UCLA
UCLA Previously Published Works

Title
“Re-Viewing Asian American Literary Studies.”

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3g62q3rp

ISBN
978-0521447904

Author
Cheung, KK

Publication Date
1997-04-24

Peer reviewed

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

RE-VIEWING ASIAN AMERICAN LITERARY STUDIES

KING-KOK CHEUNG

Asian American literature – defined here as works by people of Asian descent who were either born in or who have migrated to North America – has undergone dramatic changes since it emerged as a distinctive field in the wake of the civil rights movement in the late 1960s. The most visible difference arises from its rapid and extensive growth over the past three decades. There was a time when teachers and scholars moaned at having to teach or write about the same works, mostly by Chinese American and Japanese American writers, over and over again. Today the difficulty lies in representing and selecting among writers of diverse national origins. As this literature – along with the theory and criticism accompanying it – expands, original parameters are modified and contested; paralleling the explosion in volume is a proliferation of perspectives.

A significant switch in emphasis has also occurred in Asian American literary studies. Whereas identity politics – with its stress on cultural nationalism and American nativity – governed earlier theoretical and critical formulations, the stress is now on heterogeneity and diaspora. The shift has been from seeking to "claim America" to forging a connection between Asia and Asian America; from centering on race and on masculinity to revolving around the multiple axes of ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality; from being concerned primarily with social history and communal responsibility to being caught in the quandaries and possibilities of postmodernism and multiculturalism. The term "shift" can be misleading, however, for the recent critical moves have by no means replaced earlier exigencies. The two phases of Asian American cultural criticism may more accurately be characterized as a dialectic that continues to spark debate. I shall attempt to map some major courses this discursive development has taken. As scholars in the field, we know literary and critical anthologies are often inflected by the editors' particular beliefs and interests – biases that surface most clearly in the books'

introductions. What follows is therefore less an objective review than a subjective re-viewing of Asian American literary studies. Rather than "defining" the field, I will grapple with its crosscurrents.[1]

IDENTITY, CULTURAL NATIONALISM, HETEROGENEITY

The umbrella term "Asian American" was coined in the late 1960s to promote political solidarity and cultural nationalism. This movement was a broad-based one, appealing to immigrants and American-born Asians alike. By contrast, early Asian American cultural criticism – which emerged during this period as part of the larger movement – placed a much greater emphasis on American nativity. In the influential introduction to *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* (1974), edited by Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong, the editors regarded American nativity as crucial to what they considered to be Asian American "sensibility" – one "that was neither Asian nor white American" (1974/1983, xxi). They also decried the notion of a "dual personality, of going from one culture to another" (vii, xi). Only writers of Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese descent were included in their anthology.

More recently, however, critics such as Lisa Lowe (1991), Oscar Campomanes (1992), Shirley Lim (1993), and R. Radhakrishnan (1994) have challenged the idea of a unifying Asian American sensibility and underlined the need to take into account "heterogeneity," "exile," and "diaspora" when reading Asian American literature. These alternative modes of reading suggest that the editors of *Aiiieeeee!*, in rejecting the concept of the dual personality, also discounted the work of most foreign-born Asians and discredited the bicultural tension that often does surface in literature by both immigrant and American-born writers. Amy Ling, for example, notes that Chinese American women are frequently caught "between worlds": "Their facial features proclaim one fact – their Asian ethnicity – but by education, choice, or birth they are American" (1990, 20). Ling acknowledges the reality of a double consciousness in the writers she analyzes. The writers examined in *Articulate Silences* likewise draw freely from Asian and Anglo-American traditions, as I demonstrate, "but refuse to be defined or confined by either" (1993, 170).

Elaine H. Kim, author of the ground-breaking work of criticism in the field, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* (1982), explains in her foreword to *Reading the Literatures of Asian Ameria* (Lim and Ling 1992) why cultural nationalism was important to her earlier conception of Asian American literature and why that conception should now be revised:

> In the late 1970s . . . I sought delimitations, boundaries, and parameters because I felt they were needed to establish the fact that there was such a thing as Asian American literature. . . . That is why cultural nationalism has been so crucial. . . . Insisting on a unitary identity seemed the only effective means of opposing and defending oneself against marginalization. . . . *Yet Asian American identities have never been exclusively racial.* (1992, xi–xii; emphasis added)

Adverting to race alone also obscures the variety of generational and ethnic constituencies within Asian American communities. The fluctuating parameters of this literature reflect this complexity. Largely as a result of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, which abolished quotas favoring northwestern European nations, the number of Asian immigrants has risen so sharply that it is no longer practical to stress American nativity as the sine qua non for Asian American sensibility. As the label "Asian American" stretches to accommodate new subgroups, so does Asian American literature, which has now broadened to include writings by Americans of Bangladeshi, Burmese, Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Indian, Indonesian, Laotian, Nepali, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Thai, and Vietnamese descent.[2]

Cultural nationalism, far from being dissipated by growing heterogeneity, has taken plural forms. Ethnic and regional groups formerly eclipsed by the critical focus on Chinese and Japanese American writers on the West Coast are beginning to call for specific forms of cultural alliances. Oscar Campomanes advocates a historical and literary paradigm specific to Philippine writings in English, one that takes into account the experience of direct colonization by the United States (1992). Naheed Islam protests against the homogenization of diverse groups and the domination of Indian Americans within the "South Asian" category: "But why would I be South Asian when I could be Bangladeshi? And the Tripuras, Shantals and Chakmas living within the borders of Bangladesh, brutally suppressed by the military, may choose to distinguish their identity from that nation-state" (242). Elaine Kim stresses the importance of Korean political and cultural solidarity during the 1991 Los Angeles uprising: "Korean national consciousness, the resolve to resist and fight back when threatened with extermination, was all that could be called upon when the Korean Americans in Los Angeles found themselves abandoned" (1993, 229). Stephen Sumida points out the need for a separate critical lens to bring out the inextricability of history and place in the local literature of Hawai'i: "History and place are not simply two separate elements. . . . [I]n Hawaii's island culture *place* is conceived *as history* – that is, as the story enacted on any given site" (1992, 216). Still others are contesting for the recognition of writers "East of California" (title of a

conference at Cornell in 1991), such as those from the Midwest and the East Coast. However, even scholars who insist on the distinctness of each Asian subgroup recognize the importance of interethnic cohesion. Thus, although E. San Juan, Jr., urges Filipino Americans to assert "autonomy from the sweeping rubric of 'Asian American,'" he also concedes the importance of uniting with other Asians for "common political demands" (1994, 206). Similarly, despite Islam's annoyance with the "South Asian" tag, she "continue[s] to work with others of South Asian descent on certain issues" (244). Without such broader consortium the voice of each sector would remain inaudible in America.

Sau-ling Cynthia Wong uses an incident prior to the 1990 census to epitomize Asian Americans' need to remain both culturally distinct and politically unified. When the Bureau of the Census proposed to dispense with the listing of different ethnicities by lumping them together under the category of "Asian or Pacific Islander," diverse Asian Americans vehemently opposed the idea: "they *united* with each other in order to protect their *separate* interests" (1993, 7). But Wong herself goes beyond championing solidarity on just the political front. In *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance*, she attempts to forge a "textual coalition" across different national literatures, arguing that although Asian American writers, like their "mainstream" counterparts, evoke common literary motifs such as food, the doppelgänger, mobility, and art, "Asian American deployments of [these motifs], when contextualized and read intertextually, form distinctive patterns" within themselves (1993, 12). These patterns, according to Wong, are rooted in the race-specific American historical experience of people of Asian descent. Wong's book represents a valiant and ambitious critical effort to build an Asian American literary network, though some will quarrel with her focus on what Campomanes calls "U.S.-centric narrations" (see Chapter 2).

"Asian American panethnicity" (to borrow Yen Le Espiritu's term) is undoubtedly crucial to our political visibility. Conscious as most Asian Americans are about their ethnic differences from one another, they still look very much alike to the larger American populace, and they still confront hate-crimes perpetrated indiscriminately against them by those unable or unwilling to make distinctions. (In the now notorious case of Vincent Chin, a Chinese American was mistaken for a Japanese autoworker and was clubbed to death with a baseball bat in Detroit.) As Victor Bascara puts it, "It is this ignorance and prejudice that makes for some semblance of an Asian American collectivity forged by racism" (8). But a literary collectivity is a different matter. Trying to link the literatures of historically, culturally, and linguistically diverse ethnic groups will become increasingly straining as these communities multiply.

Nevertheless, one must not overlook the interdependence of politics and literature. Without the initial naming, subsequent institutionalizing, and continuous contestation over this literature, the many voices that are now being heard might have remained mute. Perhaps the most important reason to maintain the designation of "Asian American" literature is not the presence of any cultural, thematic, or poetic unity but the continuing need to amplify marginalized voices, however dissimilar.

AMERICAN, ASIAN, ASIAN AMERICAN

Historically, the appellation "Oriental" was used in North America both for peoples across the Pacific and for Asian inhabitants of the "New World." "Asian American," on the other hand, accentuates the American status of immigrants from Asia and their descendants. The term grows out of the frustration felt by many American-born citizens of Asian extraction at being treated as perpetual foreigners in the United States despite the fact that their roots in this country go back as many as seven generations. Such racist treatment, along with Orientalist tendencies that fetishize Asian objects, customs, and persons, has also engendered in many Asian Americans an internal ambivalence about their Asian heritage. Because of the dominant perception that what constitutes "American" is white, mainstream, and Western, the desire to reclaim a distinctive ethnic tradition seems forever at odds with the desire to be recognized as fully "American."

The most glaring example of the danger of lumping Asians and Americans of Asian ancestry together was the internment of people of Japanese descent in both the United States and Canada during World War II, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The American and Canadian governments not only refused to distinguish between Japanese people and those of Japanese descent born or residing permanently in North America, but also conflated national and cultural allegiances. In the United States, after war was declared with Japan, Japanese Americans on the West Coast who observed Japanese customs or religions, who organized social functions for the ethnic community, or who engaged in Japanese art or literature became the FBI's prime suspects. Many families, in order to avoid being incriminated, destroyed nearly everything associated with their culture of origin, from heirlooms and artwork to books, manuscripts, and diaries written in Japanese. The self-hatred induced by the psychic strain of being denied American civil rights and of having to choose between being Japanese and being American are graphically depicted in John Okada's *No-No Boy*, which, in Gayle K. Fujita Sato's words, "attempts to affirm 'Japanese American' through a character who rejects everything Japanese" (1992, 239).[3] Japanese Canadians fared no

better. Joy Kogawa, author of *Obasan* and *Itsuka* (both of which deal with the Japanese Canadian internment and its aftermath), discloses in an interview that after the war Japanese Canadians similarly tried to distance themselves from their ethnicity: "We learned to shun one another and to view any Japanese-Canadian gathering as a gaggle of ghettoized geese" (1985, 60).[4]

It is therefore not surprising that writing by Asian Americans has coalesced around the theme of "claiming an American, as opposed to Asian, identity" (E. Kim 1987, 88). This imperative accounts for the deliberate omission of the hyphen among most Asian American intellectuals. In Maxine Hong Kingston's words, "We ought to leave out the hyphen in 'Chinese-American,' because the hyphen gives the word on either side equal weight. . . . Without the hyphen, 'Chinese' is an adjective and 'American' a noun; a Chinese American is a type of American" (1982, 60). This desire to be recognized as American has sometimes been achieved at the expense of Asian affiliation. The obsessive desire to claim America has induced a certain cultural amnesia regarding the country of ancestral origin. In Kingston's *China Men* – a book admittedly designed to "claim America" – the narrator puzzles over her father's reluctance to divulge his past: "Do you mean to give us a chance at being real Americans by forgetting the Chinese past?" (14). Her question, which implies that jettisoning Asian cultural baggage augments a Chinaman's chance of being acknowledged as a "real" American, explodes the myth of a pluralist country.

