal is a city that was constructed and colonized by the British, and to this very day it has a substantial English-speaking minority population. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, Montréal is a multicultural, cosmopolitan metropolis and an international city.

Due to the fact that French-speaking Québec finds itself in a minority position in English-speaking North America, immigrant youth in Québec encounter much pressure to abandon their cultural heritage and assimilate into the majority Francophone culture. Arnopoulos (1980) and Bauer (1994) argue that although this notion may not be an institutionalized policy set forth by the Québec government, immigrants are expected to assimilate into the fabric of majority society. Pressure to shed one's heritage language (in favour of French) places immigrants in a subordinate position in terms of their capacity and social standing. Since French-speaking Québec is itself of marginal importance on the North American continent in terms of language and culture, this complexity adds another ingredient into the social turmoil felt by youth from immigrant communities in the province (Arnopoulos, 1980). However, due to their similarities with the Québécois majority in terms of religion (Catholicism), and in lesser extent to language (French), young Haitians could find themselves in an advantaged position vis-à-vis the majority culture concerning their social standing in reference to other immigrant groups. Unfortunately, despite these possibilities, young Haitians remain marginalized by Québec society.

### **Immigrant Culture**

Tse (1997) contends that children of first-generation immigrants in North American society are frequently caught between two, and often three communities: the community of the heritage country that was left behind; the local heritage community of their parents and / or families; and the dominant (majority) community surrounding them. Méthot (1995:34) and Micone (1981, 1990, 1995) define the mingling of these three realities as "la culture immigrée" or immigrant culture. Because immigrant youth are caught in the mire of a unique social construct encompassing three societal communities, Micone (1990, 1995) argues that they often incorporate aspects of each to form a fourth distinct cultural community of their own: a distinct "immigrant culture." In this sense, young immigrants are transforming themselves by creating their own distinct traditions by incorporating elements from the duelling majority / minority fact of Québec, as well as

their own heritage designators. The present paper examines how young Haitians in Montréal identify themselves in reference to the above questions by analyzing some of the reasoning behind their choices.

Identity, in regards to immigrant youth in Québec and elsewhere, is sometimes considered as a social pathology in terms of self-identification, and Abou (1986) and Meintel (1992, 1995) argue that immigrant youth sometimes suffer from problems related to their identity due to these conflicting associations. Freisan (1993), Micone (1981, 1990, 1995) and Stepick (1998, 2001) examine topics relating to social integration and adaptation in order to explain the consequences of this type of a conflicting “double identity” association found among immigrant youth in Canada, especially within the province of Québec. In one sense, immigrant youth have the benefit of sharing values with the host society in addition to the heritage society, affording them the better of two opportunities. For example, Tse (1997) argues that possessing a double identity could be a tremendous advantage for immigrant youth as they have the ability to move between two distinctive communities (host to heritage, minority to majority, and vice-versa). However, Abou (1986), Méthot (1995) and Stepick (1998, 2001) assert that possessing multiple identities may also be a divisive factor that contributes to a complicated identity designation that could lead to a personality crisis and cultural confusion.

Micone (1981, 1990, 1995) and Méthot (1995) further contend that the notion of having a double-identity does not always have positive consequences, as it sometimes results in the formation of an immigrant culture as a reactionary method used by youth as a manner in which to create their own niche out of the surrounding social disorientation. In the context of Québec, Micone (1981, 1990, 1995) and Méthot (1995) contend that the birth of an immigrant culture is the direct result of misunderstandings by the provincial government towards the various ethnocultural groups living in the province. Despite some positive steps taken by the government to help facilitate the transition of cultural communities into Québec majority society, Arnopoulos (1980), Bauer (1994) and Micone (1990, 1995) argue that a general comprehension of the immigrant experience and the needs of the Québec immigrant community is lacking.



Dreidger (1978), Meintel (1992), Tse (1997) and Micone (1990, 1995) argue to differing degrees that although immigrants and ethnocultural groups belong to a certain cultural assemblage that can be held together by language, history, appearance (etc.), these groups often evolve, modify and transform themselves once they are within a society where they are dominated (culturally, socially, politically). Due to various degrees of this dominance, ethnocultural minority groups may soon diverge from their heritage culture (Tse, 1997).

In the 1970s, the new nationalist manifestation of Québec became firmly entrenched within the Canadian federation, finally allowing the province an opportunity to address issues dealing with the minority fact within it (Arnopoulos, 1980). After the adoption of the Charter of the French Language in 1977 (known as Bill 101) many in nationalists in Québec were confronted with the compulsory reality of integrating the province's cultural communities into the majority Francophone culture (Arnopoulos, 1980). While the language legislation established French as the official language of Québec, Bauer (1994) maintains that cultural communities within the province tend to assimilate into majority society at a much slower pace than others elsewhere in North America. Castonguay (1992) and Bauer (1994) maintain that Québec's cultural communities possess a cultural persistence that is unmatched in other large immigrant centres on the North American continent due to the unique social construct of the province (i.e. Francophones as the majority culture in Québec while being in a minority position on a continent which is overwhelmingly Anglophone). Although the language legislation has not fully assimilated the cultural communities of the province (since 28 years is not quite enough to erase a generational pattern), it has succeeded on several fronts. For example, by forcing parents to send their children to French schools, immigrant children are adopting French as their principal language of communication at a remarkable rate.

In this sense, youth from ethnocultural communities are able to attach themselves to the French-speaking majority, although this attachment is not a total or complete one. Among others, Arnopoulos (1980), Meintel (1992, 1995) and Micone (1995, 1999) argue that immigrant youth prefer to align themselves to

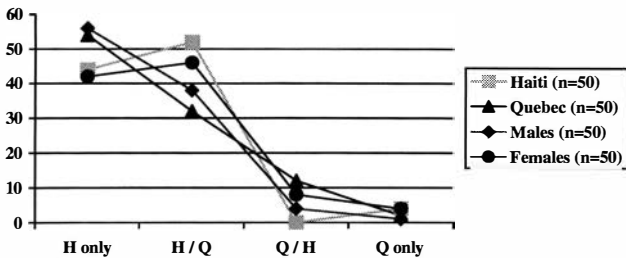
the majority community in their own fashion, without omitting or forgetting their own language and culture in the process. Thus, young immigrants might be developing into Francophones as far as language is concerned, however they are not becoming Québécois as far as identity is concerned. Instead, these youth are creating a new distinct cultural identity that fits their needs where they do not completely abandon their ethnocultural heritage; while at the same time they incorporate certain aspects of the majority Québec culture, such as language, pop culture, and fashion. Studies conducted by Arnopoulos (1980), Fleras (1992), Taylor (1994) and Méthot (1995) indicate that Montréal is a multidimensional society where immigrant youth have the capability to combine ethnic associations without settling on one single ethnic culture, majority or minority.

Identity among ethnocultural minority groups can be described in different manners. For example, Tse (1997:7-10) argues that the image or perception that certain individuals have towards their group and their own self-perceived identity directly influences their feelings of belonging to that assemblage. Therefore, the impressions that Haitian youth have of themselves concerning their self-perceived identity can emphasize their positive or negative reactions towards the heritage and host communities. It is essential to understand how Haitians identify with the images and representations of the majority culture that surrounds them. Due to conflicting surroundings, Haitian youth are often caught between the traditional heritage culture of their parents and the host culture of their peers. From a Québec point of view, Micone (1990, 1995) contends that immigrant society in the province has little or nothing to do with the societies from the heritage countries of the various ethnic groups in question. Furthermore, Micone (1990, 1995) maintains that this new culture also differs from the dominant majority group.

In the following sections, we will determine how Haitian youth identify themselves. As well, we will discern whether or not Haitians feel included as being a part of majority society. Lastly, we will also investigate how the importance of language, both the majority language (French) and the language of the heritage group (Créole) may force their identification of being Haitian or Québécois.

## Self-Identification

Since Haitians are a visible minority within the Québec mosaic who shares a few common denominators with the dominant majority group (e.g. a similar linguistic history, a common religion, and French colonization), we must begin our presentation by looking at how Haitian youth choose to identify themselves. To the question “how do you identify yourself,” respondents were given four categories from which to select their answer: “Haitian (only) above all other classifications; Haitian first, Québécois second; Québécois first, Haitian second”; and “Québécois (only) above all other classifications.” Figure 1 shows the findings of this inquiry.



The data from Figure 1 show that a strong majority of Haitian youth (91%) regardless of birthplace identify themselves either as “Haitian only” or “Haitian first, Québécois second.” When the data are broken down into individual categories, the findings from Figure 1 also show that a slight majority of Québec-born Haitians (54%) identify themselves as being “Haitian only.” A slight minority of Haitian-born respondents (44%) share the same identification. A statistically significant difference was found between the two groups of respondents based on birthplace, and this difference is due to the fact that more Québec-born respondents (54%) indicate that they identify themselves as “Haitian-only” than do Haitian-born respondents (44%). This interesting distinction can be further characterized and understood when one considers that the proximity and strength of the North American Haitian Diaspora (especially New York City) strongly influences Haitians in Montréal. It is also important to note that many respondents from both groups indicate that they felt more “Haitian” than “Québécois.” Based on this data (and contrary to Stepick’s research on young Haitians in Miami), we maintain that Haitian youth in Montréal do

not distance themselves from their ethnocultural origin, regardless of their place of birth or total overall years spent in Québec. However, will these findings differ in regards to gender?

Concerning gender differences, the findings from Figure 1 demonstrate that more males (56%) than females (42%) identify themselves as being “Haitian only.” When the identification includes being “Québécois” along with “Haitian,” the findings illustrate that that more females choose this classification than males (“Haitian first / Québécois second,” females 46%, males 38%). Few respondents of either gender choose to identify themselves as “Québécois” either first (males 4%, females 8%), or outright (males 2%, females 4%), although it should be noted that twice the number of females choose these classifications over their male brethren. This difference between genders is directly related to the fact that females tend to pull toward the societal norm in cultural surveys and they tend to be more susceptible to social change. In this case the norm means identifying oneself less as being fully “Haitian” and more of being at least partially “Québécois.” Few of the total ensemble of respondents of either group identify themselves as “Québécois” either “first” or “outright,” although it should be noted from examining the data regarding gender from Figure 1 that some Québec-born women choose this classification, again demonstrating their tendency to pull toward the societal and cultural norm.

### **Societal Inclusion**

An important goal of this research was to discern whether or not young Haitians view themselves as being equal partners in Québec. Quite often in the past, the term “Québécois” has been used pejoratively in various nationalist gatherings to describe only white Francophones living in Québec, excluding, or outright dismissing immigrants as the “other”; too unusual to be considered a real part of Québec society. Due to this past exclusion, many immigrant communities in the province frequently feel excluded from the majority culture, arguing that the term “Québécois” simply does not include them since many Francophones would never consider them as “Québécois” at all, despite any good intentions on their part (Arnopoulos, 1980; Meintel, 1992; Bauer,

1994; Méthot, 1995). Because Haitians share a few common denominators with the dominant culture, what are their feelings concerning this subject? Respondents were asked if they felt included as being “Québécois” when they heard the moniker “nous autres les Québécois” (we Québécois), and they were given four choices from which to choose: “never, at times, often, or always.” The results of this inquiry are shown in Figure 2.

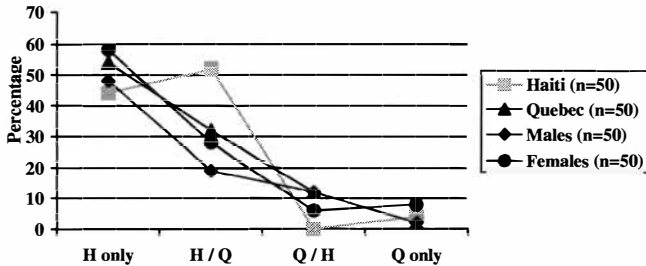


Figure 2. When you hear ‘nous autres les Québécois,’ do you feel included?  
By birthplace and gender

When combining the “at times” and “often” categories, the data from Figure 2 show that 44% of Haitian-born respondents feel “Québécois” at least some of the time, compared to only 40% of Québec-born respondents. This distinction can perhaps be explained considering that Haitian-born respondents come from a society with a legacy of harsh governmental repression. Therefore, Haitian-born respondents may feel a much stronger bond towards the host society, whereas many Haitians born in Québec may not since they have faced issues relating to discrimination and exclusion from the majority culture since their childhood. Furthermore, it can be argued that Haitian-born respondents find Québec to be a free and open society that welcomed them, so their feeling of being “Québécois” is perhaps more clearly understood than Québec-born respondents, some of whom have had to deal with social exclusion their entire lives. A majority of respondents from both groups remark that they “never” feel included as “Québécois.” These findings are hardly surprising considering that immigrants in Québec are often ignored by the provincial government, except during times where their votes are needed (such as during provincial election campaigns).

Regarding gender distinctions, the findings from Figure 2 show that a large number of respondents, including a majority of women, indicate that they never feel included as “Québécois.” When the data from Figure 2 are further broken down by gender, it is interesting to note that more females (58%) than males (48%) indicate that they never feel included as “Québécois.” This can be explained due to the fact that Haitian women can be classified as a “triple minority” in Québec society. Haitian women are not only isolated from the majority society due to social differences of language and race, but also they are also socially isolated due to their gender. Despite their willingness to identify themselves at least partially as “Québécois,” (as the data show in Figure 1) the findings from Figure 2 show that young Haitian females by and large do not feel included as equal partners in Québec. Figure 2 shows that more males (12%) often feel included as “Québécois” than females (6%). This finding highlights the ability of males to fit at least partially into the majority society despite the fact that they tend to not identify themselves as being “Québécois,” as the data from Figure 1 show. However, it is nonetheless interesting to note that when comparing only the female respondents from both groups, 60% of Haitian-born females indicate that they never feel “Québécois,” compared with 46% of Québec-born females. Although no statistically significant difference was found between males and females, a difference was found between the two groups of female respondents regarding this question. One explanation for this is the fact that Haitian-born females are faced with a language barrier which adds to their social sensitivity, whereas Québec-born females generally do not face this same social dilemma. Twenty-eight percent of Haitian-born females feel Québecois “at times” and the same percentage of Québec-born respondents’ share that view. Québec-born young Haitian women are also more likely to feel more included as “Québécois” than their Haitian-born brethren, with the latter group feeling the greater effects of being in a triple minority position. As was the case with the male respondents, Figure 2 shows that few females feel “Québécois” either “often,” or “always.”

## Language Shift

Until the 1950s, little effort was made to convert Créole from a primarily oral language into a written form. Even today in contemporary Haïti, Créole is considered to be an oral language, as the educational emphasis remains on the acquisition of written and oral French in the majority of the country's educational facilities. However, in many schools, written Créole is taught, although acquiring proficiency in French remains the priority. All of the Haitian youth who were surveyed in the present research, whether Québec-born or Haitian-born, report that they speak at least some Créole, with all stating that their heritage language is a very important part of their overall identity. Obviously, their ability and proficiency in spoken Créole varies from person to person. Concerning language ability in the heritage language, respondents were asked to assess their proficiency on a Likert scale from one to five, consolidated here as "low" (levels one and two), "average" (level three), and "high" (levels four and five); respondents chose the number which best reflects their spoken proficiency in the language (with "one" having the weakest proficiency, and "five" the strongest). Figure 3 presents these findings.

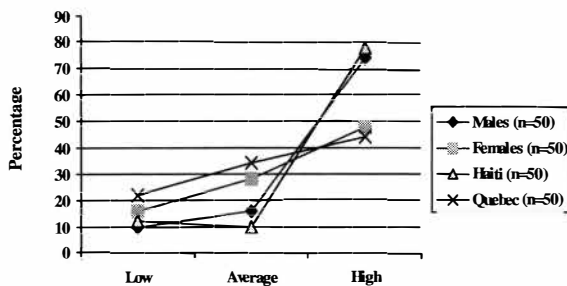


Figure 3. Knowledge of Spoken Créole, by birthplace and gender

The data from Figure 3 indicate that respondents who were born in Haïti have stronger proficiency in spoken Créole than Québec-born counterparts, as the former grew up in a Créole-speaking environment where it was the dominant culture and language, and the latter did not. A majority of Haitian-born respondents (78%) and males (74%) indicate that they speak Créole at a "high" level. In addition, a smaller number of females (44%) and Québec-born

respondents (48%) indicate that they speak Créole at a “high” level, and their abilities in the heritage language can be traced at similar levels (primarily at the “average” and “low” levels). Furthermore, the data for Haitian-born respondents and males also follow nearly the same percentages.

