

The background of the cover features several stylized, light green leaf motifs scattered across a pale yellow-green gradient. The leaves are simple in design, with a central vein and a few smaller veins branching off.

# **THE GREENWOOD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ASIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE**

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**Volume 1, 2 and 3**

**Guiyou Huang**

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**The Greenwood Encyclopedia  
of Asian American Literature**

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# Preface



The writing of Asian Americans dates back to the last years of the nineteenth century, and, following World War II in the middle of the twentieth century, experienced a notable rise that began to shape an identity of its own. Catalyzed by the civil rights movements of the 1960s and inspired by women's liberation movements in the 1970s, Asian American literature has since produced works that have caught the attention of mainstream literary critics who started to take serious note of this distinct voice in the expanding canon of American literary writing now called Asian American. In the last three decades, this emerging branch of American literature has thrived in virtually every major genre—the novel, short fiction, autobiography, poetry, anthology, and drama—a strong testimony, which is evident in the hundreds of monographs, reference works, and critical anthologies, and thousands of articles published in different venues in the United States and Canada, as well as secondary works produced in foreign languages in many Asian (China, Japan, and Korea, to mention just three) and European countries (Great Britain, Germany, and Spain, to also cite three).

While market research indicates a real demand for a comprehensive reference tool that reflects the history, complexity, multiplicity, and richness of Asian American literature, there does not exist a reference work of encyclopedic scope to facilitate the study and teaching of this field, except for some single-genre and single-volume reference books, such as the five bio-bibliographical critical sourcebooks published by Greenwood since 2000: *Asian American Novelists*, *Asian American Autobiographers*, *Asian American Poets*, *Asian American Playwrights*, and *Asian American Short Story Writers*. However, these reference works include only entries on writers of different genres. Unlike the above-mentioned sourcebooks, *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Asian*

*American Literature* contains entries on writers as well as entries on special topics, events, and terms, and, as a result, its coverage surpasses that of any single existing reference work on Asian American literature. This encyclopedia is thus designed to fill a reference gap to support and advance the study and teaching of Asian American literature at all levels.

The encyclopedia covers Asian American literature from the late 1890s to 2007, written by North American (U.S. and Canadian) writers of Asian descents, and comprises entries on authors, works, themes, genres, events, and special topics, presented in political, social, historical, cultural, and international contexts. It includes 272 alphabetically arranged entries, each of which discusses its topic in considerable depth and concludes with a list of further information resources. The encyclopedia closes with a selected General Bibliography of print and electronic resources that consist of literary anthologies, critical studies, and periodicals. Each of the entries falls into one or more of sixteen broad categories listed in the "Guide to Related Topics" in the front of the encyclopedia. This Guide is provided out of the belief that librarians, reviewers, and students will find it helpful in locating topics and in understanding the scope of the encyclopedia as well as the relatedness of the topics.

The encyclopedia is arranged alphabetically by the last names of the writers covered, or, in the case of other topics, by the first non-article word of the entry title. In the great majority of entries, for ease of reference, **boldface** cross-references highlight topics that appear in other entries. Additional cross-references are provided by "See also" lines that follow the text of some entries.

Although writers constitute the majority of the entry topics in the three volumes, a considerable number of entries are (what the editor deems to be) influential Asian American literary works such as Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart*, and the anthology *Aiiieeeee!*, to name only three. Another major entry type comprises general topics on different genres or subgenres broadly grouped by ethnicity, such as "Chinese American Drama," "Asian American Children's Literature," or "Indian American Films."

Other than writers, works, and genres, the encyclopedia consists of a range of entries on historically important events, such as the building of the Transcontinental Railroad, the Civil Rights movements, Japanese American Internment, the murder of Vincent Chin, and Japan's 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. These events all had significant impact at different times throughout twentieth-century U.S. history on the life and literature of Asian Americans, and they are thus included to provide historical, social, cultural, and even legal backgrounds against which to read and understand the writers and their works. Just as important is the inclusion of many terms and concepts, such as *the model minority*; *issei*, *nisei*, and *sansei*; *the yellow peril*; *Asian Diasporas*; or *sexism and Asian America*, which are explored in one form or another in writings by Asian American writers.

*The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Asian American Literature* is designed to be accessible to high school and college students and general readers, although English teachers and college professors of literature and ethnic studies can use it for reference and teaching purposes because the encyclopedia provides a wealth of information about writers' personal and educational experiences, along with reviews and critical analyses of their major works, and, in the case of topical entries, definitions of important terms and discussions of politically significant events or legislation. The user of this reference work will notice the following important features:

1. Although the focus is on literature, the encyclopedia is clearly interdisciplinary, including topics in different disciplines written by experts in history, cultural studies, geography, anthropology, sociology, political science, race relations, linguistics, and arts.
2. The entries have depth and breadth (and, in many cases, length) and are thus suitable for both the general reader and the specialist because each entry offers discussions based upon research and provides material for further reading.
3. A great many contributors are well-established scholars in their fields, and because of the broad diversity of their ethnic, geographical, linguistic, and national backgrounds, they offer a wide spectrum of perspectives on their respective topics. In this regard, the scope of the book is truly international; its 104 contributors hail from many different countries (see the "About the Editor and Contributors" section for biographical details).

This encyclopedia may be used in several ways. For example, the encyclopedia presents relevant, reliable biographical information on major Asian American writers, which typically includes educational achievements and cultural upbringing. A reader will also be able to find critical reviews or analyses of works of a chosen writer discussed in that entry. And if a reader is interested in reading more about a particular writer or in doing further research, he or she will have the benefit of bibliographical information at the end of each entry. Of course, for various reasons, not every American writer of Asian descent is included here, but the rich material offered in this encyclopedia will guide the reader to other writers and topics. For high school teachers and college instructors of American literature, and more specifically of Asian American literature, this reference work will be a convenient as well as comprehensive source of research information for the study of a continuously growing field of literature and the social and political milieu in which its writers work.

Guiyou Huang  
April 2008, Miramar, Florida

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This 3-volume encyclopedia is the culmination of the enthusiastic work of over a hundred scholars from many parts of the world, most notably the United States, Canada, some Asian countries, and a few European countries. Obviously, this book owes its publication to all its fine contributors. It also benefited enormously from an advisory board that consists of Prof. Shirley Geok-lin Lim of the University of California at Santa Barbara; Prof. Emmanuel S. Nelson of SUNY-Cortland; Prof. Viet Thanh Nguyen of the University of Southern California; Prof. Gayle K. Sato of Meiji University, Japan; and Prof. Eleanor Ty of Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada. Most of these advisory members also contributed entries, and all of them provided advice on various aspects of the book, especially in the initial preparatory stage of the project; they also helped identify qualified contributors to write entries. In addition, I would also like to thank Prof. Elaine H. Kim of the University of California, Berkeley for her help in recommending contributors.

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Most importantly, my wife, Dr. Yufeng Qian, and my son, George Ian, have always been very understanding and supportive of my time commitment to scholarly work. To them I dedicate these volumes.

# A



## ◆ ABU-JABER, DIANA (1959–)

Arab American novelist, short story writer, essayist, columnist, reviewer, food critic, and associate professor of English, Diana Abu-Jaber came into prominence as a storyteller of the cultural duality of home and exile in an immigrant's life with the publication of her widely acclaimed first novel *Arabian Jazz* (1993). Daughter of a Jordanian father and an American mother, Abu-Jaber grew up in a little town outside Syracuse, New York, having moved intermittently between Jordan and the United States since she was seven. She earned her bachelor's degree from the State University of New York, Oswego, in 1980; her master's degree from the University of Windsor in 1982, where she studied with Joyce Carol Oates; and her PhD in English and creative writing in 1986 from the State University of New York, Binghamton, where she worked with John Gardner. She taught creative writing and film studies at the University of Nebraska, the University of Michigan, the University of California at Los Angeles, and the University of Miami. In 1990 she was a visiting professor of English at Iowa State University. From 1990 to 1995, she worked as assistant professor of English at the University of Oregon. Since 1996 she has been an associate professor and writer-in-residence at Portland State University, Oregon, where she teaches literature and creative writing.

*Arabian Jazz* reflects Abu-Jaber's unwavering faith in the dignity of human beings and their capacity to survive; she writes about pain and passion, trials and traumas, impediments and optimism, and fears and hopes with extraordinary sensitivity that appeals simultaneously to her readers' minds and hearts. With an inevitable sense of two worlds (Jordan and the United States) in her delineation of an immigrant's new



situation, she has added new insight into the Arab American issues of race, ethnicity, gender, culture, and identity through the real and imagined constructs of home and exile. *Arabian Jazz* narrates the cultural displacement of the Jordanian family of Matussem Ramoud, a widower living with his two daughters, Jemorah and Melvina, in Euclid, New York, and his relatives and friends who frequently meet to share feelings of loneliness and longing in the United States, their new country of exile. Matussem's sister, Fatima, is obsessed with the idea of marrying off her nieces (Jemorah and Melvina) within her own community of immigrants, a scenario through which Abu-Jaber links sexuality and reputation with the identity of an Arab American. Fatima's self-imposed duty, in the absence of Matussem's deceased wife—to find Arab boys for her nieces and to preserve the family's name and honor—puts her in conflict with Melvina, who is a dedicated nurse at the local hospital. Both Melvina and Jemorah feel racial discrimination like the children of their invisible neighbors, the Ellises, Ottis, and Beevles, and their sense of exile is also linked with their father's behavior, who, like Shaharazad, tells them many stories in a language that reveals his distinctive ethnic self with irreconcilable dualities. Jemorah and Melvina grow up in their father's house, which resounds with the thunder of drumming and jazz music and heated conversations in Arabic among friends and relatives. For some time pursued by her classmate Gilbert Sesame, Jemorah is ambivalent about living a life of uncertainty amid the opportunities of freedom and work in her adopted country; this ambivalence is expressed through her love affair with Ricky Ellis, whom she visualizes as a mythical Pan, a beautiful monster, and through Melvina's love affair with her patient-lover Larry Fasco. However, their assimilation into the culture of the new country is resisted by the pull of divergent threads of their own culture. Memories of the past haunt Matussem and his sister Fatima; the former recalls his growing up as the only male child surrounded by sisters, and the latter is tormented by memories of the burial of female children. Like their father and aunt, Jemorah and Melvina live between home and homelessness with memories of their dead mother.

With her impressive storytelling Abu-Jaber weaves a complex plot in which characters like Matussem and Fatima and Jemorah and Melvina, who are caught between two different cultures, feel out of place in their new hybrid space. By bringing Jemorah close to Ricky Ellis and Nassir, Abu-Jaber suggests a kind of rebirth of the immigrant personality out of a duality that is not only cultural but also personal, driven by an individual's desire to move fully into one's own life. Her representations of race, ethnicity, gender, and diaspora are interspersed with ethnic humor, irony, and satire.

The ethnic humor of *Arabian Jazz* is transformed into a discourse of cuisine and coincidence in Abu-Jaber's second novel, *Crescent* (2003), which tells the agonizing tale of an immigrant's life. The plot centers around Sirine, the beautiful and talented

Iraqi American chef, who works at the restaurant of Um-Nadia and whose life moves along the pulls of Aziz's rhythmic poetry, Nathan's moving photographs, Hanif's attractive voice, and memories of her dead parents. Sirine, the daughter of an Iraqi father and an American mother, learned about food from her parents. In the opinion of Um-Nadia, Sirine dreams and wakes to the thoughts of cooking, and soon she would be Hanif's Cleopatra and the American Queen of Sheba. Um-Nadia's comments, based on her observations of the customers who throng her restaurant, mostly Arabs, reveal the loneliness caused by displaced identities. Like Fatima in *Arabian Jazz*, Hanif Al Eyad, the Iraqi professor and Sirine's uncle in *Crescent*, is a victim of his troubled past, a past that is haunted by distressing memories of political persecution by oppressive regimes, instead of by cultural constraints of furtive burials of female children as in the case of Fatima. Sirine's uncle tries to forget his pain of homelessness and loneliness by telling ongoing fables, which he calls moralless tales of Aunt Camille and her son, Abdelrahman Salahadin. By appropriating the elements of *Arabian Nights* to the narrative structure of *Crescent*, Abu-Jaber not only adds flavor of the indigenous oral tradition and dimensions of magical realism to the story, but she also seems to resist the monolithic discursive practices of the West. The use of a discourse of cuisine is a potent cultural signifier of the emotional bond that immigrants maintain with their families, communities, and home countries. Even for a person like Sirine, who has never been to her father's home in Iraq, she nonetheless searches for her roots by making a blend of Middle Eastern and Western cuisine for an Arabic Thanksgiving dinner at Um-Nadia's restaurant. *Crescent* is also the tragic but enduring love story of Sirine and Hanif, which ends in ambivalence, underscoring the uncertainties and emotional confusion of an outsider in a new country.

For Abu-Jaber, writing is wonderfully therapeutic. Her memoir, *The Language of Baklava* (2005), traces her family's journey through the metaphors of food, blending in each dish the ingredients of memory, faith, and love, which are so distant and yet so close. Remapping the adjustments of a growing child-narrator between Jordan and the United States through this unique experiment of combining autobiography with the cultural and emotional nuances of food, Abu-Jaber investigates her own heritage against the backdrop of her new encounters with conflicting cultures. Packed with people, foreign and familiar, filled with the aroma of a variety of recipes with inspiring descriptions, and overflowing with bright, flickering lights of primordial memories, *The Language of Baklava* is as much a celebration of an immigrant's home (which is always on the move) as it is an attempt at understanding a biracial upbringing in a multiethnic society.

*Origin* (2007), Abu-Jaber's latest novel, unfolds the mystery of sudden infant deaths, which creates an atmosphere of anguish and panic. Lena Dawson, the protagonist, is a fingerprint expert at a crime laboratory in the city of Syracuse, New York, who

has been trained through a yearlong correspondence course of the FBI Fingerprint Classification School. The infant deaths bring her to examine her own childhood as an orphan. These incidents make her think through her continued existence, which could have easily been cut short.

Abu-Jaber has also written short stories and nonfiction that unmistakably deal with issues of identity and migration in a multicultural and multiracial society. Some of Abu-Jaber's short fiction, such as "Desert" (1991), "Billets-Doux" (1991), "In Flight" (1993), "Hindee" (1994), "My Elizabeth" (1995), "Irene" (1996), "Marriage" (1997), "Arrival" (1999), "Tale of Love and Drowning" (2001), "For the Time Being" (2002), and "Madagascar" (2003), have been published in reputed magazines and anthologized (see Chandra Prasad, ed. *Mixed: An Anthology of Short Fiction on the Multiracial Experience*. New York: Norton, 2006). She has regularly written and spoken on issues of race, ethnicity, identity, multiculturalism, and the culinary arts. She acknowledges William Faulkner, Toni Morrison, John Cheever, John Updike, Louise Erdrich, Jamaica Kincaid, and, more importantly, Anton Chekhov, and Maxine Hong Kingston as her inspiration and the power that opened for her the ways to understand and appreciate the hard realities of the world through the magic of the written word, even in the most adverse and challenging circumstances. **See also** Asian Diasporas; Assimilation/Americanization; Multiculturalism and Asian America.

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## ◆ AFGHAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Afghan American literature is contemporary literature by Americans of Afghan descent. Afghans came as refugees to the United States after the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This was the first incident of mass migration for Afghans. Since the United States officially supported the mujahideen, the nationalist movement countering the Soviet forces, 1986 marked the largest migration of Afghan refugees to the United States. Currently there are approximately 75,000 Afghan Americans. The number continues to grow.

The terminology of *Afghan* is complex and should be clarified before discussing the term *Afghan American*. *Afghan* is a name that Ahmad Shah Durrani had chosen for Afghanistan after he brought together what is modern-day Afghanistan in 1747. The ancient names of Afghanistan are Ariana, Bakhtar, and Khorasan. Afghanistan was built mostly through the efforts of Pashtuns, or Afghans, an ethnolinguistic group occupying the southern and northeastern parts of the land. The name *Afghan* means “people who cause suffering,” and it came to be the name of the land of Afghans; the *-istan* means “land.” In Afghanistan, up until the 1970s, the common reference to Afghan meant Pashtun. Other groups were known as Farsiwan, meaning Persian-speakers, Tajiks (northeast region), Uzbeks (northern region), Turkmen (northern region), Kazak (northern region), or Hazara (central region). The term *Afghan* as an inclusive term for all ethnic groups was an effort begun by the “modernizing” King Amanullah (1909–1921), who went as far as printing the four different languages on the four corners of his money. Later this was continued by King Mohammad Zahir, who tried to unify the country under the banner of Afghan. Before the era of television or a national railway system that could unite the ethnically diverse people living in the extreme high and low terrains of Afghanistan, which easily allowed for isolation, the term *Afghan* to mean all Afghans did not quite permeate into the cultural society until after the 1979 Soviet invasion and later in the exile community. It was as in exilic consciousness that the term *Afghan* was used in reference to all ethnic groups, their shared culture, and their shared trauma as survivors of war.

The term *Afghan American* is a post-9/11 creation. As an American ethnic community, Afghans did not come to speak of themselves as Afghan Americans until post-9/11 required this particular community to voice their opinions and offer their assistance and expertise in the situation in Afghanistan. In this historical light, it is clear that Afghan American cultural production is a rather new concept and one that is struggling to define and create a niche for itself within the discourse of multicultural America, as well as within the context of Afghanistan. Afghan American writers discuss current politics in their fiction and prose and address the internal community issues of ethnic and linguistic unity. The Afghan Americans of note to list are Khaled Hosseini, Mir Tamim Ansary, and Farooka Gauhari. After some time, the attention

shifted to the war in Iraq, and so Afghan Americans, like Afghanistan, have been brushed aside. These authors have mostly written memoirs about their return to post-Taliban Afghanistan: *Come Back to Afghanistan: A California Teenager's Story* (2006) by Said Hyder Akbar, with Susan Burton; *Torn Between Two Cultures: An Afghan American Woman Speaks Out* (2004) by Maryam Qudrat Aseel; *A Bed of Red Flowers: In Search of My Afghanistan* by Nilofar Pazira (Afghan Canadian); and *My War at Home* (2006) by Masuda Sultan.

The first Afghan American woman writer is Farooka Gauhari, a biologist at the University of Nebraska. Her memoir, *Searching for Saleem: An Afghan Woman's Odyssey* (1986), did not feature her American life. The memoir documented her escape from Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion. Saleem is her husband, a general under King Mohammad Zahir (reigned 1933–1973) and later President Mohammad Daoud (1973–1978), who disappears the first night of the April Coup (Saur Revolution) in 1978. Currently, she is working on a book documenting the history of Pashtuns in Afghanistan. Afghan-centered literary works from this period were mainly a preoccupation with the mujahideen, the nationalist counter-Soviet guerrilla groups. This is the only work that is written by an Afghan woman.

Mir Tamim Ansary is the son of an Afghan father and an American mother who was raised in Lashkargah, Afghanistan, and returned to the United States as a teenager. His rise to fame on the topic of Afghanistan began with an e-mail that stated his outrage about the War on Terrorism in Afghanistan with an in-depth explanation of the contemporary issue in Afghanistan. This e-mail reached as far as the *Oprah Winfrey Show* and was read on air. Afterward, the children's book author and journalist wrote his memoir *West of Kabul, East of New York* (2002). Currently, Ansary has completed a historical novel set in Afghanistan, *The Malang of Kabul*, set in the nineteenth-century Anglo-Afghan Wars. He is based in California.

No other Afghan writer has achieved the fame and acclaim of the California-based doctor Khaled Hosseini. Born in Kabul, Afghanistan, to a diplomat and high school teacher, Hosseini was an internist from 1994–2006. Hosseini's first novel, *The Kite Runner* (2002), was on the bestseller list of the *New York Times* for two years. This novel has made such an impact on readers that it has been translated into plays and also released as a Hollywood film. His latest novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, was released in June 2007. Whereas his first novel focused on stories of brotherhood and men, his latest book enters the world of Afghan women. Vividly written with an abashed prose style, both novels have put Afghanistan back on the cultural map of the world. Hosseini, like many of the writers whose books have reached a mainstream market, is an avid humanitarian and has worked with the United Nations to help the war-traumatized people in Afghanistan.

Afghan American literature is surprisingly unlike the majority of Asian American literature, even Iranian American literature (Iran and Afghanistan share a language, Persian), which is spearheaded by bestselling female authors; its literary renaissance has featured mainly male authors. However, there is a growing movement of women authors who left Afghanistan as children whose narrative styles are fragmented and intermingled with Afghan folktales. Fitting within the rubric of American multicultural literature, these narratives are about growing up in America. These women writers are Wajma Ahmady, Sahar Muradi, Khaleda Maqsudi, and Zohra Saed. Many are also filmmakers and video artists such as Lida Abdul and Sedika Mojadidi. This generation of writers has developed a new kind of narrative structure, poetic nonfiction at the cusp of memoir, fiction, and folktales. Their works can be found in recent anthologies about Muslim American or Asian American women writers.

Afghan American literature is at its nascent phase. With the catapult of master storyteller Khaled Hosseini, the publishing world has taken notice of this new face in the larger American tapestry. The maturation of the second generation of Afghan Americans and the new relationship between Afghanistan and the United States promise a new literary genre within American literature.

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ZOHRA SAED

#### ◆ AHMED, SHARBARI (1971–)

Bangladeshi American playwright, writer, and actress, Sharbari Ahmed gained immediate attention for her first play *Raisins Not Virgins* (2001) about the identity conflicts of a young Muslim woman from Bangladesh in New York City. Ahmed's play, which she produced and also starred in, and her short stories and screenplays reflect her international cultural framework. Born in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and brought up in Connecticut and Ethiopia, Ahmed studied Chinese in Beijing, China, before graduating from Marymount College, Tarrytown, New York, in 1994. She attended New York University and was awarded an MA in creative writing and English literature in 1997.

Ahmed has also taught English, fiction, and poetry at Manhattanville College, Purchase, and at New York University.

*Raisins Not Virgins* premiered at the Producers Club II in New York City in 2003. Set a year before September 11, 2001, the play deals with how to live as a Muslim in North America. According to Ahmed, the play's title does not refer to the article "Challenging the Quran," published by *Newsweek* in July 2003, which discusses issues of authenticity in translations of the Quran, but refers to earlier reports about a controversial study by an anonymous professor of Semitic languages, who uses the pseudonym of Christoph Luxenberg. Luxenberg's analysis of Syriac and Arabic words in the Quran also includes the phrase "not virgins but grapes" (qtd. in Kroes), which Ahmed refers to in the title of her play.

Not unlike José Rivera's Puerto Rican American heroine Marisol Perez in his play *Marisol* (1992), who embarks on a spiritual odyssey through an apocalyptic New York City at the brink of a new millennium, 29-year-old Sahar Salam, the female protagonist of Ahmed's comedy, tries to negotiate her cosmopolitan urban identity with her religious identity as a Bangladeshi Muslim. Both women characters encounter a menagerie of impressive characters who challenge their former beliefs. Although Sahar's religious identity is clearly important, it is but one element of her journey toward self-discovery. In a manner reminiscent of the female *bildungsroman*, Ahmed is as interested in showing the spiritual maturation of her protagonist as she is in tracing Sahar's sociopolitical and emotional education. Initially bound by the religious and cultural traditions of her parents' generation, Sahar has to learn to differentiate between her self-perception and the perceptions of others.

Ahmed has also written a screenplay based on *Raisins Not Virgins* and, in collaboration with Julie Rajan, the screenplay *The Sacrifice*. Her short stories and essays have been published in literary journals such as the *Gettysburg Review*, *Catamaran*, *Chowrangi*, and *Asian Pacific American Journal*, and include "Hanging It" (1998), "Sonali" (1998), "A Boy Chooses to Go to the Moon" (2000), "Pepsi" (2003), "Wanted" (2003), and "The Ocean of Mrs. Nagai" (2005). Ahmed's work often portrays the more personal, individual aspects of intercultural encounters, as is also evident in her short story "Pepsi." As in *Raisins Not Virgins*, Ahmed resorts to embedded history lessons and comedic devices to reveal the complexities of religions and cultural concepts and to identify potential gaps in communication and the dangers of misunderstanding.

"Pepsi," like *Raisins Not Virgins*, which is marked by its autobiographical impetus, chronicles a day in the life of Zara, the precocious 10-year-old daughter of a Bangladeshi diplomat in Ethiopia. Feeling neglected by her busy parents and not part of the group of haughty international "Third Culture Kids," Zara seeks a substitute family in their Ethiopian Jewish gardener Ato Rosa and the Ethiopian

children literally playing beyond the walls of Zara's gated community. Like Lilia, the young first-person narrator in Jhumpa Lahiri's short story "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" from her collection the *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), it is through a personal encounter with these children and joining them in a game called Pepsi that Zara not only gains personal confidence but also learns that racial prejudices know no geographical boundaries and that poverty leads to strong social divisions. In a similar vein, the Bangladeshi American Ella in "Wanted," who was adopted by a couple from New Jersey, recognizes the intricate connection between personal lives and politics and that there is hardly any escape from it on a return trip to Dhaka right before her thirtieth birthday. Ahmed's work is marked by its transnational focus, which stretches not only from North America to South Asia but also repeatedly includes references to Israel and Palestine. Her broad geographical, linguistic, and cultural framework provides the necessary context for her characters' increasing intercultural understanding.

Ahmed's nonfiction work includes "A Place in the Sun" (2003), "Chasing Clark Gable's Smile" (2004), "Transcending a Troubled Past" (2005), and an introduction to Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* as part of the Barnes and Noble Digital Library (2002). She is currently working on a novel set at the time of the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971, entitled *A Small War*.

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CHRISTIANE SCHLOTE

#### ◆ AI (1947–)

A poet of mixed Native American, African American, and Japanese heritage, Ai is known as a dangerous writer for her ferocious and forceful dramatic monologues with dark, edgy subjects centered on sex and violence. Born on October 21, 1947, in Albany, Texas, Ai had her multicultural heritage from her Japanese father and her Choctaw, Cheyenne, African American, Dutch, and Scots-Irish mother. Known as Florence Haynes in her childhood, Ai grew up with her mother and stepfather primarily in Tucson, Arizona, and also lived in San Francisco and Los Angeles. At the age



of 14, when Ai was studying at Mount Vernon Junior High School in Los Angeles, an advertisement for a poetry-writing contest caught her attention. Though she had to move back to Tucson and failed to enter the contest, Ai discovered her talent for writing poetry, which became the way for her to express feelings she could not otherwise. In 1969, Ai received her BA in Japanese at the University of Arizona and then her MFA at the University of California at Irvine in 1971. In graduate school, Ai resumed use of her legal name, Florence Anthony, which sounded more poetic to her. However, after Ai learned about the affair between her mother and Michael Ogawa, her Japanese biological father, she adopted Ai, which means “love” in Japanese, as her pen name, and she legally changed her name to Florence Ai Ogawa in 1973. In the same year, Ai published her first book of poems, *Cruelty*. In the following thirty years, she published six more books of poems, including *Killing Floor* (1979), which won the Lamont Poetry Award from the American Academy of Poets; *Sin* (1986), a recipient of the American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation; *Fate* (1991); *Greed* (1993); *Vice* (1999), a winner of the National Book Award for Poetry; and *Dread* (2003). She wrote a novel, *Black Blood* (1997), which was sold but never published. Apart from the awards for her poetry publications, Ai also held the Radcliffe Institute Fellowship in 1975 and the Massachusetts Arts and Humanities Fellowship in 1976; in addition, she received recognition from the Guggenheim Foundation in 1975 and the National Endowment for the Arts in both 1978 and 1985. Furthermore, she received the Ingram Merrill Award in 1983 and the St. Botolph Foundation Grant in 1986. After graduating from the University of California at Irvine, Ai worked as a visiting poet at Wayne State University (1977–78) and at George Mason University (1986–87), as writer-in-residence at Arizona State University (1988–89), and as a visiting associate professor at the University of Colorado, Boulder (1996–97). From 2002 to 2003, Ai held the Mitte Chair in Creative Writing at Southwest Texas State University. Currently living in Stillwater, Oklahoma, she is an English professor at Oklahoma State University and vice president of Native American Faculty and Staff Association.

Ai, who started writing poetry at the age of 14, attributed her greatest inspiration to fiction, especially Latin American fiction, such as Miguel Angel Asturias's *Men of Maize* and Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which inspired her to write “Cuba, 1962,” a poem that marked the beginning of her new interest in exploring other dimensions of the characters in her poetry. Inspired also by the candid feelings expressed by Spanish and Latin American poets like Miguel Hernandez, Pablo Neruda, along with American poets Galway Kinnell and Phil Levine, Ai never fears or feels embarrassed in revealing her feelings in poetry. She chose to write poetry in the dramatic monologue form, for she took to heart the opinion of her first poetry teacher, Richard Shelton, that the first-person voice was always the strongest when writing. Ai's

poems are almost all dramatic monologues of different characters, be they well-known or anonymous, eminent or despised, dead or alive, men or women, telling their stories in crude language with stark and disturbing topics, including brutal sex, violence, child abuse, murder, necrophilia, and torture.

According to critic Claudia Ingram, the speakers of Ai's poems are obviously trapped in their "cultural definition" and "their unbearable identities seem always at the point of being shattered and remade, or simply shattered" (572). Although they are not able to "transcend" it, "they speak in such a way as to profoundly unsettle the very positions from which they speak" (572). Thus, when reviewing her works, reviewers tend to believe it is the poet who is telling her own stories behind the masks of characters, and they classify her poems and characters according to color, race, sex, and creed. However, although Ai acknowledges the importance of race as a "medium of exchange" (Ai 1974, 58) in the United States and that her characters have shared her struggles as a multiracial woman, she refuses to be catalogued, and so do her poems and characters. Ai refers to herself as "simply a writer" (Kearney 1978, 4) who intends to transcend cultural boundaries in her poetry. She also regards herself as "the playwright, the director and the actor" (Elliot 2008) who uses dramatic monologues to depict individuals instead of herself. Because she is a wide reader, Ai finds in history, newspapers, and literary works interesting subjects and personas, of which she prefers scoundrels because "they are more rounded characters" (PBS). Then she steps into these personas, creates "an entire psychology" (Elliot 2008) for them, and lends them her voice so that they are able to speak.

In 1973, Ai published *Cruelty*, whose original title was "Wheel in a Ditch," which symbolized the chariot's wheels in Ezekiel's vision where the "spirit of man [was] trapped, stuck and not able to pull himself out." As the original title indicates, the individuals depicted in *Cruelty* are anonymous, mostly women, struggling in poverty or stuck in small towns. Critic Duane Ackerson describes these characters in *Contemporary Poets* as "people seeking transformation, a rough sort of salvation, through violent acts." Their dramatic monologues deal with harsh topics including violence, rape, suicide, abortion, fracture, hanging, child abuse, and insatiable sexual desires through ambiguous and horrifying images. Although retaining the subjects of sex and violence, Ai's second book, *Killing Floor*, witnesses a change in her poetry writing. As critic Rachel Hadas comments in the *Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Poetry*, Ai moves her preoccupation from personal violence to historic atrocity, and her imagination opens out into a public arena, the domestic turned political, which can be observed in poems such as "Pentecost" on the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and "Nothing But Color" for the Japanese writer Yukio Mishima. In subsequent volumes, such as *Sin, Fate, Greed*, and *Vice*, Ai replaces the anonymous speakers of her earlier works with real individuals and poems that tend

to be longer, for she gives each character more freedom to speak. Monologues of cultural icons such as J. Edgar Hoover, Jimmy Hoffa, Elvis Presley, Lenny Bruce, and James Dean, who returned from death, reborn in Ai's verse, express "more about the American psyche than about the real figures and Ai intends it this way" (Ackerson 1996, 14). In *Dread*, her latest book dedicated to survivors of childhood trauma, besides writing on current events like the collapse of the World Trade Towers, Ai draws upon her personal life and family history, including the affair between her mother and Japanese father. Presently Ai continues to work on her first memoir and to contribute poems and articles to journals.

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### ◆ *AIIIEEEEE!* (1974)

A groundbreaking anthology of Asian American literature, published by Howard University Press in 1974 and edited by Frank **Chin**, Jeffery Paul **Chan**, Lawson Fusao **Inada**, and Shawn Hsu **Wong**, *Aiiieeeee!*'s peculiar title originates from the often heard cry of capitulation sung out by stereotyped depictions of Asians in mainstream American films, usually followed by their on-screen demise. Like the anthology itself, the editors suggest that the title is a move toward reclamation.

### BACKGROUND

More than a simple collection of literary excerpts, *Aiiieeeee!* was an audacious attempt to carve out space for Asian American literature at the popular and institutional levels. During their early development as burgeoning writers and scholars, Chin, Chan, Inada, and Wong noticed a dearth of readily available literary material written by Asian Americans, which to them seemed counterintuitive, considering the fact that Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino Americans were already well into their fifth, third, and second generations, respectively. Based in the Bay Area of Northern California, they sought each other out and began to actively search for Asian American texts by scouring local used bookstores. Through this method, they managed to discover some of the books included in the anthology, including Toshio **Mori's** *Yokohama, California* and John **Okada's** *No-No Boy*, both of which, until that point, had languished in obscurity. Armed with a copy of these "recovered" books, they would try to contact the authors to learn more about the Asian American literary heritage for which they had been searching. From there, their discussions led to the idea for *Aiiieeeee!*, which, after being rejected by several publishing houses, was put out by historically black Howard University's new publishing division. It became an instant hit, garnering reviews and attention from numerous literary journals and popular periodicals such as the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, and *Rolling Stone*. Asian American scholars credit *Aiiieeeee!* and its editors, sometimes begrudgingly, as one of, if not the single most important moment in Asian American literary history, which established the genre as a serious cultural and academic area of study. About a decade and a half later, *Aiiieeeee!* was revised and expanded upon as *The Big Aiiieeeee!* (1991), including a new introduction and a larger collection of works.

### WHAT SET IT APART

The defining feature of *Aiiieeeee!*, other than the selection of rediscovered Asian American works, is the collectively written preface and introductions. The introduction, titled "Fifty Years of Our Whole Voice," sets out to define the canon and is divided into two parts, one introducing Chinese and Japanese American literature, which was written by the editors, and the other introducing Filipino American literature, written

by Oscar Peñaranda, Serafin Syquia, and Sam Tagatac. The section on Filipino American literature largely laments the lack of literary legacies and the role political, cultural, and linguistic imperialism played in defining Filipino American works. The section written by the editors is more aggressive in its efforts to define Chinese and Japanese American literature. Polemical and pugilistic in tone, they rail against what they perceive as brainwashed, self-loathing Asian American writers pandering to mainstream white readerships. Although it ostensibly functions as a kind of overview of the ignored history of Asian American literature, it is apparent that, although it was imperative to the editors to define exactly what Asian American literature is, it was just as important to define what it is not. To this end, the introduction lends considerable space to attacking Asian American writers—Chinese American writers in particular—who, they posit, internalized white, racist stereotypes to such a successful degree that they ended up recycling the same stereotypes in their works, which was even more damaging to the larger Asian American community as they authenticated those images with their ethnicity. These authors, they contend, should be excluded from the canon because they are not truly **Asian American** but successfully indoctrinated puppets of the white, racist structure that raised them. Some of the early writers who incurred their collective wrath include Virginia Lee, Pardee Lowe, and Jade Snow Wong. Later, in the expanded *The Big Aiiieeeee!* Amy Tan and Maxine Hong Kingston would also be attacked for similar reasons. In contrast, they laud works they judge as representative of the “real” community, such as Louis Chu’s *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, which discusses the stark reality of Chinese American bachelor society without any of the romanticizing of Jade Snow Wong. They also suggest a narrow definition of Asian American writers, including a prerequisite of having been American-born without any strong ties to East Asia rather than an immigrant. This is illustrated in their discussion of Japanese American literature, specifically John Okada’s *No-No Boy*, where they outline a rejection of any notion of an Asian American dual identity, opting instead for a unified self.

## CRITICISM

Although *Aiiieeeee!* was well respected for its instrumental role in establishing Asian American literature, critics immediately attacked the contentious introduction written by the editors. They bristled at the harsh tone and pointed out the exclusion of Korean American and South Asian American literature from the anthology. With the even more vitriolic introduction to *The Big Aiiieeeee!*—this time signed off by Frank Chin alone—critics accused him of being misogynistic, chauvinistic, and, again, narrow-minded in defining Asian American literature, most notably by scholars King-Kok Cheung and Susan Koshy, who have since sought to define Asian American literature within a more global, transnational scope. Furthermore, the new

introduction, titled "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake," sparked a long-running feud between Chin and Maxine Hong Kingston, on whom he focused most of his criticism. Some of the controversy surrounding their provocative rhetoric, however, might be understood as a matter of methodology. In an interview, Shawn Wong, now a professor of ethnic studies at the University of Washington, revealed that the editors intentionally sought to provoke a strong reaction when they wrote the introduction. Unsatisfied with the ensuing response, they revised *Aiiieeeee!* with the goal of creating more controversy to galvanize other scholars into investing themselves in the direction of Asian American literature. Moreover, their vituperative tone can be explained by the radical 1960s tradition they were educated in, when ethnic tensions and angry calls for equality were at their most visible. Regardless of how the literary community reacted to *Aiiieeeee!*, it was successful in the sense that it sparked a conflagration of dialogue.

## CONTENT

In addition to its famed introductions and preface, the anthology includes excerpts from novels, short stories, and poetry from Carlos **Bulosan**, Jeffery Paul Chan, Diana **Chang**, Frank Chin, Louis Chu, Momoko **Iko**, Wallace Lin, Toshio Mori, John Okada, Oscar Peñaranda, Sam Tagatag, Shawn Hsu Wong, Hisaye **Yamamoto**, and Wakako **Yamauchi**.

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DAVID ROH

## ◆ ALEXANDER, MEENA (1951–)

Meena Alexander is one of the most important contemporary poets of the South Asian diaspora. Although a distinguished memoirist, fiction writer, and academic, it is Alexander's achievement in poetry, a genre that does not dominate the literary market, that has earned her the most sustained critical acclaim.

## BIOGRAPHY

Alexander was born in Allahabad, India, on February 17, 1951, the eldest of three daughters of Syrian Christian parents from the southern state of Kerala. After spending the first four years of her life in Allahabad and briefly in Pune, with periodic visits to the ancestral homes of her grandparents in Tiruvella and Kozencheri in Kerala, her father left to work as a meteorologist in Khartoum, Sudan, thus precipitating the first of Alexander's many border crossings. Already immersed in multiple languages in India: her mother tongue Malayalam; Hindi in Allahabad; classical Sanskrit; and English, the legacy of British colonial rule, she was also exposed to Arabic and French in Khartoum. After attending school in Khartoum, she entered the University of Khartoum at the age of 13 and graduated with bachelor's degrees in English and French at the early age of 18. She continued her education at Nottingham University in the United Kingdom, where she received a PhD in English in 1973. Her first poems were published in Arabic translation during her student years in Khartoum.

Returning to India after her doctoral research, Alexander held academic positions in Miranda House in Delhi and in the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages in Hyderabad. It was in Hyderabad that she met and married David Lelyveld, the American historian of South Asia, and accompanied him to New York to begin her new life in the United States. She began her academic career in Fordham University, followed by Hunter College. Presently, she is Distinguished Professor in English and Women's Studies at Hunter College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Her scholarly publications include *The Poetic Self: Towards a Phenomenology of Romanticism* (1979) and *Women in Romanticism: Mary Wollstonecraft, Dorothy Wordsworth and Mary Shelley* (1989). She lives in New York City with her husband and two children, Adam and Swati.

Meena Alexander's first poems, "The Bird's Bright Ring" and "Without Place," were published during her teaching years in India by the Calcutta Writers Workshop in the 1970s. In the United States, her first poems to be published were "House of a Thousand Doors" (1988) and "The Storm: A Poem in Five Parts" (1989). The 1990s saw a profusion of poetry, autobiography, and fiction from Alexander. Works such as *Fault Lines*, *Nampally Road*, *Manhattan Music*, and *The Shock of Arrival* signaled the arrival of a distinctive and original voice in South Asian American literature, a voice that distilled the experiences of multiple geographic locations and expressed a racialized, female identity. Alexander's poetic achievement has continued to grow in the new millennium. Her 2002 collection of poems won the PEN Open Book Award. This was followed by the 2004 collection *Raw Silk*. In 2003 Alexander published a revised version of *Fault Lines* with a coda titled *Book of Childhood*.

There are several unifying aspects in Alexander's oeuvre, even though she has worked in different genres. Her poetic and fictional works stem from events recollected

in her autobiography. Different aspects of her memoir illuminate several poems she has written, and her poems resonate and deepen the experience of reading her memoir. Thus the works are not contained in distinct literary and generic boundaries but flow into each other, much like the rivers and the oceans that she has crossed and that often form the symbolic landscape of her poetry.

## LANGUAGE AND ART

In Alexander's writing, the multiple migrations of her biography have resulted in a poetic vocabulary that is a hybrid palimpsest of various languages. Although she has chosen to write in English, she is acutely aware of the burden of English as a colonial language, and she infuses it with the rhythms of her mother tongue Malayalam, Hindi, and Marathi, as well as the spoken Arabic of her Khartoum adolescence to claim it as her own. She refused to learn the Arabic or Malayalam scripts as a child, unconsciously associating the formal script of a classical language with public authority. On the other hand, she is highly receptive to the musical cadences of these languages and consciously uses them in her poetry. A most remarkable example of this is the poem "Illiterate Heart" from the anthology of the same name. The intermeshing of English with Malayalam and French conveys the sense of fracture and dislocation, as well as artistic choice and agency.

The choice of poetic language is also enmeshed in Alexander's reflections on her colonial education. The entry into a colonial language is marked by an almost physical violence as painful as a separation from the ancestral home at Tiruvella by the oceanic passage to Sudan. It is in Khartoum that Alexander is tutored in proper English diction by the Scottish teacher Mrs. Mcdermott. Alexander's reminiscences of the painful process of saying these words in a manner intended to subdue her original Indian accent are recorded as bodily and epistemic violence in *Fault Lines*. Ironically, it is this same rigorous training in British elocution that marks her accent as "other" in North America. The immersion into the colonial episteme is precipitated by Alexander's choice of studying English and French poetry, culminating in a dissertation in Romanticism. It is during her time in England that she feels a profound sense of alienation from the literary figures she is studying, such as Wordsworth, and the realities of her own history. She returns to India to forge a connection with her own cultural history. This profound questioning of colonial pedagogy is also represented in the novel *Nampally Road*, where the heroine, Mira Kannadical, a young lecturer in Hyderabad, feels a sense of disconnect between the Romantic poets she is teaching at the university and the political actions of a repressive postcolonial state that interrupt the very notion of the university as a space of intellectual freedom. Mira grapples with what it means to be a writer at a time of social and political ferment. Through the debates between Mira and her lover, Ramu, Alexander seems to meditate on the



complementary roles of poetry and activism in the postcolonial nation state. Although Ramu is at times disparaging of poetry, it is through the poetic imagination that Alexander conceptualizes the possibility of establishing solidarity with the subaltern. Through her imaginative empathy with Rameeza, a victim of rape by the police, Alexander is able to envision a path to recovery, rehabilitation, and social justice.

### FEMINISM: TRAUMA AND RECOVERY

Alexander's preoccupation with the abject female body surfaces in various works. She represents the condition of being female as one encompassing the physical and psychic burden of shame. In *Fault Lines* she writes of being haunted by the image of the well in Kerala, into which unmarried pregnant women had jumped to commit suicide. Her female relatives tell her of the dishonor these women brought to their families and that the only liberation from their sexual transgression was through death. Alexander returns to this memory again in "Poem by the Wellside" in *The Shock of Arrival*, which depicts the poet persona looking into the water of the well and identifying with the women who committed suicide. The poem dramatizes the struggle of the poet persona against the oppressive sense of shame engendered in the female psyche by a patriarchal society. This scene of a protagonist looking into a well where a woman has committed suicide recurs in the life of Sandhya Rosenblum, the heroine of *Manhattan Music*.

Another recurring figure of the traumatized female body in Alexander's oeuvre is the stone-eating girl. Alexander mentions in *Fault Lines* her own act of swallowing a stone, followed by the encounter with the stone-eating girl. The stone-eating girl sits under a tree, covered in mud, and swallows pebbles in public view. This is interpreted as another act of shamelessness by Alexander's Aunt Chinna. However, Alexander feels an instinctive affinity with this symbol of female abjectness. The act of swallowing a stone seems to imply the internalizing of traumatic memory; speech will metaphorically mark the reversal of silence and the uncovering of buried memory.

One of the most significant changes in Alexander's revision of *Fault Lines* is to uncover in the 2003 memoir the long-buried childhood memory of sexual molestation at the hands of her beloved grandfather Ilya. It is only after feeling physically ill and seeking help through therapy in the late 1990s in New York that Alexander is able to gradually remember the psychic and physical trauma that her memory had unconsciously suppressed. This incident leaves her not only with a sense of betrayal against the grandfather she had loved and implicitly trusted but also with a sense of anger and sorrow at her mother's inability to protect her from this abuse or to discern what was going on. Although the revelation of this traumatic memory is shocking, many episodes in the 1993 version of her memoir seem to foreshadow this crisis. The moments of nervous breakdown in the 1993 edition seem to reflect a buried psychic trauma resurfacing in the form of bodily manifestations. In her novel *Manhattan*

*Music*, Sandhya Rosenblum falls into a state of nervous breakdown after her adulterous affair with Rashid. She virtually transforms into the girl in the well she had heard about when she attempts suicide by trying to hang herself by the neck. There seems to be a repetition of the trope of the female body being punished for transgressive sexuality. Aunt Chinna is another character who loses her mental equilibrium in the poem of the same name, collected in *The Shock of Arrival*.

Alexander's writings do not represent women as passive victims. Whether it is Rameeza in *Nampally Road* or Sandhya in *Manhattan Music*, they are always juxtaposed against characters like Little Mother, Mira Kannadical, Draupadi, and Sakhi, who strive to reverse conditions of female oppression through their intellectual, creative, literary, or activist projects. Although women have to bear the violence wreaked on them by traditional or diasporic patriarchies, Alexander always delineates a path toward rehabilitation, restoring hope in feminist agency and intervention. This is often envisioned through the formation of strategic alliances between women of differing socioeconomic and cultural groups. Female friendships and relations of nurturance abound in her works, examples of which include the one between Sandhya and Draupadi in *Manhattan Music* and the one between Rameeza and Little Mother, which begins to develop at the end of *Nampally Road*.

## RACE, RELIGION, AND VIOLENCE

Although Alexander has declared that she is more of a poet than a fiction writer, her novel *Manhattan Music* is an important testament to **Asian American** life. In many ways, this novel is a work with the largest canvas sweep, because it encompasses the geographies of home and migration for a number of racially diverse characters. Whereas Sandhya Rosenblum shares Alexander's own South Indian background, Draupadi Dinkins is of racially mixed heritage. Some of her ancestors migrated from India to work in the Caribbean sugar plantations, intermarried with Japanese and other races, and eventually migrated to New Jersey. Alexander is obviously positing a complex notion of South Asian American identity. The mainstream perception of South Asian immigration is that of a **model minority** consisting of highly educated immigrants with professional degrees. This is only true of immigrants who arrived in the phase after 1970. This presentation in the media erases the memory of Indian immigrants who came in as agricultural laborers in California in the early years of the twentieth century and the even earlier migrations of Indians as indentured laborers in the plantations of the Caribbean. Moreover, Alexander is committed to exposing the continuing racism against immigrants even at the present time. In *Manhattan Music*, she recreates the stoning of Indian women by skinheads in suburban New Jersey. Alexander has been personally subjected to incidents of racialized stereotyping and verbal abuse, which she has narrated in *Fault Lines*. This prevailing atmosphere of

racial profiling and suspicion is intensified in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. In her poem "Kabir Sings in a City of Burning Towers" in *Raw Silk*, Alexander reflects on her decision not to wear a sari while traveling to the Graduate Center, where she teaches, but to carry the sari folded into a ball and to change into it in the women's bathroom of her school. She imagines the mystical poet Saint Kabir speaking to her and chastising her for succumbing to the times and erasing marks of ethnicity from her body in public space.

Alexander has theorized and reflected deeply on the place of poetry in the public sphere, especially the function of poetry during a time of violence. She returns to the lyric form in the aftermath of 9/11 to bear witness to the horrors unfolding in the city she has made her home. "Aftermath," "Invisible City," and "Pitfire" form a triptych in *Raw Silk* and collectively mourn the tragedy of these events. Although many poems in *Raw Silk* concern themselves with 9/11 and its aftermath, this is by no means the first time that Alexander's poetry has grappled with events in the public sphere. In a poem titled "Color of Home," Alexander laments the brutal killing of Amadou Diallo by the New York police. In an earlier poem "For Safdar Hashmi Beaten to Death Just outside Delhi," Alexander voices her indignation at the repressive mechanisms of the Indian state that chose to silence one of the most progressive theater directors, who was committed to Marxist ideology in his street plays.

In *Raw Silk*, her most recently published volume of poems, Alexander returns to the question of India as a secular democracy, in the wake of large-scale violence against the Muslim minority. Alexander visited the refugee camps in Gujarat that housed the survivors of the Godhra incident, in which 2,000 Muslims lost their lives and innumerable Muslim women were raped and tortured, as the state's legal apparatus provided immunity to the perpetrators of these heinous acts. More disappointingly, the chief minister of Gujarat was re-elected by an overwhelming majority through an effective playing of the communal card. Alexander writes a series of lyrics, addressed to Gandhi, the father of the Indian nation and apostle of nonviolence, asking him to comment on what is happening in his home state. These poems are arguably the most politically charged of Alexander's poetry, because she is challenging the conscience of the Indian nation by reminding the country of its foundational principles of equality and religious tolerance. She exposes the enormous gulf between the ideals of nationalism and the travesty of a democracy that India has become. These poems were originally published in the leading Indian newspaper the *Hindu*. Although these poems are terrifying in their evocation of communal carnage in restrained and spare language, they interweave references to Sufi saints such as Wali Gujarati, thus invoking a history of tolerance, cultural pluralism, love, and spiritual healing. Alexander's poetry forms a bridge between the consciousness of the poetic self, the internal workings of memory, and the violent events in the public sphere. She considers poetry, in the contemporary

context, to be an attempt to bear witness to traumatic events in the public sphere and to seek clarity and understanding at a time of confusion and unrest. **See also** Feminism and Asian America; Hybridity; Indian American Autobiography; Multiculturalism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America.

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LOPAMUDRA BASU

### ◆ ALI, AGHA SHAHID (1949–2001)

Agha Shahid Ali was a Kashmiri American poet who was born in New Delhi on February 4, 1949, and died in Northampton, Massachusetts, on December 8, 2001. He grew up Muslim in Kashmir and was later educated at the University of Kashmir, Srinagar, and the University of Delhi. In 1984 he earned his doctorate in English from Pennsylvania State University and in 1985 received a master's degree in fine arts from the University of Arizona. Ali won fellowships from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, the Ingram-Merrill Foundation, the New York Foundation for the Arts, the Guggenheim Foundation, and was awarded a Pushcart Prize. He was a professor at the University of Delhi, Penn State, SUNY Binghamton, Princeton University, Hamilton College, Baruch College, the University of Utah, and Warren Wilson College.

Ali's volumes of poetry include *Call Me Ishmael Tonight: A Book of Ghazals* (2003), *Rooms Are Never Finished* (2001), *The Country Without a Post Office* (1997), *The Beloved Witness: Selected Poems* (1992), *A Nostalgist's Map of America* (1991), *A Walk Through the Yellow Pages* (1987), *The Half-Inch Himalayas* (1987), *In Memory of Begum Akhtar and Other Poems* (1979), and *Bone Sculpture* (1972). In addition, he wrote *T. S. Eliot as Editor* (1986), translated *The Rebel's Silhouette: Selected Poems* by Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1992), and edited the anthology *Ravishing Disunities: Real Ghazals in English* (2000).

Ali was born in Kashmir, a region known for its stunning mountainous landscapes and streams, and grew up in a sophisticated household often visited by musicians and

writers and in which relatives and visitors recited poetry in Persian, Urdu, Hindi, and English. He attended the area's privileged Catholic school where he learned about Christianity and Hinduism. His parents often encouraged his free exploration of the two religions. Writing his first poems at 12, Ali felt it only natural to write them in English. Given this linguistically diverse upbringing, Ali's poetry never ceased to investigate the intersection of Kashmiri cultures as well as Kashmiri and Western cultures, an examination heightened by Kashmir's ongoing territorial disputes and bloody war. By claiming English for his poetry and Urdu as his mother tongue, Ali asserted an identity that encompassed two seemingly contradictory stances of embracing the colonial culture of English and the native culture of Kashmir.

Ali claimed he had always known he would venture to the United States, even sending his first poems out to journals abroad and not to those in his native region. Ali moved to the United States in 1976 and quickly pursued a doctorate at Pennsylvania State University with a dissertation that would appear as *T.S. Eliot as Editor* (UMI Research Press, 1986). He then received an MFA in creative writing from the University of Arizona, where he was able to find some time to write and to take in a new part of the United States. Ali's first professorial position was at Hamilton College in Upstate New York in 1987, moving on to the MFA in English program at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, in 1993. He claimed that teaching never hindered his production of poetry, and he made time to write no matter what other duties filled his schedule. He also drew inspiration and direction from his good friend and reader James Merrill until Merrill's death in 1995. This friendship perhaps solidified Ali's dedication to form, beautiful surfaces, and formal aspects in his work.

Puzzled by the dedication to minimalism he found in American poetry, Ali filled his own poems with effulgence and lush imagery. Given the rich mix of cultural influence in the household in which he grew up and with no fixed stylistic or experimental agenda, he felt no allegiance to a particular tradition. Instead, he spent time asserting his maximalist poetic style against the constraints of the traditional Arabic form of the *ghazal*, always gesturing toward sources such as Milton, Shakespeare, Greek myth, Arabic legends, and so on. Ali felt a certain pleasure at confounding politically correct interpretations of what was considered South Asian or Kashmiri, delighting in mentions of his homeland in the work of American and European authors such as Emily Dickinson and Oscar Wilde. The political subjects of his poetry tended to represent not only the conflicts in Kashmir but also the political fights he observed in Arizona's Native American populations and the loss of their culture, sometimes blending or blurring the lines between them in his poems. Historical loss, even of other cultures, gave Ali a vehicle for his natural poetic gift of expressing grief. Extreme pitches of emotion, however, were not the ultimate aesthetic goal in Ali's poetry. He espoused

“formal distancing devise(s)” (Benvenuto 2002, 267) to gain distance on the rich and forceful emotions that seemed inherent in his favorite subject matters. Ali himself appreciated the mix of cultures that informed his imagination and kept his attention to cultural boundaries fluid and generous, never harboring ill feeling toward one culture over another.

Making his home in western Massachusetts for over 10 years, Ali authored several volumes of poetry, often dealing with the flashpoints of violence and bloody conflict in Kashmir and his mother’s death in Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1997. They include *The Half-Inch Himalayas* (Wesleyan University Press, 1987), *The Beloved Witness* (Viking, 1992), *A Nostalgist’s Map of America* (Norton, 1991), *The Country without a Post Office* (Norton, 1997), and *Rooms Are Never Finished* (Norton, 2003). He edited a book of *ghazals*, *Call me Ishmael Tonight* (Norton, 2004). He also published a translation of poetry by Faiz Ahmed Faiz from Urdu entitled *A Rebel’s Silhouette* (University of Massachusetts Press, 1995).

In the last years of his life, Ali suffered from brain cancer while teaching at New York University and—though he had decided to travel to Kashmir to die with his family and father at his side—he remained in western Massachusetts. He died on December 8, 2001, and was buried near Amherst, the final resting place of his beloved Emily Dickinson (Ghosh 2007, 36).

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CYNTHIA ARRIEU-KING

#### ◆ ALI, SAMINA (1970–)

Born in the city of Hyderabad in South India, Samina Ali immigrated to the United States with her parents when she was only six months old. In 1993, she graduated with a BA in English from the University of Minnesota and afterward acquired an MFA from the University of Oregon. Ali currently lives with her four-year-old son Ishmael in San Francisco. Pieces of her writings have appeared in diverse publications such as *Words Matter*, *Reading and Writing in the Second Wave of Multiculturalism*, *Our Feet Walk the Sky*, *Self* and *Child* magazines, the *New York Times*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Barbara Deming Memorial Fund and the Rona Jaffe Foundation have provided her with funds to write. Ali also has given lectures about her novel and the role

of Islam at the PEN/Faulkner Conference, the American Consulate in Italy, and at universities in the United States. Her interviews also illuminate her thoughts and beliefs. Ali has had a writer's mind all along, but it took years for her to pen a novel because of insecurities and fears. Ali got married when she was only 19 years old, and she returned to the United States after eight months. The writings about Muslim women by authors such as Marianna Ba, Nawal El Saadawi, and Sara Suleri have influenced her greatly. Her debut novel, *Madras on Rainy Days*, was published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in January 2004. Although India is home to the second-largest Muslim population in the world, no immigrant Muslim from India has contributed substantially to Indian American literature. Ali's novel placed before Western and South Asian readers the problems, tribulations, and travails of Muslim women. With the publication of *Madras on Rainy Days*, Ali arrived on the scene of American immigrant literature with a bang. Although Ali might not yet be labeled as a great writer because she has only one novel to her credit, readers have been captivated by her portrayal of "possession" and "self-possession" of the main character in a lyrical language. The novel was the winner of the French award Prix Premier Roman Etranger in 2005. It was short-listed for the PEN/Hemingway Award in Fiction and the California Book Reviewers Award, and it was named one of the top-five best debut novels by *Poets & Writers*.

The protagonist in *Madras on Rainy Days* is Layla, who was brought up mainly in the United States with frequent sojourns to Hyderabad. While in school, she had a deep relationship with her boyfriend Nate that resulted in an abortion. The secret remained with her when she came to Hyderabad at the age of 19 after a year of college in Minneapolis for an arranged marriage with Sameer, a handsome engineer. Layla entered a world of chador-clad women, conservatism, suppression of inner feelings, and living by the norms of a rigid society. The city of Hyderabad had a special place in the Islamic culture of the South Asian subcontinent. A place of orthodoxy, it was the capital of the princely state of Hyderabad in pre-independent India. Now, it is the state capital of the province of Andhra Pradesh. It is no mere coincidence that the Bangladesh author Taslima Nasreen was threatened and heckled here in a literary function on August 9, 2007, by obscurantist forces of Islam. A city of rich Muslim culture blended with Hindu customs, it has also witnessed communal riots. The house of Ali once faced the wrath of a gang of Hindu communalists while she was living in that city. In a masterly way, Ali portrays the life of a newly married Muslim woman in Hyderabad and her yearning to become her own person. Behind the chador and burka, her inner spirit was being suppressed. Surrounded by the old city walls of Hyderabad was an unchanging world. Layla married into this world of tradition as an abiding and dutiful Muslim daughter. But her young and independent spirit was still there, deep inside. Strangely enough, she liked her new home and



loving in-laws. However, the couple both had secrets of their own, which could devastate the lives of their spouses. On their honeymoon night, while the monsoon rain lashed the city of Madras (Chennai), the couple began to lay bare their true selves. When Layla discovered that Sameer was unable to consummate their marriage, she earnestly requested her family to allow her to leave the husband, to which she was entitled according to the laws of Islam. But Layla was forced to go on with her married life. She then began to delve into pages of the Quran and discovered the rights granted to a woman. She had rights over property, marriage, future, and, most importantly, over her body as granted by the Prophet Muhammad and Islamic jurisprudence. In the end, she began to assert herself and her rights. Layla was mistress of her own life henceforth. She could distinguish between Islam as a religion and as practiced by the self-proclaimed guardians of that religion.

Layla's stature among the readers rises when the arc of the novel comes to Sameer's understanding the angst of his wife. He did not object to her going back to the United States, thus enabling her freedom. Ali does not criticize Muslim males for criticism's sake. With empathy, she understands their condition, particularly that of gay Muslims. In the autobiographical novel, the character of Layla and the author are merged. Neither are aggressive, bra-burning femme fatales. They are, however, both devout Muslims, endeavoring to assert the rights of Muslim women as prescribed in the Quran. It was not for publicity's sake that Ali cofounded the American Muslim woman's organization *Daughters of Hajar*. It was born out of deep conviction. She has marched to the mosque in Morgantown, West Virginia, along with other women demanding equal rights. *Madras on Rainy Days* stands out as a saga of women's assertion against injustice, inequality, and male-controlled cultural norms. The world of immigrant literature is waiting for her second novel, which deals with the life of a Pakistani male.

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### ◆ AMERASIA JOURNAL

The *Amerasia Journal* is a leading multidisciplinary scholarly journal in **Asian American studies** published three times a year (winter, spring, and fall) since March 1971 by the UCLA Asian American Studies Center, one of the oldest programs in Asian American studies in the United States, with the mission to promote understanding of the lived history and the living reality of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. *Amerasia* is the earlier of the two journals under the Center, the other one being *AAPI Nexus: Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders Policy, Practice, and Community*, which debuted in 2003.

*Amerasia* in the past three and a half decades has been committed to reflecting the profound social changes that have taken place among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, such as the unprecedented increase in their population, their ever-growing panethnicity, and their dynamic interactions with American society.

Since the historic premiere issue of *Amerasia*, the journal has published over 30,000 pages of scholarly and creative writings by both veteran and up-and-coming scholars and writers, providing a publishing venue for proven talents as well as the young talents who are determined to share their interpretation of the individual and collective experiences of new immigrants and descendants of the old immigrants from Asia. The journal has expanded its concerns under the categories of "Asian American studies and movement," "Asian Americans and U.S.-Asia relations," "Asians in the Americas," "authors/books/films reviewed," "bibliographies," "comparative ethnic and race relations," "culture, arts and media," "education," "ethnic and racial identity," "gender and women studies," "Hawaii and the Pacific," "immigrants, refugees and migration," "labor, business and economy," "legal, political and civil rights issues," "literature, literary criticism and commentaries /essays," "multicultural Asians," "poetry," "religion," "sexual politics and identities," "short stories, memoirs and novel experts," "testimonies to the Commission on Wartime Relocation," "war and peace issues," and "World War II and Japanese Americans."

Although scholarly oriented, *Amerasia* has never concealed its political concerns and preferences; many of its issues revolve around the status quo and the status quo ante, which cannot be missed by a glance at some of its titles: *Salute to 60s/70s: San Francisco Status Strike* (Vol. 15, No. 1, 1989), *Satyagraha: Political Culture of South Asian Americans* (Vol. 25, No. 3, 1999), and *Challenging Race and Racism; Retrospective Look at China's Cultural Revolution* (Vol. 27, No. 2, 2001).

The journal often draws attention to specific ethnic groups within the Asian American community, such as *Japanese American Nisei* (Vol. 13, No. 2, 1987) and *Chinese Americans: Rural & Urban Lives* (Vol. 14, No. 2, 1988). In *Vietnamese Americans: Diaspora and Dimensions* (Vol. 29, No. 1, 2003), a new generation of Vietnamese and American scholars and writers examine the experience of Vietnamese Americans and

their sophisticated connections to Vietnam, employing approaches that include education, economics, ethnic studies, history, literature, political science, public health, religion, and society. Under the title of *What Does It Mean To Be Korean Today?* are two issues (Vol. 29, No. 3, 2003/2004 and Vol. 30, No. 1, 2004) dedicated to the commemoration of 100 years of Korean migration to the United States, addressing issues relevant to Korean migration history, youth, race relations, the Internet, and Koreatown.

*Amerasia* also publishes special issues in honor of highly respected individuals who have made great contributions to Asian American studies. The journal's first two issues were in honor of Rocky Chin and Yuji Ichioka, and this tradition is still alive in its recently published issues, such as *A Tribute to Miné Okubo* (Vol. 30, No. 2, 2004) and *Edward Said's Orientalism & Asian American Studies* (Vol. 31, No. 1, 2005). *Edward Said's Orientalism & Asian American Studies* is a special tribute to the influence of Edward Said's book, *Orientalism*, on Asian American studies, including papers on gender and **feminism**, identity politics, queer studies, translation in relation to the theme contributed by Moustafa Bayoumi, Ali Behdad, et al.

Asian American literature is also a theme regularly investigated and surveyed in this journal, for instance, *Asian American Literature* (Vol. 9, No. 2, 1983), *Korean Women, Literature* (Vol. 11, No. 2, 1985), and *Asian American Poetry* (Vol. 20, No. 3, 1994). Another feature of *Amerasia Journal* is its book review section, which comprises a sizable portion of every issue. The book reviews are commonly around 800–1,000 words in length, concise yet informative, reporting basic information about the books and making critical assessment of the books' scholarly value. Among many others, the following books are reviewed in the journal: *Dragon Ladies: Asian American Feminists Breathe Fire* by Sonia Shah; *A Resource Guide to Asian American Literature* edited by Sau-ling Cynthia Wong and Stephen H. Sumida; *Khmer American: Identity and Moral Education in a Diasporic Community* by Nancy J. Smith-Hefner; *A Single Square Picture: A Korean Adoptee's Search for Her Roots* by Kathy Robinson; and *Becoming American, Being Indian: An Immigrant Community in New York City* by Madhulika S. Khandelwal.

*Amerasia* has been indexed and abstracted in *America: History and Life*; *Bibliography of Asian Studies*; *Writing on American History*; *Arts and Humanities Citations Index*; *Sage Race Relations Abstracts*; and the *Western Quarterly*. *Amerasia's* library and individual subscribers are worldwide, coming from the United States, Canada, Central America, Latin America, the United Kingdom, Italy, Poland, China, Japan, India, Korea, Australia, and the former Soviet Union. Some of the journal's contributors include Prosy Abarquez-Delacruz, Moustafa Bayoumi, Grace Lee Boggs, Sucheng Chan, Edward Chang, Gordon Chang, Jeff Chang, Frank **Chin**, Rey Chow, Catherine Ceniza Choy, Lowell Chun-Hoon, Roger Daniels, Enrique de la Cruz, Philip Vera Cruz, Arif Dirlik, Yen Le Espiritu, Chris Friday, Richard Fung, Emma Gee, N.V.M. **Gonzalez**,

Jessica **Hagedorn**, Arthur A. Hansen, Bill Hing, Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, Marlon Hom, Sharon Hom, Velina Hasu **Houston**, Evelyn Hu-Dehart, Amir Hussain, Yuji Ichioka, Jerry Kang, Ketu Katrak, Peter Kiang, Nazli Kibria, Elaine H. Kim, Maxine Hong **Kingston**, Harry Kitano, Amitava **Kumar**, Scott Kurashige, Him Mark Lai, Wally Look Lai, Vinay Lai, Bill Lann Lee, K.W. Lee, Lisa Lowe, Kingsley Lyu, Martin Manalansan, Sunaina Mara, Mari Matsuda, Valerie Matsumoto, Ruthanne Lum **McCunn**, Davianna Alegado McGregor, Pyong Gap Min, Alice Yang Murray, Franklin Ng, Angela Oh, Gary Okihiro, Glenn Omatsu, Michael Omi, Gary Pak, David Palumbo-Liu, Vijay Prashad, Robert Chao Romero, Steve Masami Ropp, Roshni Rustomji-Kerns, E. San Juan, Alexander Saxton, Paul Spickard, Rajini Srikanth, Dana Takagi, Eileen H. Tamura, Haunani-Kay Trask, Mililani B. Trask, Monique **Truong**, Karen Umemoto, Urvashi Vaid, Linda Vo, L. Ling-chi Wang, Shawn **Wong**, Hisaye **Yamamoto**, Eric K. Yamamoto, Michael Yamamoto, Karen Tei **Yamashita**, Wakako **Yamauchi**, Eui-Young Yu, Henry Yu, Judy Yung, and Helen Zia, among many others.

The current editor of *Amerasia* is Russell **Leong**, with Brandy Liën Worrall-Yu as associate editor. The editorial board members include Edward Taehan Chang, Arif Dirlik, Yen Le Espiritu, Chris Friday, Richard Fung, Emma Gee, Jessica Hagedorn, Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, Marlon Hom, Sharon K. Hom, Ketu H. Katrak, Him Mark Lai, Pyong Gap Min, Don T. Nakanishi, Robert A. Nakamura, Franklin Ng, Glenn K. Omatsu, Vijay Prashad, E. San Juan, Jr., Alaxander Saxton, Dana Takagi, Sau-ling C. Wong, Karen Tei Yamashita, Helen Zia, and Renee Tajima-Peña. *Amerasia's* ISSN is 00447471. Contact: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 3230 Campbell Hall, Box 951546, Los Angeles, CA, 90095-1546; e-mail at [aascpress@aasc.ucla.edu](mailto:aascpress@aasc.ucla.edu). Phone number: (310) 825-2968; fax number: (310) 206-9844.

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UCLA Asian American Studies Center Web site: [www.aasc.ucla.edu](http://www.aasc.ucla.edu).

LINGLING YAO

#### ◆ *AMERICA IS IN THE HEART* (BULOSAN)

Published in 1946, *America Is in the Heart: A Personal History* is the best known work of Filipino American author Carlos **Bulosan**. Scholars have generally concluded that the work is a blend of autobiography, history, and novel. The book is based on events in Bulosan's life and the lives of other Filipino migrant laborers, filtered through the first-person point of view of a narrator who undergoes a number of name changes: born as Allos in the Philippines, he becomes Carlos upon coming to the

United States, and then Carl after his political transformation into a left-wing labor activist, journalist, and organizer (but following critical convention, the narrator will be referred to as Carlos here). Set during the Depression and ending on the eve of American involvement in **World War II**, the book is a record of the racist crimes of violence and labor exploitation committed by American society against Filipino migrant laborers. The book is also the story of how Carlos went from being a Filipino laborer to a writer and an American.

The book is divided into four parts. Part I documents Carlos's life in the Philippines, where he is the son of poor peasant farmers. Part II charts his immigration to the United States and the racist brutalities he endures as a migrant laborer at the hands of whites. Part III is a record of his self-education in both literature and politics and the rise of his political consciousness as he works as a radical journalist, organizing other poor laborers and people of color. Part IV shows Carlos as a published poet who finally reconciles with America, soon after **Pearl Harbor** and in the looming shadow of World War II. As a history, the book documents the intricate relationship between U.S. foreign policy abroad in the Philippines and its domestic policies at home concerning race, class, gender, and sexuality. Young Carlos leaves the Philippines because of the circumstances of his poverty in a land that is an American colony, and he chooses the United States because of that colonial tie. Although other Asians were forbidden from entering the United States after the passage of the **National Origins Act of 1924**, Filipinos continued entering because they were not technically foreigners or aliens but U.S. nationals, exempt from immigration restrictions. The seemingly liberal Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934, which promised independence to the Philippines, was actually designed by the U.S. Congress to eliminate this loophole by turning Filipinos into aliens ineligible for immigration.

As Bulosan shows, American anti-Filipino sentiment was a complex mix of racism, class antagonism, and sexual anxiety. In the Philippines, these feelings were muted, given the relatively small presence of Americans. What Bulosan depicts in Part I is the seemingly benevolent attitude of American colonizers and the American colonial system that taught young Carlos such stories as the biography of Abraham Lincoln. Inspired by this and other stories, young Carlos aspires to immigrate to the United States. At the same time, Carlos's family is mired in poverty and its attendant problems: the fatal illness of a sister, the forced and unhappy marriages of his brothers, and the gradual loss of the family land, sold to pay for a brother's education. The exploitative, feudalistic class structure in the Philippines was both a legacy of Spanish colonial rule and American acquiescence to its perpetuation after the United States conquered the Philippines in the Philippine-American War (1899–1902). While the young Carlos does not recognize this history, the mature Carlos narrating the story interjects a sharp class analysis of these feudal relations perpetuated by Filipino elites

against the Filipino peasantry. Young Carlos finally flees from the Philippines and, at the beginning of Part II, encounters his first taste of American racism on the journey there, when a young white woman calls Carlos and the other Filipino migrants “savages” and “monkeys.”

These insults set the tone for Part II, where Carlos experiences a litany of abuse in the western United States: labor exploitation and poverty, physical violence and sexual humiliation, residential segregation and antimiscegenation statutes. As Bulosan puts it succinctly, “It was a crime to be a Filipino in California” (121). By the 1930s and Carlos’s arrival in the United States, Filipinos had taken the place of earlier racial scapegoats, the Chinese and the Japanese. Those groups, too, were subject to the same intensity of white hatred that characterized the history of **racism and Asian America**, but immigration restrictions had virtually eliminated new Chinese and Japanese immigrants. In addition to the racial and economic discrimination shared with Chinese and Japanese immigrants, Filipinos were subject to a much greater degree of white sexual hysteria. Bulosan documents the sometimes sexual nature of the violence directed against Filipinos by white men, and the racist depictions of Filipino migrants that fueled that violence. Most of the Filipino migrants were men, and these racist depictions commented upon their desire for white women and the dangers Filipinos posed to these women, and, implicitly, to white men as sexual competition.

Although sex with white women was a clear taboo, sexual relations with women of color were not. Bulosan generally depicts these sexual relations with women of color as moments of degradation for Filipino men. White women, in contrast, generally represented the best of American possibility. In Part III, Carlos’s life is saved by white women such as Marian, “the song of my dark hour,” who prostitutes herself to give him money for his education. Other white women, such as Alice and Eileen Odell, give him books and mentor him. The combination of this informal education and the politicizing that Carlos undergoes through his experiences with racism and labor organizing transform Carlos into an intellectual and an aspiring writer. In his radicalization, Carlos becomes part of the wider movement to the left taken by the American intelligentsia during the 1930s. American writers and other artists were responding to the economic terror of the Great Depression, as well as to the totalitarian terror of fascism overseas. Carlos hears the urgent call to organize Filipino migrants and other poor laborers against the domestic forces of racism and labor exploitation directed against them and feels the need to tell their untold stories. Bulosan’s story of Carlos’s transformation into a radical writer-activist committed to both racial and class politics is one of the earliest accounts of **Asian American political activism**, and certainly one of the most influential. The editors of the 1974 Asian American literary anthology *!!!!!!!* excerpted *America Is in the Heart*, helping to establish its place in the new canon of Asian American literature.

By the end of Part III, Carlos has completed the first phase of his informal education, carried out while he is recovering from a bout of tuberculosis. He asks himself, "Would it be possible for an immigrant like myself to become a part of the American dream?" At the same time, he argues for the necessity of reclaiming Philippine folklore and national heroes like José Rizal. Through Part IV, Carlos matures as a writer, finding predecessors not only in Philippine culture but also in earlier Asian American writers such as Yone Noguchi and Younghill **Kang**. Carlos also finds his way into the contemporary literary scene by reading writers like Carey McWilliams, Louis Adamic, and John Fante, authors who in Bulosan's life would become his champions. Carlos also matures as a political organizer, becoming more involved with the Communist Party and developing an ever-more inclusive class and racial consciousness. The bombing of Pearl Harbor abruptly diverts his attention from the radical problems of domestic inequality to the global struggle against fascism, leading to the famous conclusion of the book in which Carlos sees the American earth "like a huge heart unfolding warmly to receive me" (326).

Perhaps not surprisingly, the American public positively received *America Is in the Heart* and Bulosan. Yet, within the book, there are clear signs of Bulosan's radical critique of the failures of American democracy and its promises of equality, given both to people of color within the nation and to colonial peoples ruled overseas by the United States. Rather than subtracting from the book's power, these tensions around the representation of the United States have only added to the book's fascination for successive generations of critics. One of the most written-about texts in Asian American literature, *America Is in the Heart* is probably the best known example of **Filipino American autobiography**, and arguably of **Filipino American literature**.

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## ◆ ANGEL ISLAND

A hilly, grassy, and tree-covered island, Angel Island is the largest island in San Francisco Bay. As the top of Mt. Livermore reaches a height of 788 feet, Angel Island overlooks Marin County, San Francisco, the Golden Gate, and the entire Bay Area. The earliest-known visitors to the island were Miwok Indians, who used it as a fishing-and-hunting site for more than 6,000 years. After the war between Mexico and the United States, Angel Island became part of the United States in 1848. Starting from the Civil War and for almost 100 years, the island served to house a variety of military installations, a Public Health Service quarantine station, and an immigration station. Now the island is a state park.

The historical significance of Angel Island in Asian American history and literature lies in the fact that it was once the site of an immigration station that existed to detain Chinese immigrants. This immigration station was designed to be the main entry point into the United States for immigrants from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Russia, and especially Asia. Often called the “Ellis Island of the West” or “the Guardian of the Western Gate,” the immigration station was opened on January 21, 1910, and closed in November 1940. More than 1 million people were processed here, most of whom were allowed to enter the United States immediately or without much delay. However, for Chinese immigrants who were not welcome because of the **Chinese Exclusion Act** of 1882, it evokes unforgettable and bitter memories. Between 1910 and 1940, approximately 175,000 Chinese immigrants were detained and processed at Angel Island, and about one-tenth of that number were deported. The amount of time Chinese immigrants were detained here ranged from several days to two or three years. The immigrants had to suffer poor food, miserable living conditions, and, above all, tormenting interrogations. An interrogation usually lasted several hours a day and would continue for several days. The Chinese immigrants were asked detailed and often absurd questions. If they failed to give the right answers, they would be deported. When they could no longer endure the long confinement or the thought of deportation, some of them even committed suicide. The Chinese immigrants thus called Angel Island “Devil’s Pass.”

During the time Chinese immigrants were detained at Angel Island, many of them scribbled, brushed, or carved poems in Chinese on the barrack walls to express their disappointment, homesickness, loneliness, frustration, humiliation, agony, anger, and even hatred toward the white racists. For fear of being prosecuted, most writers of these poems chose not to sign their names. Thus, many poems remain anonymous. A few of the poems were copied by those who passed the interrogation and were able to enter the United States; consequently, they were published in Chinatown newspapers, journals, or books. Most of the poems, however, were locked up and forgotten when the immigration station closed in 1940. They remained unknown to the public until 1970.



In 1970 the poems inscribed on the barrack walls were discovered by a park ranger, Alexander Weiss, and, several years later, efforts were made to recover the long-forgotten anguished voices of the detainees. These poems were collected in several books. The earliest and most complete collection was made by Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung, three descendants of Angel Island inmates. They undertook a project of collecting more than 135 poems from the barrack walls, translating them into English, and publishing them in 1980 in a book titled *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants*. Along with the poems, they also interviewed 39 people, most of whom had been detained at the station. The interviews serve as oral histories. The editors also presented more than 20 photographs that help to illustrate the history of the period. They dedicated the book to "the pioneers who passed through Angel Island" (Lai, Lim, and Yung 1980, book cover). These resurrected poems not only express the emotional responses of the detainees to racial prejudice but also shatter the stereotype that Chinese immigrants were poorly educated peasants and passive, silent, and uncomplaining "Orientals." Moreover, the recovered poems also lead to a resurrected history, as Charles Solomon commented, "This moving volume documents a neglected chapter of American history" (qtd. in "Him Mark Lai," *Contemporary Authors Online*).