Children of immigrants are perhaps made even more acutely aware of their ethnic differences. The pain of maintaining traditional Asian customs is evoked in Chitra Divakaruni's poem "Yuba City School" (in northern California). The speaker's son – who has long hair in keeping with Sikh customs – is mercilessly harassed by his classmates: "In the playground . . . invisible hands snatch at his uncut hair, / unseen feet trip him from behind, / and when he turns, ghost laughter / all around his bleeding knees" (80). He is also repeatedly called "idiot" on account of his broken English, his second language (79). Even American-born Asians are not immune to linguistic self-doubts, however, as intimated in Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker*, in which the fully acculturated Korean American protagonist observes wryly that people like him are "always thinking about still having an accent" (11). Many people of Asian descent feel, to this day, the need to prove their Americanness by shedding their originary culture and by setting themselves apart from new Asian immigrants. Though different sensibilities admittedly characterize the American-born and the foreign-born, insistence on American nativity can result in the double exclusion of current Asian immigrants – by non-Asians and by American-born Asians alike.

Both the altered demography in recent years and the prominence of some immigrant writers are beginning to unfix the border of Asian American literature. In Elaine Kim's words, "The lines between Asian and Asian American, so important to identity formation in earlier times, are increasingly being blurred" (1992, xiii).[5] The 1965 change in the immigration quota has resulted in the number of foreign-born Asians now exceeding that of the American-born. Asian American literature has been enriched by the voices of writers of diverse ethnic origins. Especially notable is the emergence of South Asian and Southeast Asian American authors, including Wendy Law-Yone (Burmese); Agha Shahid Ali, Meena Alexander, and Bharati Mukherjee (Indian); Bapsi Sidhwa and Sara Suleri (Pakistani); Rienzi Crusz and Michael Ondaatje (Sri Lankan); Cecilia Brainard, Jessica Hagedorn, and Ninotchka Rosca (Filipino); Le Ly Hayslip, Jade Ngọc Quang Huỳnh, and Nguyễn Qúi Đú'c (Vietnamese); and S. P. Somtow and Wanwadee Larsen (Thai). The competing impulses of claiming America and maintaining ties with Asia are especially pronounced among some of these immigrants. Mukherjee believes that such authors should draw on their American experience instead of writing as expatriates and indulging in nostalgia: "Immigration is the opposite of expatriation. . . . I've come to see expatriation as the great temptation, even the enemy, of the ex-colonial, once-third-world author. . . . Turn your attention to this [American] scene, which has never been in greater need for new perspectives" (Mukherjee 1988, 28–9). Hagedorn takes the opposite view: "I'm not interested in just writing 'an American novel.' . . . Though I've been living in America for 30 years now, my roots remain elsewhere . . . back there" (Hagedorn 1994, 181). Nguyễn, who has spent two decades in America, likewise identifies himself as a Vietnamese man, because "A psychological sense of home is the most important sense of home" (Vinh 1994, 1). Alexander describes herself in *Fault Lines* as "a woman cracked by multiple migrations," who is impelled to revisit figuratively "all the cities and small towns and villages" in which she has lived to come to terms with her fragmented life history (2–3).

Even some American-born Asians who grew up trying to distance themselves from their originary cultures have begun to take renewed interest in their Asian legacy. The protagonist in Peter Bacho's *Cebu* shuttles between the Philippines and the United States; both his visit to his "motherland" and his return to Seattle are fraught with unpleasant surprises. In *Turning Japanese* David Mura chronicles his literal and psychological odyssey of coming to terms with his ethnicity. In his own words: "Up until my late twenties, I mainly attempted to avoid dealing with my *sansei* identity, and tended to think of myself as a middle class white person. The result . . . was self-hatred and self-abuse. . . . If I had

not become self-conscious about my identity, I might have destroyed myself" (1994, 187).

Clearly the Asian American movement, together with the recent emphasis on multiculturalism, has been inspiring Americans of Asian descent to explore their composite heritage. Cultural criticism is undergoing corresponding changes, and the terms of what constitutes "America" are being re-visioned in the light of its multicolored citizenry. Some scholars, mindful that many Asians have settled in North America not necessarily by choice but because of political instability (not infrequently caused by U.S. interventions) in their Asian homelands, have gone as far as to deny the United States as the psychic center for Asian Americans and to embrace instead a "diasporic" or "exilic" identity. In addition, writers and critics who view Asia and Asian America conjunctively are exploring the relationship between Asian American and postcolonial studies, especially with regard to such countries as India, Korea, Vietnam, and the Philippines.[6]

The new diasporic emphasis coincides with growing interest in Asian American literature among overseas scholars as well as with deepening interest in East Asia among scholars in the United States. An organization called the Asian American Literature Association was founded in Japan in 1989; the inaugural issue of its publication, the *AALA Journal*, appeared in 1994. A conference on Chinese American literature has been sponsored biennially since 1993 by the Institute of European and American Studies, Academia Sinica, in Taiwan; selected papers are published in an anthology (in Chinese) after each conference. Journals such as *Muae: A Journal of Transcultural Production* and *Positions: Each Asia Cultures Critique*, which are based in the United States, cover cultural and political events in the "Asian diaspora" and feature work by writers and artists on both sides of the Pacific. These trends point to strengthening ties between Asia and Asian America as well as the internationalization of Asian American literary studies.[7]

Although excited by these new critical currents in Asian American literary studies, I hold with Sau-ling Wong that the shift from claiming America to writing diaspora should not be seen as a "teleological" progression (Wong 1995b, 17). When I first entered the field almost a decade ago as a foreign-born Asian, I felt at times like an interloper because American nativity was so central to the definition of Asian American literature. As the voices of immigrant writers become more prominent and as critical paradigms change to accommodate these new voices, my bicultural training is increasingly germane to my teaching and research. Although I take issue with the editors of *The Big Aiiieeeee!* for valorizing the Asian heroic tradition (see next section), I appreciate their effort to look beyond European American traditions for influences that have

shaped Asian American writing. I also enjoy the opportunity to revisit Chinese classics – which were never a part of my American university education – in my work on Chinese American literature.

Nevertheless, I am aware that the current emphasis on diaspora has uneven material consequences for people who have lived and studied on different continents and for people who were born and raised in North America. I am less certain how American-born Asians – the very people who spearheaded Asian American studies in defiance of their political and cultural invisibility – can avail themselves of a diasporic identity. For instance, though bilingualism is undeniably a valuable asset in tackling Asian American literature, it is disturbing to see some highly qualified American-born candidates being denied teaching jobs on the ground that they are not fluent in any Asian languages. Many of these candidates, growing up in the United States or Canada, were never encouraged or given adequate opportunity to learn their ancestral tongue(s). Furthermore, if American-born Asians discriminate against so-called FOBs (Fresh-off-the-Boats), some new immigrants from professional classes also tend to look down on the less privileged old-timers and their monolingual children and to distance themselves from community involvement generally.[8] Thus while I welcome the growing recognition of the crossover between Asia and Asian America – a crossover that permits a more fluid sense of identity – I believe Asian American literary studies must also keep alive the impetus to claim America. Otherwise the field may swing from excluding the voices of immigrants to marginalizing those of American-born Asians.[9]

Unlike Sau-ling Wong, who suggests that a "location" or "nation" must be the focal point for any political struggle (1995b, 19), or Shirley Lim, who argues from the opposite viewpoint that the effort to "claim America" only spurs assimilation into the majority culture and feeds American national pride and prejudice (see Chapter 9), I believe that we can both "claim America" – assert and manifest the historical and cultural presence of Asians in North America – and use our transnational consciousness to critique the polity, whether of an Asian country, Canada, the United States, or Asian America. Individuals may feel empowered by an ethnic American identity, by a diasporic identity, or by both, but the field of Asian American literary studies can certainly afford to incorporate these divergent perspectives. An Asian American consciousness fueled by the urge to claim America has allowed some writers to rupture a racist and patriarchal definition of an American national identity (see Lowe 1995). Similarly, an exilic or diasporic identity can enable others to contest the exclusiveness of state or cultural nationalism. To reckon with these sometimes contradictory stances is not to take refuge in a postmodern protean identity that flits from one location to the next, but

to make room for reciprocal critique and multiple commitments. Straddling these positions may involve painful alienation that renders oneself ill at ease within one's own communities. But assuming such vantage points also makes it possible to rally around our concerns as an ethnic minority in North America while avoiding the pitfalls of chauvinism and separatism that can at times accompany unconditional national allegiances. To my mind, the works of Meena Alexander, Peter Bacho, Marilyn Chin, Jade Ngọc Quang Huỳnh, Younghill Kang, Fae Ng, and Wendy Law-Yone, for example, often exemplify the simultaneous claiming and disclaiming of both Asia and America.

RACE, GENDER, SEXUALITY, CLASS

From the beginning, race and gender have been intertwined in Asian American history and literature. The editors of *Aiiieeeee!* considered "emasculation" to be one of the most damaging stereotypes about Asian Americans: "Good or bad, the stereotypical Asian is nothing as a man. At worst, the Asian-American is contemptible because he is womanly, effeminate, devoid of all the traditionally masculine qualities of originality, daring, physical courage, and creativity" (Chin et al. 1974/1983, xxx). The editors saw this affront as bound up with language and culture: "The deprivation of language in a verbal society like this country's has contributed to the lack of a recognized Asian American cultural integrity . . . and the lack of a recognized style of Asian-American manhood" (xxxviii). Outraged by Hollywood's representation of Asian Americans as either sinister or subservient, they resolved to invent a form of ethnopoetics that is specifically masculine.

This androcentric solution to racist representation was bound to be challenged sooner or later. The catalyst came in the form of Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (1976), the first Asian American work to receive astounding national acclaim. "The literary decade which had begun on a note of brash machismo with the liberating outcry from the editors of *Aiiieeeee!* . . . ended on a deeply plangent note of powerful feminist independence and literary vision," Garrett Hongo observed (1993, xxix–xxx). Yet *The Woman Warrior* was severely attacked by Frank Chin, who accused Kingston of falsifying Chinese myths and catering to a racist white audience in the name of feminism. The ensuing pen war that raged between the defenders of Kingston on the one side and Chin and his supporters on the other became one of the most protracted and notorious in the field.