Regarding gender differences, the findings from Figure 3 illustrate that spoken ability in Créole among males consequently boosts the number of Haitian-born respondents’ abilities in the heritage language, and the same can be said of females, who pull the Québec-born respondents’ numbers down to a lower ability level mirroring the results in the other categories as well. As Figure 3 illustrates, gender differences directly influence the data as the large number of males and females responding in a certain manner affect the overall response percentages in the birthplace category.

## **Analysis**

In terms of self-identification, young Haitians do not tend to identify themselves as “Québécois.” A majority of Haitians identify themselves as either “Haitian first,” or “above all” other classifications, regardless of their birthplace or gender. This shows that Haitian youth remain conscious and connected to the ethnocultural heritage as far as their feelings of self-identification is concerned. The cultural and linguistic vitality of young Haitians is very high due to the strength and proximity of the North American Haitian Diaspora (especially New York City), and because of this reality, there is less need for many youth to identify fully with the Québécois majority culture. As well, because the Haitian community in Québec is very visible through media, pop culture, the entertainment industry, and the arts (and is somewhat accepted by the dominant majority culture), there is less reason for young Haitians to try and “prove their worth” (i.e. assimilate towards the majority culture) in the province.

More males identify themselves as “Haitian only” than do females, whereas more females identify themselves as “Haitian first, Québécois second,” or “Québécois” either “first” or “outright.” As females are more likely to identify themselves (at least partially) with the majority culture, they are moving towards the societal norm. Therefore, we maintain that this partial identification with



the majority society is one way in which young Haitian females may improve their social status and achieve (or strive for) a sort of upward mobility since females tend to be more status conscious than men.

Regardless of how young Haitians identify themselves (males or females), the majority feel that they are not included as being “Québécois” or considered as equal partners by the majority culture regardless of their good faith. A larger number of females than males do not feel included as “Québécois” due to the fact that their triple minority status (minority in language, gender, and race) and subordinate social status makes them feel excluded. Both of these notions separate young Haitian females from the majority culture, despite their own willingness and desire to self-identify with it.

Tse (1997) and Loslier (1998) argue that the more members of minority ethnocultural groups find themselves lost among the masses of the majority culture, the more they desire to rediscover their own heritage and history. Tse (1997:13-17) argues that this identity transformation tends to occur when youth move from high school into university study or when they become young adults, as this is a time when minority youth obtain more independence from their family and peers.

Our findings indicate that Haitian youth are generally at the apex of this transition, either currently experiencing the changes of rediscovering their ethnocultural heritage or having already transformed. At times, Haitians, as well as other immigrants, play down their separate identity and assimilate themselves at one point (at least in part) into the larger, more dominant Québécois society; while at other times, young Haitians choose to emphasise their ethnocultural distinctiveness.

While successive Québec premiers and administrations by and large have historically ignored the immigrant fact of Québec, they have nonetheless invested much energy into the integration of newcomers and their families into Québec society, thereby anticipating that these groups will fully attach themselves to the French language as they become assimilated into the majority culture (Bauer, 1994). Since Haitians share many similar traits with the dominant majority culture in Québec, one could assume

that their identification with Québec majority society would be more significant than that of other immigrant groups due to their historical affection for the French language.

Given four choices from which to choose, all Haitian youth surveyed in this study were asked how they identify themselves. Both groups of respondents according to birthplace overwhelmingly indicate that they are either “Haitian” above all other classifications or “Haitian first, Québécois second.” Few young Haitians declared themselves to be either “Québécois outright” or “Québécois first, Haitian second.” Even more unexpected is the fact that a large number Québec-born Haitians identify themselves as “Haitian only.” These results not only conflict with the proposed hypotheses, they also run in contrast to the Québec government’s own desire to integrate immigrants into Québec society.

There are several explanations for this. For example, Tse (1997) argues that ethnocultural heritage is often rediscovered in the years of young adulthood, often resulting in renewed strong feelings towards the heritage group. As well, the fact that Haitians are a visible minority tends to isolate them further from the dominant culture, and they are not always allowed full access as equal participants in majority society, even if they have the desire to integrate. Many people from immigrant communities believe that Québécois typically tend to be ignorant of cultural minorities, and this ignorance may nullify any potential or desired attachment that young Haitians may have constructed towards the dominant culture.

In analysing gender differences, our findings show that more males than females identify themselves as “Haitian only,” while females identify themselves as either “Haitian first / Québécois second,” or “Québécois first or outright.” There are three explanations for this:

1. Women are more aware of their societal status than men.
2. Women are in a subordinate social position (both in majority and minority society), and aligning themselves with the Québécois majority culture serves as possible way in which to obtain a sort of upward mobility and status change.
3. Because males have higher linguistic abilities in French, language may be an important factor in their self-identification

as Haitian since language and culture can be directly linked. This notion is less apparent among females from cultural communities, due to their secondary status as a “triple minority” (as a woman, as a person of colour in a minority position, as a speaker of a different maternal language).

Therefore, in certain respects, young Haitian females are pulling towards the majority culture rather than maintaining certain cultural distinctions. This cultural shift among females is due to the fact that they are viewed as a “triple minority,” and one way in which to shed (or lessen) this status is to adopt certain cultural traits and / behaviours of the dominant culture. This type of social movement (as shown above) occurs quite frequently among women of colour from ethnocultural communities (Pedraza, 1991; Afshar and Maynard, 1994; Brettal and Simon, 1996).

In general, our findings coincide with Micone’s (1990, 1995) assessment of the Allophone fact of Québec. Despite the fact that the Québec government imposes language legislation on its ethnocultural communities, and this legislation does integrate young immigrants into the Francophone sector a linguistic sense, cultural integration is another subject and our findings clearly indicate this reality. As we mentioned earlier, ethnocultural groups in the province tend to view the term “Québécois” as being reserved for the white Francophone majority at the exclusion of everyone else, regardless of ability in French or participation in the general society. Some examples of this omission include the annual parade on the day of “la fête nationale” (24th June, which until very recently excluded full participation in the celebration from members of minority organizations), and remarks by politicians such as the former Premier of Québec Jacques Parizeau on the defeat of the “oui” the night of the 1995 Québec referendum.<sup>1</sup>

Further proof of these feelings of being isolated and rejected from the majority culture is discovered when inquiring whether or not Haitian youth feel included as “Québécois” when they hear this term being used by others. Majorities from both groups of respondents according to birthplace indicate that they do not feel “Québécois” at all when they hear others use this moniker. Although some respondents may feel at least partially “Québécois” when they classify themselves, they do not feel included when

they hear others use the term. Interestingly, more females than males indicate that they never feel included as “Québécois,” and more males than females indicate that they feel “Québécois” either “often” or “always,” although the total number of respondents in these two categories is minimal. Once again, because females possess “triple minority” status in Québec (language, gender and race), they feel isolated from the surrounding society, thereby believing that they are not included as a part of it. This fact occurs despite the fact that more females than males identify themselves as being “Haitian and Québécois” (or “Québécois” either “first” or “outright”). No matter their good intentions concerning self-identification, this finding shows that females identify themselves one way, while at the same time indicating that they feel that the majority culture identifies and excludes them in another.

Since the 1980s, the concept of one’s ethnicity has played an increasingly important role in the lives of young Haitians in Québec. Haitian youth have become more conscious of their ethnocultural diversity in Québec, and many would like the majority culture to become aware of this fact as well, being that they see the future not as monocultural but rather multicultural. The strains between young Haitians’ hopes for a new life and the reality of their constant struggle for identity will continue to create a distinct immigrant culture among this sector of Québec society, regardless of their birthplace. Haitian youth in Québec have strong social ties amongst themselves and with other youth hailing from different ethnocultural groups, as well as possessing a strong individual fortitude. Although not every young Haitian has the same social resources from which to choose, nearly all reaffirm pride in their ethnocultural heritage, no matter how removed they seem to be from Haïti. Although many young Haitians will conclude that issues relating to racism and discrimination are keeping them from reaching the pinnacle of Québec society, others will dismiss this notion and continue to increase their own unique brand of visibility in the new, multicultural Québec.

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## Notes

1 While speaking live on Canadian national television and also on live world-wide coverage on the American network CNN, former Québec premier Jacques Parizeau blamed the loss of the "oui" during the 1995 Québec referendum on sovereignty on "money and the ethnic vote," stating: "C'est vrai qu'on était battu, en effet par quoi? Par l'argent et des votes ethnique essentiellement." (It is true that we have been defeated, in effect by what? By money and ethnic votes, essentially).

## **“BEAUTY, BORDERS AND THE AMERICAN DREAM IN RICHARD DOKEY’S ‘SANCHEZ’”**

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Critics have pointed out discrepancies between what is commonly understood as the American Dream in the mainstream culture at large and the fictive representation of Chicanos or Mexican-Americans who attempt to appropriate the dream as their own. For example, Luther S. Luedtke explores the Chicano novel *Pocho* only to conclude that this novel confirms its protagonist as a “universal man” who “suffers an existential insecurity against which no community can protect him” (14). The existential plight demonstrated in the novel is heightened because of the distance between the historical and mythical origins of the Chicanos and the white mainstream culture which posits the American Dream in confusing and alien terms.

Luedtke relies on sociological studies by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck to illustrate the discrepancy:

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Mexican-American Response</u>	<u>American Response</u>
Man’s relation to nature	Subjugation-to-nature	Mastery-over-nature
Essence of human nature	Mutable Good-and-Evil	Evil-but-Perfectible
Man’s relation to man	Lineality (group, family)	Individualism
Preferable activities	Being	Doing
Time orientation	Present-Time	Future-Time

The contrasting categories suggest an important epistemological

orientation that continues to inform fiction and socio-political values. Luedtke infers: “the progressive orientation and success ethos of American core culture contradict the traditional world view of the Mexican-Americans, with its emphasis on continuity, community and the obligation of one’s assigned role” (8). Though this study is some forty years old and the cultural dynamics have changed to some degree, it is still helpful to illustrate the original world view that informs much of the Mexican-American presence in North America, especially as fictive representatives encounter representatives of the core culture.

More recent cultural critics have developed the idea of borders, nationality and imagery both metaphorically and geographically, with similar conclusions<sup>1</sup>: “Latina/os are inherent outsiders to the realm of national belonging” (Moya,193). Aspirations to achieve the American Dream often remain frustrated due to the history of conflict involved. Moya, for example, examines three critical works on the subject by Monika Kaup, Mary Pat Brady and Monica Brown. Both Kaup and Brady tend to view the struggle of Latina/os in terms of binary oppositions: “resistance or accommodation” for Kaup and “(subordinated) Chicanos and (hegemonic) Anglos for Brady (Moya, 186 & 188). Kaup, for instance, claims that whereas Texas Chicano writers tend to be resistant to the mainstream culture imposed upon them, Chicano writers from California employing “the immigrant plot” are “oriented toward the future, not the past, and their attitude toward the process of Americanization is one of desire rather than resistance” (185). In such writing, the border is a line of “demarcation – a point in space to be passed over and left behind – along the journey toward a new, American future” (185). Despite certain vantages from this type of oppositional thinking, Moya finally argues, however, that such distinctions eventually fail to recognize the necessary “nuanced and accurate understanding” of society (194).

Richard Dokey’s California story “Sanchez” offers a nuanced, complex protagonist that Moya could appreciate, a character who arguably fits the older Luedtke model while risking those values of his origin, bravely attempting to gain a foothold in a new land. Dokey’s Juan Sanchez attempts to raise himself in accord with the notions implied in the American Dream as valued by the core



culture, but in the end, realizes the futility of his upward mobility. His desire for preservation and self-determination are immersed with his understanding of beauty and his subjugation to nature. In other words, not unlike Villarreal's protagonist in *Pocho*, Dokey's story of Juan Sanchez is existential and individual. Its tragic protagonist demonstrates an ambivalence toward his understanding of his origins and future possibilities. The conflict between his "inner and outer realities intensifies" and he considers "his identity a personal matter" (Luedtke 5).

Another critic, Antonio Marquez, considers the "utopian quest" in *Pocho* in terms of the American Dream, but concludes the "noble and beautiful idea ... is revealed as sham" (8). Typically, the protagonist is caught between two systems and his story reveals his "confusion, alienation, and ambivalence" (10). Both Luedtke and Marquez recognize the foundational quality of *Pocho* in relation to the rise of *chicanismo*, and Marquez suggests there are "now alternatives to the American dream – and the nightmare – alternatives not available to [Villarreal's] Richard Rubio and a generation of 'pochos'" (10-11).

Nevertheless, the American Dream as perceived by the mainstream culture, with its emphases of upward mobility, materialism and class distinctions remains a "threatening" and "perplexing" construct that will "continue to beguile the Chicano and that confrontation surely will be reflected in Chicano literature" (19). Eliu Carranza expresses similar concerns, arguing that the American Dream is illusionary for Mexican-Americans; in fact, it works to oppose equality because of the establishment of "difference" and "separation" (*Pensamientos*, 45). Moya concurs, arguing that the "realm of the imaginary remains a crucial arena for epistemological and political struggle for Latina/os who are interested in claiming their rightful place as full and entitled citizens of the US" (193).

Like the emphases expressed in foundational Chicano fiction, Richard Dokey's protagonist also dares to appropriate the American Dream, even temporarily finding personal satisfaction as he raises himself above his roots and class of his fellow field workers. But his individualism costs him dearly. He finds himself excommunicated from his fellow countrymen, loses his wife, and finally, his son

does not follow in his understanding of beauty and reflection. In an ironic turn, Sanchez's son returns to the Mexican-American community thereby wounding Sanchez's appropriation of the dream. Sanchez sadly refers to his son as the "American," yet he is "of the Flotill" (35). For Juan Sanchez, the mainstream conception of the American Dream turns out to be a double-edged sword, the inherent individualism cutting both ways. It entices him with a potential elevation in status while that same individualism distances himself from his beloved son, and ironically makes it possible for him to be lured away from him, back to the cannery and to the community of laborers (all in the name of Americanization) from which Juan Sanchez has removed himself and his family.

Dokey's contribution to the theme of Mexican-Americans involvement with the American Dream offers an interesting variation – the explicit pursuit of beauty. Given the relationship of man to nature that Luedtke has pointed out as common for people of Mexican origins, such a category is implicit in other Chicano fiction<sup>2</sup>. Yet for Dokey's protagonist, beauty is a determining motivation that drives him away from the drudgery of field work. In much precursory Chicano fiction, themes of survival and identity necessarily are prominent given the characters' confrontation with a foreign world view, economy, distinctive class and racial systems. But in Dokey's story, the themes of survival and identity are amalgamated within the epistemological category of beauty that shapes the existence of his protagonist, despite the costs involved.

Sanchez's attempt to realize the American Dream may be understood in terms of a quest. With Quixotic persistence, Dokey's *caballero* yields to nothing, to no one, not even God, in his desire for beauty. His confrontation with injustice and tragedy does not alleviate his passionate understanding of how life ought to be; it only brings the reader to a renewed consideration of something not unlike the Socratic eternal forms or Romantic ideals: justice, honor, courage, and predominantly for Sanchez, beauty.

