

I sit here in a cool dark room in the middle of Africa thousands of miles from the people in the city hall who want to draft me. I sit down in the middle of it all and try to decide why I do not want to go. And that is all anyone can do, try to be honest about what he feels, what he's seen or thinks he's seen. He can offer this disturbing vision to those who are not sure why they are unwilling. Folksongs and slogans and great heroes are no good for us now, and neither is the half truth that is in every poem or every melodious sentence that hides the barbaric notions.

When I think of people trying to convince themselves that high principles result from merely hugging answers I think of the reverse of the old fairy story: a princess in her hunger kisses a handsome prince and turns him into a toad. The answers will not come by forcing ourselves upon dogma. The issue is that we should admit once and for all that we are frightened. We will not have told ourselves a lie and, after this truth which is a simple one, maybe even ugly, we can begin to ask new questions.

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## Racist Love

Frank Chin and Jeffery Paul Chan

White racism enforces white supremacy. White supremacy is a system of order and a way of perceiving reality. Its purpose is to keep whites on top and set them free. Colored minorities in white reality are stereotypes. Each racial stereotype comes in two models, the acceptable model and the unacceptable model. The unacceptable, hostile black stud has his acceptable counterpart in the form of Stepin Fetchit. For the savage, kill-crazy Geronimo, there is Tonto and the Hollywood version of Cochise. For the mad dog General Santa Ana there's the Cisco Kid and Pancho. For Fu Manchu and the Yellow Peril, there is Charlie Chan and his Number One Son. The unacceptable model is unacceptable because he cannot be controlled by whites. The acceptable model is acceptable because he is tractable. There is racist hate and racist love.

If the system works, the stereotypes assigned to the various races are accepted by the races themselves as reality, as fact, and racist love reigns. The minority's reaction to racist policy is acceptance and apparent satisfaction. Order is kept, the world turns without a peep from any nonwhite. One measure of the success of white racism is the silence of that race and the amount of white energy necessary to maintain or increase that silence.

Likewise, the failure of white racism can be measured by the amount and kind of noise of resistance generated by the race. The truth is that all of the country's attention has been

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drawn to white racism's failures. Everything that has been done by whites in politics, government, and education in response to the failure of white racism, while supposedly anti-racist, can be seen as efforts to correct the flaws, redesign the instruments, and make racism work. The object is to shut up the noise. Do it fast. Do it cheap. White racism has failed with the blacks, the chicanos, the American Indians. Night riders, soldier boys on horseback, fat sheriffs, and all them goons and clowns of racism did destroy a lot of bodies, mess up some minds, and leave among these minorities a legacy of suffering that continues to this day. But they did not stamp out the consciousness of a people, destroy their cultural integrity and literary sensibility, and produce races of people that would work to enforce white supremacy without having to be supervised or watchdogged by whites.

In terms of the utter lack of cultural distinction in America, the destruction of an organic sense of identity, the complete psychological and cultural subjugation of a race of people, the people of Chinese and Japanese ancestry stand out as white racism's only success. This is not to say that Asian-Americans are worse off than the other colored minorities. American policy has failed in Vietnam, yet no one would say that the Vietnamese are better off than the people of Puerto Rico, where American policy has succeeded. The secret of that success lies in the construction of the modern stereotype and the development of new policies of white racism.

The general function of any racial stereotype is to establish and preserve order between different elements of society, maintain the continuity and growth of Western civilization, and enforce white supremacy with a minimum of effort, attention, and expense. The ideal racial stereotype is a low maintenance engine of white supremacy whose efficiency increases with age, as it became "authenticated" and "historically verified."

The stereotype operates as a model of behavior. It conditions the mass society's perceptions and expectations. Society is conditioned to accept the given minority only within the bounds of the stereotype. The subject minority is conditioned to reciprocate by becoming the stereotype, live it,

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talk it, embrace it, measure group and individual worth in its terms, and believe it.

The stereotype operates most efficiently and economically when the vehicle of the stereotype, the medium of its perpetuation, and the subject race to be controlled are all one. When the operation of the stereotype has reached this point, where the subject race itself embodies and perpetuates the white supremacist vision of reality, indifference to the subject race sets in among mass society. The successful operation of the stereotype results in the neutralization of the subject race as a social, creative, and cultural force. The race poses no threat to white supremacy. It is now a guardian of white supremacy, dependent on it and grateful to it.