Some of the poems appeared in other books. In an attempt to recover Asian American folk and oral traditions, Marlon K. Hom collected some of the poems under the title of "Immigration Blues" in his book *Songs of Gold Mountain: Cantonese Rhymes from San Francisco Chinatown*. In 1994, Paul Lauter selected 13 of the Angel Island poems in English translation for inclusion in *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*. The fact that some of the poems were anthologized indicates that they have entered the canon of American literature. Xiao-Huang Yin translated and discussed some of the poems in his essay "Plea and Protest: The Voices of Early Chinese Immigrants."

It should be noted that the immigration station at Angel Island is frequently mentioned in the writings of Chinese American writers such as Sui Sin Far (Edith Maude Eaton), Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, Shawn Hsu Wong, Frank Chin, and William Poy Lee, whose ancestors might have entered the United States by way of Angel Island and might have experienced the confinement and torturing interrogations. The literary representations indicate that Angel Island has become a memorial for Chinese Americans.

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KUILAN LIU

### ◆ AOKI, BRENDA WONG (1953–)

Solo performer, storyteller, teacher, and recording artist using a performance aesthetic influenced by commedia dell'arte, Japanese Kyogen, and contemporary jazz, Brenda Wong Aoki's work explores issues of identity in contemporary multicultural America. Of Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, and Scots descent, Aoki's mixed heritage informs much of her work. Born in Salt Lake City, Utah, and raised in Long Beach, California, she received her bachelor's degree from the University of California at Santa Cruz in 1976. She began creating and performing solo pieces in 1988. Her many performance venues have included San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, the Kennedy Center in Washington DC, the San Diego Repertory Theatre, and Sapporo University in Sapporo, Japan. Her stories have been issued on CD, incorporated into video, and anthologized. Currently, Aoki is on the faculty of the Theater Arts Department at UC Santa Cruz, while she continues to tour and create new work.

Aoki's first solo performance, *Tales of the Pacific Rim* (1990), dramatized traditional Japanese ghost stories, casting her in the mode of the conventional storyteller. Many of her subsequent performances have adhered to this genre, including *Oake!* (1991) and *Mermaid Meat and Other Stories* (1997), a libretto commissioned by the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra. Simultaneously, however, in the early 1990s, Aoki joined a handful of performers who began to use the embodied autobiographical narrative as a political tool to expand the notion of identity. In 1992, she created *The Queen's Garden*, her first performance to receive national attention. As she documents in the performance, growing up in Southern California gave her early, practical experience with the tensions created at the intersections of race and class. Later, Aoki would become a community organizer, active in a burgeoning Asian American movement. This early activism is reflected in *The Queen's Garden*. The piece takes on such

hot-button issues as gang violence, drug addiction, and teenage pregnancy with sensitivity and without oversimplification. It loosely follows Aoki's transformation from pudgy adolescent to weekday model minority/weekend street gang member to college-educated activist. Although "Brenda" is the central figure, the piece has a diverse cast of characters, each with their own story and all played by Aoki. Set mostly in an impoverished neighborhood enclosed by freeways and oil fields, *The Queen's Garden* evokes a world in which the comedy and the tragedy of life constantly collide. It deploys extremely specific details of dialect, landscape, and circumstance to make greater observations about the repercussions of poverty and racism. *The Queen's Garden* has been performed across the country. In addition, Aoki performs selections from the piece in the video *Do 2 Halves Really Make a Whole?* (1995). In 1999, Aoki recorded *The Queen's Garden* on CD with music by Mark Izu. The recording won an Indie Award for Best Spoken Word Album, presented by the Association for Independent Music.

Aoki continued the personal narrative of *The Queen's Garden* in *Random Acts of Kindness* (1994), about her life as a performing artist. A later work in 1998, *Uncle Gunjiro's Girlfriend*, departs from the explicit memoir but remains personal. The piece tells the story of the brother of Aoki's grandfather, a Japanese immigrant. In 1909, Gunjiro Aoki fell in love with Helen Emery, the daughter of the Archdeacon of San Francisco's Grace Cathedral. The relationship prompted outrage, resulting in the addition of the Japanese to the lists of racialized "Others" legally barred from marrying in California. Eventually, the couple was able to marry in Tacoma, Washington. Helen, however, like other Caucasian women before and after her, lost her citizenship. As a historical narrative, *Uncle Gunjiro's Girlfriend* reflects and comments on contemporary racial politics. It is a reminder, for example, that antimiscegenation laws were not revoked in the United States until 1967—and that the legacy of racial hatred and discrimination remains with us still.

Aoki's autobiography-as-activism underscores much of her work. But to call her work didactic, or even overtly political in a Brechtian sense, would be misleading. Aoki is primarily a storyteller, spinning complicated, funny, and often intensely beautiful tales intended to enrapture her audience. Her stories resemble morality tales without the clearly defined moral. Her 1997 fable "Mermaid Meat," for example, seems to follow the lines of a classic Japanese ghost story, replete with the iconic figures of Mermaid, Fisherman, and Fisherman's Daughter. At the tale's conclusion, however, the story turns strikingly contemporary in its exploration of the complicated relationships between women.

Although Aoki's stories have the language of literature, they are aesthetically completed by her distinctive performance style. Her performances are as much about the body and movement as they are about dramatic reading. A mixed medley of dance training in her childhood is in evidence, as is her experience with commedia dell'arte.

Moreover, her training in Kyogen and Noh, both genres of traditional Japanese theatre, informs her entire movement aesthetic. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Aoki trained and performed at San Francisco's Theatre of Yugen with Yukio Dori. She also traveled to Japan to study with Noh master Nomura Shiro. Though her work diverges from the classical, her training emerges in her intense and precise gestural language, as well as her flexible, almost musical voice. Aoki presents a dramatic figure as she transforms her body, including a curtain of long black hair, into props and scenery.

Although Aoki is not a musician in the conventional sense, her performances can be recognized within the idiom of jazz. Her work depends upon rhythm, repetition, and the building of momentum. Although she does not improvise, the performances alternate between disciplined control and unexpected outburst. Moreover, she often collaborates with husband Mark Izu, using live jazz to underscore her work. Together, they founded First Voice as a way to promote the music and stories of people experiencing the intersection of cultures. They have created three audio recordings of Aoki's stories accompanied by Izu's score.

Aoki has twice been a National Endowment for the Arts Fellow. She has received four Dramalogue Awards for her work, as well as a Critics' Circle Award and an ASCAP special award for innovative libretto. In 2007, Aoki was awarded the Japan-United States Friendship Commission Creative Artist Exchange Fellowship, which involved a five-month residency in Japan. **See also** Multiculturalism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America.

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JENNIFER CHAN

### ◆ ARAB AMERICAN LITERATURE

In contrast to what many might assume, Arab American literature is not a new genre in the United States, but rather one that is over a century old, dating back to at least 1911 with the publication of Ameen Rihani's *The Book of Khalid*. It also includes the establishment of *Al Rabitah al Qalamiyah* (The Pen League), a vibrant and active group of Arab American writers that included such eminent immigrant writers as

Rihani, Gibran Khalil Gibran, Elia Abu Madi, and Mikhail Naimy. After the 1930s, little was heard of Arab American writers, but this group's canon experienced a resurgence in the 1970s.

### THE FIRST GENERATION: THE LATE 1800S–1930S

The earliest Arab American writers were mostly Lebanese and Syrian immigrants, known as *al-mahjar*, or “immigrants.” Between the years of 1880 and 1924, almost 100,000 Arabs emigrated from greater Syria, headed for the Americas. Many who landed in the United States settled in large urban regions, such as Detroit, New York, and Philadelphia. The swelling numbers of Arab immigrants—many of whom did not identify themselves as Arabs but rather by their individual countries or regions, such as “Syrians”—were indicated by the increasing number of Arab-language publications to serve this community. *Kawkab Amerika*, founded in 1892, was the first of many Arab-language newspapers, for example, and in the early 1900s nine such newspapers were in existence. *Syrian World*, a literary journal, was also established at this time, and it gave voice to many prominent playwrights, poets, and critics of Arab origin.

In her overview essay on the history of Arab American literature, poet, memoirist, and playwright Elmaz Abinader refers to Ameen Rihani as “the father of Arab American literature” (2000). This is an apt title, popularly applied to Rihani, considering that he was the first to note the crossroads of Arab and American literary trends in his work. Born in Lebanon in 1876, Rihani was sent to the United States by his father, with a relative, at the young age of 12 to help with the family business of silk manufacturing. While living in New York and working with his father and uncle, Rihani read voraciously and was especially attracted to the literature of William Shakespeare and Victor Hugo. Later he also became a fan of Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Leo Tolstoy, and Arab poets such as Abu-Ala. His readings greatly influenced his writing, both in English and Arabic. An admirer of the work of Walt Whitman, Rihani was the first to introduce free verse to Arab poetry, publishing work that modeled this new style as early as 1905. Today's modern Arabic poetry is most popularly written in free verse by such poets as Adonis and Mahmoud Darwish. In 1911, Rihani published *The Book of Khalid*, the first English-language novel by a writer of Arab origin; it focused on the immigrant experience, drawing from Rihani's personal life, with a philosophical edge—Khalid, the protagonist, is depicted as a new prophet whose vision transcends worlds and continents.

Gibran Khalil Gibran, coincidentally, provided the illustrations for the first edition of Rihani's *The Book of Khalid* but would later become perhaps more well-known than his prolific friend. Like Rihani, Gibran, who was born in 1883 in Lebanon and arrived in the United States at the age of 12, traversed two worlds and two languages

quite easily; he befriended prominent American writers such as Sherwood Anderson and Eugene O'Neill, while also working actively within *Al-Rabitah al Qalamiyah*. As a result, his canon assumed a universal appeal. Most of his early work was written in Arabic, but, after the late 1910s, he wrote mostly in English. His opus, *The Prophet*, first published in 1923, has remained one of the best-selling American books of all time; it remains the best-selling book by its publisher, Alfred A. Knopf. During the 1960s, *The Prophet* experienced a resurgence of popularity as members of America's counterculture movements seized on its poetic language to express their rage and hopes.

### THE 1960S–1970S

The 1940s through the 1960s were relatively quiet years in Arab American literature, but two important writers made their mark in the ensuing decades: the 1960s and 1970s.

Born in 1925, Etel Adnan is a Lebanese American, born to a Muslim, Turkish father and a Greek, Christian mother. She writes in both English and French, and her most well-known work is *Sitt Marie Rose*, published by Post-Apollo Press in 1982. The novel, considered a classic and published in 10 languages, features a young Lebanese woman who deeply sympathizes with the plight of the Palestinian people during the turbulent 1980s; for her active work on behalf of the Palestinians, she is punished by her Lebanese compatriots. Her life, cut short by violence, represents the tragedy of the wars in the Middle East.

Poet Samuel Hazo was born in 1928 to Lebanese and Syrian immigrants. Currently McAnulty Distinguished Professor of English Emeritus at Duquesne University, Hazo founded the International Poetry Forum in 1966 at the University of Pittsburgh. Chosen as the first state poet of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1993 (a position he held for 10 years), he has authored over 20 books of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction, including *The Holy Surprise of Right Now*, *The Rest Is Prose*, *Stills*, *Feather*, *As They Sail*, and *Spying for God*. A translator of many works, he has also been a National Book Award finalist.

### THE 1980S–PRESENT

Since the 1980s, a new and exciting crop of Arab American writers has emerged who are born in the United States and have made the search for an Arab American identity one of their major literary themes. There is also more concern among this new generation with political events in the Middle East, primarily the question of Palestine after the 1967 war and the occupation of the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

Much of the new literature was given voice in the form of anthologies, of new and established writers merging their efforts to express the Arab American experience. In 1982, Gregory Orfalea published a booklet, sponsored by the American-Arab

Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), entitled *Wrapping the Grape Leaves: A Sheaf of Contemporary Arab American Poets*. The small booklet would mark a resurgence in Arab American writing, such that, in 1988, Orfalea and Sharif Elmusa edited an expanded edition, a full-length anthology entitled *Grape Leaves: A Century of Arab-American Poetry*, which was published by the University of Utah Press. The collection helped to reinvigorate the discussion of Arab American literature, and it sparked the compilation and publication of other anthologies, most notably *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* (edited by Joanna Kadi) and *Post Gibran: Anthology of New Arab American Writing* (edited by Khaled Mattawa and Munir Akash). These anthologies—as well as the formation of such organizations as RAWI (**The Radius of Arab American Writers, Incorporated**) and the establishment of periodicals centered on Arab American and Arab writing, such as *Mizna* and *Al-Jadid*—offered encouragement for new writers by establishing that an audience for such work did exist.

Many Arab American writers in the last 30 years have left their mark on the American literary canon. Of these, Naomi Shihab Nye, a Palestinian American poet, essayist, and young adult author is perhaps best known. Born to a Palestinian father and an American mother in Missouri in 1952, Shihab Nye has authored several important collections of poetry, namely *The Words Under the Words* (1995), *What Have You Lost?* (1999), and *19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems from the Middle East* (2002). Her young adult novel *Habibi*, published in 1997, was recognized by the American Library Association as the Best Book for Young Adults and broke new ground in young adult literature by taking on the Arab-Israeli conflict as its central theme; *Habibi* was also named an ALA Notable Book, a New York Public Library Book for the Teen Age, and a Texas Institute of Letters Best Book for Young Readers. She has also edited several important anthologies, such as *The Space Beneath Our Footsteps* (1998), bringing together the voices and visions of many Arab poets and artists.

Lawrence Joseph, born in 1948 in Detroit, Michigan, is a lawyer by profession as well as an acclaimed poet. His poetry collections include *Shouting at No One* (1983), *Curriculum Vitae* (1988), and *Before Our Eyes* (1993). In 1997, he published *Lawyerland*, a nonfiction book that examined the attitudes of lawyers; it was republished by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, which also published his fourth poetry collection, *Into It*, in 2005.

Diana **Abu-Jaber** broke onto the literary scene with her first novel, *Arabian Jazz*, published in 1993 by Harcourt. The novel features Jemora, nicknamed Jem, the daughter of a deceased American mother and an Arab immigrant father still plunged in mourning. Torn between two cultures, Jem is at a crossroads, searching for her personal identity and happiness, which can only result from the reconciliation of the

various forces in her life. The novel's humor emanates from its satirical presentations of Jem's Arab relatives and the New York Arab community. The novel won the 1994 Oregon Book Award and was nominated for the PEN/Faulkner Award. Her second book, *Crescent*, traced the experiences of an Iraqi American woman, also searching for happiness and fulfillment, and won the 2004 PEN Center USA Award for Literary Fiction and the Before Columbus Foundation's American Book Award. Abu-Jaber's memoir *The Language of Baklava* recounts Abu-Jaber's personal experiences of growing up between Jordanian and American cultures.

Other memoirists have emerged onto the Arab American literary scene in recent years. Fay Afaf Kanafani's reputation as a writer is based on a single memoir, *Nadia, Captive of Hope*, which details her traumatic childhood and disastrous marriage in Palestine and Lebanon before her arrival in the United States. Elmaz Abinader, a skilled poet and playwright, is perhaps best known for her work *Children of the Roojme: A Family's Journey from Lebanon*, which was first published in 1991 by W.W. Norton to wide acclaim as an intimate account of an immigrant family's experiences crossing continents and searching for home. Edward Said, the renowned literary critic, published his own memoir, *Out of Place*, in 1999, shortly before his death, also to positive reviews. Most interestingly, Evelyn Shakir documents the personal life experiences of many Arab American women, both immigrants and first generation, in her monumental work *Bint Arab: Arab and Arab American Women in the United States*, published in 1997.

The last three decades have seen many short story collections and novels by Arab American writers, including some, such as Mona Simpson, who do not identify themselves or their work as Arab American in theme or nature. Those who do—that is, those who write about themes of Arab identity or concerns of the Middle Eastern community in the United States—include poets Nathalie Handal, D.H. Melhem, Khaled Mattawa, Suheir Hammad, and Dima Halal; short story writers Joseph Geha and Laila Lalami; and novelists Mohja Kahf, Samia Serageldin, and Rabbih Alammedine.

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## ◆ ASIAN AMERICAN

The increasing globalization and transnational activities bring about more diversity in the Asian American population and community. Before **World War II**, Asian Americans consisted mainly of immigrants from China, Japan, and the Philippines, including a small number from Korea and India. Recently, the population of Asian Americans in the United States has increased to over 1.2 million, including immigrants from more than 20 Asian countries or regions.

*Asian American* is a term used today to refer to all Asian immigrants, inhabitants, or American-born citizens of Asian origins. The term came into being in the late 1960s in the wake of the Asian American movement. According to King-Kok Cheung (2000, 5), "The term grew out of the frustration felt by many American-born citizens of Asian extraction at being treated as perpetual foreigners in the United States, even if their roots in this country go back several generations." In 1968 a group of activists of the Asian American movement in Berkeley founded the Asian American Political Association. Unsatisfied with the prevailing term *Oriental*, which was used to designate the category of Americans with Asian origins, these activists coined *Asian American* as a counterblast. Unlike the prevailing word *Oriental*, which signified a caricatured image of submissiveness and periphery, *Asian American* cultivated a sense of ethnic unity that was tied to a neither American nor Asian cultural awareness. The term was later accepted by American official institutions and applied in the population census of 1980.

Ostensibly intelligible as the term is, its denotation and connotation are far from easy to define. Is *Asian* a geographical term or a racial/ethnic term? Is *American* a category measured by acquisition of citizenship, birthplace, or location of inhabitance? The official definition presented by the immigration laws and federal statistics of its population constitution is by no means a fixed one, thus intensifying the complexity of the term. The Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments passed in 1965 conveyed a transformation of *Asia* as a racial origin to *Asia* as a birthplace, which is but one example of the flexibility of official definition of *Asian*.

As a category term of a group of people, *Asian American* is even controversial to the people of that category. Frank Chin, in his preface to *iiiiiiii! An Anthology of Asian American Writers*, used "the birth of the sensibility as the measure of being an Asian American" (1991, xiii). Here the sensibility refers to that "related to but distinct from Asia and white America" (Chin 1991, xiii) or a sense of one's ethnic identity as neither Asian nor American but in between. Chin's term seems too limited for its application. In terms of Chin's definition, no matter whether they have acquired American citizenship, those newcomers with Asian origins cannot be included in the category of Asian Americans because of their intimacy with Asian culture and their security in ethnic identity as Asian. However, given the significance of Chin's term in

calling for expression of the Asian American experience as a target of racial discrimination, the definition could be regarded as a strategy rather than a reflection of reality. The official definition and the definition given by the group are strategic rather than realistic or objective.

Because of the discursive nature of definitions, any attempt to be objective in defining Asian Americans as an ethnic category will result in failure. Being objective means to reflect faithfully the ontological appearance of an object. If the object loses or never has ontological significance, the reflection of the object can by no means be objective. So the definition used here can be far from nondiscursive.

The first Asian immigrants in large numbers to the United States were Chinese who were recruited for the sugar industry in Hawaii in the 1830s and the building of the Central Pacific Railroad in the 1860s. The Japanese immigrants arrived in the 1880s, and other Asians, mainly from Korea, India, and the Philippines, entered the United States after the turn of the century. The early Japanese, Korean, and Filipino immigrants shared a common experience with those from China as migrant labors (Scupin 2003, 245). By the 1920s the immigration from Asia decreased drastically in reaction to a series of highly restrictive immigration laws enacted by the U.S. Congress. After World War II, these laws were liberalized, which opened "the door to a new wave of Asian immigration" (Aguirre and Tuner 1995, 152). In 1965 the Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments was passed that abolished the old national origins quota system and restricted immigration from non-European countries. Due to the implementation of the Act of 1965, the civil rights movement, and the Asian American's tradition of family sponsorship, Asian immigrants entered at a rapid rate. Unlike other post-1965 Asian newcomers, the Southeast Asians, including those from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, mainly arrived as refugees because of the **Vietnam War**. The U.S. legislative attitude toward Asian immigrants has largely been determined by its domestic economy and labor demand. Early immigration laws ensured unlimited entry of Chinese immigrants due to the large demand for labor for the sugarcane industry and railway construction. The repeal of the **Chinese Exclusion Act** can be attributed largely to the economic prosperity in the 1940s. The nursing shortage in the 1970s and the shortage of technically trained personnel in the computer industry led to easier entry for Asian immigrants (Scupin 2003, 256).

In 2000 there were 10,477,300 Asian Americans making up 4.83 percent of the total population of the United States. Chinese Americans are the largest Asian ethnic group in the country. Its population has increased dramatically from less than 200,000 before 1945 to over 3 million today, occupying almost 1 percent of the whole population of the United States. Most Asian Americans inhabit the western United States. There is, however, a steady rise of Asian American inhabitants in the Northeast and the South, respectively accounting for 19.9 and 19.05 percent of the

total Asian American population in 2000 (Chen 2003, 51–53). Over 90 percent of Asian Americans reside in urban districts. In terms of the current number of Asian American inhabitants, New York ranks first among all the cities in the United States, followed by Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, and Philadelphia.

As the Asian immigrants before World War II were instrumental in the development of the commercial, industrial, and agricultural infrastructure of the West, those who arrived after the war, and in most cases were highly educated, have contributed greatly to America's economic development. As Martin N. Marger pointed out, these immigrants relieved the United States of a severe shortage in medical and engineering professionals (Chen 2003, 58). Because of their improved educational background, more Asian Americans are finding their way to executive, managerial, and administrative positions, and there is a great rise in their income. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (1998), in 1995 the median income of Asian and Pacific Islander families was close to that of non-Hispanic families. However, the seemingly high family income of the Asians can be explained partly by the fact that there are more wage earners in Asian American families than in white families. And "despite their representation in high-status professions, Asian Americans hold jobs in the low level of these professions" (Aguirre and Tuner 1995, 155). In other words, a glass ceiling, a restrictive line for their promotion, does exist.

Besides barriers to occupational mobility, Asian Americans suffer other forms of discrimination. Early Asian immigrants encountered nationalistic reactions, ranging from negative or even demonizing images fostered by the media to mob violence and denial of citizenship. They also experienced segregation in public places such as schools and restaurants well into the 1950s. The existence of "**Chinatowns**," "**Koreatowns**," and "**Little Tokyos**" indicates that segregation persists. Rather than a result of the Asians' preference to live with their own kind, as the popular belief perceives, it is a response to hostility in the host society (Aguirre and Tuner 1995, 177). In addition to discrimination inflicted by whites, Asian Americans suffer hostility from other minority groups, and even from its own group. The Los Angeles racial disturbance in 1992 caused an economic loss totaling 350–400 million dollars for Korean merchants. Misrepresenting the racial disturbance as a conflict between Korean storeowners as ruthless exploiters of African American customers, the media diverted the African Americans' protest against white society and changed it into violence against Korean merchants (Scupin 2003, 257).

Public prejudice against Asian Americans is caused largely by a negative image created by the media. The seemingly positive image "**model minority**" by no means gives a faithful presentation of Asian Americans. It fails to present the extreme poverty of those Asian Americans who have not "made it," especially those Southeast Asian refugees who came in the 1980s. Not only does the image of the model minority fail

to present the diversity among Asian Americans in terms of economic achievement, education, and occupation, the term also covers up the discrimination inflicted on Asian Americans. Far from a new and constructive image for Asian Americans, the model minority is but another racial stereotype.

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XUEPING ZHOU

### ◆ ASIAN AMERICAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Asian American children's literature comprises multicultural children's picture books and longer works, both fiction and nonfiction, featuring Asian American themes and characters and books written by Asian American authors. In the past, books featuring Asian American themes and characters often depicted stereotypical characters and plots, but presently many Asian American children's stories depict the complex experiences of Asian Americans and work to dispel **Asian American stereotypes**.

In the twentieth century, as children's literature came of age, children's books featuring Asians and Asian Americans have, with a few exceptions, increased continuously. The **civil rights movement** initiated the provision of more multicultural children's literature. Unfortunately, many early books portrayed stereotypical Asian Americans, and, for decades, the only children's literature depicting Asian American themes, characters, and culture was written by authors who were outsiders to the culture. Many times, both the story and the pictures were stereotypical, even negative, and failed to portray the complex nature of Asian Americans and the Asian American experience honestly. Children's stories often portrayed Asian Americans as looking the same or at least being similar in appearance, and in the stories Asian Americans were

overly polite or in roles of servitude. The other extreme was presenting Asian American characters whose only interest was martial arts. *Five Chinese Brothers*, written by Claire Bishop and illustrated by Kurt Wiese, was published in 1938 but remains in print and is sometimes referred to as a classic. The story depicts a Chinese folktale about five brothers who stand up for each other when one of them is sentenced to death. Although the story remains popular today, multicultural children's literature experts point to the problems within this text. In the illustrations, all the brothers look exactly alike, something that may reinforce stereotypes that people of different ethnic backgrounds all look alike. Although some adults may question the power of one story in reinforcing stereotypes in children's minds, research in children's literature and child development indicates that children's books are one way children learn about the world around them; therefore, young children who read or have *Five Chinese Brothers* read to them may begin to make assumptions about the appearance of Chinese people.

Presenting Asian Americans honestly in children's literature, even in more modern children's books, is no easy task. Many teachers use the 1984 book *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson* by Bette Bao Lord in their classrooms as a way to open discussions about Asian American experiences in the United States. The book is well written, but members of the Asian American community point out that the main character, Shirley Temple Wong, seems too concerned, almost obsessed, with assimilation into American culture, even to the point of completely disregarding her Chinese heritage. Although this is certainly one aspect of the Chinese American experience, some critics worry that the book oversimplifies the Chinese American experience by having the main character focus so much on assimilation. In their article "Beyond Chopsticks and Dragons: Selecting Asian-American Literature for Children," authors Valerie Ooka Pang, Carolyn Colvin, MyLuong Tran, and Robertta H. Barba contend that the book does not accurately portray the struggle recent immigrants to the United States might encounter as they try to find balance between two cultures. Again, these points might seem subtle to adults who choose Asian American literature for children, but they are nonetheless significant.

Although Asian American children's literature continues to struggle (as do other types of multicultural children's literature) to gain a wider variety of quality children's books that depict honest experiences of Asian Americans, progress has been significant in recent years, and a number of Asian American children's books in print today represent quality Asian American children's literature. As with any type of multicultural literature, there exists a great debate over whether outsiders can depict the complex experiences of a culture in Asian American children's literature, but many insiders write and publish quite prolifically, making a great range of quality Asian American children's books available to children, their parents, and teachers. Quality Asian American

children's books present culturally pluralistic themes, provide positive portrayals of Asian American characters, are historically accurate, include authentic illustrations that avoid depicting characters of the same background in the exact same way, and provide strong and engaging plots and characterizations. Children's literature scholars and educators also point out that books about Asian Americans should be set in the United States, where the Asian American characters are clearly portrayed as Americans. Research indicates that many American students still see Asian Americans as foreigners, so children's books that emphasize the long history of Asian Americans in this country can be beneficial to all students.

Taro Yashima is one of the first Asian American children's authors to present believable images of Asian Americans. His book *Umbrella* was published in 1958 but remains a good example of Asian American children's literature. The story, intended for young children, is about Momo, a Japanese American girl who eagerly anticipates a rainy day that will allow her to use the new red umbrella and rain boots that she received for her birthday. The story builds anticipation for the rain, focusing on an experience that any child might experience, no matter their cultural background. This kind of culturally pluralistic plot that appeals to all children works to build connections between cultures when children are young.

Allan Say is considered one of the most important children's literature writers today, and his books provide accurate portrayals of modern Asian Americans while avoiding the popular stereotypes. In 1994, his picture book *Grandfather's Journey* won the Caldecott Medal, the most prestigious award for a children's picture book. In *Grandfather's Journey*, Say tells the story of his own grandfather, who emigrated from Japan to the United States and then went back to Japan. Say describes how his grandfather loved both countries and felt homesick for one when he was in the other. The illustrations in the book are of the highest quality and portray the Japanese American characters with Asian features but each with their own characteristics, unlike the characters in *Five Chinese Brothers* who all look exactly alike. In Say's 2004 book *Music for Alice*, Say tells the story of Alice, a Japanese American who grew up in California and loved to dance. She married a Japanese American businessman and moved to Seattle, but, when the Japanese attacked **Pearl Harbor**, which launched the United States' involvement in **World War II**, Alice and her husband Mark had to report to an internment camp in Portland, Oregon. In this story, **Japanese American internment** is portrayed with historical accuracy, and the internment does not break Alice's and Mark's spirit. Even when Mark's business is lost because of his internment, the couple tries to make the best of it and begins farming in eastern Oregon. At the end of the book, Alice returns to Portland, where she participates in ballroom dancing. Say's story provides an honest depiction of history while at the same time addressing a topic that reaches across cultures—the love of dancing.

Laurence **Yep** is the most prolific Chinese American children's book writer and is the recipient of the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award, an award that honors the body of work of an American author who has made a lasting contribution to children's literature. His novels *Dragonwings* and *Dragon's Gate* are both Honor Books for the Newberry Medal, an award honoring the most distinguished contribution to children's literature in the United States each year. His 1975 book *Dragonwings* is a fictional account of Fung Joe Guey, the first Chinese American aviator. The novel accurately describes prejudices and difficult living conditions for Chinese Americans in San Francisco in 1900. This novel and other novels by Yep emphasize the benefits of valuing one's culture while working to make a better life.

Other important Asian American children's writers include Janet Wong, Jeanne Lee, Yoshiko Uchida, Paul Yee, and Suzy Kline. Whereas children's books with Asian American themes were once only written by outsiders to the culture, today many Asian American children's writers publish books in a variety of genres that honestly depict the Asian American experience. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization.

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CRYSTAL McCAGE

### ◆ ASIAN AMERICAN POLITICAL ACTIVISM

Popular misperceptions of Asian Americans' political apathy have persisted, contradictory to the reality of their strong and longstanding tradition of political activism. The discrepancy between perception and reality comes partly from a tendency to focus narrowly on electoral participation. To appreciate Asian American political activism fully, we must go beyond electoral politics and adopt a broader perspective.

Historically, anti-Asian racism has been an overshadowing fact in the Asian American experience. In the pre-**World War II** years, it deprived Asian Americans of their political and socioeconomic rights, as is evidenced by state and federal legislation in a wide range of areas, such as taxation, property ownership, marriage, education, and

employment. Because of the principle established in the 1790 Naturalization Act that only free white men could become naturalized citizens, a majority of Asian Americans did not have the right to vote. What is more, racism also constantly threatened their existence in this country. The exclusion of Asian immigration, which runs through all major early immigration legislation activities before World War II, beginning from the 1882 **Chinese Exclusion Act** to the immigration acts of 1917 and 1924, became a major policy of the U.S. government. While keeping aspiring Asian emigrants out, the anti-Asian forces also tried to eradicate Asian communities already in the country using legislative and political power as well as violence. This is most clearly seen in the internment of over 100,000 Japanese Americans, many of them citizens, on the West Coast. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth century, therefore, Asian Americans devoted much of their political energy and resources to fighting racism.

Chinese Americans started such struggles shortly after the gold rush, which brought the Chinese forty-niners, the first major Asian immigrant group, to the New World. They publicly and defiantly denounced anti-Chinese rhetoric on numerous occasions. Early in the 1850s, soon after California Governor Bigler issued his oral attacks on the Chinese, for example, the Chinese responded by publishing a firm and lengthy rebuttal. Chinese Americans also unwaveringly defended their rights within the legal system. Although the numerically small and predominantly immigrant community was politically vulnerable, it won a few critical victories. One of them was the Supreme Court ruling in the 1898 *Wong Kim Ark v. United States* case, which concluded that “a child born in the United States, of parents of Chinese descent. . . . becomes at the time of his birth a citizen of the United States” (<http://supreme.justia.com/us/169/649/case.html>). The ruling upheld a fundamental constitutional principle established by the Fourteenth Amendment, which is cited several times in the ruling. Asian American immigrant activists also fought legal battles in an effort to gain the right to become naturalized citizens, as is exemplified by the *Takao Ozawa v. United States* and *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind* cases. In the latter case, Asian Indians strategically appropriated the racial requirement for citizenship by arguing that they were indeed “white.” But all such efforts to gain citizenship for Asian immigrants failed.

Many Asian immigrants worked in the United States as laborers. Therefore, Asian American political activism can also be found in their struggle against economic exploitation. For example, in what is known as the Great Strike, unionized Japanese plantation workers in Hawaii stood up, in enormous solidarity and strength, to the extremely powerful plantation owners backed by the government. In another strike against Hawaiian plantation owners in 1920, organized by Japanese and Filipino labor unions, workers came together across ethnic boundaries in a struggle for economic



justice. Asian labor activism also grew strong among farm laborers and cannery workers in California and Seattle as well as in many other cases.

Overall, ethnic solidarity was not a constant occurrence in the experiences of Asian Americans, who were divided by political, cultural, linguistic, and religious differences. Such divisions further weakened their political strength. Sometimes, transnationalism became a useful tool in their struggle for social justice. The rise of Japan as a new world power, for example, helped to gain important concessions from the U.S. government that benefited Japanese Americans in what is known as the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1908. Under the agreement, the restriction of Japanese immigration was left to the Japanese government and, more importantly, allowed the children and wives of Japanese immigrants already in the United States to continue to come until the passage of the Japanese Exclusion Act of 1924. As a result, the Japanese American community was the first and, for a long time, the only Asian community to transition from a bachelor society to a family-based one. Japan's international status also helped Japanese Americans win another victory: because of the intervention of the Roosevelt Administration, the Board of Education of San Francisco allowed Japanese students to attend integrated public schools, whereas Chinese students in the city had to go to segregated schools.

Strongly believing that the status of the immigrants in the United States was closely tied to that of their mother country in the international geopolitical hierarchy, Chinese Americans dedicated enormous energy and resources to strengthening China. Chinese American transnationalism became an effective instrument for political mobilization, which also helped bring their struggle for civil rights to a trans-Pacific arena. For example, in 1905 their compatriots in China launched a national boycott of American goods in protest of American exclusion policy, forcing the U.S. government to adjust its treatment of Chinese Americans, who took part in that movement with great enthusiasm and pride. During the long war against Japanese aggression in China from 1937 to 1945, Chinese Americans donated millions of dollars to help China. The slogan "to save China, to save ourselves" clearly captured the mentality of Chinese Americans, who, by organizing popular fundraising events, such as the "Bowl of Rice," launched under the auspices of the United Council for Civilian Relief of China in the late 1930s, successfully grasped the wartime opportunity to combat racial bias, which became increasingly difficult to defend after Pearl Harbor, morally and militarily. In spite of all its apparent limitations, the repeal of all Chinese exclusion acts in 1943 represents a turning point in Asian American history, which not only marked the beginning of the collapse of Asian exclusion but also gave an Asian immigrant group the right to become naturalized citizens for the first time in American history. It was a vital victory of Chinese American political activism, won in a transnational theater.

Transnational connections do not benefit all Asian Americans, of which the Japanese American experience during World War II serves as a strong reminder. In the post–World War II anticommunist red-scare environment, the loyalty of Chinese Americans was also scrutinized.

The 1965 Immigration Reform Act, which abolished the racist quota system, opened the United States' door to new waves of Asian immigration. Post-1965 immigration has significantly increased the Asian American population (from less than a million, or 0.3 percent of the nation's total population in 1960 to more than 14 million, or 5 percent of the national population in 2005). It has also increased its diversity and made all Asian American groups, with the exception of Japanese Americans, predominantly immigrant communities. Such a preponderance of immigrants is one of the main reasons for a relatively low voter turnout rate among Asian American communities. In New York City at the end of the 1990s, for example, only 38 percent of eligible Asian voters in the **Chinatown** area were registered, which is much lower than the rates for African Americans (88 percent), Latinos (64 percent), and whites (85 percent) in lower Manhattan.

The influx of immigrants also helps to explain the continued importance of transnationalism in Asian life as a vehicle for political mobilization. The massive protest in 1999 over small business owner Truong Van Tran's decision to display the flag of the Communist Republic of Vietnam and the portrait of its founder, Ho Chi Minh, lasted almost two months and drew crowds of up to 15,000 protesters in the largest Vietnamese American community in Westminster, California, showing the lasting impact of anticommunism among Vietnamese Americans.

Economic exploitation remains a focal point of Asian American political activism. More frequently than the prewar years, however, such exploitation comes from Asian American business owners. For instance, the 1982 strike of Chinese women garment workers, which drew more than 20,000 in public rallies, was launched against ethnic Chinese sweatshop owners.

Asian Americans continue to spend much of their political activism and energy on fighting racial discrimination, which has become less visible than before. In higher education, for example, efforts to limit Asian American enrollment have been carried out under the guise of reducing the "overrepresentation of a **model minority**."

A significant event in the development of Asian American political activism is the protest over the brutal murder of Vincent **Chin** in 1982 in Detroit by two white workers in the automobile industry, which faced increasing competition from Japanese automakers. The white workers mistook Chin for Japanese. The murder and the light sentence that the county court gave the two white men (three years' probation and a \$3,000 fine) triggered one of the largest pan-Asian American political protests. Since then, efforts have accelerated in developing pan-ethnic political consciousness, as is

embodied by the formation of a growing number of political organizations, such as the political action committee known as 80-20, whose goal is to create an Asian American voting bloc. Such activities represent one of the most important new developments in Asian American political activism. **See also** Japanese American Internment; Racism and Asian America.

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## ◆ ASIAN AMERICAN STEREOTYPES

Asian American stereotypes refer to the inaccurate representations of Asian Americans, their communities, lifestyles, and the values commonly associated with these diverse ethnic communities in American literature and culture. Because their emergence can be traced back to early American literature and specifically to discourses on flows of immigration from different parts of Asia, primarily China and Japan, from the middle of the nineteenth century onward, it is vital to distinguish between different forms of and modifications to the typecasting over the centuries. Its ongoing revision and yet reinforcement constitute the major problems of their continuing pervasiveness in popular literature and culture. Despite growing divergence into more complex representations, including self-representations, of Asian Americans, they can most usefully be grouped into a triangulation of such modes of stereotyping. They are roughly framed by a chronological development: first, what

may be termed the traditional types of the Asian in early American fiction and non-fiction writing, as well as early films, from **Fu Manchu** and **Charlie Chan** onward, and their literary legacies; second, the results of a revisionism that has ironically engendered its own sets of stereotypes; third, a self-reflexive play with stereotyping and the larger problematics underpinning its popular presence in contemporary cultural discourses. The latter development has moreover given rise to the similarly often self-ironic repackaging of both traditional and newly emerging stereotypes in Asian American fiction and film.

What have now come to be seen as the traditional stereotypes of the Asian American were created in nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century popular fiction by primarily white American writers, including Sax Rohmer, creator of **Fu Manchu**, and Earl Derr Biggers, author of the **Charlie Chan** novels, as well as Mark Twain, Jack London, Bret Harte, and Ambrose Bierce. Twain's "John Chinaman in New York" (1899), for example, marked out the easy typecasting of the Chinese immigrant as helpless, although in many early narratives, he was also emphatically loyal to the Anglo American heroes. The Chinese servant in particular functioned primarily as comic relief. Rohmer's **Fu Manchu**, however, embodied a more sinister stereotype: featuring in a series of novels, from *The Return of Dr. Fu Manchu* (1916), also familiar as *The Devil Doctor*, to the 1959 *Emperor Fu Manchu*, Rohmer's last completed novel, the eponymous arch villain is a foreign, incommensurately alien, master criminal, whose knowledge and ability to adapt to the challenges of a different culture single him out as a threat to humankind at large and Anglo American culture in particular.

Like Twain's fictionalization of victimized Asian immigrants in nineteenth-century America, Biggers's **Charlie Chan** novels were originally meant as a defensive, early revisionist reaction to the popularity of **Fu Manchu** and his various spin-offs. Although essentially ambiguous in its depiction of the role of the Chinese American, the series was thus conceived as a counterpoint to the hitherto prevailing fictionalizations of **Yellow Peril** discourse. Informed largely by post-Darwinian conceptualizations of race, such narratives of the threat posed by waves of immigrants and their intermarriages in a predominantly white Anglo American culture dominated representations of Asian Americans from the 1880s onward. The "Asian" in American fiction was primarily Chinese, primarily male, either a comically innocuous servant or sidekick on the one hand, or a dangerously clever, enigmatic, criminal mastermind on the other. Published from 1925 to 1932, the **Charlie Chan** novels, in contrast, posited an intellectual, able, ethnic Chinese detective. Popularized primarily by film adaptations from the 1920s onward, they have entered the popular imagination, in different ways reinforcing numerous stereotypes of the placid, Confucius-quoting Chinese American.

Such inadvertent reinforcements of traditional typecasting and the creation of even more invidious modes based on their opposites intriguingly form central points of criticism of Asian American literature. Seminal critical studies, such as Elaine Kim's 1982 *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context*, have even traced a direct continuity, or specific linkages, between the representation of Asian Americans in early fiction by non-Asian American writers and early autobiographical writing by first- and even second-generation immigrants. The bulk of recent criticism, including Asian American academics Cynthia Sau-ling Wong and Shirley Geok-Lin Lim, has furthermore rested on the quickly stereotyped juxtaposition of the China-born mother and the American-born daughter in the internationally popular fiction of Asian American women writers. Such influential literary and controversially autobiographical works as Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (1976) and *China Men* (1980), as well as the fiction of Amy Tan and Fae Myenne Ng, have indisputably contributed much to the sheer variety of fictional representations of Asian Americans and their experiences in contemporary American society or, alternatively, the renegotiation of their protagonists' often hybrid heritage. Yet they have also engendered new stereotypes that an expanding market of the New Literatures in English has capitalized on. The popular media at large, however, primarily channelled the stereotyping. In a tellingly titled study, *In her Mother's House: The Politics of Asian American Mother-Daughter Writing*, Wendy Ho speaks pointedly of "a consumer market for Tan's mother-daughter text that the major publishing houses were happy to accommodate (the nature of the beast) and the mainstream, sometimes tributary, media were happily recommending to readers, unfortunately in rather stereotypical ways" (1999, 44).

This consumer market was consolidated by the film adaptation of Amy Tan's first novel, *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), in 1991. The dichotomous structure of this new typecasting of Asian American family life has generated a proliferation of Asian American narratives, primarily by women writers. They share an equation of generational conflicts with cultural clashes, setting an Asia (almost exclusively China) of the past against a multicultural yet often dysfunctional, micropolitical family structure in the present-day United States. Testifying to the ongoing process of revisionism that characterizes the creation, solidification, and then vigorous rejection of such mass-market new stereotypes, both Tan's and Kingston's own recent fiction has significantly moved away from this disconcertingly popular juxtaposition.

If one of the most central stereotypes of the Asian American is moreover a peculiarly misleading identification with the Chinese diaspora, to the exclusion of the descendants of immigrants from other parts of Asia, in particular South and North Asia, these contemporary Asian American women writers have thereby instigated a significant move in leaving the recasting of China and the overseas, or

diasporic, Chinese behind. Their novels self-ironically satirize the expected structures that they nonetheless tend to reinforce, as readers are not always aware of the subtle ambiguities underpinning them. In eschewing the much criticized evocation of an exoticized China of the past, Tan's *Saving Fish from Drowning* (2005) hence marks a crucial departure. A multiethnic group of American tourists, accompanied by the disembodied—dead—Chinese American narrator, travels to Burma (Myanmar), in the process coming to terms with their own preconceptions and prejudices. In a similar move, Kingston's *The Fifth Book of Peace* (2003) deals primarily with Vietnam. The multiplicity of the Asian American experience and the ongoing "re-presentation" of Asia in fiction by Asian American writers has become the center of a self-conscious, often self-ironic exploration of the making of the stereotypes themselves.

But while fiction has become more variegated in its representations of Asian Americans and their different histories, Hollywood films have simultaneously begun to play out long-standing stereotypes with a different focus on self-irony. Thus, the growing popularity of Jackie Chan movies made in Hollywood has directed new attention to the presence of minority groups in the United States, today and in the past. *Shanghai Noon* (2000), *Shanghai Knights* (2003), and the casting of Chan as the hero's "French" butler in *Around the World in Eighty Days* (2004), based on Jules Verne's novel of 1873, have done much to put the Chinese immigrant back into the Wild West of the popular imagination. At the same time, however, their play with established stereotypes has ironically tended to reinforce as much as to satirize them. **See also** Asian Diasporas.

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## ◆ ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES

Asian American studies emerged as an academic discipline because of the civil rights struggles of the 1960s and 1970s. The Asian American movement drew attention to conditions of social and economic disadvantage affecting the Asian community that had been invisible to mainstream American society by creating parallels with aspects of African American and Chicano experience. Together with calls for improvements in housing, health, and education provision and measures to tackle high unemployment, the Asian American movement also encouraged the efforts of student activists, who protested the invisibility of Asian American culture in the perspective of the mainstream and the absence of Asian American historical and cultural experience from college and university curricula. The acceptance of the term *Asian* to encompass groups including South Asian, Filipino, and East Asian communities posed an ongoing issue in Asian American cultural studies: how the concept of *Asia* is to be defined in the Asian American context. The religious, linguistic, ethnic, and geographical diversity of “Asia” has underpinned long-term debates within the field of Asian American studies, as the field continually renews itself in response to changing patterns of Asian immigration to the United States.

This issue was addressed by the writer and scholar Frank Chin in the introduction to the groundbreaking anthology that he coedited, *iiiiiiii!: An Anthology of Asian American Writers* (1974). Chin proposed a sharp distinction between Asia and America, between those writers born in the United States of Asian descent and those writers who are Asian-born immigrants to the United States. Chin argued that only U.S.-born Asians could be appropriately termed *Asian Americans*. This claim was controversial because Chin excluded from the category of Asian American writers those writers who were first-generation American immigrants, and consequently Chin foregrounded the descendants of East Asian (Chinese and Japanese) migrants who had a history of settlement in the United States that went back several generations. So writers from more recent immigrant groups, such as South Asians and Vietnamese, were excluded from the category of *Asian American* writers. Indeed, how to determine whether a writer is “Asian American” is a fraught business. Possible criteria to make this determination include citizenship or residency in the United States; Asian ancestry, though this raises the tricky question of how a mixed-race writer would be included; texts that engage issues of Asian American ethnicity might legitimate a writer as “Asian American,” though this potentially excludes writers who do not write about their ethnicity; and the degree of congruence between textual subject matter and the objectives of the Asian American movement (such as bringing to visibility the history and experience of this excluded ethnic group), though this would exclude writers who depict a quest for assimilation into the United States as an “American” rather than an “Asian American” subject.

Early anthologies of Asian American literature tended to privilege writers from one of three Asian groups: Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino. *Asian American Authors* (1972), edited by Kai-yu Hsu and Helen Palubinskas, featured works by two generations of American writers, with priority given to American-born Asian authors over Asian-born American writers. This selection was in keeping with Frank Chin's restrictive definition of Asian American writers, set out in the introduction to *Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian American Writers* (1974), coedited by Chin, Jeffery Paul **Chan**, Lawson Fusao **Inada**, and Shawn **Wong**. The editors of *Aiiieeeee!* promoted in their selection an approach to Asian American writers defined by Asian parentage and U.S. birth. The same group of editors published a companion anthology in 1991; *The Big Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature* is, as the title indicates, even more restrictive in which Asian groups can be included in the category of Asian America, though Eurasian writers such as Diana **Chang** and Edith Maude **Eaton** (Sui Sin Far) are included. In the same year that the first *Aiiieeeee!* anthology appeared, David Hsin-fu Wand edited *Asian-American Heritage: An Anthology of Prose and Poetry* (1974), a collection that extended the field of Asian American literature to include Koreans and South Pacific Islanders. Two years after the publication of *The Big Aiiieeeee!* the Filipina American writer Jessica **Hagedorn** published *Charlie Chan Is Dead: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Fiction* (1993). Hagedorn's anthology is liberal in its remit and representation of the category of contemporary Asian America.

Other Asian American literature anthologies do not so much represent the changing demographics of Asian Americans but instead address issues of gender, sexuality, and race. For example, *The Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology* (1989), edited by Shirley Geok-lin **Lim**, Mayumi Tsutakawa, and Margarita Donnelly, was the first anthology of Asian American women's writing and represented a landmark both in its emphasis upon gender and in the range of documents (poetry, stories, art, and reviews) that are included. As Shirley Lim remarks about the selection of writers, the diversity is so great that the unity of the anthology is continually in peril; however, this is the inherent risk of any project based upon the category "Asian American." A later anthology, conceived in this style, is Rajini Srikanth's *Bold Words: A Century of Asian American Writing* (2001), which includes writers of Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, South Asian, and Southeast Asian American heritage, with equal representation of male and female writers; however, the anthology uses a more conventional generic selection of literary texts that fall into the categories of memoir, fiction, poetry, and drama. Moving away from gender more narrowly perceived toward the issues of sexual difference and queer identities, David Eng and Alice Y. Hom edited the award-winning anthology *Q & A: Queer in Asian America* (1998), which brings together essays, personal testimonies, fiction, and art that address the intersection of



Asian American racial identity with queer sexuality at the turn of the twentieth century. A further example of the attempt to complicate received understandings of what constitutes Asian American literature and culture is represented by the anthology edited by Nora Okja Keller and Marie Hara: *Intersecting Circles: The Voices of Hapa Women in Poetry and Prose* (1999). This collection focuses on the work of women of part-Asian, mixed-race ancestry, which puts into question the racial and ethnic bases of Asian American identities.

Through the history of literary anthologies, which institutionalize and crystallize understandings of the category of Asian American cultural production, the complex contexts within which "Asian America" is constituted begin to become clear. The difficulty of this category, together with its necessity within a dominant immigrant culture that obscures the civil rights and cultural traditions of Asian minority communities, forms part of the effort to continually revise the basis of vibrant, relevant Asian American studies. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization.

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## ◆ ASIAN CANADIAN STUDIES

The emergence of Asian Canadian studies is a late twentieth-century development, emerging largely from Canada's adoption of an official policy of multiculturalism in 1985. The early history of Asian immigrants in Canada was marked by legislative exclusion and racial hostility. From 1885, Chinese immigrants were required to pay a

substantial (indeed, intentionally prohibitive) head tax that was not levied against any other class of immigrants, and as early as 1878 restrictions were placed on who could employ Asian workers in British Columbia. In 1907, in one of the most infamous acts of concerted anti-Asian violence, a mob destroyed Vancouver's **Chinatown** and much of the adjoining Japanese neighborhood or ghetto. Such events were followed in 1923 by a draconian immigration exclusion act that virtually stopped Asian immigration to Canada. With the outbreak of **World War II**, Canada forcibly evacuated Japanese North Americans from the Pacific Coast to detention camps in the Canadian interior, an act that preceded U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066, which removed Japanese Americans from the West Coast and detained them in internment camps. Some 23,000 Japanese Canadians, 75 percent of whom were citizens, were interned; families were broken up as able-bodied men were sent to labor camps. After the war, attempts were made to send ("repatriate") inmates to Japan rather than return them to their Canadian homes, and camp inmates were not permitted to return to British Columbia until four years after the end of the war. Only in 1947 were Asian Canadians granted the right to vote.

It was with the introduction of a national policy of multiculturalism, with the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1985, that an appropriate context for the study of the cultural heritage of Asian migrants to Canada became possible. Glenn Deer, in his introduction to the special issue of the journal *Canadian Literature*, devoted to Asian Canadian writing, observes that the hyphenated term *Asian-Canadian* is a product of early 1980s multicultural thinking. In the same issue of the journal, Terry Watada begins his essay, "Go for Broke: The Spirit of the 70s," with the reminder: "In 1969, there was no such thing as Asian Canadian writing, at least not as a genre. In fact, there was no such thing as an Asian Canadian. Japanese Canadians were Japanese; Chinese Canadians were Chinese. The generic term was 'Oriental'" (1999, 80). The title of his article refers to the battle cry of the 442 Battalion, the all-nisei company that fought for the United States in World War II to stake a claim for American identity and allegiance. Watada reminds also that the movement for government redress of the civil rights violations suffered by Japanese Canadians had its origins at the same moment in the 1980s. This movement drew upon the recently published histories of the Japanese Canadian internment, a history that was not told until the 1970s. In September 1988, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney offered an official apology and the promise of compensation to all victims of the internment program. The story of Japanese Canadian internment and the successful struggle for redress was told by Roy Miki and Cassandra Kobayashi in the book *Justice in Our Time: The Japanese Canadian Redress Settlement* (1991).

Despite this history of anti-Asian hostility and exclusion, an Asian migrant culture flourished in Canada. In 1939 *The New Canadian*, a Japanese Canadian community

newspaper, was established, to which one of the best known modern Canadian writers, Joy **Kogawa**, later contributed. Her novel about the Japanese Canadian internment experience, *Obasan* (1981), and then Chinese Canadian Sky **Lee's** novel *Disappearing Moon Café* (1990), marked the beginning of a significant English-language Asian literary presence in Canada. Alan Hotta and Ron Tanaka were influential agents behind various attempts to create and coordinate an Asian Canadian cultural community. Californian poet and academic Tanaka brought the consciousness-raising cultural politics of the Asian American movement to Canada; Hotta helped to establish the *Powell Street Review*, a Japanese Canadian cultural magazine. The Chinese Canadian Writers Workshop, formed by Tamio Wakayama and Takeo Yamashiro, published the first English-language Chinese Canadian newspaper, *Gum San Po*. Prominent writers such as Paul **Yee** and Sky Lee participated in the Chinese Canadian Writers Workshop, which was the precursor to the Asian Canadian Writers Workshop, which has involved such celebrated authors as Wayson **Choy**, Denise **Chong**, and Lien Chao. Chao's book, *Beyond Silence: Chinese Canadian Literature in English* (1997), is one of the first full-length studies of this growing area of literary creativity, and, in her account of the emergence of Chinese Canadian literature, Chao emphasizes the important context of the Asian Canadian community and community activism as a formative agent.

The first anthology of Asian Canadian writing, *Inalienable Rice: A Chinese & Japanese Canadian Anthology* (1979), edited by Garrick Chu, Sean Gunn, Paul Yee, Ken Shikaze, Linda Uyehara Hoffman, and Rick **Shiomi**, was a chapbook published through the efforts of the Chinese Canadian Writers Workshop and featured writers who have come to dominate the category of Asian Canadian writing: Sky Lee, Paul Yee, Joy Kogawa, Roy Miki, and Jim Wong-Chu. Cyril Dabydeen edited a specialist poetry anthology, *Another Way to Dance: Asian Canadian Poetry*, in 1990. Further anthologies include *Many Mouthed Birds: Contemporary Writing by Chinese Canadians*, edited by Bennett Lee and Jim Wong-Chu (1991), and *Strike the Wok: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Canadian Fiction*, edited by Lien Chao and Jim Wong-Chu (2003). As these titles indicate, the difficulty of formulating an adequate definition of *Asian Canadian* results in anthologies that focus upon the work of one ethnic group, such as Chinese or Japanese Canadians, or deal with only one literary genre, such as poetry. The field of Asian Canadian studies is so diverse, because of the history of Canadian immigration and also because of changing attitudes toward what constitutes the "Asia" from which migrants are emigrating, that it always risks fragmenting into distinct ethnic subcategories. Recent South Asian Canadian writers who have come to prominence, such as Michael **Ondaatje** and to a lesser extent Bharati **Mukherjee**, emphasize this changing profile of Asian Canada. In this respect, Asian Canadian studies confronts the same issues that scholars of **Asian American studies** face. As Tseen-Ling Khoo has persuasively argued, the very existence of the field of Asian

Canadian studies offers a public image of Canada as a nation that is tolerant and successfully multicultural. Invested in programs such as Asian Canadian studies is the management of Canada's image abroad, as well as the management of domestic multicultural communities, through policies of official multiculturalism, which produce particular sanctioned fields of minority or ethnic study. For this reason, the broad category of Asian Canadian studies sustains the value of multiculturalism, even as it draws its existence from that same multicultural policy. **See also** Japanese American Internment; Multiculturalism and Asian America.

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### ◆ ASIAN DIASPORAS

The term *diaspora* refers literally to a "scattering," which, in human terms, signifies the dispersal of people through the mechanism of migration from a single homeland across many continents and nation states. Among the best known historical diasporas are those affecting Jewish and Armenian communities, and the African communities that were dispersed because of the international slave trade. Diasporic groups, while having their origin in migration, also sustain a sense of cultural identity with the homeland that unifies members in a complex international or transnational network of relations. These relations can be more or less formalized; some community groups form into regional organizations that meet regularly to foster relations and to seek mutual economic and other benefits. For example, transnational beauty pageants, such as the Miss Chinese Cosmos competition, formalize transnational relations and

promote common cultural identifications, both among diasporic communities and between those communities and the Chinese homeland. It is this ongoing connection with an Asian “homeland,” in which the United States is constructed as a “hostland,” that Shirley Geok-lin Lim identifies as the obstacle to widespread acknowledgment of Asian diaspora writing. Diaspora sustains the backward vision of first-generation immigrants into subsequent generations. Shirley Lim was born into a Malaysian Peranakan family, part of the ethnic Chinese Hokkien-speaking community that was established in the Malacca region centuries ago. Hence, the extent to which diaspora texts can be incorporated into the national canon of “American literature” or the cultural nationalism of “Asian American literature” is compromised. The concept of a distinct canon of Asian diasporic literature is equally problematic.

A diaspora is a product of the historical phenomenon of Asian immigration and, as a result, is geographically, historically, and culturally complicated by the shifting definition of *Asia*. The Asian communities included in the category of “Asian America” are a dynamic group that changes in response to patterns in Asian immigration. The oldest and largest groups are East Asian: Chinese is the largest, the next largest group is Filipino, followed by Japanese. The most recent wave of Asian migrants to the United States comprises Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians; and South Asians, who include immigrants from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives. Correspondingly, in recent years Asian America has come to include writers of Vietnamese, Burmese, and Southeast Asian descent. In 1990, 6.9 million Asians were counted by the U.S. Census. Between 1990 and 2000 the diasporic Asian American population, of people born in the United States rather than Asia, had increased by 48 percent. In comparison, the total U.S. population grew by only 13 percent. This diversity is reflected in the very different histories of each Asian group in the United States.

Mass Chinese immigration began in the mid-nineteenth century, coinciding with the California gold rush and with conditions in China that made migration an attractive option for those suffering from famine and violent political unrest. In the 1860s, and increasingly after the abolition of slavery, cheap Chinese laborers (coolies) were imported to fill the labor gap created by the absence of slaves in the American South and to work on the **transcontinental railroad**, the Hawaiian sugar plantations, and in other industries such as logging and mining. These Chinese laborers were seen as sojourners: temporary workers who would eventually return to China. Increasing numbers of Chinese sojourners, however, created public anxiety, particularly in California and the Pacific Northwest. Subsequently, the first of several **Chinese Exclusion Acts** was passed in 1882 and remained in operation until the Immigration Acts of 1943 and 1946 allowed a quota of Chinese immigrants and resident aliens to establish themselves legally in America. During this period, Chinese migrants were forbidden

naturalization as U.S. citizens, and so they continued to look to China as a cultural “home.” This is not to suggest that Chinese communities in the United States did not strenuously object, in the courts and wherever their voices could be heard, against the range of prejudice they faced. **Chinese American autobiographies**, from the late nineteenth century onward, respond to this racial discrimination, explaining Chinese cultural practices to remove the exotic and threatening otherness of the Chinese community. Texts such as Lee Yan Phou’s *When I Was a Boy in China* (1887), Yung Wing’s *My Life in China and America* (1909), and Wu Tingfang’s *America through the Spectacles of an Oriental Diplomat* (1914) explain why Chinese lifeways, rituals, ceremonies, and cultural habits are different. Edith Maude **Eaton** (Sui Sin Far), the first Asian American writer of short fiction, published her autobiographical text “Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian” to draw attention to the plight of Eurasians, who were accepted neither by the white community nor by the Chinese during this period of violent anti-Chinese sentiment. Her younger sister, Winnifred **Eaton** (who wrote under the Japanese pseudonym, Onoto Watanna), became the first Asian American novelist when *Miss Nume of Japan* appeared in 1899. Eaton’s fictional subject was the impoverished conditions of life imposed upon Chinese immigrants living in ethnic ghettos or **Chinatowns**, often referred to as bachelor societies because of the absence of women. “Oriental” (Chinese and Japanese) women were specifically excluded from immigration to the United States by the terms of the Page Act of 1875. The gender imbalance of these Chinese communities is addressed by Louis **Chu** in his novel *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (1961). Chu sets the novel during the period of transition following the reform of immigration law in the mid-1940s when small numbers of Chinese women could enter the United States.

The 1970s saw the emergence of the Asian American movement and an accompanying Asian American cultural nationalism. Representative of efforts to create an authentic identity for Chinese Americans is the work of playwright, novelist, and scholar Frank **Chin**. Chin has famously claimed that only writers born in the United States and writing in English can be counted as Chinese American writers; this is a radically counterdiasporic perspective that would accept only individuals of the second and subsequent generations as **Asian American**. Frank Chin’s views about “authentic” Chinese American identity brought him into a well publicized conflict with Maxine Hong **Kingston**, author of the widely read autobiographical narratives *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men*. Chin accused Kingston, along with other Chinese American writers such as Amy **Tan** and David Henry **Hwang**, of using inauthentic, Western literary forms in their work. More recent writers such as Gish **Jen**, in her novels *Typical American* and *Mona in the Promised Land*, and David Wong **Louie**, in his novel *The Barbarians Are Coming* and stories collected in *Pangs of Love*, explore an experience of Chinese America that exists outside the symbolic space of Chinatown. Instead,

Chinese American identity is explored within the context of contemporary American multiculturalism, though the issues of racism and Oriental stereotyping are also present in these texts.

In contrast to Chinese immigrants, many of whom were temporary workers and were perceived as such in general terms in the United States, Japanese immigrants tended to be permanent settlers rather than sojourners. From the period of the Meiji Restoration in the 1860s, Japan pursued a policy of encouraging greater contact with the West to increase trade and Japanese industrialization. This resulted in some Japanese immigration to the United States, but significant numbers arrived only between 1890 and 1910. These immigrants tended to settle in territories like Hawaii, the Pacific Coast, and the largely undeveloped northwestern United States. The Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907 between the U.S. and Japanese governments allowed Japanese laborers to bring "picture wives" to the United States. This was a form of arranged marriage, brokered by a matchmaker, using only pictures of each of the intended couple. This system allowed for the establishment of Japanese families and permanent communities much earlier than was the case for Chinese immigrants, who felt the full impact of the exclusionary immigration laws. By ensuring that brides were brought to the United States from Japan (Korea, in the case of Korean picture brides), diasporic ties with the culture and lifeways of the homeland were reinforced in each generation. Until the U.S. Immigration Act of 1917, which introduced an "Asiatic Barred Zone" from which migrants were not accepted, Japanese immigrants were not subjected to the same racial hostility as Chinese immigrants. Indeed, a vocabulary developed to distinguish each generation born outside Japan: the first-generation of American-born Japanese are referred to as *issei*, the American-born second generation are *nisei*, and third-generation Japanese Americans are referred to as *sansei*.

From the 1920s, a flourishing Japanese American press enabled writers to publish their work in the United States. A distinctively Japanese American literature emerged in the period following **World War II** and the imprisonment or internment (between 1942 and 1945) by the War Relocation Authority of Japanese Americans residing in the western United States. This internment experience, following Executive Order 9066, uprooted 110,000 Japanese Americans from their homes and sent them to live behind barbed wire fences in inland desert camps. Literary works that explore the internment experience tend to focus upon the distinction between "Japanese" and "American" identities, and the need for U.S.-born individuals to understand their location between these two worlds. John Okada's *No-No Boy* and Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter*, for example, seek to distinguish between what is subjectively American from what could be termed Japanese or Japanese American. Internment autobiographies, such as Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston's *Farewell to Manzanar*,

record the suffering and sacrifice, in the face of pervasive American racism, of relocated Japanese American families and individuals.

The American annexation of the Philippines occurred after two separate wars: the Spanish-American War of 1898 and the Filipino-American War (1899–1902). After the cessation of the second war, Filipinos began to immigrate to the United States in large numbers, though Filipino migration to the United States can be dated back to the seventeenth century. Direct American colonial rule of the archipelago was modulated with greater self-rule during the Commonwealth Period of 1935–1946, after which the Philippines gained independence. The Philippines constituted a region of free trade for the United States up to and after independence. During the period between 1906 and 1946, 150,000 Filipinos migrated to the United States, mostly to settle in California and Hawaii; the Hawaiian sugar plantations commissioned many Filipino laborers. According to the terms of the 1934 Tydings-McDuffie Independence Act, these migrants occupied the status of “nationals” rather than citizens on the one hand and “aliens” on the other, even though they were traveling from a U.S. colony to the U.S. proper. A quota of 50 Filipino immigrants per year was imposed by the 1934 act. A significant wave of Filipino immigration followed the reform of immigration legislation in 1965, and the political and economic uncertainty of the Marcos regime in the Philippines accounted for increased Filipino immigration during this post-1965 period.

In the early part of the twentieth century, Filipino writers such as Carlos Bulosan, José García Villa, Bienvenido Santos, and N.V.M. Gonzalez wrote from the perspective of migrants to the United States. Bulosan’s *America Is in the Heart* stands as one of the paradigmatic texts engaging the Filipino American experience of isolation and economic exploitation. Later writers, such as Ninotchka Rosca, Linda Ty-Casper, and Jessica Hagedorn, continue to engage the question of whether the United States provides the opportunity for developing hybrid Filipino American identities and whether, or under what conditions, an “authentic” Filipino identity might be possible.

Korean immigration to the United States was inhibited in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by the exclusionary immigration laws that limited the eligibility of Asian immigrants. In addition, the Japanese annexation and colonial administration of Korea, which ended only in 1945, also limited the size of the immigrant Korean population in the United States. Korean immigration occurred in a number of waves: between 1903 and 1905 Hawaiian sugar planters recruited Korean plantation labor; in the early decades of the 1900s, farm and cannery workers migrated to California and the Pacific Coast; throughout the first half of the twentieth century students and political exiles entered the United States; and the reform of U.S. immigration quotas in 1965 heralded a further wave of Korean immigration.

The effects of Japanese colonization are addressed in various ways in the work of successive Korean American writers: Younghill Kang, Richard E. Kim, Sook Nyul



**Choi**, Theresa Hak Kyung **Cha**, and Nora Okja **Keller**. Second-generation Korean American writers such as Mary Paik **Lee** and Ronyoung **Kim** engage the issues arising from the Korean immigrant experience in the United States, not least the diversity and hybridity of Korean Americans. The part-Chinese, part-Korean Hawaiian poet Cathy **Song** exemplifies the multiracial or multicultural condition of individuals who are the product of intersecting migrant “routes” to America, particularly in her affirmation of her own multiple ethnic identities.

Significant numbers of Vietnamese began arriving in the United States not as immigrants but as refugees in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Saigon to the Communist North Vietnamese forces in 1975. Resettlement of Vietnamese refugees continued through the 1979 Orderly Departure Program. Before this period, a small diasporic Vietnamese population, comprised primarily of students and diplomats, resided in the United States, but the contemporary Vietnamese American community is U.S.-born. Much **Vietnamese American literature** reflects a refugee rather than immigrant experience: Le Ly **Hayslip**’s autobiographical works, like Jade Ngoc Quang Huynh’s *South Wind Changing* and Nguyen Qui Duc’s *Where the Ashes Are: The Odyssey of a Vietnamese Family*, offer Vietnamese perspectives on the military conflict and the place offered to Vietnamese migrants in contemporary U.S. society.

South Asian migrants to the United States include immigrants from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives. The earliest immigrants came to North America from the Panjab between 1904 and 1924 and settled in the Pacific Coast region of the United States and Canada. Under the terms of the 1924 Immigration Act, South Asians, like all Asians in the United States, were denied access to citizenship, and this legislative provision contributed to significantly reduced South Asian immigration. The quota system introduced with the immigration reform effort of 1943 reserved half of the quota for immigrants of the professional class. This meant that many South Asian migrants arrived in possession of a British colonial education and fluency in the English language. Largely because of this economic and social positioning, South Asians have been represented as the new **model minority**. However, this stereotype denies the increasing diversity of the South Asian American population. Recent writers grappling with the complexities of belonging, of claiming a heritage within a “hyphenated” cultural identity, include Meena **Alexander**, the poet Agha Shahid **Ali**, Sara **Suleri**, Bharati **Mukherjee**, Chitra **Divakaruni**, and Jhumpa **Lahiri**.

The literature of each of these Asian American groups engages with the difficulties of entrenched U.S. racism and exclusion, together with the impossibility of returning “home.” This is the diasporic dilemma: home is both the nation of residence and the culture of birth. The complexity of negotiating this “between world” condition is the consequence of the history of American immigration and the legacy of Asian

emigration. **See also** Japanese American Internment; Multiculturalism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America.

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## ◆ ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDERS

Based on physical and cultural differences, the Asian Pacific Islands are composed of three main parts. Located in the Southwest Pacific, the Melanesian Islands are clustered around the northeastern part of Australia and cover New Guinea, Fiji, and the Solomon Islands. The history of these islands used to be characterized by European colonization, but now these islands have assumed identities of independence, though some remain parts of Indonesia. More than 3.5 million people living on this part of the islands seldom migrate to the United States, so their cultures remain relatively free from the influence of American culture.

The Micronesia Islands are located in the midwestern part of the Pacific, and the largest island is Guam, with a population of about 105,000 and an area of 206 square miles. Its residents became U.S. citizens in 1952, 54 years after the United States assumed control of the island. Around 93 other Micronesian islands, which have a population of about 125,000 and an area of 708 square miles, are "the Trust Territory formed by the United Nations after **World War II**" (Kotchek 1986, 34). As the trustee of these islands, the United States is interested in them mainly for military purposes.

The Polynesian Islands, scattered across the triangular area of the central and eastern Pacific, are made up of Samoa (American Samoa and Samoa), the Cook Islands, French Polynesia (Tahiti and the other Society Islands, the Marquesas Islands, the Austral Islands, and the Tuamotu Archipelago), the island of Niue, the islands of Tokelau, Tuvalu (formerly the Ellice Islands), the islands of Tonga and of Wallis and Futuna, the Hawaiian Islands, and Pitcairn Island. New Zealand's original inhabitants, the Maori, are also known as Polynesian. These islands have suffered from colonization

by both European countries and the United States. Tonga used to be colonized by Great Britain, Marquesa and Tahiti by France, and Samoa and Hawaii by the United States.

Before 1941, migration from these islands to the United States was limited. After World War II, however, migration has undergone a great change. The access to Western values and technology made an increasing number of islanders realize that the self-sufficient economy no longer suited them and that a materially comfortable life was more attractive. Therefore, "with the push of population and economics and with the pull of expectations for life in a developed country, Pacific Island migration has increased exponentially" (Kotchek 1986, 34). Nevertheless, the U.S. Immigration Act of 1965, though removing national origin quotas from migration to the United States, stipulated that only those who had certain qualified professional skills and had families in the United States could apply for U.S. citizenship.

It is on the Polynesian Islands, specifically on Samoan Islands, that the transformation of migration to the United States and the corresponding effects on the island culture can be observed. During the late nineteenth century, the rivalry between the United States and Germany for the control of the Samoan islands ended with mutual partition of the islands. Western Samoa was under the control of Germany and New Zealand before and after World War I, respectively. In 1962, Western Samoa won its independence. American Samoa was under dominion by the U.S. Navy until 1952, when the Navy closed its Samoa base. Since then, it has been governed by the Department of the Interior. Economic depression followed the removal of the Navy base in Samoa, and residents began to migrate to Hawaii and the West Coast of the United States. Since the kin network served as the main channel through which migration was made, American Samoans, once settled in the United States, attempted to maintain close family ties. However, the scattered family relatives across the United States found it difficult to sustain such family-centered Samoan culture. The different ethnic groups around them, the difficulties in learning English, and the mainstream values that emphasized competition and success have formed an immense challenge to their ethnic culture. Samoan students in American public schools are "often discomfited by the atmosphere of competition and aggressiveness" (Kotchek 1986, 36).

Despite the slim chance for American Samoans to provide family alliance across scattered states, the Samoans make full use of the opportunity to support each other within the family circle. Such an extensive scale of mutual support in both material and spiritual aspects, however, met with critical observation from employers of these Samoans. To counter the opposition from their employers, the Samoans must form alliances on a larger scale. However, their confinement within the family circle prevents them from being able to achieve the goal of winning more rights. Thus, the advantages and disadvantages of the American Samoan culture of close family ties are exposed.

Similar to Chinese immigrants, the Samoan immigrants in the United States also experience generational differences in their attitude toward their traditional ethnic culture. The first generation tended to cling to their ethnic culture, which provided immense support for their survival. The second generation was inclined to assimilate into the American mainstream culture, at the expense of compromising their ethnic identity. The third generation, however, torn between their ethnic identity and their American identity, experiences ceaseless internal conflicts.

In a similar vein, the culture of Hawaii was also facing the threat of Western values. In fact, since Captain James Cook's discovery of Hawaii in 1778, the islands have been exposed to the West. In the early nineteenth century, American whaling ships had been sailing in Hawaii, and depictions of such experiences of exploration can be seen in Herman Melville's *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* (1846) and *Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas* (1847). The arrival of New England missionaries in 1820 transformed Hawaii in that Protestant and Roman Catholic beliefs were introduced and that written language replaced oral literature. Despite the missionary support for the islands' Kamehameha kingdom in guarding its independence, the sovereignty of the islands had been the target of control by the United States, Great Britain, and France. Such rivalry ended with the Kamehameha kingdom being overthrown in 1893 and Hawaii becoming U.S. territory in 1900.

Although most people identify the culture of Hawaii with warm climate, primitive beauty, and ideal resorts, Hawaii also boasts of a multicultural identity. Since the first indentured Chinese field hands and the first Japanese came to the islands in 1851 and 1868 respectively, the population of the islands has been growing increasingly multi-ethnic. The earlier generations of these ethnic groups tend to associate life on the islands with that in their native lands, yet successive generations hit a dilemma in which identity crisis becomes increasingly poignant.

Similar to early Asian American literary works on the mainland, the earliest works written by Asian Pacific Islanders are largely autobiographical in nature. Florence Frisbie's autobiography *Miss Ulysses from Puka-Puka* (1948), written in English, was known as the first published work by an Asian Pacific Islander. The first published novel, *Makutu* (1960), by Thomas Davis, a Cook Islander, and Lydia Henderson, his New Zealand-born wife, depicts the cultural conflicts between Pacific and Western values in an imaginary land—Fenua Lei. The Samoan writer Albert Wendt was determined to write a literature characteristic of Asian Pacific Islanders, though, in his novella *Flying Fox in a Freedom Tree* (1974), the protagonist-narrator expresses his wish to be another Robert Louis Stevenson (Oceanic literature 2007). Still, Wendt was a distinct contributor to the establishment of an Asian Pacific Islander literature in that he made extensive use of the images, mythologies, colloquialism, and narrative styles that smack of Asian Pacific Island culture. Wendt's achievement is "his ability to

absorb the history, myths, and other oral traditions of his country and to synthesize them with contemporary realities and the idiosyncrasies of written fiction, imposing upon it all a vision that is his own" (Oceanic literature 2007). By setting up Bamboo Ridge Press in Hawaii, the Chinese American poet Eric Chock has made monumental efforts to explore the conflicts between Asian traditional values and modern Western values by writing poems in either English or **Hawaiian Pidgin** English. Having crossed the threshold of self-discovery, the literature of Asian Pacific Islanders seems to be developing into a multicultural effort that combines the ethnic root with other subsidiary branches.

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JIN LI

### ◆ ASSIMILATION/AMERICANIZATION

Raised first by Chicago sociologists led by Robert E. Park, who had been secretary to Booker T. Washington, the concept of assimilation has become essential to one's understanding of the major currents of ethnic studies. According to Michael Omi and Howard Winant, the ethnicity paradigm has passed three stages: a pre-1930s stage, in which the prevalent biologicistic view of race was challenged; a 1930s to 1965 stage, in which two "recurrent themes—assimilationism and cultural pluralism—were defined"; and a post-1965 stage, during which "group rights" met the challenge of neoconservative egalitarianism. Social Darwinists, Spencerists, and eugenicists believed that race embodied its hereditary features and that racial intermixture would result in "biological throwbacks" (1986, 14). Such beliefs, however, were questioned by progressive scholars such as Horace Kallen and by other Chicago sociologists such as Robert E. Park. Whereas Kallen advocated a coexistence of multiple racial and ethnic communities, Park proposed assimilationism based on the 1923–1926 Survey of Race Relations on the Pacific Coast that ranged from asking Asian Americans to fill out the questionnaire about intermarriage to accumulating examples of assimilated Asians. Park shared the same belief as the missionaries did: that intermarriage could serve as the evidence of American assimilation. He wrote, "If the Japanese are not permitted to intermarry in the United States, we will always have a race problem

as long as they are here" (1921, 61). Park once used "racial uniform" to depict the skin color of Asians and blacks, reflecting his assumption of exotic differences. Such foreignness of Oriental culture, in Park's view, suggested a gap between the Oriental and the Occidental. Such a view revealed Park's assumption of the superiority of American culture to the Oriental, so it was small wonder that he would continue to assert that race consciousness could provide a solution to close the gap. In this sense, the sociological approach to immigrant cultures was similar to that of the missionaries, because both had the same goal of cultural/spiritual conversion in mind.

When the Survey of Race Relations on the Pacific Coast came to its end, Park drew a conclusion that "The race relations cycle—contact, competition, accommodation and eventual assimilation—is apparently progressive and irreversible" (Yu 2001, 70). It is important to note that the race relations cycle has the American culture at the center, with various Oriental cultures to accommodate and accept the dominant culture. Park's complacency was noticeable when he stated, "If America was once in any exclusive sense the melting pot of races, it is so no longer. The melting pot is the world" (71). The ideological implications of the assimilation cycle were that the United States was inclusive and any foreign cultures would be subject to the transformation and become Americanized. Thus, Park presented a structure that emphasized the exoticness of the Oriental culture, which promised integration into American mainstream culture.