His quest takes him from the desert to the mountains of the Sierra Nevada. He works and saves for two years in anticipation of his move, routinely thinking "only of La Belleza and the beautiful Sierra Nevada" (31). When the day comes for him to take his

loveliness, La Belleza, toward the lovely mountains, the lovers board a Greyhound bus for Fresno, then continue on to Stockton, upward toward the mountains. Their upward journey, paralleling their attempted rise in social status, their attempt to appropriate their personal dream, is erotic. Laughing as their romantic adventure progresses, they “gazed out the window at the land” (31). The passage is referred to as “a day like no other day in his life” (31), and it is closely described in terms of natural hues: “lovely mountains,” “where hundreds of [green] deciduous oaks and evergreens grew.” It is the materializing of his particularized, individualized American dream:

He had never seen so many trees, great with dignity: pines that had gray bark twisted and stringy like hemp; others whose bark resembled dry, flat ginger cookies fastened with black glue about a drum, and others whose bark pulled easily away; and those called redwoods, standing stiff and tall, amber-hued with straight rolls of bark as thick as his fist, flinging out high above great arms of green. And the earth, rich red, as though the blood of scores of Indians had just flowed there and dried. Dark patches of shadow stunned with light, blue flowers, orange flowers, birds, even deer. They saw all that on that first day. (32)

The sharp contrast with the desert of his previous life is punctuated by Sanchez’s statement declaring the destination of the two lovers: “*Bellisima* ... Into much loveliness” (32). Like the Platonic Erotic myth, Juan Sanchez’s dream moves beyond the ecstasy of material, physical to the ideal, eternal categorization of beauty. This foundational understanding determines Juan’s destiny in the making, and nothing will prevent his attempts to fulfill the ideal dominating his existence. No other place will do. He steps beyond the boundaries of his social class and economic constraints, and in gentle defiance of the mainstream culture wills for himself a new existence. His consumptive vision of an invigorating beautiful place beyond the borders of his homeland, beyond the borders of field labor demonstrates both a Chicano pride in the heritage of his indigenous ancestors as well as a bold mingling with comfortable members of the core culture.

The retreat into the lovely mountains may also be seen in terms of spirituality. When readers learn later in the plot that the mountains do not protect Juan from his fears of death, when tragedy follows him into the mountains, his demise is documented in explicitly religious terminology. In fact the spiritual conflict within Juan has been well established even before his move to the mountains. La Belleza has already suffered and lost a child in her first pregnancy by the time Juan decides his destiny will be in the beauty of the mountains. He weeps at the news of the stillborn child and at the fact that La Belleza “could not have children and live” (29), but he still entertains the hope of blessing when they finally reach the mountains. He wants to run away “to the high white cold of the California mountains, where he believed his heart would grow, his blood run and, perhaps, the passage of La Belleza might open” (30). He holds onto the possibility of the miraculous, and the miraculous is always integral with the idea of beauty. What is miraculous is beautiful, and Juan hopes that the beautiful will invoke the miraculous.

His trauma is more than just physical. It is spiritual at the core. In a life-and-death decision, Juan must decide between the atheist doctor and the priest. Like the biblical Job, he must choose between faith and humanity. Unlike Job, he curses God (30). He dares self-damnation, violating various orthodox practices in his pursuit of his ideal. Eventually he will burn his wife’s rosary and submit to a vasectomy. He curses God because he has to make ugly choices, and his only respite is escaping into the beauty and isolation of the mountains. His move to the mountains suggests the possibility of a spiritual renewal in this appropriate place, the beauty and isolation helping to cleanse him and restore his faith. Instead, more tragedy occurs there resulting in increased anger at God and an intensification of his isolated, existential musings. His love of beauty is his most reliable source of consolation for his dilemma.

His move to the mountains also, of course, has tremendous sociological implications. As a Mexican immigrant attempting to fulfill the American Dream, he is vulnerable to the whims of the mainstream culture. Having isolated himself from his community, he is exercising the fundamental values of individualism and self-

reliance celebrated by the mainstream culture. But for Sanchez, these values are limited and subject to the white culture around him. The border he has crossed to enter the United States is more than just a geographical marker. It represents class and racial distinctions. Like much Chicano fiction, Dokey's story suggests the alienation and ambivalence that usually greets a Chicano protagonist trying to make a smooth transition north of the border. Sanchez settles in a place dominated by whites where the loving couple is considered out-of-place. He is cheated when he buys a rundown shack for one thousand dollars, but this injustice is overcome not in a small part due to the overriding dream of living in beauty. Carranza points out that the Mexican-American who tries to live the American Dream is customarily "cast into the 'inferior' mold by an 'American' view of the world" leaving him with limited options and with the implied need to become "psychologically" an American (*Pensamientos* 45). Such positioning determines the existence of both the dominant and the secondary cultures into a neat, prescribed "world of order and hierarchy, a world of 'Americans' taking care of millions of Anglo-prones, so long, of course, as they remain prone" (45). Octavio Paz has suggested that the Mexican is always a problem for himself (70). Carranza quotes Paz's description of the Mexican-American as one who submits to isolationism and one whose relationships "are poisoned by fear and suspicion. ... "He must live alone, without witnesses. He dares to be himself only in solitude" ("The Mexican-American" 39). In contrast to this description, Carranza writes of the Chicano:

He has removed the mask and seen himself as he really is—publicly. He is creating new relationships by destroying or modifying old ones. He no longer seeks to escape from himself by forgetting his condition and his link with the past. ... He refuses to live alone, i.e., without witnesses, but lives with *la Raza*—his witness. He dares to be himself in solitude and with his fellowman.  
(39)

Carranza's distinction may be applied to Juan Sanchez with interesting results. Juan has left his homeland and his heritage. The story provides little, if any, overt longing or grieving for the past.

Juan Sanchez is eager to leave. He plans for two years to get away from the lowland mines and farm labor. The primary focus of the story illustrates Juan's desire to not only leave the valley, but to make his dream come true in the mountains. His desire is not merely escapism, but it is sharply focused in a certain, positive outcome. He *wants* to live in the beautiful mountains. Given Carranza's analysis, however, the question of whether Sanchez is fully, purely Chicano remains. On the one hand, Juan is apparently content to be relatively isolated from other members of *la Raza*, thus suggesting a rejection of community pride and an eager embracing of white culture.

His isolation, however, is not simply a desire to avoid his fellow members of *la Raza* or to superficially acquiesce to the white core culture. His individualism and self-reliance is an existential quest toward self-actualization – a chief value advocated by Carranza:

The Mexican-American has confronted himself with these questions: How should I live? How should I love? How should I die? And he has answered them all with: as an individual who is in possession of everything that is essentially human. The Mexican-American's goal, then, is the humanity of man, wherein each man recognizes himself in the face of his fellow-man and where man addresses himself seriously to the ultimate questions which confront man in every age. (*Pensamientos*, 26)

His isolation is also a desperate attempt to do anything possible to save his wife. It is a wounded, spiritually troubled man who moves into the mountains. His story is the story of a man who feels abandoned by the god and beliefs of his heritage. In something of a heroic attempt to contend with his cursed fate, he seeks a new place to reinvent himself, but this in no way suggests that he is rejecting his essence as a man. He is, as Carranza implies, multi-faceted and sufficiently independent to shape his own version of the American Dream to his unique situation.

When working in the valley, he refuses to participate with his coworkers in their drinking and entertaining prostitutes (30). He does, however, choose to ride in the truck with the laborers, but beyond this, he does not fully participate actively with the group. He contents himself in relative isolation. He dreams in isolation.

He does more than just dream though. He acts independently. He pursues his dream knowing full well that its realization will increasingly separate him from others of his heritage, but as is clear by the end of the story, his longing for beauty is in tune with his ancestral heritage and conflicts with the Americanization of the natural resources in California where the migrants work. By the end of the story, his thoughts reveal his inner confirmation of the vast, underlying distinction between an indigenous and capitalist view of societal resources. Though his desire for self-determination sometimes blurs his sight, he never relinquishes the native foundations of his world-view. Like Fuentes, he wants to modify his particular vision of “progress”:

The unreachable nature of the technological vanguard obliges us to revise our notions of “progress” and conclude that what today passes as such – the North American model – is not, can no longer be, will never be ours. (*La Nueva Novela*. qtd in Sommer and Yudice, 195)

Sanchez wants the bliss implied in the American Dream, but he wants it on his own terms – terms that recognize the dehumanizing effects that American mass commercialization has on migrant workers. Sanchez refuses to be held captive to either extreme: full-fledged participant and approval of American mass production and commercialization on the one hand or the subservient, pliable field laborer on the other. Either extreme robs the human of a necessary essential component of life, essentially enslaving its subjects; both fail to allow its adherents the individualism that Carranza emphasizes.<sup>3</sup>

The fact that he has cursed God and the fearful knowledge that his wife will probably die were she to conceive, further motivates him to live apart from his fellow Chicanos. Before the move to the mountains, he has alienated himself from his religious heritage; and the condition of his wife, virtually guaranteeing a barren existence, tragically, only further separates the couple from the norms of their original heritage. In other words, it could be more bearable for this child-less Mexican-American couple to live in a remote area where they are not in immediate and drastic contrast to their fellow countrymen whose families are an immense source

of pride and evidence of God's blessing.

Juan Sanchez identifies with Carranza's description of the Chicano. He certainly exhibits little, if any, intimidation in the face of injustice or in living in alienation. He is a destroyer of old relationships and a modifier of life's destiny. He dares to leave the homeland; he risks his identification to abandon the expected routines of immigrant laborers. He shows himself publicly demonstrating the courage to venture alone and undaunted to a new place with the dream of making his own mark in the world. He dares to claim the American Dream for himself. In Carranza's words, he sees himself "for what he is: a human being!" (39).

But why would Juan forsake his community to immerse himself in the Anglo culture? He does this for the sake of the aesthetic. To enable himself to fulfill his aesthetic vision, he has saved two thousand dollars, suggesting an upward social identification, yet at the same time, he does not confront his oppressor who cheats him when buying the home. He does not confront because of his anticipation of living in Edenic loveliness. He exercises discretion. He suppresses his Chicano identity as a means to reach his desired end. He is not only a Mexican in the tradition of Paz; he is a rising Chicano, but something transcends even these two categories. That something is the desire for *bellisima*.

In Juan Sanchez, a mix of identification and pride of heritage exists with a cessation of any visible link to the past. This intermingling of immigrant and citizen, Mexican and Chicano, enabler and possessor of the American Dream seems clear when Juan, in retrospect, wonders why he named his boy Jesus. The miracle of Jesus's birth cost the life of La Belleza. Stoically, honorably, Juan stayed in his dream place "to show him [Jesus] the loveliness of the Sierra Nevada" (35), but after raising of the boy, Juan's painful thoughts are not easily dissuaded: "But Jesus. Ah, Jesus. Jesus the American. Jesus of the Flotill. Jesus understood nothing" (35). In his thinking, Juan demonstrates the often tragic irony experienced by migratory people: Crossing the various borders necessary to pursue the American Dream comes with a cost that involves not only separation from heritage and cultural identities of the homeland, but also an immediate violation and termination of the familial unity that encourages and enables a migratory family



to pursue the original dream. Sanchez's melancholia echoes the terse lines of Gonzales: "I shed the tears of anguish/ as I see my children disappear/ behind the shroud of mediocrity,/ never to look back to remember me" (82). The climactic line in Paz's poem "The Return" illustrates the complexity of Sanchez: "it is not we who live, it is time lives us" (302). On the surface he apparently embodies Paz's aesthetic vision of destiny valiantly seeking to compensate for the natural limitations of his existence, but when this aesthetic vision is interrupted, Juan Sanchez acts instead of passively submitting to fate.

Dokey's structure frames a contemplative father and ambitious son at the Flotill with the final fire scene, but the middle of the story, the memory of Juan's life recounts his fulfillment of his dream. Even if only temporarily, Juan beat the systems and successfully managed the constraining borders, achieving bliss while holding death at bay:

Now the life of Juan Sanchez entered its most beautiful time. When the first snows fell he became delirious, running through the pines, shouting, rolling on the ground, catching the flakes in his open mouth, bringing them in his cupped hands to rub in the hair of La Belleza, who stood in the doorway of their cabin laughing at him. He danced, made up a song about snowflakes falling on a desert and then a prayer which he addressed to the Virgin of Snowflakes. That night while the snow fluttered like wings against the bedroom window, he celebrated the coming of the whiteness with La Belleza. (33)

The purity of his fulfilled aesthetic vision powerfully confirms his courageous choice to leave the desert. Religious imagery abounds in this passage where in child-like ecstasy Juan transforms the desert of his memory into a present-tense holy ritual. The playful sublimity of his sexuality with La Belleza parallels a renewed sense of grace and satisfactory religious certainty that all but erases the ugliness of choosing the advice of the atheistic doctor over the priest.

The white imagery, however, serves to underscore the tension of the story, keeping alive the undercurrent of racial and class

distinctions that Juan has encountered. His most happy time is a white time, a time when their dream seems fulfilled, seems in line with that of the mainstream. Of course, this dream is short-lived.

The ideal of beauty, being realized in Juan, makes love possible. In Juan, love for La Belleza is not unlike love for the mountains, nor is it unlike love for the holy (though no longer the Catholic God as demonstrated by the priest at the tragic moment of his wife's pregnancy). This love is a love for all things indigenous, undefiled by the social and economic barriers and geographical borders surrounding his existence. Living in the mountains, he realizes that love is:

an enlargement of himself, that it enabled him to be somehow more than he had ever been before, as though the pores of his senses had only just been opened. Whereas before he had desired the Sierra Nevada for its beauty and contrast to his harsh fatherland, now he came to acquire a love for it, and he loved it as he loved La Belleza; he loved it as a woman. (34)

Being in the place of beauty redeems him thereby enabling him to truly be the embodiment of a new ideal, an immigrant temporarily fulfilling the American Dream, trying to forever be rid of the shadow of servility. Transformation, whether social or spiritual, is beautiful, and in "Sanchez," beauty is the agent of both spiritual and sociological transformation.

The story of Juan Sanchez is a tragic romance. The beauty of his life is not permanent, and the transitory nature of life begins to dawn within his consciousness. He began "to understand something more of the fear or dread that seemed to trail behind love" (34). In Paz's emphasis, time is living Juan Sanchez, and in an ultimate sense, he is powerless to control the destiny approaching him. Carlos Fuentes' words aptly prophecy the destiny of this dreamer who has excommunicated himself to live secluded in beauty:

dreaming, loving, rebelling and dying will all be the same for you—the delirious fiesta in which you rebel in order to love, and you love in order to dream and you will dream in order to die; cover your body well with earth, son of mine, until the earth becomes your

mask, and the masters are unable to recognize, behind it, your dreams, your love, your revolt or your death.  
(306)

Juan eventually senses that beauty cannot be retained. The Socratic world-view of ideals materializes into bodily death. The ideal of beauty may always exist, and for Juan Sanchez it has been a most powerful, creative force in his imagination. But its physical manifestation cannot be retained, and finally, it cannot prevent his pain. His wife dies as a result of the miraculous conception of his son. In his quest for the beautiful, Juan had compensated for his childless existence, but the unimaginable event of her surprise pregnancy signals the beginning of losing what he has at great cost acquired. La Belleza gives him a son, but he cannot fully appreciate the sublimity of the experience for he loses his twin in the process, the embodiment of his determining principle. The ideal of beauty will once again resurrect within him, however.

By the time Jesus is old enough to leave home and work as an independent man, Juan is “beyond disappointment” and this factor is the guiding force of his life, the pragmatic interrupting the aesthetic. His son speaks of honor (28) but not of beauty. Juan has raised his boy in the beauty of Twin Pines, in the memory of La Belleza, but honor is the dominant theme of their conversations, and after leaving his son at the Flotill, instinct becomes the operative term for his action (35). Is a man right to pursue the beautiful, even at the expense of survival, even in the face of tremendous disappointment? The ideal of beauty really never completely leaves Juan, and when his son leaves home, Juan experiences “liberation” (35).

He goes to his home in the pines, destroys every possession and lays down to sleep. His thinking prevents sleep. His thinking brings “another kind of love” to his conscious:

A very profound, embracing love that he had felt of late blowing across the mountains from the south and that, he knew now, had always been there from the beginning of his life, disguised in the sun and wind. In this love there was blood and earth and, yes, even god, some kind of god, at least the power of a god. This love wanted him for its own. He understood it, that it

had permitted him to have La Belleza and that without it there could have been no La Belleza. (36)

The ideal, eternal category of the beautiful regains the prominent position in the mind of Juan Sanchez, and here it is clearly identified with, even shaped by an indigenous, preternatural understanding of self and society. This passage implies finally an overt recognition of mysticism. A comparison of Dokey's passage with John Phillip Santos's autobiography provides an interesting conclusion. Elizabeth Hayes Turner writes that Santos:

employs it [religious mysticism] not to confront the sins of a region nor to describe his own metamorphosis but as a tool for seeing – a clairvoyance that will interpret the disparate parts of his family's past. *Places Left Unfinished* uniquely probes the intricate paths of Christian mysticism and Toltec wisdom – the beliefs of their ancient pre-Columbian forebears. (136)

Similarly, Juan Sanchez, by the end of his trials, seems to have moved toward a similar ancestral and indigenous understanding of spirituality. Juan realizes that he is but part of a greater reality that predates and supercedes him, one that is largely unaffected by human efforts at stoic individualism, self-reliance or other vain attempts to make hubris commonplace.