For the subject to operate efficiently as an instrument of white supremacy, he is conditioned to accept and live in a state of euphemized self-contempt. This self-contempt itself is nothing more than the subject's acceptance of white standards of objectivity, beauty, behavior, and achievement as being morally absolute, and his acknowledgment of the fact that, because he is not white, he can never fully measure up to white standards.

The stereotype, within the minority group itself, then, is enforced by individual and collective self-contempt. Given: that the acceptable stereotype is the minority version of whiteness and being acceptable to whites creates no friction between the races, and given: fear of white hostility and the white threat to the survival of the subject minority, it follows that embracing the acceptable stereotype is an expedient tactic of survival, as selling out and accepting humiliation almost always are. The humiliation, this gesture of self-contempt and self-destruction, in terms of the stereotype is euphemized as being successful assimilation, adaption, and acculturation.

If the source of this self-contempt is obviously generated from outside the minority, interracial hostility will inevitably result, as history has shown us in the cases of the blacks, Indians, and chicanos. The best self-contempt to condition into the minority has its sources seemingly within the minority group itself. The vehicles of this illusion are education and the publishing establishment. Only five American-born

Chinese have published what can be called serious attempts at literature: Pardee Lowe has a one-book career with *Father and Glorious Descendent* (1943), an autobiography; Jade Snow Wong, another one-book career with the most famous Chinese-American work, *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (1950), an autobiography; Diana Chang, the only serious Chinese-American writer to publish more than one book-length creative work to date, has written and published four novels and is a well-known poet; Virginia Lee has one novel, *The House Tai Ming Built* in 1963; and Betty Lee Sung, author of the semiautobiographical *Mountain of Gold* (1967). Of these five, four—Pardee Lowe, Jade Snow Wong, Virginia Lee, and Betty Lee Sung—confirm the popular stereotypes of Chinese-Americans, find Chinese-America repulsive, and don't identify with it.

The construction of the stereotype began long before Jade Snow Wong, Pardee Lowe, Virginia Lee, and Betty Lee Sung were born within it and educated to fulfill it. It began with a basic difference between it and the stereotypes of the other races. The white stereotype of the Asian is unique in that it is the only racial stereotype completely devoid of manhood. Our nobility is that of an efficient housewife. At our worst we are contemptible because we are womanly, effeminate, devoid of all the traditionally masculine qualities of originality, daring, physical courage, creativity. We're neither straight talkin' or straight shootin'. The mere fact that four of the five American-born Chinese-American writers are women reinforces this aspect of the stereotype.

The sources of Chinese-American self-contempt are white Christianity, the sojourner's state of humiliation, overt white racism, and legislative racism. Each served to exclude the Chinese-American from the realm of manliness and American culture. The Chinese were the target of the largest missionary campaign ever mounted in the history of mankind. It's now in its fifth century. The American missionary movement is now in its second century. In 1871, the Reverend John L. Nevius wrote:

The Chinese as a race are, as compared with the European nations, of a phlegmatic and impassive tempera-

ment, and physically less active and energetic. Children are not fond of athletic and vigorous sports, but prefer marbles, kite-flying, and some quiet games of ball, spinning tops, etc. Men take an easy stroll for recreation, but never a rapid walk for exercise, and are seldom in a hurry or excited. They are characteristically timid and docile. . . . While the Chinese are deficient in active courage and daring, they are not passive in resistance. They are comparatively apathetic as regards to pain and death, and have great powers of physical endurance as well as great persistency and obstinacy. On an average a Chinese tailor will work on his bench or a literary man over books with his pen, more hours a day than our race can.

The Chinese, in the parlance of the Bible, were raw material for the "flock," pathological sheep for the shepherd. The adjectives applied to the Chinese ring with scriptural imagery. We are meek, timid, passive, docile, industrious. We have the patience of Job. We are humble. A race without sinful manhood, born to mortify our flesh. Religion has been used to subjugate the blacks, chicanos, and Indians along with guns and whips. The difference between these groups and the Chinese was that the Christians, taking Chinese hospitality for timidity and docility, weren't afraid of us as they were of other races. They loved us, protected us. Love conquered.