The Asians' assimilation, however, was not to be gained without undertaking a process of marginalization. Chicago sociologists, when confronted with narratives of second-generation Japanese immigrants that pointed to a lost identity, invented a new term of *marginal man*. In "Human Migration and the Marginal Man," which was published after the Survey of Race Relations ended, Park described various forms of marginality. He applauded the new cultural phenomenon by suggesting that the marginal man enjoyed more freedom to move between two cultures. The theoretical concept of the marginal man exerted great influence over Chinese and Japanese students in the United States. In 1928, a Chinese student named Ching Chao Wu presented his sociology dissertation in which he studied American **Chinatowns**. He echoed Park's theory about assimilation, whose nature lies in Americanization, by stating that the marginal man's "mind is the real melting pot of cultures" (qtd. in Yu 2001, 114). Nevertheless, as Yu points out, Wu's insufficient firsthand information about the Chinese immigrants and his heavy reliance on the documents from the Survey of Race Relations belies its validity. Ironically, Wu's attempt to contribute to the "Oriental" study proves to be an assimilation into the mainstream American culture represented by Robert Park.

Asian American intellectuals such as Rose Hum Lee, a Chinese American who held a doctorate in sociology from the University of Chicago, only strengthened the theory of assimilation in different ways. Instead of adopting the term *assimilation*, Lee

used *integration* to emphasize the importance of integrating into American culture in solving the problem of the marginal man. She argued for closing cultural gaps, which was “brought about by the processes of acculturation and assimilation” (Lee 1960, 127). Different from Park, who made more efforts at confirming the irreversibility of cultural assimilation in the direction of the occidental culture, Lee expanded the concept of assimilation into an ideal state in which no “dissimilar” people exist. By 1960, Lee advocated a complete commitment to integration. In her work *The Chinese in the United States of America* (1960), Lee contended that the only way to build an integrated community was to eliminate both physical and psychological distinctiveness. Her reductive binary distinction of Chinese traditional gender roles and American modern ones, however, became problematic when the women’s movement broke out in the United States in the same period. Lee construed American identity as cultural homogeneity, which was, in effect, a renunciation of the traces of Chinese identity.

The American Orientalism’s advocacy of assimilation exerted a great influence on the living of Chinese Americans, as can be found in Chinese American writings since the 1850s. Yung Wing’s autobiographical *My Life in China and America* (1909) challenged the American popular belief that Chinese were unassimilable and was regarded as influential in improving the image of Chinese immigrants. American culture influenced him so greatly that there were tangible evidences, both physical and cultural, of his American identity. He became so assimilated that “he had even almost entirely forgotten his native tongue” (Yin 2000, 72). To a certain extent, the second generation of Chinese immigrants relived the experiences that Yung had. As early as the 1920s, the second-generation Chinese had been striving to assimilate into American culture to such a degree that they were labeled “Orientals in appearance but not in reality” (118). The reason for their full-scale assimilation lies in their receiving American education while losing touch with traditional Chinese ethics. The pursuit of the American dream and the quest for independence and equality became central themes of their writings. Such themes were in keeping with the American mainstream culture. Pardee Lowe’s *Father and Glorious Descendant* (1943) and Jade Snow Wong’s *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (1950) are emblematic of Chinese Americans in the early twentieth century. As Xiao-huang Yin asserts, Low “epitomized the second-generation’s experience of assimilation as a process of alienation from traditional Chinese culture” (2000, 131). Wong’s *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, on the other hand, celebrates traditional Chinese values that had enabled the second-generation Chinese to assume “the role of being the **model minority**” (136).

Despite the dramatic social transformation of the Chinese American experience since the 1960s, it remains uncertain whether Chinese Americans can achieve success without having to undergo an assimilation experience. Contrary to the earlier Chinese American writing tradition of informing the West about Chinese culture, contemporary

Chinese American writers tend to forsake their Chinese identity and maintain an Americanized identity. As Maxine Hong Kingston claimed about the influence of American literature on her book *The Woman Warrior*: “My heritage is Shakespeare and Walt Whitman. The first story about the aunt in *The Woman Warrior* is straight out of *The Scarlet Letter*. . . . My experimentation with time and space, straight from James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. I consider the Beat writers—Kerouac, Ginsberg—they are my teachers” (Yin 2000, 259). **See also** Orientalism and Asian America.

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JIN LI

### ◆ ASSOCIATION FOR ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES (AAAS)

The Association for Asian American Studies is a nonprofit organization incorporated in the District of Columbia. Although AAAS currently has over 750 members comprised of faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students, publishers, and community organizations interested in the field of Asian American studies, its beginning was discreet. In 1979, Douglas W. Lee, who was a faculty member at the University of Washington at that time, organized the first national conference in Seattle, Washington. “He named himself president, appointed [Sucheng Chan] vice-president, and appointed Edwin Clausen as secretary treasurer.” However, Chan writes that Lee became disillusioned with the field of Asian American studies and drove all the way to California from Washington State to make Chan his successor. Chan writes that she consulted with various colleagues at the University of California, Berkeley, about the situation and did not receive much support or enthusiasm for keeping the organization



going. However, Chan felt differently and considered the possibility of the association playing a constructive role in developing Asian American studies programs throughout the nation. She recognized that, although UC Berkeley students may not feel a need for such an association, other students in nonprogressive states would benefit greatly from the advocacy of a national organization. Chan became the caretaker president and organized a second conference, where a process allowed the election of new officers for the organization. At that time, Don Nakanishi and Gary Okihiro assumed responsibility for the association (Chan 2005, 28). Since its inception, the association's membership has produced groundbreaking research and community activism in the areas of literature, social sciences, humanities, social justice, ethnic coalition building, and Asian and Asian American transnational/diaspora; the Association for Asian American Studies continues to evolve.

The association has been the center stage for scholars, academics, community leaders, and students to exchange ideas and foster dialogue about what it means to be **Asian American** and what it means to study and teach **Asian American studies**. The mission of the Association for Asian American Studies "is the purpose of advancing the highest professional standard of excellence in teaching and research in the field of Asian American Studies; promoting better understanding and closer ties between and among various sub-components within Asian American Studies: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Hawai'iian, Southeast Asian, South Asian, Pacific Islander, and other groups. AAAS sponsors professional activities to facilitate increased communication and scholarly exchange among teachers, researchers, and students in the field of Asian American Studies. The organization advocates and represents the interests and welfare of Asian American Studies and Asian Americans. AAAS is also founded for the purpose of educating American society about the history and aspirations of Asian American ethnic minorities" (Chan 2005, 29). This interdisciplinary association continues to advocate for social justice issues and has embraced a democratic process of including members from across the nation and the globe.

Since 1980, AAAS has held meetings annually across the nation and in Canada. With a growing membership, the association is currently rethinking the way in which regions are outlined for its membership. As of 2006, the organizational structure consists of a president, president-elect, secretary/treasurer, and board members from Hawaii/Pacific Islands, Southern California, Northern California, Pacific Northwest, and Midwest, South, and East Coast representatives. The regions were established to ensure that there was representation from the regions where Asian Americans studies existed at that time. However, the geographic boundaries of the regions were established in the 1980s, and the state of Asian American studies has changed significantly in the past two decades. The 2000 U.S. Census highlights the fact that Asian Americans are a fast-growing population in the United States. In almost every state, the public and

the media are becoming increasingly aware that Asian Americans are an important part of the American mosaic (Danico and Ng 2004). With this rapid demographic growth, there has been an accompanying expansion of university and college courses and programs in Asian American studies. Started at only a few colleges and universities in the 1960s and 1970s, the field has expanded through the continent, reflecting the evolving migration patterns of Asian immigrants and Asian Americans. In addition to promoting better understanding among the various Asian ethnic groups who are examined in Asian American studies: Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Filipinos, Hawaiians, Vietnamese, Hmong, Cambodians, Laotians, South Asians, Pacific Islanders, and other groups, the association is a resource for college campuses interested in developing an Asian American studies program. As the field grew, criticism surfaced to the California-centricity of the field. In the fall of 1991, on the campus of Cornell University, representatives from 23 colleges and universities established a caucus: "East of California" (EOC), within the Association for Asian American Studies. The EOC caucus has become the heart of Asian Americanists outside of California, often fighting to build Asian American programs unique to their regional needs and separate from California's program models, histories, and legacies. The caucus has successfully helped institutionalize Asian American studies outside of California, promote region-specific research and publications, and serve as a basis of support for individuals and programs in the network. Since 1991, EOC has organized an annual conference held at a member campus and developed a starter kit "to assist in the institutionalization of Asian American Studies on college and university campuses. Recognizing that students are invariably the leaders of such initiatives, the East of California Network has compiled this packet of information to respond to student requests, especially from campuses with no faculty or other resources in Asian American Studies" (AAAS Web site). The EOC also played a critical role in creating a directory of Asian American studies and scholars so that such resources would be available to those seeking information.

The history and information on AAAS are housed institutionally at Cornell University, which has served as host campus to AAAS by offering staff support to manage the association. In addition to managing the association's organizational flow, the AAAS staff helps facilitate the construction of the Web site and Listserv. Other members contribute by editing the newsletter and the association's publication, the *Journal of Asian American Studies* (JAAS), through Johns Hopkins University Press. Before the journal took form, the organization published an annual anthology, often with papers and essays drawn from its annual meetings at different sites across the country; however, as scholarship in the area intensified, JAAS was created to address the diverse body of scholarship among Asian Americanists. The quarterly newsletters highlight the latest research and news in the field, as well as job, professional, and

conference announcements, book reviews, community issues and activism, and public opinions on topics related to Asian Americans in North America. However, as globalization or neoliberalism became more apparent, AAAS looked at how the field has evolved and has been creating opportunities for dialogue and scholarship in the area of Asian American diaspora/transnationalism. The association recognizes the fluidity of Asian American studies and attempts to change as the field evolves.

In addition to disseminating information, the association acknowledges achievement by scholars, community leaders, and Asian Americans who have committed themselves in the area of Asian American studies. The book award committees, comprised of AAAS members, receive nominations from publishers and then select books in the areas of cultural studies, history, poetry/prose, and social science for AAAS Book Awards every year. The awards are given yearly to titles published in the field that deserve special recognition. In addition, the association has given a number of lifetime and community achievement awards to those who have made an impact on scholarship, service, students, and community. In addition to scholars, community leaders, and activists, AAAS also hosts the Anita Affeldt Graduate Travel Fund to support up to two graduate students who are upcoming scholars in the field to attend the national AAAS meetings.

The field of Asian American studies has grown rapidly, with a corresponding increase in the number of publications on Asian American history, contemporary issues, and literature. In addition to groundbreaking research, the association lends its support and resources to the growing demand for Asian American studies programs and departments around the nation. As progress and movement toward a more inclusive curriculum spread throughout the country, the Association for Asian American Studies too repositions itself to become a place where the public can turn for information, resources, and guidance to gain better insight into what *Asian American* means in a changing global world. **See Also** Asian Diasporas; Asian American Political Activism.

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MARY YU DANICO

## B



### ◆ *BAMBOO RIDGE: THE HAWAII WRITERS' QUARTERLY*

A publication dedicated to providing a venue for local Hawaiian literature, *Bamboo Ridge* had its early beginnings in the 1970s, which not only witnessed what many now call the Hawaiian Renaissance in language and music but gave birth to the push for writing in a “local” context—that is, a literature written by the people who grew up on the islands and who recognize the importance of island culture, experiences, and voices in their writing. Named after a famous fishing spot on the island of Oahu, *Bamboo Ridge* has, since 1979, devoted itself to providing a key outlet for a distinctly “local” understanding of writing. The push for local representation can be largely traced to the creation of Talk Story and the first major conference for Hawaiian writers, which took place in Honolulu in 1978. This was followed by Talk Story Big Island in 1979 and the Hawaii Literary Arts Council’s Writers Conference in 1980. Among the core group of enthusiasts who were paving the way for the emergence of local literature were John Dominis Holt, Milton **Murayama**, Maxine Hong **Kingston**, Garrett **Hongo**, Stephen Sumida, Arnold Hiura, and Eric **Chock**. Amid such excitement, Chock and fellow writer Darrell H.Y. **Lum** founded Bamboo Ridge Press in 1978.

*Bamboo Ridge* has published a number of local writers of diverse ethnic backgrounds. The list of contributors includes Eric Chock, Darrell H.Y. Lum, Juliet S. **Kono**, Wing Tek **Lum**, Susan Nunes, Marie Hara, Cathy **Song**, Rodney Morales, Ian Macmillan, Lee Cataluna, Wayne Wang, and Gary **Pak**. Some of the more notable collections are devoted to specific topics or to particular communities: *Hoʻi Hoʻi Hou: A Tribute to George Helm & Kimo Mitchell* (1984), an anthology devoted to the memory of two Hawaiian activists who were lost during a voyage of the *Hōkūleʻa* in 1977;

*Mālama, Hawaiian Land and Water* (1985); *Poets Behind Barbed Wire* (1985), which features a collection of tanka poems written by interned Japanese Americans during **World War II**; *Kauai Tales* (1985); *Paké: Writings by Chinese in Hawaii* (1989); *Sister Stew: Fiction and Poetry by Women* (1991); *Intersecting Circles* (2000), a collection exploring the issue of mixed-race heritage; *YOBO: Korean American Writing in Hawai'i* (2003); and *He Leo Hou: A New Voice—Hawaiian Playwrights* (2003). Coeditor Darrell Lum has pointed out that the journal is often printed without a glossary or annotations—the reasoning behind such omissions is the desire to preserve readership for a local audience. In other words, as a voice of the islands, *Bamboo Ridge* is not necessarily interested in promoting or printing glimpses of local life for nonlocal voyeurism.

The journal's importance was not lost on scholars in Asian American literature in the 1970s and the 1980s. Stephen Sumida, who was actively involved in the Big Island Talk Story conference and subsequent publication of an anthology by that same title, directed scholarly attention to the press' activities. Sumida's "Waiting for the Big Fish: Recent Research in the Asian American Literature of Hawai'i" was published within a special edition of the journal in 1986. In this essay, Sumida highlights the development of a lengthy canon that is ignored, given the preeminence of James A. Michener's *Hawaii* (1959) and A. Grove Day and Carl Stroven's largely Anglo American collection of writing, *A Hawaiian Reader* (1959). Sumida implies that *Bamboo Ridge* is the culmination of a long struggle to refute the assumption that "in this supposed paradise, hard-working Asians did not write, did not cultivate verbal expression while they cultivated Hawai'i's soil, much less indulge in verbal creativity" (1986, 303).

*Bamboo Ridge's* cause was also championed in the local press. In 1998, the *Hawaii Herald*, a Japanese American periodical in Honolulu, devoted a 27-page special issue to the press. In large part, the *Hawaii Herald's* decision to print the in-depth report came in the wake of scathing criticism leveled at *Bamboo Ridge* writer Lois-Ann Yamanaka, whose Book of the Year Award for *Blu's Hanging* was rescinded by the Association for Asian American Studies. In fact, the article goes so far as to cite the national success of many *Bamboo Ridge* writers—such as Lois-Ann Yamanaka and Cathy Song—who were given their first publishing opportunities by *Bamboo Ridge*. The report adds that despite financial difficulty, many valuable collections have been produced, including those devoted to Hawaiian issues.

Nevertheless, the 1990s were a turbulent time for *Bamboo Ridge* as Yamanaka was not the only writer targeted for criticism. At the 1994 Hawai'i Literary Arts Council Conference, Dennis Kawaharada directed heavy criticism at the emerging prominence of Asian writing with its penchant for nostalgic representations of family and homeland. Such views would become clearly linked to an assumed agenda on the part of *Bamboo Ridge* in the minds of scholars, who were quick to expand this line of critical

reasoning. Haunani-Kay Trask has been especially keen on challenging the ascendancy of Asians in Hawaii. To Trask, the literature of “settlers”—specifically mentioned are Eric Chock, Darrell Lum, Garrett Hongo, and Ron Takaki—and their claim to represent the islands results in the “falsification of place and culture” (1999, 169). Trask further reproves of the false nostalgia that is inherent in the use of pidgin and the Asian aspiration to dominate as the “unique voice of Hawai‘i” (170).

Rob Wilson attempts to contextualize the spate of racialized criticism leveled against *Bamboo Ridge* in his *Reimagining the American Pacific* (2000). For Wilson, the emergence of *Bamboo Ridge* must be understood as a “localist” strategy that confronts the challenges of globalization and transnational capitalism: “within the tormented cultural politics of the literary scene . . . local entrenchment in ethnicity and place-based identity, at times refuses to join in the global flow” (vii). Wilson astutely identifies the murky gray space posited by Hawaii’s transition from an independent Pacific nation to an American territory as an environment that on the one extreme nurtures the Native Hawaiian need to “possess and preserve the land as a locus of cultural identity” whereas *Bamboo Ridge* “posits a way of *reimagining* relationship among region, nation, and globe in which difference is not negated nor reified but constructed, negotiated, and affirmed” (179). In other words, *Bamboo Ridge*’s celebration and perpetuation of the “local”—which is an idealized amalgamation of different races and cultures—in many ways negates the absolute divisions between what is considered “foreign” and “indigenous.”

On the other hand, a particularly telling piece by Dennis Kawaharada indicates that perhaps much of the controversy over racial and ethnic representation stems from internal and highly personal conflicts among the writers themselves. Kawaharada’s essay “Local Mythologies” first acknowledges the importance of Lum and Chock, who helped the writer “reconnect with [his] roots and [his] childhood growing up as a pidgin speaker in Kāne’ohe” (2000, 189). Though he himself became managing editor and grant writer for the press, Kawaharada cites a certain “clannishness” permeated the group; he notes that the core members were well-educated, middle-class Asians who rarely, if ever, invited participation from *haole* (whites) or Pacific Islanders (including Native Hawaiians). He also argues that *Bamboo Ridge* became engaged in what many would call “vanity publishing” (217). Such sentiments were also echoed by another former *Bamboo Ridge* writer, Rodney Morales, in his essay “Literature.”

For their part, the editors of *Bamboo Ridge* have remained relatively quiet about the imbroglio that dominates the world of Western scholarship and academic discourse. In the Spring 1996 issue, Erick Chock released “The Neocolonization of Bamboo Ridge: Repositioning Bamboo Ridge and Local Literature in the 1990s,” within which he admits to upholding a certain ideal, that of the multicultural nation, which he felt Hawaii was a model for. Although he hinted of times that made him consider retiring

and dissolving the press (given the perpetual struggle to maintain fiscal solvency), *Bamboo Ridge* remains committed to its vision by continuing to nurture local writing through regular workshops and by publishing a wide range of new talents and voices.

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SERI I. LUANGPHINITH

#### ◆ BAO, QUANG (1969–)

Vietnamese American author, playwright, editor, and executive director of the Asian American Writers' Workshop (AAWW) in New York City since 1999, Quang Bao has been one of the driving forces and visionary leaders working to enhance awareness of Asian American literature. Moreover, as executive director, he has fostered an emerging community of Asian American writers through the many resources offered at AAWW, articulated as follows on its Web site:

Established in 1991, The Asian American Writers' Workshop, Inc., is a nonprofit literary arts organization founded in support of writers, literature and community.

Operating out of our 6,000 square-foot loft, we sponsor readings, book parties and panel discussions, and offer creative writing workshops. Each winter we present The Annual Asian American Literary Awards Ceremony to recognize outstanding literary works by Americans of Asian descent. Throughout the year, we offer various youth arts programs. In our space we operate a reading room of Asian American literature through the decades.

The only organization of its kind, the Workshop has become one of the most active community arts organizations in the United States. Based in New York City, we have a fast-growing membership, a list of award-winning books and have become an educational resource for Asian American literature and awareness across the nation.

Through his work at AAWW, Bao has advocated vociferously for Asian American experiences to be included in the U.S. mainstream through multiple literary genres. Of particular importance because of his personal history is highlighting the history of the Vietnamese in the United States.

Born on November 17, 1969, in Can Tho, Vietnam, Quang Bao fled with his family to the United States at the age of six in 1975. He and his family relocated to Sugar Land, Texas, and later to Houston, Texas. He received his bachelor's degree in English at Boston University and his Arts Management Certificate at Columbia University in New York City.

Many of Bao's stories involve tales, either fictional or factual, of the narrator's relationship with his mother and/or father. In fact, three works, "Mother" (2005), "Nobody Knows" (1998), and "Memories Are Priceless" (2003), all revolve around the personal revelations of a child about his parents, who are of Vietnamese descent. Underlying each work are the effects that the American phase of the **Vietnam War** has on both the child and his parents, especially in relationship to memory and loss. In "Mother" the personal loss is of economic class and status, as the mother transitions from being someone who can afford to hire housemaids to a refugee who has no home. The ending is the most poignant scene in that it reveals a sense of bitter-sweet loss when both the narrator and his mother must flee Vietnam in the middle of the night with the help of one of the mother's housemaids, Tai. The narrator details: "Tai said goodbye to me. We hugged. . . . Then, Mother reached into her pocketbook and took out the key to our house and handed it to Tai. And in one moment, however brief, all the maids in Vietnam owned everything. It was time to leave" (Bao 2005). This scene of possibility for the maid and the unknown for the narrator and his mother dramatizes the ambivalence and hardship it takes to leave one's past.

Whereas "Mother" displays the moment of exile, "Memories Are Priceless" recalls the moment of the exile's return to his homeland. Just as there is ambivalence and guilt in leaving, there is as much emotion in the narrative of return and reunion to one's place of origin. In reflecting upon his journey to Vietnam with his father, the narrator recalls, "I was born in Vietnam but I remember almost nothing about it. In returning, I yearned for a clearer picture of a place I had been trying to imagine for so long. At the end of the trip I only felt an overwhelming sense of loss and guilt, not



the connections I was searching for" (Bao 2003). What made the trip so psychically exhausting was that the possibility for a better life that was embodied with Tai, the housemaid in "Mother," is not realized. Even with the ousting of the Americans and the French, the hope that the Vietnamese people had of living a better life free from Western imperialism was outweighed by the constant poverty and strife experienced by many of the Vietnamese nationals who did not leave.

Finally, in "Nobody Knows," the narrator recounts his life with his parents in the United States. This story describes the negotiations both the parents and the son must make as they acclimate to a different country. For example, the parents urge their single son to marry and produce children, denying what their son has been struggling to convey to them through his letters—that he is gay. His parents, drawing from their experiences in Vietnam, attempt to convince him that it will be better for all of them if he chooses to get married and have children and that they will be able to assist him in finding a wife if need be. The undercurrent of their conversations, however, is the idea that their lives would be radically different had they not left Vietnam, had there not been a war. Thus, as the narrator points out, neither he nor his parents can fully overcome the mental, emotional, and psychic idea that "the war is over" (Bao 1998, 42).

Besides painting a picture of a devoted son in his few published pieces, Bao also incorporates aspects of sexuality into his narratives. In his support of Asian American writers, Bao focuses on many aspects of Asian American literature, particularly with respect to GLBT literature. As he articulates in an interview with *PersuAsian*, Bao states, "I think that gay Asian American writing pushes the margins. The works grapple with complicated, unspoken issues. I don't hold it to a different standard than what I would just plain old good writing but I think the perspectives are fresh and vibrant. . . . Over the next couple of years, the most interesting Asian American writing will be coming from gays and lesbians, refugees and writers from countries where the U.S. was a colonial power" (2005, 5). To this end, he coedited with Hanya Yanagihara the anthology *Take Out: Queer Writing from Asian Pacific America* (2000), which was a finalist for the 2002 Lambda Literary Foundation Award.

For his contribution to Asian American literature, Bao has received numerous awards and honors. They include the 2006–2007 Revson Fellowship, the 2006 Fiction/Creative Nonfiction Fellow from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, and an honoree of the 2005 M. Jacquie Lodico Distinguished Service Award at the Alliance 2005 Gala.

Bao has also been interviewed on Studio 360, an affiliate of National Public Radio, and has participated in the discussion session of the Search for Asian American sponsored by PBS. Finally, Bao has just completed his first novel, entitled *The Make Believers* (publishing date unknown).

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NINA HA

### ◆ BARROGA, JEANNIE (1949–)

A Filipina American playwright, dramaturge, director, teacher, and literary manager, Jeannie Barroga received a BA in fine arts from her hometown university, the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, and moved to California after graduation. She has been teaching playwriting, screenwriting, and theater classes at various schools and universities, mainly in the Bay Area, and has worked as a director. She founded the Palo Alto Playwright Forum in 1983 and was the literary manager for TheatreWorks, a repertory theater in Palo Alto, from 1985 to 2003. Together with Philip Kan **Gotanda**, she has co-mentored Asian American Theater Company's NewWorks Incubator program and currently she also serves as their artistic director. She is the recipient of many awards, including the 1991 Bay Area Playwrights Festival Ten-Minute Play Award, the 1996 Los Angeles Maverick Award, and the 2000 CalArts Award nomination. Her plays have been produced throughout the United States.

Barroga's work includes more than 50 plays as well as several cable TV productions. Her pre-1990 plays range from *Night Before the Rolling Stones Concert* (1981), in which a group of friends reunite for a Stones concert à la Lawrence Kasdan's classic *The Big Chill* (1983); to romantic comedies such as *Gets 'em Right Here* (1983) and *Batching It* (1986); to spoofs such as *In Search of . . .* (1984) and *The Paranoids* (1985); to historical vignettes such as *Wau-Bun* (1983), set in the 1850s, *When Stars Fall* (1985), which features the wife of General Custer, and *Lorenzo, Love* (1986), set in the 1920s in Taos, the New Mexican artist's colony. Barroga's explorations of

sociopolitical and cultural issues concerning Filipino immigration and life in the United States and in the Philippines have clearly been an important focus of her dramatic work, as already evident in her early plays such as *Donato's Wedding* (1983), *The Flower and the Bee* (1983), *Adobo* (1987), *Kin* (1990), *Shades* (1992), and the family comedy *Eye of the Coconut* (1991), in which she portrays the problems of different generations within a Filipino American family in the Midwest. Likewise, in her docudrama, one-act play *Kenny Was a Shortstop* (1991), based on an actual killing of an 18-year-old Filipino in Stockton in 1990, Barroga traces the roots of a family tragedy through the character of a Filipina Chinese journalist, Cora, who interviews the dead youth's parents for an article. Barroga's musical *The Bubblegum Killers* (1999), about competing Filipino gangs in San Francisco in the 1930s, was also inspired by a newspaper article. But Barroga has also addressed more general concerns about racial prejudices, national politics, and panethnicity in the context of larger, multiethnic frameworks. A prime example of Barroga's multiperspectival dramatic vision is her play *Walls*, which premiered at the Asian American Theater Company in San Francisco in April 1989. It received its fifteenth anniversary production by the Asian American Theater Company in 2006.

In a century dominated by monumental and controversial warfare, debates concerning the purpose and design of memorial architecture commemorating the unparalleled number of victims of some of the twentieth-century's bloodiest conflicts have been equally controversial. One of the most notorious controversies grew out of the plans for the most prominent American war monument, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, which was dedicated in November 1982. Cofounded by the veteran Jan C. Scruggs, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund organized a competition for the memorial's design. Although the winning design convinced the organizing committee unanimously, the design itself and the background of the designer caused one of North America's most notorious controversies over public art. The unexpected winner, Maya Lin, at that time a 21-year-old undergraduate architecture student at Yale, had designed a decidedly anti-monumental, modernistic memorial in the form of a V-shaped wall, consisting of polished black granite panels that rose out of the ground. These were engraved with the names of the more than 58,000 soldiers who died or were missing in action in Vietnam. Not only did veterans and others oppose the design because of its alleged "unheroic" character, but they also objected to Lin's age, gender, and Chinese descent. Eventually, and without Lin's agreement, a flag and a sculpture of three American soldiers (designed by Frederick Hart) were added to the site.

*Walls* centers around the Vietnam Veterans Memorial controversy and its sensitive issues of loss, community, and national identity. The play is set at the height of the controversy, between 1982 and 1984, and most of the dramatic action takes place directly in front of the memorial. Its intertextual references were mainly inspired by

Jan Scruggs and Joel Swerdlow's classic account, *To Heal a Nation: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (1985), with some of the play's characters clearly based on accounts in the book. The play opens with a heterogeneous group of people who are on a visit to the memorial with equally varied expectations. The historical figures of Maya Lin and Jan Scruggs are complemented by allegorical characters such as a news reporter, various veterans of Anglo American, African American, and Asian American descent, war protesters, a nurse, and two young, dead soldiers who appear as ghosts in combat gear. This multiethnic medley of women and men mirrors the conglomeration of daily visitors at the memorial and allows Barroga to present the audience with a multiperspectival view of the contested war and its equally contested memorial. Barroga also draws in the audience by building on the most striking component of the memorial as a visual medium itself, in which visitors can see their reflections in the polished marble and the names of the honored dead. The characters have been marked for life by their experiences of the war: psychologically, as in Stewart's posttraumatic shock syndrome and physically, as in the case of the paraplegic Morris and in the case of the two ghost figures, Dan and Jerry, who have lost their lives. As such, *Walls* functions as a dramatic analysis of war's repercussions and its gradual, traumatic encroachment into everyday life.

The collapse of the borders, framing private and public spaces, cannot be contained within a realist format, and Barroga resorts to a discontinuous time frame, flashbacks, and the use of ghosts. The cacophony of voices is further dramatized in the play's episodic structure. The conversations and arguments between various constellations of characters throughout the play (a veteran versus a nurse, an antiwar protester versus a veteran, Maya Lin versus the press) mirror their deep divisions. Even more importantly, these vignette-like debates essentially re-voice questions of whose version of events or whose perspective of the war dominates historical accounts, who defines public memory, and who shapes a politics of remembrance. Given the play's title, it also reflects the ambiguous function of the memorial itself: on the one side, as a place where pluralist and fragmentary memories are expressed in a moment of communal remembrance, and on the other as a site where the iconic wall reveals the persistence of other, imaginary walls, engendered by race, class, age, and so on. What at times makes the play slightly confusing simultaneously contributes to the play's literary reflection of the monument's "message," which Lin has always emphasized to be psychological, not political, by refusing to dictate or privilege any point of view. This same conception, however, has also been criticized, precisely for its lack of political intent, in that this kind of healing experience may also lead to a sort of national amnesia.

Barroga has realized that the memorial's minimalism allows for all kinds of interpretations and reflects it appropriately in her highly stylized play. Thematically, however, the play offers no healing closure. On the contrary, apart from the character of Maya Lin, the play also foregrounds several other Asian American characters who are

forced to face the irony that they resemble the very enemies the United States fought against in the **Vietnam War**. Although the play ends with a meditative gesture, as all characters together read the names on the panels until the lights fade, it becomes clear that, as one character proclaims, wars will go on despite monuments, stones, or statues.

In *Talk-Story*, which was first produced in April 1992 by TheatreWorks in Palo Alto, Barroga also uses the figure of a Filipina American woman journalist, Dee Abano, to explore intergenerational rifts within a Filipino American family and to retrieve Filipino immigration history to the United States by contrasting Dee's contemporary ambitions with her father's past. Barroga's dramatic portrayals of life in the Philippines and in the United States, marked by constant shifts in place and time as well as multilinguality, contribute to a broader mapping of Filipino American transnationality, which is also evident in the productions of the Filipino American Ma-Yi Theatre in New York and in Louella Dizon's play *Till Voices Wake Us*, in particular. Both Barroga and Dizon emphasize the importance of storytelling and the first-generation immigrants' function of bearing witness and of preserving a community's collective cultural memory. At the same time, they also indicate the unreliability of personal stories and the heterogeneity of Filipino identities and experiences. The challenges of establishing a new life in an immigrant context also form the basis for Barroga's Off-Off-Broadway comedy *Rita's Resources*, which premiered at New York's Pan Asian Repertory Theatre in 1995. In *Rita's Resources* Barroga humorously adapts the motif of the American Dream from Arthur Miller's classic *Death of a Salesman* (1949). With *Banyan* Barroga leaves the boundaries of realist theater, although keeping its dreamlike elements, and delves into Philippine folklore and American popular culture, mainly the American musical *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), based on L. Frank Baum's children's book *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900). First produced at the Asian American Theater Company in San Francisco in 2005, Barroga sends her heroine, the young Filipina American professional Ona, on a return trip to the Philippines. Not unlike Dorothy Gale, Ona has to undergo a heroic journey and is confronted with corruption, terrorism, magic, and evil spirits from Philippine folklore. In *Banyan*, whose title refers to the banyan tree, Barroga not only deconstructs essentialized notions of "home" and myths of easy cultural returns but also situates her characters on the fault lines of intercultural encounters and their specific challenges.

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CHRISTIANE SCHLOTE

### ◆ BARRY, LYNDA (1956–)

Graphic novelist, cartoonist, writer, and playwright Lynda Barry is well-known for her comic strip *Ernie Pook's Comeek*. Barry was born in Richland Center, Wisconsin. Her family moved westward, and she grew up in a multicultural neighborhood in Seattle, Washington. Being biracial, part Filipina and part Caucasian, she fit right into the neighborhood. She graduated from Evergreen State College, where she became friends with Matt Groening, who later created the *Simpsons*. He published some of her comics in the school paper. She later moved to Chicago, Illinois, and began her career.

Lynda Barry created a series of online cartoon strips that she collected into the graphic novel *One Hundred Demons*, which captures the angst of her adolescence. Barry tries to define her work as "autobifictionalography," a multigenre text, part fiction and part reality driven. Not only is the book nonconventional, but her multiracial construct is also nonconventional. Constructs or terms like *Asian American* do not seem to work when defining Barry. Other multiracial people have similar problems. For example, on the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, Tiger Woods, whose one parent is African American (black/Indian/white) and the other is Asian American (Chinese/Thai) called himself "Cablinasian," a mixture of Caucasian-black-Indian-Asian. African Americans were quick to point out that the white majority only sees him as black. Lynda Barry does not look Filipina with her red hair and red freckles, and the Asian American label does not quite fit her.

In her colorful graphic narrative *One Hundred Demons*, Lynda Barry illustrates her encounters with 17 demons of her childhood, one per chapter. The unconventional dimension of a 6 × 10 book looks more like a photo album or scrapbook with two panels per page. Indeed, the cover appears like a collage of images, cut and pasted onto the page. The bright colors and fanciful images are more feminine in nature than the haunting drawings of ghosts and monsters found throughout *One Hundred Demons*. Each chapter in her narrative album begins with a two-page splash section, creating a montage effect and functioning as a preview and transition. Usually found within the splash sections are preview panels for the chapter, the words *Today's Demon* on top of the panel, and an assortment of added drawings with a multitude of demons of the

moment, appearing to be cut and pasted, or ripped and glued onto the pages. In each chapter, she fights demons of her childhood, such as her worst ex-boyfriend, her first job, hate, resilience, and even the Filipino vampire Aswang.

Added to the format of the text, Barry has opening and closing sections that she calls "Intro" and "Outro" that function much like a preface and epilogue. These sections differ visually from the book as she discusses the meta-process of creating the book. She becomes a character as a mature adult, explaining the origins of a Zen exercise. Barry introduces the innovative narrative device for her text: the Zen painting exercise called "One Hundred Demons," developed by the Japanese monk Hakuin Ekaku (1686–1769). Barry mentions her discovery of this artist in Stephen Addiss's book *The Art of Zen* (1989). Hakuin painted these demons as a way to face his own demons. Zen paintings are usually done in black ink contrasted against white paper. Hakuin's paintings, however, are in color, just as Barry's graphic novel is in color.

One chapter or demon she fights is the Aswang, the Filipino vampire. The Aswang tale introduces an important occurrence for all immigrants: the immigration of cultural fables and morals. The Aswang tale by Lynda Barry explores the relationship between mothers and daughters. Lynda is not close to her mother, but neither is her mother close to her own mother (Lynda's grandmother). The grandmother explains to young Lynda, "When your Mommy first arrive in this country, she thought the Aswang did not follow her. Too much ocean! But the Aswang don't care about the Ocean!" (*One Hundred Demons* 2005, 92). Her mother is not free from the clutches of the Aswang as Lynda's grandmother had told her, and the grandmother reminds her mother of this. Her mother is still haunted by the Aswang in America, especially since her own mother continues to remind her of the horror. Lynda's grandmother seems to taunt her daughter joyfully with the horrors of the Aswang tales.

One of the purposes of the Aswang tale is to warn of the consequences, such as unwanted pregnancies, just as the tale of the "No Name Aunt" in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* functioned in a similar manner. Filipino women warn girls about the *hiya* (shame) that can occur to women who do not maintain respectable practices. Though Aswangs can be males, Aswangs are more often females, who attack pregnant women, sucking the blood of the unborn. Women are taught to fear Aswangs, who come in many disguises. Some are dogs, while others can be handsome men who take young women away from their families, just as Lynda's mother was taken away to the United States.

Though one can kill an Aswang, one cannot kill gossip or the fear of gossip, so Lynda learned not to communicate the truth to her mother. The less her mother knew, the better. Lynda's mother "didn't know about my secret life" (Barry 2005, 164). Perhaps it is normal for most teenagers not to communicate with their parents. However, this can be even more intense for children of Filipino immigrants, where the relationship is meant

to be intimate and interactive. Whenever the mother appears in the book, in some 22 out of 162 panels, she is calling someone a name (usually Lynda), screaming at Lynda, or both screaming and calling Lynda a name. For the most part, yelling at Lynda is the norm. On one occasion, Lynda's mother screams and threatens her with the ultimate revenge that she too will one day experience her own hell by having children (Barry 2005, 95). Since her mother is always abusive, the readers become used to it and start to accept the mother on her own terms. With an abusive relationship between the grandmother and the mother, the cycle of maternal suffering and mistrust is complete.

In the chapter called "Dogs" (2005, 170–180), Lynda Barry writes that she has avoided hell by not having any children. However, Lynda did have dogs. If you ask dog owners if their dogs are their children, many would probably say yes. In some ways, dogs are more childlike, never growing up and leaving, staying obedient even as they age. The story about the origins of this dog reveals much. Physically, the adult Lynda now looks like her mother with her hair tied up in a bun and wearing glasses. Lynda, who is married, decided to save a dog, Ooola, who was badly beaten and wounded from the shelter. She decided to treat the wounded dog the same way she had been treated growing up in an effort to make the dog strong and to teach it who was boss. The turning point was when the dog retaliated and bit her. This bite from the dog parallels an incident in Lynda's childhood when she bit her mother in retaliation for not talking about her stuffed bear in a respectful fashion. Then she remembered how different teachers taught her. Those teachers who were tough and relentless only made Lynda, the child, worse. However, one teacher was kind to her and made a positive impact. Being humane and understanding was more effective than being fierce.

With this insight, the husband and wife started to spoil the dog and gave it a second chance. This worked. The angry dog became a "good" dog. Ooola was not an Aswang waiting for the night to segment into two pieces, to fly off, and to find another victim sleeping in bed, sucking up the nutritious inner organs for sustenance. Instead, Ooola was trusted to sleep on their bed in peace. It is critical to note that Ooola is female because the relationship between Lynda and Ooola parallels her own childhood relationship with her mother. Though they were not able to repair the damage of abuse caused by her mother, Ooola became like a daughter who felt love and trust. Thus, love is possible between a mother and daughter.

By telling such stories, using words to fight words and using visual illusions to fight delusion, Lynda Barry breaks the spell of the Aswang, just as Hakuin broke the spell of his childhood hell by cultivating Zen in painting pictures of Hell. Art is salvation. It is not the artifact that has power to cast a spell upon a person. It is the person attached to the delusion that holds the power. Liberation is freedom from the tongue that sucks one's soul dry: vampires or mothers. **See also** Biraciality.



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WAYNE STEIN

### ◆ BATES, JUDY FONG (1949–)

Teacher, storyteller, and fiction writer, Judy Fong Bates was born in China and came to Canada as a young child. She grew up in homes above laundries in several small towns in Ontario. She worked as an elementary school teacher in Toronto before devoting herself to writing. Her stories have been broadcast on CBC radio and published in *Fireweed: A Feminist Quarterly*, *This Magazine*, and the *Canadian Forum*. She has published *China Dog and Other Tales from a Chinese Laundry* (1997), a collection of short stories, and the much-awaited *Midnight at the Dragon Café* (2004), her debut novel. She lives in Toronto and has taught Asian Canadian writing at the University of Toronto.

Fong Bates's two works of fiction are concerned with the lives of Chinese immigrants as they settle in small towns in Ontario during the 1950s and 1960s. Her stories deal with the shock of arrival, the encounter with European Canadians, who are viewed as the "Other" by the Chinese immigrants, and the protagonists' poignant experiences as they cope with seemingly mundane things such as the winter weather, attending school, driving to Toronto for dim sum, the strange foods that *lo fans* (foreigners) like to eat, and finding a suitable marriage partner in the new land. Fong Bates has been compared to Canadian short story writer Alice Munro, who also often sets her narratives in small towns in Ontario. Both authors excavate the hidden lives of outwardly average folks to reveal the often hidden mysteries, the quirkiness, and the strangeness of everyday life in small towns. The difference between them is that Fong Bates often presents racialized dimensions of what it means to be isolated in a town with one main street, one grocery store, one school, one bakery, one drugstore, and so forth.

Like other **Asian American** writers, Fong Bates explores several issues common to first-generation immigrants, including displacement, alienation, and nostalgia. Her works

explore the problems of assimilation, differences between first and second generations, and living in a bicultural world. Although these themes are not new to Asian American literature, Fong Bates is able nevertheless to enthrall readers with her attention to particulars and with her sensual and detailed descriptions of the work that happens in the back rooms of laundries and restaurant kitchens. Her tone is controlled and deliberately unexotic and unsentimental. In *China Dog and Other Tales from a Chinese Laundry*, she depicts the lives of a host of Chinese immigrants who arrived in Canada at the turn of the twentieth century and shortly after World War II. Of the eight short stories, six are set in either a Laundromat or a Chinese restaurant in small towns in Ontario. They depict the aspirations of the immigrants who come with high hopes to Gam Sun, or **Gold Mountain**, only to find an inhospitable climate, grueling working conditions, and loneliness. Most of the characters demonstrate resilience, strength, and an attitude of resignation to their uncomfortable or less-than-ideal circumstances. The immigrants console themselves by thinking that they have led better lives in China, and that they can always return there for a life without discrimination. In "Eat Bitter," Hua Fan, who has been working for five years as his uncle's apprentice in a hot Laundromat, pushes back his memories of humiliation and tries to convince himself that this life in Canada is not his "real life." When he is pelted with ice by a local ruffian and called "Ching, Ching, China-man," he imagines himself back in his home village, "dressed like a gentleman in fine clothes as he presided over the operations of his teahouse" (Bates 2002, 42, 51). However, the story ends with the fantasy unfulfilled, as the longed-for trip to China is deferred because the smooth running of the Laundromat necessitates Hua Fan's constant presence in Canada.

In "My Sister's Love," the newly arrived, elegantly dressed half-sister from Hong Kong looks with amazement and disdain at the meager and working-class atmosphere of the home/workplace of the Laundromat owned by her family. She eyes the washing machine standing like a "monstrous steel barrel," and "swallowed as she looked at the four burner coal stove with an oven" (Bates 2002, 13). The move from cosmopolitan Hong Kong to Cheatley, Ontario, with a population of 2,000, is shown to be a disappointment and a step down for the sister. The Chinese Canadian family is depicted as "coarse, tough, and sinuous" compared to the "tall, elegant, and exquisite" sister (11). The family makes do with old winter coats donated by the ladies from the Presbyterian church, while the sister has a new tailor-made wool coat from Hong Kong. Dallying with a rich, older man with a fancy car, the sister settles by the end of the story for the hollow-chested and severely pockmarked Chinese accountant whom her mother has arranged for her to marry. Through poignant metaphors and nuanced descriptions of their daily lives, Fong Bates reveals the compromises and disappointments of these first-generation Chinese Canadian settlers. However, instead of wallowing in despair or negativity, the attitude of the characters in Fong Bates's stories is usually one of stoic acceptance or quiet resignation. Rather than lamenting the lack of riches in Gold

Mountain, the immigrants find resourceful ways of dealing with their lowly social status in the community and the harsh working conditions they face, whether it is the extreme heat all day in the Laundromats or the unappreciative customers in their restaurants. There are small feuds and economic rivalries between families and immigrant groups, but these are depicted with gentle irony and humor. Generally, the Chinese settlers form strong bonds with other immigrants, help each other whenever they can, and console themselves with the thought that their children will not suffer the same kinds of discrimination as they have, and will not have to work in menial jobs as they do.

Fong Bates's novel *Midnight at the Dragon Café* is once again set in a Chinese restaurant, this time in the fictional small town of Irvine, Ontario. The narrative is told mainly from the perspective of Su-Jen, who arrives in 1957 at the age of six. A child's innocence adds a level of sweetness, sadness, and wonder to this typical story of an immigrant family struggling for a better life in a new land. Su-Jen describes with awe the first time she sees a family with their own refrigerator and electric stove or the first snowfall, and provides a firsthand account of the customers who patronize the greasy spoon with its Formica counters and red vinyl stools. Father and Mother both advise Su-Jen to work hard and to *hek-fuh* (swallow bitterness). At school, Su-Jen goes through a predictable pattern of a second-generation immigrant: she learns to speak English, makes friends with an artistic girl, and encounters a bully, but at home the isolated family lives a tangled life of abnegation and secrecy. While Su-Jen's world expands and develops, her mother's world becomes smaller, as she is unable to make friends easily or to speak to her neighbors with her limited language skills. The mother continues to cook traditional Chinese foods, herbs, and medicines and to pay homage to the spirit of her ancestors. In her desperate loneliness and unhappiness, the mother turns to her stepson (by marriage) for consolation and love, creating more confusion and turmoil in the family. The novel is at once a *bildungsroman*, an ethnographic account of a Chinese Canadian family, and a Gothic tale set in a small town. Fong Bates reveals the family tensions, repressed emotions, and dreams of the seemingly perfect immigrant family who blended so seamlessly into the everyday life of the town and thus remained invisible. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization.

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### ◆ BERSSENBRUGGE, MEI-MEI (1947–)

Chinese American poet, playwright, educator, and collaborator of small press, fine art books, Mei-mei Berssenbrugge was born in Beijing of a Dutch American father and a Chinese mother. Her family immigrated to the United States when she was only one, eventually settling in Massachusetts, where her father pursued a graduate degree in Far East studies at Harvard. The early linguistic shift from Chinese to English produced a vivid childhood imagination of comparison and proportion, which developed an inherent sensibility for the relativity of meaning and expression, a theme that would become central to her work and the insight that drew her at such a young age to poetry.

Berssenbrugge attended Barnard College for a year before transferring to Reed College, where she studied with Galway Kinnell, whose influence with experimental American poetry attracted important American poets Robert Bly and Robert Duncan, both of whom were hosted by the Brussenbrugges, who cooked and threw parties after readings. Completing her baccalaureate degree from Reed College in 1969, she immediately entered Columbia University where she earned an MFA in 1973.

Eager for new experiences after graduate school, she settled in northern New Mexico where she still resides with her husband, artist Richard Tuttle, and her daughter, Martha. The expansive geography and shifting light of the American Southwest has become synonymous with her work. In New Mexico she knew the prominent American painters Georgia O'Keefe and Agnes Martin before teaching at the Institute for American Indian Art in Santa Fe and cofounding the literary journal *Tyonyi*. She has also taught at Brown University and has been a contributing editor to *Conjunctions* magazine since 1978. Her work has won two American Book Awards, two Asian American Book Awards, and she has received two grants from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Mei-mei Berssenbrugge is prominently known for her critically acclaimed books of poetry, whose long, expansive lines shift and flicker through multiple perspectives, authorial agency, and emotive states, but her early association with the experimental literary, theater, and dance group known as the Multicultural Movement produced the play *One, Two Cups*, which was directed by Chinese American writer/director Frank Chin. During this period she also collaborated with the Morita Dance Company, directed by Theodora Yashikama and was anthologized with the *Aiiiiieee!* group. She forged lifelong friendships with its members, which included Leslie Silko, Ishmael Reed, Frank Chin, and his wife, the political activist Kathleen Chang. She has also been an Artist-in-the-School in Alaska and New Mexico, where she taught creative writing workshops.

In the 1970s Berssenbrugge published her first 3 (of 12) books and collaborative projects, which include *Fish Souls* (Greenwood Press, 1971), *Summits Move with the Tide* (Greenfield Review Press, 1974), and *Random Possession* (Reed Books, 1979), which won the American Book Award. Together with *The Heat Bird* (Burning Deck

Press, 1983), her fourth book of poetry, these early books begin her explorations of identity, linguistic alienation, bodily isolation, and femininity and mark the beginning of her deep, philosophic engagement with phenomenology and multiperspectival perception, which have become central concerns of her work. In *Summits Move with the Tide*, with comparatively shorter lines, stanzas, and poems than her later work, Berssenbrugge explores the continuum between the material and immaterial with drastic shifts in scale and stunning parataxis that splice deep personal emotion with vivid and vast geographical descriptions of the indigenous land of the Pueblo and Hopi tribes living on reservations in New Mexico. Performing complex processes of emotive perception that meticulously interrogate the materiality of language as social code, Berssenbrugge's poems compress subject and object relations, exposing language's alienative capacity and yet releasing its aleatory potential to create multiplicities of subjective energy for reception. Her poems also effectively destabilize previous literary models of stable authorship and authority, while simultaneously creating an emotional resonance and a spiritual affinity with the Native Americans whose post-colonial displacement and isolation become charged environments to explore her own cultural duality.

*Random Possession* is perhaps the book whose title best describes Berssenbrugge's working process, which is a combination of appropriation, collage, and written mediation. Throughout the production of a poem, Berssenbrugge focuses on sustained reading projects engaged with the ideas she wishes to explore. Simultaneously studying a relevant piece of Eastern philosophy and a relevant piece of Western philosophy as part of the research for her poems, she cuts through, transposes, and recalibrates apparent discrepancies between polarities of perception such as East/West, object/subject, and single/multiple and recasts perceived objective limits as emotionally charged temporary states of moving liminality. Within these crafted spaces, subjectivity is more similar in its coming undone than different in its bound individuality. Witnessing the masculine language and privilege of scientific discourse, *Random Possession* encompasses the beginnings of Berssenbrugge's ongoing project of feminizing the language of science and in so doing continually reveals language's often unquestioned social and cultural codes. The poems begin to be serialized over several pages, and the temporal structure of their lyrics starts to become a matter of shifting indeterminacy, overlapping imagery, and emanating syllabic reverberations. Images of animals, humans, geography, and myths repeat over the extending surfaces of Berssenbrugge's lengthening lines, which begin to encroach the standard space of the margin. Paradoxically, the effect is nonlinear and works on the reader perceptually like the points of a constellation.

In *Empathy* (1989) Berssenbrugge's lines reach their longest. The book's physical shape is wider to accommodate the protracted expansions of her multiperspectival sentences, which sometimes wrap through four to five of these extended horizontal spaces.

Much like the wide, open austerity of the landscapes of New Mexico and Alaska that Berssenbrugge is drawn to, her lines shift with the varying intensities of light moving across a wide horizontal space, yet feel intimate like intricately felt subjective states of perception as one risks his or her alterity to become closer to another. Empathy in its extreme form is to become the other, and in *Empathy* Berssenbrugge networks human emotion and intimacy with the expanses of the environment and the elements: from melting ice to jealousy, from fog to desire, from confidence to particles, and what remains is the relativity of intimacy and expression. Perhaps her most visual book, *Empathy* continues Berssenbrugge's active engagement with the history of Chinese culture and poetry through complexities of philosophic inquiry rooted in nature. At these interrogations of the borders and limits of a subject and what it observes, Berssenbrugge is able to explore a poetic ethics of intimacy and engagement. "Alakanak Break-Up" and "Fog" were written in collaboration with the choreography of Theodora Yoshikami for the Morita Dance Company while traveling between the mainland and Alaska. The poem "Honeymoon" appeared in a different form as *Hiddenness* (1987), one of several of Berssenbrugge's collaborations with visual artists, but it was during this collaboration that she met her husband, Richard Tuttle.

In addition to Richard Tuttle, with whom she has collaborated twice, on *Hiddenness* and *Sphericity* (1993), Berssenbrugge has also collaborated twice with the artist Kiki Smith on *Endocrinology* (1997) and *Concordance* (2006).

*Hiddenness* uses a metaphor to explore the way a material object can hide or hold light and spirituality. The text explores the way light can be hidden or escape through different layers of material and works on three distinct levels. The first level is slightly under the page. The text literally recapitulates the process of light escaping material, as the letters and words are pressed in, or incised into, the surface. Richard Tuttle's highly colorful shapes are *of* the page because they are mixed into the pulp of the paper, forming the intermediary level. And the outer layer is represented by a number of hand-stamped shapes that are pressed on top of the page throughout the book and made from burning different types of wood. Another way the collaboration explores the physical light in the book is by shifting the blocks of text into unusual relationships with the margins, sometimes printing across them, creating varying degrees of spatial fluctuation between and of the text. *Sphericity* is the second of Berssenbrugge's collaborations with her husband. It collects a series of his drawings, which are printed in relation to Berssenbrugge's text.

*Endocrinology* is Berssenbrugge's first collaboration with the artist Kiki Smith. Continuing her explorations of the continuum between the material and the immaterial, this book literally represents, through the monoprints of Kiki Smith, the human endocrine system, which is responsible for the transference of nearly imperceptible hormones into the undeniable trajectory of behavior. Exploring the transparency and

transience of the body, the original book was printed on a rice paper that closely resembles skin. Berssenbrugge, tired of writing in the long hovering lines that she has become known for, approached Kiki Smith with five stanzas of poetry. They proceeded by layering the imagery so that various traces of previous layers could be seen through the thinness of the rice paper, mirroring the way a vein might show through skin. Berssenbrugge proceeded to cut up her stanzas and disperse them throughout the book more or less randomly. *Endocrinology* produces a visual and literary space of transparent mirroring, in which the systems of the human body are equated to the system of writing; but most apparent is that the codes of language exist concretely in the body, and, placed as they are within a system like the endocrine system, the potential for change is ever-present. *Concordance* is the second and most recent collaboration between Mei-mei Berssenbrugge and Kiki Smith, which explores the contingent and parallel worlds of the animal body and the human body with imagery of birds, feathers, pods, and stars interspersed throughout and under Berssenbrugge's poetic texts. The effect is a paradoxical one, when held in relation to dominant modern paradigms of humanism—which hold that culture itself is a progressive and linear process within which the human is continually distancing from the animal. In *Concordance*, however, the human and the animal coexist and in fact merge with each other and with their environment to create a unified perceptual space of multiple subjective registers.

*Four Year Old Girl* (1998) and *Nest* (2003) explore the relationship between the competing domestic space of motherhood and identity. Using the language of genetic code to explore alterity, *Four Year Old Girl* uses a thin graphic box around the first page of each poem, objectifying it as the original thought or idea for the poem that follows. The box is absent from each proceeding page, or stage of the poem, stressing the serialized nature of what follows. Emphasizing a transitory and copied process while using the scientific language of genetics, Berssenbrugge creates something equitable to a poem species, capturing a literal and objective embodiment of the varying and unstable shifts between the immateriality of idea and the linguistic object.

*Nest* investigates the differences among Berssenbrugge's several familial mother tongues, audience, and margins. Suggesting that one's mother tongue or identity exists in the unstable, unfixed area of the margins, Berssenbrugge explores the errant and the erring as spaces for productive identity. The poems are serialized but remain distinct from all of her other work in that they emphasize the spaces between their sentences with wide areas of blank space between each line, allowing the book's central concern—the margins—to run through the text and dominate the spaces of the poem. In "Hearing" and "Audience" Berssenbrugge explores the audience as margin and reciprocity, where the social space of the audience and the energy of hearing become a fluid force field of connectivity.

In *I Love Artists: New and Selected Poems* (2006), Berssenbrugge investigates the many collusions of art and life by rendering the working processes of various artist friends with highly descriptive language. Contextualized by her selected poems, the new poems for *I Love Artists: New and Selected Poems* continue to question the separation among subject and object and split consciousness and posit, through long reverberating resonance of line, that meaning is just a temporary place, generally in the human animal, on a plane, moving like a filter, grid, or sieve, and that true differences are in potential.

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WARREN LLOYD

### ◆ BIRACIALITY

Biraciality describes those who are of mixed racial ancestries. The seemingly mono-racial Asian American community was preserved because interracial marriage was legally banned, and the Asian American community was segregated from the mainstream American society, so it was rare that Asian Americans married outside of the group. However, interracial couples between Asian Americans and non-Asian Americans have existed throughout American history since the first Asian immigrants set foot on the American shore. Biraciality has therefore never been a recent phenomenon. In fact, the first Asian American writer is said to be a Eurasian, Sui Sin Far (Edith Maude Eaton). When the antimiscegenation law was abolished in 1967 by the Supreme Court, supported by the **civil rights movement**, more and more Asian Americans outmarried, and now it is reported that 30 to 60 percent of Asian Americans marry non-Asian Americans. The fact that the U.S. Census now allows people to mark more than one



racial category proves the increasing number of biracial people in the United States. Biraciality is now conspicuous, not only in the Asian American community but also in Asian American literature. There are many biracial Asian American writers such as Nora Okja Keller, Jessica Hagedorn, and Velina Hasu Houston, to name just a few, and they address issues of biraciality in their works.

There are two main arguments regarding biraciality in Asian American literary studies. One is that biraciality may threaten the unity of Asian Americans. The umbrella term *Asian American* has been controversial, given the diversity of Asian American populations. The term has been criticized because it cannot contain the different experiences that each Asian American individual or group has undergone. Yet, as a minority in America, claiming political and social demands separately is not effective. It is strategically useful for all Asian Americans to unite under the umbrella term *Asian American* and voice together for their existence and demands. As a community, Asian Americans have achieved many political, cultural, and social rights. Asian American literature has become an important American cultural asset. Some are therefore anxious that biraciality may destroy the unity of Asian Americans and make their political, cultural, and social activities ineffective.

In addition to the uneasiness biraciality provokes in the Asian American community, some Asian American writers express identity problems. Kimiko Hahn, a biracial poet of a Japanese American mother and a German American father, expresses her anxiety of being biracial in "The Hemisphere: Kuchuk Hanem" in *The Unbearable Heart*. She writes that when she is with her white father, she is afraid that people may think that she is his sexual companion because they do not resemble each other. Kip Fulbeck, a son of a Chinese mother and a Caucasian father, also attests in *Paper Bullets* that he was troubled by a white "rice chaser" woman who wanted to date Asian men. Because the body of Asians is highly eroticized and exoticized in the United States, having a part of Asian blood makes biracial Asian Americans sexually marked, and that gives them a troubling feeling of being biracial. Hahn and Fulbeck's texts illustrate how biraciality is related strongly to the questions of gender and sexuality and how it complicates family relations as Hahn has shown.

Against the negative views on biraciality, some see its positive force. America's racial hierarchy, which holds whiteness at its top, has functioned as the basis of racism and justified it. Asian Americans have been discriminated against because of the white-centered racial setting. Yet, biraciality, the possibility of racial mixing, reveals that race is never a fixed entity but rather contingent and changeable. Thus, biraciality is in a possible position to challenge the white-centered American racial hierarchy. The mixed-race movement is born out of this expectation. People who push this movement believe that biraciality could overcome the racial stratification of American society and enable interracial coalition.

It is however not certain to what extent biraciality really challenges the deep-rooted American racial hierarchy because the degree of social acceptance is different in terms of whom Asian Americans mix with. It is reported that biracial people are divided between a color line. Biracial people who have Asian and black parents tend to associate themselves with African Americans. Since the notorious one-drop rule, which means that a drop of black blood makes a person black, still functions in the American imaginary, biracial Asian Americans with black parents find that they are associated more with blacks than with Asian Americans. Tiger Woods, the internationally acclaimed golfer of a Thai mother and an African American father, is usually referred to as a black golfer in the media, although he identifies himself as Asian American. His case shows the persistence of the one-drop rule. Frank Wu points out that while many Asian Americans try to climb the racial, class, and social ladder by marrying whites, they marry less to blacks. As a result, outmarried Asian Americans are 30 times more likely to have white spouses than black spouses. Some critics, such as Michael Omi, find the mixed-race movement risky, because if racial mixing between white Americans and Asian Americans is preferred, it may create a new dichotomy between blacks and nonblacks, by which blacks remain a lower social class and are left out of the melting pot practice other groups enjoy.

On the other hand, biracial people who have Asian and white parents find it easy to pass as either an Asian American or a white American. Some Asian Americans who have white parents try to pass as white because whiteness grants them more privilege in white-centered American society. Anne Xuan Clark illustrates the internalized racism in her short essay "What Are You?" in *Intersecting Circles: The Voices of Hapa Women in Poetry and Prose*. She writes that at one point of her life, she was ashamed of her Vietnamese mother and was proud of her white father. She confesses that she internalized the racist assumption that white was favorable and nonwhite was shameful.

In both cases, biracial people find difficulty in perfectly belonging to any of their parents' groups. Some feel they belong nowhere. Yet, as Clark has concluded that she is Asian American, biracial Asian Americans may feel attachment to Asian Americans, regardless of the polemic over biraciality.

There are many debates over biraciality, but as the outmarriage rate shows, approximately half of Asian Americans now outmarry, and this trend will continue. As the visibility of biraciality in the Asian American community increases, more biracial writers now address biracial issues. As Asian American literature has expanded its horizon with social and historical changes, biracial Asian American writers open the threshold of Asian American literature beyond the color line. They complicate the already complicated term *Asian American*. They question who Asian Americans are in their works, challenge our fixed notion of Asian American identity, and disclose our/their internalized racial, gender, and class biases. Biraciality thus now takes an

important position in the development of Asian American literature. **See also** Racism and Asian America.

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KAORI MORI

◆ BRAINARD, CECILIA MANGUERRA (1947–)

A Filipino American essayist, novelist, anthologist, and short story writer, Cecilia Manguerra Brainard was born on November 21, 1947. She attended St. Theresa's College in Cebu and Manila and from 1964 to 1968 Maryknoll College in Quezon City, from which she graduated with a BA in communication arts. She studied filmmaking at UCLA in 1969 and 1971 but later concentrated on creative writing. A self-described freelance writer since 1981, she has published, as author or editor, 14 books, some 36 short stories, and over 300 essays. Her work has brought her an array of awards, both Philippine and American. The former include the Makati Rotarian Award (1994), the Outstanding Individual Award from the City of Cebu (1998), the Amazing Alumni Achiever's Award from Maryknoll College (2003), and a Certificate of Recognition from the Cebu Provincial Government through the Provincial Women's Commission (2006). The latter include a Special Recognition Award, Los Angeles Board of Education (1991), a City of Los Angeles Certificate of Appreciation (1992), and a Certificate of Recognition from the California State Senate, 21st District (2001). These accolades denote appreciation for her overall contributions, not just for her literary works, although she has been the recipient of these as well (e.g., a 1989–1990 California Arts Council Artists' Fellowship in Fiction, a 1990–1991 City of Los Angeles Cultural Grant, a 1991 Brady Arts Fellowship, a 1992 Literature Award from the Filipino Women's Network, a 2000 California State Summer School for the Arts Award, and a 2001 *Filipinas Magazine* Achievement Award for Arts and Culture).

Brainard's ability to be multifaceted is revealed in the age range of audiences she is able to serve. She has edited or coedited two anthologies of children's stories: *Seven Stories from Seven Sisters: A Collection of Philippine Folktales* (1992) and *The Beginning and Other Asian Folktales* (1995). For adolescents, she has produced *Growing Up Filipino: Stories for Young Adults* (2003) and her autobiographical *Cecilia's Diary*

1962–1969 (2003). For adult consumption are her novels *Song of Yvonne* (1991, reissued under the title *When the Rainbow Goddess Wept* (1994), and *Magdalena* (2002); and her short story collections *Woman with Horns and Other Stories* (1987) and *Acapulco at Sunset and Other Stories* (1995). Another important contribution to **Filipino American literature** is the fiction anthologies that she has edited or coedited: *Fiction by Filipinos in America* (1993), *Contemporary Fiction by Filipinos in America* (1998), and *A La Carte: Food & Fiction* (2007).

In *Philippine Woman in America* (1991), the reader can glimpse Brainard the person and even sample the background of some of her fiction. All but two of the essays (mostly published in the *Philippine American* between 1982 and 1988) are written in the first person and have the chatty, charming quality of the familiar essay. Some, as Brainard notes, “served as a kind of draft for some stories” (vi). *Cecilia’s Diary* also provides autobiographical insights. Although precocious as a writer, Brainard has been cautious about publication. Of the items acknowledged in her curriculum vitae, the earliest to see print was “The Discovery,” in *Mr. & Ms. Magazine* in July 1982 and included in *Woman with Horns*. Nominally a short story, it reads as much like an essay as it does a work of fiction and as such may represent a transition from nonfiction to fiction writing. Four years after her first short story collection (*Woman with Horns*), her first novel (*Song of Yvonne*) appeared, and four years after that a second, much larger short story collection, *Acapulco at Sunset*. The even, unhurried interspersing of short story collections and novels has continued with *Magdalena*. The intertwining of the two genres is also manifested in the interconnections between short stories, making the stories resemble chapters in a novel. For instance, “Woman with Horns,” the opening selection in the collection of the same name, is narratively related to “Trinidad’s Broach” and “The Balet Tree” and “Miracle at Santo Nino Church,” which is likewise linked to the next story, “Waiting for Papa’s Return.” Again, elements of the short stories find their way into the novels (e.g., the mythic quality of a story such as “The Magic Spring” from *Woman with Horns* is a prominent element of *Song of Yvonne*).

Brainard’s short stories, with their unitary plots and narrative stances, are often so pellucid that they can appear to lack thematic substance. In particular, the 17 tales in *Acapulco at Sunset*, especially those set in late eighteenth-century Mexico, can come across as mere vignettes, even idylls. Yet these stories raise issues of life and death (through characters from each state conversing), appearance versus reality (Are the dreams of characters a mechanism for enlarging the scope of reality or escaping into fantasy?), and identity versus inauthenticity (What status does a green card bestow?). Even the setting of a story may be an important identity variable rather than a signifier. The 12 stories in *Women with Horns*, for instance, are anchored in Ubec (Brainard’s native Cebu spelled backward). This reversal may suggest that stereotypical male/female roles are equally reversed, granted that all but one of the stories revolve

around strong, successful women. These stories, with settings at crucial historical junctures, are also reminders that identity is an accretion, both historical and personal, rather than an implantation by a single occurrence.

"1521" involves the battle between Lapu-Lapu and Magellan but revolves around a central character, Old Healer. Her emblematic name is indicative of her universality and sets the chronological stage for other fictional settings—in both short stories and novels—in conquest contexts. "Alba" ("dawn" or "daybreak" in Spanish) is an obviously ironic title, granted that in 1763 the English occupied Manila, but the result was not a new day of freedom resulting from the temporary expulsion of the Spaniards; rather, it was a substitution of one invading European power for another. Another case in point is "The Black Man in the Forest," set in 1901, during the Philippine-American War, the result of which was the U.S. colonization of the country. Brainard's later short fiction is also replete with serious motifs. "Tiya Octavia: 1943," published in 2003, starts out with a palate-appealing description of a kitchen with frying bananas and white rice but quickly changes to a sordid rape scene in which a Japanese officer precedes two enlisted men in violating Octavia. "Romeo," published in 2007, is about a 65-year-old woman and a dog, living by themselves in Manila. Although we enter a world of such settled domesticity that we are privy to the desires of the dog, we are apprised of a mugging in which the woman's earrings are ripped from her ears, and the resultant wounds must be treated by a doctor.

*Magdalena* has an episodic structure reinforced by the absence of chapter numbers and the presence of looping flashbacks. We open in 1966–1967, flash back to 1930, fast forward to 1939 and then to 1942, before reverting to 1912 and then to 1926. The novel's narrative ends in 1968. Thus, the reader appreciates the family flow chart between the prologue and the first chapter. The structure mirrors the unsettled, if not unstable, nature of relationships articulated in the narrative of the pregnant Juana. Her mother Magdalena (whose name is appropriate to her long-suffering fidelity to an unworthy husband) dies in childbirth. Victor (perhaps a fitting name for a successful womanizer) immediately after their wedding starts living with a mistress and has an infant son (ironically named Inocencio) by her. A parallel plot development involves Tiya ("aunt" in Tagalog) Estrella and her unfaithful husband Esteban. Estrella's daughter withers and dies at age seven. Another juxtaposed marital situation involves Luisa and Nestor a generation earlier. Nestor is another two-timer, eventually marrying Cora, so Luisa lives with Fermin. The latter had been running around with a floozy named Chi-Chi and has, thanks to generations of inbreeding, six physically and/or mentally defective immediate family members. This situation is the most palpable manifestation of the dysfunctional domestic relationships in the novel. Although the plot might seem soap opera-level, Brainard ballasts it, as she does in much of her fiction, with a scene of wartime atrocity: Japanese soldiers invade the house of Fermin's

aunt and murder the occupants, including the feeble-minded ones. Another tragedy involves the senseless death, ironically on Good Friday, of Mario Cepeda, who has been goaded by Nestor and Junior Hernandez to descend into an abandoned mine. The boy misses a step on the ladder and plunges to his death. Not long thereafter, a miner who has been talking about organizing a labor union is found dead at the bottom of the same shaft. Later Junior commits suicide by throwing himself down a different shaft. Near the end of the book, a typhoon wreaks havoc, but, though graves in the cemetery are damaged to the point that bodies wash out, the mausoleums of the wealthy and prominent Hernandez and Delgado families sustain only minor damage. These events impress on readers that human existence is as transient as its intimate associations are ephemeral.

*Song of Yvonne*, however, remains Brainard's *pièce de résistance*. It is set during the Japanese occupation and narrated by nine-year-old Yvonne Macaraig. This narrative stance—though facilitating some light-hearted moments, as when, at confession, Yvonne numbers “concupiscence” among her sins but of course has no idea what the word means—imposes a sometimes significant restriction. As in *Cecilia's Diary*, Brainard is compelled to endow her child narrator with adult sensitivities and speech patterns to render adult material.

*Song of Yvonne* attempts to elevate the implications of a crisis period in Philippine history to cosmic proportions; Layden, the family cook, is the principal means of doing so. In recounting ancient myths, Layden assumes the role of the *babaylan* (pre-Hispanic priestess) and thus provides both physical nourishment (food) and spiritual sustenance, but her epic tales undermine narrative credibility, minimize the horror of the atrocities depicted, and are digressive. In the former regard, Layden, who has temporarily lost her bardic voice, dreams that she drinks from a spring and thereby recovers this voice. In chapter 5 of the novel she locates the spring and, having recovered her voice, “sang through the night until dawn.” She reports that “I saw Inuk [the prototypical bardic seer] . . . riding a cloud shaped like a boat to heaven” (45). Evidently, we should take this literally. The brutalities of war include an episode in which an American nurse is captured by the Japanese and impregnated, has her tongue cut out, her arms cut off, and her eyes put out—and then she is released. The myths tend to mute the tragedies because the epic hero always triumphs and the dead are frequently reconstituted by magical means. Layden's recital of the legend of the goddess Meybuyan, who has breasts all over her body to nourish the infants too young to cross the underground river into the afterlife, may gloss over the horror of an incident like the immolation of innocent Japanese shopkeeper Sanny and her baby by Filipinos because the legend implies all will somehow be made right in the hereafter. Other myths are not integrated into the plot (e.g., the beautiful maiden who spins rainbows and is rescued by the hero Tuwang or the woman warrior Bongkatolan, who killed a dozen attackers of her

brother Agyu). These stories, designed to enrich the consistent Brainard motif of strong, successful women, dilute coherence and impede narrative flow.

*Song of Yvonne* is a *bildungsroman*; Yvonne grows into adolescence, her menstruation symbolizing not only her own passage into adulthood but also the resurgence of life in the face of death during wartime; her blood starkly contrasts with wartime bloodshed. The novel's universality lies partially in its implication, as a distinguished critic has suggested, that just as a youth grows into independence, so does a country. Filipinos realize that though they welcome American aid, they cannot afford to wait for it or even depend on it; the Philippines must free itself. Although it may be that, in a macrocosmic sense, no one is an island, perhaps in a microcosmic sense a period of peril in a nation of islands requires that everyone be one.

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L. M. GROW

### ◆ BULOSAN, CARLOS (1911–1956)

A Filipino American poet, short story writer, autobiographer, editor, journalist, and novelist, Carlos Bulosan is among the most famous writers of **Filipino American literature**. He is best known for the fictionalized autobiography *America Is in the Heart* (1946) and for his consistent political and cultural engagement with issues of racial, class, and ethnic hierarchy. Bulosan was born into a relatively impoverished farming family in the village of Mangusmana near Binalonan, Pangasinan, in 1911. His formal education extended into two years of high school, and in 1930 he migrated to the United States, following the path laid out by his older brothers Dionisio and

Aurelio. Never having the opportunity to return to the Philippines, Bulosan spent most of the rest of his life on the West Coast, often moving from place to place. He worked primarily as a labor organizer of agricultural and cannery workers in the states of California and Washington. Between 1936 and 1938, Bulosan spent two years in the Los Angeles county hospital, being treated for tuberculosis. During his convalescence, he read widely and began writing poetry in earnest. Although the **World War II** years of the 1940s proved to be Bulosan's most prolific period and the height of his popularity, a plagiarism case brought against him in 1944 (which was settled out of court), and the dark turn toward anticommunism in both the United States and the Philippines following the war seem to have contributed to the waning of his reputation. He died in a sanatorium in Seattle in 1956. However, since the republication of *America Is in the Heart* by the University of Washington Press in 1973, along with the publication of previously unseen texts, Bulosan's work has again become known. It now holds a central place within the field of Asian American literary studies.

Bulosan arrived in Seattle during the first period of massive Filipino immigration to the United States. Following the forcible annexation of the Philippines by the United States because of the Philippine-American War (1899–1902), Filipinos were allowed unrestricted entry into the United States due to their colonial status as “nationals.” By 1930, there were over 45,000 Filipinos living in the United States, the majority of them working as migrant agricultural laborers on the West Coast. As the depression deepened, anti-Filipino sentiments and xenophobic movements swept through cities and towns in California, targeting Filipinos on the grounds of racial difference, alleged economic competition, and interracial sexual politics. These social and political conditions would have a marked influence on Bulosan's literary production.

Bulosan began his writing career as a poet. Within two years of immigrating to the United States, he published his first poems in the anthology *California Poets* (1932). In 1934, he coedited a small magazine titled the *New Tide: A Magazine of Contemporary Literature*, which included his poem “Cry against Chaos,” short stories by his compatriots Chris Mensalvas and José Garcia **Villa**, and stories and poems by other U.S. writers. From the mid-1930s through the World War II period, Bulosan continued to publish poems in such venues as the *Lyric*, *Frontier and Midland*, the *Tramp*, *Voices*, *Saturday Review of Literature*, and *Poetry* magazine. His literary education was aided by Sanora and Dorothy Babb, close friends who brought him books to read while he recovered in the Los Angeles county hospital. As Bulosan describes this episode in *America Is in the Heart*, he averaged a book a day, devouring a plethora of material, ranging from Marxist theory to world history to lyrical poetry. Legendary *Poetry* magazine editor Harriet Monroe also encouraged Bulosan's poetic endeavors, and she published several of his poems before her premature death in 1936.



Many of these early poems were collected in Bulosan's first book, *Letter from America* (1942). Dedicated to his brother Aurelio, the volume consists of five parts, each of which is framed by a "Passage from Life" fragment. The poems themselves cover a variety of topics: recollections of the poet's homeland ("Letter in Exile: I," "Who Saw the Terror," "Patterns in Black and White," "Letter to America: II"), insistent claims on and criticisms of the United States ("American History," "All the Living Fear," "Last Will and Testament," "Interlude of Dreams and Responsibilities"), and lamentations on poverty, loneliness, hunger, violence, and death ("Biography," "These Are Also Living," "Night Piece," "For a Child Dying in a Tenement"). Stylistically, Bulosan's poems are neither formally innovative nor transparently straightforward. He often eschews narrative linearity for odd juxtapositions of images. The ambiguity that results is further reflected in the way that the poetic voice weaves metaphorical descriptions of the outside world with a lyric "I," whose dimensions shift from the personal to the collective. Similarly, Bulosan frequently employs an indeterminate second-person ("you"), whose addressees include the poet's brother, a U.S. figure or reader, or an intimate lover. The volume as a whole is notable in that it shows Bulosan's poetic imagination extending well beyond the prosaic mode of hard-hitting social critique (for which he is best known) and experimenting with diction, metaphor, and the non sequitur.

Bulosan's second book, the poetry collection *The Voice of Bataan* (1943), is quite different from *Letter from America*, having been written in the midst of World War II as a response to the fall of Bataan (the Philippine peninsula where Filipino and U.S. forces made a final stand against the Japanese and eventually surrendered on April 9, 1942). Rather than simply commemorate the military valor of this last defense, Bulosan uses the historic event to comment on the ravages of war through a variety of perspectives. In this regard, the title of the slim book is somewhat of a misnomer. *The Voice of Bataan* contains a multiplicity of voices: Bulosan's own dedication "To Aurelio Bulosan"; a prefatory note by E. Llamas Rosario, secretary and director of research of the American-Philippine Foundation; a foreword by diplomat and statesman Carlos P. Romulo; a prologue consisting of a "metrical paraphrase" of Lieutenant Norman Reyes's farewell radio address from Corregidor; a framing poem laconically titled "Bataan"; and seven poems rendered from the viewpoints of differently positioned soldiers. The first two body poems, "Hospital: First Soldier" and "Prison: Second Soldier," speak of the physical casualties of war and the disillusionment that accompanies fighting for what comes to be seen as lies. The volume takes a surprising turn, though, in "Japan: Third Soldier." This poem sympathetically imagines the position of a Japanese soldier who is first inculcated with martial beliefs of superiority and then is separated from his homeland and his family to wage war in a distant land. Whereas "Escape: Fourth Soldier" alludes to General MacArthur's flight to Australia before the fall of Bataan, "America: Fifth Soldier" elegizes a fallen Filipino peasant. "Philippines: Sixth

Soldier” provides the most resounding declaration of perseverance in the face of momentary defeat and holds out the promise of a rebirth of freedom. However, the book closes not on this hopeful, triumphant note, but with “Epilogue: Unknown Soldier,” whose speaker addresses a son and the uncertain future that the next generation will inherit.

During this prolific period in his life, Bulosan also edited an anthology of poetry, *Chorus for America: Six Philippine Poets* (1942), and published several important essays, including “Filipino Writers in a Changing World” (1942) and “Letter to a Filipino Woman” (1943). Perhaps his most famous wartime essay is “Freedom from Want,” a piece that was printed alongside Norman Rockwell’s artwork in the *Saturday Evening Post* (March 6, 1943) and served as an elaboration of one of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s four freedoms (the others being freedom of speech, freedom to worship, and freedom from fear). In marked contrast to Rockwell’s tableau of an abundant Thanksgiving dinner table surrounded by smiling family members, Bulosan’s essay uses the refrain “If you want to know what we are” as a means of forcing renewed attention toward farm laborers, urban workers, and the unemployed. Bringing this collective working-class voice into public view, Bulosan calls upon “America” to reassess its democratic ideals to ensure just distribution of resources and proper recognition to those on the margins of society.