Some may argue that Juan commits suicide in the end, and this act is the final expression of a self-induced, perpetual grieving that should have naturally given way to a newer stage of acceptance over time. How can readers expect his son, Jesus, to be a normal rightly adjusted man when his father has evidently failed to emerge from a hermitage of grief high up in the mountains away from his people?

Another view might consider the sin of Juan Sanchez. Giving into despair is but the final step in an escalation of defiance toward God. I would argue, however, that Juan is simply a limited man, tragically coming to the end of his personal heroism, as anyone must inevitably submit to the forces of life beyond one's control. In this sense of tragedy, then, Juan's hamartia is his refusal to live in a world devoid of beauty, and not his burning of the rosary or cursing God or choosing the atheist over the priest. Those apparent acts of sacrilege are secondary and symptomatic of a

dreamer who dared to dream, a man who had to make unwanted choices in the midst of that dream.

He is “beyond disappointment” (28) he tells his son, and I doubt that Jesus (in his attachment to the community of the fields) understands his father. The numb existence of Juan Sanchez gives way to one last acting out, destroying the home and possessions, and then he settles into thinking. His thinking, overcome with loneliness and loss, leads him to the conclusion of fire. Three options for interpretation are possible: One, he has damned himself earlier by denying the god of his heritage and rather than living without hope of redemption, he takes matters into his own hands. He fast-forwards to judgment. Whatever will be will be, and he courageously confronts his judgment. Two, the fire scene is an act of redemption, as if he is helping God in the process of necessary penitence. Juan destroys by fire the evidence of his carnal desires of beauty and finally submits to an asceticism more in keeping with saints of his orthodox religious tradition.

A third possible interpretation, one that I prefer, suggests the fire is a purgative symbol, a cleansing of soul and body, one that Juan initiates himself. Like Oedipus putting out his own eyes, Juan acts in freedom and with a sense of self-directed, cathartic justice. His actions prepare him for an eternal reunion with La Belleza. In this admittedly romantic vision, he comes to understand the world is but an image of a greater pre-existing reality, and in Platonic terms, rather than existing in the shadows, he is willing to relocate into the brilliant and eternal light. If beauty is removed from him, he will pursue beauty, even into the next world, and as some might say, that is where the reality always is, in contrast to this artificial world of physical limitation. He reminds me of Singer’s “Gimpel the Fool” who, in a Spinozan way, comes to recognize a similar truth. Or, in the common vernacular, John Lennon’s line, “I won’t live in a world without love” seems to fit. Indeed, Dokey’s last line is important: “Juan Sanchez had simply gone home” (36).

For Juan to accept the possibility of living in Twin Pines, or anywhere for that matter, he would have to fully embrace instinct as a means for achieving honor and justice, but these ideals, though important to him, do not capture his imagination like the sublime does. For him, justice cannot exist, if it means beauty is not possible.

His courage and honor matter little if they are muted means to achieve his celebration of the beautiful. Really, he is rather holistic in his approach to life. He is not a merely fragmented man unable to see other possibilities of coping with pain and loss. Rather, he sees the greater whole, and in a Socratic epistemology, he not only sees but whole-heartedly believes in the inter-connectedness of the great ideas. Unlike modern proponents, who encourage honor but doubt the possibility of truth, and who talk about justice but see the world as a place of only vile expression, Juan recognizes that the category of beauty cannot be eliminated from consideration. To him, it is absurd to consider justice and honor apart from beauty. His last conscious thought:

An image went off in his head and he remembered vividly the lovely body of La Belleza. In that instant the sound that loving had produced with the bed was alive in him like a forgotten melody, and his body seemed to swell and press against the ceiling. It was particularly cruel because it was so sudden, so intense, and came from so deep within him that he knew it must all still be alive somewhere, and that was the cruelest part of all (36).

For Juan Sanchez, the American Dream is an aesthetic vision, and perhaps that is implied for all who seek the American Dream. Freedom of economic determination seems to enable the dreamer to not only embrace but also retain his ideal of beauty. As Dokey's story suggests, however, other factors conflict and interrupt the dream, but at least in the character of Juan Sanchez, readers are led to reconsider the possibility of the eternal forms. Juan's love, is still alive somewhere.

## NOTES

1. Also see Anzaldua's *Borderlands/ la frontera*.
2. Two examples include: Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* and John Phillip Santos's *Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation*.
3. Carranza writes: "Chicano realism ought to include a careful analysis of the Mexican-American's betrayal from the perspectives of the language of history, psychology, sociology and economics. Such an analysis however should not end with studies about the group, or the class, or the people. For all such studies exclude

the individual. Each Mexican-American ought to be allowed, at his own choice, the opportunity for an analysis of his betrayal" (*Pensamientos*, 46).

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## THE ETHNIC IMPULSE IN FRANK X. GASPAR'S POETRY AND FICTION

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Although a compelling and award-winning voice in contemporary American literature, the work of Frank Xavier Gaspar (1946- ) has not received the attention it deserves. Apart from an article by Alice R. Clemente,<sup>1</sup> to my knowledge, there are no other scholarly publications touching upon his writings, all of which published in the course of the last seventeen years. While his work appeals to all audiences in the United States of America and even abroad – Portugal in particular – his poems dealing with issues related to his ancestral culture and ethnic background are the ones which have sparked the attention of Portuguese Americans. Prompted by Clemente's pioneer article on Gaspar's poetry and prose, in this essay my goal is to touch upon quintessentially Portuguese American issues left unaddressed in her piece. Furthermore, while I view Gaspar as a native-born American writer who resists ethnic tags, his Portuguese American background provided him with relevant materials and – to a certain extent – the impulse for writing. This is evident in his first volume of poems, *The Holyoke* (1988), where "ethnic signs"<sup>2</sup> loom more forcefully compared to his most recent work, *Night of a Thousand Blossoms* (2004). Although it is possible to detect traces of his ethnic background in all of his published works, in *The Holyoke* and *Leaving Pico*, however, these

certainly strike the reader in a more forceful manner than in his other three titles.

A Portuguese American writer and scholar, Gaspar is the grandson of immigrants who came to Provincetown, Massachusetts, from the island of Pico, in the Azores. He is the author of three award-winning collections of poetry. The first one is *The Holyoke*, winner of the 1988 Morse Poetry Prize. In this volume we witness a mature poetic voice reminiscing about how his childhood was shaped by his Portuguese family and community. It comprises a few poems touching upon Portuguese American issues, but *Mass for the Grace of a Happy Death* (1994), winner of the 1994 Anhinga Prize for Poetry contains even fewer. Practically all the poems in *A Field Guide to the Heavens* (1999), winner of the 1999 Brittingham Prize in Poetry, are about California, the poet's home. Unlike these volumes of poetry, in the novel *Leaving Pico*, published in 1999, Gaspar probes deeper into his ancestral culture. In this essay, my goal is to focus on Gaspar's ethnic impulse as incentive for artistic performance in all of his writings and ascertain why I view him as a compelling voice in contemporary American literature. While aiming for totality, for the reasons outlined above I shall dwell at length on *The Holyoke* and *Leaving Pico*.

The impression one gathers from his poems in *The Holyoke* is that he views himself as fully American, although with a few recollections of a childhood in Provincetown. Unlike Thomas Braga (1943- ), another American scholar and writer of Portuguese descent, in *The Holyoke* Gaspar's references to his ancestral culture are very superficial. In *Leaving Pico*, however, such is not the case. As Clemente has noted, this "is a novel that fleshes out the characters and the Provincetown world of the earlier works in a way that poetry could not."<sup>3</sup> It allows him to probe deeper into his ancestral culture through Josie and his grandfather, John Joseph, who, in the course of the story, tells him the tale of Carvalho, an adventurous explorer and competitor of Christopher Columbus. In addition, in *The Holyoke*, Gaspar will not trouble himself – or perhaps is not aware of – what it means to belong to a minor culture within a dominant one for he belongs to the mainstream. He will settle for observing his childhood community and leave it at that.

Mary Oliver's assessment of these poems in her preface is an

interesting one because she thinks that Gaspar does not resort to the subterfuges of most writers nowadays. She claims that the writers of today are obsessed with readers' opinions that it was worth their time to read these writers' work. This is not the case with *The Holyoke*:

Poems nowadays often address the reader with obvious insistence. "Let me tell you about my life," they say, "and I will make it fancy enough that you won't be bored." Frank Gaspar, I believe, has something else in mind. He is speaking to the reader – but also to himself, or perhaps to some hazy divinity, or to the blue sky. I felt in his voice no attempt to persuade me of anything.

In my view, what is missing in this quote is that Gaspar also wished to "speak" about his ancestral culture in some of these poems, even if lightly. Oliver also writes that the "poems tell the old story: a young man's passage from boyhood to maturity, in a small town by the sea. His people are Portuguese and Catholic."<sup>4</sup> Upon closer inspection, *The Holyoke* may be seen as a Portuguese American version of Robert Frost's *A Boy's Will* since there are several parallels between both volumes of poetry. Both works deal with a boy's growth and how nature and the community assist the process of maturation.

The setting in most of *The Holyoke* is clearly that of Provincetown. "Who is Hans Hofmann and Why Does the World Esteem Him?" and "The Woman at the Pond" show us a group of artists engaged in their work. Although some of these painters are seen as eccentric by the impoverished local Portuguese Americans, their "rent money," as we learn in the former poem, is highly appreciated since it "would buy a family's winter heat" (31). "August," for example, alludes to the nearby town of Truro. Oliver adds more particulars on this issue and even makes an interesting comment on how these mainstream artists view the people they stay with temporarily while vacationing in Provincetown, where the majority ethnic group is composed of Portuguese, more specifically Azoreans. According to Oliver, most of these mainstream artists believed it was unthinkable that in a community composed mostly of fishermen a poet such as Frank Gaspar would have ever emerged:

Because I have lived in Provincetown, Massachusetts,

for many years, it was impossible not to recognize the place-names of this manuscript. Provincetown has been, and still is, a town where artists and writers, Hans Hofmann among them, come to live and to work. Over the years there has been a lot of talk about what the “creative” people have added to the town – opinions voiced mainly by the creative people themselves. Perhaps a sense of elitism is inevitable in such a situation, perhaps not. None of us was born here. *And no one, if you get my meaning, ever considered the possibility of a Frank Gaspar.* That I was engaged by his work has nothing to do with Provincetown but with the poems themselves, naturally. But this part of the story, I decided, was also worth the telling (italics mine; xiii).

Undoubtedly, this quote stresses the recognition of the falseness of their “sense of elitism,” making Oliver’s comment about how “no one, if you get my meaning, ever considered the possibility of a Frank Gaspar” self-evident. Artists who flocked to Provincetown during the Summer had never considered the possibility of the birth of a writer in a town made up of Portuguese fishermen and clam diggers.

Although Frank Gaspar may be considered a Portuguese American writer, in *The Holyoke* we do not encounter a poetic voice torn between both cultures. What we witness is a mature Gaspar reminiscing about how his childhood was shaped by his Portuguese family. But even in some of these poems, we do not really get a close-up picture of the family either. In my view, the way in which he writes about such an ethnic past leads me to believe that it was not as strongly ethnic as that of Braga who, like Gaspar, was also born on American soil. Gaspar’s poems obviously possess a Portuguese flavor but they also evince how much this writer is not comfortable with Portuguese issues. This may be due to his lack of ease with the ancestral culture and language, something we do not encounter in other Portuguese American writers. Or even in Katherine Vaz [author of *Saudade* (1994); *Fado & Other Stories* (1997); and *Mariana* (1997)], whose familiarity with the language and culture is stronger than Gaspar’s.

A keen observer, he is nevertheless an outsider who does not probe deeper into some of the Portuguese American issues he raises in his writing.

Frank Gaspar may be compared to the Italian American writers Gilbert Sorrentino and Don DeLillo regarding their position within the American mainstream and how they manifest their ethnic signs. Gardaphé has noted that the writings of these Italian American voices have very few signs of *Italianità* because of their comfortable integration within the mainstream and their weak ties to the ancestral culture.<sup>5</sup> The same applies to Gaspar in *The Holyoke*. A brief analysis of some of his poems will certainly support this argument. Furthermore, in a volume composed of forty-five poems, only about eight of them touch tangentially on Portuguese themes – and yet, these outnumber those in his other volumes of poetry.

The religious zeal of most Portuguese is a case in point since Gaspar does not relinquish his opportunity to focus on how Catholicism occupies much of the time of Portuguese women. “Tia Joanna” (“Aunt Joanna”) is a good example of a devout woman who spends much of her time in church either praying the rosary, going to confession, or trying to connect with God through mystical experiences. Perhaps the poem’s uniqueness lies in the manner in which it captures how Provincetown Portuguese women reconcile their spiritual lives with their role as housekeepers and wives of fishermen:

.....The soft kerchiefs  
of the women, the dark cloth  
of their long coats, the kale cooking  
on the oilstoves in the redolent kitchens,  
the checkered shirts of the husbands,  
the fish they bring to the doorways....

.....  
She likes that, thinks of the host she will receive  
in the morning, *His* light shining in her eyes.

But tonight still there is mackerel to pickle  
with vinegar and garlic in the stone crock,  
her husband’s silver hair to trim, the bread

to set rising in the big china bowl  
on the stool tucked close to the chimney (7-8).

In this poem, Gaspar does not dwell on the sense of fate and mourning that traditionally has characterized the Portuguese temperament and how in this poem this is conveyed through, for example, this woman's dark clothes. Another important aspect is how this particular couple still holds on to their native language in this ethnic enclave. This can be seen in the following line: "Go wash, she says in the old tongue" (8). Although the "old tongue" is often alluded to, as readers, we do not really hear its sounds. The other poem stressing this people's Catholic fervor is "Ernestina the Shoemaker's Wife," which dwells on the mystical experience of a woman who claims to have met St. Francis in the woods when she was a young girl. But it also focuses on the poetic voice's mother who believes in supernatural occurrences and witchcraft, especially when she claims that Ernestina is a witch, that is, "a bruxa/[who] can give you the evil eye herself" (12).

"Potatoes" is an unusual poem because it highlights the fondness the Portuguese evince in growing a vegetable or fruit garden in their backyards. This is an aspect that characterizes immigrant life in the United States – especially immigrants from agrarian societies – and shows that even in an industrial setting as is, for example, the Ironbound section of Newark, New Jersey, the Portuguese still plant vegetable and flower gardens today. In their need to hold on to an ancestral way of life, they find in these gardens a spiritual connection with the old country.<sup>6</sup> Or, perhaps, like the mother figure in Alice Walker's "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens," this may be their only means to express their spirituality since most of these immigrants – like most Blacks after Reconstruction – were predominantly illiterate. Despite the obvious differences between both ethnic groups, the garden metaphor is what brings meaning into their lives of toil. Walker tells about how her mother found beauty, creativity, and spirituality in her elaborate gardens; the Portuguese, too, feel the same way when in their vegetable and flower gardens. What is fascinating about the gardens in *The Holyoke* is that they have a little bit of everything. Apart from potatoes and even corn, one also has a patch of kale (to make the famous Portuguese kale soup) as well as a "patch of anise"

(10). The episode of Gaspar's mother digging for potatoes comes in the tradition of Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896) in which the narrator digs a few potatoes to make a chowder. Fortunately, the old New England way of life that Jewett so eloquently wrote about at the turn of the nineteenth-century has not entirely disappeared since it is in a way kept alive by the Portuguese. With the rapid industrialization of New England throughout most of the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries, Jewett's novel records the disappearance of an agrarian way of life which still attracted a number of mainstream Americans. Certain emergent contemporary American literatures, however, stress the ways in which this agrarianism in specific ethnic communities was kept alive – especially by those waves of immigrants arriving in the United States from predominantly agrarian countries. The Portuguese are not the only ethnic minority interested in growing a garden, for as Boelhower has noted,

It is truly surprising how frequently the garden appears in Italian-American narratives – from the spice garden of Marietta Simone (with its *basilico*, *finocchio*, Italian parsley, and leaf-chicory in JoPagano's novel *Golden Wedding* (1943) to Rosario's garden of basil, sage, chives, garlic, and peppers in Joe Vergara's autobiography *Love and Pasta*(1968)...<sup>7</sup>

“The Old Town” and “Descent” aim at capturing the carefree attitude and simplicity in childhood experiences. While in the first poem the author and his “old friend Santos” (32) have gotten together for a bottle of beer, reminiscing about how they spent their time capturing birds, the second one describes the time when the boys used to dive for eels and other fish. Judging from the surnames in both poems, Santos and Carvalho, this suggests that the Azorean community in Provincetown was a very closely-knit one and that the boys socialized only with those belonging to their own ethnic background.