Feminist critics such as Elaine Kim, Shirley Lim, Sau-ling Wong, and myself have taken the *Aiiieeeee!* editors to task for their preoccupation with reasserting Asian American manhood, their classification of desirable attributes as masculine, and Chin's blistering attack on Kingston (Cheung 1990, Kim 1990, S. G. Lim 1990, S. C. Wong 1992). We have further pointed out the reality of sexism in both Asian and American cultures and the imperative for Asian American women to engage in gender politics. The hyperfeminization of Asian women in popular American culture, for instance, is no less demeaning than the emasculation of Asian American men and is in as much need of refutation. In Kim's words, "Asian men have been coded as having no sexuality, while Asian women have nothing else. . . . Both exist to define the white man's virility and the white race's superiority" (1990, 69). The stereotype has been responsible in part for the continuing boom of the mail-order Asian bride business. Rapee Thongthiraj, in her study of Wanwadee Larsen's *Confessions of a Mail Order Bride*, demonstrates how the narrator – a Thai woman – must overcome the constraints exerted on her by both a feudal Thai society and an American culture that exoticizes her.

The feminist intervention has had little impact on the direction of the *Aiiieeeee!* editors. Seventeen years after the publication of *Aiiieeeee!* (1974) the editors made good their commitment to discovering a style for Asian American manhood in *The Big Aiiieeeee!* (1991). This sequel presents selected Chinese and Japanese heroic epics as the sources of the "Asian heroic tradition" and maintains that "authentic" Asian American writing must hark back to these heroic tales and to early immigrant annals. Such tenets infuse Chin's *Donald Duk*, in which a Chinese American boy regains his cultural pride by learning about the heroic exploits of classical heroes and of the Chinese railroad builders in America. Alongside the editors' endorsement of the Asian heroic tradition is their vehement denouncement of highly publicized Chinese American writers such as Jade Snow Wong, Maxine Hong Kingston, David Henry Hwang, and Amy Tan for being complicit with the white publishing industry in distorting Asian legends and creating unflattering portraits of Asian and Asian American men. These editors, so instrumental in launching the literature, have subsequently vilified much of it by arbitrating what is "real" and what is "fake" Asian American writing; to them, seemingly every work that has become a national bestseller falls into the "fake" category. To question their arbitrary distinction of the "real" and the "fake" is not, however, to dismiss many of their astute observations about the dubious ways in which the publishing establishment promotes certain Asian American texts and scants others, a topic I shall discuss in a later section.

The skirmishes between feminist critics and the editors of *Aiiieeeee!* and *The Big Aiiieeeee!* bespeak a more general conflict between feminism and state or cultural nationalism.[10] Both Theresa Cha's *Dictée* and Sara Suleri's *Meatless Days* have in their different ways shown how state nationalism – in Japan/Korea, the Indian subcontinent, and the United States – is at

times fought over the bodies of women (see Lowe 1994, Sadana 1993). More complex is the relationship between feminism and cultural nationalism. Many Asian American feminist critics champion cultural nationalism in their own way by contending not only against Asian and white patriarchy but also against Eurocentric feminism. Some of these critics have taken women writers to task for espousing white liberal feminism at the expense of "third world" cultures. Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, for instance, has been interrogated by Inderpal Grewal and Susan Koshy, among others, for its hierarchical comparison of women in India and the United States, with India coded as an oppressive place for women and the United States emerging as a land of hope and freedom. "The problem of such a formulation," Grewal observes, "is that it enables the erasure . . . of women's exploitation and oppression in the U.S., and the denial of women's agency in India" (226). Koshy further notes how Mukherjee's unqualified celebration of a self-determining subject in *Jasmine* is complicit with Western liberal feminism in masking class differences in both India and the United States: "In a strange alliance of liberal feminism, capitalism, and neocolonialism, Mukherjee's critique of the patriarchal practices of indigenous and diasporic Indian culture gets narrativized . . . as the emancipatory journey from Third to First World, a journey into the possibilities of a 'developed' subjectivity characterized by individualism, autonomy, and upward mobility" (71). Another widespread Anglo-American assumption – the notion that silence is synonymous with submissiveness and passivity and that voice is tantamount to power and truth – has been variously challenged by critics such as Gayle Fujita, Donald Goellnicht, and myself (1993).

Feminism and cultural nationalism have thus infiltrated and refined one another. Feminism has gone through much internal revamping to take into consideration differences in race, class, and culture; both patriarchal and Eurocentric constructions of femininity and masculinity are currently being questioned in cultural studies and gender studies. Similarly, nationalism (increasingly exposed as being complicit with patriarchy and compulsory heterosexuality) is being revaluated in ethnic studies, and gay and lesbian studies (see, for example, Eng 1994; J. Lee 1995; R. Lee 1995; Lowe 1995). These ongoing investigations may enable scholars and critics of Asian American literature to go beyond the binarism of feminist and masculinist agendas, to extend feminist concern to men of color who have been subordinated by the dominant culture, and to dispel stereotypes by inventing alternative models that do not simply conform to patriarchal templates.

Whereas debates about gender have been seething for more than two decades, discussions around themes of sexual orientation have remained relatively hushed until recently. Notable literary exceptions include Merle Woo's "Letter to Ma" (1981), Kitty Tsui's *The Words of a Woman Who Breathes Fire* (1983), Barbara Noda's *Strawberries* (1986), Paul Stephen Lim's plays (1977, 1985a, 1985b, 1989), and *Between the Lines: An Anthology by Pacific/Asian Lesbians*, edited by C. Chung et al. (1987); these were published by small presses with limited circulations. Self-censorship and the repressive attitudes of both Asian American communities and American society at large no doubt kept Asian American lesbian and gay writers and critics from reaching wider audiences earlier. The situation has changed dramatically in the last few years. Acclaimed works with gay or lesbian themes have flooded the cultural scene. These works include Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* (1990), Ginu Kamani's *Junglee Girl* (1995), Timothy Liu's *Vox Angelica* (1992), David Wong Louie's title story in *Pangs of Love* (1991), Russell Leong's *The Country of Dreams and Dust* (1993a) and "Geography One" (1993b), Anchee Min's *Red Azalea* (1994), and Norman Wong's *Cultural Revolution* (1994), along with anthologies such as *A Lotus of Another Color: The Unfolding of the South Asian Gay and Lesbian Experience*, edited by Rakesh Ratti (1993); *Piece of My Heart: A Lesbian of Colour Anthology*, edited by Makeda Silvera (1993); and *The Very Inside: An Anthology of Writing by Asian and Pacific Islander Lesbian and Bisexual Women*, edited by Sharon Lim-Hing (1994). In 1994 *Amerasia Journal* launched a special issue entitled "Dimensions of Desire: Other Asian & Pacific American Sexualities." With respect to literary theory and criticism, David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly* – a play at once popular and highly controversial – has generated some sophisticated analysis of the intersection of race, gender, nationalism, and sexuality (see, for example, Eng, Garber, Kondo, Lye, Moy, Pao, and Shimakawa).

Of the vectors in Asian American literary studies discussed in this section, class issues have perhaps been the most neglected to date. Aside from E. San Juan, Jr.'s *Carlos Bulosan and the Imagination of the Class Struggle* (1972/1975), there is hardly any sustained materialist analysis of Asian American literature. The diverse nationalities and disparate incomes of Asian Americans make any generalization in this area difficult. In addition, the prevailing perception of Asian Americans as the model minority clouds the tremendous economic variation among and within Asian American ethnic communities. Nevertheless, the literature itself offers many examples of capitalist exploitation, class privilege, and penury, as well as of the interplay between class and ethnicity. H. T. Tsiang's *And China Has Hands* (1937) describes the ordeal of a Chinese laundryman hounded by city officials and beleaguered by racist ordinances in New York's Chinatown, and who becomes increasingly involved in the labor movement of his day. Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart* (1943) confronts head-on the appalling working conditions of Filipino farmworkers in California, the fierce collisions between labor and capital, and the uneasy

alliances between Filipino and white workers. Milton Murayama's *All I Asking For Is My Body* (1959) exposes the pyramidal structure of the Hawaiian plantation system, with white foremen at the top and Filipino laborers at the bottom. Surjeet Kalsey's "Siddhartha Does Penance Once Again" (1977) evokes the hardship of early Punjabi immigrant workers; this poem also shows the parallels between the experiences of workers in India and immigrant workers in North America (Grewal). Kim Ronyoung's *Clay Walls* (1987) recounts the vicissitudes of a déclassé Korean immigrant family; the mother, member of a Yangbang (aristocratic class) in Korea, survives by being first a domestic and then a sweatshop worker in California. Wendy Law-Yone's *The Coffin Tree* (1987) provides vivid glimpses into the schizophrenia suffered by two siblings uprooted from their relatively comfortable circumstances in Burma to live in harrowing poverty in the United States. Gary Pak's "The Trial of Goro Fukushima" (1992) shows how the combined prejudice of classism and racism leads to the unjust lynching of a Japanese gardener. As suggested earlier, the new waves of immigrant professionals may also feel estranged from their working-class compatriots, especially the old-timers who came before them; such cleavages are poignantly delineated in Bienvenido Santos's "The Day the Dancers Came" (1979) and *What the Hell For You Left Your Heart in San Francisco* (1987). All the works above manifest the various ways in which social and economic inequality engenders interracial, interethnic, and intra-ethnic friction.

As Asian American literary criticism evolves, class analysis will take on increasing importance.[11] Such analysis is likely not only to reveal the unequal material conditions of Asian Americans but also to prompt a refinement of current critical concepts such as hybridity and diaspora. Bilingual and biliterate writers and academics may thrive on hybridity, whereas those who are less fluent and less privileged may find their biculturalism to be a handicap that marginalizes them in both dominant and ethnic cultures. Similarly, diasporic experience may be enabling for metropolitan intellectuals who can afford to travel back and forth across the Pacific but debilitating for migrant workers and those who suffer drastic occupational "demotion" in the transition from Asia to America. At the same time, a transnational class analysis can unveil analogous or interrelated structures of class and gender oppression in Asia and America, as exemplified in the works of Bulosan and Kalsey, as well as those of Meena Alexander and Le Ly Hayslip (see also Grewal 1993; Mohanty 1993; San Juan 1995). With the rise of global corporatism in which Asia plays a significant role (see Miyoshi 1993), Asians and Asian Americans are seen as occupying not just exploited but exploiting positions.

COMMUNAL RESPONSIBILITY, ARTISTIC FREEDOM

"Must the multicultural writer/artist be totally and exclusively answerable to his or her ethnic community . . . [or] can she or he claim the right to express an individual vision and personal concerns?" asked Amy Ling (1991, 195). This question has haunted writers of every emerging canon. Given the ideological genesis of the term "Asian American" – a self-designation that implies a certain political awareness – and its subsequent use as a neutral descriptive label, the perspectives of those who expect Asian American literature to be primarily socially dedicated and those who believe literature to be essentially personal and experimental inevitably clash.