In the early 1940s, Bulosan began publishing short stories in such U.S. magazines as the *New Yorker*, *Town and Country*, and *Harper’s Bazaar*. A number of these were collected in Bulosan’s third book, *The Laughter of My Father* (1944). Departing in some ways from both his earlier poetry and his essays, these stories combine absurdity with ambiguity, satiric humor with social critique. Presumably set in the Philippine village and town of Bulosan’s own childhood, the collection is comprised of 24 stories, arranged in roughly chronological order and told from the perspective of an unnamed child-narrator. The stories center on the exploits of the narrator’s father, a poor, largely well-meaning alcoholic who is part trickster (outwitting his wealthy neighbor in “My Father Goes to Court”) and part buffoon (giving away the family’s house to his nephew as a wedding present in “The Gift of My Father”). As social satire, the stories portray the ludicrous effects of the colonial legal system’s move toward land enclosures (“The Tree of My Father”), the morally corrosive consequences of U.S. capital investment (“The Capitalism of My Father”), the bribery and corruption intrinsic to provincial governmental politics (“The Politics of My Father” and “My Father and the White Horse”) and to institutionalized Catholicism (“My Father Goes to Church”), and the intrafamilial rivalries that result from gambling and cockfighting (“The Triumph of My Father” and “My Father’s Tragedy”). Finally, the element of absurdity arises in the bawdy humor that accompanies some of the stories’ treatments of heterosexual eroticism, marriage, and adultery (“The Marriage of My Father,” “My Father’s Lonely

Night," "The Song of My Father," "My Father's Love Potion"). In fact, the book's concluding story, "The Laughter of My Father," describes how the narrator's father sends his son to the United States to escape from marriage.

In the essay "I Am Not a Laughing Man" (published in the *Writer*, May 1946), Bulosan would subsequently repudiate the notion that the stories in *The Laughter of My Father* are meant to be read solely as humor or comedy. He goes on to assert that his forthcoming autobiography *America Is in the Heart* will put to rest the mistaken idea that he is "a laughing man." Indeed, Bulosan's fourth book, which would eventually secure his place in the Asian American literary canon, moves much more emphatically in the direction of proletarian writing. *America Is in the Heart* (1946) chronicles the life of Allos, Bulosan's mirror image, first-person narrator, from his impoverished childhood in provincial Philippines to his political and cultural work as a labor activist in the United States. Complicating the traditional immigration narrative of assimilation or upward mobility, Bulosan's fictionalized autobiography advances many of the themes taken up in his earlier work—descriptions of poverty and loneliness, criticisms of class hierarchy, depictions of erotic and sexualized relationships, and calls for democracy and equality—but focuses even more emphatically on issues of racial difference and racialized violence in the United States.

Subtitled "a personal history," *America Is in the Heart* furthermore embeds the individual narrator's experiences within a larger framework of social history, documenting the lifeways of peasants in the Philippines and working-class Filipinos in the United States during the interwar period. The book is divided into four parts, with Part 1, the section dealing with Allos's life in the Philippines, constituting nearly a third of the narrative. This section focuses on the struggles of Allos's peasant family to survive in the face of absentee landlordism, the usurious practices of landowners, who keep peasants in debt, and the need for the family to sell their diminishing plot of land to fund his older brother Macario's education. Demonstrating that these difficulties are not exclusive to Allos's family, Bulosan interprets the past through the lens of class-based social history, referring, for example, to the Colorum uprising in Tayug, which occurred in the 1920s. Under these crushing conditions, Allos leaves home and travels to the resort town of Baguio, where he works for an American woman named Miss Strandon at a library. After a brief return home to Binalonan, Allos again departs, this time for Lingayen, where he attends school for a short period. Allos's third departure from his village is his last; he travels to Manila where he boards a steamer headed for the United States.

Although Allos's first impression of Seattle is one of familiarity, he is rapidly disabused of any sense that he and his fellow Filipino immigrant-laborers would be welcomed in the United States. In Bulosan's rendering of this underclass world during the Depression in Part 2 of the book, the overwhelmingly male workers are exploited by

Filipino cannery foremen and Chinese gambling-house owners, hunted down by white vigilantes out of fears of miscegenation and economic competition, victimized by unmotivated police brutality, and fight among themselves over white women. Positioned against this vicious world are the organizing efforts of such characters as the labor leaders José and Felix Razon, the newspaper editor Pascual, and Allos's brother Macario, as described in Part 3. Though often engulfed by this world of cruelty and violence, Allos simultaneously strives to maintain a certain distance from it, a dissociation that becomes literal when he spends two years in an L.A. county hospital recovering from tuberculosis and other ailments. It is during his convalescence that the intermittent moments of Allos's literary and political education (which had begun in the Philippines under the tutelage of his older brothers and the American librarian Miss Strandon) take on a more purposeful direction. Paralleling Bulosan's own life narrative, Allos spends a great deal of time reading the books and progressive magazines brought to him by Alice and Eileen Odell. He continues to pursue his intellectual ambitions once released from the hospital, in part by patronizing the Los Angeles public library. Part 4 also narrates Allos's increasing investment in political radicalism as he visits with and talks to the ethnic migrant laborers along the West Coast, writes essays and pamphlets for various progressive outlets, and organizes informal sessions for the political education of the field workers. The book's historical frame concludes with the bombing of **Pearl Harbor** and the consequent scattering of Allos's brothers Macario and Amado once again. The narrative ends on an ambiguous note, with Allos professing his faith in America, in spite of the atrocities he has experienced and witnessed. Certainly, this seeming contradiction has become a focal point of the critical tradition.

Although Bulosan continued to publish short stories in U.S. magazines until the end of the 1940s, he did not come out with a new book during his lifetime. However, since his death in 1956, a number of posthumously published texts have appeared. Among the most important of these is the novel *The Cry and the Dedication* (1995), edited by E. San Juan, Jr. The book has attracted scholarly attention since it seems to perform a kind of symbolic return to the homeland—a return that Bulosan himself was unable to fulfill in literal terms. The novel is typically read as an allegorical rendering of the Huk Rebellion, a radical peasant organization that first formed in opposition to the Japanese occupation of the Philippines during World War II and later in resistance to U.S. neoimperialism and the collaboration of the Filipino elites. Set in the postwar moment, Bulosan's novel depicts a seven-member guerilla group (known in the novel only as part of the "underground"), whose mission is to travel through the provincial countryside and rendezvous in Manila with Felix Rivas, a Filipino expatriate who has recently returned from the United States and who is to provide the rebels with money, arms, and medical supplies. En route to Manila, the band of guerillas visit

their respective hometowns with the leader Hassim to assess the social situation on the ground and to educate the peasants about the underground's political goals of national unity and international working-class solidarity. In the course of the journey, the guerilla band listens to the grievances of the peasants: landlords are demanding increasing shares of the harvest, while the local constabularies and collaborators are seeking to eradicate any signs of communism or radical organizing, often through murderous means. In turn, the group attempts to convince the peasants to join their organization, thereby fending off the lure of competing political groups. The novel ends with Dante, another Filipino expatriate returned from the United States, being killed by his brother, a priest who has gathered a wealth of information about the underground's activities. It is unclear whether Bulosan actually finished the book, given that the remaining members continue on their journey to Manila in its closing pages. The novel is significant, nonetheless, in that it shows Bulosan's continued commitment to Philippine radicalism and its complex connections to Filipinos in the United States.

Other texts published in the wake of Bulosan's death include a volume of letters, *Sound of Falling Light: Letters in Exile* (1960); two collections of short stories, *The Philippines Is In the Heart* (1978) and *The Power of Money and Other Stories* (1990); several anthologies, *Selected Works and Letters by Carlos Bulosan* (1982), *If You Want to Know What We Are* (1983), *Bulosan: An Introduction with Selection* (1983), *On Becoming Filipino: Selected Writings of Carlos Bulosan* (1995), as well as a special issue of *Amerasia Journal* devoted to Bulosan's work (1979); a volume of poetry, *Now You Are Still and Other Poems* (1991); and the novel *All the Conspirators* (1998, 2005). The majority of his papers are currently held in the Special Collections area at the University of Washington–Seattle. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization; Racism and Asian America.

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MARTIN JOSEPH PONCE

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## C



### ◆ CAO, LAN (1961 –)

Like Monique **Truong**, another Viet Kieu (Overseas Vietnamese) author who is also a lawyer, Lan Cao, an attorney, is well-known for her 1997 novel *Monkey Bridge*. However, unlike Truong, who stopped practicing law to become a full-time writer, Cao is currently a Boyd Fellow and professor of law at the College of William and Mary Marshall-Wythe School of Law, teaching in the areas of corporations, international business transactions, and international trade law. After receiving her bachelor's degree in political science at Mount Holyoke College and her JD at Yale University, Cao became a Ford Foundation Scholar in 1991. According to her faculty page Web site, she also practiced law with Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison in New York City, clerked for Judge Constance Baker Motley of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, and taught at the Brooklyn School of Law for six years before attaining her current position at the College of William and Mary. A prolific scholar, Cao has been published in a number of reputable law journals, including the *Berkeley Journal of International Law* and the *California Law Review*. Yet her greatest contribution to **Vietnamese American literature** and **Asian American studies** would have to be her novel *Monkey Bridge* and her other work, *Everything You Need to Know about Asian American History* (1996), coauthored with Himilce Novas. In fact, this text was revised and published for a second edition in 2004.

Although it may appear that Cao abandoned the literary elements of her writing style, the subjects that she chooses to engage with in her profession as a law professor still maintain a connection to her personal history and background as a refugee from Vietnam, which she details in her fictional narrative *Monkey Bridge*. For example, her



2007 article, "Culture Change," published in the *Virginia Journal of International Law*, argues for the necessity of international law to actively engage with cultures and different societies. As Cao stresses, "In this Article, I argue that norms matter, or more controversially, culture matters to law and development. The observation, that culture matters, and the proposal, that it be examined and evaluated, run counter to the tradition of public and private international law. Law and development, however, must disassociate itself from this long-standing tradition" (2007, 358). Cao believes that having laws that address only structural issues may not be enough to spur development in countries that are struggling to survive and grow economically. International laws, particularly those dealing with development, must take into consideration the changing cultural norms and the variety of traditions that govern and direct each individual nation. Of particular importance are those countries in East and South-east Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, in which it is imperative to understand the cultures before implementing laws that may impede economic progress and national prosperity.

As a refugee who immigrated to the United States at the age of 13 in 1974, Cao recognizes the significance of living in two cultures and negotiating between two different worlds or communities. Thus, her articles in various law review journals are just as detailed and informative as her first novel, especially in their understanding and appreciation of those whose lives may radically differ from a Western hegemonic norm. *Monkey Bridge* provides a diasporic lens from which to read a history fraught with death and war and a story about struggle, survival, and the passing down of one's personal stories; Cao's legal articles are just as striking in their ability to convey how globalization and economic development affect not only the nation-state but more importantly the lives of individual people and their respective communities. Examining these issues is of particular import in her article "The Transnational and Sub-National in Global Crimes," which was part of the Stefan A. Riesenfeld Symposium 2003: *International Money Laundering: From Latin America to Asia, Who Pays?* According to Cao's summary: "Human trafficking and money laundering are international problems that have been fueled by globalization." However, the people who are intimately affected by human trafficking are mostly women, whose lives are intertwined not only with local, personal factors but also with the global geopolitical effects that allow for human trafficking to take place.

Thus, it is necessary to place Cao's recent works, which contribute to the study of international law and development, into a context that may have stemmed from the writing of her 1997 novel. Although legal writing could appear to be dry and filled with jargon, Cao's impassioned arguments and insistence in "humanizing" law convey how vital it is to tell a persuasive story that allows change to improve the lives of the people affected by these laws.

In a way, *Monkey Bridge* is an intimate portrayal of what Cao has tacitly deployed in her legal articles, albeit with less personal characterization. Through her novel, the author describes how tragedy affects the protagonist, Mai, and the lives of those around her. In fact, the impact of war, like the effects of globalization and economic development, can incur trauma upon its victims and can indeed propel people to flee their homelands and seek new lives in new lands.

Nevertheless, *Monkey Bridge* is also far from a legal document. It is a *bildungsroman* that employs literary devices such as irony (see Michele Janette's examination of *Monkey Bridge*). Moreover, this text gestures to previous Asian American novels, employing themes around mothers and daughters, such as Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone*. More importantly, it conveys issues such as the passing down of personal histories and memories and negotiating ideas of loss, identity, community, and culture, all subjects that many Viet Kieu authors contend with.

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NINA HA

### ◆ CARBÒ, NICK (1964–)

Besides being an acclaimed lecturer at several universities across the United States, Filipino American poet and editor Nick Carbò is primarily known for his poetry, but he has also edited and coedited four anthologies. Born in Legaspi, the Philippines, he was adopted at the age of two, together with his younger sister, by a wealthy Spanish couple of Greek background (his grandfather on his mother's side came from Greece). He was brought up with Spanish, Greek, and Filipino influences in Westernized Manila, where he attended the International School before furthering his education in the United States. He started developing an interest in poetical composition while studying at Bennington College, Vermont, in 1984–1985. In 1990 he received his BA in English from St. Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas, and in 1992 he obtained his MFA in creative writing at Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, New York.

His teaching experience has been wide and varied, starting in 1992 as resident poet in the Department of English of Bucknell University, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. He later taught courses, among others, at the American University, Washington DC (fall 1993); New Jersey Institute of Technology, Newark, New Jersey (fall 1996); Manhattan College, Riverdale, New York (from spring 1997 to spring 1998); Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey (from spring 1998 to spring 1999); and the University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida (fall 2000–fall 2003, fall 2004–spring 2005). He is currently teaching poetry at the New College of Florida, Sarasota, Florida.

Nick Carbò has published writings in specialized literary magazines such as *Asian Pacific American Journal*, *DisOrient*, *Gargoyle*, *Mangrove*, and *North American Review*. His poems have been featured in important anthologies such as *Asian American Poetry: The Next Generation* (2004) and *Dark Horses: Poets on Overlooked Poems* (2007). Among his awards are grants in poetry from the National Endowment for the Arts (1997) and from the New York Foundation for the Arts (1999).

Carbò has published two chapbooks of poetry: *Running Amok* (1992) and *Rising from Your Book*, a collection released online in 2003 that includes experimental pieces. In his first volume of poems, *El Grupo McDonald's* (1995), Carbò explores the

complexity of the Filipino American identity, the Filipino **diaspora**, and the impact of **colonialism** on his motherland. Moreover, behind his witticism and irony, he subtly conveys political reflections stemming from his personal experience in the Philippines in the 1980s, during the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos.

His second book of poetry, *Secret Asian Man*, was published in 2000, won the Asian American Literary Award in 2001, and was an official selection of the Academy of American Poets Poetry Book Club. It is a collection of 35 poems that can be read either individually or as a story, set in New York. The main character, introduced by Carbò in the Foreword, is Ang Tunay na Lalaki, which in Tagalog means the “Real Man.” The name leaves aside the languages of the two colonial empires: the Spanish (Spanish language) and the American (English language), choosing Tagalog over both Spanish and English. Thus being fashioned as a sort of postcolonial Everyman, Ang Tunay na Lalaki faithfully mirrors the experiences of every Filipino American eager to partake in the American Dream but at the same time afraid of feeling displaced in an alien and often hostile environment (in almost every poem Carbò seems to feel the reassuring urge to record the exact coordinates of his character). Of the 35 poems, 26 start with “Ang Tunay na Lalaki” and the action he is carrying out in that precise moment; by choosing such a difficult name for a westerner to pronounce and by placing the stress on his character’s being *active*, Carbò seems to prompt the readers to reconsider the stereotypes that, for centuries, have undermined Americans of Asian descent, perceived by WASPs as an undistinguished yet mysterious **model minority**, thus showing that the “real” Asian American man is not at all anonymous, passive, or silent.

*Andalusian Dawn* (2004) is Carbò’s most recent book of poems, written during his residency in Spain, which replaces the United States or the Philippines as the setting of his poems. The volume is divided into four sections in which English and Spanish are both used and in which memories of the writer’s childhood and adulthood mingle with Filipino folklore (as in the poem entitled “Mal Agueros”). *Andalusian Dawn* echoes Garcia Lorca’s compositions, and the contemplation of the Andalusian landscape often overlaps reminiscences of the past with the geography of the mind.

Carbò’s activity as an editor has produced four anthologies. The first one is the breakthrough *Returning a Borrowed Tongue* (1996), featuring side-by-side Filipino and Filipino American poets. Carbò decided to put together this anthology when he was studying at Sarah Lawrence College, after realizing that in every course of poetry or world literature he was taught no mention was ever made of Filipino or **Filipino American literature**, despite the fact that Filipino poets had been publishing in the United States since the 1920s (Marcelo de Gracia Concepcion) and writers such as Carlos Bulosan, with his *America Is in the Heart* (1943), had been giving voice to the hopes and the disappointments of Filipinos struggling to redefine their identity in the United States.

Carbò coedited his second anthology, *Babaylan: An Anthology of Filipina and Filipina American Writers* (2000) with Eileen Tabios, aiming to fill, also in this case, an even deeper gap in world literature. The volume features the writings of over 60 Filipina and Filipina American writers of the diaspora (M. Evelina Galang, Jessica Hagedorn, and Marianne Villanueva, to mention a few), composing in different times and different parts of the globe and belonging to different generations. The word *babaylan* means priestess, *curandera*, for the Visayan natives of the Philippines; a *babaylan* is a healer, a woman who performs important ceremonies within the community, a person whose magic words can cure or cause somebody to fall in love. Carbò's choice, therefore, signifies the important and powerful role that women can play in the Philippines.

*Sweet Jesus: Poems about the Ultimate Icon* (2002) is Carbò's third anthology, coedited with his poet wife, Denise Duhamel. It is a collection of poems inspired by Carbò's and Duhamel's Roman Catholic background and focusing on the figure of Jesus, portrayed from different perspectives: African American, **Asian American**, Native American, lesbian, gay, married, divorced, and even atheist.

Carbò's last anthology, *Pinoy Poetics: A Collection of Autobiographical and Critical Essays on Filipino Poetics* (2004), perfectly follows Carbò's already manifested intention of breaking the silence surrounding Filipino poetry in English. The volume gathers poetic essays and sample poems by writers, university professors, activists, and journalists who are either Filipino or of Filipino descent. The themes the contributors deal with as important strands in their writings range from the aftermath of Marcos's dictatorship to the influx of American imperialism, postcolonialism, and history. **See also** Asian Diasporas; Colonialism and Postcolonialism; Gay Male Literature; Lesbian Literature.

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ELISABETTA MARINO

### ◆ CHA, THERESA HAK KYUNG (1951–1982)

In her short career as a writer, filmmaker, and visual and performance artist, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha made important contributions to **Korean American literature** and late twentieth-century conceptual art. She experimented with form and language in various media, and her best known work is the book *Dictée*.

Cha was born in 1951 in Pusan, Korea, as the middle child of five. Her parents were Koreans raised in Manchuria and educated as teachers, and her mother's experience as a Korean exile longing for homeland would later be referenced in *Dictée*. In 1962 Cha's family moved from Korea to Hawaii and two years later to San Francisco, where she went to the Convent of the Sacred Heart School, a private Catholic high school for girls. There she studied French, read Greek and Roman classics, and received many scholastic awards. After a semester at the University of San Francisco, Cha transferred to the University of California, Berkeley, in 1969, where she studied art with James Melchert and literature and French film theory with Bertrand Augst. With them, she started her lifelong exploration with the art of sculpture, theatrical performance, film, and poetry. Her reading in her undergraduate years of Korean poetry and such writers as Samuel Beckett, James Joyce, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Marguerite Duras would also show continuing influence in her later art. At Berkeley Cha obtained a BA in comparative literature in 1973, a BA in art in 1975, an MA in art in 1977, and an MFA in 1978. The antiwar events of the 1960s and 1970s at Berkeley and the explosive atmosphere around the Bay Area provided a perfect environment for artistic experimentation for young artists like Cha. The Berkeley years witnessed her development into an outstanding performance and video artist, and she received numerous awards for her photography and video work. Through the university's Education Abroad Program, she attended the Centre d'Etudes Américain du Cinéma in Paris in 1976 for a study with film theorists such as Christian Metz, Raymond Bellour, and Thierry Kuntzel and became involved with European artists and projects. The study in Paris provided a catalyst for Cha's artistic career, and she completed several important performances after she returned to the Bay Area. She moved to New York in 1980, and the following two years saw the debut of her films *Exilée* and *Permutations* and the publication of most of her important writings. She returned to Korea several times between 1979 and 1981, and the experience is centrally referenced in both *Dictée* and *Exilée*. *Dictée* was about to be published officially by Tanam Press when Cha was murdered on November 5, 1982. *White Dust from Mongolia*, the film she went back to Korea to shoot, remained unfinished.

Through works in various media, Cha shows a strong interest in inventive ways to force the audience to reconsider their own role in the process of viewing. She started her artistic experimentation in video and performance around the mid-1970s to explore language and other themes related to immigration experience, and her works require active thinking from the audience. Influenced by her study with Augst, who taught film mainly through frame-by-frame close analysis, Cha's videos, and her later films, are mostly constructed as a series of stills, always black-and-white, one dissolving into another, and often accompanied by voice-over. Among her numerous videos, important works include *Mouth to Mouth* (1975), a piece about an encounter with

Korean language; *Vidéoème* (1976), a work built upon the construction and the inner fractures of its title word; and *Re Dis Appearing* (1977), a piece again fusing visual and audio media by accompanying spare and pure imagery with multiple articulations of enigmatic phrases. The use of text-images, symbolic audiovisual combination, and sequences of stills in Cha's videos also translates into her performances. Readers and critics today can only get a glimpse of her mixed-media performances through the photos and documentation she left. In *A Ble Wail* (1975), for example, her dream-like dancing movement was viewed through an opaque curtain that divided the space between her and the audience, and the consequent viewing of her partially tai chi, partially Korean dance gestures might call to mind the challenges of any cross-cultural encounter. Her later performances show even more thinking about the significance of media in art creation. *Other Things Seen, Other Things Heard (Ailleurs)* (1978), one of her major works, consisted of two slide projectors and one film projector, projected images on the wall, recorded voices, and sandy powder on the floor. She intended to introduce the performance aspect to projection in this piece and to explore the meaning and effect of apparently simple gesture and imagery.

Cha's films further expand into adventurous exploration of language, displacement, and identity. Her 50-minute film *Exilée* (1980) combines film and video projection by embedding a video monitor into a large film screen. Opening with a text-image in which the title is broken into a list of words and word fragments—*exil*, *exile*, *ile* (island, isolation), *é* (sign for the female gender), and *ée*—the film makes evident its central concern with women in displacement. Based on Cha's own experience of traveling back to Korea as an American citizen, a significant part of the film comprises a sequence of still images of cloud, shot through the window of a flying airplane, to capture the distance of an exile's travel. The images are shown with Cha's own soft, poetic, and hypnotic voice-over, which counts off the passing minutes of the flight between San Francisco and Seoul. Together with the visual images, the voice-over text creates a melancholic sensation of suspension and rootlessness. Another sequence of stills in the film contains several different designs of the letter X and opens a number of possibilities for interpretation. Visually an intersection of routes, the sign may remind the audience of the cross-cultural encounters an exile has to confront; it is also a sign paradoxically both for deletion and for multiplication. It can point to the complexity of the exile identity, involving both tremendous loss and multiple ways of self-positioning in the world. Another film by Cha, the 10-minute silent *Permutations* (1982), also forces the audience to think actively and to do interpretation for themselves. It features a series of close-up shots of Cha's sister. Quick frames of her face with eyes open—reminiscent of those depersonalized, expressionless identity photos—or closed and frames of the back of her head leave more questions than definitive messages about identity and its transformation.

The theoretical underpinning for Cha's philosophy of active viewing can be found in *Apparatus—Cinematographic Apparatus: Selected Writings*, an anthology of essays on film she edited in 1981, for which she is known among film scholars. The book includes writings by theorists and artists such as Roland Barthes, Maya Deren, and Christian Metz and her own piece "Commentaire." Composed of words, photographs, film stills, and blank and black pages, "Commentaire" is a text that foregrounds its inventive form. In a book about the mechanism of film, it most effectively provides a filmic presentation with its screen-like page arrangement. Most of its pages contain one or two words each, capitalized and placed in the middle or to the margin. Many of these pages present her characteristic play with words by breaking a word into multiple words or word fragments, which calls attention to the variable signification and complicated connotation of any word or any frame in a film. Taking language apart in this way, the text challenges the usual way of reading or viewing that takes meaning for granted. In her preface to the anthology, Cha expresses her hope that the book makes its readers active in thinking about their own position in relation to the film. "Commentaire" is a piece that defies passive, absorptive reading or viewing and instead drives readers to think actively about not merely the text's content or "meaning" but their own commentary and, more importantly, how the text brings that out.

Cha's most famous work, *Dictée* (1982) can be seen as a culmination of the ideas demonstrated in her videos, films, and performances. The book constantly crosses linguistic, textual, and generic boundaries in a postmodern fashion. Its highly avant-garde form resists any conventional form of classification, fusing and confusing poetry and prose, literature and history, text and image. Drawing upon her family's and her own experience of traveling between nations, languages, and cultures, Cha examines a number of interrelated issues, including power and history writing, female subjectivity, and the cultural politics of language.

The book is divided into nine sections designated by the nine classical Greek muses, in which the three major sections—the first "Clio History," the second "Calliope Epic Poetry," and the fourth "Melpomene Tragedy"—center on the modern history of Korea, from its struggle against Japan's colonization in the early twentieth century to the political and military turmoil during and after the **Korean War**. Intentionally discontinuous and sometimes painfully disrupted, the sections foreground a sophisticated way of perceiving history by weaving together various subtexts, including historical and personal photographs, maps, historical documents, personal correspondence, and lyric and prose poems. In so doing, it moves among different languages, voices, times, and geographical spaces and presents the modern history of Korea as multidimensional and contextualized in a variety of political relations. In reference to the recurring war and political uproar in Korea, the text analyzes the United States' complicity in Japan's colonization of Korea and its later role in Korea's severance on



the one hand and, on the other, points to the predicament Korean people encountered during the democratic movement against their own government in the early 1980s. The multiple historical references reveal a profound interrogation of how history is conventionally written, specifically how Korea has been missing from the master narrative of the West.

Not just a text about history, *Dictée* is also a woman's text, expressing a feminist idea by questioning and commenting on both Korea's traditional patriarchal culture and the male-centered literary and cultural tradition of the West. Courageous female figures play a significant role in the book: Yu Guan Soon, the patriotic girl who sacrificed her life in Korea's anticolonization movement, and Hyung Soon Huo, the author's mother who retained a deep love for her homeland as an exile, are juxtaposed to female figures famous in Western history such as Joan of Arc and St. Therese. Through the women's stories, the book explores its major themes of exile, displacement, and identity, and the women can be seen as different aspects of the disease, the female speaker recurring throughout the book. Giving voices to the women, Cha's text seeks to restore subjectivity in the women who were traditionally silenced and by doing this retrieves what has been missing from the male-dominated record of history.

As the title suggests, *Dictée* is ultimately a work about language. The French word for "dictation," the title reminds one of not only the immigrants' experience of foreign language learning but also the colonizer's systematic suppression of the native language, both described repeatedly in the book. Using multiple languages in the text, Cha shows how language, Japanese, French, and English, can become a colonial tool or a medium for political and cultural suppression. In its intentional fragmentation, disruption, abundant historical references, and untranslated multilingual presentation, the book draws attention to the mechanisms and structures of language and the political and cultural implication hidden inside language. It forces the reader to contemplate what lies behind the text for a more complete understanding and, in possible discomfort and frustration, to witness linguistic exchanges as deeply rooted in and shaped by imbalanced political powers.

Published first with a small press in 1982, *Dictée* did not elicit much criticism until a panel discussion at the meeting of the **Association for Asian American Studies** in 1991 addressed the book's significance as an Asian American literary text. The four papers presented at the panel were later collected into a book, *Writing Self, Writing Nation*, and published in 1994, in which critic Shelley Sunn Wong attributes the increasing attention to *Dictée* 10 years after its initial publication to the major shifts in social, political, and cultural coordinates since the late 1980s. These major shifts include the demographic changes in the Asian American community and the consequent broadening of Asian American identification, the growing concern with gender issues, and the development of postmodernist and poststructuralist theories. *Dictée* has

been widely studied in university poetry, ethnic studies, and postmodern literature classes over the past decade and is now embraced by many artists and scholars as a significant work of contemporary literature, both in Asian American context and beyond.

After Cha's tragic and untimely death, her family entrusted the Berkeley Art Museum with the Theresa Hak Kyung Cha Archive. In addition to unpublished writings, the photographs and documentation of her video, film, and performance works, the archive also contains many of Cha's less known works of visual art. Handmade artist books, such as *Earth* (1976) and *Father/Mother* (1977), incorporate photographs, paintings, and writings to emphasize the physical book as a work of art. Pieces of concrete poetry such as *The Missing Page* (1976) arrange poetic elements on paper for certain pictorial and typographical effects. There are also works of intermedia art and mail art. Two exhibitions of Cha's oeuvre were held in the early 1990s in the Berkeley Art Museum and the Whitney Museum of American Art respectively. From 2001 to 2005, an exhibition built upon the previous two titled *The Dream of the Audience: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951–1982)* was held in Korea, Austria, Spain, and the United States.

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XIWEN MAI

#### ◆ CHAN, JEFFERY PAUL (1942–)

With Frank Chin, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong, Chinese American author, editor, and professor of Asian American studies Jeffery Paul Chan coedited the groundbreaking anthologies of Asian American literature *Ameeeeee!: An Anthology*

of *Asian American Writers* and *The Big Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature*. He is also known for his many short stories, plays, and his 2004 novel *Eat Everything Before You Die: A Chinaman in the Counter Culture*. Born in Stockton, California, Chan graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, and received a master of arts degree in creative writing from San Francisco State University. In 1970 he helped create the School of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University and cofounded the Department of Asian American Studies. He spent the bulk of his career there in a joint appointment with the Department of English. He retired from teaching in 2006 to focus more on his writing. Since the late 1990s Chan has spent part of the year in Rome, where he has been witnessing and writing about the Chinese diaspora in Italy.

Chan's paternal grandfather immigrated to the United States around the turn of the nineteenth century; his maternal grandmother may have been Chinese and Ute Indian. Chan's father spent his childhood roaming Nevada. Eventually his parents left him in Carson City, where he attended high school. As an herbalist and merchant, Chan's maternal grandfather was exempt from exclusion. He brought his wife and first daughter to San Francisco also around the turn of the nineteenth century. Five more daughters, including Chan's mother, and three sons were born and then raised in San Francisco's **Chinatown**. Chan himself spent his early years living near his maternal grandparents. Later, his family moved to the suburbs, becoming the first Chinese family in El Cerrito, California. Chan has one brother, Michael Paul Chan, an actor known for his roles in television and film.

Chan began writing and publishing short stories while still a student at UC Berkeley. By the late 1960s, Chan was among a handful of young Asian American writers struggling to articulate the terms of this newly coined identity. From the beginning, Chan took as his subject what he calls the process of acculturation and the crisis of identity in the lives of Chinese Americans. Characteristics of these early stories, such as a sharp focus on detail and a poet's attention to language, can be found throughout his work. In such stories as "Auntie Tsia Lays Dying" (1972) and "The Chinese in Haifa" (1974), Chan plunges the reader into the mundane realities of a central character's day-to-day existence. Chan's willingness to allow the smallest actions of his characters to tell the larger story makes these stories fiercely antiromantic. The intricate prose meanders almost lyrically until it is caught up short by a discomfortingly explicit aspect of personal hygiene. The subjects of Chan's stories are old, young, tired, maybe angry, and trying to work out what it means personally for them to be Chinese American. China itself appears only occasionally—in a popular song, a news story, a memory—as a place one should, but does not, call home. Taken together, these early stories function like a mosaic, each story a complex and independent tile working together to characterize a distinctly Chinese American sensibility.

As an undergraduate in the early 1960s, Chan witnessed the student strikes at Berkeley, where he learned that political action could result in real change. The tone of his early fiction was not particularly political. His insistence, however, that Chinese Americans were a worthy and interesting literary subject was in and of itself radical. In the late 1960s Chan met Frank Chin. Together they began to follow a lead established by such scholars as Him Mark Lai, Philip Choy, and Thomas Chinn—the founders of San Francisco's Chinese Historical Society. Chan and Frank Chin began to look for texts to add to this archive, helping to identify and shape the literary legacy of Chinese in America. They sought work written by an earlier generation—texts that had long been out of print or were never recognized by the mainstream. Among the earliest of these identified was an English-Chinese phrase book from 1875 (partially reprinted in *The Big Aiiieeeee!*). Chan and Chin noted the ironic, insider jokes and linguistic twists residing in this seemingly nonliterary vehicle. They credit the author or authors with surreptitiously demonstrating point of view, humor, and an understanding of the situation they were in as immigrants in the United States. More significantly, Chan was instrumental in the rediscovery and republication of Louis Chu's *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (1961, 1979). Both texts are notable for their dexterous use of language. According to Chan, Chu created a literary language that operates simultaneously in English and the Toisan dialect of his 1950s Chinatown. This language, Chan argues, is a particularly Chinese American dialect—the words of individuals simultaneously Chinese and American. In his introduction to the 1979 edition, Chan identifies Louis Chu as the first Chinese American novelist. According to Chan, earlier works pandered to white readers, providing a sanitized version of Chinese America explicitly for white consumption. In contrast, Chu created a more realistic vision of a Chinatown community. It was a vision that recognized the challenges of an immigrant society as it was transitioning from the bachelor ghetto to a family-based community. Chan's introduction functions as a geographical inscription of Chinese America as an almost concrete place with social, political, and historical roots. This inscription recurs in all of Chan's work, as, in the face of Orientalism and reductionism, he insists on the complexities of the Chinese American landscape.

In 1973 Chan, Chin, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong published *Aiiieeeee!* The anthology collected many of the texts the editors had rediscovered alongside the work of contemporary Asian American writers. *Aiiieeeee!* insists on the status of Asian American literature as a literary genre worthy of attention. A product of the activism of its time, the book's fiery, rhetorical introduction, coauthored by the editors, blasted white racism. A polemic, the introduction angrily condemned a genre of Orientalized writing that constructed and upheld Asian stereotypes. They called instead for serious writing about the complicated realities of the Asian American experience.

Since its publication, the book has been extremely influential in the field of Asian American studies. It has been praised for identifying some of the key structures of

anti-Asian discrimination in the United States. It influenced and inspired a generation of Asian American writers, artists, and activists. At the same time, the editors have also been criticized, in particular for promoting what has been called an ultra-masculinist vision of what Asian America should be. This vision is given its clearest articulation in an essay cowritten by Chan and Chin prior to the publication of *Aiiiiiiii!* In the frequently cited "Racist Love" (1972), the coauthors write of the emasculation of the Asian American man. They claim anti-Asian bias feminizes Asian American men, making them weak and womanly. Stereotypical Asian American men are not courageous, daring, or original—all qualities the authors identify as particularly masculine. Most contemporary scholars agree that the particular workings of racism emasculate Asian American men. At the same time, scholars such as King-Kok Cheung have criticized the authors for the misogyny and homophobia that seems to underpin Chan and Chin's argument; the authors seem to argue that women and homosexuals are weak, derivative, and fearful.

Known first as a writer and editor, Chan spent the bulk of his career as a teacher and activist at San Francisco State University. He began teaching in the English department while still a master's student. In 1968 he became involved with what would become known as the **Third World Students' Strike**. The strike resulted in major institutional changes and curriculum reform. The School of Ethnic Studies (which included a department of Asian American studies) created as a consequence of the strike was among the first program of its kind in the country. The success of the strike sent a clear signal to American universities that institutional change and curriculum reform recognizing the needs of minoritarian students would be required. Chan joined the faculty of Asian American Studies at its inception. For the next 38 years, he would continue to shepherd and shape the department, serving twice as chair.

In 2004 Chan published his first novel, *Eat Everything Before You Die: A Chinaman in the Counter Culture*. As the title indicates, the novel is a gustatory whirlwind, as it revels in the pleasures and pitfalls of sex, drugs, and, of course, food. Novelist and scholar George Leonard identifies the book's metaphor of eating as another way of understanding assimilation. Eating-as-assimilation emphasizes assimilation as a complex process of consumption. Rather than tamely melting into the American status quo, the Chinese American characters of the novel experience assimilation as pleasurable, painful, nauseating, transgressive, and, most of all, compulsory. A transformational process, it alters both eater and eaten, while blurring the boundaries between the two.

True to his roots as a scholar of Chinese America, the novel is very much about remembering, though not in the stultifying form of memorial. Remembering instead becomes a form of digestion, a way of processing and understanding the past. Memory provides the narrative spine of the book. The novel follows Christopher Columbus Wong as he journeys back in his mind over the first 50 years of his life. Raised in San

Francisco's Chinatown by a coterie of figures who may or may not have been his parents, Wong is a product of what Chan identifies as a lost generation. For the most part this is not the post-1965 Chinatown in which husbands know their wives and grandparents their grandchildren. Instead, this is a Chinatown populated by Chinese bachelors and the few women, children, and white folk who have stumbled into the long shadow of exclusion.

In a loosely chronological narrative, the novel finds Wong as a boy piecing together the fragments of the history of one possible father, his uncle Lincoln. At the same time, the young Wong must face his ambivalent feelings toward another father figure, the Reverend Candlewick, a white missionary who turns out to be a pedophile. Later, Wong goes to college. In discovering women, he also discovers the distance between himself and "real," that is, Chinese-born Chinese. By the late 1960s and 1970s, Wong has become a hippie. He finds himself living in a Marin County commune, where he encounters yet another way of being Asian in America: his fellow residents include a number of prelitererate Hmong, one of whom is reinventing himself as a spoken word performance artist. By the end of the novel, we recognize that the nominal orphan, Christopher Columbus Wong, has been parented by the last 50 years of the Asian American experience.

As with his earlier works, Chan's imploding use of language is central to the novel. If, however, his early work used language as an appetizer, the novel features a five-course meal with wine pairings. Chan is a master of the never-ending sentence, the many-paged paragraph. This is not to call him long-winded. Rather, these long descriptions and observations evoke a complexity of sensual experience made tangible on the page. There is something literally gluttonous in his language, as though the language is in and of itself the "everything" of the title. Chan's masterful balance between linguistic exactitude and abundance recalls the experience of living as both carefully contained and fundamentally uncontainable. Reading itself becomes the titular act of consumption.

This sentiment is reiterated by the structure of the novel. Rather than following a strict chronological narrative, for the most part the novel is a series of intimate scenes. Working against the strictures of conventional plot, Chan seems to place these scenes almost randomly, forcing the reader to draw his or her own conclusions as to the relevancy and meaning of their adjacency. As with his earlier works, the effect is mosaic. By resisting the simplification of linear narrative, Chan's readers must step back to contemplate the entire design. Again, Chan exercises just enough narrative control to allow for a greater freedom of meaning and consequence.

The narrative of the novel recounts the particular experience of Christopher Columbus Wong as he is embedded in the context of circumstance. The novel as a whole, however, can be understood as a response to the legacy of **Chinese American literature** Chan has spent his career reading. The title itself invokes both Louis Chu's *Eat a Bowl of Tea* and Frank Chin's 1974 play *The Chickencoop Chinaman*. In one

respect, the novel can be read as a parody of the canon of Chinese American literature, taking on such familiar themes as autobiography/history, food, and sexual identity. At the same time, Christopher Columbus Wong's ironic perspective and wry tone allow the novel to veer sharply between a satire and a real warmth of feeling. Chan's gentle mockery of his literary predecessors betrays gratitude, respect, and a genuine appreciation for those who have come before.

*Eat Everything Before You Die* was produced in part by a California Arts Fellowship and the Marin County Writers-in-Residence Award. It also won the American Pen Oakland Literary Award for fiction in 2005. Parts of the novel, as well as Chan's other work, have been translated into Italian. **See also** Asian Diasporas; Asian American Political Activism; Asian American Stereotypes; Assimilation/Americanization; Chinatowns; Orientalism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America.

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JENNIFER CHAN

#### ◆ CHANG, DIANA (1934–)

Chinese American novelist, poet, and painter Diana Chang is best known for her first novel *The Frontiers of Love* (1956), considered the first novel published by an

American of Chinese origin in the United States. Born in New York City in 1934, she moved as an infant to China with her Chinese father (an architect) and U.S.-born Chinese American mother. During her childhood, she lived in various Chinese cities, including Beijing, Nanjing, and Shanghai—the city that became the setting for *The Frontiers of Love*. At the end of **World War II**, Chang returned to New York and completed a baccalaureate degree at Barnard College in 1949. After graduating, she worked as a full-time junior editor until she decided to pursue a writing career while working various part-time jobs such as answering telephones and freelance copyediting. Between 1956 and 1978, she produced six novels, including *A Woman of Thirty* (1959), *A Passion for Life* (1961), *The Only Game in Town* (1963), *Eye to Eye* (1974), and *A Perfect Love* (1978). Chang has also published three volumes of poetry and placed numerous short stories in literary journals and anthologies. As an accomplished painter, she has exhibited paintings in solo and group shows as well. In 1979 she returned to Barnard College to teach creative writing in the English department, a position she held for many years. She served for a time as the editor of the *American Pen*, a journal of the international writers' association PEN, and she has received a Fulbright and the John Hay Whitney Fellowship. A member of the Asian American Writers' Workshop, Chang continues to give readings of her work. She currently lives in Manhattan and Water Hill, Long Island.

Critical attention to *The Frontiers of Love* was revived through an influential introduction by Asian American author and critic Shirley Geok-lin **Lim** when the University of Washington Press reissued the novel in 1994. Chang's other novels, with the exception of *The Only Game in Town*, primarily feature white characters and have generated less scholarly interest. In interviews, Chang has explained her choice of white characters as an attempt to speak to universal issues such as existentialism, love, and the role of the artist in society. Critics such as Frank **Chin** have read her later works as a betrayal of her Chinese heritage, despite Chang's engagement with the "hyphenated condition"—a term she coined in 1976—in two novels, much of her poetry, and the short story "The Oriental Contingent," published in *The Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology*. More recent critics such as Carol Spaulding have argued that Chang's white characters are acutely conscious of their racial identity, and so whiteness is challenged as an invisible subject position in U.S. society. In all of Chang's fiction, characters face crises of ethnic, national, gender, and artistic identity, whether they are biracial Chinese Americans living in Shanghai or white Protestants residing in New England.

*The Frontiers of Love* (1956), Chang's first and most influential novel, focuses on the love affairs and identity crises of three Eurasian characters in Shanghai, a "Eurasian" city during the final months of its Japanese occupation in 1945. The novel uses a limited third-person narration, focalized through particular characters in each chapter to create a nuanced and multivocal discourse (Lim 1994). The three major



Eurasian characters—Sylvia Chen, Feng Huang, and Mimi Lambert—strive to resolve the contradictions of mixed race and bicultural identities, and they each represent a different resolution of these issues. Sylvia, 20, has a belligerent American mother and an intellectual Chinese father, and she does not feel comfortable in Western or Chinese dresses. Hinting at her eventual acceptance of a self-constructed identity, she declares in the novel, “I shall have to design my own kind of clothes, a modified Chinese dress” (Chang 1956, 4). Feng is a 26-year-old lawyer with brown hair and freckles, and he has a Chinese father and an English mother. In contrast to Sylvia, he seeks an essentialist Chinese identity, particularly through his ideological involvement with the Communist Party. Mimi, a 19-year-old orphan of an Australian father and a “Chinese socialite,” is the most cosmopolitan of the three main characters, and her trajectory is toward integration into Western society; she is dating Robert Bruno, 34, the son of a Swiss businessman who owns a printing company, and her character is trapped by a stereotypical gender role.

The novel opens with Sylvia, Mimi, and Feng attending a cocktail party at the home of Bill and Julie Jastrows, a Jewish couple who host regular gatherings of the cosmopolitan crowd in transnational Shanghai. Mimi argues with Robert about his tardiness because he was at the Chinese opera, and Feng explodes in a tirade, accusing those gathered of looking down on Chinese culture. Later that night, Feng conspires with a communist cell leader, Tang, who secretly prints political pamphlets in the Bruno’s printing press after hours and who is planning a strike at the plant. Feng reveals that he overheard the Bruno heir discussing his father’s plans to expand control of printing and the media in China after the war. He is assigned to cultivate a relationship with Sylvia, whose father, Liyi, is the plant manager.

The next day, Sylvia moderates a disagreement between her parents, a role she is accustomed to playing and one that is symbolic of her identity dilemma. She takes her mother, Helen Ames Chen, on a walk in the city, and they remember a previous visit to New York City through the sights and sounds of Shanghai. Sylvia contemplates how uncomfortable she felt in the United States and how much she envies her father and cousin Peiyuan because of their well defined Chinese identities. She considers the cosmopolitan character of Shanghai, a city with European enclaves superimposed on a Chinese backdrop and where cultural relativism rules the day.

In the evening Feng arrives for an unannounced visit to determine Liyi’s knowledge of the Brunos’s plans. Like Sylvia, he also is drawn to Peiyuan, who is a 16-year-old country boy who comes to represent an essential Chineseness, unvarnished by Western colonialism. During the visit Feng launches into a political diatribe against Chinese liberalism, a position advocated by Sylvia’s Western-educated father. A few days later, Sylvia and Mimi spend an afternoon together at Mimi’s house. Mimi reveals that she may be pregnant with Robert’s child, and she asks for Sylvia’s help to hide a secret rendezvous from her aunt. Sylvia cannot help her that night, however, because she has

agreed to go on a date with Feng. Feng and Sylvia's first date is disastrous because he scolds her throughout the dinner for being spoiled, and she calls his political ideas romantic. Sylvia cuts the evening short and tells Feng she has promised to meet Mimi even though she has not.

On the evening of August 4, 1945—a date recognizable to the novel's readers as being on the cusp of the first U.S. nuclear attack on Japan—Soviet radio breaks the news that the war in the Pacific is about to end in the defeat of the Japanese. The cosmopolitan crowd gathers at the Jastrows to celebrate, as they had long planned to do. However, when Robert Bruno does not arrive, Sylvia, Feng, Mimi, and their Irish friend Larry Casement venture out into the nighttime city streets to find him. After they discover that Robert has passed out at his father's house, they decide to celebrate the victory in the streets, only to be picked up by a Japanese patrol and imprisoned.

In one of the novel's most significant scenes, the characters are sorted according to nationality by the armed Japanese soldiers, who are extremely drunk. Sylvia and Feng are both identified as "white Chinese" while Mimi—despite being phenotypically similar to Sylvia—identifies herself as Australian and is designated as a white foreigner. During the ordeal, Feng protects Sylvia while they are all forced to stand throughout the night. After a night of humiliation, they are released. Sylvia and Feng form an attachment that eventually turns into a love affair.

In the following days Mimi reveals to Robert at a garden party that she is pregnant. He wants her to get an abortion so they can remain lovers, eventually revealing that he can never marry her because of his father's prejudices. The strain of this rejection causes Mimi to faint, and she loses the baby in a spontaneous miscarriage. Meanwhile, Sylvia seems to lose herself in her affair with Feng, attracted to his idealism and social conscience.

As the war ends and American GIs begin to arrive in Shanghai, Sylvia's mother, Helen, grows increasingly eager to leave China for the States, and at the same time she is increasingly irritated with Peiyuan living in her home. When she demands that Peiyuan leave the house, Liyi arranges a job for him at the Bruno printing plant, despite his initial objections to nepotism. From his new apartment near the plant, Peiyuan observes Feng entering the building and follows him to a meeting of the secret communist cell. Peiyuan is discovered by Tang, the communist leader, and imprisoned in the factory for several days. When he attempts to escape, he is killed by Tang on the street in the climax of the novel. Peiyuan's murder ends the romance between Feng and Sylvia because Feng had confessed to Sylvia that Peiyuan was being held because he discovered Feng's secret activities. The communist strike is also averted because Sylvia reports what she knows about Peiyuan's death to Mr. Bruno, her father's boss.

The novel concludes with Feng leaving Shanghai on a train for an inland assignment for the communists. Mimi adopts a promiscuous lifestyle after being jilted by Robert and takes up with the Americans. The last glimpse of her in the

novel is in the city streets in a sexually compromising position. In the final chapter, Sylvia's family is on vacation at a beach house, where she feels reborn as a whole self.

While *The Frontiers of Love* explicitly addresses Asian American identity through Eurasian characters, the rest of Chang's novels do not deal overtly with Asian American characters and themes, with the exception of a short satirical work *The Only Game in Town*. However, critics such as Carol Spaulding contend that the emphasis on class, gender, artistic, and religious identities in Chang's remaining novels may in fact represent a transmutation of underlying questions of ethnic identity and, as a result, draw attention to the construction of racialized selves even in white Protestant characters (3024–3025).

Chang's second novel, *A Woman of Thirty* (1959), is set in the high-class world of publishing in New York City, where Emily Merrick becomes infatuated with a married architect, David Sansom, whom she meets at a cocktail party hosted by her boss. Recently divorced, Emily seeks to escape the narrow confines of her morally rigorous, white Protestant rearing in New England through an extended vacation in Florida and later by embarking on an affair with David. However, Emily discovers the instability of basing her identity on a romantic relationship. David sporadically breaks off their relationship for weeks at a time, only to begin wooing her again, full of apologies and with renewed passion. Emily learns that her quest to explore the widest ranges of possibilities in life cannot be fulfilled by marriage.

*A Passion for Life* (1961), Chang's next novel, continues her exploration of white Protestant morality, in this case in the claustrophobic atmosphere of a small New England town. Barbara and Geoffrey Owens find their conventional life in Kingsbridge, Massachusetts, turned upside down when Barbara is raped during a break-in at her home by an escapee from a mental institution. Driven by duty and social obligations, the couple believe they must keep the rape and the resulting unwanted pregnancy secret from their narrowly moralistic neighbors. Set in a period when abortions were illegal and extremely dangerous, Barbara and Geoffrey are forced to entrust the town's newest doctor with their secret. Since Dr. David Bergman is Jewish and a new arrival to Kingsbridge, he has been socially isolated in the white Protestant town, and the Owensens feel his outsider status makes him a safe ally. He agrees to help the couple find an adoption agency, in part to gain acceptance, and in the end the Owensens and the Bergmans form a friendship. Eventually, Barbara persuades Geoffrey to keep the child, and the new parents move to Boston, leaving behind the restrictive morality of the small town.

In Chang's fourth novel, *The Only Game in Town* (1963), she returns to a portrayal of ethnic identity in what has been called an East-West spoof. This short satiric novel—originally composed as a film script—is “a slight, farcical piece of political

satire" in the form of a love story between a white Peace Corps volunteer and an attractive Chinese dancer who is a communist (Ling 1980, 74).

*Eye to Eye* (1974), Chang's fifth novel, deals most explicitly with her vision of the artist in society. George P. Safford is a respected visual artist who—although he is happily married and a father—becomes smitten with an unattainable Jewish woman who works in the same building. The woman, Nan Weil, is a novelist, and she attempts to discourage George's attentions by telling him that she has three children although she has none. George thinks Nan is a "foreign princess" who makes his wife Edith seem to be even more the epitome of the average Protestant American woman. To deal with his obsession, George enters psychotherapy with Dr. Yale H. Emerson, an analyst who is intrigued with the "Orient." Throughout the novel, George also produces immense dioramas, or mood scenes, which come to symbolize his progress toward self-awareness. In addition, he seeks advice from his friend, Bob Meachum, a free-spirited poet who ends up having an affair with Nan at a writers' retreat. In an unexpected twist, Nan is revealed to be Dr. Emerson's wife, who has kept her maiden name, and the analyst abruptly ends his work with George. As George uncovers the link between his obsession with Nan and his desire to break out of Protestant conventionality, he is able to move forward to greater self-understanding, and a persistent cough that plagues him throughout the novel vanishes.

Chang's sixth novel, *A Perfect Love* (1978), continues her familiar theme of the love affair as a mechanism to break free of social conventionality. This novel's protagonist, Alice Mayhew, is a middle-aged married woman who feels confined by her 20-year marriage to an emotionally unavailable man. For a time she is able to contain her discontentment because of her daughter's promise. However, when her daughter drops out of college and begins an affair with a much older man, Alice is thrown into an identity crisis. She begins her own love affair with an intense younger man, David Henderson, who disrupts her tidy world. Alice's relationship with David terrifies her, and at the same time she feels herself opening up to exhilarating possibilities in life.

After the publication of her last novel, *A Perfect Love*, Chang shifted her literary attention toward the production of poetry and short stories. She published three volumes of poetry: *The Horizon Is Definitely Speaking* (1982), *What Matisse Is After* (1984), and *Earth, Water, Light* (1991). She was also involved in two translated volumes of poetry by Chinese women, *Approaching* (1989) and *Saying Yes* (1991). In fact, after *The Frontiers of Love*, Chang's clearest examination of her ethnic identity is found in poems such as "An Appearance of Being Chinese," "Second Nature," "Saying Yes," "Otherness," and "Allegories," as well as her short stories "The Oriental Contingent" and "Falling Tree." Critics have also praised her poems dealing with the visual arts such as "Plunging into View: Inspired by the Art of James Brooks" and "A Double Pursuit."

Chang's best known short story "The Oriental Contingent" directly engages Asian American identity, in particular questions of authenticity and assimilation. The story centers on the fraught relationship between two Chinese American women—Lisa Mallory and Connie Sung—who each secretly feel inferior to the other because neither woman feels she is authentically Chinese. At the same time, the well assimilated women are labeled as the "Oriental continent" in their elite social circles. Chang's short story, like much of the rest of her fiction, explores the inner conflict of characters in "the hyphenated condition" as they seek both to form an individual identity and to find a place within their immediate communities and the wider U.S. society. See also *Assimilation/Americanization*; *Colonialism and Postcolonialism*.

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ERIC MARTINSEN

### ◆ CHANG, LAN SAMANTHA (1965–)

Author of *Hunger: A Novella and Stories* (1998) and the novel *Inheritance* (2004), Lan Samantha Chang, one of four daughters of Chinese immigrant parents, was born

and raised in Appleton, Wisconsin. She has a BA in East Asian studies from Yale University, an MA from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, and an MFA from the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop. Chang was awarded the Bunting Fellowship at Radcliffe Institute and fellowships from Princeton University, the National Endowment for the Arts, Stanford University, Harvard University, and the Iowa Writers' Workshop. *Hunger* won a California Book Award Silver Medal and the *Southern Review* Prize, and *Inheritance* was awarded a PEN Beyond Margins Award in 2005. Chang was Briggs-Copeland Lecturer in Creative Writing at Harvard University until 2005, when she was named director of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, the first **Asian American** and the first woman to occupy this position.

Chang's fiction focuses on the dynamics of family relationships, most often in the context of the Chinese American immigrant experience. She portrays the tension of family dissonance through elegant prose that reflects the nuances of dialogues that hide more than they reveal. As her characters deal with separation from their homeland and the need to fit in a new country, they willingly make the ultimate sacrifice to belong: forgetting. In "Pipa's Story," a woman recalls how years before in China she took revenge upon the man who killed her father on behalf of her mother, a story her present family in the United States does not know. Tian, in "Hunger," puts his family, who did not support his dream of becoming a violinist, and the past behind when he moves to the United States. Ming, in "The Unforgiving," tells his wife they will forget the past to make room for the space required by the present. These deliberate rejections produce in Tian and Ming an obsessive hunger to belong to the American Dream. When this dream is denied them—Tian and the father in "The Eve of the Spirit Festival" are passed over for promotion at the music school and lab where they work, respectively, and Ming, who dreamed of being a scientist, works as a Xerox machine technician—they channel their fierce regret through their children. Unable to deal with their fathers' dreams for them, the children eventually leave. The balance between what the characters choose to forget and the hunger produced by what they remember becomes the hinge upon which the tension in the stories turns.

Many of the stories in *Hunger* are told from the perspective of women and center on the ways they deal with preordained roles and expectations. Min, the narrator of "Hunger," lives in a state of controlled anxiety as she helplessly observes how her husband's frustration leads him to drive his daughters—tone-deaf Anna and talented Ruth, who leaves home to escape the pressure of becoming a violinist—to a perfection they neither want nor can achieve. Ming's wife, Sansan, tries to arbitrate between her husband's dreams for their son and the youth's ambitions, realizing how similar they are. Chang's female characters appear fragile, but that fragility is generally accompanied by a hint of hidden passion or the strength to hold on when hope has diminished. Children often find themselves caught between familial obligations, inherited cultural

norms, and personal identity. In “Hunger” and “The Eve of the Spirit Festival,” two daughters react differently to their fathers’ needs and impositions: one struggles to please him while the other breaks free. Caroline, the narrator of “San,” chronicles her father’s slide into gambling and his abandonment of the family. Using the riddles of mathematics that her father has taught her, she understands that she will never learn what he was seeking when he left them. These children cope with their parents’ hunger for adaptation, success, and love and their subsequent regrets and frustrations as they define their own positions in relation to the family, the buried past, and possibilities for the future.

The opposing positions of two sisters that Chang explored in stories in *Hunger* are taken up in *Inheritance*, the story of a family in China from the 1920s to the United States in the 1990s. The novel describes the Japanese invasion of China, the nationalist movement, the communist revolution, and the inevitability of immigration. Hong, the narrator, recounts the story of her mother, Junan, and aunt, Yinan, sisters bound by the tragedy of their mother’s suicide because of their father’s rejection. As she explains how their love for the same man, her father Li-Ang, shattered their bond, Hong also connects the political upheavals in China to the family story. The novel is about fragmentation on many levels: the ruptures in the family mirror the divisions in China. The estrangement between Li-Ang and his brother because of opposing political loyalties reflects the split between China and Taiwan, just as the final rupture between Junan and Yinan is a paradigm for the separation between families caused by the diaspora. These ruptures will haunt the family for generations.

The novel explores forms of love: sisterly love, brotherly loyalty, romantic love, and daughterly devotion motivate the characters to make difficult choices in complex situations. Against her better judgment, Junan, a calculating and possessive woman, falls passionately in love with her husband. Pregnant with her second child and hoping for a boy, she sends her timid sister to attend to him when he is stationed in Chongqing, the wartime capital of China. The two fall in love, and Yinan bears Li-Ang a son. Junan eventually leaves China with her two daughters. Many years later, Hong travels back to China to reunite with her father and aunt and to try to heal the wounds of separation and betrayal. Chang shows in *Inheritance* how attitudes toward family responsibility and loyalty are generationally transmitted or revised. Hong’s relationship with her sister Hwa, for instance, is colored by their different perspectives on their mother’s story. Hong’s narrative then becomes an attempt to reconnect with her family and her own past in an act of compassionate understanding that seeks forgiveness for errors made in the name of passion.

Chang’s fiction examines the intergenerational experiences of Chinese immigrant families and explores how individuals negotiate multiple inheritances, adapt to changing situations, and fulfill ambitions. As her characters struggle to sate the hunger—

for freedom, for control, for economic opportunities, for another chance—that led them to make choices, they deal with the elusive nature of the dream they sought, as well as their children’s unique dilemmas. These narratives widen our perspectives of Asian American engagements on the connection between history and personal stories. **See also** Asian Diasporas.

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ROCÍO G. DAVIS

◆ CHANG, VICTORIA (1970–)

Victoria Chang is a Chinese American poet and anthologist who wrote an award-winning volume of poetry and edited a pioneering anthology of contemporary Asian American poetry. She has also written reviews and essays for the *Boston Review*, *Southern Review*, *Slope*, and others. Her *Asian American Poetry: The Next Generation* (2004) is considered a groundbreaking anthology because it brings together Asian America’s most recent poetic talents, including Lisa Asagi, Nick Carbo, Suji Kwock Kim, Srikanth Reddy, Brenda Shaughnessy, and Paisley Rekdal. Due to the multitude of styles and subjects, this anthology does away with previous uniform perceptions of Asian American poetry and culture. Her own volume of poetry, *Circle* (2005), won the Crab Orchard Review Award Series in Poetry and the **Association for Asian American Studies** Book Award. It was a finalist for both the 2005 *Fore Word* magazine Book of the Year Award and the 2005 PEN Center USA Literary Award.

Chang’s poetry has appeared in journals such as *Poetry*, the *New England Review*, the *Paris Review*, the *New Republic*, *Ploughshares*, *Triquarterly*, and *Threepenny Review*. Her poem “Seven Changs” is included in *Best American Poetry 2005*, guest-edited by Paul Muldoon. She is the recipient of a John Atherton Scholarship in Poetry from the Bread Loaf Writer’s Conference, a Kenyon Writer’s Workshop Taylor Fellowship, the Hopwood Award from the University of Michigan, the Holden Minority Fellowship from the MFA program at Warren Wilson College, and a Peter Taylor Fellowship from the Kenyon Review Writer’s Conference.

A second-generation Chinese American, Chang was born on December 3, 1970, in Detroit, Michigan, and grew up in West Bloomfield, Michigan. She has a bachelor’s degree in Asian studies from the University of Michigan, a master’s degree in Asian studies from Harvard University, and an MBA from Stanford Business School. Chang is currently in the PhD program in literature and creative writing at the University of



Southern California and works as a business researcher and writer for the Stanford Graduate School of Business. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband Todd and their daughter.

Chang's poetry collection *Circle* explores an array of subjects. The first part, "On Quitting," focuses on wanting, the wish to possess, and the difficulty of ending a relationship. In "Five-Year Plan," the second subdivision of the volume, her Chinese American identity and family take center stage. In the third section, "Limits," themes such as violence and crime are contrasted with poems about finding a home and about mortality and the self (selves). *Circle* is about the progress of the human mind, be it personal progress in matters of love, temporal progress from one generation to the next, or general progress through human evolution. Chang doubts the mind's capacity for progress, especially in the subsection "Limits," which shows that its relationship to aggression and cruelty have not advanced but regressed.

The collection's title, *Circle*, alludes to many aspects touched on in the poems. A circle stands for repetition, such as the recurrence of violence in humankind; it is a symbol of transformation (e.g., from "Gertrude" to bombshell); and it represents perfection such as that which the speaker's family and social stereotypes demand of her but which she cannot provide. There can also be a circle of experiences and emotions, such as being single, falling in love, being jealous, being bored, splitting up; and history can be circular, as described in the beheading of people from the Middle Ages to now. It must not be forgotten that a circle can also refer to the area inside the circle line. In this context, the circle designates her closest companions: her sexual partners and her family. At the center of this circle is of course the poetic persona herself. The exploration of her subjectivity and of the world surrounding her is the core of this poetry collection.

Other major images in *Circle* include food, birds, the garden, and the ocean. Food, a vital necessity in the lives of all creatures, also has a social dimension, as meals are often shared with loved ones, be they partners or parents. Chang gives credit to the importance of food by featuring it in numerous poems. Mentioned are not only Chinese American dishes like chicken feet ("Hong Kong Flower Lounge") and winter melon soup ("Seven Reasons for Divorce"), but also European American food such as Bundt cake ("Preparations") and meringue ("Edward Hopper Study: Hotel Room"). Birds also appear frequently in Chang's poems. Their ability to fly and enjoy infinite freedom of movement ("Flight") and their natural instincts ("Instinct") are envied. According to the speaker's father in "The Laws of the Garden," birds are allowed to have sex—unlike people. Ravens can feel at home where humans are killed ("The Tower of London"), and larks move while humankind is static: "*we have always been this way—a thousand young larks/mount the sudden breeze*" ("Meditation at Petoskey," 2005, 63). The garden, nature cultivated by humans, is another recurring image in

*Circle*. The cultivation of beautiful or useful plants (including tulips and vegetables) and the elimination of weeds relates to morality and the attempt to develop one's good sides while giving up bad habits (cf. "The Laws of the Garden," "To Want," and "On Quitting").

The image of the ocean is also prominent. It stands for separation, loneliness, and being far from rescue ("Seven Reasons for Divorce"); for impossible or very difficult tasks ("On Sameness"); and for absence of a sense of belonging ("Mostly Ocean"). In "Mostly Ocean" the poetic persona's racially marked body is described by Chang as an ocean. The Pacific Ocean, situated between the United States and China, symbolizes the perception of the speaker as culturally in-between. As she tries to reach land, raging hounds and soldiers attempt to scare her off. When she goes ashore, she is inspected and interrogated. A look back at the sea painfully reminds her that she does not really belong to this land: "As I look // back at the sea, I know my body/will always be mostly ocean, // a disease stitched into me" (2005, 42).

There are many unusual metaphors, such as comparing a woman during a (imagined) sex scene to a washrag spreading in a basin ("Edward Hopper Study: Office at Night") or linking Shang Yuan lanterns to human heads, hung in a line during the Japanese Nanking invasion: "they hang in a row for decoration, foreheads bumping/into each other, // glowing like a galaxy of holiday lights" ("Lantern Festival," 2005, 47). The conversational language describes atrocities and emotional disappointments in a forthright way, so that the intensity of the turmoil reaches the reader unhindered. Some poems start with an epigraph explaining the historical or political background of a poem (i.e., "Grooming," "Sarah Emma Edmonds," and "Yang Gui Fei"). References are made to history, art, and films.

Most of the poems in *Circle* are couplets and tercets. This form echoes the poet's concern with societal regulations, moral rules, and limits to freedom and life. The fact that the couplets and tercets are unrhymed signifies a break with tradition. There are beautiful sound clusters (for example in "Mostly Ocean" and "Before"). Anaphora, repetend, parallelism, and lists are frequent (e.g., in "Chinese Speech Contest," "\$4.99 All You Can Eat Sunday Brunch," "Holiday Parties," and "Five-Year Plan"). These repetitions are the formal expressions of thematic repetitions such as disappointment in love, generational difficulties, and brutality. The harmony between form and content, along with the originality of the poems and their inner correspondence, prove Chang's position as an outstanding new voice in Asian American poetry. **See also** Racism and Asian America.

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BRIGITTE WALLINGER-SCHORN

## ◆ CHARLIE CHAN

The fictional Chinese American detective Charlie Chan is a creation of the Ohio-born white American writer Earl Derr Biggers, who is said to be inspired from the career of the Hawaiian police detective Chang Apana. Between 1925 and 1932, Biggers wrote six novels in which Charlie Chan was the hero. Realizing that "[s]inister and wicked Chinese are old stuff, but an amiable Chinese on the side of law and order has never been used" (Lackman) Biggers created the character of Charlie Chan in contrast to Sax Rohmer's Dr. Fu Manchu. In his novels, Charlie Chan lives in Honolulu with his large family. His sons are known as son No. 1 and son No. 2, who support their father but often cause him troubles. Charlie Chan is described as a man who is courageous, intelligent, amiable, patient, and characteristically modest. Although he is very fat, he moves gracefully. He speaks English fluently and often quotes Confucius. All the six novels were serialized and published, winning immediate success from the time they appeared. Before his death in 1933, Biggers saw all his Charlie Chan novels except the last one adapted into films.

After that, Charlie Chan continues to be a great charm to the American audience. He is the hero of 49 movies, 47 of them shot before 1950. The Charlie Chan movies are mostly produced by Fox Film Corp, which was later succeeded by 20th Century Fox and by Monogram Pictures. Of the three white actors who successively starred Charlie Chan, Warner Oland has acted in 16 Charlie Chan movies, Sidney Toler in 22, and Roland Winters in 6. Most of the movies were favorably received and were popular. Although in Biggers's novels Charlie Chan stays in Honolulu and never travels anywhere except to California, in the movies he is constantly on the road to various places around the world, solving one mysterious murder case after another and making himself a widely known celebrity.

Besides movies, Charlie Chan also appears as the hero in a Broadway play in 1933, on radio during the 1930s and 1940s, in comic strips from 1938 to 1942, in TV series in 1957–1958, in a theatrical play during the 1970s, and in books by several other writers. The only occasion in which a Chinese starred as Charlie Chan was in an animated series in the 1970s in which Keye Luke, who acted as Charlie Chan's eldest son in some of the previous films, got the chance to act as Charlie Chan. With his name gaining popularity in American society, Charlie Chan is more famous than his creator, Earl Derr Biggers, who brought him into literature. He is probably the most popular ethnic detective ever created in the United States.

Despite the fact that he was created to be the opposite of the evil Orientals who incarnated the **Yellow Peril** and that he was popular in American society, Charlie Chan and his movies have become targets of criticism and protest from militant Asian and African Americans since the 1960s. African Americans complained against the description of frightened blacks in the Charlie Chan movies. Asian Americans were upset about the stereotypical portrayal of Asians as inscrutable and inassimilable Orientals. They felt that the Charlie Chan image has reinforced white preconceptions about Asians, and the Charlie Chan movies have misrepresented or underrepresented Asian culture. The most scathing criticism comes from the Chinese American writer Frank **Chin**, who produced articles, short stories, essays, and novels to dispel the Hollywood stereotype of Charlie Chan. He identified Charlie Chan as a representative of racist love, and for Chin racist love was as harmful as racist hate. Chin and the characters in his novels tried hard to escape from the specter of Charlie Chan. Chin was not alone in fighting the Charlie Chan stereotyping. In 1993, the Filipino American poet, playwright, novelist Jessica **Hagedorn** edited an anthology titled *Charlie Chan Is Dead: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Fiction*.

It should be mentioned that, praise or criticism, the Charlie Chan movies have experienced a resurgence of interest in recent years. Cable television and videotapes of the 1980s connected younger generations with the Charlie Chan movies. In 2003, Fox Movie Channel showed Charlie Chan movies shot before 1950. In 2004 MGM released six of the Monogram movies. In 2006 Fox released some of the Charlie Chan movies on DVD.

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KUILAN LIU

### ◆ CHEE, ALEXANDER (1967–)

Alexander Chee, a Korean American novelist, essayist, short story writer, book reviewer, activist, and professor of creative writing, was born in South Kingston, Rhode Island. Because of his parents' affinity for traveling, Chee had either lived in or visited the states of California and Maine as well as Korea, Kauai, Truk, Guam, Mexico, Canada, and the Canary Islands, all before attending college. After this itinerant upbringing, Chee attended Wesleyan University from 1985 to 1989, devoting time to creative writing, primarily under the tutelage of Annie Dillard. Subsequent to undergraduate studies, Chee moved to San Francisco, becoming heavily involved with queer activist organizations ACT UP and Queer Nation. He then left for New York, where he worked as the assistant editor of *Out* magazine. From 1992 to 1994 he attended the Iowa Writers' Workshop and received an MFA in fiction writing. Since completing his schooling, he has taught creative writing at a number of institutions, including New School University, Goddard College, Wesleyan University, and, as of 2006, he teaches at Amherst College.

Chee's first novel, *Edinburgh* (2001), was published by Welcome Rain to glowing reviews in the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, *Kirkus Reviews*, *Publisher's Weekly* (where his novel was named Best Book of the Year), and *Lambda Book Report*, among others. Due in large part to its critical acclaim, *Edinburgh* was picked up by a larger publishing company, Picador, soon after its debut. Chee has received numerous distinctions related to his writing, including a National Endowment of the Arts Fellowship in fiction writing (2004), a MacDowell Colony Fellowship, the Whiting Writers' Award, the Asian American Writers' Workshop Literature Award, a Lambda Editor's Choice Prize, and a Michener/Copernicus Prize.

*Edinburgh* is a lyrical novel set in Maine. It is structured in four primary sections. The first, "Song of the Fireflies," centers on the early life of Aphias Zhe (nicknamed Fee), a biracial Korean American adolescent who is one of a number of boys molested by a choir director, ominously named Big Eric. Complicating this sexual abuse, Fee develops a passionate attachment to a fellow choirboy named Peter. The second part,

"January's Cathedral," follows Fee as he grows older and unacknowledged trauma resurfaces. Some of the choirboys, including Peter, commit suicide. Fee attempts suicide but does not succeed. The third section, "And Night's Black Sleep Upon The Eyes," is narrated from the viewpoint of Warden, a high school student and swim team member, who bears a ghostly resemblance to Fee's childhood love, Peter. At this point, Fee has returned to Maine, after having briefly lived in both San Francisco and New York for a number of years subsequent to his college schooling. When Fee takes a job as a swimming coach, his relationship to Warden takes a problematic turn as Warden becomes strongly infatuated with him. The final portion, "Blue," investigates how the complicated web of desire and loss entangling Fee and Warden forces Fee to confront the cyclical and destructive nature of melancholic love. Warden discovers that his father was the one who had molested Fee and kills him as an act of love. The novel is framed by a Korean folktale of the fox-woman, Lady Tammamo, who transforms into a human after falling in love with a man. After the man dies, she throws herself on his funeral pyre, even though she could have lived for centuries. Using this particular fable, Chee makes clear the ways in which Fee must consider his racial and ethnic identity as being constitutive of and informing his sexual experiences.

Chee's shorter writings (comprising short fiction, essays, and autobiographical sketches) have been widely anthologized or published in a variety of literary venues from 1990 onward. These pieces include "Memorials" (1990) in *Literature of Tomorrow: An Anthology of Student Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*; "A Queer Nationalism" (1991) in *Out/Look*, a journal of LGBT studies; "These Trees Were Once Women" (1996) in *Boys Like Us: Gay Writers Tell Their Coming Out Stories*; "A Pilgrimage of You" (1999) in *His 3: Brilliant New Fiction by Gay Writers*; "Burn" (2000) in *Take Out: Queer Writing from Asian Pacific America*; "After Peter" (2001) in *Loss Within Loss: Artists in the Age of AIDS*; "13 Crimes Against Love, or, the Crow's Confession" (2002) in *Lodestar Quarterly*; "Self-Quiz" (2002) in *The Man I Might Become: Gay Men Write About Their Fathers*; "Best Friendster Date Ever" (2005) in *Best Gay Erotica*; "Before, During, and After" (2005) in *Blithe House Quarterly*; and "Dick" (2006) in *From Boys to Men: Gay Men Write about Growing Up*. Although these writings are quite divergent in genre and narrative details, Chee has been consistently interested in themes related to loss, trauma, desire, queer identity, activism, AIDS/HIV, race, ethnicity, and/or Asian American identity. He is one of a select group of queer Asian American writers that include Timothy Liu, Justin Chin, Lawrence Chua, Russell Leong, Nina Revoyr, and Ginu Kamani who have received strong critical attention within literary studies. He also is part of a growing contingent of Korean American novelists whose works have been favorably reviewed in the last decade, such as Marie Myung-Ok Lee, Don Lee, Chang-Rae Lee, Suki Kim, Susan Choi, Nora Okja Keller, and Caroline Hwang.

Chee has written book reviews for *Wilson Quarterly* and *Lambda Book Report* and contributed articles for various magazines. He is currently at work on two novels and an autobiography. He is working on his next novel, *The Queen of the Night*, which chronicles the experiences of a nineteenth-century Paris opera singer. **See also** Asian American Political Activism.

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STEPHEN HONG SOHN

◆ CHENG, NIEN (1915–)

A Chinese American author and survivor of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), Nien Cheng is known internationally for her memoir *Life and Death in Shanghai* (1987), which describes her victimization, imprisonment, and torture for six and a half years in communist Shanghai. Born in Beijing, Cheng was educated at Yanjing University and the London School of Economics. She married Kang-Chi Cheng, diplomat for the Kuomintang (nationalist) regime. On the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Cheng's husband became general manager of Shell Oil's Shanghai office until his death in 1957. After he died, Cheng was employed by Shell as an advisor to its British managers in China. She worked in this capacity until 1966. Before the Cultural Revolution, Cheng had lived a privileged lifestyle in communist Shanghai. She had been permitted to keep servants, had a large bank account in Hong Kong to draw from, was allowed to travel outside China, and had managed to avoid involvement in the political campaigns preceding the Cultural Revolution. In 1966, this privilege, taken as evidence of counterrevolutionary sympathies, made her an inevitable target for the Red Guards who, in August 1966, ransacked her home and held her hostage while they destroyed her books, pictures, and many priceless pieces of Chinese porcelain from her collection. This was followed a month later by her arrest and detainment at No. 1 Detention House in Shanghai on the trumped-up charge that she was a British spy. Jailed in solitary confinement for nearly seven years, refusing to make a false confession, Cheng also lost her only child, her daughter Meiping, to the horrors of the Cultural Revolution. The official explanation offered Cheng was that her daughter, a prominent Shanghai film actress, had

committed suicide while under interrogation by throwing herself out the window of a high building. Later, after persevering at some personal risk to uncover the truth of Meiping's death, Cheng learned that she was murdered by Maoists for refusing to denounce her mother.

Cheng was released from prison unexpectedly in 1973 because of a misdiagnosis of cancer made by an unqualified Cultural Revolution "physician." Like many other victims of the Cultural Revolution, Cheng was rehabilitated after the Gang of Four was arrested; she was permitted to leave China in 1980. She moved first to Ottawa, Canada, where she began writing her memoir. She wrote in English with the aim not only of documenting the atrocities of the Cultural Revolution and her personal suffering but also of educating the West on the brutal facts of life in communist China. In the Author's Note, Cheng explains that her memoir provides a reliable factual account, a product of her need, during long confinement, to repeatedly recall events and dialogue to memory to evaluate their significance to her case. *Life and Death in Shanghai* was completed in Washington DC, where Cheng eventually settled. In 1988 she became an American citizen.

*Life and Death in Shanghai* is divided into three parts. The first part, which is the shortest, describes the events leading up to her arrest. We are introduced to Cheng's daughter, several friends, and her ever loyal house servants. The peace of this household is shattered by the arrival of the Red Guards, Mao's youth army. The night when her home is ransacked is vividly narrated, the education and sophistication of Cheng exposing the ignorance and blind fanaticism of her young opponents. This is best exemplified when she manages to dissuade them from smashing more of her porcelain, arguing that the value of the pieces will help them finance their world revolution. In this first section, Cheng is also forced to attend two "struggle meetings"; she is a reluctant observer at the first (denouncing a colleague from Shell) and the unfortunate subject of the second. Such meetings, which took place all over China during the Cultural Revolution, were public persecutions of counterrevolutionaries, capitalist-roaders, and intellectuals, who were paraded, beaten, and humiliated before large crowds until they confessed their "guilt." Cheng refuses to confess and is promptly taken to prison.

Cheng continues to refuse to confess throughout her long imprisonment, detailed in the central section of her memoir. In a clear and understated manner, Cheng describes the conditions of her solitary confinement in Shanghai's No. 1 Detention House. Her lonely and squalid existence is punctured by occasional interrogations. Cheng maintains her sanity partly by keeping her brain active; and her study of Mao's writings in her cell enables her, under interrogation, to use the language of the revolutionaries in her own defense. The intelligence and skill by which she holds to her principles also highlight the dulling effects of ideological fanaticism. The language of her interrogators, full of clichés and quotations from Chairman Mao's *Little Red Book*, are



no match against her manipulative and tactical expertise. At one point, when a picture of her dancing with a Swiss friend is produced as evidence of her lack of patriotism, she counters that in dancing with foreigners she was serving the revolutionary cause by making her dance partners unpatriotic to the capitalist West. Though such moments of wit may thrill the reader, her interrogator was not amused. She was punished on this occasion by being forced to read aloud from Mao's collected works for three consecutive days.