It's well-known that the cloying overwhelming love of a protective, coddling mother produces an emotionally stunted, dependent child. This is the Christian love, the bigoted love that has imprisoned the Chinese-American sensibility; whereas overt and prolonged expressions of hatred had the effect of liberating black, red, chicano, and, to some degree, Japanese-American sensibilities. The hatred of whites freed them to return hate with hate and develop their own brigand languages, cultures, and sensibilities, all of which have at their roots an assumed arrogance in the face of white standards, and defiant mockery of white institutions, including white religion. One of the products of these cultures born of overt racist hatred was a word in the language for white

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man, a name loaded with hate. A white man knows where he stands when a chicano calls him "gringo," or a black man calls him "honky," "Mr. Charlie," "ofay," "whitey," or an Indian calls him "paleface." Whites aren't aware of the names Chinese-Americans and Japanese-Americans have for them. And it's not a little embarrassing for an Asian-American to be asked by a curious white what we might call him behind his back.

The first Chinese were sojourners to America. They arrived in a state of humiliation as indentured servants, coolie laborers to California to perform the labor of slaves, which were outlawed in this free state. They never intended to settle here. The whites encouraged them with overt white racism and legislative racism to leave as soon as they could. The first Chinese so loathed this country that they regularly burned all their letters and records of their stay, journals and diaries, and tossed the ashes into the sea in the hope that at least that much of themselves would make it back to China. As a consequence of their total self-contempt, Chinese-America has no literary legacy. Of the Chinese who stayed not one complete account of one Chinese man's life in California, in diary, in journal, or in the form of correspondence, survives. Nor is there any oral history. All that survives from those old men is the humiliation of being foreign.

If life here was something to be erased from memory, death here was the ultimate humiliation. They were contemptible in life on American soil. Life they could endure. But death, no. So the practice of returning the bones to China for burial in hospitable ground, an eloquent and final expression of their loathing of America released after death, which the whites regarded as quaint and heathenish.

Legislative racism, the only form that openly survives, was invented to cope with the Chinese specifically and the first applied against them with success. Legislative racism culminated in the passage of The Chinese Exclusion Act by the US Congress, giving the Chinese the distinction of being the only race to be legislated against by name.

The racist policy applied against the blacks defined them as nonhumans, as property without legal status. This resulted

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in political schisms among the white majority and contributed to a costly war, thus failing as an instrument of white supremacy. It also failed to control the blacks and condition them into white supremacist self-control. The policy of extermination and incarceration applied against the American Indian was another costly failure.

For the Chinese, they invented an instrument of racist policy that was a work of pure genius, in that it was not an overtly hostile expression of anti-Chinese sentiment, yet still reinforced the stereotype and generated self-contempt and humiliation among generations of Chinese and Chinese-Americans, who, after having been conditioned into internalizing the white supremacist Gospel of Christian missionaries, looked on themselves as failures, instead of victims of racism. This wondrous instrument was *the law*. They gave the Chinese legal status, access to and protection under the law as "aliens ineligible for citizenship." We were separate but equal under the supposedly blind impartiality of the law. Legally we were masters of our own destiny, limited only by our intelligence and talent.

The game was rigged. The Chinese were forced into Chinatown and out of American culture and society by laws supposedly designed to protect fish, secure safety against fire, and protect public health. One law stated that only "aliens ineligible for citizenship" of the laboring class would be admitted into the country. A fancy way of saying only men, no women. This law was designed to control the Chinese population. It discouraged Chinese from staying by denying them access to their women, underscored the state of their (supposedly voluntary) humiliation in America, and guaranteed that even should all the Chinese stay they would not reproduce. And eventually they would die out.

This law worked. At the turn of the century the ratio of men to women was 27 to 1. Then a little after the turn of the century the Chinese population took a sudden decline. White historians like to say that suddenly a lot of us went home to China. We didn't, but our bones did, six months after we died here. This law was doubly successful in that it contributed to the myth of Chinese-American juvenile decency and thus added to the effeminization of the racial stereotype.

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According to this myth, the reason juvenile delinquency stayed so low in Chinatown until the last twenty years was the maintenance of the strong Chinese family. Nothing less than Confucianist Chinese culture was making law-abiding citizens of us. The reason there was no juvenile delinquency in Chinatown has less to do with Confucian mumbo jumbo than with that law against the birth of Chinese kids. There were no juveniles to be delinquent.