Elaine Kim's subtitle for her classic – *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* – makes plain the nexus between this literature and society. The editors of *Aiiieeeee!* likewise argue that "the distinction between social history and literature is a tricky one, especially when dealing with the literature of an emerging sensibility. The subject matter of minority literature is social history, not necessarily by design but by definition" (xxxv). Texts that contain implicit or explicit social commentary (for example, Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart*, Louis Chu's *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, and John Okada's *No-No Boy*) have long been staples in courses on Asian American literature. Many scholars and students have almost come to assume that Asian American writers furnish material that reflects ethnic experiences. In the wake of poststructuralism and postmodernism, however, not only is identity perceived as unstable and multiple, but history itself becomes suspect – a human construct not to be equated with "truth." Thus the earlier view of Asian American literature as mirroring society has been unsettled.

George Uba, in tracing the evolution of Asian American poetry, has remarked that, unlike the "activist" poets of the late sixties and early seventies (for instance, Janice Mirikitani and Merle Woo, both of whom evoke a "tribal" identity and shun the "conventional finesse of Euro-American poetry" in their attempt to "deliver poetry to the People"), "postactivist" poets such as Marilyn Chin, David Mura, and John Yau have lost their "faith in the efficacy of language as an agent of social reform and as a reliable tool of representation," though they continue to wrestle with issues of identity (33–5).

The impetus to dispel the notion of a unitary identity and to extend the boundaries is evident in the two recent anthologies of Asian American literature: *Charlie Chan Is Dead: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Fiction*, edited by Jessica Hagedorn (1993), and *The Open Boat: Poems from Asian America*, edited by Garrett Hongo (1993). Both Hagedorn and

Hongo aim at contradicting existing stereotypes. In her introduction Hagedorn trots out the offensive images of Asians and Asian Americans propagated by the mainstream cinema then and now: "The slit-eyed, bucktooth Jap. . . . The inscrutable, wily Chinese detective. . . . The child-like, indolent Filipino houseboy . . . the greedy, clever *Japanese Businessman* . . . the *Ultimate Nerd*, the model minority Asian American student . . . *Miss Saigon*" (xxii).

Whereas Hagedorn lambastes the popular media for stereotyping Asian Americans, Hongo criticizes Asian American critics for regulating and policing Asian American expression. He challenges what he calls a "secondary system of literary authority *within* Asian America that has arisen since the early seventies" (xxx–xxxi). Although he does not name names, Hongo's criticism seems directed, inter alia, at the editors of *Aiiieeeee!* and *The Big Aiiieeeee!* for having "created a profile of what the Asian American writer was supposed to be": "The Asian American writer was an urban, homophobic male . . . who identified with Black power and ethnic movements in general . . . he was macho; he was crusading; he professed community roots and allegiances . . . his work was widely unrecognized by 'the mainstream'" (xxxi). Hongo allegedly detects an unspoken mandate for the Asian American writer to write for "an idealized fiction called 'the community'" and to adopt "a predominantly political or sociological construction of Asian American identity" (xxxiv).

In their attempts to break out of the rigid molds cast by the mainstream media and the ethnic community, respectively, both Hagedorn and Hongo stress the dazzling array of their selections. "The writers . . . are exhilarating in their differences," Hagedorn remarks. "The resulting range is enormous" (xxviii). Her writers hail from so many places that she muses: "Asian American literature? Too confining a term, maybe. World literature? Absolutely" (xxx). Hongo similarly notes: "For the thirty-one poets included here, our own individual literary odysseys differ and diverge. . . . Each poet defines for us a world, and those worlds are as varied as the dreams of ten thousand saints imagining ten thousand worlds. . . . It is a plain fact that recognition has come to us and to our work as part of the American voice that is great within us," (xxxvii–xxxviii, xlii).

I agree with Hagedorn that, as Asian Americans, our choice is "more than whether to hyphenate . . . more than gender, race or class. . . . who is authentic or fake. . . . Mainstream or marginal" (xxx). I also agree with Hongo that the category of Asian American literature has previously been "too narrowly defined" and that "it is arguable whether or not we can agree on an identifiable model for the *culture* of Asians in America from which we must derive our work" (xxxiv). Yet those socially committed forerunners with whom Hagedorn and Hongo differ have nevertheless

been instrumental in securing the freedom and diversity of expression enjoyed by Asian American writers at present. Without those pioneers who first gave Asian American literature a name, without the ethnic studies programs and community centers that gave it a habitation – not to mention the community activism that engendered both – today's flowering of Asian American literature and the concomitant multiplication of venues for writers and critics could hardly have occurred. The profusion attests to the power of naming and to the efficacy of communal effort.

THE PUBLISHING MARKETPLACE

Even as we marvel at this burgeoning, we must not assume that the constraints on Asian American writers have lifted completely. Just because some writers have been recognized by the literary establishment does not mean that the mainstream publishing industry is now open to the full range of Asian American sensibilities and tonalities. If, as Hongo charges, ethnic presses and ethnic studies programs in the past tended to valorize texts that are bitter, brashly political, and accountable to an ethnic community (xxxi, xxxv), the commercial presses seem to have favored works at the other end of the spectrum: those that are optimistic, apolitical, autobiographical.

To be sure, a work can be at once autobiographical and political, as exemplified by Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart*. But both commercial presses and the mainstream American reading public seem lukewarm toward that kind of writing by Asian Americans. The highly uneven receptions of Maxine Hong Kingston's three major works further illustrate my point. *The Woman Warrior*, originally classified as "autobiography," was an overnight, resounding success. *China Men* (also autobiographical) and *Tripmaster Monkey*, both of which are much more concerned with collective identity and racial politics, were accorded scant attention. As all three works are by the same writer, the difference in reception may have more to do with content than with artistic merit.[12]

Although we must not detract from the achievement of writers who have received national acclaim, we need to question whether there is some unspoken formula for Asian American literary success that prevents those who deviate from it from being heard. Why, for instance, is there such a preponderance of autobiographical works by Asian Americans? Why is it that, unlike works by other peoples of color, Asian American works that are commercial triumphs seem to be those the least overtly concerned with racial politics? Why are the few Asian American writers who do rage about racism (Frank Chin, Lawson Inada, Janice Mirikitani)

so neglected by a general readership? To what extent are Asian American writers complicit with Orientalism in order to meet mainstream expectations? I ask these questions not in any attempt to prescribe literary creativity, but to suggest that there are still invisible limits placed on Asian American writers.[13]

Unlike Frank Chin, who categorically denounces the genre of autobiography as being a form of Christian confession, I have no qualms about autobiography and autobiographical fiction. What troubles me is the trade publishers' predilection for Asian American personal narratives that lend themselves to what Brian Niiya, in his survey of Asian American autobiography, calls "open-minded conservative" political orientation, works that stress the ability of Asian Americans to assimilate and to accommodate to the basic rules of American society. Niiya believes these books collectively contribute to the current image of Asian Americans as the "model minority": "If one were trying to prove that the American system works for everyone and that, consequently, it's their own fault if certain groups fail to achieve 'success,' then one could hardly come up with a better vehicle than the Asian American autobiography." Because young Asian American writers often look to their predecessors for inspiration, this "success" story, in all senses of the word, tends to reproduce itself (Niiya 1990, 127–8, 132).

Although the recent works touted by the mainstream are much more multifarious in content and genre, many of them still fall under what David Palumbo-Liu calls "model minority discourse": "The most popular texts tend to be perceived as resolutions to a generalized 'problem' of race, ethnicity, and gender." He observes that there is a "doubleness" in texts such as *The Woman Warrior*, Gus Lee's *China Boy*, and Gish Jen's *Typical American*, which "at once serve as representatives of 'ethnic' literature and as models of assimilation into the dominant." Niiya's remarks regarding Asian American autobiography are echoed in Palumbo-Liu's observations concerning these contemporary texts, in which "the sociopolitical apparatuses that perpetuate material differentiations remain unchallenged and sometimes even fortified" (forthcoming).[14] In a parallel vein, Sau-ling Wong observes that both *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Kitchen God's Wife* by Amy Tan "tacitly subscribe to a worldview in which the inverse relationship between political power and cultural visibility is deemed natural." She further argues that Tan's novels plug into certain "discursive traditions" that contribute to their sensational success; these include "'mainstream' feminist writing; Asian American matrilineal literature; quasi ethnography about the Orient; Chinese American 'tour-guiding' works" (S. C. Wong 1995a, 201, 202).

Perhaps the time has come to reflect on how the label "Asian American literature," so instrumental in instituting the literature, can also regulate creativity. Both ethnic studies programs and mainstream literary establishments may, in different ways, have essentialized and commodified the Asian American writer. For entirely different reasons, both institutions have come to expect a strong "ethnic" quotient in Asian American literature. The earlier emphasis on social history and communal responsibility in ethnic studies has led to the privileging of writers (such as Bulosan and Okada) who can speak out of a collective identity; it has also occasioned a distrust or neglect of the formal dimensions of writing.

If community activists at times distrust "high-brow" art, the literary establishment seems to think that Asian American writers are incapable of it. The die-hard tendency to value Asian American works primarily as autobiography or ethnography has perhaps prevented these works from being taken seriously as literature. In tandem with the reading public's preference for autobiographical works is readers' tendency to take selected Asian American texts as representative of an entire ethnic group, a tendency that is reinforced by the current implementation of multiculturalism in the American classroom.[15] Ironically, while Asian American writing that emerged after the civil-rights movement was bent on claiming America, educators and publishers who are currently seeking to integrate works by Asian Americans into their offerings tend to fasten on texts with a strong "Asian" (exotic) flavor. In the popular consumption of East Asian and South Asian American literature, the focus has been on putative Asian lore, picturesque details, and outlandish practices. Such a predilection has the effect of distracting from what Asian American writers have to say about America at large.[16]

Works that do not dwell on being Asian or Asian American, including José García Villa's *Have Come Am Here*, Holly Uyemoto's *Rebel without a Clue*, Vikram Seth's *Golden Gate*, Arthur Sze's *Dazzled*, Karen Yamashita's *Through the Arc of the Rain Forest*, have also been elided in both ethnic studies and multicultural studies. Because American minority writers are often judged primarily by the ethnic content in their work, those interested in taking up other subjects are seldom given critical attention. Asian American writers thus may find little incentive to explore different channels of creativity.

These reflections are not meant to downplay the tremendous strides made in Asian American literary studies in the last three decades, but to provoke Asian and non-Asian scholars alike to rethink the many ingrained assumptions about Asian American literature. Cultural critics, being partly responsible for the reception and dissemination of this literature, must avoid ghettoizing it while remaining vigilant about the terms of its production and circulation. We may find ourselves juggling different tasks: uncovering the distinctive Asian ethnic traditions that inform this literature as well as attending to what it says about the larger American

society; exploring its historical and political specificity as well as analyzing the writing in interethnic, interracial, trans-Pacific, and international contexts; refraining from setting up arbitrary standards that circumscribe creativity as well as exposing and resisting dominant forces that contain Asian American literature and sanction "model minority discourse" at the expense of dissident voices. "We've come a long way" (Hagedorn 1993, xxviii). But is it far enough?