“Ice Harvest” is a poem that highlights the New England practice of cutting ice from ponds for business purposes. Like so many other poems in this volume, “Ice Harvest” fulfills one of Ralph Waldo Emerson's tenets for American literature – the celebration of the commonplace. But the poem also reminds readers of the

scarcity of references to Portuguese culture and language in this volume. When mentioning his “mother’s / favorite uncle William” (49) among the ice-cutters, Gaspar shows that the process of Americanization among his family members is well under way. Within just one or two more generations, surnames like Santos or Carvalho will be all that is left pointing to their Portuguese ethnic background.

In the poem “Leaving Pico” we are introduced to a group of nostalgic Azoreans in a living room, talking about their native island of Pico and the beautiful things they had left behind, especially the

green and clay roads, they said,  
and the rolling walls  
brushed white with lime,  
and how many trunks  
in the hold of a ship,  
what dishes, what cloth, how many  
rosaries and candles to the Virgin,  
and the prayers for the old dead  
they left to sleep under the wet hills  
(the green hills, and at night  
light from the oil lamps  
and sometimes a guitar keening  
and windmills that huddled white  
over the small fields of the dead)  
and all the time they were  
preparing themselves behind  
their violet lips and heavy eyes  
to sleep in this different earth  
consoled only by how the moon  
and tide must set themselves  
pulling off to other darkness  
with as little notion of returning (9).

In this poem, it is only the older generation who yearn for their place of birth or even remember it with fondness. The poetic voice, however, manifests absolutely no interest in visiting Pico or any curiosity about it. This voice’s attitude towards the ancestral land and culture is one of detachment while the members from the older generation get together every now and then to reminisce



about it.

“The Old Country” focuses on a superstitious belief some of these immigrants had brought with them from the Azores. After so many years, the poet still remembers how his “mother would never sweep at night, / would never let us sweep. The broom / rustling, she said, would bring the dead up” (55). The reason why the poet’s mother had never questioned such a belief was because she was afraid her ancestors’ ghosts would come to haunt her and say this to her: “*We never came/ from the old country to live like this*” (55). Is it the new lifestyle these immigrants adopt in America or the manner in which they slowly drop – one generation after another – their distinctive “ethnic signs” that these ghosts are rebelling against? What is obvious is that the poetic voice completely resists them:

And this old country is any place  
we have to leave. The voices  
calling us back are dust.  
I have traveled to the far edge  
of a country now, fearing the dead.  
They still want to speak with my mouth (55-56).

Gaspar might be acknowledging that he will try to fulfill their request even if that proves a difficult task since he is more of an American than a Portuguese. His ties with Portugal are weak. To add to this, as an adult he has moved to California (for professional reasons) and is physically distant from the ethnic roots he had left behind in Provincetown. *The Holyoke* contains no poems with explicit references to Portuguese history and culture. Moreover, Gaspar’s command of written Portuguese does not seem as proficient as, for example, Braga’s. A glance at the poem “Ernestina the Shoemaker’s Wife” confirms this since the word he uses, “hervas,” should have been spelled “ervas.” A conflation with ‘herbs’ reveals how much closer he is to English language and culture than to that of his ancestors. While this example attests to his unfamiliarity with the ancestral culture and language, it also stresses the rapid process of assimilation of the Portuguese into the American mainstream.

As these ethnic communities receive fewer new emigrants from Portugal, the collective memory from the old country will gradually disappear, leaving us with only Portuguese surnames. Such is the

current situation in Hawaii. Perhaps this might soon be the trend in continental U.S.A. as well, especially as Portugal has developed so much after having joined the European Union in 1986. In this sense, the Portuguese are no different from the waves of Eastern Europeans, Germans, Poles, and Italians who arrived in America at the end of the nineteenth-century or during the earlier decades of the twentieth-century. At this point, these ethnic groups have been fully assimilated into the mainstream. The Portuguese are no exception because they are marrying people from other ethnic backgrounds. Contrary to those scholars who have insisted on the melting-pot theory as anachronistic in American culture – arguing that it should be replaced by the mosaic theory – the melting-pot, after all, is still alive in America even if it takes a few generations to, so to speak, bring it to a “full boil.”

If *The Holyoke* comprises only eight poems touching upon Portuguese American issues, *Mass for the Grace of a Happy Death*, which is divided into three parts, contains even fewer. I am particularly interested in part one, because it is the one dealing with Gaspar’s Portuguese American background. The setting in part I of this book, “Chronicle,” is Provincetown during the poet’s youth. The poems in parts two and three, “Lamentation” and “Psalm,” range from the poet’s days in the navy during Vietnam to his days as an undergraduate and graduate student in California, life in the Golden State, the drought, illegal Mexican immigrants being assisted by family members, the youth culture of the 60s, the border scene, the 70s road culture, women and sex.

The three poems from part one which I will focus on are “Reliquary,” “Acts,” and “Mass for the Grace of a Happy Death.” “Reliquary” focuses on the Portuguese contribution to the New England whaling industry through the figure of the great uncle, who had left a few whaling artifacts behind as family heirlooms:

Bone of the manatee  
and the carved yellow tooth  
of the sperm whale, the number  
of barrels of oil tried from its fat  
penciled next to the old name  
in the tooth’s hollow – whale killed  
in 1912 by my great uncle,

this from memory...

In the following sequence, the poetic voice laments their disappearance. His mother had been forced to sell these objects to antique dealers because of the hard times during the long New England winters which kept fishermen ashore:

..... for the relics  
 have been bargained away from our door  
 by the traveling antique dealers,  
 my mother remembering the hard times  
 of some previous winter and letting  
 everything go for a thin rick of dollars:  
 brass compass boxed in mahogany, harpoon's  
 lily, case-knife, the blue serge uniform,  
 even the coffin flag, for little goes down  
 to the lockers of death with the body as once  
 it did, the daggers of the old sailors  
 laid by their sides in the burial boats,  
 the boats laid under the rich bogs  
 to fester in the holy nitrogen  
 where nothing followed and no one  
 came after, and above, on the crown  
 of the earth, the mourner's foot  
 stepping quietly to a song....

Such a past does not exist any longer because the activity has been discontinued and the objects which testified to its former existence have vanished from the family's abode:

.....*Mother,*  
*what winter was it that stripped us*  
*of all the implements of that life?*  
 I remember snow moaning up the ditch  
 from the harbor and fog on our breath  
 in the bedrooms. Now I must  
 remember everything. *Where is our bone?*  
*Where has that scored tooth gone?*<sup>28</sup> (18)

As the poet must find some consolation in recollection so as to retrieve such a valorous – yet perilous – past, in “Mass for the Grace of a Happy Death,” he also remembers those times when the Provincetown youngsters got together to discuss their

family's poverty, the losses at sea, and the dead-end life of their progenitors, most of whom had been humbled by a dangerous life at sea. The heroism of the trade did not appeal to them since they had witnessed too many shipwrecks and knew too many families who had been torn apart:

A bunch of us always standing in doorways down by the center of town opposite the drugstore or over by the Bowlaway with its five lanes of candlepin – in a city you might think a gang, but not here in our little blue village, tourists gone for the season and us bumming cigarettes from one another, rain coming down in the dark, somebody telling jokes, punching, the usual stuff because nobody wanted to sit at home like his father or uncle or older brother, stuck and humbled, no point to much of anything, every now and then a broken window or some stolen hootch, sometimes the solemn story repeated from mouth to mouth on the same gloomy steps, like a prophecy, like when one of the boats went down in December cold, all hands, and we knew every one of them, gave our versions, told our reasons – too much weight up on deck, out too far in bad seas, greedy, too young to be in the pilot house, bad luck:

As native-born Americans, they knew America had more to offer them than a life of toil at sea since they, unlike their parents, were not affected by the language barrier. They all agree not to follow in their father's footsteps:

.....Every one of us under  
those drizzly eaves repeating  
the mysteries until we were  
satisfied, for a while, that  
what finally rose from us was  
the benediction unspoken – *not me,*  
*not me, not me* – and waiting  
awhile after that prayer finished  
itself before we drifted off  
along the sidewalks to our houses,  
knowing that we'd stayed away  
long enough, that the lights

would be out and everyone asleep. (24-5)

With the summer vacationers gone, and the realization that there was nothing more promising in this fishing town, the Portuguese American youth of Provincetown solemnly swear to renounce a life of peril, poverty, and uncertainty on the sea. As a university-trained man, Frank Gaspar renounced the dangerous life evoked in this poem and he can now write about these occurrences rather than, like his grandfather, live them.

The third poem which offers us another perspective of ethnic life in Provincetown and even invites us into a Portuguese American kitchen is, for example, "Acts." A popular foodstuff available in most Portuguese communities in the United States or even found in major supermarkets across the nation is sweet bread, which Americans often eat toasted with butter for breakfast or a late afternoon snack. In "Acts," baking sweet bread is a community ritual which he, as a child, has had the opportunity to witness. This poem stresses this community's strong ties given that baking sweet bread was a means to bring its women and men together:

As if there were no bitterness  
 in their lives, as if no dark ever  
 slid outward from the sills of  
 those kiltered windows, the house  
 would suddenly fill with women  
 and the rooms would float in heady  
 yeasts while my mother, powdered  
 to the wrists in flour, would pound  
 the dough in the great bowl, yellow,  
 sugared, egg-heavy, warm in the gossip  
 and coal-smoke of a winter morning.  
 And the gravid bowl set by the chimney  
 filled each corner with lingering  
 spirits, the sweet bread swelling,  
 buttock, breast, belly, plump tub  
 of the world where the women even then  
 were softly disappearing into their  
 envies and wishes, and where the men  
 also slipped toward shadows as they waited  
 for the hot slabs tendered from the oven,

greased with butter, to dredge  
in milked coffee after a freezing day  
at the wharves:.....

Moreover, it is laden with religious imagery, namely that associated with Christ's Last Supper. The old woman's blessing of the sweet bread before it is baked, its distribution after it is taken out of the oven, and the communal ritual of the men eating it together reminds us of holy Eucharist:

.....and the oldest  
among them all, maple-skinned, gaunt  
under her rough apron, brushing  
the heel of her hand in the Sign  
of the Cross over still-rising loaves,  
a devotion she would never again  
make over loaves like these,  
never again in exactly this way,  
the earth, in the rife bounty  
it heaps upon the favored, letting  
go of all of this forever: If such  
sweet bread were ever blessed or holy,  
let them take it now, quickly – and eat. (19)

A poem centering on a popular Portuguese delicacy, *pão doce* or *bolo da Páscoa*, also has the effect of highlighting the old woman's Catholic fervor – and the Portuguese people in general – living in this Portuguese American community.

Practically all of the poems in *A Field Guide to the Heavens*,<sup>9</sup> Gaspar's third volume of poetry, are about California, the poet's home. This volume conjures up the memory of lost ones as it also focuses on the poet's immediate family, his wife and son. There are no kale and potato gardens, but, instead, a rose garden in the backyard. The nights are spent either star-gazing through a telescope or reading books – John Milton, *The Teaching of Buddha*, the ancient Greeks, Dante, Allen Ginsberg, George Herbert, João Cabral de Melo Neto, and Fernando Pessoa. Only two poems in this collection hark back to the poet's Provincetown days, namely "February" and "The Standard Times." While "February" continues the author's treatment of the theme of poverty and the uneventful lives of fishermen on the very tip of Cape Cod, in the figure of

the poet's stepfather, in "The Standard Times" we find the poet reminiscing about his boyhood as he delivered the *Cape Cod Standard Times*, before dawn, which paid his "lunches/at school, most of the time" (73). Apart from these two poems, the one that I find the most representative is, "I Am Refused Entry to the Harvard Poetry Library," which I quote in full:

Rightly so: for who am I but a tired question  
 squatting, in those days, somewhere up on  
 Beacon Hill, snow equally tired, crusted and dirty,  
 crouching in striated piles along the ancient curbs—  
 such a homely winter. And so there should  
 be books at my elbow! And there were rumors  
 of that splendid room: imagine sitting in  
 the warm, thick air, among the sons and daughters  
 of the sons and daughters, among the thin spines,  
 among the soft chairs, I would not eat all  
 day but linger there and let the gray light slant  
 through the gothic windows, or the square windows,  
 or from brass lamps, or from fluorescent lights,  
 the exact details so impossible to imagine  
 that they roll and flicker and agitate  
 the manic breath and heart: walk to the T and lay  
 my coins down, count the stops, hunch in  
 the chill morning to coffee and sugar at the vendor's  
 cart near the square, then advance, certain I can  
 talk my way into the sanctified places, sure  
 I can find in my pocket some scrap of card,  
 some guarantee I might pass. And if the world  
 has its own ideas, and if they are not in accord  
 with my own wishes, and if the mild young woman  
 shakes her head firmly and explains how I in  
 general never have, and never will, live a qualified  
 day in my life, I must not be afraid of the cold gray  
 sky and the sprawling yard – I must walk among  
 the gay colors of the coats and scarves, the backpacks  
 of the deserving: there are other buildings open  
 for roaming, and though I might be regarded  
 with the sideways look reserved for my kind,

someone will soon lay down a book or some other thing that will fit a hand, and swiftly it will be mine. (62)

This poem is about refusal, about not being allowed into the Harvard Poetry Library. Only the best students in the nation and the privileged are eligible there. I am not sure if the poem is about not qualifying for study there or, instead, if the poetic voice is denied entrance since he is on a day trip to the Harvard campus. While he may visit other buildings on the site, the “splendid room” is not for him. To me, it is an updating of Virginia Woolf’s plea in *A Room of One’s Own*, but from the ethnic – not feminist – perspective. What is the reader to make of, we are told, the “mild young woman/[who] shakes her head firmly and explains how I in/general never have, and never will, live a qualified/day in my life” or even when he “might be regarded/with the sideways look reserved for my kind”? Is this a reference to how visitors are treated by mild but patrician librarians? Or, instead, the poet’s fear of not being admitted into the hall of fame of poets, canonization, if possible? To me the phrase about letting “the gray light slant/ through the gothic windows” echoes Emily Dickinson’s poem, “There’s a certain Slant of light” in which an overall mood of depression prevails as Dickinson questions Emerson and Thoreau about the therapeutic qualities of Nature as postulated by the writers of the American Renaissance or even the English Romantics, namely William Wordsworth in *The Prelude*. In the light of this verse, Gaspar may have also in mind Dickinson’s fear of not being well received by her audience, her fear of publication, and rejection, which she has distilled into, for example, “Publication – is the Auction.” In addition, Gaspar is suggesting that this poem also be read as the saga of a Portuguese American from a poor fishing town with artistic yearnings, but who cannot qualify for Harvard given his limited financial resources. “I Am Refused Entry to the Harvard Poetry Library” is a Portuguese American rendition of the fears and uncertainties of a given writer, Frank Gaspar, about his audience, literary merit, and fame.