Frustrated in their attempts to extract a confession, her enemies resorted to methods of physical torture. At one point, she was locked in a tiny dark cell, her hands cuffed behind her back so tightly that her wrists and arms oozed with pus. But her mind never breaks. When she is eventually informed that she is free to leave as a beneficiary of proletarian magnanimity, she is enraged. Refusing to leave until she is issued an official apology for wrongful arrest and a declaration of her innocence, Cheng is eventually dragged out of the detention house by two female guards.

The final section of *Life and Death in Shanghai* records Cheng's experience living as a proletariat after her release from jail. She is provided with modest quarters but is quickly made aware of the suspicion and hostility of her new neighbors. Although she was still under surveillance, Cheng investigates the circumstances of her daughter's death, teaches private English lessons, and stubbornly sustains her attachment to old China in, for example, her continued study of poetry from the Tang dynasty and her resistance to wearing the standard proletarian navy blue drill clothing. Her description of China in the 1970s depicts a malaise of cynicism and political disillusionment in the context of general social disorder. Her account of the "back door" system, whereby regulations were circumvented through negotiation of personal favors, exemplifies the political and moral breakdown of this period of Chinese history.

Cheng assesses the Cultural Revolution as a disaster for China, deliberately caused by unscrupulous leaders embroiled in factional conflicts. *Life and Death in Shanghai*, with its combination of riveting memoir and historical evaluation, takes its place with a number of other autobiographical accounts of the Cultural Revolution and its aftermath. *Born Red: A Chronicle of the Chinese Revolution* (1987) by Gao Yuan and *Red Scarf Girl* by Ji Li Jiang, both written by former members of the Red Guards, create an interesting contrast with Cheng's book. Swept up by the revolutionary excitement as teenagers, Yuan and Jiang explain how their indoctrination in the cult of Chairman Mao prepared them to root out counterrevolutionaries with enthusiasm and little conscience. Their zeal, however, was considerably compromised when members of their own families became targets. Such accounts show that less privileged people than Cheng also suffered greatly from a campaign that encouraged widespread paranoia and suspicion, and that most people were ill equipped to combat the immorality and cruelty that resulted.

Cheng's gender, age, and physical frailty render her courage all the more impressive. Undoubtedly, her tormentors did not expect such stubbornness and bravery from a woman. Her memoir is important, then, as a record of female strength and intelligence under extreme duress. It belongs with a number of other memoirs by Chinese women who tell the recent history of China from their female point of view. Nien Cheng and writers like Jung Chang, Adeline Yen Mah, and Hong Ying document extraordinary female resistance and courage through searing accounts of lives affected not only by the turbulent and violent history of twentieth-century China but also by the long legacy of Chinese oppression of women.

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LINDSAY DAVIES

### ◆ CHIANG, MONLIN (1886–1964)

Also known as Jiang Menglin, American-educated Chinese writer and educator Monlin Chiang was born in Zhejiang Province, China. Chiang received his traditional Chinese education from private tutoring when he was very young. Later he went to Hangzhou, the capital city of Zhejiang province, and attended Qiu Shi College, the precursor of the present Zhejiang University. From 1908 to 1917 he studied in the United States, taking his undergraduate work at the University of California, where he received a bachelor's degree and later a PhD from Columbia University in 1917 under John Dewey's guidance. For three years he wrote editorials for the *Chinese Free Press*, Dr. Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary organ in San Francisco. His impressions of the revered revolutionary leader both in the United States and later in China are valuable source materials for

his contributions to the press. On his return to China in 1917, he edited an educational magazine entitled *New Education*. From 1923 to 1926 he was the acting chancellor of National Peking University, and from 1930 to 1935 he became its president. As the head of Peking University, he moved with his university to Southwest Associated University in Kunming, Yunnan province. He was also asked to be the head of Zhejiang University and later the Minister of Education during Chiang Kai-shek's administration. Before the founding of the People's Republic of China, he moved with Chiang Kai-shek's administration to Taiwan and died there in 1964.

Chiang is known mainly as an educator who was instrumental in the establishment of a modern education system in China. Being well educated in the traditional Chinese school, to the extent of having attained the first honor in the imperial examination, while at the same time having studied in westernized institutions in China and in the West, Chiang is well versed in two cultures and their educational differences. In his early life he witnessed the political vicissitudes and educational changes in China. His meditations on education culminated in a book, *Tides from the West: A Chinese Autobiography*, which was written in English in an air-raid shelter during the difficult years when he was teaching at Southwest Associated University in Yunnan. The book was accepted and published by Yale University Press in 1947. The title of the book is a pun, alluding not only to the famous tides near Hangzhou Bay but also to the flood of Western influence on China. The book is called an autobiography, but it is more than an autobiography, as it gives a panoramic view of the changing political, social, and cultural structure of China at that time; it describes sincerely and perhaps a bit whimsically the author's keen diagnosis of China's ills and offers shrewd analysis of the Chinese and Western outlook on life.

*Tides from the West* consists of seven parts. Part I begins with the description of Chiang's early life in his hometown, then narrates his education and the examination system in China. Part II is devoted to his study in the United States and also his comparisons between Chinese and American cultures. Part III focuses on the intellectual awakening in the whirlwind of changes in modern China. Part IV narrates his relation with Dr. Sun Yat-sen and also constitutional experiment in China. Part V is a description of the social and cultural aspects of Chinese life. Part VI tells of the war in China and its devastation to Chinese people and education, and the last part reflects on China's position in the modern world. Chapters such as "China and Japan—a Comparison," "Characteristics of Chinese Culture," and "Modern Civilization" are the result of his mature opinions. The author explains the fundamentals of the Chinese outlook on life and the principles that have always guided China in her appropriation of alien ideas. Having received a sound education both in China and in the United States, Chiang knows clearly what Chinese people have been interested in and feels that he has the duty to articulate the interactions between China and the West. After

enumerating some of the gifts that China has received from the West, he adds that the West has also learned a great deal from China, maintaining a comparatist stance with regard to Eastern and Western cultures.

Straddling both Chinese and Western cultures, Chiang likes to compare and contrast the origin and development of Chinese and Western cultures. In his early days he was pro-West during China's intellectual debates about the relationship between Chinese and Western cultures, maintaining that China should take Western culture as essence and Chinese culture as application, that is, first, pay attention to Western culture; second, make a good study of Chinese culture; and third, give attention to natural science. Later he moderated his view by trying to reconcile Chinese and Western cultures.

Issues of education in China are Chiang's lifelong concern. In the United States Chiang studied under John Dewey and obtained his PhD in 1917 with a dissertation entitled *A Study in Chinese Principles of Education*, analyzing Chinese educational systems since Confucius's time, with cross-references to Western culture and educational practices. On his return to China, he edited *New Education* monthly and prepared a *John Dewey Special*, introducing Dewey's ethics and moral education to Chinese readers. He compared Dewey's ethical views to ancient Chinese Confucian philosopher Wang Yangming's moral attitude toward learning. Through comparison and contrast between Chinese and Western ways of education, Chiang hoped that he could put what he had learned in the United States into practice in China. But he lived in a turbulent period in modern Chinese history, and it was difficult for him to realize his dream.

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GUANGLIN WANG

#### ◆ CHIANG, YEE (1903-1977)

A Chinese American poet, writer, painter, calligrapher, and professor of Chinese, Chiang Yee was best known for the series of *Silent Traveller* books, in addition to his introductory volumes on Chinese painting and calligraphy. Born in Jiujiang, Jiangxi

province, China in 1903, Chiang grew up in an affluent household that valued Confucianism and Chinese classical education. Under the tutelage of his father, a traditional Chinese intellectual/poet/painter, Chiang had been immersed in Chinese painting and literature since early childhood. Before attending public high school, he received a family education with his cousins in the Chinese classics. Caught in the tumultuous developments of modern China when economic interests in the early Chinese republic were being divided by militant Japanese and colonial Western powers, Chiang believed Western science and technology would help improve his country, and so he decided to study chemistry instead of art in college. After obtaining his bachelor's degree, he worked as a chemistry teacher, a journalist, and subsequently a county magistrate in three different counties along the Yangtze River. As county magistrate, Chiang witnessed firsthand the suffering of the commons at the hands of corrupt politicians and Japanese invaders. He was determined to implement reforms to better the living conditions of his compatriots; however, his idealism was not appreciated by his superiors and colleagues. In 1933, out of frustration and fear of persecution by his power-hungry superiors, Chiang chose to leave China for Britain, leaving his wife and four children behind.

Initially Chiang intended to study foreign government at the University of London, but he ended up teaching Chinese there instead, and later on worked at the Wellcome Museum of Anatomy and Pathology. During this period, Chiang's expertise in Chinese painting and calligraphy brought him publishing opportunities, and he began to assume the role of self-appointed ambassador of Chinese culture in the West. The year 1935 saw the publication of his first book, *The Chinese Eye: An Interpretation of Chinese Painting*, whose lucid and humorous explication of Chinese philosophy and painting was so well received that the book was soon sold out and reprinted. In 1937 Chiang published his first travel book, *The Silent Traveller: A Chinese Artist in Lake Land*, also an immediate success. His English audience found his interpretations of English landscape and social practices from a unique Chinese perspective and his renditions of them in Chinese-style painting refreshing. Chiang would continue to produce in the same fashion, illustrating his prose with his own pen-and-ink drawings and Chinese-style paintings, accompanied by the poems he composed in traditional Chinese lyric form and penned in Chinese brushes. He would publish eleven more books in the Silent Traveller series, including those about Edinburgh, London, Oxford, the Yorkshire Dales, Dublin, Paris, New York, San Francisco, Boston, Japan, and wartime in general. In 1938 Chiang published *Chinese Calligraphy: An Introduction to Its Aesthetic and Technique*, in which he explains the composition of Chinese characters and their strokes and draws on Chinese legends and stories for illustration. In 1940 he published *A Chinese Childhood*, his memoir of adolescence in Jiujiang. From his recollections of well-ensconced childhood and prelapsarian formative years in the

Chiang mansion, the reader can see how the larger sociopolitical climate affected the welfare of the Chiang family. In his explications of Chinese customs and culture in the book, Chiang tried to make the Chinese understandable to his Western audience, and hence dissipating the stereotype of the “inscrutable” Chinese. His persistent efforts to dispel negative stereotypes about the Chinese and to focus on the similarities between the East and the West established him as one of the earliest bridge builders between East and West. Chiang is mostly remembered today for his *Silent Traveller* series and books on Chinese painting and calligraphy, but he also wrote and illustrated several children’s books during his sojourn in England.

In 1945, at the suggestion of his publisher, Chiang took a trip to New York at the end of **World War II** and later published his first American travel book, *The Silent Traveller in New York*. In 1955 he resettled in the United States, serving first as a lecturer of Chinese at Columbia University and later became professor emeritus. Some time in between, he received a two-year fellowship at Harvard University and then served as a visiting professor at the University of California, Berkeley. His stay in these places resulted in two more American travel books, *The Silent Traveller in Boston* (1959) and *The Silent Traveller in San Francisco* (1963). Despite his success in publishing and probably due to the cold war, Chiang never got a chance to return to his motherland until 1975, when he was finally able to reunite with his family on a trip arranged by the Chinese government. In his travel impressions *China Revisited: After Forty-Two Years*, published posthumously in 1977, Chiang was uncharacteristically emotive; he raved about the changes and reconstructions he witnessed in communist China. Along with his unexamined admiration for the “new China” was his long overdue critique of European and American imperialism and the devastation it inflicted on China. Such explicit disapproval was rarely detected in his other books. In 1977 Chiang took another trip to China and was planning to write another book about Chinese art before he fell seriously ill in Beijing. He was hospitalized and died shortly thereafter.

With the rise of **Asian American studies** and its transnationalist approach, Chiang’s contributions to diasporic Chinese literature are being reevaluated, and several volumes of his *Silent Traveller* series are being republished. Chiang’s travel experience in the West presents an exceptional case of Chinese American mobility. Unlike many of his contemporary Asians in America, most of whom were laborers and hence economically and geographically immobilized, Chiang as an artist/writer could afford frequent leisure travels. Although his initial journey out of China was dictated by necessity, to borrow critic Sau-ling Cynthia Wong’s term, his subsequent travels in Europe and America were more for extravagance; he embarked on the journeys both for pleasure and for collecting materials for his books.

Chiang’s travel books can be placed in the tradition of both Chinese and Western travel writing. On the one hand, his travelogues reiterate the Western ideal of the voyage as

progress, liberation, salvation, and expansion of knowledge. On the other, his adoption of the pseudonym Silent Traveller, his fusion of various genres in his books—prose, poetry, and painting, and his allusions to Chinese art, literature, and history hark back to the conventions of travel writing by Chinese literati, whose political visions and social critique are embedded in their depictions of natural surroundings and native customs. Perhaps aware of his position as a cultural other in the West, especially during the cold war, Chiang was not vociferous about social and political injustices in Britain or the United States. His evasiveness on political issues could have resulted from his identity as a Chinese exile striving for recognition in the West. His travel books mostly offered his good-natured appreciation of Western social practices, complemented by his unique stylized renditions of Western landscapes. Contemplating Western natural scenery, Chiang often evokes Chinese poets and painters, such as Du Fu, Su Dongpo, Tao Yuanming, and so on, to enhance his sentiments. His allusions to Chinese art and literature may imply his masked homesickness and his attempts at bridging Chinese and Western cultures. Ultimately, Chiang upheld a universalist humanism that leveled differences between Chinese and Westerners; such universalism may inadvertently result in cultural indifference. Critic Elaine Yee Lin Ho warns against the ahistorical and apolitical undertone in Chiang's universalizing strategy. His books paint a picture of a solitary world where race and culture are erased, and hence neither conflicts nor struggles seem to exist. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes.

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## ◆ CHIN, FRANK (1940–)

A Chinese American playwright, actor, novelist, literary critic, literary historian, and activist, Frank Chin is best known for his two groundbreaking anthologies of Asian American writings coedited with Jeffery Paul **Chan**, Lawson Fusao **Inada**, and Shawn **Wong**. He has also written two widely acclaimed novels, several plays, and a collection of short stories. Besides, he has contributed numerous critical essays on Asian American literature, identity, and culture. For his contributions, Chin has sometimes been considered the godfather of Asian American literature. Yet for his radicalism, poignancy, and freewheeling imagination, Chin has been nicknamed the Ayatollah or a literary gangster. Born on February 25, 1940, in Berkeley, California, a fifth-generation Chinese American, Frank Chin attended the University of California at Berkeley as an English major from 1958 to 1961, when he won a fellowship that took him to the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa. In 1965, he received his bachelor's degree from the University of California at Santa Barbara. In the 1960s, Chin worked for two years as a clerk at Western Pacific Railroad in Oakland, California, and one year as a brakeman on the Southern Pacific Railroad, and he claims to be the first Chinese American brakeman in the company's history. In 1966 he left the railroad and started writing and producing documentaries for King Broadcasting Co., in Seattle, Washington. In 1969, he left his job and became a part-time lecturer in **Asian American studies** at the University of California, Davis. In the early 1970s, Chin began his dramatic career and wrote two plays, *The Chickencoop Chinaman* (1972) and *The Year of the Dragon* (1974), which were produced Off-Broadway by the American Place Theatre. The success of these two plays made Chin the first Asian American to have work presented on a mainstream New York stage. Chin was also the first Chinese American playwright to produce plays about the Chinese American experience. In 1973 he established the Asian American Theatre Workshop in San Francisco and remained as its artistic director for four years. Since the 1980s, instead of focusing on theatre, Chin started writing fiction and essays on Chinese and Japanese history, culture, and literature. He has taught courses on Asian American subjects and creative writing at San Francisco State University; the University of California at Berkeley, Davis, and Santa Barbara; Western Washington University; and the University of Oklahoma at Norman. He has also received a number of awards and fellowships throughout his career, such as the James T. Phelan Award in Short Fiction and East West Players Playwriting Award in 1971, the Rockefeller Playwright Grant in 1974, and three American Book Awards, respectively in 1982 for *The Chickencoop Chinaman* and *The Year of the Dragon*, in 1989 for his collection of short stories, *Chinaman Pacific and Frisco R.R. Co.*, and in 2000 for Lifetime Achievement. Currently, he resides in Los Angeles, California.



Frank Chin's important contribution to the development of Asian American literature has been acknowledged by critics such as Ishmael Reed, Elaine Kim, and King-Kok Cheung. His writings and polemics have influenced and inspired major Asian American writers, including David Henry Hwang and Russell Leong. Some of his works have also been excerpted in American literary anthologies such as *Heath Anthology of American Literature*. In his publications, Frank Chin explores issues related to Chinese American history, community, and family, especially the father-son relationship. The Asian American sensibility, racial stereotypes, Chinatown, Chinaman, and railroads have been key themes for Chin. Influenced by the **civil rights movement** and the cultural nationalist movements, in the 1970s, Chin endeavored to preserve the cultural and historical integrity of Chinese America and form the cultural identity of Chinese Americans by distinguishing them from both white America and China and exposing the falsity of racial stereotypes established by white supremacists. He also developed a pidgin language exclusively for Chinese America and called himself "Chinaman" to distinguish himself from assimilated Chinese Americans.

In the early 1970s, together with Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong, Frank Chin founded the Combined Asian American Resources Project to preserve the cultural and historical integrity of Asian ethnic groups. They rediscovered the ignored writings of Asian American writers such as Louis **Chu** and Toshio **Mori** and compiled the foundational anthology, *Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian American Writers* (1974). Its preface and introduction have been regarded as the declaration of intellectual and linguistic independence of Asian America. In the preface, Frank Chin and his comrades condemned the prevailing racism and white supremacy in the United States and dissected the false and effeminate Oriental stereotypes of racist love and racist hate, respectively represented by **Charlie Chan** and **Fu Manchu**. By means of reduction to absurdity, they created a new term *Asian American sensibility*, which they claimed to be authentic and distinguish Asian America from both Asia and white America, though they failed to provide a substantial definition to the term. With the publication of this anthology, they intended to show the real Asian American communities and real Asian Americans their "dual personality identity crisis." *Aiiieeeee!* also excerpts act I of Frank Chin's own *Chickencoop Chinaman*.

Frank Chin first gained fame as a playwright with the production of *The Chickencoop Chinaman*. This two-act play won the 1971 East West Players Playwriting Award for Chin. The play debuted at the American Place Theatre, New York City, on May 27, 1972, and became the first Asian American play performed in New York stage history. The play's protagonist Tam Lum is a Chinese American writer and filmmaker who is making a documentary of his idol—Ovaltine Jack Dancer, an African American prizefighting champion. To find more information about Ovaltine, Tam goes on a trip in search of Charley Popcorn, Ovaltine's father. The play traces Tam

Lum's trip from Oakland, California, to "Oakland," a black ghetto in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he unites with his childhood friend, Kenji, a Japanese American, and meets Lee, a possible Eurasian or Chinese American passing for white, and Tom, a Chinese American writer and one of Lee's ex-husbands. In Pittsburgh, Tam interviews Charley Popcorn. However, to his great disappointment, Charley is not Ovaltine's father but his former boxing trainer, now an owner of a porn movie house. The inspiring father-son story told by Ovaltine is a mere lie. Back from the interview, Tam has a fight with Lee and Tom. Tam attacks Lee for pretending to be white and Tom for being the Americanized **model minority** and a brownnoser of white culture. Lee and Tom, in return, attack Tam for his imitation of African Americans and not being positive about his Chinese American identity. The play ends with Tam's monologue about his grandmother hearing the legendary Iron Moonhunter, a train made by Chinamen, which repeatedly appears in Chin's writings as a symbol of masculinity, heroism, and the pioneering spirit of Chinese America. The production of *The Chickencoop Chinaman* caused a great stir and aroused controversy because of its theme of Chinese American history, genealogy, and identity, its experimental combination of the scenes of dream and reality, and its language of synthesis and hybridity. The play apparently is about Tam Lum's quest for a heroic father figure to replace his own effeminate and absent father. However, underneath, the play centers on Chinese Americans' struggle with their identity problem and their search for their missing history and genealogy. The combination of surrealistic and realistic scenes presents various elements that constitute the hybrid experience and broken memory of Chinese Americans. The Pidgin English in the play is full of slang, black American vernacular, obscenities, Cantonese, and unusual grammar, which presents difficulty for the audience to fully understand the play. However, Chin argues that with the bold and unconventional linguistic experimentation, he follows the Asian American sensibility and truly represents Chinese America.

Two years later, Frank Chin again displayed his talent with *The Year of the Dragon* produced at the same place on May 22, 1974. In 1975, the play was videotaped for the PBS program *Theatre in America* and broadcast nationally. In 1977 Chin also starred in a San Francisco production of the play. Compared with *The Chickencoop Chinaman*, *The Year of Dragon* is more traditionally structured and better received by the public. The play is set in an apartment in San Francisco's **Chinatown**. The story is about a Chinese American family, the Engs. Father, Wing Eng, is the respected "mayor" of Chinatown. The young Wing immigrated to the United States and left in China his first wife, China Mama, mother of Fred Eng. In the United States, Wing married Hyacinth, a Chinese American girl, who later gave birth to Mattie and Johnny. Now that Wing is in his sixties and is dying of a lung disease, he can only depend on Fred to support the family. Fred works as a Chinese American travel agent and tour

guide in Chinatown. Though he hates this job and wishes to be a writer, he cannot quit, so he stays for the sake of his family. Mattie married Ross, a China-crazy white American, after her college graduation and is determined to leave Chinatown forever. Johnny is a rebellious Chinatown street kid in his late teens. During the Chinese New Year, fully aware that death is approaching, Wing Eng brings China Mama to the United States and calls back Mattie to have a family reunion. Though old and dying, the autocratic father insists that the whole family remain in Chinatown and rejects Fred's proposal to let Hyacinth and Johnny leave Chinatown and go to Boston with Mattie for a new beginning. Wing Eng dies in a fierce argument with Fred.

The play centers on the disintegration of the Chinese American family in Chinatown. In it, for white American tourists, Chinatown is a museum of "ornamental Orientalia" and their "private reserve" to appreciate the exotic culture; however, for Chinese Americans, it is poverty-stricken, degenerating, and suffocating. The Eng family is a microcosm of Chinese American community, and the conflicts within the family reflect the problems of the community at large: The old generation of Chinese immigrants is dying, and thus, the connection with China and Chinese traditional culture is fading. The second and later generations of Chinese Americans have been trapped in Chinatown under the imposed aura of "model minority" and suffer from economic exploitation and institutional racism.

Besides two plays, in 1988 Frank Chin compiled eight stories mostly written in the 1970s into an award-winning collection, *The Chinaman Pacific & Frisco R.R. Co.* Throughout these stories, Chin attacks racial stereotypes and indicts white supremacy and imperialism. He also attempts to synthesize the myths and history of Chinese America based on the legends of early Chinese railroad builders and miners to empower and restore masculinity to Chinese American males. However, most male protagonists in these stories are still ironic and tragic antiheroes such as Tam Lum and Fred Eng, without any positive features.

In the 1980s Frank Chin also published several critical essays. Around the mid-1980s, after years of reflection, Chin changed his negative views on Chinese culture. Instead, he started reading Chinese classics including *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *the Water Margin*, and Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, based on which he made efforts to claim a new literary and racial authenticity for Chinese America. This change is seen clearly in *The Big Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature* that he coedited with Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong, published in 1991. In its introduction, Chin and his comrades explain that their early misunderstanding of Asia and Asian culture was caused by the white social Darwinist philosophers and fictionists who, through teaching and various ways of propaganda in mass media, forced Asian Americans to accept as both fact and stereotype their Christian vision of Asia as a remote area with a brutish and sadomasochistic culture.

Therefore, they felt the urge to revive Asian history and culture to differentiate the real from the fake and claimed to offer an authentic literary history of Asian American writing. At the beginning of this anthology, Chin contributed a 92-page-long essay, "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake," which summarizes his reflections and research in the 1980s. In this essay, Chin criticizes many Asian American writers, including Jade Snow **Wong**, Maxine Hong **Kingston**, Amy **Tan**, and David Henry Hwang for being Christianized, assimilating, and contributing to the stereotyping of Asians by faking Chinese culture and history. In the essay he even inserted the original "Ballad of Mulan" both in Chinese and in English translation to prove that Kingston distorted the legend of Fa Mulan in *The Woman Warrior*. Chin also introduced a number of Chinese classics, including *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *the Water Margin*, and *Journey to the West*, to demonstrate the heroic tradition in Chinese culture and cited historical documents on the tongs in Chinatowns to show their inheritance of this tradition. Moreover, Chin selected a few heroic figures out of these classics such as Kwan Kung, Song Jiang, and Lin Chong as masculine models and representatives of Chinese Americans to replace the effeminate and demonized Oriental stereotypes. *The Big Aiiieeeee!* also excerpts Chin's own short story "The Only Real Day."

The 1990s is another productive period for Frank Chin, within which he shifted his focus from the theatre to fiction and published two novels, *Donald Duk* (1991) and *Gunga Din Highway* (1994) as well as a collection of essays, *Bulletproof Buddhists and Other Essays* (1998). *Donald Duk* is Chin's first novel. Compared with his early writings, *Donald Duk* is less poignant and more tolerant. It demonstrates Chin's transformation of his attitude from rejection to recognition of Chinese culture and heritage. Donald Duk, the protagonist of the novel, is a twelve-year-old Chinese American boy who grows up in Chinatown and studies in a private school where the majority of students are Caucasians and Chinese American students are discriminated against. While dreaming to be the "Chinese Fred Astaire," Donald feels embarrassed and self-contemptuous of being Chinese American, especially when his history teacher devalues Chinese traditional culture and philosophy. When the Chinese New Year approaches, Donald's father makes 108 paper planes on which he paints the 108 outlaws from *the Water Margin*. These planes make Donald continuously dream about outlaws from Liang Shan (Mount Liang) and Chinese American forbears who defeated the Irishmen in the tracklaying contest and broke its world's record. The vividness of his dreams forces Donald to do research in the library to find out whether what went on in his dreams actually happened in history. The historical facts he finds fill him with pride in his Chinese American identity and Chinese culture. Hence, when his imperialistic teacher misrepresents Chinese railroad workers in class, Donald daringly points out his mistake and forces him to apologize. On the Chinese New Year's Day, Donald joins the

dragon team in the parade and lights the planes with his father on Angel Island to commemorate the heroes in Chinese history and culture, as well as the Chinese American railroad workers. Being Chin's first novel, this *bildungsroman* is considerably different from his early works.

Unlike Chin's past antiheroes in their doomed search for identity and genealogy, Donald Duk finds his cultural root in Chinese classics and Chinese American forebearers' contribution to the building of the **transcontinental railroad**, and now he firmly establishes his identity based on the Chinese legacy. Through the young protagonist's dreams and research, Chin unearths the silenced, heroic history of Chinese American ancestors and glorifies Chinese traditional culture and classics. The novel is also filled with hypermasculine personae such as traditional Chinese heroes Kwan Kung and Lee Kuey, as well as upright Chinamen like King Duk and Kwan the Foreman to replace emasculated Oriental stereotypes. Furthermore, Chin even changes his attitude toward white Americans and becomes more objective and tolerant, which can be evidenced in his different portrayals of white characters. In his early writings, white characters were all white supremacists who looked down upon Chinatown and Chinese Americans with prejudice like Ross in *The Year of the Dragon*. However, in *Donald Duk*, Azalea was portrayed as Donald's best friend, who even helps to search for the hidden history of Chinese railroad workers. In short, Frank Chin wrote this novel not only to restore Chinese Americans' pride in their cultural heritage, but also to give white American readers an opportunity to gain a fair understanding of the real Chinaman, Chinatown, and China.

In September 1994, Frank Chin published *Gunga Din Highway*, his longest and most complex novel to date. It is an encyclopedic saga of late and contemporary Asian American experience, which takes on plots and characters that have appeared in Chin's early writings. The major characters of the novel are Longman Kwan, a Cantonese opera heartthrob in China and now an actor in Hollywood, his son Ulysses Kwan, and Ulysses's cousins and best friends, Benedict Han and Diego Chang. The story, told by four first-person narrators, centers on Kwan's family history from the 1940s to the 1990s. Its major conflict lies in the tense relationship between Longman and Ulysses Kwan. Longman Kwan has acted in many movies as the Chinaman Who Dies and Charlie Chan's Number Four Son, which he proudly claims to be the most Americanized and thus the most legitimate son of Charlie Chan. His lifelong dream is to play Charlie Chan in the movies and to set an example for future generations. In opposition to his father and furious about racial discrimination and cultural imperialism in the United States, Ulysses Kwan resists being assimilated into a model citizen. Instead, he forms his cultural identity as a Chinaman and obtains his personal integrity by identifying with Chinese history and the heroic tradition and then by working as a brakeman on the Southern Pacific and Western Pacific railroads built by Chinese laborers. In *Gunga Din*

*Highway*, as the novel's title implies, Frank Chin uses parody to attack Oriental stereotypes such as Charlie Chan and assimilated Chinese Americans such as Pandora Toy and Benedict Han, who are fictional counterparts of Amy Tan, Maxine Hong Kingston, and David Henry Hwang. Chin accuses them of betraying their people like Gunga Din in Rudyard Kipling's poem "Gunga Din" and being ignorant of their cultural heritage. Chin uses collage and intertextuality to combine their Chinese heritage with American experience to portray a cultural identity of Chinese America, which, as the name Ulysses Kwan indicates, is a combination of East and West—Kwan Kung, Chinese God of War, and Ulysses, the famous Western mythological hero. In the end, the death of Longman Kwan and Ulysses driving the pregnant housekeeper in labor to the hospital symbolize the end of the era of assimilation and the further development of the Chinaman's genealogy.

In 1998 Frank Chin published *Bulletproof Buddhists and Other Essays*, a critically acclaimed collection of six best essays written from 1972 to 1995. Though the locales for these essays vary from Castro's Cuba to the California-Mexico border, from Singapore to Interstate 5, the collection centers on Chinese heritage, racial authenticity, and the formulation of cultural identity. The latest publication of Frank Chin's is *Born in the USA: A Story of Japanese America, 1880–1947* (2002), a critical cultural study of Japanese American histories before **World War II** and **Japanese American internment** during the war, presented through in-depth interviews, diaries, novels, popular songs, and newspaper articles. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Racism and Asian America.

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JINGJIE LU

### ◆ CHIN, MARILYN MEI-LING (1955–)

A Chinese American poet and professor of English, Marilyn Chin was born in Hong Kong on January 14, 1955. She immigrated to the United States while a child and was reared in Portland, Oregon. Chin received her BA in classical Chinese literature from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in May 1977, her MFA in creative writing from the University of Iowa in May 1981, and was a Stegner Fellow at Stanford University from 1984 to 1985. She has been working at San Diego State University since 1989 as a professor in the English and Comparative Literature Department, teaching literature and codirecting the master of fine arts program in creative writing. While at San Diego State, she also took opportunities to work as a visiting scholar worldwide: visiting associate professor in English/**Asian American studies** at the University of California, Los Angeles, in spring 1990; visiting professor at the University of California, San Diego, in 1993; the University of Hawaii, Hilo, in 1997; visiting professor at the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia, in fall 2001; and visiting Fulbright professor at National Dong Hua University, Taiwan, from 1999 to 2000.

Marilyn Chin is a widely acclaimed and recognized poet and social activist. Her books have become Asian American classics and are taught and read internationally. She is the author of three individual collections of poetry: *Dwarf Bamboo*, *The Phoenix Gone, the Terrace Empty*, and more recently *Rhapsody in Plain Yellow*. Her poems have been published in numerous journals and featured in a variety of anthologies, including the *Paris Review*, the *Iowa Review*, the *Washington Post*, the *Columbia Anthology of Women's Poetry*, *Norton Introduction to Poetry*, the *Writer's Chronicles*, the *Best American Poetry 1996*, *Pushcart Prize Anthology*, the *Open Boat*, and the *Oxford Anthology of Modern American Poetry*. While studying at the University of Iowa, Chin participated in the International Writing Program from 1978 to 1982, co-translating *The Selected Poems of Ai Qing* (1982) with Peng Wenlan and Eugene Eoyang. She also co-translated the poetry collection *Devil's Wind: A Thousand Steps or More* (1980), with the author Gozo Yoshimasu. In addition to writing and translating, she coedited *Dissident Song: A Contemporary Asian American Anthology* (1991), and *Writing from the World: An Iowa Translation Series* (1985).

Marilyn Chin has won numerous honors for her writing. She is the recipient of a Paterson Book Prize (2003), a Senior Fulbright Fellowship to Taiwan (1999–2000), PEN Josephine Miles Award (1994), four Pushcart Prizes (1994–1997), the Best American Poetry of 1996, Blue Mountain Colony (1996), the Gjerassi Foundation Fellowship (1989), Bay Area Book Review Award (1987), two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts in Poetry (1985, 1991), the Stegner Fellowship in Creative Writing, Stanford University (1984–1985), the Mary Robert Rinehart Award in Poetry (1983), Virginia Center for the Creative Arts Fellowship (Summer 1983), Centrum Fellowship (1987), MacDowell (1987), Reader's Digest Award, Yaddo (1990–1994), and Villa Montalvo Artist Residency (1992, 1999), among others.

One of the leading voices of contemporary Asian American poetry, Marilyn Chin has been invited to read her poetry and teach workshops all over the world. She was guest poet at universities and poetry festivals in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Sydney, Singapore, Berlin, Wellington, and elsewhere. She is also judge for the Ruth Lake Memorial Award (Poetry Society of America, 1994), panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts (Translation Division), poetry selection panelist for the Corporation of Yaddo (1993–present), and panelist for the National Book Award in the category of poetry.

Chin's study in classical Chinese literature and practice in translating modern Chinese and Japanese poetry make her poetic style distinct. The crisp images and rhythms she creates are worth repeated savoring. She relates the Chinese immigrants' American experiences with ancient Chinese allusions and in the tradition of Chinese verse. The titles of her poems and the names of Chinese places and those of important figures in Chinese history are all ethnic markers that show her immersion in Chinese culture. In fact, there are new lyric forms in each of Chin's books, which are often hybrids of both Chinese and English forms indicated by the poet's voice impressively moving from pleasant tenderness to searing irony. She dwells on the themes of race, history, gender, culture, love, nature, and politics, and her poems are of various kinds: long meditations, hymns, blues poems, ballads, and political anthems.

Different from many Chinese American writers writing about assimilation, Chin sticks to her cultural identity as a bicultural and bilingual person. She stresses the perpetual struggle and tension of assimilation and the tragic loss of one's culture, language, religion, and sense of self. In an interview with Bill Moyers, Marilyn Chin said: "I am afraid of losing my Chinese, losing my language, which would be like losing a part of myself, losing part of my soul. Poetry seems a way to recapture that, but of course the truth is we can't recapture the past. The vector only goes one direction and that is toward the future. So the grandeur of China—the grandeur of that past of my grandfather's, of my grandmother's, of my mother's and so forth—that will be all lost to me. I lose inches of it every day. Sometimes I think I lose a character a day" (Moyers 1995, 70).



Critics have praised Chin's work for its unshrinking examination of the contradictory feelings brought about by immigration in general and for Asian Americans specifically. Throughout her work, Chin expresses her earnest concerns for social issues. Growing up in an era of vast sociopolitical changes, Chin was greatly influenced by the activist poets and developed an activist voice of her own. She deals with such particular issues as bicultural identity and assimilation. Her dedication to feminist issues within the Asian American community is also strongly voiced in many of her poems, notably in pieces like "Homage to Diana Toy." There are images of Asian women as exotic and doll-like in her poems, so her poetry exemplifies a complex intersectionality between race and gender identity. Chin's boldness about female sexuality and the social roles of women of color and her frequent references to the revolutionary movement in China have earned her a reputation as an important political feminist poet.

Just as Denise Levertov points out in her review of Chin's poetry on the back cover of *Dwarf Bamboo*, Marilyn Chin "draws on ancient cultural sources and at the same time reflects something wholly Western, urban and contemporary—so that we have here two kinds of sophistications combined" (1987). This assessment can be underpinned by most poems in Chin's three published collections.

*Dwarf Bamboo* is Chin's first book and a winner of the Bay Area Book Reviewers Award in 1987. It was dedicated "to Ai Qing, Chinese revolutionary and poet." The title of the book suggests Chin's interest in Po Chu-yi (Bai Jüyi), a Tang dynasty Chinese poet who wrote many poems about the dwarf bamboo. The collection consists of three long sections and an abbreviated fourth, containing numerous poems that focus on the immigrant experience in the United States. It is a product of artful irony and satire, infused with the pains of cultural assimilation.

"A Chinaman's Chance" is one of the well-known poems in this collection. The influence of both traditional Chinese culture and contemporary American society on the poet is apparent when her poetry moves from Plato and Socrates to Confucius: "If you were a Chinese born in America, who would you believe/Plato who said what Socrates said/Or Confucius in his bawdy way: 'So a male child is born to you/I am happy, very, very happy'" (Chin 1987, 29). The quotation and the question meant for the Chinese American women to answer evidently reveal Chin's feminist inclinations. Then Chin reminds those who would choose Plato over the history of the Chinese Americans, demonstrating the pains of assimilation with bold and stunning words: "The railroad killed your great-grandfather/His arms here, his legs there . . . /How can we remake ourselves on his image?" (Chin 1987, 29)

Chin's second book, *The Phoenix Gone, the Terrace Empty*, winner of the PEN Josephine Miles Award in 1994, has been more critically acclaimed than her first collection. The title is a literal translation from the work of Li Po (Li Bai), another Chinese poet of the Tang dynasty, with a typical Chinese syntax. The pains of cultural

assimilation are seen here as more strongly expressed. The collection is divided into six titled sections, beginning with "Exile's Letter." Here multiple exiles—political, cultural, linguistic, and familial—haunt Chin's poems with brilliance. The most anthologized and quoted poem of this part is "How I Got That Name," subtitled "*an essay on assimilation*." To shake off the specific binds that they had to face after arriving in the United States, Asian women immigrants must change in every possible way to be accepted as Americans. Chin fights against culture and gender displacement with severe mockery and incisive humor: "Of course/the name had been changed/somewhere between **Angel Island** and the sea,/when my father the person/in the late 1950s/obsessed with a bombshell blonde/transliterated 'Mei Ling' to 'Marilyn'./And nobody dared question/his initial impulse—for we all know/lust drove men to greatness,/not goodness, not decency./And there I was, a wayward pink baby,/named after some tragic white woman/swollen with gin and Nembutal" (Chin 1994, 16). Chin criticizes changing Asian women immigrants' names and customs and cutting off their links with the old culture to assimilate more easily into the new one. She also explores group identities and stereotypes imposed upon Asian Americans by the mainstream American culture and accuses American politicians who use Asian "success" to erase the inequality and poverty caused by exclusion, racism, and oppression: "Oh, how trustworthy our daughters,/how thrifty our sons!/How we've managed to fool the experts/in education, statistics and demography—/We're not very creative but not adverse to rote-learning./Indeed, they can use us./But the '**Model Minority**' is a tease" (Chin 1994, 17).

The second section, "The Tao and the Art of Leavetaking," foregrounds the themes of loss and elegy. There is obvious experimenting with hybrid forms. The one-line stanzas of "Reggae Renga," the longish elegant lines of "Autumn Leaves," and the aphoristic leaps of "The Tao and the Art of Leavetaking" impress the reader in both emotion and style. Chin's elegies, dealing with loss and identity politics, are also in gorgeous lyric forms, such as "Altar" for a grandmother, "Elegy for Chloe Nguyen," and "Leaving San Francisco" for "Master Weldon Kees." While mourning her brilliant friend in "Elegy for Chloe Nguyen," Chin relates the fatality of the cultural assimilation experience with a touching ironic voice: "Bipedal in five months, trilingual in a year;/at eleven she had her first lover." At thirty-three, she was dead. The last line reads: "Chloe, we are finally Americans now. Chloe, we are here!" (Chin 1994, 37–38).

A third section, "The Phoenix Gone, the Terrace Empty," is the most significant, consisting of five poems including the title poem of both the section and the book. The poem relates death and the regeneration of identity and contains more powerful cultural elements. Here are many meaningful images and allusions, supernatural in a Chinese way. While walking in a Chinese garden, the Chinese American speaker seems

to be inhabited by the spirit of an ancestor. In the presence of the unnamed spirit, she dialogues with several spirits, her father, grandfather, grandmother, and aunt, together recalling their suffering and ruin in China. At the end of the poem, they accompany her to an American garden where she meets her boyfriend secretly. Her ancestors are quick to point out all the bad omens in the garden. "The snake bites her own tale,/meaning harmony at the year's end./Or does it mean/she is eating herself into extinction?" The poem ends like a fairy tale, with the speaker crying out like a doomed princess: "Oh dead prince, oh hateful love/shall we meet again/on the bridge of the magpies" (Chin 1994, 51).

The center section, "Homage to Diana Toy," is a chilling portrayal of the life and death of a psychiatric inpatient. The eight little poems that make up the section are moving and wrenching, in a tone of great tenderness and high tragedy. Toy, a patient Chin tutored, commits suicide when denied citizenship in the United States and sexually taken advantage of by an administrator. Chin blames herself as an "unworthy tutor" who "failed to tell her about the fifty paltry stars" (Chin 1994, 63).

The fifth section, "Love Poesy," adds more charm to the collection with tender emotion. The poems here bring the reader to face an intersection of love, sex, family, and politics. Like her other poems, Chin's love poems are full of lexical rewards and they explore what Chin refers to as love's "postcolonial subtext" (qtd. in Weisner). For her, love always means assimilation in the Chinese American context, and one must learn to erase one's former identity to merge into the new culture, language, and religion. "His Parents' Baggage" portrays the colonized landscape of a lover's psyche, while the excellent "Composed Near the Bay Bridge" opens with a psychocultural tango. The segment ends with the appealing "Summer Love."

The last section, "Beijing Spring: *for the Chinese Democratic Movement*," shows Chin's concern for China. The series of poems present a glimpse into the complex world of cultural contestation and negotiation of a Chinese American. Chin politicizes her purposes in relation to her most personal themes as in her other poems. The political homage to the Chinese democratic movement is interwoven with portraits of cousins, mothers, and self. "The Floral Apron," an accomplished closed-form lyric homage to Chin's mother and her ancestresses—women of both a literal and a mythical past—shows Chin's attempt to bridge two cultures. Her mother's knowledge of cooking and the floral apron are both symbolic. Significant are the lessons her mother is trying to pass down through the process of cooking: "patience, courage, forbearance, on how to love squid despite squid, how to honor village, the tribe, that floral apron" (Chin 1994, 86).

*Rhapsody in Plain Yellow*, Chin's third collection of poetry, won the Paterson Book Prize in 2003. The book continues to focus on the struggle between heritage and the New World, exploring her relationship with her parents and her grandparents. In this

volume, Chin drew inspiration for the forms and rhythms from Chinese music, Persian ghazals, and American blues music. The book is distinguished for its fusion of the East and the West, and of popular culture and ancient Chinese history. The song-like poems cover a terrain of emotional nuance and postmodern experimentation—from homage to Li Po to polyphonic samplings of Emily Dickinson, from ballads of eternal love to lamentations. With her intercultural singing, Chin elegizes the loss of her mother and maternal grandmother and tries to unravel the complexities of her family's past. She narrates the trials of immigration, of exile, of thwarted interracial love, and of social injustice. "Blues on Yellow," an angry poem in blues rhythm, is put before the title page to set the tone for the book. In the first part, Chin turns her critique inward and laments the loss of her "Chinese half," focusing on her family and bringing their experiences into continuum of a Chinese past and an American present. Then Chin works outward from her own life with the sarcastic fable-like "The True Story of Mr. and Mrs. Wong." The volume ends with the title poem "Rhapsody in Plain Yellow," referencing the Han dynasty and taking in everything that has come before. It is dedicated to "my love, Charles," starting as a love poem with the collection's rhythmic theme and a repeated word—*say*: "I love you, I love you, I love you, no matter/your race, your sex, your color. Say:/the world is round and the arctic is cold./say: I shall kiss the rondure of your soul's/living marl. Say: he is beautiful, serenely beautiful, yet, only ephemerally so" (2002, 96). After moving through her personal wants and desires, the history from both hemispheres, the relation of life to fable, and quotations from poetry and philosophy, the poem ends in silence: "Hills and canyons, robbed by sun, leave us nothing" (2002, 103).

Marilyn Chin is finishing a book of stories that will be published by Norton in 2008. The *Indiana Review* has published her two short fiction pieces: "The Parable of the Fish" in volume 24.1 and "The Parable of the Cake" in volume 25.1. **See also** *Assimilation/Americanization; Racism and Asian America*.

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AIQIN LIU

### ◆ CHIN, VINCENT (1955–1982)

The Vincent Chin case catalyzed the unification of Asian Americans against anti-Asian violence in the United States. The motivation to mobilize was caused by the lenient sentencing of two white Detroit autoworkers, Ronald Ebens and Michael Nitz, who brutally murdered Chin on June 19, 1982. The autoworkers pleaded down from second-degree murder to manslaughter, which is a lighter charge, hence a lighter sentence—no jail time, probation for three years, and fines of \$3,780 for each person. His case inspired the founding of the American Citizens for Justice (ACJ), which was the first explicitly pan-Asian American community advocacy group that offers assistance nationally against anti-Asian violence. Because this hate crime highlighted the failures of the justice system, in recognizing the severity of Chin's murder and race as key motive, the case became the blueprint for how Asian American communities should organize to ensure that future crimes against Asians received fair treatment and the full attention of the justice system.

Vincent Chin was the only son of Lily and David Bing Hing Chin. The Chins adopted Vincent from Guangdong Province, China, in 1961. David Chin died in

1981, one year before Vincent was killed. Vincent was an active teenager. He was a high school track athlete and wrote poetry. Friends and family describe Vincent as friendly, yet tough and outspoken. Helen Zia, an award-winning journalist who worked tirelessly with the ACJ to pursue justice for Chin, describes him as an “energetic, take-charge guy who knew how to stand up for himself on the tough streets of Detroit” (2000, 63). After high school, Chin worked as a draftsman in Oak Park, Michigan. He was happily engaged and planned to wed on June 26, the week after he was killed.

On June 19, 1982, Chin’s pals took him out to a bachelor party. They went to Fancy Pants, a striptease bar, the place in which the downward spiral would begin. Chin’s three friends, including another **Asian American**, Choi, and two white men, Koivu and Sirosky, were tipping the dancers generously and frequently to entertain the husband-to-be. The exchange began with Ebens’s annoyance with the dancers’ attention directed toward an Asian American. According to a white dancer at Fancy Pants, Racine Colwell, Ebens shouted across the dance stage at Chin: “It’s because [of] you little mother fuckers that we’re out of work” (*United States v. Ebens*, No. 83-60629-CR, Vol. 299, 226). This racially motivated comment became the smoking gun that transformed Chin’s murder into a hate crime. In response to Ebens, Chin yelled, “I’m not a little mother fucker.” Ebens countered, “Well, I’m not sure if you’re a big one or a little one,” which caused Chin to go around the stage to confront Ebens (*United States v. Ebens*, No. 83-60629-CR, Vol. 299, 226). Other accounts indicate that Chin’s friends overheard Ebens say, “Chink,” “Nip,” and “fucker” (*United States v. Ebens*, 800 F.2d, 1427). This shouting exchange resulted in a scuffle. Both groups were ejected from the bar.

Fighting words continued in the parking lot. Chin yelled, “Come on, you chicken shits, let’s fight some more.” Ebens retrieved a baseball bat from his vehicle, and Chin and his friend, Choi, ran away while his white friends stay put, unthreatened by the two autoworkers. Ebens and Nitz started their search. They recruited a stranger, a black man named Jimmy Perry, by paying him \$20 to help them “find a Chinese guy” and “bust his head” (*United States v. Ebens*, 800 F.2d, 1428). While most of this sequence was disputed or denied by defense witnesses, including Ebens and Nitz, Ebens did admit that he told Perry that he “was looking for two Orientals,” a deeply racist term rooted in Western imperialism used to reinforce the foreignness of Asian Americans (*United States v. Ebens*, Vol. 299, 179).

Eventually, they spotted Chin and Choi outside a McDonald’s restaurant. Ebens and Nitz approached them. Choi escaped, but Chin was grabbed and held by Nitz while Ebens beat Chin with the bat. After several blows, Chin escaped and ran out into the street before falling to the ground. Unsatisfied, Ebens followed Chin. Standing over him in a golf stance, Ebens took several homerun swings at Chin’s head. Two off-duty police officers at the McDonald’s stopped and arrested Ebens and Nitz. An ambulance

arrived. The driver saw Chin's injuries and parts of his brain matter on the street. At the hospital, Chin was declared brain dead. Four days later, the life support was unplugged, and he died.

The Wayne County prosecutor opted for second-degree murder—homicide with no premeditation. Ebens and Nitz struck a plea bargain in which they pleaded down from second-degree murder to manslaughter, which carries a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison. On March 18, 1983, almost nine months to the day, Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Charles Kaufman, who is white, sentenced Ebens and Nitz to three years probation, fines of \$3,000 each (and court costs to be paid over three years), with no imposed prison time for either of them. This sentence shocked Detroit. In response to the lenient sentence, local press printed scathing headlines and cartoons criticizing the decision. The Asian American community remained silent. Even if the community wanted to protest, there was no advocacy or watchdog group to turn to for assistance.

After the news of the sentences of her son's murderers, Lily Chin wrote a letter in Chinese to the Detroit Chinese Welfare Council: "This is injustice to the grossest extreme. I grieve in my heart and shed tears in blood. My son cannot be brought back to life, but he was a member of your council. Therefore, I plead to you. Please let the Chinese American community know, so they can help me hire legal counsel to appeal, so my son can rest his soul" (Zia 2000, 64).

On March 31, 1983, the council met, which eventually led to the creation of the American Citizens for Justice advocacy group. The formation prompted Liza Chan, the only Asian American woman practicing law in Michigan, to take the lead in pursuing Chin's case. On April 15, ACJ held its first news conference at the Detroit Press Club. Shocking numbers of Asian Americans gathered along a strong presence of local and regional media. The goal was to educate the community about anti-Asian violence, Asian American history in the United States, and the need for justice in the Chin case. In May 1983 ACJ started a mass rally in downtown Detroit to protest Kaufman's lenient sentences. The protest was the first to have broad representation of Asian American communities involved. The growing prominence of the case gave Asian Americans the first direct entry on the national level into the white-black race dynamic, complicating many people's notion of race and oppression in the United States. The *New York Times* picked up the story, which catalyzed other national media interest, including TV news magazine specials and Lily Chin's appearance on the *Phil Donahue Show*. With public pressure mounting and after meeting with Chan and other ACJ representatives, Judge Kaufman responded in June 1983 by defending his lenient sentence. He asserted that Ebens and Nitz were incapable of committing such a crime under normal circumstance and viewed it as an accident rather than a brutal murder. He further defended his decision by pointing out the defendants' "stable working

backgrounds and lack of criminal records” and to make the punishment fit the criminal (Espiritu 1992, 141). Kaufman asserted, “Had this been a brutal murder, of course, these fellows would be in jail now” (Ma 2000, 80). He would not reverse his decision.

With the news, Chan and the ACJ pursued a civil rights case using the racial reference from Colwell’s testimony, indicating that Ebens mistakenly blamed Chin for the U.S. auto industry demise. In November 1983 a federal grand jury indicted Ebens and Nitz for violating Chin’s right to enjoy a place of public accommodations. Judge Anna Diggs Taylor, one of the first African American woman judges to serve on the federal bench, presided. On June 28, 1984, the federal jury found Ebens guilty, but Nitz was acquitted. The case won a retrial by appeal in 1986 due to procedure errors and suspicion that attorney Chan allegedly coached Chin’s three friends in preparation for trial. The trial was held in Cincinnati, and jurors were interrogated about their familiarity with Asians to eliminate biases while no questions addressed possible favoritism toward whites. The jury was mostly white, male, and blue-collar, a striking resemblance to Ebens’s background. On May 1, 1987, the jury found Ebens not guilty. In the civil suit against the autoworkers for the loss of Chin’s life, a settlement of \$1.5 million was levied in September 1987 against Ebens. He stopped making payments toward the judgment in 1989.

More than any other incident, the beating death of Vincent Chin epitomizes the racism of lumping together all Asian Americans stamped primarily with an East Asian phenotype, wrongfully affirming, for many, the stereotype that all Asians look alike and are blamed for Japan’s economic competitiveness. It also instills fear in Asians and Asian Americans that this violence could happen to them due to anti-Asian attitudes and stereotypes of Asians being passive and silent. Scholars assert that Chin’s case empowered many Asian Americans to speak out against injustices. His case catalyzed the formation of many community groups combating anti-Asian violence, pan-Asian social services, and educational organizations at the local, regional, and national level. The case inspired the joining of Asian Americans and other marginalized groups to actively lobby for the passage of the Hate Crime Statistics Act in 1990. This act requires the U.S. attorney general to collect and publish statistics on crimes motivated by prejudice against race, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity. Chin’s case is a monumental stepping-stone in Asian American history. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Racism and Asian America.

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DANIEL HIROYUKI TERAGUCHI

## ◆ CHINATOWNS

Chinatowns are ethnic communities established by Chinese immigrants since the nineteenth century. There are three main types of Chinatowns in the United States: the frontier and rural, urban, and suburban Chinatowns. The first two types were typically established by Chinese immigrants from the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, whereas the third has developed because of the arrival of the comparatively wealthier and better educated Chinese immigrants since the 1970s. In the beginning, Chinatowns were established out of the necessity for self-protection and a sense of security against the hostile environment and for mutual assistance in life and business in an alien country. Early Chinatowns were isolated from white residential districts or other ethnic enclaves. With the gradual lessening of discrimination and hostility toward Chinese, many Chinese, especially American-born Chinese such as Nina in Fae Myenne Ng's novel *Bone* or some recent immigrants, moved out of Chinatowns to suburban areas.

Although it is recorded that Chinese came to the United States as early as 1785, the first wave of Chinese immigrants, mainly from Guangdong Province, arrived in this country around 1850 because of the discovery of gold in California in 1848. As more Chinese immigrants migrated into California in search of fortune and work, those who were working in frontier and rural areas banded together and established their own distinct communities, which eventually became the frontier and rural Chinatowns.

Early Chinese immigrants established a reputation for hard work—they did mainly farm work, or built the railroads, or did hard labor in the gold mines, so their initial arrival was generally welcomed, although prejudice against them existed. With increasing numbers of Chinese immigrants in the job markets, initial acceptance and tolerance gave way to animosity, especially during the 1870s, when the United States was in a nationwide depression. The Chinese immigrants were loathed by whites, whose hatred eventually led to the passage of the **Chinese Exclusion Act** in 1882, which banned immigration of Chinese laborers to the United States and prohibited Chinese from becoming naturalized citizens. The anti-Chinese sentiment and the deteriorating

situation made it necessary for Chinese immigrants in the United States to leave farms, mines, railroads, and other places where they worked to retreat into cities to make a living. Their arrival greatly increased the population, community, and service business in Chinatowns in the cities.

Urban Chinatowns have gradually developed from the districts where the Chinese who remained in the cities crowded together and were later joined by rural or new immigrants. In the United States, some of the largest and most significant urban Chinatowns are those in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York. San Francisco Chinatown was the oldest and was once deemed by city officials as a health hazard. In 1906 the earthquake and fires reduced old San Francisco Chinatown into smoldering ashes; the present Chinatown was in fact reconstructed in the outer reaches of the Richmond district. It is one of the most beautiful Chinatowns in the United States today, with each of its streets possessing its own unique characteristics and charming cultural heritage. With anti-Chinese hostility rising on the West Coast in the 1870s, Chinese immigrants began to move to the East Coast, arriving in significant numbers in the New York area in the late 1870s and beginning to create enclaves for existence and self-protection. New York City Chinatown in Manhattan was thus founded. As the largest Chinatown in the United States today, it provides tourists and visitors with a unique historical and cultural experience not found anywhere else in the world. Like many other urban Chinatowns in the United States, it has become a site of a rich history that tells the story of the Chinese American experience.

Suburban Chinatowns were established as a result of the relaxation of Chinese immigration restrictions, the passage of laws that forbade racial discrimination in real estate, and, most importantly, the improved relationship of China and the United States. As better educated immigrants arrive from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, along with younger generations leaving old urban Chinatowns, suburban Chinatowns have sprung up. Unlike old Chinatown populations, which are mainly middle-aged or senior working-class citizens, most people living in suburban Chinatowns are younger generations of middle or upper class. The aging infrastructures in old Chinatowns have been replaced by modern residential buildings and shopping malls in suburban Chinatowns.

Chinatowns used to be close-knit communities with unique organizations and management systems. The Chinese who came from the same region in China formed district benevolent associations, and those with the same family names formed family associations. These associations were first set up to serve the social and personal needs of the Chinese immigrants. The success and survival of early Chinatowns depended a great deal on these benevolent associations, which served as political, social, and economic support systems to old immigrants and newcomers. The members strove to meet the basic needs of the community and represented a united voice in the fight against

discriminatory legislations. Today, these benevolent associations, though less influential than they used to be, still play the role of social and welfare institutions that provide the Chinese community with job information and opportunities, monetary aid, and opportunities to express opinions in public affairs.

Since the Chinese usually consider education as the most important asset of life and an important way to glorify the family, they established many Chinese schools in Chinatowns, the first of which was set up in 1884 in old San Francisco Chinatown. Chinese children were schooled in many subjects, among which the learning of Chinese language was the most important. In the minds of older generations, the Chinese language was a significant channel to preserve the Chinese culture and maintain ties with their homeland. With children attending American public schools, most of them were gradually whitewashed and thus became unwilling to learn anything Chinese, an issue that is best reflected in Frank **Chin's** *Donald Duk*. Recently, there has been a revival of Chinese schools in Chinatowns, and these schools play more roles to meet the needs of Chinese parents and their children.

Chinatowns used to have a negative image in the past, with dirty streets, brothels, and opium dens, especially during the period of the Chinese Exclusion Act when Chinatowns became bachelor societies because of the absence of women and children. This situation is vividly caricatured in Louis **Chu's** *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, where most Chinese mainly entertained themselves by playing Mahjong, visiting brothels and opium dens, and spreading rumors. In addition, there was real threat from societies like the tongs, secret groups formed by outcasts who either lacked clan ties or were expelled by their associations. These tongs were involved in operating brothels, gambling parlors, opium dens, and even the extremely lucrative business of importing thousands of Chinese women and girls to the United States to serve the Chinese bachelor population. The tongs were fighting incessantly among themselves for control over territories and profits, which are described in some detail in Pardee **Lowe's** novel *Father and Glorious Descendant*.

With the passing of time, especially with the appearance of new urban and suburban Chinatowns like the ones in Los Angeles and New York City, the images of Chinatowns have changed greatly. Today, Chinatowns remain self-sufficient communities with vibrant businesses, which mainly consist of grocery stores, laundries, shops, restaurants, and banks. Almost everything that a Chinese person needs in daily life can be obtained there. There are also many cultural and recreational activities, including theatrical performance, poetry clubs, and art collectives. Meanwhile Chinese restaurants offer Chinese and non-Chinese visitors delicious Chinese food, and Chinese theatres and joss houses provide them with a glimpse of Chinese culture and religion. These sights and unique customs have turned many old urban Chinatowns into tourist attractions. In addition, there are increasing connections between Chinatowns and the

home country. Although many Chinese do not live in Chinatowns anymore, Chinatowns still serve as centers of social, economic, cultural, and business activities for Chinese in the United States today.

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AIMIN CHENG AND JUN LU

## ◆ CHINESE AMERICAN ANTHOLOGY

Chinese American literature, which dates back to the late nineteenth century, finally came of age in the 1970s. The publication of Chinese American anthologies was, therefore, symbolic of this maturation. Since Chinese American literature, as a minority literature, fits into the more inclusive, more diverse label—Asian American literature, its anthology more often than not jointly appears with other Asian American literature. This has been a general trend to date, which to a certain degree reflects the interdependent status of Chinese American literature. A clarification is necessary here, however, in that Chinese American literature holds a dominant standing within the larger category of Asian American literature.

The first ever Asian American literature anthology, *Asian-American Authors* (1972), was edited by Kai-yu Hsu and Helen Palubinskas, both of whom had profound knowledge of Chinese, and it included eight writers of Chinese descent (five of Japanese descent, nine of Philippine descent), namely, Pardee Lowe, Jade Snow Wong, Virginia Lee, Frank Chin, Diana Chang, Jeffery Paul Chan, Shawn Hsu Wong, and Russell C. Leong, and covered autobiography, novel excerpts, short stories, and poems. In 1974 another anthology, entitled *Asian American Heritage: An Anthology of Prose and Poetry* edited by David Hsin-Fu Wand, made its debut. But the most influential yet highly controversial anthology of this period was *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers* (1974), coedited by Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Hsu Wong. The 14 writers included in this anthology are arranged alphabetically, instead of being categorized according to their ethnic label like Hsu and Palubinskas's. The scope of its collection of Chinese American literature includes six writers, namely, Jeffery Paul Chan, Diana Chang, Frank Chin, Louis Chu, Wallace

Lin, and Shawn Hsu Wong, covering fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and miscellaneous writings. The *Aiiieeeee!* introduction, "Fifty Years of Our Whole Voice," condemned white racism and rejected the Asian American writers who mirrored "white standards." Based on the editors' philosophy, both aesthetical and political, the anthology went as far as to promote the yet unknown writer Louis **Chu**, while excluding the highly respected Jade Snow **Wong**.

If we regard the early 1970s as the first prosperous period for literary anthologies, the next productive period did not occur until the late 1980s, but it lasted throughout the 1990s to date. The major anthologies published during this time include *Pake: Writing by Chinese in Hawaii* (1989), edited by Eric **Chock** and Darrell H.Y. **Lum**; *The Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology* (1989), coedited by Shirley Geok-lin **Lim** and Mayumi Tsutakawa; *Between Worlds: Contemporary Asian-American Plays* (1990) by Misha Berson; *Home to Stay: Asian American Women's Fiction* (1990) by Sylvia Watanabe and Carol Bruchac; *The Big Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature* (1991) by Jeffery Paul Chan, Frank Chin, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Hsu Wong; *Dissident Song: A Contemporary Asian American Anthology* (1991) by Marilyn **Chin** and David Wong **Louie**; *Chinese American Poetry: An Anthology* (1991) by L. Ling-chi Wang and Henry Yiheng Zhao; *Charlie Chan Is Dead: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Fiction* (1993) by Jessica **Hagedorn**; *Growing Up Asian American* (1993) by Maria Hong; *The Open Boat: Poems from Asian America* (1993) by Garrett **Hongo**; *The Politics of Life: Four Plays by Asian American Women* (1993) by Velina Hasu **Houston**; *Unbroken Thread: An Anthology of Plays by Asian American Women* (1993) by Roberta Uno; *American Dragons: Twenty-five Asian American Voices* (1993) by Laurence **Yep**; *Under Western Eyes: Personal Essays from Asian America* (1995) by Garrett Hongo; *On a Bed of Rice: An Asian American Erotic Feast* (1995) by Geraldine Kudaka; *Asian American Literature: A Brief Introduction and Anthology* (1996) by Shawn Hsu Wong; *Asian-American Literature: An Anthology* (2000) by Shirley Geok-lin Lim; *Bold Words: A Century of Asian American Writing* (2001) by Rajini Srikanth and Esther Yae Iwanaga; and *Asian American Poetry: The Next Generation* (2004) by Victoria M. **Chang**.

In comparison with the first prosperous period, this period witnessed a considerable increase of genre-specific collections, such as plays, poetry, fiction, and collections dedicated to women writers. It sufficiently reflects a shift of research to poetry and plays as well as feminism. *The Big Aiiieeeee!* editors have maintained their endorsement of "Asian heroic tradition" and "authenticity" in *Aiiieeeee!*, and willfully relegated the widely acclaimed writers such as Jade Snow Wong, Maxine Hong **Kingston**, David Henry **Hwang**, and Amy **Tan** into the "fake" category. Wang and Zhao's *Chinese American Poetry: An Anthology*, as one of the few exclusively dedicated to Chinese American poets, is noteworthy here. The 22 poets collected represented multiple

geographic locales (including Massachusetts, Hawaii, Alabama, New Mexico, California, Jakarta, Hong Kong, and Malacca), diverse aesthetic perspectives (such as traditional, experimental, and postmodern), and different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (e.g., some have Chinese as their mother tongue, whereas some may only speak English). Considering that many of the selected poets were familiar names, such as Marilyn Chin, Carolyn Lau, Li-Young Lee, John Yau, Laureen Mar, and Stephen Liu, one should not expect to discover the lesser known yet talented poets by looking through this collection. Unlike Wang and Zhao's poetry anthology, Chang's *Asian American Poetry* is dedicated to the up-and-coming poets, making it a good companion to Wang and Zhao's collection. *Bold Words*, on the other hand, covers Asian American writing of all genres and 60 authors from the early years of the twentieth century to the present, with a balanced split between male and female writers. Maxine Hong Kingston, Li-Young Lee, Frank Chin, and Sui Sin Far, among several others, are selected.

Apart from specific Chinese American and Asian American anthologies, Chinese American literature successfully knocks on the door of other anthologies and ultimately comprises a good proportion of them. The historical moment for many Chinese American writers came when Chinese American literature (alongside other Asian American literature) found its way into the American literary cannon. *Columbia Literary History of the United States* (1988), edited by Emory Elliott, was a pioneer in presenting Chinese American literature to a broader audience. Therein, Elaine H. Kim contributed a passionate and thought-provoking introductory essay on Asian American literature. An array of Chinese American writers and other Asian American writers made their grand collective debut. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* (first published in 1979 and edited by Ronald Gottesman, with sequent editions edited by Nina Baym) overlooked Chinese American writers in its first two editions, but included four of Cathy Song's poems in its third edition released in 1989 and then added Maxine Hong Kingston and Li-Young Lee in its fourth (1995) and fifth editions (1998). *The Heath Anthology of American Literature* (first published in 1990), edited by Paul Lauter, collected works by Edith Maude Eaton (Sui Sin Far), Maxine Hong Kingston, and Cathy Song, as well as poetry by early Chinese immigrants, carved on the walls of the wooden barracks on **Angel Island**, which were marked by intense footnotes in its very first edition. The latest, fifth edition (2006) has added three more Chinese American writers, namely, Frank Chin, Gish Jen, and Li-Young Lee. By so doing, *The Heath Anthology* presents a more inclusive, more diversified collection of American literature.

Anthology is selective and exclusive, and thus making a value judgment becomes part of its nature. Whatever set of standards it adopts, conservative or liberal, an anthology has to rule out a certain number of works that could inevitably trigger

serious debate on its selection criteria. Although a literary debate over anthology selection is not an uncommon occurrence, it is conspicuously visible and loud concerning Chinese American anthology compilation. The complete and unrelenting rejection of some critically favored Chinese American writers by some anthology editors (represented by Frank Chin) can hardly find its repetition in another literature. Despite the argument, conflict, and verbal rhetoric, the increasing number of published Chinese American anthologies forcefully demonstrates the remarkable energy a minority literature is now carrying on its way forward. **See also** Feminism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America.

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LINGLING YAO

## ◆ CHINESE AMERICAN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Chinese American autobiography has become a controversial literary form, focusing on debates concerning the authenticity or "Chineseness" of writers in this tradition, as well as the social or political function of **Chinese American literature**. Technically, this is a subcategory of ethnic autobiography within the wider category of life writing. In contrast to biography, autobiography presents the story of a life by the person who has lived that life. Consequently, narrator and narrated are assumed to be identical, and the events narrated are assumed to be historically and objectively true. This latter characteristic distinguishes autobiography from memoir, for example, which relies more explicitly upon remembrance that might not possess the same objective character as autobiography or, the third-person form of life writing, biography. These assumptions of historical verisimilitude and authorial authenticity comprise what Philippe Lejeune has famously described as the "autobiographical pact" in the title of his book, *Le Pacte autobiographique* (1975): a contract or assumed agreement between reader and writer that text comprises a historically true story that has been lived by the narrator.

Autobiography has become a controversial genre in Chinese American literature since Frank **Chin** launched a scathing criticism of writers such as Maxine Hong

Kingston and Jade Snow Wong for writing in what he sees as a compromised Eurocentric autobiographical form. Chin's essay "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake" was published in the groundbreaking anthology *The Big Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature*, coedited by Chin with Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong. In this essay, he accuses particular, popular Chinese American writers of using a literary form—autobiography—that is not part of the native Chinese cultural tradition but represents the incursion and negative influence of European missionaries upon traditional Chinese culture. He calls for a style of writing that is neither Chinese nor Euro-American but is specifically Chinese American and that resists the assumption that the lives of Chinese immigrants to the United States can be simply and unproblematically accessed, in their specificities, through autobiographical texts.

Chin's criticism of Chinese American autobiography and its practitioners arises from the history of this literary genre in the United States. Some of the earliest Chinese American autobiographical texts were written in response to and as a gesture against the legislative actions that heralded the period of Chinese exclusion in North America. The first Chinese Exclusion Act was passed by the U.S. Congress in 1882. It was preceded by various legislative restrictions on the freedom of Chinese to enter and to move around the United States. For example, the 1870 Nationality Act excluded Chinese from those racial groups authorized to apply for naturalization, whereas in 1878 the Californian Constitutional Convention prohibited Chinese from entering California. Between 1882 and 1943, when the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed, Chinese immigration was restricted to teachers, students, merchants, and diplomats on temporary visas. Among the many effects upon the Chinese community in the United States was the polarization between an educated migrant class, entering with temporary visas, and the existing class of laborers whose migration to the United States had preceded the exclusion laws. Many early Chinese American autobiographies are written in an apologetic style that attempts to engage the racial assumptions and prejudices that motivated these restrictive laws. Such texts provide an ethnographical account of Chinese culture, which has been likened to Mary Louise Pratt's concept of "auto-ethnography," to dispel American racial anxieties. These autobiographical writings attempted to represent the Chinese perspective on American racism by recognizing, and responding to, white fears and prejudices. To do this, writers often adopted the narrative point of view of racially prejudiced Americans to demonstrate that these prejudices were groundless.

Autobiographical texts such as *My Life in China and America*, written by Wing Yung, the first Chinese student to graduate from a U.S. university when he completed his studies at Yale College in 1854, and later texts such as Yee Chiang's Silent Traveller series, attempted to take the mystique out of Chinese customs, habits, and rituals



by explaining the purpose and history of these cultural practices. The intention of the autobiographical writers was to reveal the superficiality of cultural differences between Chinese and Americans and to demonstrate that in their common humanity both groups are the same. Jade Snow Wong, in the introduction to her autobiography, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, explains that: "At a time when nothing had been published from a female Chinese American perspective, I wrote with the purpose of creating better understanding of the Chinese culture on the part of Americans. That creed has been my guiding theme through the many turns of my life" (vii). Sau-ling Cynthia Wong has characterized these texts as "guided Chinatown tours," which emphasize the continuities between middle-class Chinese and American cultures. Not only do these texts create and emphasize false commonalities, Wong argues, they also place Chinese superstition and American racism on the same logical footing, assuming that if one can be explained away, so can the other.

These apologetic texts assume a set of stable and fixed national, ethnic, and cultural differences. They argue not for assimilation but for cultural pluralism and mutual tolerance. However, the autobiographical self in these narratives is treated as the site of socialization into the dominant U.S. culture. Consequently, the explanation of and apology for Chinese cultural difference cannot fully accommodate the demands of Euro-American "normality" or normative values, and as a result texts such as *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, Pardee Lowe's *Father and Glorious Descendant*, and Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* reveal a necessarily incomplete socialization of the autobiographical "I." Sidonie Smith has written extensively and persuasively about the assumed "universal" subject of autobiography, which complicates all attempts by the ethnic subject to appropriate this literary form. The universal autobiographical subject, against which the ethnic or female subject must be distinguished, is represented as normative in the form of male, white, and European. This, Smith argues, is the culturally sanctioned subject of autobiography, a subject that is able to enact particular experiences that have been sanctioned for autobiographical representation. As a "universal," this self is "desocialized" and consequently is defined not by specific material social roles and relations but by an interior essence that is congruent with maleness, whiteness, and European identity. It is in this context that the early Chinese American autobiographies attempt to engage with American racism and anti-Chinese sentiment. The exclusion of non-European and nonmale subjects may be, Smith suggests, the very cause of their engagement with autobiography as a literary form, to write or talk back to the universal self that is the cause of their exclusion. Writing in an earlier study, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography* (1987) about Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, Smith argues that this text "exemplifies the potential for works from the marginalized to challenge the ideology of individualism." If the "universal" subject of European individualism is undermined by the racialized and gendered autobiographical ethnic

subject, then the entire autobiographical genre is placed in question. Chinese American autobiography does challenge the European tradition of first-person life writing in this way (Smith 1987, 150).

The internal contradiction of Chinese American autobiography, which attempts to bring together in a condition of mutual tolerance or cultural pluralism the distinct cultures of Chinese and European America, is a direct consequence of the hybrid nature of the literary form. Chinese American autobiographies bring together the origins of the form in European tradition with the details of daily Chinese American experience. In contrast, in his 1985 essay, significantly titled "This Is Not an Autobiography," Frank Chin complains that the dominance of the autobiographical genre within the Chinese American literary tradition has generated the assumption among European or Western readers that all Chinese American writing is life writing, and therefore it necessarily offers authentic insight into the reality of Chinese American culture and experience. He argues that autobiographers "characterize Chinese history and culture in terms of Christian stereotypes and tell of the same Cinderella story of rescue from the perverse, the unnatural, and cruel Chinese into the one true universe" (109). However, autobiographies like *Fifth Chinese Daughter* and *Father and Glorious Descendant* use the conventions of Euro-American autobiography, in the style established by Benjamin Franklin, to tell an American rags-to-riches story. These texts focus upon the narrator's struggles to achieve an education and a successful career and to triumph against all odds, including racial prejudice and inherited Chinese values. Jade Snow Wong and Pardee Lowe both describe at length the circumstances that permit them to benefit from an American college education: the former at Mills College and the latter at Stanford University. Their autobiographies culminate in the story of their individual career triumphs. These writers seek to authenticate both an ethnic Chinese self and a claim to American nationality or citizenship within the context of the autobiographical narrative.

Chinese American autobiographies are perhaps uniquely compromised in the capacity to tell an objectively true story because of the impact upon community and family formation by the history of exclusion. For example, Pardee Lowe expresses early in his autobiography the suspicion that his father was a fake. By this, he means to suggest that his father was a so-called paper son, someone who had falsely purchased the identity of a legitimate Chinese American to claim U.S. citizenship. This practice of inventing or buying personal identities and personal histories was the direct consequence of the Chinese Exclusion Laws. After 1881, Chinese who were resident in the United States but who left the country could then reenter only by producing a Certificate of Return. All Certificates of Return were declared void in 1888; the Scott Act of that year stipulated that returning Chinese residents had to produce their Certificates of Residence upon demand or be deported. This legislative move had the effect of stimulating a market in false identity papers, but it also institutionalized the

location of ethnic identity in these papers. Autobiographers like Pardee Lowe use the life narrative to place in question the authority of paper documents to legitimate identity, which then becomes a constitutive part of the autobiography. In *China Men*, the sequel to *The Woman Warrior*, Maxine Hong Kingston describes her father's experience at the **Angel Island** immigration station as a game based on these false, paper identities. What is effectively tested by U.S. immigration officials is not the "real" or objective identity of these immigrants but their ability to construct a self-consistent narrative, a fictive autobiography that is consistent with the paper lives they are presenting as their own. In the period following the 1906 earthquake and fire, which destroyed documents such as birth certificates and citizenship records, the numbers of paper sons claiming U.S. citizenship increased significantly. The legacy of this history for Chinese American autobiography is a tradition of secrecy concerning the origins of families and communities, which is reflected in the radical epistemological uncertainty of autobiographical texts such as *The Woman Warrior* and more conservative texts such as *Father and Glorious Descendant*. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Assimilation/Americanization; Racism and Asian America.

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## ◆ CHINESE AMERICAN DRAMA

Compared to other genres of **Chinese American literature**, Chinese American drama started late. The earliest dramas with “Chinese motif” were those traditional Chinese operas translated into English or those written by Americans that dramatized their exotic imagination about China. As for the latter, the Chinese played the role of servants of the whites and functioned dramaturgically only as comic clowns to amuse the audience (Jiang 2006, 115). The caricatured image of Chinese was sustained in dramas with Chinese motif well into the 1950s. The unprecedented success in Chinese American drama came in the 1960s. C.Y. Lee’s novel *Flower Drum Song* (1957) presented euphemistic portraits of **Chinatown** and quickly earned popular and financial success (Kim 1988, 814), winning a Commonwealth Club Award. In 1958 the novel was revised by Rodgers and Hammerstein into a musical and brought to Broadway. It was the first Chinese American drama presented on Broadway. As a play concerned with Chinese American community, it comically dramatized issues like racial discrimination, the generation gap between FOB (Fresh off the Boat) and ABC (American-Born Chinese), and bachelorhood due to severe disproportion of men to women. The growth of Chinese American drama in the real sense began in the 1970s with the emergence of theater companies particularly concerned with Asian American themes—the Asian American Theater Workshop, the East West Players, the Pan Asian Repertory, and the Northwest Asian American Theatre Company (Vena and Nourgeh 1996, 945). However, only a small part of the dramatic works of this period found their way to publication, which included a one-act play, *One, Two Cups* (1974) written by Mei-mei Berssenbrugge and *Points of Departure* (1977) by Paul Stephen Lim. The 1980s and the 1990s witnessed the publication of works by a group of young Chinese American playwrights, such as Merle Woo’s *Balancing* (1980), Diana W. Chou’s *An Asian Man of a Different Color* (1981), Darrell H.Y. Lum’s *Oranges are Lucky* (1981) and *My Home Is Down the Street* (1986), Laurence Yep’s *Daemons* (1986) and *Pay the Chinaman* (1990), Genny Lim’s *The Only Language* (1986), *Pigeons* (1986), *Paper Angels* (1991), and *Bitter Cane* (1991), and Deborah Rogin’s *The Woman Warrior* (1994), which was a dramatic revision of two of Maxine Hong Kingston’s novels, *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men*. These plays present realistic pictures of early Chinese immigrants’ hardship as manual laborers and of the racial, cultural, or generational conflicts encountered by these immigrants. *Bitter Cane* is concerned with the Chinese labor immigrants cultivating sugarcane in Hawaii. *Paper Angels* presents the internment of early Chinese immigrants on **Angel Island**. Mei-mei Berssenbrugge’s *One, Two Cups* describes mother-daughter relationships among Chinese Americans. Diana W. Chou’s *An Asian Man of a Different Color* is concerned with racial and cultural conflicts.