INTERETHNIC LITERACY

Despite the mounting interest in Asian American literature, not only among "insiders" but also among scholars seeking to broaden the American canon, many have found this literature especially difficult to teach because of the lack of background knowledge, the scarcity of secondary sources, and the variety of cultures involved. Most instructors, familiar with only a few luminaries, are unable to place these writers within cultural and historical contexts, let alone within a literary tradition. Even specialists in the field are not fully conversant with its numerous components.

This collection seeks to fulfill the dual purpose of introducing the distinctive literary history of constituent Asian American groups and of bringing out issues that connect them. Each contributor in Part One provides a literary survey of a subgroup of writers and describes salient historical events (for instance, the Chinese exclusion laws, the Japanese internment, the Vietnam War) that have affected the writers. The contributors in Part Two delineate some of the shared theoretical and critical concerns and reciprocal influences in literary texts by writers of different ethnic extractions, as well as issues that set them apart. By presenting Asian American writers according to ethnic descent and in comparative terms, this volume calls attention both to the many strains of Asian American literature and to their points of intersection. The book is intended both for nonspecialists seeking a broad introduction to the field and for veteran scholars wishing to learn more about the literature of a particular group or about new ways of reading, theorizing, and comparing Asian American literary texts.

There are two limits to this volume. First is the concentration on texts written in English, the only common language among people of diverse Asian lineage in North America. Though it is possible and highly desirable to have a bilingual literary or critical anthology devoted to one subgroup, it is not feasible to encompass in a single volume works written in many dissimilar tongues. This practical consideration must not obscure the fact that in every group there is a sizable body of literary production in the corresponding Asian language(s). The second limit concerns the selective

coverage of ethnic groups in Part One. I have been unable to find scholars who feel equipped to discuss writings by Americans of Burmese, Cambodian, Indonesian, Laotian, or Thai descent, as well as by those of mixed descent. My hope is that future scholars will be goaded into launching a study of these missing traditions.

CHAPTERS BY CONTRIBUTORS

In the spirit of decentering authority and promoting multiple points of view, I have in large part refrained from editorial interference. The contributors – many of whom are more knowledgeable about the particular topics they address than I am – were urged to present their ideas in whatever way they saw fit. They were also encouraged to come up with their own analytical frames and critical angles instead of merely providing a survey of a specific literature or a chosen topic.

Sau-ling Wong starts with a brief examination of the history of Chinese in the United States and traces the coinage of the term "Chinese American." Her survey of Chinese American works pays close attention to the historical periods from which individual works emerge, though she does not treat them as mere reflections of social reality. Instead she brings out "the complex and reciprocal interactions of material and discursive forces," taking into account the social conditions that impinge on the texts and noting the ways in which some of the writers challenge the dominant reception and containment. In reviewing writers with varying degrees of political consciousness and concern, Wong reveals the dialectical relationship between particular works and the social climates in which they are written. She also highlights certain texts that generated cultural debates and transformed previous literary criteria. A notable case in point has been the polemical writing of the *Aiiieeeee!* editors, who called for a revolutionary cultural nationalism. Wong considers their writing to be the "first clear articulation of the possibilities of Chinese American literary identity." She believes that new perspectives such as those of gay and lesbian writers, Chinese Canadian writers, and writers from other Asian ethnic communities will provide further opportunities for opening up and challenging the existing canon of Chinese American literature.

Stan Yogi divides the chapter on Japanese American literature into three main sections according to the writers' generations – issei (first), nisei (second), and sansei (third) – and traces the cultural and political events that have affected each group. The issei section introduces three authors who wrote in English: Sadakichi Hartman, Etsu Sugimoto, and Bunichi Kagawa (whom Yogi regards as the first to have taken on the concept of a Japanese American identity). The nisei section is subdivided

chronologically: prewar, internment, and postwar. Yogi notes that, before the war, published works by issei and nisei were confined mostly to Japanese American periodicals, which provided a forum for writers such as Taro Katayama, Chiye Mori, Toshio Mori, and Mary Oyama. The segment on literature about the internment underscores the tension between the "optimistic" and the "critical" in the works printed in camp journals, notably *Tulean Dispatch*, *The Pen*, and *Trek*. The sansei section is subdivided by theme: activism, place, and postmodernism. These headings refer to activist poets, writers who evoke a specific locale, and writers who evince postmodernist aesthetics, respectively. Throughout the chapter Yogi illuminates the role played by literature in creating and maintaining Japanese American identity.

Elaine Kim presents writings by Koreans in the United States as an ever-dynamic corpus, resistant to racism in American society, sexism in the Korean American community, and classism within a seemingly monolithic group. The works are divided into four sections. In the first section, the authors described write in different periods and about vastly different subjects, but they all, according to Kim, look back to Korea as their "homeland" and offer an incisive critique of racism in the United States. The second section concentrates on immigrants' daughters who write about their struggle to maintain the cultural integrity of Koreans even as they are beset by poverty and discrimination. These writers offer a narrative of what Kim calls "(female) difference" from the centralized narrative of whiteness and maleness in the United States. In the third section Kim discusses the emerging possibilities of identity formation for Korean Americans, particularly writers from Hawai'i who are "distinct from their mainland counterparts" in that they can "claim to be both Asian and American." These writers partake of the cultural hybridization that occurs in Hawai'i and refuse to allow a single frame of reference to determine their identity as writers. The last section points to the future of Korean American writing by invoking Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*, noting that by subverting the very notion of narrative, Cha poses a challenge to all future writers to remain critically engaged as Korean Americans while being open to the multiple dimensions of identity.

The collaborative essay by N. V. M. Gonzalez and Oscar V. Campomanes sketches the permeable yet irreducible boundaries between Filipino English and American literatures, as well as between postcolonial and ethnic studies. Both contributors agree that "engagement with the legacy of colonialism . . . charges the Filipino (American) literary tradition with its singular tensions." Gonzalez, a second-generation Filipino English writer, uses the term "Filipino Writing in English" to describe the work of writers who have either settled in the United States or maintained dual residence in the Philippines and North America. This writing

is informed by various Philippine folkloric and vernacular traditions as well as by the colonial languages of Spanish and English. The American legacy of English functions paradoxically as both "the deterrent and medium of 'Filipino imagination' seeking to break out of colonial fetters." Unlike immigrant writers who see America as the "promised land," Filipino writers often construct a fictive "homeland" for "moorings in their exilic writings and peripatetic journeys." Campomanes, an immigrant scholar of Filipino descent, refers to the writing by Filipinos in the United States as "Filipino American" only to expose the slipperiness of that terminology. He argues that this writing "falls within, while exceeding the discursive borders" of both Asian American and postcolonial discourse. Writers such as Carlos Bulosan, Gonzalez, Bienvenido Santos, and José García Villa have been studied as being both Filipino English and Filipino American authors.

Ketu Katrak announces at the outset that South Asian American literature is not "a monolithic whole but a collection of differences." The authors she covers exhibit differences in class, religion, education, and gender, dispelling the notion of a unitary identity. Katrak provides a broad historical survey of writers of the 1950s and 1960s and a much more detailed analysis of authors writing during and after the 1970s, particularly Agha Shahid Ali, Meena Alexander, and Bharati Mukherjee. Borrowing Edward Soja's argument in *Postmodern Geographies*, Katrak observes that identities are negotiated along the axes not only of race, class, gender, and language but also of region. This attentiveness to geographical surroundings informs Katrak's discussion of authors in whose works she discerns the violence of dislocation accompanied by a poetics of loss, as well as a sensibility enriched by the "simultaneity of geography": "the possibilities of living here, in body, and elsewhere in mind and imagination."

Monique T. D. Trương frames the emergence of Vietnamese American literature in the context of the Vietnamese conflict and its aftermath. Throughout her chapter, which is divided into five sections, she exposes the "U.S.-centric" approach to the Vietnam War and to Vietnamese Americans. The first two sections critique European American editors' appropriation and manipulation of Vietnamese American voices in several collections of oral history. The third section analyzes *Shallow Graves* by Wendy Wilson Larsen and Tran Thi Nga; Trương detects an imbalance of power in the relation between Larsen and Tran, an imbalance which replicates that of the interviewer-respondent relationship in the edited collections. The fourth section demonstrates how an analogous subordination of Vietnamese American subjectivity takes place in Oliver Stone's film *Heaven and Earth*, in which Le Ly Hayslip's narratives are reduced into "fragments of American popular culture" and codified as a "definitive

Vietnamese American perspective." The chapter's coda celebrates the advent of autonomous literary voices in Jade Ngọc Quang Huỳnh's *South Wind Changing* and Nguyễn Qúi Đức's *Where the Ashes Are*.

The essays in Part Two of the *Interethnic Companion* address common issues that affect writers from different subgroups and suggest various ways of reading and theorizing Asian American literature. Rachel Lee examines how four writers respond to the portrayals of Asians and Asian Americans in the popular press from 1910 to 1920. She observes that American journals of the time, including *Collier's*, the *Masses*, and *Good Housekeeping* typically characterized Asians as less evolved, unclean, unknowable, and unassimilable. She notes that the threatening descriptions of Asians found in the texts of these journals were juxtaposed with pictorial advertisements in which Asian emblems were used to sell domestic goods. The writers Lee discusses (Sax Rohmer, Onoto Watanna, Paz Marquez, and Sui Sin Far) each responded directly but very differently to the negative images of Asians produced in the press. Whereas Rohmer fuels those images, the other three challenge the popular constructions to varying degrees. By comparing journalistic and literary representations, Lee presents a spectrum of contending perspectives on Asian American identity in the early twentieth century.

Stephen Sumida argues that the notion of postcoloniality only imperfectly describes the relations between colony and nation in Asian Pacific American literatures. He asserts that Native Hawaiian literature today, for instance, is created and studied under conditions not of postcolonialism but of a colonialism that commenced with the overthrow of the Hawaiian nation in 1893. Asian American literature as a whole, according to Sumida, is still a literature of internal colonization, because a point of "liberation" from a colonizing nation's racial and cultural oppressiveness has not yet been reached. He observes that with the notable exception of Native Hawaiian literature – which assumes a "nation" apart from the United States and which expresses resistance and opposition to colonization in both content and form – the "nation" generally assumed in Asian American literary studies has been the United States, albeit in its idealized form as a country built on equality and democracy. This sanguine vision of the United States, he adds, distinguishes Asian American literature from Native American, African American, and Latina/Latino literatures.

Shirley Lim deplores the tendency of critics and publishers to disregard works by ethnic writers who do not center on stock American topics and proposes a diasporic model of reading that seeks to illuminate how works by Asian Americans shuffle notions of "identity, home, and nation." Borrowing Edward Said's notion of "filiation and affiliation," she shows how the tension between natal ties (filiation) and social relations (affiliation) surfaces rather differently in works by immigrants and in works by second-generation authors.[17] Lim discerns in immigrant texts (for instance, the poems on the walls of Angel Island) a "cultural di/stance toward U.S. society." She notes by contrast that the narratives produced by American-born writers (for example, Jade Snow Wong, Pardee Lowe, Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, and Gish Jen) advance an assimilationist narrative position.