*Leaving Pico* (1999) is a novel about Azorean immigrant life in Provincetown during the 1950s and 60s and how this community reacts to – or resists – American ways. This novel captures quite well the antagonism between the Portuguese from the Azores, represented by Josie’s family, and the *Lisbons*, that is, those from



the Continent, represented by Carmine, who is courting Josie's mother, Rosa. This conflict, which Leo Pap has written about in *The Portuguese-Americans*,<sup>10</sup> is further highlighted through the characters of Madeleine Sylvia, a *Lisbon*, and Great Aunt Theophila, the narrator's great aunt and a "Pico" woman:

My great aunt had also been active in church, amoving force in the Holy Rosary Sodality, and she had been a great fighter for the *Pico* side of things in the Portuguese-American Social Organization, a powerful if *Lisbon*-dominated civic club that conducted all important functions in our town and held whist parties on Friday nights. It was in the PASO Hall that battles raged long and hard between *Picos* and *Lisbons*, fought with wrath and passion, almost exclusively by the women. When the snooty *Lisbons* tried to relegate the *Pico* ladies to mere cleanup duties after a feast, it was my great aunt who would pound the table and spit furious old-country oaths at the like of Madeleine Sylvia. She was strong and demanded respect. The *Picos* could cook salt fish with tomato sauce as well as anyone, and the damned *Lisbons* could wash the pots! For a while Great Aunt Theophila seemed bound to take control of the entire organization....<sup>11</sup> (4-5)

In this novel about Josie's coming of age, there are numerous references to the Azorean presence on the very tip of Cape Cod: the kale and potato gardens, the social clubs and club bands, the fish served during the two clambakes that take place in the course of the novel, the names on the fishing boats, most of which highlight this community's strong Catholic beliefs (the *Coração de Jesus*, the *Amor de Deus*, etc.), the fado music that is played at parties and social gatherings, and the rituals associated with their Catholic calendar throughout the year, namely, the sodalities, the festivals with their street processions, the Blessing of the Fleet, etc.

As Clemente has noted, "Gaspar structures his narrative around two clambakes."<sup>12</sup> During the first, we meet a gay couple, Roger and Lew, who have rented an upper room for the Summer season at Josie's house and the two women, Cynthia and Amalia,

John Joseph (the narrator's grandfather) is flirting with. What is appealing about the character of John Joseph is – unlike most first-generation Portuguese immigrants – his willingness to interact with individuals from beyond his ethnic enclave and eagerness to know more about American ways. At a point when the clambake is well under way and all the Portuguese guests had already arrived, we learn that:

behind them came two women. They were not townspeople, but summer people, wearing long flowery dresses and big, wide-brimmed straw hats. A ripple of distress passed through the *Pico* ladies sitting by the door. I watched my great aunt calculate their arrival. Yes, they were friends of John Joseph, some of those people from away that he invariably ran off with every summer, those women who sat along the wharves and painted bright senseless pictures of the fishing boats – painted pictures of John Joseph, even, in that poor hat of his and with his unshaven face. These were the people from the Other World, and without John Joseph we would never have had any contact with them.... The two worlds of townspeople and summer people existed side by side, like parallel universes, but no one traveled between them except for my grandfather (28).

The clambake enables its community members to get together and, in the process, reminisce about the old country and revive some of its traditions:

John Joseph and I brought out the lobsters and clams and fish and bread and corn. Their smells spread a lushness in the air, and the women softened and talked and laughed as we all ate. Everyone celebrated my grandfather's cooking, and cartons of ale were now stacked along the duckpen fence. Sometime after the clatter and slosh of eating had subsided, Jaime Costa, Juney's younger brother, pulled his guitar out of its battered case, and in his ragged voice began singing *fados*, those sad, old-country songs of fate (29).

The second clambake is held in chapter eighteen, the very last

chapter in *Leaving Pico*. Everybody has gotten together to mourn John Joseph, who had perished at sea. Between both episodes, this novel depicts the times when the boy went sailing with his grandfather and the stories he told the boy about the mythical ancestor from Portugal. *Leaving Pico* is, in my view, the best Portuguese American novel to date because we get a very detailed and engrossing portrayal of life in a Portuguese ethnic enclave in the United States.

In his fourth collection of poems, *Night of a Thousand Blossoms*,<sup>13</sup> published in 2004, references to ethnicity are scarce. In “I Am Not a Keeper of Sheep,” the poetic voice acknowledges being fascinated by the poetry of Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935) whereas “One Arm and Another Arm,” builds on a poem by Eugénio de Andrade (1923-2005). Were it not for both references to these Portuguese poets, the items composing this volume hardly provide any signs pointing to the author’s ethnic background. Instead, in this collection, the poet wrestles with a few metaphysical questions. These range from the state of the soul in today’s world to a quest for meaning. While these issues are prompted by late-night readings, these poems reflect a poetic voice searching for answers in Buddha, the Bible, Bodhidharma, Plato, Dante, St. John of the Cross, Keats, and other voices, hoping, in the process, they will provide solace to the troubled poetic soul.

From the first volume of poems to the subsequent titles, we witness a gradual erasure or, instead, a process where the allusions to the author’s ethnic background become dimmer and dimmer. And yet, his childhood recollections of a predominantly Portuguese American community functioned, so to speak, as a catalyst which catapulted him into the world of writing – and a pool from which he would later draw from to write his first novel. At this point, Gaspar has already become a major voice in contemporary American fiction and poetry – and a cornerstone in Portuguese American writing as well.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Alice R. Clemente, “Of Love and Remembrance – the Poetry and Prose of Frank X. Gaspar,” *Cávea-Brown: A Bilingual Journal of Portuguese-American Letters and Studies*, vol. XXI (2000): 25-43.

<sup>2</sup> William Boelhower, *Through a Glass Darkly: Ethnic Semiosis in American Literature* (New York: Oxford UP, 1987), p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Clemente, p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> References to Frank Gaspar's volume are taken from *The Holyoke* (Boston: Northeastern UP, 1988), see page xi.

<sup>5</sup> Fred L. Gardaphé, *Italian Signs, American Streets: The Evolution of Italian American Narrative* (Durham: Duke UP, 1996), pp. 154-55.

<sup>6</sup> On this issue, see my article "The Ethnic Garden in Portuguese-American Writing." *The Journal of American Culture* 28.2 (June 2005): 191-200.

<sup>7</sup> Boelhower, p. 114.

<sup>8</sup> References to Frank Gaspar's volume are taken from *Mass for the Grace of a Happy Death* (Tallahassee, FL: Anhinga P, 1995).

<sup>9</sup> References to Frank Gaspar's volume are taken from *A Field Guide to the Heavens* (Madison, WI: The U of Wisconsin P, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> See Leo Pap, *The Portuguese-Americans* (Boston: Twayne, 1981), pp. 158-9.

<sup>11</sup> References to Frank Gaspar's novel are taken from *Leaving Pico* (Hanover and London: UP of New England, 1999).

<sup>12</sup> Clemente, p. 41.

<sup>13</sup> Frank X. Gaspar, *Night of a Thousand Blossoms* (Farmington, Maine: Alice James Books, 2004).

## TOWARD FIRST-RATE IDEAS

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“The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still have the ability to function. One should, for example, be able to see that things are hopeless and yet be determined to make them otherwise.”

–“The Crack-Up”

by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Recently, my 21 year old son and I returned to California to visit my father, sister and extended Shinagawa clan during the winter holiday season. Three months earlier, my mother had passed away after several years of illness fighting off the twin demons of tuberculosis and pneumonia. My father was recovering slowly from the loss of my mother and my sister was doing her best to keep up his spirits. During the illness and after my mother’s passage, a reverend of the local Japanese American Buddhist church helped enormously with the pain, sense of loss, and the need to let go. My father and sister were so impressed with the compassion and dedication of this reverend that they resolved to attend the Buddhist church services from there on out.

During our stay in California, we attended the services and participated in the traditional New Year activities of closing the old year by eating “long-life noodles” – hot noodles in fish broth with onion garnish and fish cake, followed by attending the reverend’s sermon the next day on New Years and eating o-mochi – rice cakes symbolizing a good new year and the potential of an excellent harvest. These services were attended mostly by Japanese American seniors. In spite of the beauty of the service and the camaraderie of the activities, there was a sadness in the air in the shared awareness of their impending death – both physical and cultural.

During our meals, several Japanese Americans approached me and shared their thoughts about my lecture on the future of Japanese Americans that I had presented at their Church several years earlier. In that lecture, I had suggested that the Japanese American community would not completely die but be transformed by several factors – the continuing rise in intermarriage among Japanese American women with white men and the role of their subsequent offspring, the growth of a new “Shin-Issei” (new recently-arrived first generation transnational Japanese) community that I surmised would be central to maintaining the larger Japanese American community, the dwindling number of Japanese Americans married to one another of the same generation and background, and what I have consistently observed as our greatest racial myopia – the almost completely ignored but largest phenomenon of Pan-Asian marriages and the key role of their offspring. The last factor involved primarily 3rd and later generation Japanese American men, but increasingly, among the 4th and later generations, Japanese American women were also participating in Pan-Asian relationships and marriages.

I argued that it would be impossible to maintain our old paradigms of a homogenous Japanese American community rooted in our immigration to the United States roughly a hundred years ago during the Meiji Era and Showa Era of Japan. Multiracial, multiethnic, multigenerational, and transnational – the Japanese American community would transform itself over time as an early precursor to a new vibrant culture that was in the making – a

pan-Asian American culture that would rise like a phoenix from the ashes of the former, and become a vital force, culture, and community in American life.

On New Year's Day, several of the elderly Nisei (second-generation Japanese Americans) said to me that the relationships of their children and grandchildren had proven me largely right. One Mr. Yasuda came up and introduced me to his son, who was engaged to a Korean American woman. Another Nisei, a widow, was now dating a Chinese American man. Yet another Sansei (third-generation Japanese American), who had brought her three Hapa children (half-Japanese and half-white) to the service, was relating to me her personal wish to impart Japanese values and have her children grow up with a sense of being Asian American.

For these Japanese American men and women, the cultural continuity of the homogenous Japanese American community of yesteryear is felt as largely hopeless. Although they reminisce and are nostalgic for the past, their actions of going to the church and participating with other Japanese Americans suggests their determination to hold on to aspects of their shared culture and identity. These Japanese Americans felt akin in spirit to what F. Scott Fitzgerald felt over 75 years ago, "One should, for example, be able to see that things are hopeless and yet be determined to make them otherwise." But out of the chaos and trepidation of the death of the old order, what rises in its place?

\* \* \* \*

As the Director of the Center for the Study of Culture, Race, and Ethnicity I feel similarly that race relations at the beginning of the 21st Century is undergoing death and transformation. Like Japanese Americans at the church service, Americans of the 21st Century hang on to the visions and vestiges of the race relations and civil rights revolution of the 1960s, but have yet to recognize its "death." Clinging to and cherishing what we hold as the great battles and clarity of the past, we have been unable to fashion a rhetoric or language to describe the changing realities of race relations in our present age.

Today, I feel that it is imperative to do what Carlos Bulosan, the great Filipino American writer of the 1940s, implored, "We must

destroy that which is dying, because it does not die by itself. . . . The old world is dying, but a new world is being born. It generates inspiration from the chaos that beats upon us all. . . . The old world will die so that the new world will be born with less sacrifice and agony on the living. . . .”

The rest of this short essay will focus upon what I mean by destroying that which is dying. I will describe five observations that, in my personal estimation and opinion, need to be acknowledged if we are to forge a new scholarship and movement for social justice and better race relations. There are any numbers of other observations that one can choose, but these are, in my mind, some of the ones that are central but largely ignored by current scholarship and not openly acknowledged in much of public discourse. Each of these observations is necessarily short here; they will probably be expanded in a later work. But the gist is here – and I hope that the ideas presented spark debate, controversy, and intellectual activity regarding race relations in the United States.

### *Immigrant and Colonized Minorities*

One only needs to visit Flushing, Miami, Fremont, or Alhambra to notice the burgeoning new communities of recent immigrants of color who continue to be characterized as “racial minorities” within the color-coded designated labels of African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and Muslim Americans. Yet when Robert Blauner and many of the 60s generation wrote of racial minorities in the U.S., they were described as peoples of color who had been historically objectified and dehumanized by the majority in order to provide access to cheap labor and/or natural resources for those in positions of authority and power. In a relationship akin to the colonialism of mother country and colony – these racial minorities were treated as “internal colonies.” They were unlike the white ethnic immigrants who came to the United States voluntarily, because racially “colonized” minorities had been subject to forced entry, unfree or unequal labor, and forced assimilation and cultural destruction for decades and centuries. Radicals and liberals alike argued for various forms of redress,



reparations, and affirmative action on behalf and in support of these historically aggrieved racial minority populations. Civil rights in the aftermath of the 1960s were initially largely conceived as an effort to combat racism and the historical legacy of racism.

Today, in many of the elite colleges and universities, immigrants of color are many times the preponderant or overwhelming proportion of the racial minority presence. Go to Ithaca College, Cornell University, Berkeley, or Stanford, and scratch beyond our surface notions of our color-coded consciousness – one can't help but notice this significant immigrant majority among the racial minority presence. Where are the historically aggrieved, generationally longstanding, populations of African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans originally to be served by much of civil rights and affirmative action legislation? Their significant presence is notably absent, by and large, despite the fact that among African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans, they continue to be the overwhelming majority of these communities. They are invisible in the "visible" spectrum of our notions of racial categories that are utilized by corporations, governments, and educational institutions. To many institutions, it doesn't really matter whether they are working class or middle class or whether they are immigrant or long-time Californ' (referring to Chinese Americans who can trace their origins to the gold rush era). Regardless, they are racial minorities, and in our neoliberal and neoconservative age, we *should* have some, especially when they are qualified and aspiring.

But this begs the question, how will our society address our longstanding historically aggrieved populations? We can be quite cynical here, but many conservatives and liberals alike are very comfortable about avoiding the *diversity* within racial minorities. Unlike the Sixties, the distinctions between immigrant and minority are no longer so clear. Due to the selective consequences of U.S. immigration policy, racial minority immigrants are more likely to bring with them greater privileged class status, more education, and even capital than members of many longstanding racial minority communities. Yet, this does not mean that racial minority immigrants do not continue to suffer racial discrimination nor does it connote that longstanding racial minorities are all underprivileged.

Our fixation on race without significantly recognizing class and immigrant status will vex our efforts toward greater social justice and equity, and provides ammunition to those who oppose affirmative action and distributive justice. For the 21st century, we must recognize that race, immigrant status, and class are fluid yet distinct factors in the life chances of individuals.

*The "Failure" of the Second and Subsequent Generations*

Similarly, the higher one goes up the educational hierarchy, there are proportionately fewer racial minority individuals of second and subsequent generations who enroll in education. This tendency has been observed by many social scientists and social commentators, notably such public intellectuals as William Julius Wilson, Edward Murguia, Susan Chow, Alexandro Portes, and Ruben G. Rumbaut. Unlike whites, racial minorities do not exhibit maintained class or educational status or sustained class or educational upward mobility. While racial minority immigrants exhibit remarkable initial gains in education and occupation in the 1st and 1.5 generations, this is not necessarily true for the majority of the U.S.-born, especially among 3rd generation and subsequent generations.

So where are they? Many drop out. Some join the military, some are in prison, and many, especially among Asian Americans, complete degrees in lower status institutions or at lower levels of education. Associated with this tendency and exacerbating family dynamics is the much higher probability of racial minority women to attend colleges and universities. Among African Americans at the undergraduate level, for example, the current ratio is above 3 to 1.

Contrary to the myth of the model minority, Asian Americans are finding this set of general trends among racial minorities to be true for them as well. Susan Chow has observed that in family gatherings of Asian Americans who have been here for three generations or more, the educational and subsequent occupational achievements of the 1.5 generation and 2nd generation are greater than among the 3rd and 4th generation when they were of the same age. Among the later generations, they not only had less

education than the former, but when they did attend colleges, they attended schools of significantly lower stature than their parents and grandparents.

As we can see, this generational picture is associated with our observations on immigrant and colonized minorities. As Frank Wu has noted, racial minority immigrants do not tend to see themselves as racial minorities, yet are treated by American society and institutions as such. In a complex relationship of perception, treatment, and self-awareness, racial minority immigrants eventually become “racialized,” both by themselves and by others.

### *Ignoring Pan-Ethnicity: The “Racialization” of Ethnicity*

Many years ago, I was a graduate student at Berkeley copy-editing the manuscript that would later be entitled *Racial Formation in the United States*. In that landmark book, Michael Omi and Howard Winant noted that racial formations develop that define and redefine racial and ethnic identities out of a complex process involving the racial state, its efforts to maintain racial hegemony and social order, and the competing interests of various racially based social movements. In the dialectical process of racial conflict and accommodation, races and racial categories are socially formed and reformed. Racial formation thus is the process by which socio-historical designations of race are created and manipulated.