Today the most influential Chinese American playwrights are Frank **Chin** and David Henry **Hwang**. Established as a man of letters with his collaboration in editing

*Aiiieeee!:* *An Anthology of Asian American Writers* (1974), Chin also stands out by being the first Chinese American dramatist who drew attention from American mainstream critics. Chin's first play *The Chickencoop Chinaman* won the top prize in a playwright contest sponsored by the East West Players in Los Angeles. However, due to financial problems encountered by the company, the play was not produced until it found its way to the American Place Theater in New York in 1972 under the direction of Jack Gelber. It was the first production of its kind in the history of the legitimate American stage and was a landmark event in the history of Chinese American drama in its connection with the Asian American dramatic prosperity that followed (Vena & Nourgeh 1996, 944). After the premiere of *The Chickencoop Chinaman*, Chin's second play, *The Year of the Dragon*, was produced at the same theater in 1974 and then was filmed for *Theater in America* on public television, where it was aired in 1975 (943–945). This play was the first Chinese American drama aired on American television. *Gee, Pop!* a real cartoon in two acts, was produced by the American Conservatory Theater in 1974, while *Flood of Blood*, a one-act play, was published in the *Seattle Review* in 1988. Failed father-son relationships and Chinatown as a place of death are favorite themes in Frank Chin's plays. Both *The Chickencoop Chinaman* and *The Year of the Dragon* portray the prisoner-like life of Chinese Americans in Chinatown. Confining themselves in Chinatown, presented as a place of internment, the inhabitants lose their will and courage to experience life in the outside world, which results in a loss of assertiveness and even in the disintegration of the self and family. Flight becomes the only possible way to establish a self-identity. However, the young protagonists find it impossible because of the older men's clinging to illusions that limit their lives and stifle their opportunity to be real men, hence the conflict between fathers and sons and the image of failed fathers (Kim 1988, 819). After the premiere of *The Chickencoop Chinaman*, Clive Barnes of the *New York Times* commented that Chin showed in this play "an ethnic attitude [he] never previously encounter" (Vena and Nourgeh 1996, 948), for the reason that the play was "the first Asian American work to confront crucial cultural issues that has long been repressed in the theatre and other performance media" (944). It conveys sociopolitical messages about Asian Americans that audiences could not possibly learn from C.Y. Lee's *The Flower Drum Song*. The groundbreaking theme of *The Chickencoop Chinaman* is backed up by Chin's unconventional style with incisive language, biting humor, and nonconformist characters (946).

One of the major issues of the play is the failed father-son relationship that leads to the protagonist's search for an ideal father and selfhood. The protagonist Tam Lum, a Chinese American writer and filmmaker, comes to Pittsburgh to interview Charley Popcorn, the father of a black ex-champion boxer, Oualtine Jack Dancer, for a documentary movie Tam is shooting. With his actual father being a timid and cowardly old

man who is unable to set a model of manhood for his own son, Tam's search for Dancer's father, whom Dancer describes as a model of masculine assertiveness and heroism, is actually a quest for a surrogate father he can be proud of and follow as an example of manhood. After his encounter with his black friend, Kenji, a culturally dichotomized limbo like Tam himself, Robbie, and Robbie's mother, who endeavors to pass for white, Tam finally meets Charley Popcorn, only to discover that Charley is not Dancer's father at all. Nevertheless, Tam pleads with the old man: "[Dancer] needs you to be his father . . . you gotta be his father." Charley turns down the request. The contrast between a needy son desperate for an adorable father and a father failing to or refusing to act out that expectation goes on throughout the play. In the end, his search for a surrogate father ends in failure, and Tam refuses to let go of the feelings of anger and pride engendered by his ancestral heritage with the sound of the train as its symbol. The failed father-son relationship signifies the failure of Asian American manhood to express itself in the former, as its simplest form (Vena and Nourgeh 1996, 947), which is a theme preoccupying Chin in most of his works.

*The Year of the Dragon* is also concerned with father-son conflict and disintegration of selfhood. The play begins with the imminent death of the father, Pa Eng. The old man is an authority both in Chinatown, as "mayor" of Chinatown, and in the family by demanding unconditional obedience. He removes the protagonist Fred, his eldest son, from college, chooses a despised tour guide business for him, stifles his ambition to be a writer, and forces him to promise he will stay in Chinatown. For Fred, Chinatown is the whites' private preserve for an endangered species. However, as the tour guide of Chinatown, repeating set spiel in line with the white tourists' expectation, Fred is forced to reinforce the American stereotypes of Chinese Americans. Though the job turns him into a self-loathing person, Fred is proud of his success in shouldering family responsibilities by being the income-earner and for his loyalty he expects respect and affirmation from his father. However, his sacrifice is not acknowledged or rewarded by the father, for the old man declares Fred to be a "flop," unable to take care of the family outside Chinatown. Torn between his desire to live as an independent individual and his responsibility to the family and loyalty to a selfish and despotic father, Fred finds himself maimed as an individual.

David Henry Hwang's success as a playwright surpasses Chin's in terms of popularity and finance. Hwang establishes his fame as a playwright with his *Chinese American Trilogy: FOB* (1979), *The Dance and the Railroad* (1981), and *Family Devotions* (1981), which are concerned with the cultural and political experience of Asian Americans. First staged in a dormitory at Stanford University where he was pursuing his BA, *FOB* was later produced in New York in 1980 and won an Obie Award for Best Play. Since then, prolific in writing, Hwang has addressed similar issues in a series of powerful plays, including *The Sound of a Voice* (1983), *The House of Sleeping Beauties* (1983),

*Rich Relations* (1986), *As the Crow Flies* (1986), *1000 Airplanes on the Roof* (1988), *M. Butterfly* (1988), *The Voyage* (1992), *Bondage* (1992), *Trying to Find Chinatown* (1996), and *Golden Child* (1996). The peak of his career came in 1988 with the production of his masterpiece *M. Butterfly* on Broadway. Not only winning box office success, the play established Hwang as the most renowned Asian American dramatist of the twentieth century, making him the first Chinese American dramatist to win a Tony Award. Beside the Tony Award for Best Play, *M. Butterfly* also won an Outer Critics Circle Award, a John Gassner Award, and a Pulitzer Prize nomination. Ten years later, the Off-Broadway production of his *Golden Child* received an Obie Award, and the Broadway staging earned Tony Award nominations for Best Play, Best Actress, and Best Costume Design (Trudeau 1999, 151).

Since his first play *FOB*, Hwang has been interested in exploring how people of different cultures and genders perceive and react to each other. As a result, fluidity of identity is a favorite theme in Hwang's plays (Bryer and Hartig 2004, 231). The theme is most elaborately explored in his masterpiece *M. Butterfly*. Combining a modern-day political and sexual scandal reported in the *New York Times* with Puccini's opera *Madama Butterfly*, Hwang exposes the illusionary nature of stable identity, consolidated by man/woman and West/East dichotomies. Rene Gallimard, a junior-level French diplomat, develops a relationship with a Chinese opera actress, Song Liling, after watching her performance in *Madama Butterfly*. After a 20-year-long affair, the actress Gallimard loves turns out to be a man and a Chinese spy. Not only subverting the stereotyped image of the Oriental woman and the East, the play also questions the stability of identity purported by that political/sexual stereotype.

Despite the successes achieved by individual playwrights, Chinese American drama has a long way to go before its presence in either performance media or critiques is more adequately recognized. As a category of works highly stressing artistic beauty and presenting directly to the audience Chinese American experiences, Chinese American drama deserves greater recognition and support. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes.

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XUEPING ZHOU AND AIMIN CHENG

## ◆ CHINESE AMERICAN LITERATURE

Chinese American literature emerged as an area of academic study with the publication of the first anthologies of Asian American literature in the early 1970s, which had the consequence that literary works produced by writers of Chinese heritage were not clearly distinguished from texts written by members of other Asian cultural groups. Chinese American literature has generally been discussed under the wider rubric of Asian American literature. Early collections included *Asian American Authors* (1972), edited by Kai-yu Hsu and Helen Palubinskas; David Hsin-fu Wand's *Asian-American Heritage: An Anthology of Prose and Poetry* (1974); and the groundbreaking anthology edited by Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong, *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers* (1974). These anthologies brought Asian American literary texts together to form a new category of literature, within which Chinese American works formed a distinct subcategory.

The first English-language book published in America appeared in 1887, when Yan Phou Lee, a Chinese student who graduated from Yale in 1897, published *When I Was a Boy in China*. Whether this constitutes the first work of Chinese American literature is, however, debatable. Indeed, the exact definition of Chinese American literature is the subject of considerable controversy. Yan Phou Lee's autobiographical work was published in the United States but deals only with the author's experiences in China. In content, then, this is a Chinese book, though technically it is American. The "Chineseness" of Chinese American literature is complex, whether a definition is approached in terms of the ethnicity of the author, the literary subjects, or settings featured in the texts, or the language in which the text is written. Perhaps most ambiguous of all is the body of poetry written at the beginning of the twentieth century by Chinese immigrants, awaiting admission to the United States and detained at the Angel Island immigration center in San Francisco Bay. These poems were carved into the walls of the barracks to which the writers were confined. Written in Chinese but expressing the savage disappointment concerning their reception in the United States, these poems were written in the liminal space of the detention center, neither inside nor outside the United States. These poems were translated into English only in the



1970s by Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung for publication as *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910–1940* (1980).

Edith Maude **Eaton**, known also by her pseudonym Sui Sin Far, is often hailed as the first Chinese American writer. She was in fact Eurasian, born of an English father and a Chinese mother, and raised in Canada. It was Eaton's decision to identify with the cultural heritage of her mother and to write explicitly about the experience of the Chinese in North America in the 1880s that accounts for her status as the earliest pioneer of Chinese American literature. The editors of *Aiiieeeee!* (1974) offered a definition of Chinese American writers that was restricted primarily to those who are American-born of Asian parents, though with an exception for those like Eaton who migrated to America in early childhood. To limit Chinese American writers to those born in America excludes the first generation of immigrants who traveled from China to the United States and who wrote in Chinese. In part because of the exclusion laws in operation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these immigrants did not think of themselves as "American" but rather as *huaqiao*, meaning "Overseas Chinese." Only after the repeal of the exclusion laws in 1943 did it become possible to conceptualize a Chinese American class of U.S. citizens and to formulate a category of Chinese American literature.

Those Chinese writers who were living in the United States in the late nineteenth century were either descendants of earlier immigrants or belonged to permitted categories of migrants: students, merchants, and diplomats, for example. Many were Christian and some, like Yan Phou Lee; **Yung Wing**, who wrote *My Life in China and America* (1909); and Huie Kin, the author of *Reminiscences* (1932), were sent from China as students to the United States by Christian missionary organizations. These writers responded to the anti-Chinese prejudice they encountered by writing apologetic autobiographical accounts of their lives in China. It is to this tradition of Chinese American autobiography that the work of later writers such as Jade Snow **Wong** and Maxine Hong **Kingston** belongs. However, it is also to this autobiographical tradition of Chinese American literature that Frank Chin has famously objected. In the introduction to *The Big Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature*, Chin and his coeditors describe two kinds of Chinese American literature: the real and the fake. By "fake" Chinese American literature, Chin and his colleagues refer to this Christianized autobiographical tradition, observing that autobiography is not a genre found in the Chinese literary tradition. Chin further objects to the apologetic nature of these early autobiographies, which sought to respond to racism by appealing to the rationality of white American readers. This style of autobiography, which explains and justifies aspects of Chinese cultural tradition that may seem alien and aggressive to Americans of European descent, is seen to underlie a "fake" literature. Chin accuses writers like Wong and Pardee Lowe, and later writers like Maxine

Hong Kingston and David Henry Hwang, of internalizing anti-Chinese prejudices that are reproduced in the texts that take these prejudices as their starting point. Also included in this category of “fake” Chinese American writing are Wu Tingfang’s *America through the Spectacles of an Oriental Diplomat* (1914), Lin Yutang’s *Chinatown Family* (1948), and Chiang Yee’s *Silent Traveller* series. These educated and privileged Chinese saw themselves as quite distinct from the laboring classes of Chinese immigrants upon whom racist stereotypes as either ignorant buffoons (in the style of **Charlie Chan**) or scheming villains (like **Fu Manchu**) were often based. The effort to contradict Chinese stereotypes by explaining the true character of Chinese and Chinese American experience is seen as based on a false motivation. What Frank Chin sees as the true tradition of Chinese American literature arises out of the Chinese fairy tale, Cantonese opera, and the Confucian heroic tradition. However, because this tradition is fundamentally oral, Chin admits that these texts are notoriously difficult to retrieve. The work to salvage the early sources of the oral tradition occupies contemporary scholars who seek to establish the complex beginnings of Chinese American literature.

The talk-story tradition of oral storytelling that Maxine Hong Kingston describes in *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men* belongs to this oral peasant tradition of the immigrant Chinese. Two collections of the folk rhymes that would have been known to the early Chinese immigrants have been published: Chen Yuanzhu’s *Taishan Geyao Ji* (1929) and Hu Zhaozhong’s *Meizhou Guangdong Huaqiao Liuchuan Geyao Huibian* (1970), respectively, collect Taishan and Cantonese folk rhymes. Marlon K. Hom’s *Songs of Gold Mountain: Cantonese Rhymes from San Francisco Chinatown* (1987) is a selection of poems that Hom has translated from Chinese. These poems are not transcriptions of oral works but were written by members of early twentieth-century **Chinatown** poetry societies. Membership of these societies was composed primarily of educated merchants, though the authors of the poems are anonymous.

From the time of the repeal of the Chinese exclusion laws in the mid to late 1940s, a small group of Chinese American women began publishing literary works: Helena Kuo, Lin Yutang’s daughters Adet and Anor Lin (or Lin Tai-yi), Mai-mai Sze, and Han Suyin. Also at this time, the second generation of Chinese Americans, those who were American-born of Chinese immigrant parents, began to write and publish. Jade Snow Wong and Pardee Lowe are the most prominent of these second-generation writers. Like the early autobiographers, among whom Wong and Lowe are counted, these writers adopt the stance of a cultural guide who describes and explains to a white American readership the significance of Chinese American customs, rituals, and cultural practices. Sau-ling Wong has famously called these texts “guided Chinatown tours” (1992, 249). Pardee Lowe’s *Father and Glorious Descendant* (1943) and Jade Snow Wong’s *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (1945) address both a new mainstream readership for texts that concern Chinese American lifestyles and also the conflicts that

characterized this transitional period in Chinese American history. Both Pardee Lowe and Jade Snow Wong depict conflict with their fathers as their attitudes change toward the traditional values that are enforced from within the Chinese American family. Such conflicts focus on the shift from Chinese tradition to American modernity, from conformity to individualism, that takes place largely through the dynamics of education. This is particularly true of Jade Snow Wong's experience of growing up in a traditional Chinese family but with the expectations of a modern Americanized woman. Specifically, she expects to go to college, but her father refuses to support her financially and so she must find a way to support herself throughout her college education, an experience that further promotes her commitment to individualism. Other Chinese American women writing at this time expressed their ambivalent experience as Chinese Americans. Though American culture valued women more highly than did Chinese culture, America devalued Chinese people and so was not experienced necessarily as a place of liberation. Helena Kuo's autobiography, *I've Come a Long Way* (1942), Su-ling Wong's *Daughter of Confucius* (1952), and later Katherine Wei's *Second Daughter* (1984) all express this ambivalence.

The changes brought about in the Chinese American community by the repeal of the exclusion laws, in the wake of China's role as an American ally during **World War II**, are dramatized in Louis **Chu's** novel *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (1961). Before the war, the most significant demographic effect of the exclusion laws was the development of male-dominated bachelor societies. The restrictions placed on migrant Chinese women were so severe that few women were able to settle in the United States. Consequently, Chinatowns developed as almost exclusively masculine communities. After the war, and with the relaxing of restrictions on Chinese women migrants, these male-dominated bachelor societies were radically transformed. Chu's novel focuses upon anxieties surrounding Asian male emasculation because of racial discrimination and disempowerment that were identified by the editors of the landmark anthology *Aiiieeeee!* (1974) and elaborated by later critics such as David Eng in his book *Racial Castration* (2001). Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Inada, and Shawn Wong attack the racial stereotype of the Chinese American man as delicate, effeminate, and emasculated. Louis Chu's novel deals with the sexual impotence of the narrative's newly married protagonist, Ben Loy. This private problem quickly becomes a matter of concern for the community. Indeed, Chu represents impotence as a political issue, arising from a history of womanless communities, where prostitutes provided the only female company available to Chinese men. Ben Loy cannot approach his new wife sexually without recalling those encounters with prostitutes, and the memories unman him. The dysfunctionality of Ben Loy's sexuality, his marriage, and his community is diagnosed as a symptom of the history of American racism.

Chu's novel has been described as introducing a strain of gritty realism to Chinese American literary expression. The language, characterization, and setting are all realistic, in particular Chu's deployment of Chinatown slang and the particular verbal idiom of Chinatown. In contrast to Chu's work, other writers of this period persisted in representing a sanitized version of Chinese American culture that would appeal to white stereotypes, while representing a sympathetic portrait of Chinese American life. For example, Virginia Lee's *The House that Tai Ming Built* (1963) uses Chinese stereotypes to present a positive image of Chinese culture. The narrative is sentimental and lacking in analysis of the characters' motivation; rather, it focuses upon the cultural artifacts that surround the characters to create an exotic and tasteful milieu in which they can move.

Louis Chu's effort to bring the Chinatown vernacular language into the domain of literary works is continued by Frank Chin's "Chinaman" language, a form of verbal expression that is particular to Chinese American life by combining Cantonese slang with an urban black idiom (inspired by the Black Power movement) and English. This effort alienated some reviewers of Chin's early play *The Chickencoop Chinaman* (1971). Chin's protagonist Tam Lum responds to the question of where he was born with a tirade that culminates in the exclamation: "I am a Chinaman! A miracle synthetic!" Tam refuses to be identified as either Chinese or American; instead, he is a hybrid of both. Chin's work is highly hybridized, combining the heroic Chinese tradition with American popular culture. Frank Chin's writing in drama, fiction, and prose is a form of protest literature. Chin attacks those Chinese Americans he calls racists, who internalize inauthentic ethnic identities by accepting stereotypes of Chinese Americans.

Many post-1960s writers struggle with the difficulty of being culturally hybrid—Chinese and American but neither Chinese nor American—and the search for an authentic identity. David Henry Hwang's play *M. Butterfly*, which explores the force of Orientalism and racialization through the figure of the emasculated Asian man who passes for a woman, caused controversy when it was first performed in 1988. This concern harkens back to the issue of Asian male sexuality and the force of anti-Asian racism in *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, but the attention that the play attracted is a powerful indication of the concern among contemporary writers with interconnected relations between sexual and gender identity, on the one hand, and personal and ethnic identity, on the other. Catherine Liu's novel *Oriental Girls Desire Romance* (1997), for example, explores interconnections between sexual and ethnic stereotypes through the figure of a bisexual and biracial protagonist negotiating her hybrid Chinese and American cultural identity.

The negotiation of racial stereotypes and the pursuit of alternative ethnic and sexual identities is a theme engaged by contemporary Chinese American writers. Many of this generation of writers are the children of immigrant parents, who deal with the cultural

pressures confronted by ethnic communities in the contemporary United States. Maxine Hong Kingston's early works, *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men*, describe the difficulties she encountered dealing with her mother and father, the traditional stories they would tell, the Chinese cultural practices to which they introduced her, and the American cultural artifacts, not least movies, that complicated the formation of her identity as a Chinese American. Gish Jen's novels *Typical American* (1991) and *Mona in the Promised Land* (1996), while engaging the tension between American-born children and their Chinese-born parents, focus on the immigrants who came to America in the wake of the Chinese communist revolution rather than the earlier generations of economic migrants who came predominantly from southern China. The relationship between Chinese-born mothers and American-born daughters has become a popular theme in texts written by Chinese American women: Ruthanne Lum McCunn's *Thousand Pieces of Gold* (1981), Alice Lin's *Grandmother Had No Name* (1988), Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone* (1993), and Amy Tan's best-selling novels *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991), and *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001) all deal with this theme. Amy Tan's work focuses not so much on the life experience of American daughters as the history of Chinese mothers in the novels that have followed publication of *The Joy Luck Club* in 1989.

This body of work produced by contemporary Chinese American writers is marked by a significant shift away from the social and cultural concerns of the "guided Chinatown tours" offered by early twentieth-century writers. Recent Chinese American literature explores the complexity of the subjective life in the context of a post-civil rights culture of identity politics and its aftermath. Writers such as Kingston, Ng, Tan, Liu, and others offer a more psychologically oriented approach to contemporary Chinese American experience that opens up to transnational or diasporic perspectives on the migrant context, out of which Chinese American literature has emerged as a category of study and analysis. Writers such as Shirley Geok-lin Lim, a Peranakan Chinese American of Malaysian birth, reveal the complexity of a literature that has developed out of the historical dispersion of Chinese culture into Southeast Asia and across the globe, where the United States is but one point of intersection in an intercultural network of extraordinary complexity and richness. As Chinese American literature advances and increases the critical mass of writings that comprise the canon of this literature, it looks back to the history of Chinese writing in English as it has developed over the course of the past century and a half. In this perspective, Chinese American literature is not simply a subcategory of Asian American literature regionally conceived; rather, Chinese American literature enjoys a relationship with the literatures of other diasporic Chinese communities in Canada, Australia, Southeast Asia, and across the world. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Chinese American Autobiography; Chinese Exclusion Act; Orientalism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America.

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DEBORAH L. MADSEN

## ◆ CHINESE AMERICAN NOVEL

It is the achievement of the Chinese American novel that brings **Chinese American literature** as an essential component of American literature into factual existence. The Chinese American novel in English, either by the first-generation Chinese immigrants or by America-born Chinese Americans, is a relative newcomer, with its debut in the twentieth century.

The development of the Chinese American novel roughly undergoes three stages, each with distinct thematic concerns under changing social circumstances: the decades before the 1960s witnessed the sprouting of Chinese American novels which appealed to little critical concern and a limited reading community because of the unsteady Sino-American relationship, especially when the new communist China is concerned; from the 1960s to the early 1990s, Chinese American literature established the undoubted position in American literature through some notable works, accumulating most of its creative impetus from the increasingly flourishing African American literature inspired by the **civil rights movement** of the 1960s; from the mid-1990s to the present Chinese American novels manifest a kaleidoscopic vision far beyond what American readers have ever expected, owing to

Chinese Americans' assimilation into American culture and, to some extent, the effects of multiculturalism.

In the pre-1960s, critical self-awareness of Chinese American identity and literary tradition had not been a conscious concern of Chinese American writers. The earliest Chinese American novel, though lacking Chinese American sensibility, came into being as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. As the precursor of Chinese American literature, Sui Sin Far (Edith Maude **Eaton**) published her collection of short stories *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings* (1912), and her sister, Winnifred **Eaton**, gained fame with the novels *Miss Numè of Japan* (1899), *A Japanese Nightingale* (1901), and *Tama* (1910) under the Japanese pseudonym Onoto Watanna. Her avoidance of Chinese American identity and her catering to the popular stereotypical images of Oriental women in the exclusion era also exclude her from consideration by some Chinese American critics who are more loyal to their ethnic identity.

Another early Chinese American novel that also fails to appeal to critics is Lin Yutang's *Chinatown Family: On the Wisdom of America* (1948). Among the many books written by this sophisticated Chinese immigrant who introduced Chinese culture to the Western readership, this novel is an inconspicuous work, relating the story of a working-class Chinese American family that settled in New York City in the 1940s. The lack of real experience in **Chinatown** and his being spared of the pains of exclusion turn the book into a deduction of Lin's Chinese philosophy about balance, tolerance, and harmony, even though he touches, if not empathically, some Chinese American concerns, such as interracial marriage, cultural assimilation, and cultural differences.

C.Y. Lee's *Flower Drum Song* (1957) is a novel by a Chinese-born elite. As the best-selling 1957 novel, it has been adapted into a successful musical on Broadway and a movie. It narrates the love story between Wang Ta, a second-generation Chinese American who seeks freedom from his father, and Li Mei, a girl who enters San Francisco illegally with her father from China. Lee's observation of the generation gap and his recognition of the class differences among Chinese Americans are portrayed in a comic, even farcical way, which compromises its influence on Chinese American novels.

Diana **Chang's** *Frontiers of Love* (1956) is among the first few Chinese American novels almost free of critical controversy. Chang's novel deals with a group of Eurasians in search of love and cultural identity in Shanghai during the last days of the Japanese occupation in 1945. The protagonist Sylvia effortlessly explores the issue of cultural identity in a Chinese metropolis dominated by Western colonialism. Chang uses psychological delineation, historical narrative, and sociological observation to achieve a multidimensional view of both the city and the divided self of Eurasians.

Chinese American experience finds the most vocal and steadfast expression for the first time in Louis **Chu's** *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (1961), a novel that portrays the life of a

young couple, Ben Loy and Mei Oi, in the bachelor society of Chinatown in the 1940s. Ben Loy's impotence after his marriage gives Ah Song, a gambler in Chinatown, the opportunity to seduce Mei Oi, whose pregnancy excites revenge from Ben Loy's father, Wah Gay. After an ear was sliced off by Wah Gay, Ah Song is forced into exile for five years under the pressure of the local tongs. The two fathers of the couple choose to leave to avoid facing the scandal. The couple makes a new start: the husband finds a job and restores his sexual vitality by drinking a bowl of herbal tea prescribed by an herb doctor; the wife gives birth to a son, whose "haircut party" is held in the parents' hope that a family reunion will be realized at the next party. The novel reveals explicitly the highly patriarchal society of Chinatown resulting from immigration restrictions, establishes an idiosyncratic ethnic Chinese American experience as a legitimate literary subject matter for future generations of Chinese American writers, and impresses readers with authentic Cantonese dialect translated directly.

Most of the pre-1960s Chinese American novels reacted to the social milieu dominated by racial discourse by resorting to Chinese culture, *Eat a Bowl of Tea* being the only remarkable exception. Nevertheless, the Chinese American novels of this time paved the way for later writings by providing a background for more creative and critical awareness of identity politics.

The 1960s, marked by the **Vietnam War** and the civil rights movement, was an era permeated with cultural and racial sensitivity. The increasing ethnic consciousness of Chinese Americans raised by the success of African Americans procured the legitimate existence for the Asian American movement, under the impact of which Chinese American novels widened their thematic scope. Maxine Hong Kingston and Frank Chin, both tempered by the 1960s, are two outstanding writers of novels who help to shatter stereotypical images of Chinese in their own distinct ways and redefine the Chinese American experience.

Maxine Hong Kingston's first book *The Woman Warrior* (1976) means many things to readers, fitting in several labels: nonfiction, autobiography, novel, and memoir. It became a best seller instantly and won the 1976 National Book Critics Circle Award for nonfiction. The book delineates in a nonlinear narrative the growth of a Chinese American girl against patriarchal and racial oppression in an immigrant family in Stockton, California. Of the five chapters, only chapters 2 and 5 feature the first-person narrator as the protagonist. The appropriation of Chinese allusions, especially the story of Fa Mulan; the inheritance of Chinese "talk-story" tradition; and the insightful discovery of Chinese American reality surrounded by the white "ghosts" enrich the book's literary and political significance.

After establishing the place of Chinese American women in her first book, Kingston's second book *China Men* (1980) concentrates on the stories of males in her family: her father, grandfather, great-grandfathers, uncles, and her brother. The narrative strategy is



similar to that of *The Woman Warrior*, being saturated with talk-story and allusions appropriated from both the East and the West. Kingston's ambition to reinscribe the history of Chinese Americans is reflected in a chapter entitled "The Laws," in which she encapsulates chronologically restrictions imposed on Chinese immigration to the United States from 1868 to 1978. For some, this section disrupts the flow of the stories with nonliterary materials, but it is these historical facts ignored by most Americans that weigh most for the readers' understanding of the Chinese American experience. The suffering, lonely Chinese men emasculated by American society echo strongly the predicament of Chinese American women silenced by racism and sexism.

Nine years after *China Men*, Kingston published *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* (1989), unmistakably her only novel to date. Though Chinese myths and intertextuality still occupy the heart of the book, the novel is narrated by an omniscient female narrator with a fictional protagonist, Wittman Ah Sing, who is a rebellious poet and playwright wandering in San Francisco in the 1960s. As a fifth-generation Chinese American, Ah Sing distinguishes himself from the Chinese Americans the readers expect to see. He identifies himself with the mischievous Monkey, a trickster in the classical Chinese novel *Journey to the West* by Wu Cheng'en; Ah Sing ruminates about his being a Chinese American by combining Chinese culture and Western literature into his own theatrical work. Ah Sing succeeds in producing a three-day theatrical event staging Chinese legends, which brings him out of the war in Vietnam and transforms him from a cynic into a pacifist.

Frank Chin's observation of the contemporary Chinese American experience on the other hand seems to be audaciously frank, unveiling Chinese Americans' hard struggle in the suffocating American society. His two novels, *Donald Duk* (1991) and *Gunga Din Highway* (1994), together with his plays, combine to show his resolve to fight racial stereotypes and restore Chinese American males' masculinity by reclaiming the nineteenth-century history of Chinese America, which he values so much because of their contribution to the construction of the railroad in the American West.

Chin's *Donald Duk* is closely tied with this phase of American history. A 12-year-old boy who lives in San Francisco's Chinatown, Donald Duk hates his eccentric name almost as much as his disdain of his Chinese heritage. A series of magical dreams about Chinese Americans who constructed the Central Pacific Railroad with himself as a worker among them transform the boy's attitude about his ethnic identity and kindle his love for Chinese culture, represented by Kwan Kung, the Chinese god of war. The story unfolds against the background of the Chinese Spring Festival, which is delineated from an insider's perspective with the pops of firecrackers and the sound of gongs in the Cantonese opera resonating with Chin's forceful and unaffected prose.

Whereas *Donald Duk* aims to reconstruct a history of early Chinese Americans' heroic deeds performed during the construction of the railroad, *Gunga Din Highway*

deals with the Hollywood film industry's deliberate, distorted representation of Chinese Americans and their culture, and it alludes to an array of Eastern and Western artistic traditions. In this provocative novel, Ulysses Kwan, a young artist and son of Longman Kwan, who is famous for his role as **Charlie Chan's** son No. 4, has a poor relationship with his self-absorbed father and finds his father's Hollywood role insulting. The narrative alternates among the points of view of Longman Kwan, Ulysses, and Ulysses's two childhood blood brothers, spanning from the early 1940s to the present. Though somewhat alienated, Ulysses molds himself into a Chinatown cowboy who incarnates Chin's ideal Chinese American male in his refusal to be a passive Chinese American hampered by the Chinatown ghetto.

Kingston and Chin have both received a good deal of critical attention among Chinese American writers, while Amy Tan appeals more to the common American readers with novels that feature Chinese culture, mother-daughter relationships, and Chinese American women's experience. Tan's first novel, *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), immediately became a best seller and brought the Chinese American experience to a wide audience. *The Joy Luck Club* details in 16 interwoven stories the complex relationship between four sets of mothers and daughters, whose stories are told in turn from the first-person point of view. Each Chinese immigrant mother adheres to her own view of the world based on her experiences in China to counterbalance her Americanized daughter. The reconciliation between the mothers and the daughters, Chinese culture and American culture, is symbolically achieved through Jing-mei Woo's delving into her deceased mother's history and her reunion with two half-sisters left in China by her mother in a time of war.

Tan's second novel, *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991), is located primarily in China, again focusing on the relationship between a Chinese immigrant mother (Winnie) and her American-born daughter (Pearl). The heart of the novel is Winnie's recounting of her secrets in war-torn China in the 1940s, when she endures a childhood of loneliness and a nightmarish arranged marriage. When her secrets are uncovered, the gap between Winnie and Pearl is bridged, and Pearl attempts to accept her identity as an American of Chinese ancestry. *The Hundred Secret Senses* (1995), Tan's next book, appeals to readers with Tan's distinctive trademarks: Chinese culture, family history, supernatural elements, and the interwoven narratives. The mother-daughter relationship prevalent in the previous novels is replaced by the more complex relationship between the America-born Olivia and her China-born half-sister Kwan, who comes to the United States when she is 18 and is never assimilated into American culture. *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001) is Tan's last novel that focuses on family heritage and fascinates readers with her sensitive portrayal of another mother-daughter relationship. In this novel, after having her mother's autobiographical manuscript translated into English, Ruth begins to reevaluate everything about her mother and get out of the shadow of being a "ghostwriter."

Tan's fifth novel, *Saving Fish from Drowning* (2005), writes about 11 Americans' expedition into southern Burma where they encounter a tribe in the jungle waiting for the return of their leader, who will protect them from destruction by the Myanmar military regime. The novel, narrated from a ghost's satirical first-person viewpoint, is a true departure from Tan's familiar themes and looks into the unexpected consequences of good intentions and the responsibilities individuals must assume for others' sake.

The same year Tan's *The Kitchen God's Wife* enchanted American readers with Chinese myths and family secrets, Gish Jen published her *Typical American* (1991), which, in contrast, relates the story of a Chinese immigrant's efforts at assimilating into life in the United States. As "an American story" against ethnic essentialism, the struggle of Ralph Chang's family is portrayed honestly, lacking the usual sentimentality with respect to the Chinese American experience. The book's sequel, *Mona in the Promised Land* (1996), is a first-person account of Mona Chang, Ralph Chang's daughter, who chooses to convert to Judaism. The novel demonstrates the flexibility of ethnic identity and is acclaimed for its recognition of cultural diversity. Jen's more ambitious third novel, *The Love Wife* (2004), explores the themes from her earlier works: racism, cultural identity, the American dream, assimilation, and occasional tensions among ethnic communities. The focus is on the racially mixed Wong family, the stability of which is threatened by a female relative from mainland China, Lan, who helps Carnegie Wong rediscover his Chinese identity. In Jen's novels, the sadness of Chinese American experience is tinged with wit and humor, in keeping with her antiessentialism attitude.

Another Chinese American woman novelist Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone* (1993) wins tremendous praises for its contribution toward establishing a Chinese American literary tradition through the poignant story of a family of three daughters in Chinatown, San Francisco. The title, disliked by the publisher, is used to commemorate the Chinese Americans whose bones were sent back to China because they considered themselves displaced sojourners in a foreign country. The focus is not so much on the middle daughter Ona's suicide as on the sense of alienation and displacement among the Leong family or the Chinese American immigrants in a country that they feel reluctant to claim as home. As the narrator and the oldest daughter, Leila feels repugnant about her parents enslaved by their years of humiliating life in the United States, and wistful about the settlement of Chinese Americans in American history. The protagonist's dislocation within her family and her community is also captured in Mei Ng's *Eating Chinese Food Naked* (1998).

Since the 1990s, American narratives that represent the Chinese American experience in the United States rather than racism and issues of identity become the uniting theme of Chinese American novels. The contemporary scene of Chinese American novels is marked by multiplicity in subjects and perspectives, conditioned by minority

discourse, feminism, postmodernism, and multiculturalism. Some male writers seem more willing to resist the temptation of Chinese culture and disengage themselves from the past. Gus Lee, for example, is adept at presenting his character's struggle of reconciling Chinese heritage with American reality and has won critical acclaim for his two autobiographical novels *China Boy* (1991) and *Honor and Duty* (1994). In *China Boy*, in a Chinese community in California in the 1950s, a seven-year-old Chinese American boy Kai Ting learns how to defend himself in the face of the local bully and his stern stepmother. Its sequel, *Honor and Duty*, continues to tell Kai Ting's story after he enters West Point in the 1960s. The expectation of his father and stepmother that he be a "real" American collides with the moral codes imparted by some other figures equally important to Kai Ting, who has to strive to reconcile these values. Lee's third novel, *Tiger's Tail* (1996), is another best seller, featuring Jackson Kan, a military lawyer who struggles between love and duty, while frequently disturbed by his flashbacks of service in Vietnam. Lee's next books are a legal thriller *No Physical Evidence* (1998) and a memoir *Chasing Hepburn* (2003).

The publication of Chinese American novels in unprecedented numbers since the mid-1990s encourages some writers who worked in other literary genres to turn to novel writing, and they have produced some unforgettable novels, such as Shawn Wong's *American Knees* (1995) and David Wong Louie's *The Barbarians Are Coming* (2000). The Chinese American experience in their works is filled with relatively more chaos, absurdity, and muddled narrative, which seems to reflect the authors' ambition to present the Chinese American experience by narrative itself, instead of appealing to readers with sociological or anthropologic elements. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Assimilation/Americanization; Colonialism and Postcolonialism; Feminism and Asian America; Multiculturalism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America; Sexism and Asian America.

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### ◆ CHINESE AMERICAN SHORT STORY

The Eaton sisters are believed to be the pioneers of Chinese American short story writing (Ling 2001, 35; G. Huang 2006, 25). As early as the late nineteenth century, Edith Maude Eaton (1865–1914) began to publish short stories in major literary journals and newspapers under the Chinese pseudonym Sui Sin Far, and in 1912 she published *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*, the first short story collection in Chinese American literary history. Born to a family with an English father and a Chinese mother, Sui Sin Far identifies with her Chinese ancestry and challenges the stereotypical representations of Chinese in American popular culture at the time in her stories. However, her younger sister Winnifred Eaton (1875–1954) adopted a different racial and cultural position in her writing: by using a Japanese pen name Onoto Watanna, Winnifred wrote novels, screenplays, and short stories, mainly romances between Caucasian men and Asian women. According to Amy Ling, the Eaton sisters have “created paradigms followed by their successors,” the “inner-directed” (“existentialist”) narrative by Edith Eaton and the “other directed” (“exotic”) narrative by Winnifred Eaton (1999, 137, 142).

The decades following the Eaton sisters’ careers were a quiet period for Chinese American short story writing. Then, under the influence of the **civil rights movement** and the Pan-Asian movement, Asian American literature started booming, which accordingly brought about the development of the Chinese American short story. In the 1970s, Jeffery Paul Chan (1942–), a leading figure in the *Aiiieeeee* group and one of the pioneers in pursuing the Chinese American patriarchal heroic tradition, published several influential short stories, mainly dealing with the Chinese American male identity. In 1975, Monfoon Leong’s (1916–1964) short story collection, *Number One Son*, was posthumously published, 11 years after his death; many of the stories are based on his life experience of growing up in San Diego’s **Chinatown** as the eldest son in the family. Also during this decade, the prolific writer Diana Chang (1934–) published short stories to explore the theme of racial “otherness” in the bicultural or multicultural context.

Then came the noteworthy era of the 1980s for the publication of short stories and collections by well-known Chinese American writers. Alex Kuo (1939–), Shirley Geok-lin Lim (1944–), Russell Leong (1950–), Darrell H.Y. Lum (1950–), Gish Jen (1956–), and Fae Myenne Ng (1956–) published short stories in magazines, journals, and newspapers. Darrell H.Y. Lum’s short story collection *Sun: Short Stories and Drama* came out in 1980. Frank Chin, primarily known as a Chinese American playwright and critic, put forward the short story collection *The Chinaman Pacific & Frisco R.R. Co.* in 1988, which “dazzles readers with his intense love/hate reaction to the Chinese American identity” (Ling 2001, 37). And if we take Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) as a short story cycle, it is safe to say the Chinese American short story reached its first major flowering period in 1989.

According to Guiyou Huang, "Asian American short fiction did not fully flower until the 1990s. This decade was characterized by not only a great number of writers working in this genre but also a variety of themes and styles never seen before" (2006, 26). This is also true of Chinese American short story writing. Darrell H.Y. Lum produced a new volume, *Pass On, No Pass Back*, in 1990, and it was awarded the Outstanding Book Award in Fiction by the **Association for Asian American Studies**. David Wong Louie's *Pangs of Love* came out in 1991 and has won several notable awards since its publication. In his stories, David Wong Louie tries to go beyond the problems of ethnicity and identity and to show general concerns about human life, such as love, family, divorce, and so on. In 1993, Evelyn Lau (1971–) published her first collection of short stories, *Fresh Girls and Other Stories*, reflecting her life as a teenage prostitute and exploring the theme of male domination and masochists. Her second collection, *Choosing Me: A Novella and Short Stories* (1999), centers on women from different social status who are still passively waiting to be chosen by men. Then Shirley Geok-lin Lim published two short story collections, respectively in 1995 and in 1999, which portray the life experience of a diasporic Chinese woman from a colonized Third World (Malaysia). Coincidentally, Kathleen Tyau's (1947–) two short story collections, *A Little Too Much Is Enough* and *Makai* also came out in 1995 and 1999, and the former was chosen as the 1996 Best Book of the Year by the Pacific Northwest Book Sellers Association and the latter was a finalist for the 2000 Oregon Book Award. Both of these two collections focus on the development of Hawaii, especially the peculiarity of the physical environment in Hawaii. John Yau (1950–), who was born to a Eurasian family, explores the theme of multiethnic identity in his first collection *Hawaiian Cowboys* (1995) and deals with the sexual liberation of a Caucasian woman in the second collection *My Symptoms* (1998). Also in 1998 Lan Samantha Chang (1965–) put forth *Hunger: A Novella and Stories*, a short story cycle that has won warm acclaim from academia home and abroad because of its thematic concerns with Chinese American family dynamics and because of its elegant prose style. In 1999 the already well-known Chinese American writer Gish Jen (1956–) published her first short story collection *Who Is Irish*, which explores the themes of "assimilation, identity, displacement, generational conflict, interracial relationships, and the American dream" (Shuchen Susan Huang 2003, 103). According to many critics, Jen's *Who Is Irish* is a breakthrough in **Chinese American literature** because it has transcended the Asian American background and turned to other hyphenated minorities in the United States, such as Jewish Americans and African Americans.

In the twenty-first century, the Chinese American short story continues to thrive. Russell Leong's (1950–) *Phoenix Eyes and Other Stories* (2000) marked a strong beginning in the new era. This collection of short stories portrays the so-called marginalized groups of Asian Americans—the gay Asian male, the Asian prostitute,

people who suffer from AIDS, and so forth. Alex Kuo's (1939–) *Lipsticks and Other Stories* (2001) tells of his life in China and the United States and was nominated for the American Book Award. Christina Chiu's *Trouble Maker and Other Saints* (2001) provides a bigger picture of the Chinese American family living in a changing and globalizing society—the ever-present cultural and generation gaps between parents and children, heterosexuality and homosexuality, and the dynamic immigration between the host country and the home country.

Moreover, the so-called new immigrant writers from the mainland of China have contributed a great deal to short story writing since the 1990s and in the new century: Wang Ping's *American Visa* (1994) is about the Cultural Revolution in China and a new immigrant's experience in New York. Ha Jin (1956–), the National Book Award winner, published three short story collections within five years: *Ocean of Words* in 1996, *Under the Red Flag* in 1997, and *The Bridegroom* in 2000, which portray the social upheavals in the Cultural Revolution in China and Ha Jin's personal experience as a soldier in the Chinese army. In 2005 Yiyun Lee's *A Thousand Years of Good Prayers*, a short story collection set in and around China, has received high praises from Chinese American critics and won *Guardian* First Book Award along with many other honors.

It is worth noting that Chinese American short story writing in the 1990s was increasingly diverse in thematic concerns and in writing styles. Instead of directly protesting the discrimination and unfair treatment Chinese Americans have suffered from mainstream society as the pioneers have done, writers of the younger generation tend to reflect their diverse life experiences in a more subtle, artistic, and complicated way, and as such they have achieved more in terms of aesthetic contributions to Chinese American short story writing.

It is worth mentioning that the list of short story writers discussed herein is limited to authors who published short stories or collections in English in the United States. Some famous Chinese American writers, such as Hua-ling Nieh and Ge-ling Yan, are not mentioned in this entry because their short story collections were published in Chinese and outside of the United States. If the short stories written in Chinese were taken into account, the list of the authors would be much longer. See also *Assimilation/Americanization*.

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RUOQIAN PU

### ◆ CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT (1882)

This federal act was approved by the U.S. Congress on May 6, 1882. The declared intention of the act was to prohibit the coming of Chinese laborers to the United States for a period of 10 years. This act codified a number of changes to previous legislative instruments that regulated travel, including immigration, between China and the United States.

At the conclusion of the Opium Wars, a number of treaties, known collectively as the Treaties of Tientsin (1858), were ratified by the emperor of China in the Beijing Convention of 1860. These treaties permitted, among other things, the establishment of legations in the previously closed city of Beijing by Britain, France, Russia, and the United States. Further treaty ports were opened, according to the terms of these treaties, and foreigners were permitted to travel freely within China. The Burlingame Treaty of 1868 amended the Treaties of Tientsin by establishing reciprocal conditions for travelers in China and the United States. In particular, reciprocal legal status and protections were accorded U.S. citizens in China and Chinese citizens in the United States.

It was during this period, from 1849, that a significant stream of economic migrants from China began entering the United States. Although there had been some Chinese immigration before this date, the numbers were small. After the discovery of gold in California in 1848 and with worsening political and economic conditions in China, the United States became one of several destinations for many Chinese migrants. Floods followed by drought, starvation, banditry, and the chaos brought about as a consequence of the Tai-ping Rebellion against the Manchu dynasty were important contributing factors. It was also during this time that the imperial government allowed Chinese workers to travel abroad as contract laborers or coolies for the first time, and foreign governments were granted the right to recruit Chinese laborers. In the aftermath of the abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire and the cessation of the transatlantic slave trade, there was a considerable global demand for cheap labor.

Most Chinese migrants to the United States traveled as coolie laborers or on a credit ticket system. The latter involved the payment of the passage by a broker, often



located in Hong Kong, and the assistance of a local labor agent in the United States; these costs plus interest were repaid in monthly installments. Coolies were required to work for the person who had paid for their passage. In 1852 there were approximately 20,000 Chinese in San Francisco. Between 1848 and 1855, the high point of the Gold Rush, some 47,200 Chinese passed through U.S. Customs in San Francisco. Increasing numbers of Chinese workers, sojourners who had no interest in assimilating to American customs, led to resentment of the money that was remitted to China, to fears of economic competition, and to the hysteria of the **Yellow Peril**. Violence against ethnic Chinese in California and elsewhere escalated, especially in the period immediately following the completion of the **transcontinental railroad** and the economic depression of the 1870s, when the need for cheap labor appeared to have ended. Politicians seeking public favor and newspapers fueled the anti-Chinese sentiment.

The Angell Treaty (1880) modified the terms of the Burlingame Treaty, by allowing the U.S. government to limit and regulate Chinese immigration while separating trade issues from immigration. The Angell Treaty prepared the way for a complete prohibition on Chinese immigration, which came two years later. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 suspended the Burlingame Treaty, which had promised both legal protection and the right to immigration to Chinese citizens in the United States. The Exclusion Act allowed for the detention and deportation of ineligible Chinese immigrants. Subsequent acts of legislation codified the practices authorized by the 1882 Exclusion Act. The Scott Act of 1888 prevented the readmittance into the United States of Chinese persons who traveled abroad, perhaps to visit family in China, by denying the validity of their Certificates of Return. The act authorized the establishment of a detention center, the forerunner of the **Angel Island** Immigration Station in San Francisco Bay, where Chinese immigrants could be held while their documents were checked. The Scott Act also prohibited the courts from granting U.S. citizenship to any person of Chinese ethnicity. Only officials, teachers, students, tourists, and merchants could enter the United States. United States citizens who married a Chinese national lost their U.S. citizenship. In 1892, Congress passed the Geary Act, which extended the 1882 act for another ten years and required all Chinese living in the United States to apply for a Certificate of Residence within a year and carry it wherever they went. The McCreary Amendments of 1893 added an additional six months to the deadline for registration but at the same time narrowed the definition of what constituted a "merchant" to exclude the industries in which most Chinese worked.

The Chinese Exclusion Extension Act was approved on April 27, 1904. This further act of Congress extended the provisions of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act indefinitely, with its various amendments. The last of these amendments was passed in 1902 and intended to prohibit all Chinese immigration and to regulate the residence of Chinese migrants and people of Chinese descent in the territories and possessions controlled by the United States.

The United States was not the only nation to act against large-scale Chinese immigration in this period. Similar acts of legislation were introduced in Australia (the Immigration Restriction Act or so-called White Australia Policy of 1901), New Zealand, and Canada. Like Australia and New Zealand, Canada imposed upon all Chinese immigrants a head tax, authorized by the Canadian Chinese Immigration Act of 1885. Initially set at 50 dollars, in 1900 the fee was raised to 100 dollars and in 1903 the amount was raised further to 500 dollars. Later, and again in keeping with Australian practice, legislation was introduced to limit the number of Chinese immigrants who could disembark from a single ship. One Chinese immigrant was permitted to enter Canada for every 50 tons of the ship on which they were traveling, for that one voyage. The Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 authorized a complete ban on Chinese immigration to Canada, including British nationals of Chinese descent.

These discriminatory legislative acts did not go without protest from Chinese communities, both within China and abroad. Strategies ranging from calls for the Chinese government to intervene, to boycotts of U.S. goods, to legal challenges in the U.S. courts were used as Chinese immigrants fought for their civil rights. Organizations such as the Native Sons of the Golden West, later known as the Chinese-American Citizens Alliance, campaigned to change these exclusionary laws. In 1943 the Chinese Exclusion Acts were repealed in the United States, and the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 removed all racial bars to U.S. citizenship. In 1965 a new immigration law based on hemispheric quotas finally removed racial qualifications from U.S. immigration requirements.

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◆ CHOCK, ERIC (1951–)

A Chinese American poet and cofounder and coeditor of Bamboo Ridge Press in Hawaii, Eric Chock majored in English during his undergraduate years in Pennsylvania and became involved in activism. He developed a strong sense of social responsibility in his various attempts to participate in local community activities. Later he studied in the graduate program at the University of Hawaii. His teaching and coordination in the Hawaii Poets in the Schools program since 1973 has guided many teachers and students to write poems. Chock was awarded the 1996 Hawaii Award for Literature by Lieutenant Governor Mazie Hirono for his work on *Bamboo Ridge*. The award came from the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts and the Hawaii Literary Arts Council. Currently, he is the writing program director and visiting distinguished writer in the English Department at the University of Hawaii.

The purpose of founding Bamboo Ridge Press, Chock once explained, was “not just to publish, but to help define ‘local’ literature” (Burlingame 2008). He added that with Darrell H.Y. Lum, the cofounder and coeditor of the press, “We wanted it to be both a showcase and a vehicle. In a way, we were riding on the coattails of other ethnic movements around the United States. We were trying to help create a sense of community, at least a sense of literary community” (Huang 2002, 84). Such efforts are rewarding in that many local writers claimed to have found their space through the literary journal of *Bamboo Ridge: The Hawaii Writers Quarterly* for development in their poetry writing.

In 1978 Chock’s first collection of poems *Ten Thousand Wishes* was published. “Ancestry” and “Papio” stand out for their distinct concerns with the root of one’s identity, the tracks of growth, recollections of the past, interactions between memory and the present, and prospects for the future. The first lines of “Ancestry” articulate the significance of identity both to the addresser and to the addressee. On the one hand, the question indicates the speaker’s curiosity about the first-person persona whose identity might engender a possible friendship or remove such a possibility; on the other hand, the reply suggests the long history of his culture and the dire material background. Chock integrates his observations about the transience of age, the youth of human existence, and the eternity of nature into the process of creating poetry. Similarly, in his other two poems about Chinese ancestry, “Chinese New Year” and “Farmers in the Field Return at Dusk,” the young descendants’ link to and their departure from the ancestors are closely examined. The mixed feelings about the traditional culture and contemporary culture are derived from the complex mentality of the poet as an individual standing between two cultures and two generations. As he states, “I believe that this social function of poetry is part of the give and take between life and art which ideally makes the two indistinguishable, exciting, and mutually beneficial” (Cheung 2000, 215).

Chock's second collection of poetry *Last Days Here* appeared in 1990. Covering the cycle of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood and structured in four parts, the collection chronicles both the personal and historical repertoire of experiences in Hawaii. It further explores the various aspects of life and dilemmas that modern individuals face.

Recent poems collected in *The Quietest Singing* point to Chock's social concerns as well. "For George, Our Neighbor" overflows with the guilty recollection of the first-person speaker about his old and neglected neighbor George. The indifference to old George arises not just from his neighborhood but also from his family. Chock employs the technique of repetition, which takes the form of a series of "because" clauses. And by beginning most stanzas with "Because," the poem highlights the nonchalance that spreads like a plague among communities. This explains why the title "Our Neighbor" is used instead of "My Neighbor." Satire is also obvious in the poem, when human closeness to animals is contrasted with human isolation. Fortunately, however, the speaker, in inserting his current thoughts into his backward glance over the past, undergoes an awakening to the fact that mutual respect and reciprocal care help to cement a good and healthy human relationship. "After Hurricane Iniki, Kaua'i 1992" reflects the speaker's thoughts and observations of the impact of natural disasters on human beings. The good values about family and community are reemphasized, while people have to face disasters such as hurricanes. Like the poem "For George, Our Neighbor," this poem illuminates the importance of harmonious human relationships, very much in keeping with Chock's principles of poetry writing: "I believe in the function that poetry performs in reflecting and shaping the people and culture which give it life, which sustain it" (Cheung, 215).

While establishing a natural local voice by adopting the first-person speaker, Chock also resorts to **Hawaiian Pidgin** English to convey his philosophy of life. Written in a housewife's voice, "Snacks" illustrates with humor a woman's inner thoughts about her husband and her justification for craving snacks. Beneath the veneer of complaint and light-hearted humor, the reader is guided to perceive the impact of poverty upon local Hawaiian families. In the meantime, the lack of communication between the husband and the wife also points to the mystery of human relationships. It might be that the housewife resorts to snacks to seek consolation from life's pressure.

In exploring the theme of cultural differences and experimenting with the language, Chock has made significant contributions to Hawaiian literature in that the Bamboo Ridge Press has nurtured writers such as Nora Okja Keller and Lois-Ann Yamanaka, who have received national acclaim. **See also** Asian American Political Activism.

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JIN LI

◆ CHOI, SUSAN (1969–)

A Korean American fiction writer and lecturer in creative writing, Susan Choi is the author of two well-received novels, *The Foreign Student* and *American Woman*; the latter was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 2004. Born in South Bend, Indiana, to an immigrant Korean father who came to the United States to study at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, and a second-generation Russian Jewish American mother, Choi initially grew up in the Midwest and moved to Houston, Texas, after her parents divorced. She earned a BA in literature from Yale University, where she had early success with writing, winning the Wallace Prize for fiction, and, upon graduation in 1990, she drifted aimlessly before finding herself working at a health food store while trying to figure out what to do next. In a self-described panic, she applied to graduate school and was admitted to Cornell University's dual PhD/MFA in English and creative writing program. Deciding to drop out of the PhD program but staying on for the master of fine arts degree, she remained at Cornell for three years teaching creative writing courses, writing several short stories that were published in literary journals such as *Epoch* (Cornell's literary journal) and the *Iowa Review*, and forming a rough sketch for what would become her first novel. After graduating, she moved to New York to work as a fact checker for the *New Yorker* magazine while writing during her spare time until shortly after her first novel was published. Choi has since moved on to several writing fellowships and lectureships to pursue writing full-time.

Alongside writers like Chang-Rae Lee, Choi has been hailed as part of a vanguard of an emerging generation of Asian American novelists. Coincidentally, both she and Lee published their first novels at the relatively young age of 29, and both studied literature at Yale University, overlapping each other by one year (Lee being three years

her senior), even sharing some similar themes in their first novels. In *The Foreign Student* (1998), she explores issues touching on immigration, the legacies of both Japanese and American imperialism, isolation, and especially language, to form a meditation on the linkages between people despite historical, geographic, political, and social barriers. Her second, most recent novel, *American Woman* (2003), takes a different turn in concentrating on issues of homegrown disenfranchisement rooted in class and race, the trauma associated with it, and the multitude of possible responses, signaling a sense of irony in the title. Common to both novels is a fairly developed sense of poetic, elliptical prose whose quietude belies the raw emotional and explosive events that punctuate critical points.

Choi's first novel, *The Foreign Student*, negotiates the difficult task of massaging connections between postwar Korea and the American South in the 1950s to facilitate an unconventional romance. Centering on Chang "Chuck" Ahn, a political refugee from South Korea who comes to a small Southern college on an evangelical church's academic scholarship to earn a degree, Choi jumps back and forth several years between the United States and Korea, unwrapping Chang from a reticent, timid student to his origins as a U.S. Army-employed interpreter and political refugee. He arrives to meet Katherine, a beautiful young woman who also lives in exile, of sorts, because of a sordid affair with a popular college professor, named Charles Addison, that began when she was 14 years old and he was considerably older. As an iconoclast of the Old South, Katherine is estranged from her family and the rest of proper society for returning to Sewanee as Charles's mistress. In Katherine, Chang discovers a fellow journeyman in search of a place to call home after both of their homes had been ravaged by personal and political turmoil, and they turn to each other when it seems that they are utterly alone. Although most critics tend to gravitate toward the American South narrative, *The Foreign Student* really has two threads, the other being situated in another South (Korea). If Chang's life in Sewanee is about a formation of a home, his life in Seoul and Pusan is about the loss of that home. His former social status as the son of a highly respected scholar is reduced to nothing during the war and the military occupation of Korea by the United States. When Seoul falls, his job as a translator for the American wire services cannot protect him, he flees to Pusan, where his family is separated, and he eventually is captured and tortured, even as the country is divided along ideological lines. Throughout the novel, Choi manages to strike a balance between a universal tale of romance and a commentary on the legacy of political and religious imperialism.

*American Woman* (2003), based on events surrounding the kidnapping of Patty Hearst by the Symbionese Liberation Army in 1974, portrays a Japanese American woman's struggle to come to terms with being relegated to the periphery in every possible portion of American society. Jenny Shimada, loosely based on former-activist-turned-painter Wendy

Yoshimura, is hiding out in upstate New York after her leftist collaborator and boyfriend has been arrested for bombing military draft offices. Lonely and mournful of her solitary situation, she lives out her days questioning her own disillusionment with the radical movement and the violence of their tactics. Meanwhile, two blundering radicals in their early twenties and their newly converted kidnappee, the teenage daughter of a famous media mogul, hide out in a Berkeley apartment after the rest of their organization has been decimated by the police. Eventually, Jenny agrees to look after the three of them by taking them into an isolated farmhouse, while they halfheartedly attempt to write a book detailing their underdeveloped ideologies. She eventually forms a strong connection with Pauline, the kidnapped recruit, whom she looks after; their solitude on the farm is cut short by a botched robbery attempt. Jenny's quiet self-reflection and intellectualism contrast strongly with the knee-jerk reactions of both the mainstream media and the fugitives under her care, but she does share in their paranoia. Hers seems rooted in some part with her estranged father, who was incarcerated at a **Japanese American internment** camp during **World War II**. Choi thus depicts Jenny as having to deal with two layers of conspicuousness: her status as a fugitive and as an **Asian American** who cannot escape the consciousness of race, something that she is reminded of repeatedly, even though she shies away from directly addressing it. Only after she is liberated of her status as a criminal by serving time and in some part paradoxically ignored because of her race by the media, does she begin, alongside her father, to reform herself.

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DAVID ROH

### ◆ CHONG, DENISE (1953?–)

A Chinese Canadian economist, memoir and fiction writer, editor, and biographer, Denise Chong's literary career began with the publication of the memoir of her mother's family, *The Concubine's Children: Portrait of a Family Divided* (1994), which won the City of Vancouver Book Award, the Edna Staebler Prize for Creative Non-Fiction, and the Vancity Book Prize and was on the best seller list of *The Globe and Mail* for 93 weeks. Born in Vancouver, Chong grew up in Prince George, British Columbia. She worked as an economist with Canada's Department of Finance. From 1980 to 1984, she served in the prime minister's office as an economics advisor to Pierre Trudeau. She lives in Ottawa with her husband, CTV reporter Roger Smith and their two children, Jade and Kai.

Originally written as the cover story to the October 1988 issue of *Saturday Night Magazine*, Chong's narrative about her trip to Kwangdong (Guangdong) to meet her relatives in China and the discovery of the history of the earlier sojourner generation prompted numerous offers for her to write a book within a week of the work's publication. *The Concubine's Children* tells the story of her maternal grandmother, May-ying, who was sold as a concubine at 17 to Chan Sam, an immigrant who left his family in China in search of wealth in *Gum San*, or **Gold Mountain**. The book was highly successful, in part, because of its crossover quality, appealing to readers interested in history, biography, Asian American and Asian Canadian literature, and to those who enjoy multigenerational stories about women. Chong combines meticulous research in social and political history, an eye for domestic detail, and an unsentimental but evocative style of narration that earned the book praise. Book reviewers described it as "an utterly absorbing tale" (*The Globe and Mail*), "a gripping story" (*The Vancouver Sun*), and "a wonderfully engrossing family saga" (*The London Free Press*) (*Concubine's Children* 1994, back cover). It has been compared to works by Asian American and Asian British writers such as Maxine Hong **Kingston**, Amy **Tan**, and Jung Chang.

Like other Asian North American writers who write about a previous era, Chong challenges dominant culture's account of the past by documenting the lives of people who have largely been forgotten by traditional versions of history. Her book focuses on first-generation Chinese immigrants who settled in Vancouver's early **Chinatown**, on their poverty, the lack of education, and their exclusion from the larger white society, breaking what Lien Chao calls "silences" about these pioneers (1997, x). In the foreword to her



book, Chong writes, "There are as many different versions of events as there are members of a family. The truth becomes a landscape of many layers in an ever-changing light; the details depend on whose memories illuminate it" (*Concubine's Children* 1994, xiii). The story of *The Concubine's Children* spans two continents, two worlds, and two halves of one family with competing versions of the past. The story of her grandmother, May-ying, the concubine who came to Canada in 1924 only to find out that she had to work as a teahouse waitress for at least two years to pay for her passage from China, is one that takes up much of the book. In an even-handed and factual manner, Chong narrates May-ying's life, including her early efforts to work as a waitress and to be a dutiful second wife to Chan Sam, the birth of her three daughters, her eventual habits of gambling, prostitution, and her struggles with alcohol. At the same time, she presents her readers with a concise and useful account of Asian Canadian social history at the turn of the twentieth century: the conditions in China that pushed men to leave their country for California and British Columbia, the discriminatory practices in Canada against hiring men with pigtailed during the second half of the nineteenth century, the **Chinese Exclusion Act** of 1882 in the United States, the imposition of the head tax in Canada for Chinese immigrants in 1885 (\$50) and then in 1904 (\$500), and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923 in Canada. She uses various kinds of records—oral history, government documents, and photographs—to represent her grandmother's life in all its facets.

The 36 photographs included in the book add an immediacy and authenticity to her grandmother's, her mother's, and her own life stories. Yet, critics such as Teresa Zackodnik and Eleanor Ty have pointed out that the photographs are public performances, as they are often posed and formal, taken on happy or auspicious occasions. They do not tell the whole story about the family, about the pains and the loneliness experienced by May-ying and later by her daughter, Hing (Chong's mother), who was often left unattended while May-ying worked or entertained her secret male friends. Chong's narrative supplements the public narrative told by these photographs and paints the unexotic and often difficult moments of living in Chinatowns in Vancouver and Nanaimo in the first half of the twentieth century. At the same time, the book acts as a vindication of her grandmother's life. For it was from her hard-earned wages as a waitress that Chong's grandfather, Chan Sam, was able to send money back home to China to support his first wife and the children he left behind there and to build his house. Upon meeting her relatives during her trip to China with her mother in 1987, Chong discovers that their version of the family past was much different from hers. For them, the grandfather, Chan Sam, was the one who held the family together, and May-ying was the troublemaker and the alcoholic whom he could not tolerate. Out of respect for their memories and the grandfather, Chong does not tell her Chinese relatives her version of their family history.

Aside from the book version of *The Concubine's Children*, Denise Chong has contributed a short piece also called "The Concubine's Children" to *Many-Mouthed Birds*:

*Contemporary Writing by Chinese Canadians* (1991), edited by Bennett Lee and Jim Wong-Chu. She has edited *The Penguin Anthology of Stories by Canadian Women* (1998) and has contributed to the anthology *Who Speaks for Canada: Words that Shape a Nation* (1998), edited by Desmond Morton and Morton Weinfeld. Her second book, *The Girl in the Picture: The Story of Kim Phuc, the Photograph, and the Vietnam War* (1999), is again a work of creative nonfiction. This book is a biographical account of Kim Phuc, the Vietnamese girl who was photographed naked, running away from a napalm bomb attack in June 1972. Similar to her first book, Chong's narrative focuses on a woman's life, her aspirations, desires, struggles with day-to-day difficulties—this time mainly from her physical condition—set against a backdrop of historical and political events. The book, a project suggested by two editors from Penguin Canada, is constructed from interviews with the subject, Kim Phuc, her family members, reporters who covered the **Vietnam War** some 25 years ago, and from newspapers, books, and film sources.

Chong's biography of Kim Phuc renders her human, rather than an icon of suffering or a symbol of the evils of violence and war. The book supplements the story of horror told by the photograph and makes Kim Phuc more than another spectacle of the Vietnam War. She generates interest not only in Phuc but also in the Vietnamese people, their daily lives, their ways of worship, their food, and their family lives by giving details and textures of everyday life. By resituating Kim Phuc in the specificities of history and into South Vietnamese culture, politics, and religion, Chong gives voice to Kim Phuc, who had largely become as still as her photograph, in spite of her apparent public presence in the media. She also describes the events surrounding the taking of the photograph from multiple perspectives: from the viewpoint of the average peasant, from the American government, and from the perspective of the photographer, Nick Ut. These perspectives supplement the captions that had accompanied the picture when it appeared and add different angles and layers not only to the napalm bomb incident but also to the Vietnam War itself. Hence, through these biographies, Chong participates in the rewriting of cultural memory and in the foregrounding of the stories we remember when we think of our history and our collective past.

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ELEANOR TY

### ◆ CHONG, PING (1946–)

Chinese American playwright, theatre director, choreographer, and video and installation artist, Chong did not feel being a member of a minority group until he was in high school, though he was born in Toronto and raised in New York City's **Chinatown**. He started looking at the United States as an outsider, yet when he passed the phase where his early works were disguised autobiography, he realized that "the role of the outsider was more universal" (Berson 1990, 3).

Ping Chong has written numerous plays. Since *Nuit Blanche*, Chong's work has, according to himself, fallen into two categories, "the conventional scenes, like *Kind Ness*, and the more choreographic works like *Angels of Swedenborg*, which is almost textless" (Ibid). In 1975 Chong founded Ping Chong & Company, a nonprofit art organization. The company, working in partnership with theaters, museums, and community organizations, has created over 30 works of theater and art for audiences around the world. His works include *Humboldt's Current* (1977, Obie Award), *Anna into Nightlight* (1982), *A Race* (1984), *Nosferatu* (1985, 1991), *Kind Ness* (1986, Playwrights USA Award from Theatre Communications Group and Home Box Office), *Plague Concrete* (1988, a triad of outdoor multimedia installations for the Three Rivers Festival in Pittsburgh), *Noiresque: A State of Being* (1989), *Brightness* (1989; two Bessie Awards, 1990), *Elephant Memories* (1991), *Deshima* (1993), *Interfacing Joan* (1996), *After Sorrow* (1997), *Kwaidan* (1998), and *Pojagi* (2000). In 2002, La MaMa presented *SlutforArt, a.k.a. Ambiguous Ambassador*, a collaboration of Ping Chong and choreographer Muna Tseng, as a sequel to their collaboration *After Sorrow*. The ongoing series of community-specific works *Undesirable Elements* beginning in 1992 explore the effects of history, culture, and ethnicity on individuals in a community. The more than 28 productions of *Undesirable Elements*, also known as *Secret History*, as Chong once stated in an online chat, are "both a communication with a community and a testimonial of lives lived" (2005).

Ping Chong has garnered two National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a National Institute for Music Theatre Award.

Chong's first performance piece, *Paris*, was successfully made in 1972 in collaboration with Meredith Monk, but *Lazarus* was his independent work, which was his "most uncompromising" (Berson 1990, 3) in his entire career. The third play *Nuit Blanche* (1981) shows the influences of Shiva Naipaul and V.S. Naipaul on Chong, who claimed that it was "the first show I did with the theme that has echoed over and over again in my later works: the vulnerability of human beings and the recurrence of destruction" (Berson 1990, 4).

*Nuit Blanche* explores the destructive effects of alienation and racial discrimination on human beings. As the author makes clear in his comments on the play, it is "really about human history, about the way history evolves vis-à-vis the two characters in the plantation who wind up in their respective worlds later on" (Berson 1990, 5). The play begins with the early nineteenth-century South American ranch owner Señor Ortega giving his daughter Gloria birthday presents—a tea set, a dangerous-looking knife, and a magic lantern that projects a film in which a chimpanzee is hunted and slaughtered by a tiger. These presents point to the paternalistic principle of educating his daughter into a feminine and obedient woman whose rebellion, if any, will certainly result in severe punishment. Berenice, the maid of the house, serves as both a victim of slavery and a victimizer of Gloria, in that the former attempts to keep the latter within the patriarchal domain.

As the scenes unfold, the story develops into the latter half of the nineteenth century. The abolition of slavery in South America enables Berenice to gain freedom, yet her life is torn between hard labor and her unrequited love for her husband. The patriarchal oppression from both her husband and the white man Franklin, who Berenice is subjected to, proves to be no different from that experienced by Gloria. Hence, women's fate under patriarchy seems universal regardless of time, skin color, or living spaces.

When the hotel, the Haven of Peace, located in South Africa, begins to host an increasing number of tourists, the conflicts are ironically intensified. Apparently, the hotel-owner Papa Willie is the ranch owner, only in a different era and place. The Oriental, though unnamed and appearing mysterious, assumes the identity of the indomitable. It is he who plots a number of deaths and who remains the only person alive to witness the funeral scene. The author skillfully adopts both audio and visual techniques to dramatize the dark theme of destruction. With every sound of gunshots, the reader/viewer is informed of the death of a certain character. The successive slides of characters switch from ancient to modern times, to the effect that human emotions, conflicts, and ways of survival or death prove to be universal despite the time difference.

Human history is shown as fluid and repetitive. Ping Chong sends a warning to all human beings: unless individuals rid themselves of alienation and begin to accept each

other on an equal standing they will end in destruction. Since his performance of the play, Chong claimed that he has “always come back to [the theme], to the cyclical nature of destruction” (Berson 1990, 4).

Chong once wrote that his works were characterized by “a kind of magic realism” like that of the South American writers (Berson 1990, 4). The increasing concern of his works is with individuals’ spiritual journeys and spiritual longings. He has committed to the belief that “we are all together on this one little planet” and that “it’s more and more important for us not to feel so foreign with one another” (Berson 1990, 5). When asked about the most rewarding thing about the creative process in creating new works in an online chat, Chong answered, “To create is its own reward” (2005).

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JIN LI

### ◆ CHOY, WAYSON (1939–)

A Chinese Canadian novelist, memoirist, and professor of English, Wayson Choy is best known as the author of three award-winning novels of Chinese immigrant life in Vancouver in the early part of the twentieth century. *The Jade Peony* (1995) shared the Trillium Book Award for Best Book of 1996 with Margaret Atwood and won the 1996 City of Vancouver Book Award. Begun as a short story in 1977, *The Jade Peony* has been anthologized more than 25 times. His memoir, *Paper Shadows: A Chinatown Childhood* (1999), won the Edna Staebler Creative Non-Fiction Award; it was nominated for a Governor General’s Award, short-listed for the inaugural Drainie-Taylor Prize, and was a 1999 Toronto *Globe and Mail* Notable Book of the Year. Choy’s second novel, *All That Matters*, the sequel to *The Jade Peony*, won the 2004 Trillium Book Award, was short-listed for the 2004 Giller Prize, and was long-listed for the 2006 Impac Dublin Literary Award. In 2005 Choy was named a member of the Order of Canada.

Choy attended the University of British Columbia, where he studied creative writing with such teachers as Earle Birney, Jacob Zilber, and Jan de Bruyn, whom he later named as early influences. His first story, "The Sound of Waves," was published in *PRISM* magazine and anthologized in *Best American Short Stories for 1962*. Choy has explained in interviews that he could not envision a career as a writer because he felt that he had nothing of relevance to write about. At that time, in the early 1960s, his experience of growing up as a child of immigrants in Vancouver's **Chinatown** did not seem to represent the kind of "Canadian" experience that proponents of Canadian literature were then promoting. Choy moved to Toronto in 1962 and taught English at Humber College and the Humber School for Writers from 1967 to 2004. During the sabbatical leave he was granted in 1977, following the death of his mother, Choy returned to UBC, where Carol Shields was leading a short story writing course within the creative writing program. With her encouragement, he wrote the story "The Jade Peony" and submitted it to the UBC *Alumni Chronicle* writing contest. The story won and was published the following year. However, a contract for the novel was agreed upon only in 1992.

Wayson Choy's work is frequently compared with that of Sky Lee and the Chinese American novelist Amy Tan. He shares their interest in the complexities of the "between worlds" condition of first- and second-generation immigrants to North America. Choy's writing is praised for his sensitive portrayal of childhood experience in Vancouver's Chinatown during the period of exclusion. Particularly, his ability to adopt the narrative point of view of the child is noted by critics, along with his delicate balance between adult and child perspectives.

*The Jade Peony* tells the story of the Chen family, through three interconnected narratives, each narrated by one of the family's three Canadian-born children. The fourth child, first son Kiam-Kim, who was born in China and traveled to Vancouver with his grandmother Poh-Poh and his father at the age of three, narrates his own story in the sequel *All That Matters*. Choy has explained that originally Kiam-Kim's narrative concluded *The Jade Peony*; however, upon the advice of his editor, he removed that section from the novel with the intention of writing a separate text. His reasoning was that, as the only child born in China and as the First Son who was raised more by patriarchal authorities than by the women in the family, Kiam-Kim's experience was of a different order and so required separate telling. Each of the child-narrators of *The Jade Peony*, however, occupies a distinct position within the family and the Chinatown community: Jook-Liang is the only daughter; Jung-Sum is Second Brother, but he has been orphaned and adopted into the family; finally, Sek-Lung or Third Brother tells his story around his gradual realization that he is gay. As critics have noted, the novel is based upon the notion of transformation; each of the three narratives involves a moment of significant, transformative change, which symbolizes the coming together

of the Canadian and Chinese identities of these characters. In his delicate blending of fiction with historical fact (and his work is exhaustively researched in archives and libraries as well as oral histories and personal reminiscences), Choy introduces a subtle, symbolic texture to the novel that works by bringing together the mundane and the mythical. The grandmother, called Poh-Poh or sometimes simply the Old One, will tell stories of Old China to the children who sit peeling vegetables or shelling peas. Choy's novelistic strength lies in his ability to interweave stories of the China that was left behind with histories of Canada, and Vancouver in particular, during the period up to **World War II**. Conflicts between the Chinese and Japanese communities of Vancouver, for example, provide Choy with the occasion to explore the possibilities of multicultural citizenship but within the context of pervasive discrimination.

Like Sky Lee's pioneering novel of Chinese Canadian immigrant experience, Choy's fiction is informed by the culture of secrecy that developed within Chinese communities in the wake of the exclusion laws. As the title of his memoir suggests, "paper" relationships supported by false documents gave rise to a culture of suspicion, where illegal immigrants feared that the falsity of their documents might be exposed and they would be deported. As Choy emphasizes, the first Canadian-born generation was especially suspect because these children may inadvertently betray the true nature of family relationships. The Chen family migrated to Canada to provide a "paper" family for Third Uncle, whose own wife and son died in China. Stepmother is brought from China using the papers of her future husband's dead wife. Even the adoption of Jung-Sum is kept confidential. The keeper and fiery guardian of the family's secrets is the matriarch Poh-Poh; throughout *All That Matters* Kiam-Kim tells of his attempts to navigate the complex maze of truth and falsehood about which Poh-Poh tries to educate him, all the while mistrusting his ability to keep these necessary secrets. This novel returns to many of the situations and events of *The Jade Peony*, but this theme of secrets and silence is emphasized more because Kiam-Kim is the only child old enough to remember such turning points in family history as the arrival of Stepmother and the adoption of Jung-Sum.

This same secret history also informs Wayson Choy's memoir, *Paper Shadows*: he begins by telling of his surprise when a listener of a radio interview he had just broadcast telephoned to inform him that Choy himself was adopted, not unlike his character Jung-Sum. This information, received by the writer in his middle age, caused Choy to reevaluate his recollections of his earlier life, particularly his childhood in Chinatown. He refers to this book as a work of creative nonfiction rather than an autobiography and is clear about the complex relationship between this text and his novels: the one based on memory, the others on fiction. But Choy describes his approach to his writing as the pursuit of a truth that lies somewhere between truth and fiction. Through his lyrical, movingly symbolic, yet profoundly realistic style, he achieves a balance

between the present and the past, Canada and China, that speaks to his many readers. **See also** Multiculturalism and Asian America.

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DEBORAH L. MADSEN

◆ CHU, LOUIS HING (1915–1970)

With John Okada, Louis Hing Chu was the Chinese American writer to whom *Aiiieeeee* was dedicated. Chu became known for his one book *Eat a Bowl of Tea*. Published in 1961, the book is now acclaimed as a classic in Asian American literature. Born in Toishan, China, in 1915, Chu immigrated at nine with his family to New Jersey, where he completed his high school education. He obtained a BA from Upsala College in 1937 and an MA from New York University in 1940. During World War II, between 1943 and 1945, he was stationed in Kunming, China, as a member of the Army Signal Corps. After the war he became owner of a record store in New York City. Chu was also a popular social worker, and for many years he was the only Chinese American disk jockey in New York, hosting a program entitled *Chinese Festival* from 1952 to 1962. He was executive secretary of the Soo Yuen Benevolent Association for 16 years, until 1970, and worked as director of a day center for the New York Department of Welfare. Chu was well-known in New York's Chinatown and thoroughly familiar with the bachelors whom he portrayed vividly in his novel, *Eat a Bowl of Tea*.