Jinqi Ling explores ways of undermining gender binarism by discussing three interrelated issues: the "emasculation" of Asian American men, the simultaneous articulations of multiple oppressions, and the transgression of gender norms to disrupt heterosexism. He argues that when the term "emasculation" is used to epitomize the identity crisis of Asian American men, it entraps the user in "an endless repetition of the oppressor's logic." To remain constructive, the metaphor must be detached from its familiar contexts. Ling illustrates how this concept is put to different uses in the works of David Henry Hwang, Carlos Bulosan, and Frank Chin. He then analyzes how the writing of Maxine Hong Kingston concurrently resists racism and sexism. Finally, he demonstrates how Wendy Law-Yone and Jessica Hagedorn refigure gender in their work.

Donald Goellnicht, after pondering on his own position as a white male engaged in Asian American literary discourse, proposes a method of reading that blurs the generic line between literature and theory and permits Asian American works to stand as significant narratives of resistance. He argues that writers such as Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa, Theresa Cha, and Trinh Minh-ha challenge "traditional, patriarchal hierarchies of genre"; these writers, though seeking to recover repressed ethnic histories, are "acutely cognizant of the difficulty of knowing the past through language." Their works discourage a universalist and singular mode of reading, writing, or theorizing history.

Interethnic Companion likewise discourages a homogeneous approach to Asian American literature. It does not strive toward arriving at a consensus of what "Asian American literature" is. As indicated earlier, both the literature and the criticism are undergoing unprecedented growth and flux. Many of the essays here reflect some of the aforementioned "shifts" in paradigms, especially the changing emphasis from a unifying cultural nationalism grounded in North America to an insistence on heterogeneity and diaspora. Heterogeneity is also manifest in the variety of organizing themes that emerge in Part One, revealing the historical concerns particular to each subgroup. But whether the focus is on generational peculiarity (Yogi), geographical instability (Katrak), or the difficult emergence of an autonomous voice (Trường), there is a concerted accent on differences *within* the subgroup covered.

The essays in Part Two more directly challenge or complicate earlier critical paradigms. Lee's analysis of the narratives set in Japan and the Philippines demonstrates how asymmetrical race relations in the United States are replicated outside American borders; her essay furnishes another vantage point for viewing parallel phenomena in Asia and Asian America. Sumida holds that cultural nationalism takes very different forms in Hawai'i and on the continent. Lim reverses the trend of earlier critics (who stressed American nativity as crucial to an Asian American sensibility) by placing a premium on the diasporic consciousness of immigrant writers. Ling recasts the concept of "emasculation" to take into account the perspectives of women and gay men. Goellnicht moves away from the critical tendency that conflates ethnic literature and social history by showing how women writers question traditional historiography.

Certain concerns run through both parts, providing material for further dialogue or debate. Lee and Trường unmask the skewed representation of Asia in U.S. print and cinematic media; Lim and Wong analyze the assimilationist and resistant dimensions in Asian American texts; Goellnicht, Kim, and Ling map out the intersection of gender and race in positioning writers and critics; Campomanes, Gonzalez, and Sumida investigate the conjunction and disjunction of Asian American and postcolonial studies; Katrak and Yogi show the centrality of geographical sites in shaping or unsettling ethnic identity. Considered together, these approaches will enable students and scholars to explore many of the tributaries and confluences in Asian American literary studies.

The boundaries of Asian American literature are likely to continue to stretch and be contested as its constituency expands and new voices emerge. The question remains whether the label "Asian American" can continue to hold together the multitude of ethnic groups and "consent" (to give an ethnic twist to Werner Sollors's term) is possible amid such diversity.[18] This question is not unlike the one raised by those critics of multiculturalism who worry about the "balkanization" of America. Other issues broached earlier – the competing claims of wanting to embrace an ethnic heritage and wishing to be recognized fully as an "American"; the politics of race, gender, class, and sexuality; and the concerns about representation, communal responsibility, artistic freedom, and the literary marketplace – also have much in common with the study of Native American, African American, and Mexican American literatures. Hence I would like to conclude by reflecting on Asian American literary studies in conjunction with a multicultural curriculum.

When teaching courses on Asian American literature at UCLA, I encounter students of all colors as well as students from practically every extant Asian American group. I have come to see that for most Asian American students, and for myself, identification with Asians who belong to different subgroups is not so much "natural" as learned or acquired. As Espiritu points out, "pan-Asian ethnicity was the product of material, political, and social processes rather than cultural bonds. But . . . once established, the panethnic group – through its institutions, leaders, and networks – produces and transforms panethnic culture and consciousness. In the process, the panethnic idea becomes autonomous, capable of replenishing itself" (164). Although Asian American students may readily feel a certain affinity with one another because they have faced similar forms of discrimination, a deeper sense of mutual understanding emerges only after exposure to the different material histories, cultures, and literatures of the various groups. Perhaps that is why a much greater degree of solidarity can be discerned among Asian Americans in academic communities than among those outside these settings. Similar dynamics are also at work in courses covering writers from diverse racial groups. Paradoxical as it may seem, learning about differences is an effective way to foster empathy.

Knowledge, to be sure, can also divide. For instance, in connecting Asia and Asian America, Asian Americans must confront the conflicted histories that have split nations such as Japan and Korea, Pakistan and India, and Vietnam and Cambodia. Similarly, a multicultural education that does not simply scratch the surface of cultural diversity must grapple with historical injuries – for instance, the dislocation and the dispossession of Native Americans and Mexican Americans, the enslavement of African Americans, the internment of Japanese Americans – not to mention the economic asymmetry and unequal power relations that continue to pit one group of people against another. These painful legacies will fissure and embitter. But acquiring such knowledge in the hope of eventual reconciliation and cooperation is surely preferable to accepting any false harmony imposed by the repression of history.

This volume, published at a time when the Asian American population in North America has been escalating and when the call for multiculturalism can no longer be ignored, works toward a historically and culturally informed reading of Asian American literature. It aims at facilitating interethnic approaches to American literature, not only in relation to the nationalities covered but, conceivably, also to other marginalized groups. I hope the *Interethnic Companion* will encourage those not of Asian American backgrounds to know us and help us to know ourselves.

NOTES

1. Sau-ling Cynthia Wong and I discovered upon exchanging our works-in-progress that independently we had been wrestling with similar "shifts" in Asian American studies (see Wong, 1995b). Wong's valuable suggestions inform this essay; I am especially grateful to her for alerting me to the slippage between how the term "Asian American" was used in cultural criticism and how it was used in the general Asian American movement (see next section).
2. This list is not meant to be exhaustive. Asian American groups are continuing to proliferate and to redefine themselves. For instance, Pacific Islanders, who are currently bidding to be placed in the same category as "Native Americans" in the U.S. census, are not listed here (though some of their works are included in the cumulative bibliography). Senator Daniel K. Akaka, a Native Hawaiian, observes: "There is the misperception that Native Hawaiians, who number well over two hundred thousand, somehow "migrated" to the United States like other Asian or Pacific Island groups. . . . This leads to the erroneous impression that Native Hawaiians, the original inhabitants of the Hawaiian Islands, no longer exist" (quoted in Wright 1994). There is also disagreement over whether the many national groups who hailed from the Indian subcontinent should be classified as Asian Americans or even as South Asians (see Islam, Sharpe, Wright).
3. "No-no boys" were nisei who refused to fight for the United States. Internees were asked to fill out a so-called Loyalty Questionnaire administered in conjunction with an army recruitment drive. "No-No" refers to the responses given to two of the questions: 'Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States in combat duty wherever ordered?" and "Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attacks of foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, to any other foreign government, power, or organization?" See also Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* (155) for a moving description of the burning of Japanese textbooks and other items during the war.
4. Partly because of the parallel experience of Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians during World War II, Kogawa's works have often been considered as a part of the Asian American canon.
5. As E. Kim (1992) and S. Wong (1995b) have pointed out, the growing fluidity between "Asian" and "Asian American" is also facilitated by material factors such as increasingly affordable air travel and phone services across the Pacific, fax machines, e-mail, and the easy rental of Asian films and videos.
6. Outside the literary realm, the connection between Asia and Asian America was there from the start. As historian Sucheta Mazumdar points out, the activists who spearheaded Asian American studies in the late 1960s were influenced no less by the Cultural Revolution in China than by the civil-rights movement and the Black-Power movement. Similarly, the anti–Vietnam War movement and the internal colonialism model have maintained a transnational perspective (1991). The term "Asian American literature" has itself

become a site of debate, either because many early Asian inhabitants in North America do not perceive themselves as "Americans," or because the term homogenizes different groups, or because it presupposes the desirability of be(com)ing Americans. For these various points of view, see E. San Juan 1995, S. Wong, 1995b, as well as the essays by Campomanes, Gonzalez, Lim, and Sumida in this volume. I discuss the ambivalence among Asian Americans toward their ancestral homeland at much greater length in Cheung 1992.

7. Interest in Asian American literary studies in Europe is also mounting. The first book-length work of criticism on Chinese American literature, Karin Meissenburg's *The Writing on the Wall* (1987), was published in Germany. More recently, students from Italy, Poland, France, and Spain have come to the United States specifically to study Asian American literature. The spread of Asian American literary studies abroad reflects the internationalization of American Studies in general. Paul Lauter asks, "What are the borders within which the study of 'America' has been conducted? Does it make sense, especially when we talk of multiculturalism and cultural study, to define these borders by nationalist geography or by language? Or does 'America' have to be seen within a world system, in which the exchange of commodities, the flow of capital, and the interactions of culture know no borders?" These questions are obviously relevant to Asian American Studies as well (see also Kroes).
8. David Henry Hwang's *FOB* dramatizes the tension between American-born and foreign-born Chinese; see also Hom on their mutual discrimination. Grewal discusses the disinclination of upper-class Indian immigrants to associate with Asian Americans and other peoples of color.
9. Either of these extremes is complicit with the exclusive forces of the dominant culture. The hiring pattern described above (preference for foreign-born Asians who are bilingual over American-born Asians who are not fluent in any Asian languages) gives the impression that Asian Americans have done well in institutions of higher learning, even in the unlikely fields of the humanities, thereby reinforcing the myth of the model minority while perpetuating the invisibility of Asians born and raised in North America.
10. In both anthologies there are twice as many male as female writers represented. As though to make up for this imbalance, successive anthologies of Asian American women writers have appeared, including *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writing by and about Asian American Women*, ed. Asian Women United of California (1989), *The Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology*, ed. Shirley Geok-Lin Lim and Mayumi Tsutakawa (1989), and *Home to Stay: Asian American Women's Fiction*, ed. Sylvia Watanabe and Carol Bruchac (1990).
11. As Lisa Lowe has pointed out, a number of young scholars – Jeff Chang, Colleen Lye, Michael Murashige, Viet Nguyen, Shelly Wong – have been working on the intersection of class and race, though much of their work still remains unpublished (1995b).
12. *Tripmaster Monkey* may have deterred some readers because of its many layers of allusion. Unfolding these layers requires knowledge of Chinese and English

classics, the culture of the late 1960s, as well as various "inside stories" about Asian Americans (including a re-creation of Frank Chin as the protagonist). Yet similar complexity in work by Euro-American writers such as T. S. Eliot and James Joyce has always inspired scrupulous scholarship.

