General Biography

- Born as Edith Maude Eaton on May 15th, 1865 in England
- English father, Edward Charles Eaton & Chinese born, English adopted and educated mother, Grace A. (Lotus Blossom) Trefusis
Timeline

- 1872 - Family migrates to North America
- 1883 - Begins working at *Montreal Star* then as typist-stenographer in law offices
- 1897 - Working as reporter for *The Newsletter* in Jamaica
- 1898 - Canvassing newspapers in San Francisco; begins freelance writing
- 1900-1910 - Working in Seattle’s Chinatown
- 1910 - Boston; Freelance writing short stories and essays for periodicals
- 1914 - Sudden death; Montreal
- 1980’s - Finally, recognized as important Asian American writer
Sui Sin Far

- Adopts pseudonym, Sui Sin Far, to reflect her Asian roots
- Sister, Winnifred (Onoto Watanna) had great success writing and publishing
- First writer of Asian descent to publish works in North America
Critical Conversation

- Frequently referred to as “Mother of Asian American literature” (Li 126) or “The first Chinese-American fictionalist” (Ling 7)

- Faced and opposed stereotypical assumptions about Chinese immigrants:

She was told that “if [she] wanted to succeed in America [she] should dress in Chinese costume, carry a fan in my hand...live in New York, and come of high birth” (qtd. in Solberg 30)
Scholarly opinions about her ability to resist common stereotypes in her written work vary:

- Some accuse her of being “deeply conservative” or even having “a filter of US cultural prejudice” (qtd. in Chapman 976)

Whereas according to Wenxin Li:

“Sui Sin Far’s legacy lies in the construction of more fluid gender dynamics in contrast to the rigid gender opposition in contemporary Asian American discourse” (128)