This novel is considered a landmark in Asian American literature. It truthfully depicts New York's Chinatown in transition after World War II, and, unlike Jade Snow Wong's *Fifth Chinese Daughter* and Pardee Lowe's *Father and Glorious Descendant*, it is written in a language with many idioms and expressions familiar to and used by the males in the Chinese community. Set in the late 1940s in New York's Chinatown, whose inhabitants are mostly bachelors produced by the racist Chinese exclusion acts, the novel develops around Ben Loy and his war bride Mei Oi. The young couple's marriage is arranged by their fathers, Wang Wah Gay and Lee Gong, who came as teenagers



to the United States on the same ship, returned to China to marry, and left their pregnant wives at home in the 1920s. Now Wah Gay runs a basement mah-jongg club, symbolically described as a dungeon, where Lee Gong and other old bachelors frequent to kill time and ease their loneliness. Ben Loy and Mei Oi's happy married life soon ends when Mei Oi finds her husband impotent, a consequence of Ben Loy's regular visits to prostitutes. The middle-aged Ah Song takes the opportunity to seduce Mei Oi and makes her pregnant. Wang Chuck Ting, president of the Wang Association, is irritated when he finds cousin Wah Gay involved in the scandal spreading in Chinatown, an incident causing all Wangs "to lose face." He informs Wah Gay of the affair and at the same time asks Ben Loy and Mei Oi to leave New York for Stanton to help Uncle Chuck Ting out in his restaurant, which, he says, is in desperate need of hands. When Wah Gay is wanted by the police for cutting off Ah Song's left ear, Wang Chuck Ting again intervenes and settles the case privately out of court. Taking advantage of his prestige and authority among Chinese, Wang Chuck Ting manipulates Ping On Tong, an organization to which both Wah Gay and Ah Song belong, to order Ah Song to withdraw the charges filed against Wang Wah Gay and keep away from New York for five years. Also leaving the city are Wang Wah Gay and Lee Gong, who are too ashamed to stay, and Ben Loy and Mei Oi, who decide to leave for San Francisco. Free from the elders' control, the young couple begins a new life. Ben Loy not only accepts Mei Oi's son but is now also willing to discuss his physical condition with his wife. Mei Oi in turn feels "both a desire and a responsibility of sharing her husband's problems" (Chu 1979, 242). With the help of Mei Oi and bowls of bitter tea prescribed by a Chinese herb doctor, Ben Loy finally regains his manhood, and the young couple talks happily of inviting their fathers to the haircut party of their second child.

*Eat a Bowl of Tea* exposes many problems of New York's Chinatown, typical of the Chinese communities in the United States in the late 1940s. Patriarchy reigns, but the fathers' authority is undermined—the old bachelors are reduced to taking insignificant jobs as cooks, waiters, laundrymen, and barbers, and their activities limited within the bounds of Chinatown. Even there they do not feel secure, as "Immigration people . . . hang around out in the streets and all of a sudden they would walk up to you and ask you for your papers" (Chu 1979, 192). They have no contact with the white world except with immigration officers, the police, and prostitutes. With their families away and no home to return to after work, they gather in tea, coffee, or barber shops, mah-jongg clubs, or association buildings to gossip like the "long-tongue women" (common Chinese phrasing) they despised back at home in China. They talk about Lao Lim fighting Lao Ying for taking his wife out, Lao Tsuey running to South Carolina with Lao Ning's wife, Wang Wah Gay's daughter-in-law having "no big belly yet" after she has been in New York for almost a year, and Wang Wah Gay "[sending] his son to a small town to work so as to keep him from the evils of the big city," unaware

that "the son used to come to New York several times a week for women" (Chu 1979, 101). Their gossip invariably ends with such conclusions as "[w]omen nowadays are not to be trusted" (Chu 1979, 15), and "[t]his generation of girls is not what it used to be" (Chu 1979, 19). What they appreciate are their "rice cookers" back in China, grass widows who take care of their parents without bitterness and wait patiently for their return year after year.

The old bachelors' living conditions have not improved in their dozens of years' stay in the United States. Wang Wah Gay's basement lodging is crudely equipped, and Lee Gong shares a room with another Lee; both still sleep in folding beds. As husbands, they merely manage to send money to support their families in China; as fathers, they fail to perform their responsibility to look after and provide guidance to their children. As Ben Loy and Mei Oi see Wah Gay and Lee Gong for the first time at 17 and 18, they feel alienated from and find it difficult to communicate with their fathers. However, the fathers have the right to make important decisions for their children in matters such as jobs and marriage. While they see it as their obligation and concern for their children, they have also made the young people dependent and miserable by denying the latter's freedom of choice and impeding their development.

New York's Chinatown is a closed, rigidly stratified patriarchal society, in which the son obeys the father, and the father in turn obeys the head of the family association. This can be seen clearly from the role Wang Chuck Ting plays in the lives of Wah Gay and Ben Loy. In such a society, a person's lot is very much controlled by the patriarch of the family, and the latter's character and personal qualities determine to a great extent the success or failure, rise or fall, of the clan. In the novel, led by Wang Chuck Ting, who skillfully exploits what seem to be perfectly legal and democratic procedures, the Wangs are able to save face and defend their cousin Wah Gay against Ah Song, the only Jo in New York with no family association to support him. In this society, one's identity is defined by one's relationship with others, especially with someone more important or powerful than oneself. Thus Ben Loy is known in Chinatown only as Wang Wah Gay's son, and Mei Oi as Lee Gong's daughter or Wang Wah Gay's daughter-in-law. Because one exists as a member of a group, closely related to others, what one does also affects others; and one's business becomes the business of everybody related to him or her. Consequently, Mei Oi's adultery not only brings shame to Ben Loy but causes all the Wangs in the association to lose face, and, when Wang Wah Gay is in trouble, his cousin Wang Chuck Ting readily comes to his rescue. Thus, an individual's freedom of choice is limited, for one needs to consider the community's interests before taking any action.

Face is important to the Chinese, so important that when the scandal breaks out and the young couple is in great distress and in urgent need of comfort and advice, everyone else, including their fathers, is concerned about their own loss of face. Even

Ben Loy himself, when first learning about the scandal from his father, is “most concerned about any publicity over the cause of his wife’s infidelity” (Chu 1979, 144). However, face may not be a negative element in Chinese culture as is presented in *Eat a Bowl of Tea* if we consider that it may keep people from improper conduct and wrongdoing. Far different from the Western culture, which is a guilt culture, Eastern/Chinese culture is a shame culture; and Chinese fear shame and loss of face as much as Christians fear sin and God’s punishment. The crux of the issue is whether behaviors bringing about loss of face are truly shameful, and, since one feels loss of face only when one’s wrongdoing is exposed, face is not dependable as a sure guarantee against misconduct.

Discrimination against women is prevalent in New York’s double-standard bachelor society, in which, as in feudal China, the women’s main role is to continue the family line. As the Chinese believe that “There are three things which are unfilial, and to have no posterity is the greatest of them” (Mencius, chapter xxvi), young people have the obligation to marry, and it is unforgivable for a woman not to have “a big belly” soon after marriage. That is why Mei Oi is greatly relieved to find herself pregnant, and Ben Loy too feels somewhat relieved, even though he is not sure whether he is able to become a father. It also explains why Wang Wah Gay begins to bring chicken, pork chops, and herbs to visit his daughter-in-law.

*Eat a Bowl of Tea* is a truthful and vivid depiction of New York’s bachelor society, a deformed Chinese community produced by racist exclusion laws and bearing marked features of feudal China. Because of the lack of a normal family life in the United States, the four great Chinese social vices of eating, drinking, whoring, and gambling, especially whoring, are further aggravated. Ben Loy and Mei Oi’s move to San Francisco is significant in that it marks the beginning of the new Chinese American family. At the end of the novel, Louis Chu presents to the reader a bright picture of hope—“New frontiers, new people, new times, new ideas unfolded. [Ben Loy] had come to a new golden mountain” (Chu 1979, 246). Without their fathers’ interference, the young couple is able to start a new life; husband and wife are equal, and they make joint efforts to raise a new generation of Chinese Americans.

However, a close reading of the book shows that they move simply from one Chinatown to another, and there is no fundamental change in their situation. Besides, Ben Loy and Mei Oi can hardly be entrusted with the task of bringing up a new generation of Chinese Americans. Ben Loy is regarded as a “good boy” by Wang Chuck Ting, who sees “some phase of Chinese culture” on the young man: “To be obedient when practice and tradition demand it” (Chu 1979, 176). It is true that compared with the double-standard, older generation of men, who themselves whore at home and abroad but demand chastity and fidelity of their wives in China, he is lenient and open-minded in his attitude toward Mei Oi’s infidelity. He is able to self-criticize, as

he admits to his close friend, "In a way I have myself to blame. I have ruined my health" (Chu 1979, 232). Later in San Francisco he takes Mei Oi as his equal and shares his problems with her. But it is also true that Ben Loy does not have the caliber and makings of one who can bring about a radical change in the situation, his greatest hope and ambition being to rise from a "regular waiter" to "become number one cook at the restaurant" (Chu 1979, 245).

Mei Oi is no doubt Louis Chu's instrument with which to end the bachelor society. However, this female character presented from a male perspective is a flaw in the much praised book. Mei Oi has the looks of a traditional Chinese beauty with an "oval face," soft skin, smooth like ivory, eyebrows like "the crescent of the new moon," and "cherry-red" full lips (Chu 1979, 50). Though she has a secondary education and used to attend the Wah Que School of English before marriage, she has not developed the consciousness of a new woman. Moreover, all her changes in the United States are superficial—with her "make-up technique improved," her skin becomes "softer, smoother, whiter," and her body is "more fully developed" (Chu 1979, 154). She is different from her mother's generation in that she demands rightfully both love and sex in marriage. However, Louis Chu overemphasizes her sexual desire, to the extent that virility seems to be the only quality she wants in a husband. If the impotent Ben Loy is not good enough for her, Ah Song, who is involved with many women, is by no means a wise choice. Mei Oi impresses the reader as a vain, shallow woman with little self-respect, pleased with her attractiveness to men. Feeling the scorn of cousin Wing Sim's wife, she retorts, "Some women would like to have a baby by another man but they don't get the opportunity because no one else would have them" (Chu 1979, 168), thus reducing herself to a sex object. To be true, in the end, Ben Loy regains his masculinity with the help of Mei Oi and bitter tea; nevertheless, most of the time she is seen as a destructive rather than a constructive force.

The title of the book, *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, is well chosen. As is universally known, the Chinese have been drinking tea for over 4,000 years, and tea has become an integral part of Chinese culture and daily life. The function of tea is mentioned time and again in the book—first and foremost, it is the Chinese herb doctor's bitter tea that cures Ben Loy of his impotence; when Lee Gong goes to the restaurant in Stanton to find out more about Ben Loy, the prospective husband he has chosen for his daughter serves him jasmine tea in the hopes of earning a sizable tip. Ben Loy and Mei Oi first meet in a teahouse, arranged by the matchmaker; at the wedding banquet in New York, the bride offers guests tea to show her gratitude; and it is by asking for a cup of tea that Ah Song manages to stay in Mei Oi's apartment and finally succeeds in seducing the young woman. Clearly, tea, as a representative of traditional Chinese culture, can serve purposes both positive and negative; it depends on how the Chinese receive their cultural heritage. To survive, Chinese Americans must be willing to alter old Chinese ways

and give up certain Chinese values; obstinate refusal to change will never work. Nor is it advisable to reject totally traditional Chinese culture; after all, it is the Chinese herb tea that restores Ben Loy to health and enables him to start a new life. Base oneself on traditional Chinese culture, discard the dross, and assimilate the best of Western culture: this is perhaps the message conveyed in Chu's *Eat a Bowl of Tea*.

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BING WU

### ◆ CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND ASIAN AMERICA

The emergence of the Asian American movement in the mid-1960s had three major direct influences: the civil rights movement, the critical mass of American-born college students of Asian descent, and the burgeoning antiwar movement. The civil rights movement brought to public consciousness racial inequalities embedded in American institutions and social practices within a black-white paradigm. By the mid-1960s, after the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act were passed, a new generation of leaders emerged. Many of them, who had been radicalized by the intense struggles domestically and by the anticolonial wars internationally, began to articulate political agendas based on their identification with Third World peoples abroad through the similarities in their experiences of oppression at home. The birth of the Asian American movement developed out of the legacy of activists from the previous generations who found voice through the historical period of racial consciousness in African American liberation movements.

The evolution of the civil rights movement into the Black Power movement galvanized young Asian American activists across the country. Asian Americans who had participated in the civil rights movement began to strengthen the movement's infrastructure in their own communities, particularly on the West and East Coasts. On

campuses nationwide, the growing number of Chinese and Japanese American students formed organizations mirroring African American, Chicano, and American Indian groups. The movement's crystallization dovetailed with the height of the antiwar movement. In addition to exhaustive community organizing, Asian Americans joined the demand for comprehensive representation on college campuses and an end to U.S. imperialism in Third World countries abroad.

The name "**Asian American**" begot a message that expressed the political orientation of this generation of leaders in contrast to their predecessors. In previous generations, the political orientation of Asians in the United States at large and organizationally was directed toward their respective Asian "homelands." However, by the 1960s, the demographic shift increasing the American-born population of Asian descent recentered the political focus on the rights, contributions, and entitlements of Asian Americans. The energy from the civil rights movement and the growing criticism of American intervention in Southeast Asia stimulated this new generation to think about the similarities of their racial oppression as a monolithic "Asian Other" at home and the oppression of Asian peoples in general in the context of European colonialism and American imperialism. Moreover, unlike many of their predecessors, their lives were situated unproblematically in the United States, to the degree that historic national divisions could more easily be overcome through the commonality of an American identity. To them, the term *Asian American* accurately represented their unique experience of a dual identity that essentially manifested in a different identity that was neither simply Asian nor American. Moreover, the political viability of such a claim complemented the developing notions of similar identity formations in other racialized communities that furthered the concept of Third World solidarity.

As a vibrant social movement, the Asian American movement found expression in numerous ways. Movement activities fell within four general categories: education, social service, political organizing, and artistic creation. The birth of **Asian American studies** on college campuses is often viewed as the origins of the movement itself. Although this is not the case, Asian American studies programs on college campuses are a foundational pillar for the education, politicization, and knowledge production for the Asian American movement. The struggle for Asian American studies manifested as part of the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) demand for ethnic studies at San Francisco State in November 1968. Students of color, supported by faculty and community, wanted a curriculum that spoke of their contributions and represented their lived experiences. By the spring of 1969, they were victorious in creating the first ethnic studies program in the United States. That fall, the struggle continued at the University of California. By the mid-1970s the movement on college campuses to win ethnic studies programs would move from campus to campus over the next three decades. The fight for these programs precipitated major student organizations, such

as Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) and Philippine-American College Endeavor (PACE). These organizations bonded campus organizing with community and movement campaigns.

For many American-born organizers, the issues facing ethnic communities in geographically bound sites such as **Chinatowns** played a much more critical role in their politicization than the desire of previous generations to intervene in politics of “the homeland.” Organizations formed that dealt with local issues, such as street gangs and neighborhood violence, feeding and supporting the poor, or providing job-training courses for community members. However, radical activists and students from the Chinese diaspora came to see the People’s Republic of China (PRC) as embodying the strength and spirit of the Chinese people. The alignment with the PRC symbolized the reconfiguration of Asian American priorities in Asia not so much as citizens in exile but as allies in solidarity with anti-imperialist or proletariat struggles in the region. They initiated political educational events to offer people news, perspectives, and propaganda from mainland China. In this light, the Asian American presence represented a radical injection in the predominantly middle-class, white antiwar movement that focused on bringing American troops home rather than the right of self-determination for Southeast Asian peoples.

While direct action tactics and militant strategies were often employed within the context of the antiwar movement, the overlap of participants in community organizing and movement work resulted in similar strategies, tactics, and allies in both spaces. A quintessential example would be the campaigns to fight the demolition of International Hotel and eviction of its elderly Filipino residents in San Francisco’s Chinatown. Numerous organizations and coalitions were formed over the I-Hotel, and, on the night of the eviction, the door to the building was barred by hundreds of supporters of all races to create a human wall against local law enforcement.

Moreover, the Asian American movement was not without soundtrack and backdrop. Spaces like Kearny Street Workshop and the Basement Workshop served as exciting laboratories for the creation of Asian American experiences expressed through the arts. Publications like *Gidra* and albums like *A Grain of Sand* by Yellow Pearls offered a medium through which Asian Americans across the country could form a unifying, imagined community. Young Asian Americans in the late 1960s became increasingly involved in interethnic formations, not only in movement activities but also in the expression of a hybrid cultural identity that borrowed extensively from other ethnic groups. Nonetheless, with all the strengths of a multifaceted movement, the recurring shortcoming cited by many scholars and pundits is the movement’s lack of a clear unifying voice, personified in a charismatic leader such as Martin Luther King Jr. or Cesar Chavez.

Yet the movement did have strong leaders. For example, Yuri Kochiyama has become an inspirational figure across generations. Yuri is a second-generation Japanese

American (**nisei**) woman born in San Pedro, California, on May 19, 1921. Like thousands of Japanese Americans, her life was profoundly impacted by the injustice she experienced during **World War II**. On December 7, 1941, she witnessed her father taken into custody by the FBI and held on Terminal Island with no due process, visiting rights, or medical treatment, and soon thereafter she and her family were relocated to **Japanese American internment** camps. After the war, she and her husband Bill raised a family in New York, marking the beginning of their careers as radical political activists.

In the 1960s Yuri dedicated herself to deepening her political education, participating in community organizing, and broadening her alliances to interracial and international solidarity activities. Recognizing her lack of knowledge of the struggles of other people of color in the United States, she studied extensively with the Harlem Freedom School, Malcolm X Liberation School, and Organization of Afro-American Unity among others. Simultaneously, she worked on community-building projects in her Harlem neighborhood and in Asian American and Third World unity coalitions. She worked with Harlem parents' and women's organizations in addition to developing relations with the left-wing forces in Japan. During the civil rights movement, she joined masses of college students and activists who traveled to Southern states to support the organizations in the South.

In 1968 Yuri participated in the fight for ethnic studies in New York, and she was one of the first to respond to Kazu Iijima's call for participants in the pan-Asian group, Asian Americans for Action. At this point, her work began to shift into antiwar and anti-imperialist movement organizing, as was the reflection of the radicalism expressed by the Black Power movement. In the 1970s she supported antiapartheid in South Africa, Puerto Rican independence, and the rights of indigenous peoples in America, and Palestine as a result of U.S. imperialism. Since this period, Yuri has dedicated her life to fighting for the freedom of political prisoners. She has actively participated in numerous legal defense committees for people of color across the United States, including Black Panthers, Assata Shakur, Leonard Peltier, Marilyn Buck, Vincent **Chin**, and Chol Soo Lee. Yuri continues to organize tirelessly for the release of political prisoners and against American imperialism in solidarity with people of color at home and abroad. Her life's work is one of the legacies that will remain with the movement for generations to come.

Although many Asian Americans recognize the emergence of the Asian American movement as a phenomenal moment in American history, its legacies in contemporary Asian American communities have been underplayed. The organizational infrastructure built from the emergence of this movement continues to serve thousands of people and is reproduced in almost every major city in the United States. The new generation of movement leaders also continues to construct a movement based in



interracial and pan-Asian solidarity, a positive and complex Asian American identity, and strong voices and representation in the political processes in the United States. **See also** Asian Diasporas; Colonialism and Postcolonialism.

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LOAN DAO

## ◆ COLONIALISM AND POSTCOLONIALISM

The question of postcolonialism has surfaced in and out of **Asian America**. In respect to academic scholarship, **Asian American studies** has concerned itself most centrally with questions of racialization and has long worked to expose how norms of citizenship exclude certain bodies from membership within the nation. This emphasis on racial formations has often placed the subject of empire as secondary to the material and epistemological contradictions of the nation-state. However, questions of war, empire, and colonialism have always been prevalent in Asian America, for example, in protests against the **Vietnam War**, literature by Filipino authors, and South Asian activism surrounding the Ghadar movement.

Recent scholarship in Asian American studies has attempted to bring a postcolonial approach to bear on the concerns of the discipline by exposing the imperial practices of the United States and theorizing the colonial structure of "America" as a concept and territorial entity. Postcolonial interventions have most notably pointed to the erasure of the Philippines and Hawaii within Asian American studies, the tensions of which are captured most famously in the Yamanaka awards controversy. As the 1997 recipient of the **Association for Asian American Studies** Best Fiction award, Lois-Ann **Yamanaka's** *Blu's Hanging* sparked a series of impassioned debates over the novel's representation of the central Filipino character and the absence of Native Hawaiians. The contestations elicited by Yamanaka's novel illustrate the tensions

between racialized identities brought together under the category “Asian American” but unequally formed by colonialism, imperialism, and capital. Exposing the ways in which Filipino Americans and Central Pacific Islanders are continually positioned as the Other within Asian American studies, the *Blu’s Hanging* controversy displayed Asian America as irreducibly multiple and composed of conflicting imaginings, desires, and claims to the nation. Framing a discussion of postcolonialism through Yamanaka’s novel and the debates surrounding it works to foreground the ways in which Asian American studies is necessarily implicated in and produced out of colonial histories and modes of knowledge production, as well as the pressing need to attend to the differences that structure the very category of Asian America.

Scholars working at the intersection of Asian American and postcolonial studies have pointed to an important distinction between *postcoloniality* and *postcolonialism*, where the former refers to the material set of social conditions and the latter to a mode of inquiry or critique. The grouping of colonialism and postcolonialism is itself a troubled one, because it assumes similarity or grounds for comparison between the two terms. However, postcolonial critique has specifically worked against the assumption that the *post* signifies a temporal or geographic distance from colonialism, or a state of being beyond domination. Rather, following author Qadri Ismail, postcolonial critique represents a politics that puts into question the logic of Eurocentrism. Approaching postcolonialism as a critique that poses particular challenges to Asian American studies, this entry suggests that postcolonial critique specifically foregrounds the politics of nation, empire/imperialism, and diaspora/migration within and for Asian America. At the same time, Asian American studies brings the theorizing of race and racial formations to the conversation, topics that are often overlooked in postcolonial studies.

## NATION

A critique of nation and nationalism has been particularly central for Asian American studies in questioning the political objective of achieving national subjectivity or claiming the United States as home. Postcolonial scholarship has argued for the inherent complicity between nationalism and colonialism, thereby exposing the necessary paradox at the heart of anticolonial nationalism. As an epistemological concept, the nation-state is internally contradictory for the very reason that its promise of equality and contention of universality always relies upon a particular, or Other, against which to assert its claim to modernity. Moreover, the logic of inclusion that structures the identity of nation necessitates a constant expulsion of difference. Postcolonial and Asian American studies have often made parallel critiques of the nation: the former stressing its colonial structure and the latter, its implicit racism. Lisa Lowe’s foundational work *Immigrant Acts* argues that the liberal promise of equality sutures together the contradictions of a capitalist order that necessarily relies upon the

differentiation of its subjects. Lowe's critique of liberalism and multiculturalism suggests that the struggle for political recognition or claims to citizenship must be interrogated as the endpoint for Asian American studies. Recognizing the United States as a historical and contemporary imperial power, as Kandice Chuh has also suggested, confronts the limitations of placing the hope for justice within the hands of the nation-state. Indeed, the United States as a territorial and conceptual entity has always been constituted in and through colonial projects. The recent move to theorize the United States as a transnational formation attempts to foreground the ways in which America is formed out of global relations of power and has constantly reached beyond itself to secure its physical and imagined borders. Maintaining the nation as the uninterrogated ground for politics therefore risks reproducing the very structures of colonial domination being contested in the first instance. Following this logic, cultural nationalism must also be approached skeptically for its allegiance to colonial modes of knowing. Postcolonial feminists in particular have uncovered the gendered and sexualized norms operating within cultural nationalist assertions of identity and autonomy and have often had their arguments dismissed as inauthentic and traitorous by the self-appointed gatekeepers of Asian American culture. The pressing need to attend to the question of nation is eloquently captured in Kandice Chuh's call to "imagine otherwise" as expressed in the title of her 2003 book, that is, to risk imagining possibilities for justice that are not limited to the contours of the nation-state.

### EMPIRE/IMPERIALISM

The modernization of the United States, as David Palumbo-Liu has noted, is deeply enmeshed and inseparable from the Pacific region. Expansion into East Asia and the Pacific enabled the importation of cheap labor, while broadening the United States' reach in the world economy. Within a neoliberal regime of economic restructuring, however, imperialism takes many forms that are often more subtle and diffuse than outright territorial colonialism. Economic sanctions, covert wars, border patrols, and corporate privatization of basic needs are all manifestations of modern empire-building. The violence of the military intervention in Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, remains a defining moment that spurred critiques of American imperialism and the military-industrial complex within Asian America. The intersection of Asian American and postcolonial studies specifically highlights the ways in which racial formations are produced through and articulated with imperial projects. Although the mechanisms for constructing difference shift and transform over time, the underlying epistemology of Othering remains similar. Recognizing these parallels allows connections to be made, for example, between **Japanese American internment** during **World War II** and immigrant detainment post 9/11. The conflicting needs of capital and nation that Lowe highlighted also link past exclusion acts with the immigration policies resulting from the Patriot Act.

The recent turn to the postcolonial within Asian American studies has been largely characterized by a renewed interest in the Philippines and Hawaii. Although these postcolonial locales figure very visibly within current scholarship, they often enter the conversation as exceptions to Asian America, that is, as the minority perspective acknowledged by the responsible majority. Attending to the legacy of colonialism is a project that is clearly far from complete, given that the categories of difference upholding Asian American studies as a distinct disciplinary field of study are themselves heirs of colonial epistemologies. The fraught relationship between the formations "Asian American" and "Arab American" highlights the ways in which Asian America is necessarily fractured by histories and geographies of colonial occupation. The continued struggle over the status of "Pacific Islander" as a subject-position and racial formation distinct from "Asian American" underscores the incommensurable differences brought about by the violence of modern empire-building.

Postcolonial critique has also been centrally concerned with theorizing the knowledge production that underpins colonial and imperial projects. Thinking critically about the politics of representation that constitutes Asia as a distinct entity separate from America and the Eurocentric discourses that have variously given rise to the **model minority** myth or stereotypes like the Asian butterfly have been important projects within Asian American studies. In her book *Compositional Subjects*, Laura Kang specifically traces the ways in which Asian American women are constituted as legible and coherent subjects by cultural texts, disciplinary knowledge, and the transnational economy. This body of scholarship has contributed a rich analysis of the colonial epistemes that continue to structure understandings and productions of difference.

## DIASPORA AND MIGRATION

Asian American studies scholars such as Jigna Desai and David Eng approach diaspora as a mode of critique that interrogates notions of home, rootedness, and origins. This framework engages with the inequalities that structure transnational circuits of migration by attending to the dissonant and conflicted relationships between territoriality, identity, and belonging. A postcolonial approach to transnationality understands diaspora and migration as constituted out of colonialism and imperialism and views racial formations within the United States that produce Asian Americans as exterior to the nation as inseparable from the transnational racial processes of the nation-state. Diasporic critique has made significant interventions into narratives of globalization that emphasize time-space compression and the rise of the cosmopolitan subject. Stressing the ways in which capitalism relies upon and articulates with racial formations, this body of scholarship positions diaspora as complicit with post-Fordist globalization and attempts to theorize the new forms of state racism that emerge as a

result of the shifting role of the nation-state within late capitalism. At the same time that borders have become increasingly porous to capital, the militarization of state lines restricts and prohibits the movement of certain bodies. Distinctions between voluntary and involuntary migration, forced relocation, and elite travel therefore underscore the irreducible difference between the subject positions of immigrant and refugee. In forwarding the specificities of mobility and movement as they are structured through capitalism, neocolonialism, and national discourses, Asian American critique has worked to displace the construction of the United States as homeland, while positioning processes of racialization within global geopolitics. **See also** Asian Diasporas; Asian Pacific Islanders; Hawaiian Literature; Multiculturalism and Asian America; Nationalism and Asian America; Orientalism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America.

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DIANE DETOURNAY AND JIGNA DESAI

## D



### ◆ DESAI, KIRAN (1971 –)

Indian American novelist and winner of Man Booker Prize, Kiran Desai has gained wide acclaim within a few years. The daughter of the celebrated writer Anita Desai, she was born on September 3, 1971, in New Delhi. Desai went along with her family to Great Britain at the age of 14. Afterward they migrated to the United States, and Desai finished her schooling in Massachusetts. She studied in Bennington College, Vermont University, and Columbia University. She took two years of leave while studying creative writing at Columbia to write her first novel, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, which was published in 1988. Desai wrote the next novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, which bagged the £50,000 Man Booker Prize for Fiction in October 2006. She was one of the six short-listed authors. Her mother Anita had been nominated thrice earlier, although she did not make it. Desai dedicated the novel to her mother. Desai also won the National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award for *The Inheritance of Loss*.

*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* was set in the small town of Shahkot in India, and Desai was inspired to write the novel after reading a story about a holy person climbing a guava tree. Disillusioned with ordinary life, the protagonist of the novel, Sampath Chawla, had gone to lead a solitary life on a guava tree. He was privy to the mail of his town, while working in a post office earlier. The residents became convinced that he was a saint, because he was able to tell their inner thoughts. Sampath could do so because he had read their letters earlier. In the novel, there was description of monkeys who had descended into the orchard. There were also characters like the doting mother, preparing dishes for the son and a sister of Sampath, in love with an ice cream vendor. There were police officers and a man from the atheistic society bent upon

exposing Sampath. The protagonist of the novel was a simpleton, naïve, and somewhat idiotic. In the end, he disappeared from the scene. Desai in her masterly way gives a vivid portrayal of characters lashed with humor. She also describes in detail the ordinary life of people and their beliefs in a superb way. The novel was praised by critics and by Salman Rushdie, who was impressed by it. It earned her the Betty Trask Award, given by the Society of Authors.

*The Inheritance of Loss* is about the life of a Cambridge-educated Indian, living a retired life at the foot of Mt. Kanchunjunga in the northeastern Himalayas. The backdrop is the Gurkha insurgency movement of mid-1980s India. Jemubhai Popatlal's life in the town of Kalimpong changes after the arrival of his granddaughter. Another character is the poverty-stricken cook Nandu, who bears with his master's peculiar request and laments the fate of the son after reading his letters. Jemubhai reminiscences about his preretired life. He had gone to Cambridge before **World War II**. He became an English gentleman after giving up his Indianness. But he struggled with two identities: Indian background and aspiration to become an English gentleman. He was in two worlds, and both rejected him. The other characters are refugee princesses from Afghanistan, the Anglophile sisters Lora and Noni, and Father Potty from Sweden. In a postcolonial world, the characters search for their identity amid a fast changing world. Desai addresses issues such as modernization, cultural identity, nationhood, and insurgency, while narrating the events. The 17-year-old granddaughter Sai Mistry is in love with Gyan, who is involved in the violent Gurkha liberation struggle. The cook, Nandu, has a son named Biju, who is leading the life of an illegal immigrant in the United States. The Anglophile Judge Patel becomes the target of the insurgency. Romance between Sai and Gyan is affected by violent struggles of the Gurkhas. The illegal alien Biju living in Manhattan soon returns to India. He has become homesick.

*The Inheritance of Loss* delves into the human mind in all its ramifications and highlights the national and global issues of the 1980s. Some of the issues persist until now. It seems as if Desai had anticipated the continuance of these problems. Although Gurkha insurgency has subsided, India is facing terrorist menaces from other quarters. The immigrant still feels cultural alienation. The condition of aliens staying illegally in the United States and other nations is miserable. In India itself, the Anglophiles continue to feel despair. Her style of writing is skilled, and she can describe any situation, event, or even state of mind with aplomb. She describes human behaviors vividly without moralizing. However, criticism against her has been rather harsh. She has been unjustly blamed for telling the story of the elite only. But this is far from the truth, as feelings of subalterns find an equal place. She rightly deserved the Man Booker Prize of 2006 for writing a stunning and brilliant piece of fiction. Even still, readers have found a major flaw in the novel and have complained about her lack of definitions of the Indian idioms. Moreover, her portrayal of the Nepalese diaspora and the people has

angered many, and there were protests and demonstrations against her novel. The people did not take kindly to her description of Bhairav and Mt. Kanchenjunga.

An astute observer of human behavior, Desai writes with elegance, perception, clarity, and humor. She is quite at ease whether she is writing about the life of an aristocrat or of the common people. Desai is a worthy daughter of her mother. **See also** Asian Diasporas.

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PATIT PABAN MISHRA

### ◆ DIVAKARUNI, CHITRA BANERJEE (1956–)

Born in Calcutta, India, poet, novelist, essayist, children's writer, and social activist Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is one of the most popularly known authors of Indian origin in the United States. She also has an international audience, as her work has been translated into several languages, including Dutch, German, and Japanese. In the last two decades, since writers such as Salman Rushdie and V.S. Naipaul have cemented the fact that a readership exists for Indian Anglophone writers, Divakaruni has been one of the most prolific to appear on the literary scene.

Divakaruni's father worked for an oil company, and her mother was an elementary schoolteacher in Calcutta. The Banerjees, a Hindu family, had four children, of which Chitra was the second-born and the only girl. She was schooled in a rigorous environment, attending the Loreto House, a convent school managed and taught by Irish nuns.

Early on, Divakaruni developed a love for the English language, which was a dominant lingua in postcolonial India. She enjoyed reading Rabindranath Tagore, the giant in Indian letters and winner of the 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature, as well as other international writers. As an undergraduate at Presidency College, part of the University



of Calcutta, Divakaruni studied English and earned a bachelor's degree in 1976. At that point, only 19 years old, she decided to pursue a master's degree in the United States. She enrolled at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, where her eldest brother already lived. She graduated in 1978.

A year later, she married Murthi Divakaruni, an engineer, whom she met while completing her studies. Afterward, she attended the University of California at Berkeley and earned a PhD in English in 1984, completing her dissertation on "For Danger Is in Words: Changing Attitudes to Language in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe." However, she had already begun to feel that her focus on Renaissance writers had little to do with her personal identity as a woman of color and an immigrant to the United States.

Banerjee's parents were hardly wealthy, so she had to help fund her own education. While working on her graduate degrees, she earned money doing various odd jobs. These included babysitting, washing equipment in a science lab, and working in an Indian boutique. Three years after graduating, she began teaching at Diablo Valley College, then took a position at Foothill College in Los Altos, California, in 1989. During this time, she realized that creative writing attracted her much more than academic writing. She joined a writers' group during the mid-1980s and found that poetry intrigued her. She had publishing success early; her first published poem, "At Muktinath," appeared in *Calyx* in 1986.

Her first book of poetry, *Dark Like the River*, was published a year later in 1987 by Writers Workshop, a Calcutta-based house. In these initial poems, she evokes themes that will later come to distinguish her writing, namely women's issues and feelings of exile. *The Reason for Nasturtiums*, her second poetry collection, appeared in 1990, published by the Berkeley Poets Workshop and Press. Calyx Press published her next collection, *Black Candle: Poems about Women from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh*, in 1991, developing her interest in the lives and experiences of immigrant women. By this point, Divakaruni's reputation as a poet was well established, as was her interest in women's themes.

As a writer, she felt it important to explore other genres, namely fiction; she wanted to stretch her abilities and discover new avenues for expressing the themes that were a hallmark of her poetry. She enrolled in a fiction-writing course at Foothills College, where she was teaching, and applied herself to studying the craft. Her earliest drafts demonstrated her continuing interest in the experiences of women emigrating from South Asia.

*Arranged Marriage*, her debut short story collection, appeared in 1995, published by Anchor Books, and received critical acclaim. Most of the main characters are Indian women who find themselves newly arrived in the United States. Struggling to adapt to a new, often overwhelming American culture, they also face problems from

their own community. Divakaruni writes vividly about the highlights and shortcomings of the Indian community, especially the way in which Indian women are sometimes oppressed or silenced by Indian men. She depicts these tensions as part of the difficulty of adapting to a new culture and new country. *Arranged Marriage* won the 1996 American Book Award and the PEN Oakland Award for Fiction for its examination of how a traditional institution—arranged marriage—fares when brought into a different environment.

Divakaruni was not without her critics, however. Some South Asian readers accused her of maligning the Indian immigrant community and giving credence to the stereotype that Indian women were oppressed and silenced by Indian men. Divakaruni responded by insisting that she wrote about the community she saw and witnessed and that she wanted her audience to care about her characters as humans rather than as representations of cultural or ethnic identity. Indeed, her work has remained consistently nonpolitical, focusing instead on personal and emotional relationships among people.

In 1997 she published her second work of fiction and first novel, *The Mistress of Spices*, also with Anchor Books. The novel demonstrates Divakaruni's interest in mystical storytelling and magic. The protagonist, Tilo, is an elderly woman who runs a spice shop in Oakland, California. However, she is actually one of a line of immortal mistresses of spices, trained in the arts of knowing which spices will help solve the problems of her customers, mostly first- and second-generation Indian immigrants. She evokes the powers of the spices to heal their pain, usually caused by the difficulty of leaving one world behind and seeking another. While American audiences loved the book, her critics again charged her with exoticizing Indian culture. However, others, such as Indian novelist Shashi **Tharoor**, praised the book for its unusual storyline, lush imagery, and magical realism; indeed, Divakaruni lists Gabriel Garcia Marquez, a pioneer of magical realism, as one of her literary influences. Her evocation of the experiences of Indian immigrant life also garnered her critical attention. *The Mistress of Spices* was named a Best Book of 1997 by the *Los Angeles Times*.

That same year, *Leaving Yuba City*, a fourth poetry collection was also published. It collected poems from her previous three collections as well as new works and helped establish her as a writer talented in multiple genres. *Leaving Yuba City* won the Allen Ginsberg Prize as well as a Pushcart Prize. It also garnered the author a Gerbode Foundation Award.

*Sister of My Heart*, her second novel, appeared in 1999 by Doubleday Books and traced the close relationship of cousins Sudha and Anju, born on the same day. (The novel is actually an extension of the story "The Ultrasound," which appeared in *Arranged Marriage* and featured the two cousins.) One is beautiful while the other is not, and the cousins are forced into arranged marriages that will test their personal

strength and their sense of sisterhood. She returned to their story with *Vine of Desire*, her third novel, in 2002. Sudha, the cousin blessed with good looks but cursed in an abusive marriage, moves in with her cousin-sister Anju, though she struggles to resist the attentions of Anju's husband. Both books refrain from employing the magical realism that distinguished *The Mistress of Spices*, but they display Divakaruni's beautiful prose and talent for twisting plot lines.

*The Unknown Errors of Our Lives*, a second short story collection, was published in 2001 by Doubleday. Again Divakaruni explores the lives of Indian immigrants and their American-born children with grace and honesty. "Mrs. Dutta Writes a Letter," one of the stories in the collection, was selected for the *Best American Short Stories* anthology of that year. Divakaruni herself assembled two anthologies: *Multitude: Cross-cultural Readings for Writers* (McGraw-Hill, 1993) and *We, Too, Sing America* (McGraw-Hill, 1998), both of which feature writing by South Asian and other ethnic writers.

Most recently, Divakaruni published *The Queen of Dreams*, a compelling novel featuring Rakhi, a young woman who has always wished she shared her mother's talent as a dream interpreter. An artist living in Berkeley, California, Rakhi has a daughter but is separated from her husband; she runs a teashop with her friend, but a series of events, including her mother's death and the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, conspire to threaten her lifestyle and identity. The book's early reviews were filled with praise but reluctantly expressed dissatisfaction with the story's plotline; the main critique is that the storyline was overly dependent on coincidences and, as some critics charged, too many convenient events, such as the discovery of the journals of Rakhi's mother. Nevertheless, *The Queen of Dreams* continued Divakaruni's tradition of excellent storytelling.

In recent years, Divakaruni has also ventured into yet another literary genre: children's books. In 2002 she published *Neela, Victory Song*, a novel for middle school-aged readers and part of the Girls of Many Lands series by American Girl books. The story is set in India during the national struggle for independence from British colonialism. Set against the background of Mohandas Gandhi's civil disobedience movement, *Neela, Victory Song* follows its main character through a series of adventures and experiences. The action is fast paced, but the language exhibits Divakaruni's signature lushness for detail. She followed *Neela, Victory Song* with *The Conch Bearer*, by Roaring Book Press in 2003. Featuring a young boy as its protagonist, a departure for a writer whose female protagonists are one of her hallmarks, *The Conch Bearer* also uses Divakaruni's attraction for magical storylines and plot elements. Anand meets an elderly member of the Brotherhood of Healers, who convinces the 12-year-old to accompany him on a journey to the Himalayas to return the conch shell, which holds magical powers, to its original home. Like *Neela, Victory Song*, it offers young readers an

exciting storyline, filled with plot twists and villains, while sustaining an engaging writing style.

An important component of Divakaruni's career has also been her social activism. Divakaruni considers writing to be an expression of a social consciousness, as exhibited in her underlying political message in *The Queen of Dreams* regarding the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States (in the novel, a young Indian man is mistaken for an Arab and viciously attacked by a mob of angry American men). Much of her social work has been closely linked to her own ethnic roots, and she has striven to aid other immigrant Indian and South Asian women in making the difficult transition between home and the new world of the United States.

In 1991 Divakaruni founded MAITRI, a telephone helpline for battered and abused South Asian women. For years she had been working with battered women in other organizations, such as the Mid-Peninsula Support Network for Battered Women. However, she had noticed that few South Asian women sought help at these places, which made her wonder why. She realized that many were disconnected from mainstream American society and thus were unaware of the existence of organizations and networks that could help them, while a second reason was that they felt they were betraying their ethnic roots by seeking help from non-South Asians. MAITRI was established as a connection between the South Asian community and the organizations already in existence, and it aims to help abused women feel they are not being judged when they seek advice and counseling. The helpline receives about 15–20 calls a month, and counselors work with the women to reach a solution that is comfortable for them.

In 2005 Divakaruni supported the launch of a satellite radio program intended to reach rural Indian women. Equal Access, a San Francisco-based organization, uses such communication tools to educate and connect women who would have no other form of networking. The project, launched in the villages of the Uttaranchal Pradesh region, gives local women's groups radio and transmission equipment and trains them in production. They tape their own shows, focusing on various topics and issues, and send them to Delhi, where a station edits them and forwards the programs to a satellite station in Australia. The programs are then broadcast across the region and offer listeners information on various local issues, such as health, child marriage, and disaster management.

Divakaruni has won many other awards for her writing, including a Memorial Award from the Barbara Deming Foundation, a Bay Area Book Reviewers Award for Fiction, a Before Columbus Foundation Prize, and a California Arts Council Award. Her stories and essays have appeared in many mainstream publications, such as *Good Housekeeping*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and *Salon.com*. In addition, *The Mistress of Spices* has been adapted as a movie by director Gurinder Chadda. **See also**

Asian American Political Activism; Asian American Stereotypes; Colonialism and Postcolonialism.

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SUSAN MUADDI DARRAJ

## E



### ◆ EATON, EDITH MAUDE (SUI SIN FAR) (1865–1914)

Chinese North American journalist and short stories writer, Edith Maude Eaton published short stories depicting Chinese American life under the Chinese pen name of Sui Sin Far (differently spelled as Sui Seen Far or Sui Sin Fah, all meaning Water Lily). Her literary reputation mainly rests on a collection of short fiction titled *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* (1912), published two years before her death in 1914. She is now recognized as the first Asian American fictionist and the spiritual grandmother of Asian American literature, appreciated both for her ethnic authenticity and for her courage to speak for Chinese Americans at a time when Sinophobia ran rampant in North America. Born in Macclesfield, England, Eaton was the second child and the eldest daughter of a family of 14 children, one of whom, Winnifred Eaton, would become a successful writer of popular fiction, publishing most of her works under a purportedly Japanese pen name, Onoto Watanna. The father, Edward Eaton, was an Englishman and son of a silk merchant, and the mother, Grace A. Trefusis (Lotus Blossom), was a Chinese, adopted by English missionaries and educated in England. When Edith Eaton was about seven years old, the Eatons migrated to New York but eventually settled down in Montreal, Quebec. Due to family poverty, Eaton was withdrawn from school at the age of ten and started to support her parents and earn her own living.

Beginning in the 1880s, Eaton worked as a stenographer and a journalist while struggling to establish a literary reputation. She worked as a journalist for the *Montreal Star* and published her writings in the Montreal magazine *Dominion Illustrated*. Her first writings—eight pieces of short stories and essays (“A Trip in a Horse Car,” “Misunderstood: The Story of a Young Man,” “A Fatal Tug of War,” “The Origin of a

Broken Nose," "Robin," "Abermarle's Secret," "Spring Impression: A Medley of Poetry and Prose," and "In Fairyland")—were published between 1888–1890 and bylined "Edith Eaton." Dealing with English or French Canadian subjects, these pieces have nothing to do with the Chinese American experience, the major subject of her journalistic writings and short fiction starting from the year 1896. In the same year, she visited the New York **Chinatown** and published under the pen name of Sui Seen Far a group of Chinatown short stories about violence arising from gambling ("The Gamblers"), the tragedy of misplaced identity ("Ku Yum"), the cost of cultural defiance ("The Story of Iso"), and star-crossed lovers ("A Love Story of the Orient" and "A Chinese Feud"). With the exception of "The Gamblers," a story of all-male Chinese characters, these stories depict women of Chinese descent and their tragic lives. "The Story of Iso," for instance, tells the story of a rebellious Chinese woman who defies cultural norms by refusing to marry the man chosen for her, disgraces herself by following foreigners across the sea, and dies in a strange land.

Eaton went to Kingston, Jamaica, in late 1896 to work briefly as a reporter for *Gall's Daily News Letter*, owned by a Canadian proprietor. In 1898 she went to the West Coast of the United States, living first in San Francisco and then in Seattle and earning a meager living as a stenographer and a teacher in a missionary school of Chinese immigrants. In the meantime, she published essays defending the Chinese immigrants and stories featuring Chinese men and women in America. A group of journalistic essays published in the *Los Angeles Express* in 1903 present various aspects of Chinatown life ("In Los Angeles' Chinatown," "Betrothals in Chinatown," "Chinatown needs a School," "Chinatown Boys and Girls," "Leung Ki Chu and His Wife," "Chinese in Business Here," and "Chinese Laundry Checking"). These pieces presented images markedly different from those portrayed with racial prejudice against the Chinese by providing fairly sympathetic and unbiased glimpses into the cultural, social, and economic activities of Chinese immigrants in the United States. The short stories explore individual lives of Chinese descent but at the same time tackle issues of broader social concerns. "Sweet Sin," a story that touches upon interracial marriages, is particularly significant in that, like Eaton who remained an unmarried Eurasian, the titular protagonist is a Eurasian daughter of a Chinese merchant and an American woman. Disliking the idea of marrying a Chinese man her father intends for her, Sweet Sin commits suicide on the eve of their departure for China. The name "Sweet Sin" plays on Eaton's own pen name, Sui Sin Far, both meaning water lily (the former mainly refers to the plant itself while the latter may mean both the plant and its flower). "Lin John" narrates a story similar to "Sweet Sin." Lin John saves to buy his sister out of prostitution and send her back to China to live an honest life, yet she frustrates his plan by stealing the money and refusing to be subservient to men. The story of "A Chinese Ishmael" deals with the tragic love affair between Leih Tseih and a slave girl

(again with the name of Ku Yum), who drown themselves in the sea to escape the persecution by a Chinese villain named Loy Choy; the story also touches on such Chinatown issues as violence, gambling, passage fee, and the operations of the Chinese Six Companies. In these stories, Eaton departs from stereotypical representations of the Chinese immigrants and depicts her characters as ordinary human beings whose reactions are shaped by their historical circumstances.

In 1909 "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian," Eaton's autobiographical essay, appeared in the *Independent*, a New York-based prestigious journal of the day. On the surface level, the essay consists of biographical incidents in her life—accused of being a storyteller and slapped by her mother at four, refused to be spoken to by a playmate for having a Chinese mother, scrutinized and judged to be an "interesting little creature" by an old Englishman, shocked by an awareness of the Chinese race in Hudson City, shouted at and bullied by white children for being of Chinese descent, psychologically burdened with "the cross of the Eurasian" in a Canadian school, troubled by identity, nationality, and life in a family of many Chinese Eurasian siblings, pleased with gratitude from the Chinese for writing for them in the papers, risen to the defense of the Chinese in an unnamed Midwest town when a Mr. K. slights the Chinese, misjudged to be a loose Chinese girl by an English sailor in the West Indies, and accepted by Chinese men and women on the West Coast. Despite its autobiographical nature, "Leaves" does not provide much matter-of-fact information about Eaton and her life; rather, they are just mental leaves selected from the psychological depth of a Eurasian woman who looks at both sides of her biological inheritance without preconceived bias. With the biographical incidents, Eaton exposes white prejudice against the Chinese; at the same time her unique Eurasian perspective allows her to perceive that she differs from both her parents and that her mother's race is as prejudiced as her father's. The same perspective also endows her with an appreciative attitude toward both sides, admiring the courage of Mr. K. for admitting his groundless prejudice against the Chinese and for apologizing to her. Her contacts with the Chinese lead her to believe that prejudice can be removed by association. Eaton is aware of the strategic routes of different Eurasian individuals and expresses her sympathy toward them. She pities the half-Chinese girls who pass for white or for Japanese and places the blame on those who compel them to use such strategies. As for herself, Eaton prizes individuality over nationality, claiming, "I give my right hand to the Occidentals and my left to the Orientals" (1995, 230). Yet what Eaton says in the narrative cannot be taken simply as factual; she, for instance, is referred to as "Miss Sui" by her nurse and addressed by Mr. K. as "Miss Far," when she should be known by her official name.

In 1910 Eaton relocated to Boston, where she remained until 1913. In May 1912 she published another autobiographical essay, "Sui Sin Far, the Half Chinese Writer,



Tells of Her Career," in the *Boston Globe*, summarizing her life and announcing the forthcoming publication of *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* and a second book to follow the next year. A.C. McClurg & Co. published the former under her pen name followed by "Edith Eaton" in parentheses, but the second book somehow never saw publication, even though it was mentioned several times in her correspondences that it had been completed and submitted to McClurg and was going through revisions.

*Mrs. Spring Fragrance*, a collection of 17 short stories and 20 children's stories, runs up to 347 large-print pages. Of the 37 pieces, about 11 were previously published and now incorporated into the book, in some cases, with slight revisions in the text (as in "Mrs. Spring Fragrance") or in the title (as in "The Story of One White Woman Who Married a Chinese" and "Children of Peace"). That most of the stories were published for the first time while a second book was in progress indicates that Eaton must have attained literary maturity, and the last few years of her life must have been the most productive period of her literary career. Like many of Winnifred Eaton's Japanese romances, the stories are printed on pages decorated with plum blossoms on the upper part and a bird perched on a twig of a tree branch. Apart from that, each odd page is imprinted on the lower right corner with three Chinese characters meaning "happiness, fortune, and longevity." The design must have been part of the marketing strategy to give the book a Chinese/Oriental flavor, though it is not clear whether it was the idea of Eaton or her publisher. The short stories are grouped under the subheading of "Mrs. Spring Fragrance," which is also the title of the first story, whereas the children's stories are given a group name, "Tales of Chinese Children," though not all of them deal with subjects specifically relevant to Chinese children. In "What about the Cat," the sixth children's story, for example, the princess hears different stories from her servants about what a cat is doing, when in fact it is all the while up in her sleeve. Except for the mention of the duck farm of Shinku, a name that sounds somewhat "Oriental," the different stories about the same cat and hiding the cat in one's sleeve suggest that the story is more Anglo American than Chinese.

The short stories are all love stories that explore manifold aspects of Chinese American experience, which contests stereotypical representations. The first two pieces present a slightly comic picture of Mrs. Spring Fragrance, the young Americanized wife of a Chinese merchant. In "Mrs. Spring Fragrance," she quotes lines of Tennyson and helps an 18-year-old Chinese girl neighbor named Laura (Mai Gwi Far) out of an undesired betrothal and into marriage to an Americanized youth, arousing her husband's suspicion of her as having lovers elsewhere. In "The Inferior Woman" she decides to follow the example of American women by writing an immortal book about Americans. In the process, she assists Will Carman in winning back Alice Winthrop, a working girl estranged from him by his mother, who contemptuously calls Alice the

Inferior Woman. The tragic story of "The Wisdom of the New" attends to the intense cultural conflicts experienced by Chinese Americans. In contrast to Wou Sankwei, who adapts successfully to American life, his wife Pau Lin clings to Chinese cultural traditions and murders their son to save him from American culture, which she calls the Wisdom of the New. The half-Chinese girl named Pan raised in Chinatown in "Its Wavering Image" feels hurt by Mark Carson, her white lover and a reporter who betrays her by selling his soul for a Chinatown story. "The Story of One White Woman Who Married a Chinese" and "Her Chinese Husband" substitute the white male and Chinese female pattern of interracial marriages with the marriage of a Chinese named Liu Kanghi and Minnie, a white woman who sees her Chinese husband in every way antithetical to the treacherous and threatening James Carsner, the white husband she has divorced.

"The Smuggling of Tie Co" and "Tian Shan's Kindred Spirit" are two unique stories, not only because they share the subject of smuggling across the U.S./Canadian border, thus related to exclusionary laws against the Chinese immigrants, but also because both focus on Chinese American women who resort to tricksterism in befriending the smugglers they love. In the first story, Tie Co, a Chinese Canadian laundry manager who disguises herself as a young man and offers to be smuggled into the United States to encourage the smuggling business of a professional smuggler named Jack Fabian, throws herself into the river to save Fabian from imprisonment when they are discovered by Customs officers. In the second story, Fin Fan, the daughter of a Canadian Chinese storekeeper, puts on her father's clothes and devises to have herself captured and deported to China when she hears of the coming deportation of Tian Shan, her smuggler lover. A story that directly confronts the inhumanity of immigration laws against the Chinese is "In the Land of the Free," which relates the sad experience of a Chinese couple with the immigration officers. Lae Choo, together with her two-year-old son, arrives in San Francisco from China to join her husband, Hom Hing, but, ironically, upon their arrival in the Land of the Free, their son is detained and taken away. When after 10 months of agonizing separation their son is returned to them, the boy bids the mother to "Go 'way."

Like the majority of Eaton's Chinese stories excluded from *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*, the ones included in the collection share a number of features. To various degrees, the stories seek to challenge stereotypical images of the Chinese and eradicate prejudices that have stigmatized them as exotic, inhuman, and inassimilable aliens. Mrs. Spring Fragrance, for example, quickly adjusts to her American environment and learns the language; after five years of residence in the United States, as her husband claims, "There are no more American words for her learning" (1995, 17). Her ambition to write a book counters the logic of racism by reversing the argument, for she wishes to

explain the “mysterious, inscrutable, incomprehensible Americans” (33) to Chinese women. The stories are also characterized by a reconfiguration of the relationship between men and women. Characters such as Mrs. Spring Fragrance, Laura, Alice Winthrop, Pau Lin, Tie Co, and Fin Fan all pose as women of strong personality who refuse to be dictated to; in the case of Mrs. Spring Fragrance, it is she who gives the orders and her husband who obeys. The high visibility of women in these stories might be in disproportion to historical reality, yet it functions as a challenge to the notion of Chinese community as a bachelor society. Eaton’s texts generally appear to be facile and direct in expression, yet underneath the surface there often lies a sense of irony that renders simple interpretations problematic. For instance, “The Inferior Woman” ends with Mrs. Spring Fragrance wishing for a daughter walking “in the groove of the Superior Woman” (41) which threatens to nullify all her efforts to exalt the Inferior Woman. Stylistically, Eaton’s stories are sometimes tainted with a faint Chinese flavor in language style, as in her occasional use of flowers as names for her Chinese characters and in the substitution of *moon* for *month*, but she seldom goes to the extent of exoticizing things Chinese, and her Chinese characters rarely utter speeches unnecessarily distorted by their Chinese background. See also Racism and Asian America.

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### ◆ EATON, WINNIFRED (ONOTO WATANNA) (1875–1954)

A Chinese North American journalist, novelist, short story writer, and scenarist, Winnifred Eaton was the first Chinese North American novelist mainly known for her Japanese American popular romances. Unlike her elder sister Edith Maude Eaton, Winnifred was a prolific writer who produced over 16 novels, numerous short stories, two autobiographies, a cookbook, and dozens of screenplays for Universal Studios and MGM. Her best known novel, *A Japanese Nightingale* (1901), was translated into several languages, adapted into a Broadway play and a silent film, and won the praise of William Dean Howells. Most of Eaton's novels are fairylike popular romances that are related to Japanese settings with Japanese or Japanese American characters and published under her invented Japanese pen name, Onoto Watanna, though they often reconfigure the conventional patterns of popular romance and contest or challenge cultural, social, and sexual discourses of her day, particular evolutionary interpretations of race.

That Eaton chose to deal with Japanese subject matters and adopted a Japanese persona for her literary career might have been the result of her family influence as well as the historical circumstances of her time. Born in Montreal, Canada, Eaton was the eighth of 14 children of Edward Eaton, son of an English silk merchant, and Grace A. Trefusis (Lotus Blossom), a Chinese adopted by English missionaries and educated in England. Mr. Eaton was an impoverished artist who had traveled to Japan and was infatuated with Japanese arts in the heyday of Japonisme. The slightly favorable conditions of the Japanese in America and the Japanese victory in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 might also have played a part in Eaton's decision to invent a Japanese family background and write for an American reading public thrilled with things Japanese.

Eaton claimed to have written a story at the age of 16 that won her the recommendation to work as a reporter for *Gall's Daily News Letter* owned by a Canadian in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1896. She went to the United States in the same year and worked for the *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune* in 1897–1898. "A Japanese Girl," her first Japanese story, was published in that paper, but another Japanese story, "A Japanese Love Story," came out in *Iroquois Magazine* in 1897, and was definitely bylined "Onoto Watanna." In 1898, she moved to Chicago where she did secretarial work in the meat-packing industry and continued to publish essays and stories about the Japanese.

Eaton's first novel, *Miss Numè of Japan: A Japanese-American Romance*, was published by Rand, McNally & Co. in 1899. Set in Japan, the novel tells the interracial love story as a result of partner-changing between a Japanese pair of lovers (Takashima and his sweetheart, Miss Numè) and an American pair (Arthur Sinclair and Cleo Ballard). On his voyage back to Japan after his Harvard education, Takashima falls victim to a coquettish American girl, Cleo Ballard, who, accompanied by her mother

and her cousin Tom Ballard, is going to join her fiancé in Tokyo. Cleo desists from reciprocating Takashima's love, while Sinclair, the American diplomat prejudiced against Japanese women, meets Numè at a party and the two take a fancy in each other. In contrast to the love story of Sinclair and Numè, which consummates in happy marriage, that of Cleo and Takashima ends with the tragic suicides of Takashima, his father, and Numè's father when Cleo refuses to marry her Japanese lover. The novel resembles Japanese travel narratives by Pierre Loti (*Madame Chrysanthème* 1888) and John Luther Long (*Madame Butterfly* and *Miss Cherry-Blossom of Tokyo*, both published in 1895) in narrative pattern and language style, but Eaton's romance essentially refutes the American misconception of the Japanese. The deaths of the male Japanese characters disprove Tom Ballard's belief of the Japanese men as heartless, while Numè's love effectively challenges Sinclair's prejudice of the Japanese women as having no heart. In this sense, the insertion of the superficial "new woman" of Cleo into its plot and her incestuous marriage to her cousin as reported in the end of the novel might be regarded as a reversal of the American prejudice and as a punishment of her own heartlessness.

*The Old Jinrikisha* (1900), a novelette accounted by an old jinrikisha that assumes a feminine persona, reflects the vicissitudes of Japanese society, including the impact of the Meiji Restoration, Japanese contacts with the West, the evils of temporary marriages, and its effects upon the half-caste offspring. The story involves three generations of Japanese women with the same name of Natsu: the grandmother Natsu reduced to a geisha after her parents' deaths, induced by the dispossession of the samurai class from power; the mother Natsu's temporary marriage to an Englishman after the death of her Japanese husband; and the granddaughter Natsu's marriage to a liberal Japanese man. An important theme that the novelette tackles is interracial marriage. After being deserted by the English husband, the mother Natsu bleeds herself to death, leaving behind two daughters, Natsu by her Japanese husband and Koto by her English husband. Koto is patronized by Phil Evans, an American young man, who falls in love with her in the end.

In 1901 Eaton moved to New York, married Bertrand W. Babcock, and published *A Japanese Nightingale*. Lavishly decorated with color illustrations and printed on delicately predecorated pages featuring geishas playing samisen, jinrikisha runners, and Japanese landscapes, the novel depicts the romance of Jack Bigelow and Yuki, the former a rich American young man traveling in Japan and the latter a half-caste, the daughter of a Japanese woman and an Englishman whose death impoverished the family. Bigelow is charmed by Yuki's magic dance in the teahouse, resists her proposal of a temporary marriage to him but eventually marries her, despite warnings by Taro Burton, his half-caste Japanese classmate, against any temporary marriage before Bigelow's departure for Japan. However, instead of ending with the marriage, the novel

situates Bigelow and Yuki in the union early in its plot to put to test American misconceptions about Japanese women. Soon after his marriage, Bigelow begins to be perturbed by Yuki's eccentric behaviors, usually misconceived as the immorality of Japanese women. He is annoyed by the way she seizes every opportunity to extract money from him by inventing fabulous and conflicting stories about her family and her numerous siblings, the number of whom changes from moment to moment. Worse yet, her unexplained habitual disappearances from his house further perplex him and throw him into restlessness. Everything clears up when his classmate Taro Burton returns from the United States and discovers that the woman that Bigelow has married is his sister, who has contracted the temporary marriage with Bigelow for money to finance her brother's travel back. Yuki runs away and Taro dies of remorse, but before Taro's death Bigelow promises to take care of Yuki. Eaton may have evoked the story of Loti's *Madame Chrysanthème*, in which the temporary Japanese wife of a French sailor is shown to be a woman devoid of morality and greedy for money. Unlike Loti, whose French protagonist leaves the Japanese woman with a clear conscience when he happens to see her counting money in his absence, Eaton, refusing to exempt her American protagonist from moral accusation, reconfigures the plot so that what in the beginning appears to be another story of temporary marriage turns into a bond of eternity when Bigelow and Yuki reunite by the end of the novel.

After *A Japanese Nightingale*, Eaton produced in quick succession a series of Japanese romances and a comic novel about an Irish maidservant. *The Wooing of Wistaria* (1902), as the subtitle on its first page indicates, is "A Love Story of Japan," populated only with Japanese characters. Set on the eve of Commodore Perry's Japanese cruises, the novel revolves around the love story of Prince Keiki from the Mori family, loyal to the emperor, and Wistaria who—brought up by the Catzu family, loyal to the shogun—is ignorant of her low birth through her mother, a woman belonging to the lowest social class of Eta. Prince Keiki, son of Lord of Mori, falls in love with Wistaria and goes to the house of Lord of Catzu to court her in disguise. When her family discovers Keiki's identity, Wistaria's father forces her to wrest military information from him by taking advantage of his love for her. Warned by Wistaria of his dangerous situation, Keiki escapes from the house but is captured by her father, who intends to kill him to avenge his wife, who was murdered by the Mori samurais. To save his life, Wistaria suggests her father punish Keiki by marrying her to him, thereby reducing him to an Eta. Crushed by his marriage to the Eta girl, Keiki abandons Wistaria and goes to fight for the emperor. Wistaria enters his service disguised as a young man and eventually reunites with Keiki when class distinctions are abolished. The novel crosses class barriers and gender lines through the use of boundary-crossing and cross-dressing, strategies similarly used in such novels as *The Heart of Hyacinth* and *The Daughters of Nijo*.

Both *The Heart of Hyacinth* (1903) and *The Daughters of Nijo* (1904) inquire into the relationship between culture and nature, a theme that becomes manifest in some of Eaton's later novels. Set in Sendai, *The Heart of Hyacinth* features two children named Koma and Hyacinth, the former the half-caste son of Madame Aoi and her English sailor husband, who dies at sea, and the latter, the daughter of an American couple entrusted to the care of Madame Aoi upon her birth by the wife, who has run away from her unfaithful husband. As he grows up, Koma goes to England, receives an English education, and acquires Western manners, while Hyacinth, unaware of her biological origin, accepts Japanese culture and religion and joins the Japanese children in ridiculing Christian missionaries. The interference of James Blount, the American missionary, brings the childless Mr. Lorrimer and his new wife to Sendai to claim his lost daughter. Unwilling to leave Japan, Hyacinth appeals to the parents of her Japanese fiancé for a hasty marriage but is rejected because of her white skin. In the end, Hyacinth's dilemma is finally sorted out when Koma reveals his love for her. The novel clearly argues for culture over nature, a concept embodied in the story of Hyacinth, who is biologically white but culturally Japanese. Cross-dressing in *The Daughters of Nijo* (1904) again looks into the issue of culture and nature. The novel slightly resembles Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper* (1882) in storyline and in narrative structure, yet Eaton substitutes Twain's English story with a story of Japanese setting and female characters. Eaton's novel tells the story of two daughters of the Prince of Nijo, Sado-ko and Masago, who look identical in appearance. Sado-ko, the legal princess fostered by the Dowager Empress in seclusion, is a rebellious and sentimental girl. She dislikes the court life and feels ill fitted among the faddish ladies in the palace of Komatzu, her royal cousin to whom she is expected to marry. In contrast, Masago, the illegitimate daughter of Nijo, grows up in a rich merchant's family and admires the luxurious court life imparted to her by her mother. She is betrothed to Junzo, a well educated sculptor commissioned to work in Komatzu's palace, where he mistakes Sado-ko for Masago. Sado-ko recognizes Junzo as the boy she adored as a child in the castle of the Dowager Empress and falls in love with him. Out of jealousy, Sado-ko trades her position with Masago, puts on her clothes, and eventually marries Junzo, while Masago fits nicely into her new life in the court and marries Komatzu.

*The Love of Azalea* (1904), another Japanese American romance and similar to *A Japanese Nightingale* in tone and language style, centers on Richard Verley, an American missionary, and Azalea, a Japanese girl maltreated by her stepmother, Mrs. Yamada. To escape her unkind stepmother, Azalea claims to be Verley's convert, for she learns that he wins converts by bribing them. Meanwhile, Matsuda, the richest local merchant, determines to marry Azalea, partly out of revenge for having been insulted by Azalea's father. Her stepmother is anxious for the match, notwithstanding Azalea's aversion to Yamada. Azalea temporarily escapes from her trouble when Verley admits his love for

her, but, soon after their marriage, Verley is called back to the United States, leaving behind Azalea, who gives birth to a baby in his absence. Verley is detained in America longer than expected, and Azalea suffers financially. She is reduced to begging when Matsuda, who has schemed to take the missionary's property into his control and intercepted Verley's letters to Azalea, drives her out of her house. Matsuda then takes Azalea into his house and prepares to marry her. Yet Verley returns on the day of their wedding and finds in the mission church Azalea, who has escaped with her baby from Matsuda. An important theme of the novel concerns issues related to Christian missions and their impact in Japan. Verley uses money in enlisting converts, while Azalea's misery in Verley's absence is partly induced by her conversion to Christianity and her forsaking Japanese religions as symbolized in her throwing away the family tablet on the day of her wedding.

Set in the time of the Russian-Japanese War, *A Japanese Blossom* (1906) reverses the conventional Caucasian male and Japanese female romance; it instead presents a fairylike picture of cross-cultural conflicts arising from the marriage of Kiyo Kurukawa, a Japanese widower and businessman, and his white American wife, Ellen Kurukawa, an American widow. Kurukawa takes his wife, their child, Ellen's American children, and their Irish maidservant back to Japan, where his Japanese children live with their maternal grandparents. Disgusted by the news of his father's marriage to a barbarian woman, Gozo, Kurukawa's eldest Japanese son, fakes an older age and goes to war to avoid the white stepmother. Stirred by the fervor of war, Kurukawa obtains the support of Ellen and joins the army. The novel ends when Kurukawa and Gozo return from the war, and the family gathers around to listen to a story that promises to be a fairy tale with its beginning "Once upon a time . . ." Despite the cultural conflicts, particularly those between the children, the novel sounds like a lighthearted fairy tale that probes into the possibility of harmonious existence of people of different races.

Lightheartedness also characterizes *The Diary of Delia: Being a Veracious Chronicle of the Kitchen with Some Side-Lights on the Parlour* (1907), but it departs from Eaton's Japanese theme and uses a humorous vernacular Irish dialect rather than the quaint Japanese Pidgin in representing Delia, an Irish maidservant, who records in her diary her experiences with the Wolleys, a middle-class New York family. Encouraged by her friend Minnie, Delia refuses to do the general housework for the Wolleys and decides to hire herself out as a cook only. She is invited back to the family to cook a week later by Claire, the Wolleys's daughter, who has failed to manage the housework herself that week. Claire assigns different housework to the unwilling family members who in time either hire others to do their jobs or enlist Delia's service.

After *The Diary of Delia*, Eaton returned to Japanese American romance in *Tama* (1910), a novel set in Fukui shortly after the Meiji Restoration. Through the depiction of an American professor of science, simply called *Tojin* (the foreigner) by the



Japanese, and his love for Tama, the blind daughter of a Japanese woman and an English sailor, living in the mountains after the murder of her parents, the novel inquires into problems caused by the introduction of Western science and culture. Tojin represents Western science, with which he imposes upon himself the mission to educate the superstitious Japanese, who regard Tama as a fox-woman. With the help of his Japanese students, he traps Tama and takes upon himself to protect her for belonging to his own race. The novel ends happily when Tama, restored to light, returns to Fukui and confesses her love for Tojin. On the surface, the romance of Tojin and Tama presents a dark picture tainted by a racist point of view, yet there is an obvious subversive stance encoded in its plot. Throughout the novel, Tojin the foreigner, befuddles science and culture with his conviction in scientism, which is encountered by his Japanese students, who acknowledge the usefulness of science in Japan's modernization but defy the cultural superiority of the West.

*The Honorable Miss Moonlight* (1912), another Eaton novel with an all-Japanese cast, is propelled not by love but by the force to pass on the family line. The novel tackles the problem of heredity by presenting the fate of three individuals who either transcend or fall victim of hereditary forces: Saito Gonji, who, as the only male member of his generation, shoulders the responsibility of passing on the family line; Miss Moonlight, a geisha whom Gonji loves and marries but who is forsaken for bearing him no child; Ohano, Gonji's distant relative and second wife, who is compelled to commit seppuku for being childless and for her unwillingness to take care of Miss Moonlight's child, born after she is turned out of the family. Gonji revolts against using him as a biological mechanism to carry on the family heredity, and after agonizing trials he is eventually reunited with Miss Moonlight, while Ohano's life ends tragically, not only because of her being childless but also because of the inability to free herself from the bindings of hereditary influence, which is reflected in her committing seppuku.

Published in *The Blue Book Magazine* in January 1915 and set in wartime Japan, *Miss Spring Morning* features the interracial marriage of an American man and a Japanese woman, Jamison Tyrrell and Spring-morning. A fanatic artist of Japonisme, Jamison witnesses the wedding of Yamada Omi and Spring-morning during his stay with a Japanese captain. The wedding is arranged on the very night he leaves for the war, so that Spring-morning should take care of Madame Yamada, mother of Omi. Upon Omi's departure, Madame Yamada takes Spring-morning to Yokohama, with the intention to force her into service in the Yoshiwara there. The destitute Spring-morning, however, attracts the attention of Edith Latimer, an American girl in missionary service, who arranges for her to work in the house of Mrs. Tyrrell, Jamison's mother, who has followed him to Japan, resolved to bring him back to the United States. Not knowing that Spring-morning is the very girl whose wedding he has

witnessed, Jamison grows infatuated with her and, despite strong resistance from his mother, marries her. However, Jamison is kept in the dark that Spring-morning enters into the liaison with the intention to go back to Omi when he returns from the war. Upon his return from war, Omi comes to claim Spring-morning, but he gives up his claim upon the announcement of her pregnancy. Jamison is disillusioned when Spring-morning dies in childbirth and goes back to the United States with his mother. The novel, the least romantic in its gloomy representation, depends heavily upon coincidences, but it is important in presenting Jamison, who refutes the American notion of racial inferiority of the Japanese and of the **Yellow Peril**.

In 1915 Eaton anonymously published her autobiography *Me: A Book of Remembrance*, in which she traces a short period of her life between her departure for Kingston, Jamaica, in 1896 and her return to New York in 1901, in the name of Nora Ascough, a 17-year-old Canadian girl. The book opens with the narrator voyaging out to Jamaica, to be a reporter there, with only 10 dollars in her pocket. As the daughter of an English father and a mother from an unnamed far-distant land, she is filled with expectations of wealth, literary fame, and romance. In Kingston, a black Jamaican statesman forces kisses on her, an event that results in her decision to go to Richmond, Virginia, where she escapes from Dr. Manning, a lecherous surgeon she met in Kingston. With the financial support of Roger Avery Hamilton, whom she meets on the train to Richmond, she goes to Chicago where she works as a stenographer, writes stories, accepts the proposals of several men, all the while loving Hamilton, who visits her at intervals but refrains from seriously committing to her. She eventually discovers from the newspaper that Hamilton is a married man unfaithful to his wife. By the time the book ends and she departs for New York, she has achieved nothing of her expectations she held when she first voyaged out. The autobiography is far from a factual record of Eaton's life and much of it is fictional, inaccurate, and inauthentic, masking rather than revealing her life, particularly about her mother's Chinese identity. However, in some cases, it does faithfully tell the story of Eaton as the writer who produces romances under the pen name of Onoto Watanna.

*Marion: The Story of an Artist's Model* (1916), supposedly written "By Herself and the Author of 'Me'" as its title page states, is a biography of Eaton's sister, Sara Bosse. The book provides more information about the Eatons and their Canadian life under the mask of their fictional names: Winnifred as Nora, Sara as Marion, and Edith as Ada. The book, however, focuses on Marion, who learns painting and acting and struggles to be a woman artist. She is first discouraged by Reginald Bertie, her selfish English boyfriend, who disdains artists and seeks personal advancement. She then goes to Boston, where the artist she seeks help from discourages her artistic ambitions. She is later forced by starvation to pose nude for art students, runs away, and moves to New York, where she works in art studios and marries Paul Bonnat, an energetic and promising young painter.

In 1916 Eaton divorced her first husband, married Frank Reeve, and moved back to Canada with Frank and lived on her husband's Albertan ranch. However, she grew weary of her ranch life and wrote her last Japanese American novel, *Sunny-San*, in 1921, and it was published the next year both in Toronto (by McClelland and Stewart) and in New York (by George H. Doran Company). Its plot faintly echoes the 1900 short story of "A Father" in its crossing the international borders and the discovery of the American father, but, in critical purview and in tone, *Sunny-San* excels its predecessor. It tells the story of Sunny-San, the Eurasian daughter of Madame Many Smiles—herself a half-caste with a Russian father and a Japanese mother—and an American traveler named Stephen Holt Wainwright, who eventually becomes the Chicago Man of Steel and a U.S. senator. The romance begins with a party of American students (Jinx, Bobs, Monty, and Jerry) under the supervision of Professor Timothy Barrowes, enjoying themselves in a Japanese teahouse on a night when Sunny takes the place as the leading dancer after her mother's death. Upon discovering her maltreatment at the hand of Hirata (the teahouse owner), the students storm into the torture room and take Sunny away by force. They raise among themselves \$10,000 and set up the Sunny Syndicate Limited for Sunny's education and future, depart for the United States, and soon forget their Japanese adventure. Sunny then follows them to the United States and moves into the studio of Jerry, who has become an artist, while Professor Barrowes busies himself in excavating dinosaur fossils in Canada. Like Nora in *Me*, three of her benefactors (Jinx, Bobs, and Monty) propose for her hand, and she accepts them all. Jerry's mother and the girl he is engaged to, however, drive Sunny away from his studio during his absence. Sunny then strikes the acquaintance of an Irish girl, who shares her meager subsistence with Sunny and accidentally discovers that Sunny's American father is Senator Wainwright, who being childless in his marriage with his American wife, happily reclaims his Japanese daughter. The romance ends with Sunny announcing her love for Jerry at her debutante ball.

After *Sunny-San*, Eaton forwent popular romance, relocated her literary field to Calgary ranches in Alberta, Canada, and reoriented her attention to themes related to but varying from those explored in her Japanese romances in her last two novels, *Cattle* (1924) and *His Royal Nibs* (1925), bylined respectively as Winifred Eaton and Winifred Eaton Reeve. In these novels, Eaton continues to engage current issues such as race, yet these issues go beyond the dichotomy between people of the Orient and the Occident. *Cattle* tells the story of various pioneers on the Canadian prairie. The domineering antihero of the romance is Bull Langdon, the proprietor of the Bar Q Ranch, whose success story as a cattle rancher primarily reflects the grab-and-keep logic of early frontier pioneers. He has started his cattle ranch by rustling unbranded Indian calves but finally becomes the owner of a large cattle ranch. When his neighboring ranch widower Dan Day dies, leaving 10 children behind, Bull takes the oldest girl

named Nettie Day into his household to take care of his physically feeble wife, Mrs. Langdon, a former rural schoolteacher. Nettie is loved by Cyril Stanley, Bull's ranch hand, who helps Bull in breeding Prince Perfection, a specimen of thoroughbred cattle, and tries to build a home for Nettie in his spare time. Ever present in the story is Bull's illegitimate, half-breed son, Jake, half-witted and indecipherable in speech because of a knock on his head by Bull. He discovers Bull's rape of Nettie during Mrs. Langdon's absence but fails to make himself understood by Angella Loring, an English woman recluse on a neighboring ranch that has been given to her without her knowledge by Dr. McDermott in return for his education, which was financed by her father. Upon her return, Mrs. Langdon discovers the secret of Nettie's pregnancy and dies of shock. Meanwhile, Nettie runs away, is brought to Angella by Dr. McDermott, and gives birth to a baby. A sisterly sympathy gradually grows between Nettie and Angella, and, when Bull comes to claim his child, Angella frightens him away with a rifle. A plague breaks out in Alberta, and Nettie joins Dr. McDermott in medical service. Bull steals the baby and goes to claim Nettie, but he is gored to death by Prince Perfection, set free by the Chinese cook upon his flight from the plague. The baby dies of cold weather, but the romance ends with the happy union of Nettie with Cyril and that of Angella with Dr. McDermott.

Eaton's last novel, *His Royal Nibs*, again depicts the frontier life on an Albertan ranch through the love story between Hilda McPherson and Cheerio, the former the daughter of P.D. McPherson, who is the proprietor of O Bar O, an Albertan ranch managed by a foreman named Bully Bill, and the latter a young Englishman looking for a temporary job. Cheerio is hired, assigned to chores despised by cowboys, and looked down upon by almost everybody on the ranch, including Hilda, her brother Sandy, Bully, and Roughneck Holy Smoke, but he is content with his position, greets everybody with "Cheerio," by which he is known to the ranchers, sticks to taking a bath every morning, proves himself to be a first-rate rider, gradually wins the respect of the ranchers, devotes his spare time to searching for dinosaur fossils and finds a cave on a cliff in which he paints pictures of Indians and also of Hilda, for he begins to take a fancy in her. As a girl with desires for romance, Hilda's heart also throbs with constant curiosity for Cheerio, but at the same time she repulses and reviles everything associated with his presence, for his sleek dress, his habit of bath, his aristocratic English air, his fractured English speech, and his interest in dinosaur fossils stand for everything that her ranch life is not. Adding to these is her jealousy aroused by his gold locket, in which is a picture of a lovely woman whom Hilda mistakes for his fiancée. Her dislike for him reaches its zenith when he faints in a scene of cattle branding and in delirium reveals his cowardice to be a constitutional defect.