Extending this argument, and following similar lines of thought expressed by Yen Le Espiritu, I believe that in the United States a pan-ethnicity forms primarily through such a racial formation process. Ethnic groups that were originally objectified by society, the state, and by other ethnic and racial groups as a part of a larger category of “race,” through a process of racial formation, coalesce and develop into self-actualizing and self-aware pan-ethnicities. Over time, their primary awareness and allegiance to ethnic identity diminishes, and commonly shared cultural and social features begin to reflect the constructed landscape of each “race.”

People are generally blithely unaware of the impact of pan-ethnicity. The racial formation process that led to Whiteness during the middle half of the 20th century led to interethnic marriages

among white ethnics that were largely unheard of in the 19th century. Today, according to Mary Waters, most whites who describe themselves as white can not ascertain a specific ethnic background with confidence. They are a mix of ethnic backgrounds that had been subsumed in the larger social category of Whiteness. Likewise, racial minorities are also recently undergoing a massive project of pan-ethnicization that is the result of the “racialization” of ethnic groups in the United States. Thus, for example, out of Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, and Puerto Ricans, a shared Latino culture and diverse set of communities is born. Similarly, the same may be said of African Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans.

Pan-ethnicities in the U.S. formed primarily along the lines of socially constructed notions of race. Amorphous and indefinite, and largely invisible, pan-ethnicities correlate, overlap, coincide, and sometimes extend with racial formation. Yet, they have significant impact and are largely ignored by most scholarship. Very little research has so far been conducted on this topic, and yet all of the racial immigrant ethnic communities are undergoing such a process. What are the implications? As we noted earlier, pan-ethnicities are often immigrants as well as ethnicities, and also racially categorized. The scholarship of the 21st century requires us to delve further into pan-ethnicity and its interplay with ethnicity, nationality status, and race.

### *The Allure of Assimilation and Privilege*

The continuing dominance of assimilation theory as the primary theoretical model depicting race relations in the United States is undisputable. Regardless of their politics, observers of race and ethnic relations such as Linda Chavez, Dinesh D’Souza, Bart Landry, Michael Omi, Richard Rorty, and Arthur Schlesinger have all alluded to the importance of assimilation in the lives of immigrants, minorities, and ethnicities. While specific definitions may differ, assimilation involves a process of incorporation of an out-group into the in-group. Generally, the in-group is the majority and the out-group is the minority, with the in-group possessing greater privilege, status, and opportunities, while the

out-group suffers from discrimination, disadvantage, and restricted opportunities. Members of the out-group assimilate because they want the rights and privileges that members of the in-group have.

To deposit all the books on the many variations of assimilation theory would fill all of the Center's space – they include such forms as Anglo-conformity, melting pot, cultural pluralism, two-way, and multicultural cosmopolitanism. Underlying these approaches, however, is the general liberal belief that American society is generally accepting of minorities and immigrants and strives toward egalitarianism and equal treatment, concomitant with an assumption that our society rewards those with merit who wish to participate with the mainstream.

Whether these assumptions hold merit may be questionable, but nevertheless the everyday person in the United States acts upon acculturation and assimilation as the primary vehicle for garnishing the rewards of our society. Implicitly, minorities are told that by attending integrated schools, learning English, living in the same neighborhoods, and participating in the same circle of workers, friends, and lovers as that of the majority, their actions will accord them higher status and better treatment.

Most immigrants and minorities do indeed strive in these directions, but the diversity amongst them indicates wide disparities in their socioeconomic outcome, as shown most notably in the works by Larry Bobo, Joe Feagin, Andrew Hacker, Douglas Massey, and Marta Tienda. According to this body of work, differential outcome continues to arise in large part due to differential treatment associated with their ascribed or prescribed race, ethnicity, and nationality status. In fact, their studies indicate *growing* racial residential segregation, *sustained* educational disparities regardless of generation, and *limits* to social integration at different levels for different groups. These findings suggest that American society continues to treat people differently on the basis of their race, ethnicity, and nationality status. Although I personally do not agree with either, Douglas Massey goes so far as to argue that there is an "American Apartheid," and Andrew Hacker talks of two divided nations and completely different experiences – one black and one white.

Regardless of the discriminatory behavior directed against a

group, individually people are drawn by the allure of assimilation and the privileges conferred by participating in the assimilation process, whether they are aware and conscious of their participation in assimilation or not. Many immigrants and minorities continue to individually strive for recognition and achievement, despite negative perceptions by the majority (and the minority), and land in different social locations in the racial, class, and gender hierarchy of our society. As the British rock band Queen quipped,

“If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em  
It’s everyone for themselves  
Move on out!”

Studying the dynamism of race, class, and gender in a hierarchical society that lauds and celebrates integration and assimilation is a daunting task, but there would be much to gain if we were to do so. One example would be to conduct a comparative systematic study of the marriage patterns of racial and ethnic groups in the United States across generations that can be informed by history, social policy, and reactions to assimilation. Intermarriage, passing, hybridity, intersectionality, communal and familial efforts to maintain culture by marital selection, and changing notions of identity formation can be gainfully studied by a grounded interpretation of this dynamism.

### *Multiple and Overlapping Identities and Allegiances*

The bipolar world of the Cold War Era and the 1960s no longer describes the complex realities of race relations today. Race is no longer characterized by the stark black and white of some modernist painting. Rather, the increasing complexity of multiple and overlapping identities shaped in part by the aftermath of the civil rights revolution, the rise of the global economy, ever increasing migration, and emergence of a global marketplace have created a race relations which might best be evoked as similar to a pointillist painting by Georges Seurat – embodiments that are whole and substantive, which upon closer inspection are made of tiny detached strokes of color and hue that serve to make his paintings

shimmer with brilliance and depth. Similarly, such embodiments as self, ethnicity, nationality, pan-ethnicity, transnationality, and race all share elements with one another and influence each another, but yet they remain amorphously distinct.



The amorphous distinctiveness of multiple and overlapping identity formations is shown in the rising racial diversity of the United States. Our Nation, once largely white and black, is now multiracial. Regionally, as a result of largescale immigration and domestic migration, new areas have developed that have become regional cultural Meccas for identities that are agglomerations of associated ethnicities, nationalities, races, and panethnicities – Miami for the Latino communities, San Francisco for the Asian American communities, Atlanta for the African American communities, and Detroit for Muslim American communities. Yet within or adjacent to many of the largest of these New Meccas, there are significant and vital pockets of other immigrants, ethnicities, and races.

The growing heterogeneity of our society has also led to increasing intermarriage, both interracial and pan-ethnic. Interracial marriages, once less than one percent during the 1960s, increased five-fold by the year 2000 to almost five percent of all marriages. In some states, notably California and Hawaii, such marriages approached and surpassed 20 percent of the state's married couples. Pan-ethnic marriages and relationships also grew, as a consequence of the liberalization of civil rights and immigration

laws, the influence of the ethnic studies movement, and the rebirth and growth of ethnic and pan-ethnic enclaves brought about by the modern day bursts of global diasporas and migrations. Today, Asian Americans, for example, increasingly marry across ethnic lines within the social construction of Asian American in spite of the carry-over prejudices and residual enmity that was the legacy of World War II.

The rapid rise of people claiming multiracial and multiethnic identities are yet another indication of rapid social change. During the 1960s, less than half a percent of all individuals in the U.S. identified themselves as multiracial. By the year 2000, however, 2.4 percent claimed on the census form two or more races, and that did not include the large numbers of people who identified themselves as multiethnic (the offspring of parents of two differing ethnic groups within the same race). That population, hidden by the racial myopia I mentioned earlier, is still hidden from view because of our obsession with visual race.

Upon closer examination, this can be seen among Asian Americans very clearly, and similar patterns are to be found among all racial minority populations. According to the 2000 census, 11,898,828 (4.2 percent of the total population) identified themselves as Asian, either wholly or partially; 10,242,998 (3.6 percent of the total population; 86.1 percent of all Asians) as just Asian; and 1,655,830 (0.6 percent of the total population; 13.9 percent of all Asians) as part Asian mixed with one or more other races. Among the offspring of interethnic and interracial marriages, we find about 52 percent are of the combination of Asian and White, and 46 percent are the result of interethnic marriages among Asian Americans. Recent studies by the Census Bureau have shown that the latter figure is rapidly outpacing the growth of the former, and thus signifies a growing sense of pan-ethnic identity.

The global Diasporas from intermediate locations between the United States and the "mother" country such as former colonies and other areas of the developed nations, newly developing countries (NDCs), and the Third World also impact our diversity. In Queens, New York, for example, it is quite possible nowadays for a Dominican American to identify with being a Dominican



immigrant, to be characterized by the larger society as African American or Black, view themselves as Latina/o or Latin American, and adamantly correct others who would dare mistake them for African Americans. Yet their son or daughter, in little more than half or a full generation, will identify with much of African American culture (although at times ambivalently), consider themselves Hispanic, and be proud of their Dominican heritage. Multiple and overlapping identities brought about by such Diasporas, some of them confusing and conflicting, yet dynamic and creative, are part and parcel of the new 21st century American landscape of race relations.

Diaspora communities of color formed of exiles escaping forced and traumatic genocides and expulsions leave their own distinct mark in this variegated landscape. In what ways can one accurately describe a Southeast Asian refugee from Laos as a voluntary Asian immigrant? Would they not have very different lives than those who have come here voluntarily? Wouldn't their exile or pariah status not leave a feeling of consciousness similar to what was felt by Palestinian exile Edward Said?: "Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that – to borrow a phrase from music – is contrapuntal. For an exile, habits of life, expression, or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment. Thus both the new and the old environment are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally. ... There is a unique pleasure in this sort of apprehension." I believe Said talks from the perspective of an exile who had been disrupted and displaced, and his contrapuntal views are very different than that of an immigrant who has had a chance to make a planned closure and emigration from his home country or a longstanding racial minority who has never had such immediate memories of a lost homeland.

Adoptees also complicate the picture. Since World War II, the global disruptions of poverty, environmental and resource degradation, war, and genocide have led to many displaced children of color becoming adopted by Americans. The overwhelming majority of these Americans are white, and many

of these adoptees are either Asian or Latin American (89 percent) and female (81 percent in general, 91 and 97 percent for China and Korea). These adopted children – part of what we term transracial adoptees – number close to a million since World War II, according to some census research. Their identities are complex and difficult to characterize. Suffice it to say that the anomalies of proportionately few African or African American children being adopted, proportionately higher number of lighter-skinned children being adopted, and the overwhelming sex imbalance in favor of girls being adopted require us to examine the effects of assimilation, socialization, development, racism, patriarchy, paternalism, and colonialism in the selection and upbringing of these children.

Finally, there are the transnationals – people who are involved in and who stake claim to more than one nation. Some are clearly sojourners, who identify strongly only with one nation but do business, education, and tourism in other nations on a consistent basis. Last year, there were about 16 million of them here in the United States. Their stake may not be strong in the United States at first, but some change their minds and decide to stay in America either legally or illegally. Many visitors eventually bring along their children to attend American schools, colleges and universities. Currently, there are more than 350,000 international students attending high school in the United States, with the overwhelming majority of these coming from Asia. Among those who are attending colleges, there are over 570,000 international students attending colleges and universities in the United States. Most of these students are from nations of color. For over thirty years, international students of color have been the main source of scientific doctorates in the United States.

Transnationals who significantly stake their fortunes in more than one nation are increasingly common. What might have once been described as the international jet-set has morphed into a global transnational elite whose child may have been born in Hong Kong, educated at a boarding school in Switzerland, attended Cornell University as an undergraduate, graduated from Kings College in Great Britain for his or her doctorate, who has the acquired the ability to speak quadrilingually, and who now works in corporate finance at a multinational corporation whose holding

company is headquartered in Japan and where the workplace is at a company that appears to be “American” located in South Carolina. To characterize this person as Hong Kong-raised, Cantonese, Chinese, Asian, Chinese American, Asian American, British, or American would be difficult to do. He or she partakes in all of these identities and none of them completely. This individual is a global transnational who has multiple and overlapping identities and allegiances...

\* \* \*

What all of this diversity of identity formations have in common is the simple observation that identities are also shared communities, with their own codes of behavior and mores and their own set of social boundaries however tightly or loosely made about in-group and out-group. A person is a member and participant, and each person will have varying degrees of attachment in their participation of an identity. Strong attachments will carry with it feelings of allegiance and belonging, loose attachments may bring about conversion or straying away and feelings of alienation and disaffection.

When individuals experience multiple and overlapping identities, it would be natural to hold multiple allegiances that would ebb and flow with various stages of their life, their immediate situation and environment, and the political and social discourse prevalent in the ethos. As we progress into the 21st century, we must not shy away from a discussion of the social dynamics of identity and allegiance, even if there is a danger that it might play into the hands of some conservative interests who would question the loyalties of some individuals and groups as had happened in World War II. Times are different. In the previous era, the national narrative was strongly assimilationist and didn't allow for ambiguity regarding identity and allegiances. Times and circumstances have changed with the globalization of our economy and our participation in world events as the single remaining global superpower. These have brought about for many persons who are considered racial minorities a range of identities that for some would be choices and for others largely pre-chosen by the ascriptive nature of our society. Such identities carry with them coetaneous allegiances.

Perhaps to their peril, multiple identities and allegiances are no longer completely sanctioned to the degree as in the past, but neither are they completely voluntary and without sanction. Without recognizing the complexity of our current constructions of identities and allegiances, we do a disservice in understanding race relations today.

Let me provide several examples.

Richard Perle, currently a highly influential Pentagon policy advisor and leading neoconservative, holds dual citizenship in both the United States and in Israel. Although born in New York City, he has served for the Israeli government as a Likud policy advisor, been on the boards of numerous American corporations, government agencies, and think tanks, and continues to participate in the civic and non-profit activities of major Jewish American and Israeli organizations. During the 1970s and the 1980s, indisputable evidence was indeed garnered that he had passed on American governmental secrets to the Israeli government. However, because of his strong connections with the American government and corporate interests, and although he was indicted, he evaded sentencing and continues to serve both the United States and Israel at top echelons of their governments.

Another contrasting example is the sad case of Dr. Tsien Hsue-shen, who was born in China in 1911, who came to the United States during the 1930s, and later earned a doctorate at Caltech. He later achieved major scientific breakthroughs in aeronautics, rocketry, nuclear technology, and other fields at American government-sponsored research laboratories. After applying for U.S. citizenship in the 1950s, he became an innocent victim of the Red Scare, subjected to grueling interrogations regarding his loyalty, and put under house arrest. He was ultimately deported to Communist China. Instead of assuming the leadership role of America's missile and space programs that he was eminently qualified to hold, he became a victim of racist paranoia, red-baiting, the effects of the glass ceiling, and the Cold War. Out of this set of tragic experiences, he was quickly recruited into the scientific efforts of Communist China to modernize its military capabilities. He became one of the fathers of the Chinese missile

and space program that would develop the Silkworm missile and subsequently other more deadly nuclear missiles.

Forty years later, almost the same set of patterns occurred for Dr. Wen Ho Lee, a U.S. citizen and a former researcher who had worked at the Los Alamos National Laboratory. While employed, he was alleged by the FBI to be a spy passing on secrets about U.S. nuclear technology to the Communist Chinese. Eventually, after a thorough and contentious review forced upon the FBI by the Asian American communities, he was eventually released from his incarceration, absolved from the charges of espionage, and cleared of all wrong-doing. However, his fate contrasted sharply with that of Richard Perle. Today, he is no longer allowed to work in government agencies and was subsequently forced to retire. A shy and quiet elderly man, he currently remains at his home almost as if in house arrest.

Such examples as those above suggest that among those who have multiple and overlapping identities, there still remains different degrees of choice and different degrees of punishment resulting from the perceived choices made regarding their allegiance that continue to be shaped by domestic and international politics, race relations, and access to power.

As we close, let's ask a rhetorical question. What happens when some communities are more likely to have multiple and overlapping identities and allegiances and others remain largely perceiving themselves as monocultural and homogenous? The anti-semitic Palmer Raids of the 1920s, the detainment and incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, and the more recent roundup, detainment, and incarceration of Muslim Americans in post-9/11 America stand as testimony to the tragic consequences of ill-treatment of groups who through no fault of their own held or were perceived to have held multiple identities and allegiances. In each of these historic incidences, a large set of the American population, namely large segments of the white population, were the primary doubters of their loyalty and allegiances, and were able to impose racially and ethnically consequential policies that seriously hurt these particular communities as well as led to the erosion of the civil rights of all Americans.