13. In asking these questions I am indebted to critics such as Tomo Hattori, Brian Niiya, David Palumbo-Liu, E. San Juan, Jr., Monique Trường, and S.C. Wong.
14. That Asian American literature exudes a sanguine tone is apparently a widespread assumption. Responding to a call in the T-AMLIT e-mail bulletin board for suggestions of texts that are "humorous and affirming," which will make readers "feel good" afterwards, A. Keith Lawrence writes: "Many contemporary Asian American writers fit the bill" (quoted with Lawrence's permission). He goes on to list the works of Jade Ngọc Quang Huỳnh, David Henry Hwang, Gish Jen, Maxine Hong Kingston, Gus Lee, Sky Lee, David Wong Louie, Lydia Minatoya, Michael Ondaatje, Ruth Sasaki, and Amy Tan.
15. One must not dismiss the sincere effort of many educators to transform the curriculum by including the voices of hitherto marginalized minorities. However, as scholars such as Hazel Carby, Henry Giroux, Chandra Mohanty (1989–90), and Cornell West have pointed out, the liberal notion of multiculturalism, which stresses merely *cultural* differences, clouds the highly uneven economic conditions and asymmetrical power relations among races. In contrast to this form of multiculturalism, David Palumbo-Liu advocates a "critical multiculturalism [that] explores the fissures, tensions, and sometimes contradictory demands of multiple cultures, rather than (only) celebrating the plurality of cultures by passing through them appreciatively" (1995, 5).
16. Cutting a piece of one's own flesh and serving it in a broth to one's mother – a scene that occurs in both the text and film version of *Joy Luck Club* and passes for a time-honored Chinese expression of filial piety – is one that I find particularly vexing. As far as I know, there is no such Chinese custom.
17. For another application of Said's concept to Asian American literature, see Li.
18. Sollors describes the ethnic characteristics inherited by American immigrant writers from their ancestors as "descent" and the common American characteristics adopted by them in the New World as "consent."

WORKS CITED

Alexander, Meena. 1993. *Fault Lines: A Memoir*. New York: Feminist Press.

Asian Women United of California, eds. 1989. *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writing by and about Asian American Women*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Bacho, Peter. 1991. *Cebu*. Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press.

Bascara, Victor. 1993. "Hitting Critical Mass." *Critical Mass: A Journal of Asian American Cultural Criticism* 1.1:3–38.

Bulosan, Carlos. 1943/1977. *America Is in the Heart: A Personal History*. Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press.

Campomanes, Oscar V. 1992. "Filipinos in the United States and Their Literature of Exile." In Lim and Ling, 49–78.

Carby, Hazel. 1980. "Multi-Culture." *Screen Education* 34:62–70.

Cha, Theresa Hak Kyung. 1982/1994. *Dictée*. Berkeley: Third Woman Press.

Chan, Jeffery Paul, Frank Chin, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong, eds. 1991. *The Big Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers*. New York: New American Library-Meridian.

Cheung, King-Kok. 1990. "The Woman Warrior versus the Chinaman Pacific: Must a Chinese American Critic Choose between Feminism and Heroism?" In *Conflicts in Feminism*, ed. Marianne Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller, 234–51. New York: Routledge.

———. 1992/1993. "Asian and Asian American: To Connect or Disconnect?" Conference paper delivered at the American Studies Association Annual Convention; a version of this paper was also presented at National Taiwan University, Taipei.

———. 1993. *Articulate Silences: Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press.

Chin, Frank. 1991. *Donald Duk*. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press.

———. 1991. "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake." In Chan et al., 1–92.

Chin, Frank, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inado, and Shawn Wong, eds. 1974/1983. *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*. Washington, D.C.: Howard Univ. Press.

Chu, Louis. 1961/1979. *Eat a Bowl of Tea*. Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press.

Chung, C., Alison Kim, and A. K. Lemshewsky, eds. 1987. *Between the Lines: An Anthology by Pacific/Asian Lesbians*. Santa Cruz, CA: Dancing Bird Press.

Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee. 1993. "Yuba City School." In Hongo, 79–80.

Eng, David. 1994. "In the Shadows of a Diva: The Commitment of Homosexuality in David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly*." *Amerasia Journal* 20.1:93–116.

Espiritu, Yen Le. 1992. *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities*. Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press.

Fujita, Gayle Kimi. 1985. "'To attend the sound of stone': The Sensibility of Silence in *Obasan*." *MELUS* 12.3:33–42.

Garber, Marjorie. 1992. "The Occidental Tourist: *M. Butterfly* and the Scandal of Transvestitism." In *Nationalism and Sexualities*, ed. Andrew Parker et al., 121–46. New York: Routledge.

Giroux, Henry. 1992. *Border Crossings*. New York: Routledge.

Goellnicht, Donald C. 1989. "Minority History as Metafiction: Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 8.2:287–306.

Grewal, Inderpal. 1993. "Reading and Writing the South Asian Diaspora." In Women of the South Asian Descent Collective, 226–36.

Hagedorn, Jessica. 1990. *Dogeaters*. New York: Penguin.

———. 1994. "The Exile Within/The Question of Identity." *The State of Asian America: Activism and Resistance in the 1990s*, ed. Karin Aguilar-San Juan, 173–82. Boston: South End Press.

———, ed. 1993. *Charlie Chan Is Dead: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Fiction*. New York: Penguin.

Hattori, Tomo. 1994. "Orientalist Typologies: The Cultural Politics of the Female

Subject in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*." Ph.D. diss., McMaster Univ.

Hom, Marlon K. 1984. "A Case of Mutual Exclusion: Portrayals by Immigrants and American-born Chinese of Each Other in Literature." *Amerasia Journal* 11:29–45.

Hongo, Garrett, ed. 1993. *The Open Boat: Poems from Asian America*. New York: Anchor-Doubleday.

Huỳnh, Jade Ngọc Quang. 1994. *South Wind Changing*. St. Paul, MN: Graywolf Press.

Hwang, David Henry. 1983. *FOB*. In *Broken Promises: Four Plays*, 5–56. New York: Bard/Avon.

———. 1989. *M. Butterfly*. New York: Plume/Penguin.

Islam, Naheed. 1993. "In the Belly of the Multicultural Beast I Am South Asian." In Women of the South Asian Descent Collective, 242–5.

Jen, Gish. 1991. *Typical American*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Kalsey, Surjeet. 1977. "Siddhartha Does Penance Once Again." *Contemporary Literature in Translation* 26:32–4.

Kamani, Ginu. 1995. *Junglee Girl*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.

Kim, Elaine H. 1982. *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context*. Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press.

———. 1987. "Defining Asian American Realities through Literature." *Cultural Critique* 6:87–111.

———. 1990. "'Such Opposite Creatures': Men and Women in Asian American Literature." *Michigan Quarterly Review* (Winter):68–93.

———. 1992. "Foreword. " In Lim and Ling, xi–xvii.

———. 1993. "Home Is Where the *Han* Is: A Korean American Perspective on the Los Angeles Upheavals." In *Reading Rodney King/Reading Urban Uprising*, ed. Robert G. Williams, 215–35. New York: Routledge.

Kim, Elaine H., and Norma Alarcón, eds. 1994. *Writing Self, Writing Nation: A Collection of Essays on DICTEE by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha*. Berkeley: Third Woman Press.

Kim, Ronyoung. 1987. *Clay Walls*. Sag Harbor, NY: Permanent Press.

Kingston, Maxine Hong. 1976/1977. *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*. New York: Vintage Books.

———. *China Men*. 1981. New York: Vintage-Random House, 1989.

———. 1982. "Cultural Mis-readings by American Reviewers." *Asian and Western Writers in Dialogue: New Cultural Identities*, ed. Guy Amirthanayagam, 55–65. London: Macmillan.

———. 1989. *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book*. New York: Knopf.

Kogawa, Joy. 1981. *Obasan*. Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys.

———. 1985. "The Japanese-Canadian Dilemma." *Toronto Life*, December, 29–33, 58, 60.

———. 1992. *Itsuka*. Toronto: Viking.

Kondo, Dorinne K. 1990. "*M. Butterfly*: Orientalism, Gender, and a Critique of Essentialist Identity." *Cultural Critique* 16:5–29.

Koshy, Susan. 1994. "The Geography of Female Subjectivity: Ethnicity, Gender, and Diaspora." *Diaspora* 3.1:69–84.

Kroes, Rob. 1995. "Internationalizing the Study of the United States." *American Studies Association Newsletter* 18.2:1, 3–4.

Larsen, Wanwadee. 1989. *Confessions of a Mail Order Bride: American Life Through Thai Eyes*. Far Hill, NJ: New Horizon.

Larsen, Wendy Wilder, and Tran Thi Nga. 1986. *Shallow Graves: Two Women and Vietnam*. New York: Perennial Library.

Lauter, Paul. 1995. "A Call for (At Least a Little) American Studies Chauvinism." *American Studies Association Newsletter* 18.2:1–3.

Law-Yone, Wendy. 1987. *The Coffin Tree*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Lee, Chang-rae. 1995. *Native Speaker*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Lee, Gus, 1991/1994. *China Boy*. New York: Penguin/Plume.

Lee, James Kyung-Jin. 1995. "The Poetry of Myung Mi Kim." M.A. thesis, Univ. of California, Los Angeles.

Lee Marie G. 1992. *Finding My Voice*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Lee, Rachel. 1995. "The Americas of Asian American Literature: Nationalism, Gender, and Sexuality in Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart*, Jen's *Typical American*, and Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*." Ph.d. diss., Univ. of California, Los Angeles.

Leong, Russell. 1993a. *The Country of Dreams and Dust*. Albuquerque, NM: West End Press.

———. 1993b. "Geography One." In Hagedorn, 215–29.

———, ed. 1994. "Dimensions of Desire: Other Asian and Pacific Sexualities: Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Identities and Orientations." *Amerasia Journal* (special issue) 20.1.

Li, David Leiwei. 1992. "Filiative and Affiliative Textualization in Chinese American Literature." In *Understanding Others: Cultural and Cross-Cultural Studies and the Teaching of Literature*, ed. Joseph Trimmer, 177–200. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Lim, Paul Stephen. 1977. *Conpersonas: A Recreation in Two Acts*. New York: Samuel French.

———. 1985a. *Homerica: A Trilogy on Sexual Liberation*. Louisville, KY: Aran Press.

———. 1985b. *Woe Man: A Recreation in Two Acts*. Louisville, KY: Aran Press.

———. 1989. *Figures in Clay: A Threnody in Six Scenes and a Coda*. Louisville, KY: Aran Press.

Lim, Shirley Geok-lin. 1990. "Japanese American Women's Life Stories: Maternality in Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* and Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*." *Feminist Studies* 16.2:289–312.

———. 1993. "Feminist and Ethnic Literary Theories in Asian American Literature." *Feminist Studies* 19.3:571–96.

Lim, Shirley Geok-Lin, and Mayumi Tsutakawa, eds. 1989. *The Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology*. Corvallis, OR: Calyx Books.