What holds all this self-contempt together and makes it work is "The Concept of the Dual Personality." The so-called "blending of East and West" divides the Chinese-American into two incompatible segments: (1) the *foreigner* whose status is dependent on his ability to be accepted by the white natives; and (2) the *handicapped native* who is taught that identification with his foreignness is the only way to "justify" his difference in skin color. The argument goes, "If you ain't got Chinese culture, baby, all you got's the color of your skin," as if to say skin color were not a cultural force in this country.

The privileged foreigner is the assimilable alien. The assimilable alien is posed as an exemplary minority against the bad example of the blacks. Thus the privileged foreigner is trained to respond to the black not the white majority as the single most potent threat to his status. The handicapped native is neither black nor white in a black and white world. In his native American culture he has no recognized style of manhood, in a society where a manly style is prerequisite to respectability and notice. His pride is derived from the degree of his acceptance by the race of his choice at being consciously one thing and not the other. Black, white, chicano, or a museum of Chinese culture. In his use of language, voice inflection, accent, walk, manner of dress, and combing his hair, the handicapped native steepes himself in self-contempt for being "quick to learn . . . and imitative." At worst, he's a counterfeit begging currency. At best he's an "Americanized Chinese," someone who's been given a treatment to make him less foreign.

No stereotype is isolated or self-sufficient. In defining the role, character limitations, and cultural boundaries of a given minority, the stereotype defines relationships between

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that minority, the majority group, and the other minorities. The concept of the dual personality posits a disintegrated personality, a condition of constant conflict that removes the Chinese-American from the realm of white concern. The conflict between the "Chinese" part and the "American" part has been a source of white entertainment for the whole of the twentieth century. Virtually every book-length work by a Chinese-American—China- or American-born—published in America has stated the concept of the dual personality. All but one celebrates the concept, accepts it, and writes within it. That exception is the work of Diana Chang who was not educated in America and hence not taught to play the part.

Unlike Chinese-America, Japanese-America produced serious writers who came together to form a literary-intellectual community. In Chinese-America due to the reign of the concept of the dual personality that dictates that culture in this country is white, to write meant becoming white and the rejection of and by the community. Art in Chinese-America signaled contempt. In Japanese-America it encouraged community. Japanese-America through the thirties and forties produced their own literary magazines in whose pages Japanese-American English was developed and the symbols of Japanese-American experience codified. In spite of the more highly developed literary sensibility and literary skills of Japanese-America, the general belief is that Chinese-America is more literate. It's true that until very recently after a spate of Japanese-American publications, much of it commissioned by Japanese-American community organizations, more books by Chinese-Americans had been published than Japanese-American works.

As the concept disintegrates the Chinese-American's personality and keeps him busy schizophrenically playing one part of himself off the other, so, in the social sphere, the concept plays the Chinaman off against the other minorities, trains him to look on all other nonwhite races with envy, fear, and contempt, as threats to his acceptance by whites. The playing of one race off against the other is one function of all racial stereotyping. The races absorb and accept the stereotypes of each other invented and pushed by the whites,

and, in doing so, authenticate these stereotypes and serve white supremacy by breeding interracial contempt. David Hilliard, Black Panther Party Chief-of-Staff, addressing a Chinatown San Francisco rally in 1969, told the Chinese-Americans they were the "Uncle Tom minority" and were contributing to holding the blacks back. If that is an extreme example, subtle and more painful ones are available. In Richard Wright's classic *Black Boy*, we meet Shorty, an elevator operator in the deep South. Shorty needs a quarter for lunch and tells the white man, "I'll do anything for a quarter." He offers the white man his ass to kick. The white man kicks, then throws a quarter on the ground. Shorty picks it up with his teeth. "You're all right, Shorty, you sonofabitch," the white man says. Shorty, by white Southern standards, is assimilated and happy.

"I'm going north one of these days," Shorty would say.

We would all laugh, knowing that Shorty would never leave, that he depended too much upon the whites for the food he ate.

"What would you do up north?" I would ask Shorty.

"I'd pass for Chinese," Shorty would say.