## *Recognizing “First-Rate” Ideas*

The first step toward creating a rhetoric or language that describes the changing realities of race relations in our present age is to acknowledge how our present age differs from that of the past. Although I could have chosen other features, I chose five observations that I believed would be helpful toward forging a new scholarship and movement for social justice and improved race relations: the conflation of immigrant and colonized minorities following the 1960s; the “failure” of second and subsequent generations among racial minorities; the rapid growth and consequences of pan-ethnicity among racial minorities; the continuing allure of assimilation in the context of hierarchies of privilege and power; and I ended with a focus on the real need of scholars, activists, policy analysts, and public intellectuals to grapple with the diversity of multiple and overlapping identities and allegiances.

I believe that ethnic studies must focus much of its research and academic activities toward investigating further these directions. I also contend that a language to describe these new changes needs further development that can only come about through concerted dialogic communication and scholarship.

To do so requires us to have first-rate ideas and the ability to hold two or more opposing ideas at the same time. Thinking critically and heterogeneously enables us to be able to grapple with the complexities of culture, race, and ethnicity as we proceed into the 21st century.

Moreover, as Frank Wu, the Dean of the School of Law at Wayne State University has so eloquently stated, “The necessary but not sufficient threshold is acknowledging that race operates in our lives, relentlessly and pervasively. . . . By becoming more conscious of our own perceptions (of race), as a society we will be able to neutralize racial prejudice.” Similarly, examining race is no longer a sufficient factor for understanding race relations, and examining diversity of identities and allegiances will be crucial to the task of social justice in the future.

## REVIEWS

**Evelyn Nakano Glenn. *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002). x, 306 pp., notes, index, \$39.95 cloth.**

Evelyn Glenn is among the pioneers who laid the groundwork for an intersective approach of race, class, and gender to the analysis of social inequality. This new book carries on and extends her well-established intellectual project along this line of inquiry in both depth and breadth. In *Unequal Freedom*, Glenn offers an exemplary historical and comparative analysis of how race and gender as fundamental organizing principles of social institutions shaped American citizenship and labor system from the end of Reconstruction to the eve of World War II. She begins with a brief introduction to the book project in the introductory chapter. In the next three chapters, she lays out a conceptual framework for her analysis, devoting one chapter to each of the three twisted threads: race and gender, citizenship, and labor. Glenn also provides historical backdrops at the national level for her analyses of citizenship and labor. The following three chapters shift to regional-level analysis with three case studies: Blacks and whites in the South, Mexicans and Anglos in the Southwest, and Japanese and haoles in Hawaii. The final chapter epitomizes the common themes across chapters and compares the three regional cases in citizenship and labor systems.

Glenn's analytical framework that integrates race and gender is

a further synthesis and extension of social constructionist streams. She treats race and gender as interacting, interlocking structures not only socially constructed by social institutions but also mutually constructed. While there is no dearth of work on citizenship and labor, Glenn contributes to the conceptualization of both by weaving in race, gender, and sometimes class. Moreover, her unique contribution is to tie race and gender with citizenship and labor and to cogently and skillfully demonstrate how race and gender structured American citizenship and labor systems and how citizenship and labor systems in turn helped create and maintain racial and gender inequalities. Glenn's regional approach allows her to uncover the common trends as well as variations across the three regions in the definition, enforcement, and practices of citizenship and labor rights; in the contestation of those rights and resistance to the imposition of white ideology and institutions by racial minorities and women; and in interracial dependent lives and identities.

*Unequal Freedom* is a work of painstaking synthesis and insightful analysis. This book moves a step closer to a more thorough understanding of the centrality, simultaneity, and intersectiveness of race, class, and gender in American life. While the book focuses on the role of race and gender in organizing citizenship and labor systems, from time to time Glenn factors in class in her analysis. Nonetheless, class is not treated in its fullest as an organizing principle as granted to race and gender. A simultaneous analysis of race, gender, and class at the parallel level should be the next step to go. The nuance between race and gender and racial and gender inequalities should be attended to as they seem to be used synonymously or inclusively at times. It appears that Glenn has started an expandable project. This book will no doubt inspire scores of future work on the interaction of race, class, and gender with other social institutions such as the family, school, religion, and political system for other regions, groups, and periods. Scholars in gender studies, ethnic studies, citizenship studies, labor studies, history, and the social sciences will find this excellent book thought-provoking, illuminating, enriching, and invaluable.

Reviewed by: Philip Q. Yang  
Texas Woman's University



**Rámon Grosfoguel. *Colonial Subject: Puerto Ricans in Global Perspective*. (Berkeley: University of California, 2003). xi, 268 pp., \$21.95 paper.**

Merging world-systems and postcolonial analyses, Grosfoguel presents an insightful look at Puerto Rico's colonial status and its consequences on the Puerto Rican migration experience while comparing these experiences to those of other Caribbean migrants. While asserting that "world-system theorists have difficulties theorizing culture, whereas postcolonial theorists have difficulties conceptualizing political-economic processes" (13), Grosfoguel challenges scholars of the modern world-system to move from paradigms of earlier centuries and go outside their disciplines in order to reduce the risk of reductionism. The analysis is grounded on "Bourdieu's concept of "symbolic capital" and Quijano's notion of "coloniality of power [to] redress these limitations" (3).

The first part of the book, *The Political Economy of Puerto Rico*, contains two chapters – the first explores various status scenarios/strategies for the island's future after focusing on how the United States' selfish interests with the island have shifted since 1898. This shift has been from one of geographic/military strategy to one of symbolically showcasing the island's capitalistic superiority vis-à-vis communism during the Cold War. Currently, the United States' main focus is on transforming the island into a neocolony which "seeks to cheapen Puerto Rican wages, eliminate environmental regulations, and reduce the social and civil rights won by popular sectors" (64). The second chapter explores Caribbean urban transformations, focusing on Miami and San Juan. Miami, as a core world city, and San Juan as a semi-peripheral world city, possess strategic military advantage and both have benefited from the United States' effort to highlight the superiority of capitalism over communism throughout the world, and specifically in the Caribbean Basin.

The second part of the book, *Puerto Rican Migration and the Caribbean Diaspora in the United States*, brilliantly compares and contrasts Caribbean migration histories to the United States. The most fascinating comparative analysis focuses on the migration processes of Puerto Ricans and Cubans to the United States from a geopolitical symbolic and military logic perspective. Based

on this perspective, the author lays out divergent policies of the United States government toward both groups. For example, Cuban migrants between 1960 and the mid-1970s were afforded welfare benefits which included a disproportionate amount of Small Business Administration loans, bilingual education programs, job training, subsidized college loans, health care benefits, and monies for relocation outside of Miami. While the United States invested in the showcase of Cuban prosperity in the United States, it invested similarly in showcasing the island of Puerto Rico but **not** its low wage workers which were enticed by the United States government to the mainland. Thus, not surprisingly, Grosfoguel is quite critical of micro reductionist theories that rehash culture of poverty arguments in the quest to understand Cuban's "model minority" status vis-à-vis Puerto Ricans "failed" status.

The third, and final part of the book, compares colonial migration and incorporation into the labor market of migrants from Puerto Rico, Martinique/Guadeloupe, Suriname/Dutch Antilles, and the West Indies to their respective metropolis of the United States, France, the Netherlands, and England. This portion of the book does a fantastic job analyzing how the racial construction of the above mentioned migrants has impacted their labor market incorporation or marginalization in the metropolises.

Although at times repetitive, this book makes a great contribution to the literature. This book would be an excellent addition to courses in migration history, race and ethnicity, Latino studies, and urban studies as it challenges mainstream attitudes toward immigrants in the United States.

Reviewed by: Enilda Arbona Delgado  
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse

**David Mason, ed. *Explaining Ethnic Differences: Changing Patterns of Disadvantage in Britain.* (Bristol, UK: The Policy Press, 2003).vii,183 pp., \$79.95 cloth, \$37.50 paper.**

A series of "communal disturbances" took place in several north of England towns during the spring and summer of 2001.

They were “notable” for the participation of young, male Asians, “a significant proportion of them Muslims...as against African-Caribbeans” (21).

This volume arises from a seminar organized jointly by the UK government department responsible for local government and policing (the DTLR – since superseded) and the Cities Programme of the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council). That has three consequences: *first*, the book focuses on the pre-9/11 situation – though some of the post 9/11 trends were evident before 9/11; *second*, it is more a wide-ranging and up-to-date research review than a report on primary research – though contributors cite their own original extensive research as well as that of others; *third*, it is concerned with policy and prescription as well as understanding – since its most immediate audience was government. There are 33 tables and 13 figures, many of them based on government statistics – though others on for example the excellent 1993-4 PSI (Policy Studies Institute) survey of ethnic minorities.

The authors are seven distinguished sociologists. That too has consequences: they focus on core topics of that particular discipline – demography, educational performance, employment, health, housing, policing and gender, even occasionally on class.

Broad-brush treatments of social science topics are often entertaining but always risky and particularly deadly when the topic is ethnicity. This volume stresses the differences between ethnic minorities as much as their commonality. The hard data show dramatic differences between Black, South Asian and East Asian experiences and achievements in Britain. More strikingly, they show dramatic differences between Caribbean and African Blacks, between Pakistanis and Indians and, within the same nominal ethnic group, between first and second generation immigrants, or between males and females. Moreover the inequalities within some (not all) ethnic minorities are greater than between them and the majority. The devil is in the detail. Any and every grand statement should be regarded with suspicion.

There is a particularly thoughtful and thought-provoking chapter on educational performance by Tariq Modood. He notes that “Asian students experience more frequent and more violent racial harassment from other pupils than do Caribbean students” (58)

but nonetheless have exceptionally high school-stay-on rates and university-admission rates. It is as important to research minority success as minority disadvantage.

The book's approach is fundamentally Anglo-centric however, focusing on what are called the "visible" minorities, "substantially a product of post-war migration"(16) – typically categorized as "Caribbean," "Indian," "Pakistani" or, the majority, "white". But religion, not skin-color defined ethnicity in Scotland for over a century and it continues to do so in Northern Ireland. In Scotland and Wales, English immigrants are the largest ethnic minority. And membership of the EU will make England itself less English though no less white. Though they are often easily identifiable by other means, ethnic minorities in Britain are not necessarily "visible" – not now, nor in the past, nor in the future.

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**Joane Nagel. *Race, Ethnicity, and Sexuality: Intimate Intersections, Forbidden Frontiers.* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). vii, 308pp., \$24.95 hardback.**

One of the most significant points about Joane Nagel's text is its broad approach to the idea that ethnicity is sexualized and that the boundaries that on the surface seem to separate the two concepts are actually extremely thin and transparent. Thus, according to Nagel, "Ethnicity and sexuality are strained, but not strange bedfellows" (14). She supports this statement throughout her text, providing specific examples to argue her case. Her approach to the subject at hand also coincides with her goals for the book, "to illustrate the power and ubiquity of sexuality as a feature of racial, ethnic, and national identities, boundaries, and tensions" (4). Another one of her goals is connected to the broad approach to the subject matter; that readers will be inspired to undertake more specific research based on cases that she presents.

Nagel's first two chapters focus on more theoretical approaches that explain how she comes to the conclusion that ethnicity and sexuality have been mutually connected throughout various

historical events such as the conquest and colonization of North America, the slave trade and “racial mixing.” One concept that she continuously refers to is “Ethnosexual frontiers” which she defines as “erotic locations and exotic destinations that are surveilled and supervised, patrolled and policed, regulated and restricted, but that are constantly penetrated by individuals forging sexual links with ethnic Others across ethnic boundaries” (14). The next two chapters in her book are primarily focused on the United States and this nation’s own experiences with ethnosexual frontiers. Chapter three looks at the process of conquest and colonization with a particular focus on the interactions, relationships and “intimacies” between European settlers and the native populations that were already established in the New World. She states that one of the ways that explorers would justify their treatment (suppression, oppression, conversion) of the Native was to portray them in sexual terms, making multiple references to nudity and “supposed” sexual practices undertaken which established clear differences between the two groups at the moment of encounter. The accounts on the part of the colonizers had a lasting impact on readers, and as scholars such as Stuart Hall and Jan Neverdeen Pieterse state, the labels, stereotypes and attitudes shared by the colonizers were not new to those developed during encounters with the New World Natives. Chapter four, on the other hand, looks at the slave trade and how plantation owners treated slaves in general and slave women in particular. Nagel states that interests in the African slave’s sexual prowess pre-dates experiences with slavery in the United States. She even writes that the depictions of Africans on the part of Europeans “are nearly identical to Columbus’s and Vespucci’s descriptions of indigenous Americans” (93). There was a fear not only about Black male sexuality in America, but also worries about “miscegenation,” an idea further supported in 1915 with the release of D.W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation*.

The next few chapters Nagel dedicates to the study of the treatment of both men and women in various parts of the world, particularly Europe during World War II and various African nations. For instance, in the case of France during World War II she provides images of women accused of being Nazi collaborator, and how even the way these women were paraded differs from the way men were treated once accused of the same crime. Thus,

she argues that there has always been a gender disparity across time and space and we talk about men and women and their roles in society.

What makes Joane Nagel's *Race, Ethnicity, and Sexuality: Intimate Frontiers, Forbidden Frontiers* an important contribution to the field of Ethnic Studies is her underlying message that regardless of the period, the group or the region, ethnic and sexual experiences that include rape, genocide and cleansing are experiences shared by many groups. These experiences are connected to attitudes pertaining to superiority as connected to skin color and sexuality, and a belief in one group's weakness and need for civilizing based upon notions of a world that is divided between the strong and the weak, between Us and Them and between Men and Women.

Enrique Morales-Díaz  
Hartwick College

**Robert Utley, *Battlefield and Classroom: An Autobiography of Richard Henry Pratt* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964) 1964. \$24.95 paper.**

*Battlefield and classroom* is an important book that looks at a crucial era in American Indian history. Robert Utley's notes have done an excellent job in making Richard Pratt and his motivations and impact on American Indian tribal life accessible to the average reader while retaining the book's value as a scholarly work. It is a must read for those attempting to understand the importance of the boarding school era. With this book, Utley has successfully reopened the debate that has surrounded Richard Pratt and his motives.

Most of the book is a re-release of Pratt's autobiography. Pratt explains his methods, motives and most important his ideology regarding "The Indian Problem." Pratt's ideas are both enlightened and inhumane well-intentioned and destructive. It is these paradoxes which makes Pratt a central figure in American Indian History. The Pratt Plan, as his ideas were initially called, was introduced at a time when American Indians were deemed to be disappearing from the American landscape. Pratt believed and taught that American Indians were the intellectual and physical

equals of European-Americans. This was an incredibly enlightened belief for his time. Pratt was convinced that American Indian cultures created the perceived inferiority of American Indians not their racial identity. His solution to the “Indian Problem” was to destroy those cultures. This could be accomplished, he emphasized, by isolating children from all tribal influences and raising them in a strictly European-American environment. If this could be done American Indians would then be as productive citizens as the members of any European immigrant group.

Pratt set up Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania as a model school. He chose Pennsylvania because it has no American Indian reservations. *Battlefield and Classroom* focuses on Pratt’s retelling of his experiences at Carlisle and what he sees as his success in eliminating American Indian culture at the school. He goes into great detail about how no tribal influences were permitted. American Indian languages, clothes, religious expressions and even menstrual practices were forbidden. American Indians were to be completely immersed in Pratt’s version of mainstream culture.

The boarding school movement was most successful in destroying American Indian languages. Many tribes lost most of the native speakers of their language. Children were placed in these schools at the age when they were acquiring linguistic fluency. This meant that even those children whose first language was a tribal one did not become fluent in their tribal language. Also since many of these children were severely punished for speaking native languages, when they became adults, they protected their own children from similar punishments by preventing them from learning any native language. *Battlefield and Classroom* helps both scholars and casual readers to gain an understanding of these events and the motives of Richard Pratt.

Reviewed by: Sarah R. Shillinger  
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse





# ETHNIC STUDIES REVIEW

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