Lim, Shirley Geok-Lin, and Amy Ling, eds. 1992. *Reading the Literatures of Asian America*. Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press.

Lim-Hing, Sharon, ed. 1994. *The Very Inside: An Anthology of Writing by Asian and Pacific Islander Lesbian and Bisexual Women*. Toronto: Sister Vision Press.

Ling, Amy. 1990. *Between Worlds: Women Writers of Chinese Ancestry*. New York: Pergamon Press.

Ling, Amy. 1991. "'Emerging Canons' of Asian American Literature and Art." In *Asian Americans: Comparative and Global Perspectives*, ed. Shirley Hune et al., 191–7. Pullman: Washington State Univ. Press.

Liu, Timothy. 1992. *Vox Angelica*. Cambridge, MA: Alicejamesbooks.

Louie, David Wong. 1991. *Pangs of Love*. New York: Knopf.

Lowe, Lisa. 1991. "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences." *Diaspora* 1.1:24–43.

———. 1994. "Unfaithful to the Original: The Subject of *Dictée*." In Kim and Alarcón, 35–69.

———. 1995a. "Canon, Institutionalization, Identity: Contradictions for Asian American Studies." In Palumbo-Liu, 48–68.

———. 1995b. "On Contemporary Asian American Projects." *Amerasia Journal* 21.1, 2:41–52.

Lye, Colleen. 1995. "*M. Butterfly* and the Rhetoric of Antiessentialism: Minority Discourse in an International Frame." In Palumbo-Liu, 260–89.

Mazumdar, Sucheta. 1991. "Asian American Studies and Asian Studies: Rethinking Roots." In *Asian Americans: Comparative and Global Perspectives*, ed. Shirley Hune et al., 29–44. Pullman: Washington State Univ. Press.

Meissenburg, Karin. 1987. *The Writing on the Wall*. Frankfurt: Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation.

Min, Anchee. 1994. *Red Azalea*. New York: Pantheon.

Miyoshi, Masao. 1993. "A Borderless World? From Colonialism to Transnationalism and the Decline of the Nation-State." *Critical Inquiry* 19:726–51.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 1989–90. "On Race and Voice: Challenges for Liberal Education in the 1990s." *Cultural Critique* 14:179–200.

———. 1993. "Defining Genealogies: Feminist Reflections on Being South Asian in North America." In Women of the South Asian Descent Collective, 351–8.

Moy, James S. 1993. *Marginal Sights: Staging the Chinese in America*. Iowa City: Univ. of Iowa Press.

Mukherjee, Bharati. 1988. "Give Us Your Maximalist." *Los Angeles Times*, 28 August, 1, 28–9.

———. 1989. *Jasmine*. New York: Grove Press.

Mura, David. 1991. *Turning Japanese*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press.

———. 1994. "A Shift in Power, A Sea Change in the Arts." In *The State of Asian America: Activism and Resistance in the 1990s*, ed. Karin Aguilar-San Juan, 183–204. Boston: South End Press.

Murayama, Milton. 1959/1975. *All I Asking For Is My Body*. San Francisco: Supa Press.

Ng, Fae Myenne. 1993. *Bone*. New York: Hyperion.

Nguyễn Qúi Đứ'c. 1994. *Where the Ashes Are: The Odyssey of a Vietnamese Family*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Niiya, Brian T. 1990. "Open-Minded Conservatives: A Survey of Autobiographies by Asian Americans." M.A. thesis, Univ. of California, Los Angeles.

Noda, Barbara. 1979. *Strawberries*. Berkeley: Shameless Hussy.

Okada, John. 1957/1979. *No-No Boy*. Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle; Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press.

Pak, Gary. 1992. "The Trial of Goro Fukushima." In *The Watcher of Waipuna and Other Stories*, 95–112. Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press.

Palumbo-Liu, David. Forthcoming. "Model Minority Discourse and the Course of Healing." In *Minority Discourse: Ideological Containment and Utopian/Heterotopian Potentials*, ed. Abdul JanMohamed. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

———, ed. 1995. *The Ethnic Canon: Histories, Institutions, and Interventions*. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press.

Pao, Angela. 1992. "The Critic and the Butterfly: Sociocultural Contexts and the Reception of David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly*." *Amerasia Journal* 18.3:1–16.

Redhakrishnan, R. 1994. "Is the Ethnic 'Authentic' in the Diaspora?" In *The State of Asian America: Activism and Resistance in the 1990s*, ed. Karin Aguilar-San Juan, 219–33. Boston: South End Press.

Ratti, Rakesh, ed. 1993. *A Lotus of Another Color: The Unfolding of the South Asian Gay and Lesbian Experience*. Boston: Alyson Press.

Sadana, Rashmi. 1993. "Making a Space for Women in the Third World: Displacement and Identity in Sara Suleri's *Meatless Days*." In Women of the South Asian Descent Collective, 320–4.

San Juan, E., Jr. 1975. *Carlos Bulosan and the Imagination of the Class Struggle*. Quezon City: Univ. of the Philippines Press.

———. 1991. "Beyond Identity Politics: The Predicament of the Asian American Writer in Late Capitalism." *American Literary History* 3.3:542–65.

———. 1994. "The Predicament of Filipinos in the United States." In *The State of Asian America: Activism and Resistance in the 1990s*, ed. Karin Aguilar-San Juan, 205–18. Boston: South End Press.

———. 1995. "In Search of Filipino Writing: Reclaiming Whose 'America?'" In Palumbo-Liu, 213–40.

Santos, Bienvenido N. 1979. "The Day the Dancers Came." In *Scent of Apples: A Collection of Stories*, 113–28. Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press.

———. 1987. *What the Hell For You Left Your Heart in San Francisco*. Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Publishers.

Sato, Gayle K. Fujita. 1992. "Momotaro's Exile: John Okada's *No-No Boy*." In Lim and Ling, 239–58.

Seth Vikram. 1986. *Golden Gate*. New York: Random House.

Sharpe, Jenny. 1995. "Is the United States Pcostcolonial? Transnationalism, Immigration, and Race." *Diaspora* 4.2:181–99.

Shimakawa, Karen. 1993. "'Who's to Say?' Or, Making Space for Gender and Ethnicity in *M. Butterfly*." *Theatre Journal* 45.3:349–62.

Silvera, Makeda, ed. 1993. *Piece of My Heart: A Lesbian of Colour Anthology*. Toronto: Sister Vision Press.

Skloot, Robert. 1990. "Breaking the Butterfly: The Politics of David Henry Hwang." *Modern Drama* 33.1:59–66.

Soja, Edward. 1989. *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. New York: Verso.

Sollors, Werner. 1986. *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

Sone, Monica. 1953/1979. *Nisei Daughter*. Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press.
Suleri, Sara. 1989. *Meatless Days*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.
Sumida, Stephen H. 1991. *And the View from the Shore: Literary Traditions of Hawai'i*. Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press.
———. 1992. "Sense of Place, History, and the Concept of the 'Local' in Hawaii's Asian/Pacific American Literatures." In Lim and Ling, 215–37.
Tan, Amy. 1989. *The Joy Luck Club*. New York: Putnam.
———. 1991. *The Kitchen God's Wife*. New York: Ballantine.
Thongthiraj, Rapee. 1955. "Breaking Silence and Remaking the Self in Wanwadee Larsen's *Confessions of a Mail Order Bride*." M.A. thesis, Univ. of California, Los Angeles.
Tsiang, H. T. 1937. *And China Has Hands*. New York: Robert Speller.
Tsui, Kitty. 1983. *The Words of a Woman Who Breathes Fire*. San Francisco: Spinsters Ink.
Uba, George. 1992. "Versions of Identity in Post-Activist Asian American Poetry." In Lim and Ling, 33–48.
Uyemoto, Holly. 1989. *Rebel Without a Clue*. New York: Crown.
Villa, José García. 1942. *Have Come, Am Here*. New York: Viking.
Vinh Do. 1994. "The Search for Home: An Interview with Bay Area Writer Nguyễn Qúi Đức." *Pacific Reader: International Examiner Literary Supplement* (Spring), 1.
Watanabe, Sylvia, and Carol Bruchac, eds. 1990. *Home to Stay: Asian American Women's Fiction*. Greenfield Center, NY: Greenfield Review Press.
West, Cornell. 1993. *Beyond Eurocentrism and Multiculturalism*. Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press.
Women of the South Asian Descent Collective (Sheela Bhatt, Preety Kalra, Aarti Kohli, Latika Malkani, Dharini Rasiah, eds.). 1993. *Our Feet Walk the Sky: Women of the South Asian Diaspora*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute.
Wong, Norman. 1994. *Cultural Revolution*. New York: Persea.
Wong, Sau-ling Cynthia. 1992. "Autobiography as Guided Chinatown Tour? Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and the Chinese American Autobiographical Controversy." *Multicultural Autobiography: American Lives*, ed. James Robert Payne, 248–79. Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press.
———. 1993. *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press.
———. 1995a. "'Sugar Sisterhood': Situating the Amy Tan Phenomenon." In Palumbo-Liu, 174–210.
———. 1995b. "Denationalization Reconsidered: Asian American Cultural Criticism at a Theoretical Crossroads." *Amerasia Journal* 21.1, 2:1–21.
Woo, Merle. 1981/1983. "Letter to Ma." In *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, 140–7. Latham, NY: Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press.
Wright, Lawrence. "One Drop of Blood," *New Yorker*, 25 July 1994, 46–55.
Yamamoto, Hisaye. 1988. *"Seventeen Syllables" and Other Stories*. Latham, NY: Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press.
Yamashita, Karen Tei. 1990. *Through the Arc of the Rainforest*. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press.

PART ONE

AN INTERETHNIC COMPANION TO ASIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Editor

King-Kok Cheung

University of California, Los Angeles

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1997

First published 1997

Printed in the United States of America

Typeset in Meridien and Optima

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
An interethnic companion to Asian American literature / edited by King-Kok Cheung.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.
ISBN 0-521-44312-1 (hard). – ISBN 0-521-44790-9 (pbk.)
1. American literature – Asian American authors – History and criticism. 2. Asian Americans – Intellectual life. 3. Asian Americans in literature. I. Cheung, King-Kok, 1954– .
PS153.A84I58 1996
810.9'895 – dc20 95-43092
CIP

A catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 0-521-44312-1 Hardback
ISBN 0-521-44790-9 Paperback

Transferred to digital reprinting 2000
Printed in the United States of America

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments — *page*
Contributors

Re-viewing Asian American Literary Studies
King-Kok Cheung

PART ONE

1 Chinese American Literature
Sau-ling Cynthia Wong

2 Filipino American Literature
N. V. M. Gonzalez and Oscar V. Campomanes

3 Japanese American Literature — 1
Stan Yogi

4 Korean American Literature — 1
Elaine H. Kim

5 South Asian American Literature — 1
Ketu H. Katrak

6 Vietnamese American Literature — 2
Monique T. D. Trường

PART TWO

7 Journalistic Representations of Asian Americans and Literary Responses, 1910–1920 — 2
Rachel C. Lee