50 Wright portrays Shorty as loathsome and euphorically sick with self-contempt. More loathsome is Shorty's comparison of himself to the Chinese. Yet Shorty's vision of the Chinese is the same as white America's. Betty Lee Sung, the latest Chinese-American writer, with her *Mountain of Gold*, displaying the genius of the concept of the dual personality, manages to reassure whites that Chinese-Americans are not blacks, while patronizingly semi-identifying with them in the most general terms. She is to Chinese-Americans what Shorty is to the blacks.

The position of the Chinese in the United States is tied in not only with the international situation but with the domestic issue of race relations as well. *Although the struggle is primarily between Negroes and whites, comparisons can be made with the Chinese experiences,*

*and it should be noted that the Chinese have benefited from the Negro's struggle. (Emphasis mine.)*

Having stated the cliché, the question of race relations and blacks is never mentioned again. She makes no comparisons between black and Chinese experiences in race relations. The closest she comes to reacting toward discrimination and prejudice, which she does not compare to discrimination and prejudice against the blacks, is:

The past is history. Today, the Chinese are in very favorable circumstances. The opportunities are unparalleled, and the Chinese have much to offer.

Offer who? Need we ask? Nor does she say how the Chinese have benefited from the Negro's struggle. But it's obvious, even in the few sentences quoted, that she's working for acceptance, indeed she defines assimilation as "letting go of the old, taking on the new, and being fully accepted into the dominant society." Knowing this much, it takes no great effort of mind to see that she is sensitive to what whites want to hear. She has learned from the blacks' mistakes . . . learned what not to do to be accepted. She subtly acknowledges that our present function as a minority is to be not black. The method of being not-black is to make a lot of silence for all the noise the blacks make. She is meticulously uncontroversial with potentially controversial subjects. She practices the method of silence masterfully in the second to the last chapter titled "The Chinese Get into the Best Places." She notes that in the forties the Chinese suddenly enjoyed enthusiastic acceptance. The Chinese Exclusion Act was removed from the books. A Chinese-American published a book. She is pleased with the acceptance of the Chinese into the dominant society, receives it like a miracle, the answer to prayers, the reward for suffering and hard work. She totally ignores the influence Pearl Harbor, World War II, anti-Japanese sentiment, and the Chinese allies had on the acceptability of Chinese in America. In the forties of her Chinese-America there was no war, no Japanese, no obligations to Chinese allies.

The concept of the dual personality successfully deprives the Chinese-American of all authority over language and thus a means of codifying, communicating, and legitimizing his experience. Because he is a foreigner, English is not his native tongue. Because he was born in the U.S., Chinese is not his native tongue. Chinese from China, "real Chinese," make the Chinese-American aware of his lack of authority over Chinese, and the white American doesn't recognize the Chinese-American's brand of English as a language, even a minority language, but as faulty English, an "accent." The notion of an organic, whole identity, a personality not explicable in either the terms of China or white America (in the same way the black experience is not explicable in either the terms of Africa or white America), has been precluded by the concept of the dual personality. And the development of Chinese-American English has been prevented, much less recognized. The denial of language is the denial of culture.

The deprivation of language in a verbal society like this, for the Chinese-American, has contributed to (1) the lack of a recognized Chinese-American cultural integrity (at the most native-born Chinese-Americans are "Americanized Chinese") and (2) the lack of a recognized style of Chinese-American manhood. These two conditions have produced "the house of nigger mentality" under which Chinese-Americans, accepting responsibility to, rather than authority over, the state language, accept dependency—a state of dependency encouraged by the teaching of English and the publishing establishment. In 1949 a Japanese-American, Toshio Mori, published a book of short stories, *Yokohoma, California* (Caxton). Mori's friend, William Saroyan, wrote the introduction which opened with:

Of the thousands of unpublished writers in America there are probably no more than three who cannot write better English than Toshio Mori.

Saroyan unquestioningly accepts the concept of the dual personality, otherwise he wouldn't have read his friend Mori's work as an English paper and graded his grammar without feeling he wasn't insulting the man. He assumes Mori has

no command over English. He's a student, not a writer, to Saroyan. If he'd thought Mori a writer, he would have criticized a murky garbled "style," questioned the writer's skill, not his language. In the Scott Foresman anthology of "American Ethnic Writing," *Speaking for Ourselves*, the editors Lillian Faderman and Barbara Bradshaw have reprinted one of the stories from *Yokohoma, California*. They ignore the consequences of Saroyan's flunking him in English and say, "Mori never wrote another book." Mori, who has been writing since the thirties, now in his sixties, has the manuscripts to four novels on his shelf. Four novels written in flunkout English, English that Japanese-Americans of the thirties and forties happened to speak and make themselves known by but whites won't publish.

Language is a medium of culture and the people's sensibility, including the style of manhood. Language coheres the people into a community by organizing and codifying the symbols of their own common experience. Stunt the tongue and you've lopped off the culture and sensibility. On the simplest level, a man, in any culture, speaks for himself. Without a language of his own, he no longer is a man but a ventriloquist's dummy at worst and at best a parrot. The concept of the dual personality deprives the Chinese-American of the means to develop his own terms of self-definition. It subjugates him by forcing him to define himself in terms he knows are not his. The tyranny of language has been used by white culture to suppress Chinese-American and Japanese-American culture and exclude the Asian-American sensibility from operating in the mainstream of American consciousness.

The tyranny of language continues even in the instruments designed to inject the minority sensibility into the mainstream. Virtually every anthology of Third World writing containing Asian-American sections confuses Chinese from China with Chinese-Americans, conveniently ignoring the obvious cultural differences, and features Chinese writers from China, C. Y. Lee and Lin Yutang, who, being born and raised in China, are secure in their Chinese culture, are Chinese who have adapted to American ways. Their work inevitably authenticates the concept of the dual personality. However,



their being Chinese precludes their ability to communicate the Chinese-American sensibility. The other Chinese-American writers collected in this new splash of anthologies most often include Jade Snow Wong and Pardee Lowe who also reinforce the stereotype. They were educated by the stereotype to play the role. Jade Snow Wong's father was an ordained Presbyterian minister. Lowe's book came out in 1943. The dust jacket listed among the reasons this book should be read, the need for Americans to become acquainted with and understand America's "loyal minorities." The jacket notes went on to say that Pardee Lowe, after delivering the manuscript for publication, enlisted in the army. These writers do not regard themselves as professional writers. They were putty in the hands of publishers anxious to make cartoons of real people. The new anthologies that include their work and pass it off as representing the Chinese-American sensibility in their introductory remarks—although it didn't twenty years ago when it was current much less today—are perpetuating a white monster.

In the fall of 1971, Houghton Mifflin released the first anthology of Asian-American writing ever published, edited by Kai-yu Hsu. His introduction equips the reader to read Asian-American writing intelligently. The concept of the dual personality and the stereotype of the Asian-American are discussed. Distinctions between the experiences of Asians in America and Asian-American experiences are made. He goes so far as to recognize the experiences and cultural integrity of Chinese-Americans, Japanese-Americans, and Philippine-Americans. The conscious effort by modern Asian-American writers to legitimize the languages their respective people speak is described. In spite of this, the following letter comes from Kai-yu's white editor, as stupid, culturally tone-deaf, and self-righteous as ever:

May 28, 1971

Dear Mr. Chan:

Thank you very much for so promptly sending us the telegram about the spelling of your first name. We were

able to make sure that galley proofs would be correct in this respect.

We are still distressed, however, about using the word *lays* instead of *lies* in the title of your story and in a sentence near the end of the story. You see, if teachers or students using the book come upon a word usage that they think is incorrect, they write to the author or to us asking what dictionary or other source authorizes it.

Would you be willing to reconsider letting us use *lies*? We would be glad to have you call Mr. Romano or me about this and reverse the charges.

Sincerely yours,

[Name Withheld by Publisher]  
School English Department

Great white bitch goddess priestess of the sacred white mouth and dumb broad ventriloquist whose lips don't move fine doesn't know us Chinamans mean to reverse the charges with our writing. The object of our writing is no different from that of any other writer. We mean to inject our sensibility into the culture and make it work there. That means we are the teachers. People should ask what dictionary or other sources authorize what we say, how we talk. That's a part of learning how to read. She is illiterate, so self-righteously illiterate I'm going to write about her. I will begin, "[Name withheld by publisher], warm in her inner stupidity, self-righteously illiterate, got a job with the White Racist Secret Service, teaching people they no good for talking trash and wondered why us wouldn't read Pearl Buck out loud at all because didn't Pearl write us nice . . . ?