P.D. McPherson, who has been kept literally in the backdrop up to this point—the middle of the romance—comes to the fore with his obsession for winning the world

championship of chess. P.D., as he is called in the romance, has built up a reputation as the chess champion of Western Canada and now determines to defeat the greatest chess player in the United States. Faced with being discharged from his job because of his cowardice, Cheerio proposes to P.D. that he stay on and play as his opponent at chess until he is defeated, which P.D. accepts. Cheerio turns out to be a better hand at chess and each time defeats P.D., who gradually sinks into gloom and neglects Bully's urge for him to give the order of the fall roundup. It is not until Cheerio detects the impending trouble for the cattle and secretly changes the position of chess pieces that P.D. finally gets the chance to win. This, together with his rescues of Hilda from Roughneck's lariat, eventually wins for him Hilda's affection. The defeat of P.D. in the meantime attracts the attention of the editor of the Calgary *Blizzard*, who sends Duncan Mallison to O Bar O to investigate the matter. He accidentally discovers Cheerio to be the lost son and heir of Lord Chelsmore. The novel thus ends happily with the reconciliation of Cheerio as duke of the O Bar O and Hilda as the darling duchess when Cheerio reveals his identity as Edward Eaton Charlesmore of Macclesfield and Coventry, an allusion to Eaton's father, Edward Eaton.

Eaton's short stories are not unlike her novels in subject matter. The largest group deals with Japanese subjects and Eurasian characters ("Two Converts," "Kirishima-San," "The Pot of Paint," "A Half Caste," "A Father," "An Unexpected Grandchild," and "A Daughter of Two Lands"), but others feature the Irish ("Delia Dissents: Her Diary Records the End of a Great Endeavor"), the Chinese ("Amoy, a Chinese Girl"), or Caucasians ("Eye That Saw Not"). Most of these stories attend to cross-cultural issues, though some have to do with issues of gender and artistic creation ("Margot" and "Eyes That Saw Not").

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ZHIMING PAN

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# F



## ◆ FEMINISM AND ASIAN AMERICA

Feminism in Asian America is a collective response to racism, sexism, cultural nationalism, and a call for heterogeneity in various locations—feminist scholarship, organization, and activism. It aims to reconsider the gender and ethnicity paradigm around nexuses of race, ethnicity, gender, and class in Asian America. It emerges to challenge the Orientalism inflicted upon Asian women and the stereotypes American mainstreams hold of Asian American women. Contemporary Asian American feminism also attempts to extend its territory to other Asian subjects in a transnational context by including women across boundaries of race, class, and nationality.

Asian American feminism is profoundly attached to the **civil rights movement**, the second-wave feminist movement, and the Asian American movement in the 1960s and throughout the 1970s, when Asian American women interrogated the marginalization of women of color in these movements and asserted Asian American women's voices in the feminist and **Asian American studies** agendas. Simply put, the Asian American feminist movement arises from a conscious and strategic move to resist, interrogate, and analyze the ethnocentrism of white feminism, sexism, and cultural nationalism in the Asian American community.

In the 1970s Asian American women, together with African American or Hispanic women, became more aware of the barriers and struggles they faced as a group. On the one hand, they noticed that the white American feminist movement dismissed race as irrelevant to the feminist agenda. Asian American women were underrepresented in leadership roles, academia, and anthologies. These women also found Asian American women neglected in the early Asian American studies movement. As a result, there was



an urgent need for Asian American women to counter racism and sexism at the same time.

In the earlier phase (1970s–1980s) of Asian American feminist consciousness-raising and political and literary practice, Asian American feminists had to overcome many obstacles and make Asian American women's experiences relevant to both feminist and racial concerns.

Asian American feminist activists first introduced Asian American women's experiences into university classrooms. By virtue of limited written materials and resources available to examine Asian American women, universities such as the University of California at Berkeley and San Francisco State University made an effort to first introduce Asian women and then Asian American women's oral histories in their curriculum and offered courses on Asian American women to help raise Asian American feminist consciousness. The effort led to the first journal, *Asian Women*, being published in 1971. It included papers students wrote for the first class on Asian women at the University of California, Berkeley.

In the meantime, literature became a site of conflict, contestation, and resistance for Asian American women. Earlier feminist writers engaged themselves in auto/biographical and life writings to counter stereotypes, sexism, and racism. They primarily reflected immigrant women's efforts and struggles to construct their cultural identities. Chinese American women's writings played a leading role in creating new images of the self in self-representation or biographical writings and in forging matrilineal relations in their works.

Maxine Hong Kingston's award-winning memoir *The Woman Warrior* was published in 1976. It is seminal in that it incorporates inquiry of gendered identity in revisiting and revising history, memory, ethnicity, and culture from a feminist perspective. It unquestionably contributes to a feminist understanding of the gender politics in the Chinese American community and provides a useful theoretical frame to examine similar questions in other Asian American communities as well. Although the book received controversial reviews and critique from white feminists and Asian American male writers, it marks the beginning of Asian American feminist intervention to link literature to culture concerning gender and ethnicity. Most importantly, it indicates earlier feminist efforts to establish matrilineal relations to Asian American history, tradition, and home culture; to move away from male-dominant cultural nationalism; and to assert women's views of culture.

Ruth Lum McCunn's *Thousand Pieces of Gold: A Biographical Novel* (1981) was an acclaimed biography of a Chinese immigrant woman's journey from China to the United States, followed by her struggles for independence in the American West. Some Chinese American women writers, such as Amy Tan, also wrote about immigrant women's lives but used fictional forms. *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), focusing on four mothers, four daughters, and four families, portrays ways matrilineal relations are

formed among Chinese American women—immigrant mothers and American-born daughters. It became a *New York Times* best seller. Nevertheless, like *The Woman Warrior*, the book was critiqued for its negative portrayal of Chinese men and was involved in the debate about feminist and cultural nationalist agendas.

Attention to matrilineal relations is also found in Japanese American women's writings. Mitsuye **Yamada** uses her poems and stories to reflect the role matrilineal relations play in Japanese American women's identity construction, while defying racism at various levels. Hisaye **Yamamoto's** *Seventeen Syllables and Other Stories* (1988) addresses issues concerning gender and ethnicity with focuses, among other things, on cultural conflicts and generation gaps between the *issei*—the first-generation Japanese Americans, and the *nisei*—American-born Japanese children.

Unlike Chinese or Japanese American women writers, Indian American women writers, such as Meena **Alexander** and Bharati **Mukherjee**, position their works in a postcolonial discourse or a diasporic world and write about the consequences of dislocation for immigrant women from India. Alexander's poetry and autobiographical writings reflect her search for home, whereas Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989) presents an Indian woman on a nonstop journey from India to the United States.

A number of Asian American feminist anthologies were also published in the 1970s and 1980s. Besides *Asian Women* (1971), a few more anthologies were published: *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981), although addressing American women of color in general, also includes Asian American feminist scholarship. Two other anthologies—*The Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology* (1989) and *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writing by and about Asian American Women* (1989)—are collective efforts to define Asian American feminism.

From the late 1980s until the early twenty-first century, although Asian American feminist studies and discussions of Asian American literature made further efforts to theorize gender in relation to ethnicity, they continued to recognize differences among Asian American women while finding common ground based on race considered. They deemed it more important to disrupt the homogeneity of Asian American women's experiences because they are not inherently monolithic or homogenous, especially given the diverse demographic features of the Asian American community. Therefore, demographic changes in the Asian American population and the influx of new immigrants from various Asian countries helped initiate a feminist paradigm shift to difference, diaspora, and heterogeneity, in addition to seeking connections between Asia and Asian America. In 1987 Esther Ngan-Ling Chow showed her concerns about a lack of feminist consciousness among Asian Americans and proposed to link the intersectionality of race, gender, class, and culture to Asian American women's experiences. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Lisa Lowe are also among Asian American feminist scholars to orient to difference. Lowe's "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity:

Marking Asian American Differences" (1991) is a landmark essay for the feminist paradigm shift to difference. Echoing Spivak and Lowe, other Asian American feminists focus more on multiple nexuses of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or class. Along the same line, Asian American feminist scholars started to consider the role that transnational feminism plays in Asian American women's experiences. They incorporated feminist activism and literary practices in forging connections, affiliations, or coalitions with border crossing and other categories of identities.

Beginning approximately in the mid-1990s, Asian American women writers wove transnational feminist concerns in their creative or life writings. A Vietnamese American woman writer, Lan Cao, published *Monkey Bridge* (1997), while a Japanese American woman writer, Kyoko Mori, produced *Polite Lies: On Being a Woman Caught Between Cultures* (1997). These works—fiction or prose—both reflect the authors' deliberate efforts to weave different cultures together and cross-examine gender politics or issues of cultural identities.

In the 1990s, Asian American feminist scholars and activists continued to publish anthologies such as *The State of Asian America: Activism and Resistance in the 1990s* (1994), *Making More Waves: New Writing by Asian American Women* (1997), *Dragon Ladies: Asian American Feminists Breathe Fire* (1997), *Dangerous Women: Gender and Korean Nationalism* (1998), and *Other Sisterhoods: Literary Theory and U.S. Women of Color* (1998). These anthologies, together with the body of literary works at the same period, continue Asian American feminist efforts to theorize feminism in Asian America. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Asian Diasporas; Orientalism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America; Sexism and Asian America.

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DONG LI

### ◆ *FIFTH CHINESE DAUGHTER* (WONG)

Written by Jade Snow Wong (1922–2006) and published in 1945, this autobiographical novel "depicts the 'collision of worlds' between the traditions of the old world and the lure of American values and lifestyles. *Fifth Chinese Daughter* is one of the earlier works by Asian Americans where the dilemma of bridging two different cultures is addressed" (Ng 1995, 1673). Greatly appreciated by Maxine Hong Kingston as "the Mother of Chinese American literature" (Bloom 1997, 16), Jade Snow Wong depicts a perfect example of the qualities of traditional Chinese and American individuality and tries to deal with the two cultures harmoniously without damaging either one.

### A CHINESE DAUGHTER AT HOME

Born in San Francisco in 1922, Jade Snow Wong lived in San Francisco's Chinatown, which was isolated from the white society, when she was a child. From her father, Wong learns Chinese calligraphy, ancient Chinese culture, and history because he thinks that all Chinese children in the United States should learn Chinese so that they could acquire the knowledge of Chinese culture and history. One evening he announces that Jade Snow would go to a Chinese evening school so that she could

become acquainted with China's great rivers, T'ang poetry, and Chinese history. At home she helps her mother with housework, such as cooking and washing dishes, as a filial Chinese daughter should.

Young Jade Snow follows her father as he works to observe what he is doing, and she raises many questions because she is curious. To satisfy his young daughter's demand, her father begins to teach her Chinese history by asking her to recite after him such statements as "Wong Ti was the first king of China" (Wong 1995, 4). Jade Snow repeats such sentences repeatedly until they become rooted in her memory. By practicing like this, she learns Chinese language and history. These sentences are inscribed in her mind and have a far-reaching influence on her.

Her mother tells her that a girl should be polite and never rough enough for fist-fights. This kind of teaching has an unconsciously crucial influence on the young daughter living in a Chinese community. One day, a bigger girl hits Jade Snow with her fists. Jade Snow clenches her fists and has the impulse to strike back. But her mother's familiar reminder echoes in her ears: "Even if another should strike you, you must not strike him, for then your guilt would be as great as his" (Wong 1995, 14). What little Jade Snow can do is to control her fists and burst into tears for relief.

Filial piety is emphasized by her parents time and again. Family is most important to the Chinese, whereas filiality is the essence that keeps the family together. Her father quotes Confucius to teach her. "He who is filial toward elders and fraternal toward brothers and is fond of offending his superiors is rare indeed; he who is not fond of offending his superiors and is fond of making revolutions has never been known" (Wong 1995, 15). So offending superiors is considered *unfilial*.

As her father announces, the peace and stability of a nation depends upon proper relationships established in the home. Confucianism emphasizes the importance of family: if an emperor fails to handle the relationships among his family members, he cannot reign over the country peacefully and powerfully. That is to say, a harmonious family is the foundation of a peaceful country. When her father is hospitalized, Jade Snow's mother is worried that if something happens to him, the whole family will collapse. Thinking of the horrifying consequence, her mother bursts into tears in front of her. For the first time she not only understands the vulnerability of her mother but also feels a "novel closeness" (Wong 1995, 81) to her.

Nurtured in the Chinese culture, Jade Snow is proud of her origin, although racism visits her repeatedly. When she goes to English school where "Jade Snow would be forced to learn more English" (Wong 1995, 67), she finds herself the only Chinese student among the "foreign" classmates of her age. It is at the school that Jade Snow experiences racial discrimination. One day after school, for example, everyone has gone home except herself and a boy named Richard, who has been waiting for a chance like this to insult her. "With malicious intent in his eyes, he burst forth, 'Chinky,

Chinky, Chinaman" (68). Astonished at the sudden challenge, she is sensible enough to keep silent, which provokes the racist boy. He picks up an eraser, throws it at her, and laughs. Faced with such provocation, Jade Snow resorts to Chinese civilization for consolation. "Everybody knew . . . that the Chinese people had a superior culture. Her ancestors had created a great art heritage and had made inventions important to world civilization—the compass, gunpowder, paper, and a host of other essentials" (68). Moreover, she looks down upon Richard, thinking that his "grades couldn't compare with her own, and his home training was obviously amiss" (68). It is encouraging that she is brave enough to compete with her classmates and to be proud of her Chinese heritage, instead of being confused and self-contemptuous. So far, Chinese identity has stayed rooted in her.

### AN AMERICAN INDIVIDUAL OUTDOORS

Jade Snow's education begins to reward her. In grade four, she is surprised by the practices of her teacher, Miss Mullohand, who has wavy, blonde hair, fair skin, and blue eyes. One day in the schoolyard, Jade Snow is hit on the hand by a carelessly flung bat. The teacher holds her, feeling the sore hand and wiping away her tears. The teacher's consolation moves her to a strange feeling; she begins to be aware of the difference between the American lady and her mother, who never hugs her to comfort her.

Jade Snow picks up a sense of individuality little by little. When her graduation from high school approaches, she inquires about qualifications for a college education. Although she meets the academic requirements for the state university, the fees will be beyond her even if she has a part-time job. She consults her father, who surprises her greatly. According to her father, the sons must have priority over the daughters because they will perpetuate their ancestral heritage by permanently bearing the Wong family name and transmitting it through their bloodline. They will make pilgrimages to ancestral burial grounds and preserve them forever, while the daughters leave home at marriage to go to their husbands' families to carry on the heritage in their names. The dream "to be more than an average Chinese or American girl" (Wong 1995, 109) depends on the opportunity to go to college. Her father, however, withdraws financial support because he thinks that she has been "given an above-average Chinese education for an American-born Chinese girl" (109). Although frustrated by her father's decision, Jade Snow does not say anything, but her mind is undergoing a stormy protest. "I can't help being born a girl. Perhaps, even being a girl, I don't want to marry, just to raise sons! Perhaps I have a right to want more than sons! I am a person, besides being a female! Don't the Chinese admit that women also have feelings and minds" (110).

Later, with her own efforts, she attends San Francisco Junior College, where she takes one course, sociology, that "completely revolutionized her thinking shattering her

Wong-constructed conception of the order of things" (Wong 1995, 125). One day her instructor discusses the topic of the relationship between parents and children. The teacher argues that children are individuals and that their parents cannot demand their unquestioning obedience any more. The right thing for parents to do is to try to understand their children, who have their rights as well. The statement arouses Jade Snow's consciousness and consideration about herself as an individual. She has been docile to satisfy her parents' and brother's unquestioned demands. Her consciousness is saying, "I am an individual besides being a Chinese daughter. I have rights too" (125). For the first time she thinks that perhaps her parents are wrong in forgetting that their daughter will become a woman in new America, not in old China. Encouraged by the teacher's statement and realizing her own individuality, she calls a boy named Joe for a date. She gets dressed up, full of happy anticipation. But when she is ready, her father suddenly stops her by asking whether she has obtained permission from her parents to go out. Confronted with her father's demand, Jade Snow is brave enough to challenge his authority. All of a sudden, she bursts out her declaration of independence.

The debate between Jade Snow and her father becomes an argument between American culture and Chinese culture. The authoritarian father is symbolized by the saying that he has eaten more salt than she has eaten rice, whereas Jade Snow is represented by the belief that a girl is an individual. The former resorts to Confucianism for support, and the latter comes to this discussion from the perspective of an American, and of the teacher's ideas. The result is that Jade Snow is given the freedom to find some answers for herself. From then on, she comes and goes without being questioned. The family where she used to be nurtured turns out to be a site of her independence, a site for her to obtain a new identity. It is the first step for her to be recognized as an individual by her own family.

The fact that Jade Snow wins the debate does not mean that she has become a pure American at the cost of the Chinese identity as some Chinese Americans do. Her advantage is to stand between two cultures—she understands and accepts both of them without favoring either one. The Chinese culture has nurtured her, offering her a particular foundation for her future, such as the values of hard work and of the importance of a harmonious family. The American culture provides her with an opportunity to be an independent individual. The blend of the two cultures produces a special identity—to be both a Chinese woman and an American individual. In her declaration of independence, she tries to talk her parents into treating her as an individual with her own rights instead of as a child. But she keeps her Chinese identity—to be a filial daughter. When she finds her parents have conceded defeat, she understands that it is a hard blow to them and they have lost face. To soften the blow, she explains that to get along with others would help her deal with life more easily in her future. Moreover, she assures them, "You must have confidence that I shall remain true to the spirit of

your teachings. I shall bring back to you the new knowledge of whatever I learn" (Wong 1995, 129–130).

After getting a measure of freedom, Jade Snow concludes that she should not discard her parents' teaching to accept the philosophy of foreigners as a substitute, because the foreign philosophy is also vulnerable to criticism. Her dialectic analysis of her situation indicates that she knows how to analyze a problem from the opposing side. This ability enables her to be wisely sensible to know who she is and where she is. She knows that she has grown up reading Confucius and learning to embroider and cook rice and that she cannot reject Chinese fatalism. Chinese culture is inscribed in her mind, like a poem carved onto a piece of stone or steel, so deep that it cannot be wiped away. But she is an American in a white society. It is impractical for her to be pure Chinese. So she has to find a middle way to accommodate two cultures.

Although the search is not easy, Jade Snow is determined to go on without turning back. Mills College offers her a full scholarship so that she can continue her study without worrying about tuition. The older she is, the more she learns about life and society. At 18 she re-reads a diary she wrote at the age of 16, when she proclaimed her declaration of independence, and sees many points of difference: she now is a very serious young woman. "That two years had made her a little wiser in the ways of the world, a little more realistic, less of a dreamer, and she hoped more of a personality" (Wong 1995, 132).

With a wider scope for life, Jade Snow improves her social status gradually. One day, she brings her instructor and classmates to visit her father's factory as a field trip. Her parents welcome them warmly. Although it is a smaller factory than the American one they visit next, Jade Snow does not show any contempt for her parents or reject her kinship with the factory. Following the project, she prepares a term paper for a year's course in the English novel. She has an opportunity to compare the English and Chinese approaches to novels and to link her past and present learning. Her English professor is pleased with her paper, "The Chinese Novel," and singles it out for reading at an English conference to be held at the college. By working hard and connecting with Chinese culture, she improves herself from "a mere spectator" to "a participant" (Wong 1995, 166).

A key to her success is to distinguish her social life from her family life. Jade Snow follows her father's advice—"Do not try to force foreign ideas into my home" (Wong 1995, 130). When she visits her parents during weekends, she is a Chinese daughter again by accompanying her mother to church as usual. "Jade Snow no longer attempted to bring the new Western learning into her Oriental family. When she entered the Wong household, she slipped into her pattern of withdrawal, and she performed her usual daughterly duties—shopping for Mama, doing household chores, writing business letters in English for Daddy—in the role of an obedient Chinese girl. But now



she no longer felt stifled or dissatisfied, for she could return to another life in which she fitted as an individual" (169).

Jade Snow succeeds in being a dutiful Chinese daughter and an American individual simultaneously without confusion, although this kind of double identity is extremely difficult to maintain. The young man Narcissus in Roman mythology sees his image reflected in water and falls in love with it. The image is his other identity that he cannot handle properly and causes his death. So it is generally believed that double identities lead to confusion and possibly death of the subject. It is, however, a different case with Jade Snow. She not only grasps Chinese language and calligraphy but also understands Chinese civilization and history. She understands the differences between the two cultures and knows well how to deal with them. Her father visits the college art gallery with Jade Snow when he goes to Mills College for her graduation ceremony in 1942. Impressed by some pottery Jade Snow has created in an art class, he tells her that her grandfather is artistically talented and would have been very glad to see her work. It is obvious that her father is praising her indirectly. Jade Snow answers properly, "Is that so?" instead of "Thank you" (Wong 1995, 180). When she puts on her academic regalia in front of her mother, Mama says nothing with tears in her eyes. Everyone says congratulations to her at her moment of triumph except her parents. But Jade Snow understands their mute happiness—they are proud of her. Her father is proud because the college president, although busy at that ceremony, "gave face" to let him take some pictures of the president herself and Jade Snow. Her mother's tears are mingled with joy and excitement.

The success in claiming to be an individual daughter at home and a hardworking student in school is just the beginning of her career. Her graduation presents another serious question—can she be as competent in society as she has been in school? When she looks for a job, a white interviewer's advice stings her into speechlessness and numbness. "If you are smart, you will look for a job only among your Chinese firms. You cannot expect to get anywhere in American business houses. After all, I am sure you are conscious that racial prejudice on the Pacific Coast will be a great handicap to you" (Wong 1995, 188).

Racial discrimination does not thwart her ambition, though. Later she finds a job as a secretary for the Navy, but a morass of detail and monotonous copy typing irritates her. Her boss lets her find out how practical cold vaccines will be. Although her report is well organized with detailed data, she finds that her chance for promotion is slim because the American work world is a man's world. When she asks her boss for his ideas, she is told that a woman could not compete for equal pay in a man's world.

Her first attempt at a promising career failing, Jade Snow retreats to the Santa Cruz Mountains for a vacation—to introspect her identity in depth: although she is recognized by her parents as an individual, the white-dominated society has not

accepted her as an equal. When reflecting, she suddenly finds a fresh path in front of her—she can write down her experience as a Chinese daughter and an American individual. But she is not sure whether she can make a living by writing because she has a vague impression that writers struggle for a living. The gene she inherits from her grandfather brings her through—she will sell her pottery for a living. Her autobiography, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, was published in 1945, and she opened her own ceramics shop in Chinatown.

### ADVANTAGE OF HER CHINESENESS

Jade Snow's success is based upon her Chinese identity to some extent. When she fails to advance in the white society, she resorts to the valuable and inexhaustible mine—Chinese culture. Her sound knowledge of Chinese language, history, and culture enables her to be a competent writer. Chinese American writers will need more chances to show themselves, their life, and their ancestral culture. Readers can discern the influence of Chinese culture in both her book and her life. When she was interviewed for *Contemporary Authors*, Jade Snow announced, "I give priority to women's responsibility for a good home life; hence, I put my husband and four children before my writing or ceramics" (Bloom 1997, 110).

Traditional Chinese ways of writing are embodied in the writing style of Jade Snow Wong's autobiography. Most white autobiographies are written in the first person to emphasize the emergence of the individual. *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, however, is told under the cloak of a third person. "I" is transformed into "she." As a result, the protagonist and the author merge into one. The reason that Jade Snow employs the third person is that she sticks to the personal modesty Chinese culture emphasizes. In "Author's Note to the Original Edition" and "Introduction to the 1989 Edition," Wong explains, "Although a 'first person singular' book, this story is written in the third person from Chinese habit. The submergence of the individual is literally practiced. In written Chinese, prose or poetry, the word 'I' rarely appears, but is understood. . . . Even written in English, an 'I' book by a Chinese would seem outrageously immodest to anyone raised in the spirit of Chinese propriety" (Wong 1995, xiii). Modesty is one of the Chinese virtues that requires respect for others. Jade Snow skillfully conflates it with her autobiography to illustrate the Chinese family teaching embodied in her.

In 1951, the State Department of the United States sent her on a four-month world tour as an example of the success of a Chinese American woman who, "born to poor Chinese immigrants, could gain a toehold among prejudiced America" (viii). The most valuable spirit found in this book is that Jade Snow Wong identifies herself with Chinese culture and adopts it as a guide for her family and social lives, just as she writes, "My Chinese heritage has been my strength and advantage" (xi). See also Chinese American Autobiography; Racism and Asian America.

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LONGHAI ZHANG

◆ FILIAL PIETY

Filial piety is the central part of a Confucian value system concerned with the need to produce beneficial behavior patterns from children who are expected to care for their parents. According to Confucius (551–487 BC), a variety of virtues is needed to maintain a strong society: filial piety, righteousness, love, loyalty, sincerity, justice, tranquility, moderation, and harmony. Filial piety stands as the most important. Even in today's Marxist/capitalist society of China, filial piety is still valued. *The Book of Filial Piety (Xiao Jing)* is the key text defining this Chinese virtue. In the text, through a series of conversations between Confucius and his pupil, Zeng Zi, the main points of the patriarchal pattern of obedience are examined in detail. The son is expected to be the highest model of filial piety, specifically the eldest son. Indeed, the original Chinese character or ideograph for filial piety, *xiao*, is composed of two characters: *lao* (old) and *zi* (son) (Ikels 2004, 3). It is the duty of the son, specifically the eldest son, to care for his parents. Therefore, this son is expected to sacrifice almost everything for his parents, for the true purpose of his life is to take care of his parents. Even after death, that son will pay his respect to the parents. The father-son relationship becomes the model for all relationships in society, which follows a prescribed hierarchy of power: husband-wife and older brother-younger brother. Other social relationships are also modeled on such relationships, such as emperor-minister and teacher-student. The model exists even in a friend-friend relationship if one friend is considerably older.

When Buddhism first tried to become part of Chinese culture, it was rejected. The old teachings of Theravada Buddhism were too austere for the public. After all, Lord Buddha left his parents to become enlightened. For Chinese, this act demonstrated the opposite virtue of filial piety: abandonment. For Buddhism to succeed in China, it had to emphasize stories about filial piety. A selfless aspect of Buddhism would in the end fit well with Chinese filial piety. In a Jataka story about Shan-tzu, the protagonist took care of his blind parents. With this story and others, Buddhism appeared Chinese. One

day Shan-tzu went to get water, wearing deerskin as a disguise, so as not to upset the deer that watered there. Unfortunately, he was accidentally shot by the king. When the king found out what happened and that Shan-tzu's death would mean the death of his blind parents, the king promised to take care of them. When the parents learned that their son had died from a poisoned arrow, they grasped the dead body and cried. Miraculously, he was reborn, so he could take care of them. This story became famous and was repeated as a classic example of filial piety. Its connection to Buddhism was secondary.

A more important Buddhist story of filial piety would become part of Chinese lore and psyche. A religious holiday would be created based on the need to remember and respect the dead. Mu-lien, through hard study and discipline, had obtained the status of an arhat, an enlightened being with clairvoyant abilities. With such abilities, he saw his dead mother, who had been reborn as a hungry ghost. He tried to feed her, but it had no effect. Buddha suggested that special offerings be made. Mu-lien made the offerings and liberated his mother from the realm of the hungry ghosts. On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, the Festival of the Hungry Ghost is celebrated throughout China. Variations of this festival would occur in other Asian countries. In the eyes of Chinese, Buddhism and filial piety were now inseparable because a son could so love his mother that he could rescue her from hell. One could be Buddhist and Chinese. Buddhism would extend the possibilities of filial piety, as Kenneth Ch'en points out. Whereas Confucian virtue focused on the harmony of relationships here on Earth, Buddhism works for the liberation of all sentient beings in the afterlife, so they can be reborn and ultimately attain nirvana (1968, 97).

Another important pedagogical text for filial piety was popular among the common people of China: *The Twenty-four Paragons of Filial Piety*. Written in the Yuan Dynasty (1280–1368 CE) by scholar Guo Jujing from Fujian Province, this text, along with its drawings, was created primarily for children, who enjoyed the entertainment value of the tales while learning about the virtue of how parents should be the crucial focus of life. A dutiful son will do anything for his parents. He will fight demons, divorce a bad daughter-in-law, and even starve himself for his parents. Though these stories go to extremes, such is the nature of children's fables worldwide.

In one tale, Kuo Ju, an obedient son, decides to kill his only child, a son, so that there will be enough food to feed his mother. As he digs the grave so he can bury his son alive, he discovers gold. His son is kept alive. According to scholars Weimin Mo and Wenju Shen, the moral of the story is not that one should sacrifice one's son, but that one will be rewarded for such extreme sacrifice for one's parents (1999, 17). Such stories become powerful reminders of how children should respect their parents. In another story, a son even cuts part of his own body off to feed to his parent. The sacrifice is more than nutrition, for the act becomes the medicine or cure that is needed.

In *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), the Chinese American novelist Amy Tan mentions a similar story of a daughter making soup out of her flesh to feed her mother.

Filial piety originated in China and expanded to Korea, Japan, and other Asian countries that were influenced by the power of the middle country's cultural, political, and economic might. As Asian families immigrated to the United States, they brought such values of filial obligations with them. However, filial piety often conflicted with the values of Western society, which emphasized independence and individuality. Asian American literature is full of stories about how the "Americanized" children of "Asian" families had problems dealing with such conflicts as they tried to fit in while trying to maintain a show of respect toward their parents and elders; this is especially noticeable in another Chinese American writer, Jade Snow Wong's autobiography *Fifth Chinese Daughter*.

When Asians immigrated to the United States, they brought such stories of filial piety with them to tell their children. Other Chinese stories of filial piety became famous. The story of Hua Mulan comes from the *Ballad of Mulan* written in the sixth century. In a time of war, a daughter takes the place of her father, who is too old to fight. She goes off to war disguised, willing to sacrifice her life for the love of her father. Maxine Hong Kingston uses the story in her classic Asian American book *The Woman Warrior* (1976) to show what kind of dedication Asian American children are expected to give their parents. Such dedication can be overbearing for children, especially in a land where women's rights are proclaimed.

In Japan, one famous tale of filial piety is Momotaro, usually translated as peach boy. In some versions of the tale, a boy in a giant peach is sent from Heaven and is discovered by a woman who has no child. She raises him with her husband. When he becomes older, Momotaro leaves for the island of Onigashima to fight an *oni*, a demon. He returns as a dutiful hero who takes care of his parents. His whole life is about serving the needs of his parents. Momotaro is mentioned in the Japanese American writer John Okada's novel *No-No Boy* (1978), which examines the sacrifice that the oldest son must make during World War II. Ichiro and his family were sent to a Japanese American internment camp, where the boys were given a chance to show their patriotism to the United States by answering two simple loyalty questions, 27 and 28—Will you serve the United States in combat? Will you swear allegiance to this country? Ichiro was the oldest son, so out of duty to his mother, he said no-no. But he would pay a high price for his filial piety. He was despised by his Japanese American peers as a traitor.

Thus, as Asian "American" children grow up in a Western culture with its value system emphasizing independence and individuality, they are also brought up with the conflicting Asian values of being interdependent and obedient. This conflict returns repeatedly in Asian American literature.

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WAYNE STEIN

## ◆ FILIPINO AMERICAN ANTHOLOGY

Since **Filipino American literature** was first conceptualized as a distinct body of work in the Asian American anthology *Aiiieeeee!* (1974), at least a dozen Filipino American literary anthologies have been published in the United States or assembled by Filipino editors located in the United States. As part of the broader proliferation of Filipino American literature in recent years, these anthologies have facilitated the construction of Filipino American literature as an expressive field separate from the general category of Asian American literature. In the process, these texts have implicitly raised the question of what constitutes Filipino American literature, even if they have not always explicitly answered that question. When situated within a transnational history that extends as far back as the 1920s, contemporary Filipino American anthologies can be seen as part of a vibrant and complex literary tradition that is shaped, but not circumscribed, by its conditions of emergence—U.S. colonialism and imperialism in the Philippines and migration to the United States.

The period of the 1920s is often regarded as the golden age of Philippine literature in English, the moment when the first generation of Anglophone writers in Manila, under the general guidance and tutelage of the U.S. colonial regime, began to publish in great quantity. The first anthology of Filipino poetry in English, *Filipino Poetry (1900–1924)*, was put together in Manila in 1924 by Rodolfo Dato. A few years later, educator and author Paz Marquez Benitez, whose own "Dead Stars" (1925) is considered the first modern Filipino short story in English, edited the

earliest anthology of fiction called *Filipino Love Stories* (1927). Shortly thereafter, a young José Garcia **Villa** implicitly responded to Benitez's anthology by publishing *Philippine Short Stories: Best 25 Stories of 1928* (1929), borrowing his selection criteria from Edward J. O'Brien's *Best American Short Stories* series. According to Villa's brief preface, the anthology was meant to encourage Filipino writers in their artistic endeavors by giving them due recognition, to preserve the stories for posterity (especially since the usual mode of publication in this context was weekly or monthly Manila periodicals) and to cultivate an appreciative reading public. Although this was the only anthology to result from his editorial selections, Villa continued to survey and evaluate Philippine literature in English until 1941, even after he migrated to the United States in 1930. He renewed this practice, in a sense, after he stopped publishing his own poetry in the 1950s. While living in New York, Villa maintained his position as self-appointed arbiter of Filipino literary value from afar through the four editions of *A Doveglion Book of Philippine Poetry* (1962, 1965, 1975, 1993), all published in Manila.

Moving across the Pacific and into the **World War II** period, Filipino American writer Carlos **Bulosan** edited the first collection of Filipino poetry published in the United States, *Chorus for America: Six Philippine Poets* (1942). Whereas Villa's editorial criteria emphasized the aesthetic properties of literature and the metaphysical aspects of life, Bulosan foregrounded the political and revolutionary possibilities of literature. Published just weeks after the fall of Bataan, *Chorus for America* gathers a number of Filipino poets, including Villa, R. Zulueta da Costa (whose award-winning "Like the Molave" is excerpted), C.B. Rigor, R.T. Feria, and Bulosan himself (under his own name and under the pseudonym Cecilio Baroga). In his preface, Bulosan situates the anthology within a Philippine revolutionary tradition and offers the volume as engaged in the antifascist/popular front effort.

Villa's short story anthology and his "best of" essays, coupled with Bulosan's *Chorus for America*, constitute a kind of prehistory to contemporary Filipino American anthology-making. Such a history proper, when the self-conscious use of "Filipino American" (or "Pilipino American") takes root, begins with *Liwanag: Literary and Graphic Expressions by Filipinos in America*, published in San Francisco in 1975, one year after the appearance of *Aiiieeee!* This multimedia anthology consists of poetry and fiction, as well as black-and-white photographs, drawings, and paintings. Collectively assembled and edited by several West Coast Filipino American artists, *Liwanag* (Tagalog for "light" or "illumination") reflects the ethos of its time. The introduction rejects the compulsion to assimilate into mainstream culture and seeks instead to construct a "whole" Filipino American identity. The most evident way that this process is thematized and achieved is through what might be considered generational transmission in reverse, a deliberate effort at maintaining or recovering what threatens to be lost in the first generation's

migration to the United States. Thus, some of the works—such as the framing poem “Liwanag” or Joselyn Ignacio’s poem “Memories of Dusty Bamboo Mats”—look to the “homeland” to retrieve (at times, “indigenous”) Filipino cultural signifiers and practices. Similarly, other works—such as Prisco’s poem “These are the forgotten Manong” and Serafin Syquia’s poem “a sight for sour eyes”—aim to recover and connect with the history of the *manongs*, the first generation of mostly male Filipino immigrants who labored in the fields and in the canneries from the 1920s forward. The anthology contains work by a number of writers who would go on to publish books of their own (Virginia Cerenio, Jessica Hagedorn, Bayani Mariano, Oscar Peñaranda, Al Robles, and Cyn Zarco) as well as other important poets of the so-called Flips generation, such as Emily Cachapero, Lou and Serafin Syquia, and Sam Tagatac.

In its multimedia scope and ambition, *Liwanag* remains an important, if fleeting, attempt to engage in a cultural nationalist construction of Filipino American identity at a time when other social movements were absorbed in analogous strategies. Two anthologies—*Without Names* (1983) and *Liwanag: Volume 2* (1993)—follow in *Liwanag*’s wake. *Without Names* is a slim volume of poems written by many of the same writers in *Liwanag*; the latter resembles its predecessor in its multidisciplinary and in its thematic concerns with laying claim to a Filipino American identity and culture. However, *Liwanag: Volume 2* also contains pieces, particularly by women artists, which insistently take up issues of gender and sexuality. Framed by Theo Gonzalves’s preface, which highlights the rootedness of Filipino American culture within U.S. society, the volume is comprised of poetry, drama, fiction, and visual art by a new generation of artists, some of whom, such as Bino Almonte-Realuyo, Catalina Cariaga, Eugene Gloria, Vince Gotera, Rex Navarrete, Celine Salazar Parreñas, and Barbara Jane P. Reyes, have gone on to make names for themselves.

Since 1993, there has been a veritable explosion of Filipino American anthologies. Unlike the earlier anthologies, the contemporary ones seem to be concerned less with collecting and advancing a particular version or vision of Filipino American literature than with ensuring that writers of Filipino descent gain visibility in the U.S. literary marketplace. The result is an astonishing and sometimes bewildering array of Filipino American literary instantiations. Luis Francia’s edited *Brown River, White Ocean: Philippine Literature in English* (1993) is the only recent anthology that provides a diachronic, historical survey of literature produced mainly, though not exclusively, in the Philippines. Divided generically into two sections—short stories and poetry—the book is arranged chronologically, with many of the early Philippine writers coinciding with those whom Villa had earlier included in his “honor roll” essays.

Most other anthologies, by contrast, aim to gather contemporaneous literature in an effort to document a segment of Filipino writing produced at a specific historical moment. These tend to be built around such categories as gender (*Babaylan: An*



*Anthology of Filipina and Filipina American Writers*, 2000; *Going Home to a Landscape: Writings by Filipinas*, 2003); genre (*Fiction by Filipinos in America*, 1993; *Contemporary Fiction by Filipinos in America*, 1997; *Returning a Borrowed Tongue: An Anthology of Filipino and Filipino American Poetry*, 1995); and theme (*Flippin': Filipinos on America*, 1996; *Growing Up Filipino: Stories for Young Adults*, 2003).

Despite these manifold orientations, what these recent anthologies have in common is that they are addressed to remedy some kind of lack, loss, or absence—what is generally regarded as Filipino invisibility within the U.S. cultural imaginary. For example, editor Cecilia Manguerra **Brainard** states that *Fiction by Filipinos in America* and its sequel *Contemporary Fiction by Filipinos in America* are intended to redress the perceived scarcity of Filipino American literature and the alleged voicelessness of Filipinos in the United States. Other editors understand Filipino invisibility to result not so much from the dearth or absence of an available literary archive but from the way colonial and/or U.S. education has ignored or subordinated Anglophone Filipino literature. In their respective introductions to *Brown River, White Ocean* and *Returning a Borrowed Tongue*, editors Luis Francia and Nick **Carbó** position their anthologies as responses to the lack of recognition this body of work has received, both in Philippine and in U.S. higher education. Given the colonial and imperial roots of these conditions (and the basic fact that Anglophone Filipino literature is a direct effect of U.S. colonial education), it is not surprising that these editors underscore the politics of language inherent in the use of English. The very title of *Returning a Borrowed Tongue* speaks to the complexities of linguistic imposition, reception, and appropriation. In her introduction to *Babaylan*, editor Eileen **Tabios** also focuses on language as a potentially contestatory tool.

Despite these avowed assertions of anti-imperial, self-representational, postcolonial stances, the actual works anthologized in the books undertake a wide range of thematic, political, and cultural initiatives. Nowhere is this heterogeneity more evident than in *Pinoy Poetics: A Collection of Autobiographical and Critical Essays on Filipino and Filipino-American Poetics* (2004). Documenting the extensive history of writing by Filipinos in the United States, editor Nick Carbó self-consciously situates the volume within the enduring tradition of Filipino anthology-making and seeks to challenge the condition of invisibility by inscribing a Filipino presence into world Anglophone literary history. However, the essays themselves—written by both Philippine- and U.S.-located poets—traverse a remarkably broad spectrum of aesthetic theories, from the overtly political (Mila D. Aguilar's "The Poetics of Clarita Roja," Marlon Unas Esguerra's "The Poetry of Rebolusyon," Barbara J. Pulmano Reyes's "The Building of 'Anthropologic,'" Tony Robles's "A Poetics of the Common Man(ong)") to the meditative and philosophical (Gemino H. Abad's "What Does One Look for in a Poem?" Eric Gamalinda's "Language, Light, and the Language of

Light"). Other poets theorize their poetics in relation to English (Ricardo M. de Ungria's "An English Apart," Kristin Naca's "The Cult of Language in Pinoy Poetry"), ethnic identity (Leslieann Hobayan's "Mo(ve)ments in Silence: Constructing 'Home' in the Gap Through Poetry and Letters," Patrick Pardo's "On Being a Filipino Poet," Oscar Peñaranda's "The Filipino American Sensibility in Literature," Jean Vengua's "Abilidad and Flux: Notes on a Filipino American Poetics"), and queer sexuality (Joseph O. Legaspi's "Boys in Skirts and Other Subjects That Matter," Joel B. Tan's "Brown Faggot Poet: Notes on Zip File Poetry, Cultural Nomadism, and the Politics of Publishing").

In general, then, contemporary Filipino American anthologies take up and enact a host of artistic and political projects. They anthologize the well established (Cecilia Manguerra Brainard, N.V.M. **Gonzalez**, Jessica Hagedorn, F. Sionil José, Bienvenido **Santos**, and Linda **Ty-Casper**) next to younger writers (Catalina Cariaga, Sarah Gambito, Paolo Javier, and Patrick Rosal), Philippine authors next to Filipino American authors, women writers next to male writers, colonial pasts next to postcolonial presents, poetry next to fiction, and experimental next to traditional forms, all the while staging the continuities and discontinuities that mark the history of Anglophone Filipino literature. **See also** Colonialism and Postcolonialism; Filipino American Poetry, Filipino American Short Story.

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MARTIN JOSEPH PONCE

## ◆ FILIPINO AMERICAN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Autobiographical texts by Filipino Americans unveil the interconnection between historical writing, racial positioning, and literary experimentation. The earliest Filipino immigrants wrote autobiography to engage their personal experiences in the United States, most often in contrast to official or idealized versions of the country popular in the Philippines at the time. Filipinos, colonized by Americans from 1898–1946, generally believed in the notion of the American Dream, and many traveled there as workers or as *pensionados* (young men who received college scholarships to later return to the Philippines). The first three known Filipino American autobiographies—Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart: A Personal History* (1943), Manuel Buaken's *I Have Lived with the American People* (1948), and Benny F. Feria's *Filipino Son* (1954)—describe the experiences of those early immigrants. Bulosan's narrative, the founding Filipino American text and a classic of Asian American literature, centers on his experiences as a migrant worker in West Coast farms and Alaskan canneries and as a union organizer in the United States after his arrival in Seattle in 1930. Seduced by the idea of the American Dream to seek his fortune in the United States, Bulosan chronicles in detail the destruction of that fantasy as he encounters the economic hardships and racial oppression that many immigrants experienced. Having had only three years of schooling in the Philippines, Bulosan, afflicted with tuberculosis, which obliged him to spend years in a hospital, spent hours reading and writing, eventually becoming one of the most prolific Filipino American writers of poetry, essays, and novels. Extensive critical attention to *America Is in the*

*Heart* has focused on Bulosan's representation of the struggles of early Filipino immigrants, the representation of gender roles, race and class consciousness, notions of American democracy, and political commitment.

In opposition, Buaken's and Feria's texts are little known and have received no serious critical attention. Buaken's autobiography is written along the same lines as Bulosan's and describes the life of Filipino workers in California from the 1920s–1940s, ending with his 1942 enlistment into the 1st Filipino Infantry Regiment of the U.S. Army. But one notable exception makes this work a crucial complement to Bulosan's narrative: Buaken went to the United States as a scholarship student who was meant to study divinity at Princeton. He came from an upper-middle-class Protestant family, and his early life centered on education, music, and religion. His family sent him to the United States to prepare him to take over his father's church. But Buaken had other plans and remained in the West Coast. This led to an estrangement from his family and entrance into a life completely different from the one he was accustomed to, working as a dishwasher, a cook, and at stoop labor for menial pay. Buaken's autobiography also highlights the racism against Filipinos in California, including details of riots and institutionalized rejection of Filipinos. Finally, Buaken enters university part-time until he joins the Army.

Feria's *Filipino Son*, on the other hand, elides the negative perspectives on the United States and American racial attitudes patent in Bulosan's and Buaken's texts. Feria spent most of his time in the United States in Chicago, studying at DePaul University and the University of Chicago and participating actively in community events that included publishing the first Filipino American newspaper, the *Commonwealth Free Press*. The narrative ends with the account of the publication of his volume of poetry, *Never Tomorrow* (1947). Of doubtful literary value, *Filipino Son* nevertheless provides a description of the lives of Filipinos in the Midwest. Feria's chronicle is notable for his determined optimism regarding the treatment of Filipinos and other immigrants and his unquestioning acceptance toward the ideal of assimilation to the United States.

Remarkably, five decades passed before other autobiographies were produced, although this recent production is outstanding for its literary quality. Connecting thematically and chronologically with the early autobiographies, Peter Jamero's *Growing Up Brown: Memoirs of a Filipino American* (2006) is the story of the "bridge generation," the American-born children of the early immigrants. As a *campo* boy, whose family included the dozens of young Filipino American men working in farm labor camps, Jamero recounts his experience of the United States as a place where Filipinos occupied an ambivalent position. His autobiography, written during his retirement, covers over six decades of West Coast Filipino American life, giving readers a comprehensive perspective of the problems and opportunities the second generation of

Filipino Americans experienced. Other second-generation narratives include Pati Navalta Poblete's *The Oracles: My Filipino Grandparents in America* (2006), a heartfelt reminiscence of how her adolescence was transformed by the arrival of both her maternal and paternal grandparents to the United States, and Benny Agbayani's *Big League Survivor* (2000), the autobiography of a Major League Baseball player. Poblete focuses on the typical generational and cultural clash between grandparents and their grandchildren but also describes her growing appreciation of her family history and Filipino culture. Agbayani's autobiography, written in the tradition of other sports autobiographies, stresses his appreciation for Filipino American life in Hawaii, his struggle to enter the big leagues, and his success as a baseball player.

The experience of **biraciality** and biculturalism links Norman Reyes's *Child of Two Worlds: An Autobiography of a Filipino-American, or Vice Versa* (1995) and Patricia Justiniani MacReynolds's *Almost Americans: A Quest for Dignity* (1997), inviting readers to examine the ways in which Filipino Americans articulate hybrid positions. Reyes's autobiography of his childhood unveils perspectives on race in the Philippines, particularly during the American occupation, when his Filipino father returned from the United States with his American wife. The couple envisioned their children as a bridge between two worlds, and Reyes, reflecting the idea of the United States as the pathway to modernization, stresses the positive aspects of this position. From his privileged position in middle-class Filipino American life, Reyes consciously performs the role of a cultural guide who introduces the American public to the customs, traditions, and idiosyncrasies of the Philippines by describing the events that illustrate the similarities and differences between American and Filipino ways. MacReynolds's autobiography, set in Los Angeles, focuses on a multiethnic family—Filipino father, Norwegian mother, and American daughter—as they negotiate the racial and cultural demands of society. Most of the text centers on Patsy's childhood memories of trying to understand her parents and dealing with mainstream society's prejudice against interracial marriage. The eponymous notion of being "almost Americans" illustrates the ambivalence of persons who struggle to belong to a society that looks upon them with distrust.

Syndicated cartoonist Lynda Barry's *One Hundred Demons* (2002), an experimental graphic text structured in short, titled narrative pieces, is the coming-of-age story of a mixed-race Filipina artist. The independent sections are linked by the protagonist/narrator and by a series of motifs, notably the concept of the demon and the need to paint it to master it. Barry's "demons" are the objects, events, or concepts that remind her of the difficult emotional stages in her young life. She negotiates her ethnic position mostly through her Filipino family and their customs and, importantly, by intersecting issues of race, class, and her dreams of becoming a writer. Another singular text is Luis Francia's *Eye of the Fish: A Personal Archipelago* (2001), which weaves memories of this journalist's childhood and adolescence in the

Philippines with historical anecdotes, stories of his professional life in the United States, and commentaries on U.S.-Philippine cultural relations, in the context of several trips he takes as an adult back to his homeland. This sophisticated text explores the notions of hybrid Filipino identity and “home,” the narration of history, and cross-cultural belonging.

These autobiographies reveal the predominant issues that have marked the history of Filipino American self-representation, such as changing attitudes toward Filipinos in American society and the possibilities of literary experimentation. By engaging narratives of the self, these Filipino American autobiographers focus our attention on the ways history nuances self-perception and how changing views on ethnic writing invite us to rethink the history that created particular communities. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization; Racism and Asian America.

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ROCÍO G. DAVIS

### ◆ FILIPINO AMERICAN LITERATURE

Filipino American literature is rooted in the experiences of the laborers who migrated from the Philippines to the United States in the early twentieth century, the U.S. **civil rights movement**, and the development of literature in the Philippines. Filipino American literature today is firmly tied to Philippine literature in English,

which is itself a product of a long history of colonization and decolonization and which is understandable only in relation to the development of literatures in other languages in the Philippines.

Before Magellan's landfall (and subsequent death) on the eastern rim of the Pacific Ocean in 1521, the islands that would become known as the Philippines were part of a trading network that ringed the South China Sea and extended from Madagascar to Europe to Korea. During the Spanish colonial period, 1565–1899, precolonial indigenous cultural production suffered major attacks, but many forms were transformed and translated. Late in this period publishing in several indigenous languages and in Spanish flourished, and the circulation of texts was crucial for the growth of nationalist movements that would erupt in the Philippine Revolution of 1896. Writing in Spanish continued well into the next period, running from 1899 to 1946, the period of U.S. and, from 1942 to 1945, Japanese occupation. Filipinos began to produce writing in English in 1905, and by the end of the 1920s a tradition of writing in English was established and a body of writings in a number of genres—poetry, short stories, novels, essays, and plays—emerged that would later be called Philippine literature in English. Philippine literature in English began—and continues in the present—within a publishing context where only a small and generally privileged minority could read English, a context shared progressively less with the literature in another colonial language, Spanish, but progressively more with literatures in indigenous languages such as Tagalog (the basis of Filipino, the national language). About 150,000 Filipinos traveled to the United States during the first half of the twentieth century, most of whom were low-wage migrant workers such as Carlos Bulosan, whose autobiographical novel *America Is in the Heart* is likely the most widely read text within the canon of Filipino American literature. During this time Jose Garcia Villa would also travel to the United States, and, after briefly moving into the firmament of the U.S. avant-garde in poetry in the 1940s and early 1950s, he would largely be forgotten by people in the United States. However, Villa exerted a powerful influence on literature in the Philippines, and in particular poetry in English, from the 1930s until his death. In the late-1960s **Asian American political activism** provided a major impetus for the naming of a specifically Filipino American literature and movement, in which Filipino Americans were defined as U.S.-born, in contrast to people born in the Philippines who migrated to the United States. But with the massive influx of people who were Philippine-born after the immigration reforms of 1965 “Filipino America” has widened to include new immigrants. Since the People Power revolt of 1986 that ended the Marcos regime, Filipino American literature has developed increasingly close ties with Philippine literature in English, as a number of writers have traveled back and forth between the two countries and have worked, written about, and published in both.

## LITERATURE IN THE PHILIPPINES DURING THE SPANISH PERIOD

Literature in Spanish in the Philippines was sharply limited because of the reluctance of colonial authorities to have the Christianized natives (*indios*) learn the language of power. However, with the relaxation in controls over trade early in the nineteenth century and the growth of the *principalia* class of elites made up of natives and mestizos (Chinese and Spanish), *indios* were sent to Europe to study. During this time *indios* were admitted to educational institutions administered by the religious orders in Manila. This group of young men, collectively known as *ilustrados*, would form the nucleus of Filipino nationalism, which became a revolutionary force when it inspired popular elements such as the Katipunan secret society, led by Andres Bonifacio, who was himself a Tagalog poet.

The outbreak of revolution in 1896 quickly led to the execution of José Rizal, arguably the father of Filipino nationalism. Rizal was a leader of the Propaganda Movement, which agitated in Barcelona and Madrid for reforms in the Philippines during the late 1880s and early 1890s. Rizal's writings have exerted a tremendous influence on the development of literature in the Philippines, and part of the reason for this influence was the adoption by the U.S. colonial regime of Rizal as the national hero of the Philippines.

## LITERATURE OF THE U.S. COLONIAL PERIOD

According to the terms of the Treaty of Paris, which concluded the Spanish-American War of 1898, Spain ceded its claim to the Philippines to the United States. The Filipino revolutionary forces, which had already declared a constitutional republic and had won the whole of the archipelago from Spain with the exception of Manila, were not consulted in the negotiations, and in 1899 the Filipino-American War began. Even before the United States declared the war over in 1903, the processes were set in motion to transform Filipinos into colonial subjects through language and education. In 1900 English became the official language of instruction in public schools, and in 1901, 600 teachers arrived on the USS *Thomas* to begin in earnest the pacification-by-education project.

Some of the early contributions to Philippine literature in English owe their existence to two institutions. First, Filipinos named *pensionados* were selected to enter the colonial administration and were thus sent to U.S. colleges and universities. In 1905 the first poetry published by Filipinos in English was written by *pensionados* studying in California, and over the next few decades several thousand *pensionados* would study in the United States. Then, soon after the establishment of the University of the Philippines (UP) in 1908, a means for transmitting a canon of English-language literature, with its attendant dispositions and aesthetic norms, was set in place. Up to the present many of the most prominent figures in Philippine literature in English would be students and teachers at UP.



The spread of English created a limited audience and market, and through the early 1900s newspapers and magazines provided a vehicle for English-language writing. In 1921 the first novel in English appeared, followed in 1924 by the first poetry anthology. In 1925, Paz Marquez Benitez published what many critics have called the first “modern” short story by a Filipino writer in English, “Dead Stars,” and in 1927 she edited the first anthology of Filipino short stories. By the late 1920s the Manila literary scene had consolidated to the point that revolts against established forms could occur, in particular with the founding of the UP Writers’ Club in 1927.

However, the Manila literary scene was relatively isolated. Few people had the leisure to read or the money to buy reading materials; English instruction was of uneven quality and duration, and the majority of people in the archipelago seldom used the language in everyday life. The fact that English had not really established itself prompted the delegates to the 1934 constitutional convention that founded the Philippine Commonwealth to include a provision stating that one of the vernaculars would be the basis for a national language. By 1940, Tagalog received official support to be the basis for Filipino.

The Commonwealth Literary Contest of 1940, the largest literary contest up to that time in the Philippines, was indicative of the changing linguistic terrain of literature insofar as it included prizes for writing in Spanish, English, and Tagalog. However, the field of literature was also bifurcated by a movement toward asserting the autonomy of art and a countermovement toward more engagement between literature and society, a division sharply outlined in the debate between Villa, who had relocated to the United States in 1930, and Salvador Lopez. In the Philippines this debate was occurring at a moment when peasant movements were gaining strength, labor unrest in the United States was increasing as the Depression continued, and worldwide a broad united front was forming against fascism. Against this backdrop Villa acted as a major tastemaker with his annual selections of the “best” stories and poems from 1926 to 1941.

The aesthetics and social commitments Lopez outlined would find a measure of fulfillment in the work of Bulosan. Like Villa, Bulosan had also relocated to the United States in the early 1930s, but his trajectory was far different. Around 150,000 Filipinos, most of whom were men under 30 years old, had migrated to the United States from the Philippines during the early 1900s. Large numbers of Filipino “U.S. nationals” worked on the sugar plantations in Hawaii, the agricultural fields near the Pacific Coast, in the Alaskan canneries, and in low-wage service occupations across the United States. In 1934, however, the Tydings-McDuffie Act sharply curtailed the movement of Filipinos between the United States and the Philippines. Bulosan, who was born in a rural area near Manila that would be a center of the peasant guerrilla uprisings both during and after **World War II**, attempted to give artistic

expression in his novels to both the struggles of Filipino laborers in the United States and to the peasant movements in the region where he was born.

### POST-INDEPENDENCE PHILIPPINE LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

After the Philippines attained formal independence in 1946, the links between English-language literature in the Philippines and literature in the United States became tighter. Writers and literary scholars from the Philippines traveled to the United States to study and sometimes teach, and in many cases this travel was enabled by grants and fellowships. In the United States many of these writers participated in creative writing workshops, and the University of Iowa Workshop would play a particularly large role in shaping literature in the Philippines, because not only did several Filipinos participate in its writing program, but two of the most prominent among them, Edith and Edilberto Tiempo, returned to the Philippines and founded the Silliman University National Summer Writers Workshop, located in Dumaguete City in the Visayas in 1962. Most of the leading English-language writers in the Philippines today are alumni of the Silliman Workshop, as are several figures who have relocated to the United States.

On a world scale, the long 1960s were the high point of Third World decolonization movements. As colonial regimes fell, nationalist and Left movements in the Philippines gained confidence. In the Philippines Renato Constantino published in 1966 "The Miseducation of the Filipino," an essay that outlined the mechanisms, primarily through the imposition of the education system, by which the United States gained and maintained cultural hegemony. Massive protests against sending Filipino troops to Vietnam, and more generally against imperialism, feudal relations in the countryside, and bureaucratic capitalism in the urban centers, erupted in Manila and culminated in the First Quarter Storm of 1970 and the Diliman Commune of 1971.

### DEFINING FILIPINO AMERICAN LITERATURE

In the United States, the 1968 **Third World Students' Strike** at San Francisco State became a defining event for what would soon emerge as Filipino American literature. The first anthology of **Filipino American poetry**, *Flips*, was published in 1971 by writers based in San Francisco, some of whom would define themselves in the introduction of *Aiiieeeee!* a few years later as specifically U.S.-born Filipinos, as opposed to Philippine-born Filipinos. The genealogy of this group would be rooted in the history of the *manongs*, the older generation of Filipinos whose lives were depicted by Bulosan and who would, after his death, play an integral part in the Delano Grape Strike of 1965 and the formation, in conjunction with Mexicans, of the United Farm Workers. These Filipino Americans were closely linked to the general Asian American movement in California, which would consolidate again in 1976 in defense of the

International Hotel, a building that provided low-income housing, primarily for Filipino and Chinese men, and housed offices for activist groups.

However, events in both the United States and the Philippines would work against the formation of a Filipino American identity in terms of only U.S.-born Filipinos. With the 1965 U.S. immigration reforms, the quotas that had tightly restricted immigration from the Philippines were lifted, and, through preferences for family reunification and for professionals, the numbers of Philippine-born U.S. citizens soon dramatically increased. The diaspora from the Philippines—both of contract workers to other parts of Asia and of middle-class professionals to the United States—further intensified when Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in 1972. During the 1970s some U.S.-based groups concentrated political activity not only on local community issues but also on the struggle against martial law in the Philippines. Some writers in English, such as Bienvenido **Santos** and Ninotchka **Rosca**, went into political exile in the United States, and others, such as Mila Aguilar, Emmanuel Lacaba, F. Sionil Jose, and Bienvenido Lumbera, braved the political repression in the Philippines as the Marcos regime attempted to suppress communist and Muslim insurgencies.

Writers in exile and their continued engagement with the political situation in the Philippines played an important part in the creation of Filipino American literature. During the martial law years of the 1970s, institutional support in the United States developed to sustain, and in some ways create, **Asian American studies**, ethnic studies, Filipino American studies, and their attendant departments, classes, and publishing networks. At this time several writers from the Philippines taught at universities in the United States—Santos at Wichita State University, Epifanio San Juan Jr. at the University of Connecticut, and N.V.M. **Gonzalez** at California State University at Hayward.

During the Marcos regime there was a sharp decrease in the publication of literary texts, although some mainstream Manila publishers continued to release new works. To get around the censors, some publishing emanated from underground political organizations. However, after the assassination of Benigno Aquino in 1983, the middle classes participated in massive protests throughout the archipelago. These protests heralded both a revival in popular theater in the streets and a new assertiveness on the part of some publishers in printing works critical of the dictatorial regime. After an election clearly marked by fraud, the People Power revolt of 1986 finally forced Marcos to flee the country and thus ended the dictatorship.

Inequality and the impoverishment of the vast majority of the Filipino people was a major cause of the Marcos regime's collapse. However, after martial law ended the Philippine economy was still crippled by massive military outlays and payments to maintain the foreign debt accumulated under Marcos. In the succeeding years the Philippines has not shifted far from the economic course taken by the dictatorship,

and the remittances of the Filipino diaspora have become increasingly important in sustaining the Philippine economy.

### THE INTERSECTION OF FILIPINO AMERICAN LITERATURE AND PHILIPPINE LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Despite the deepening economic crisis in the Philippines, Philippine literature in English has accomplished something of a renaissance since 1986. There has been a publication boom of works in English—New Day, Solidaridad, and Anvil Press have published a number of literary works, and UP, Ateneo de Manila University, and De La Salle University have collaborated in publishing literature in English. Creative writing workshops are conducted not only at these universities but also at other universities in Metro Manila and across the archipelago. A substantial number of writers' organizations have also formed that hold workshops and symposia in locations spread throughout the country. Literatures in languages such as Cebuano and Ilocano have been receiving increasing scholarly attention since the 1970s, and writing in English has established centers outside of the dominant Metro Manila-Silliman circuit in places such as Mindanao State University in Iligan and San Carlos University in Cebu City.

This revival of Philippine literature in English has had effects in the United States that are most strongly felt in both Asian American and Filipino American literature, and arguably the current boom of Philippine literature in English owes much to events in the United States. The struggles of the Asian American movement helped to open the canon of English-language literature in the United States to include some Asian American writers. The resulting academic and publishing support helped to create reading and writing publics for Filipino American literature that did not exist prior to the 1960s. New York, as the center of publishing in the United States, has become a particularly favored destination for writers arriving from the Philippines. Rosca and Jessica **Hagedorn** were both largely based in New York City when they made breakthroughs in getting their novels published by major presses in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Writers such as Luis Francia and Luis Cabalquinto participated in workshops with Villa in New York, and they were joined in the early 1990s by Eric Gamalinda. This group has been involved in publishing several important anthologies with the Asian American Writers' Workshop, and it has grown to include writers of Filipino descent who have grown up in the United States, such as Bino Realuyo. This group has also maintained particularly close ties with fellow writers in the Philippines, such as Gemino Abad, while building links with writers based in the San Francisco Bay Area, such as Eileen **Tabios**, and with institutions such as the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

An under-studied aspect of Filipino American literature is the writing and performance that is less consecrated by the academy and more community-based. Filipino

student organizations at many universities have written and staged plays during Pilipino Cultural Nights, and several of these organizations have published collections of writings. Hip-hop and spoken word scenes rooted in community organizing have sprung up in Los Angeles, Seattle, San Francisco, Chicago, and New York. A substantial body of writing in Ilocano has been produced in Hawaii. In general, literary production by Filipinos and Filipino American communities beyond the centers in Manila, San Francisco, and New York needs more attention. **See also** Asian American Political Activism; Asian Diasporas; Filipino American Anthology; Filipino American Novel; Filipino American Poetry; Filipino American Short Story.

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SHERWIN MENDOZA

## ◆ FILIPINO AMERICAN NOVEL

Like much of Filipino literature in general, the Filipino American novel is heavily indebted to the work of the national hero of the Philippines, José Rizal. Rizal's two novels, *Noli Me Tangere* (1887) and *El Filibusterismo* (1891), were published in Europe, and both were realistic novels that depicted friar abuses and advocated for a Philippines in which Filipinos and Spaniards were equal to each other. Rizal was executed shortly after the Philippine Revolution broke out in 1896, and early in the U.S. colonial period he was chosen to be the hero of the not-yet-born nation. Rizal's legend would extend across the Pacific, and Carlos Bulosan, whose *America Is in the Heart* (1943) is likely the most widely read novel within the Filipino American canon, wrote in a letter in 1949 that he wanted to repeat what Rizal had done for

Philippine literature. The only possible rival for *America Is in the Heart* in terms of readership is Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* (1990). Set in Manila during the Marcos dictatorship of the 1970s and early 1980s, the novel's fragmented, cinematic narration ranges across a number of social strata, from shantytowns to the bastions of the elite. Between Bulosan and Hagedorn the major Filipino novelists in the United States were Bienvenido Santos and N.V.M. Gonzalez, both of whom were closely involved with the Filipino literary scene for writing in English, and their careers intertwined with writers based in Manila, such as Nick Joaquin and Francisco Sionil Jose. Asian American political activism and the rise of Asian American studies programs in the 1970s created an institutional space for Filipino American writers, but Filipino American poetry and the Filipino American short story took the lead as U.S.-born Filipinos wrote primarily in these forms. In the 1970s and early 1980s, many writers left the Philippines because of the political repression of the Marcos regime, and Linda Ty-Casper published novels in the 1980s that were critical of the dictatorship. Since the People Power revolt that deposed the dictator in 1986, a number of Philippine-born writers, such as Ninotchka Rosca, Bino Realuyo, and Noël Alunit, have published novels in the United States set in the martial law Philippines. The novels of Realuyo and Alunit are also coming-of-age stories, and Cecilia Manguerra Brainard, Sophia Romero, and R. Zamora Linmark have in recent years contributed to this subgenre.

### THE NOVEL IN THE COLONIAL LANGUAGES OF THE PHILIPPINES

Rizal was born in 1861 in the Philippines, and he left for Spain in 1882 to study. While there he became a leading member of the Propaganda Movement, which consisted of men from the Philippines who agitated in Barcelona and Madrid for reforms in the Philippines. The propagandists were particularly critical of the Spanish friars who held much of the secular power in the Philippines, and Rizal's two novels—*Noli Me Tangere* (*Touch Me Not*) and *El Filibusterismo* (*The Subversive*)—both depicted friar abuses and advocated for reforms in the colonial administration in the Philippines. The novels were written in Spanish and published in Europe, but they were quickly banned in the Philippines, and, when he returned to the colony, Rizal was sent into exile on the southern island of Mindanao. When the revolution began in 1896, Rizal was executed, and as a martyr he became a rallying point for the revolution.

Bulosan, before publishing *America Is in the Heart* in 1944, published an essay in 1942 on the 1940 Commonwealth Literary Contest in which he cites a Filipino literary tradition with two branches, one in Tagalog running from Francisco Balagtas (1788–1862), who is best known for the metrical romance *Florante at Laura* (*Florante and Laura*), the other in Spanish running from Rizal. Bulosan would later think of himself as being in dialogue with Rizal, and he made plans to write a panoramic work

covering 100 years of Philippine history. He died before this project was completed, but a portion, edited by E. San Juan Jr. and titled *The Cry and the Dedication*, was published posthumously in 1995.

In the years immediately after **World War II**, a number of Filipinos were in the United States as students, teachers, and writers. Edith and Edilberto Tiempo studied creative writing at the University of Iowa, and they have both written several novels in addition to founding and directing the Silliman University Workshop. Santos was doing graduate work in the United States during World War II, and after the war he published a number of novels in the 1960s. Gonzalez, who had made a name for himself as a journalist and novelist before he received a college degree, attended courses in a number of universities and colleges in the United States in the 1950s. His final novel, *The Bamboo Dancers* (1959), is set primarily in the United States and is reminiscent of Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, but significant differences emerge because of the Filipino protagonist's position as a writer from a colony dealing with gender and sexuality in the metropole.

Joaquin and Jose were important figures in the literary scene that extended from Dumaguete City, where the Silliman University campus is located, to Manila to campuses and cities in the United States. Joaquin, whose career as a writer owed much to the praise of Jose Garcia **Villa**, wrote stories, drama, children's books, poems, history, but only one novel, *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* (1961). The novel tells the story of a group of Filipino expatriates in Hong Kong during the Chinese Civil War of 1946–1949, whose lives range over the Philippine revolution and the U.S. and Japanese occupations. The novel lovingly depicts Manila before the city's destruction during World War II, and Joaquin translates much from Spanish-language literature into an English-language novel. Jose is best known for his Rosales Saga, five novels—*The Pretenders* (1960), *My Brother, My Executioner* (1972), *Mass* (1976), *Tree* (1977), and *Po-on* (1984)—that span four generations in a family that migrates from the Ilocos in the north of the Philippines to a town in the province of Pangasinan, just north of Manila. The saga weaves the life of a single family into a history of revolts—against the Spanish colonizers, their U.S. successors, against the power of landlords, and finally against the neocolonial oligarchy.

## THE NOVEL IN THE FILIPINO AMERICAN MOVEMENT

In the 1960s and 1970s, several events in both the Philippines and the United States would shape the later course of the Filipino American novel. As a result of the **civil rights movement**, ethnic studies and Asian American studies departments provided an institutional home for Filipino and Filipino American writers. In some early articulations of Filipino American identity, such as the one in the seminal anthology *Aiiieeeee!* a sharp line was drawn between Filipinos in the United States and U.S.-born Filipinos, with only the latter included within the category "Filipino American." However, this line was weakened as the number of immigrants from the Philippines

increased dramatically after the 1965 immigration reforms and after the imposition of martial law by Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos in 1972.

Martial law had a profound effect on Filipino and Filipino American novelists. Santos's novel *The Praying Man* was set to be published by Jose's Solidaridad Press, but because of the novel's criticism of corruption the publication was delayed until 1982. Santos applied for U.S. citizenship, and during his exile due to martial law he taught at Wichita State University. Joaquin accepted the National Artist Award for Literature in 1976 on the condition that a fellow writer, Jose Lacaba, was released from prison. Ty-Casper, whose novel *The Peninsulars* (1964), was the first historical novel published by a Filipino, wrote a number of novels sharply critical of the Marcos regime's human rights abuses. One of these novels, *Awaiting Trespass* (1985), loosely draws inspiration from the *Pasyon*, a long poem recited during the Catholic Holy Week that tells the story of the crucifixion of Jesus.

Both Ty-Casper and Rosca have primarily been based in the United States since the Marcos regime fell in 1986, but the two writers are notable for publishing their novels both in the United States and in the Philippines, where imported books have been prohibitively expensive. As Oscar Campomanes has noted (1992, 72), Rosca's first novel, *State of War* (1988), is divided into three parts that correspond to three descriptions that Ty-Casper offers in the epigraph for *Awaiting Trespass*: a book of hours, a book of numbers, and a book of revelations. *State of War*, however, in its temporalities, baroque descriptive passages, and comic tone, more closely resembles Joaquin's novel as it tells the story of two women and a man who attend a festival that becomes a battlefield in the civil war between the Marcos regime and the revolutionary underground. Rosca's second novel, *Twice Blessed* (1992), is a roman à clef that satirizes Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos but also provides a map of the origins and workings of elite power in the Philippines.

As the Filipino American movement continued in the 1980s and 1990s, the work of some writers began to address issues and take on themes borrowed from that movement. A novel published in 1987 by Santos, *What the Hell for You Left Your Heart in San Francisco*, raises the question of Filipino American identity by tracing an editor's search for material for a magazine for Filipinos in the United States. The narrative moves through several segments of Filipino America, from old-timers in the United States, to the new middle class, to the U.S.-born youth, to the **Asian diaspora** of Filipino writers. Brainard's *When the Rainbow Goddess Wept* (1994), which was first published in the Philippines under the title *Song of Yvonne* (1991), tells the story of a middle-class family from Cebu that goes into hiding with the Japanese invasion during World War II. The novel takes a number of cultural motifs from the Filipino American identity movement in the United States: recipes are dramatized in the act of cooking; folk tales, myths, and epics become structuring devices; and contradictions



surface about the role of imperial aggression—from Spain, the United States, and Japan—in shaping the Philippines and Filipino America.

Since 1995 several texts have appeared that highlight issues concerning gender and sexuality in the form of coming-of-age novels. R. Zamora Linmark's *Rolling the R's* (1995), in its use of **Hawaiian Pidgin**, dramatizes the resistance of young Filipinos, Native Hawaiians, and people of mixed race against the linguistic, national, gender, and sexual norms of a school system and wider state that consigns them to being second-class citizens. *Always Hiding* (1998), by Romero, takes its title from a translation of the Tagalog phrase *tago ng tago*, which, abbreviated to TNT, is a commonly used name for Filipinos in the United States who are in danger of being deported. The novel evokes a number of themes common in the Filipino diaspora, large portions of which extend not just to the United States but also to other parts of Asia: family separation, exploitation by employers and immigration lawyers, de-skilling and loss of status, and the desire for migrant workers and immigrants to escape or resolve problems in the Philippines by traveling overseas. In Realuyo's *The Umbrella Country* (1999) the narrator grows up in a struggling Manila neighborhood during martial law, and the patriarchal violence of the regime is reproduced within the boy's household. Noël Alumi's *Letters to Montgomery Clift* (2002) correlates the love for the dead movie star of a Filipino boy growing up in Los Angeles, with his love for his parents who were imprisoned by the Marcos regime. **See also** Asian Diasporas.

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SHERWIN MENDOZA

### ◆ FILIPINO AMERICAN POETRY

Filipino American poetry is distinct from other Asian American poetries because of its Spanish and U.S. colonial history, which has resulted in poems negotiating

multiple languages and an ambivalence toward the United States and the Philippines as real and imagined homelands. Filipino American poets in the 1970s, like other writers participating in broader **Asian American political activism**, constructed a history that traced a genealogy through the pre-Hispanic Philippines, the Philippine Revolution of 1896, and the struggles of the Filipinos who worked on farms, in Alaskan canneries, and in working-class service jobs, primarily bachelors who were collectively known as the *manongs*. The figure of the *manong* is often juxtaposed with recollections of an imagined homeland that questions the desirability and possibility of assimilation to the United States and the return to the Philippines. The poetry reflects the historical realities of **racism and Asian America** and the specific invisibility of a large Filipino American community in the ethnic imaginary of U.S. multiculturalism. Many innovations result from this Filipino American context in a poetic tradition that analyzes and exploits the inheritance of English as a colonial language through English mixed with Tagalog, other Philippine languages, and the language of the street. The poetic form is most often a short lyric, which is driven by a single speaking voice (usually the poet her- or himself) directly addressing the reader. More recently, some poets have experimented with forms that subsume the poet's authorial position as the speaking voice in a serial or long poem in which collaged material and other poetic voices compete with the traditional speaking voice of the lyric poem.

Filipinos wrote poetry in English as early as 1905, and a literary scene consisting of faculty and students at the University of the Philippines (UP), English-language periodicals and newspapers, and a small but significant readership consolidated itself by the mid-1920s in Manila, the political and economic capital of the colony. From the 1920s to the early 1940s, poetry by Filipinos oscillated between the poles of a cosmopolitan aestheticism and direct engagement with the social realities of the Philippines, such as class divisions, landlessness for peasants, and the impact of U.S. colonialism.

Jose Garcia **Villa**, arguably the most influential English-language poet in Filipino literary history, grew out of the early twentieth-century Manila literary context. Villa enrolled in UP in 1925, and he was a founding member of the UP Writers' Club in 1927. However, he would be suspended from the university in 1929 for publishing an allegedly obscene poem, "Man Songs," and shortly thereafter he immigrated to the United States. Villa's primary rival in UP's poetry scene was Angela Manalang, who was the literary editor for an important student publication but who also remained somewhat aloof from the UP Writers' Club. Her early poetry at UP superficially resembled symbolist and imagist poetry in Europe and the United States, but as she matured as a poet the impact of her more immediate environment became more pronounced in her work. Loss, unrequited love, and calls from a distant lover are dominant themes in her poems from 1925 to 1930.

Villa, as a single man, was able to travel to the United States in 1929; Manalang (who changed her name to Manalang-Gloria), on the other hand, married and moved back to her parents' town in the province of Albay. In the early 1930s, while Villa was giving up the short story form, Manalang-Gloria was repudiating the romantic aestheticism of her college days, and as the 1930s progressed she, in her own way, joined the more general movement away from the Art for Art's Sake position staked out by Villa and his supporters. In 1940, as the great struggle against fascism was reaching its climax, the Philippine Commonwealth government held the largest literary contest to date in the archipelago. One of the prizes was for poetry in English, and, in a statement made shortly after the contest, the chairman of the board of judges claimed that both aesthetics and social significance guided the board's assessments. Both Villa and Manalang-Gloria submitted collections of poems, but, whereas Villa received an honorable mention, Manalang-Gloria was completely snubbed by the judges, who did not recognize the feminist significance of her work.

In the decades following **World War II**, the New Criticism, which emphasized the formal qualities of literature rather than extrinsic determinants such as the intentions of writers and their historical contexts, played a major part in the development of English-language poetry in the Philippines, and its primary exponents were Edith and Edilberto Tiempo. The Tiempos enrolled in the creative writing program at the University of Iowa in the late 1940s, and they founded the Silliman National Writers Workshop in 1962. Edith Tiempo's *Tracks of Babylon and Other Poems*, which was published in the United States in 1966, is a collection of carefully crafted poems that shows a New Critical sensibility in its deployment of irony, images, and symbols. The tendency of the poems to make their settings ambiguous—neither straightforwardly U.S. nor Philippine—would contrast sharply both with the overtly political poetry inspired by the national democratic movements in the Philippines and with the specifically Filipino American poetry that would emerge in the late 1960s around San Francisco.

On the West Coast, Kearny Street Workshop and **Asian American studies** programs institutionally supported Filipino American poetry in the late 1960s to the present. In the Manilatown neighborhood on the edge of the financial district of San Francisco, over 2,000 people protested the closure of the I-Hotel, which housed several *manongs* and Chinese American men in affordable housing. This event galvanized the demand for Asian American studies at San Francisco State College and the University of California at Berkeley through the **Third World Students Strikes**. The strikes resulted in the establishment and growth of the institutional programs that helped to canonize Carlos **Bulosan** as the literary representative of the *manong* experience in poetry and prose, while affording the support of an engaged Filipino American community for new poets such as

Al Robles, Shirley Ancheta, Jaime Jacinto, Oscar Peñaranda, and Jessica Hagedorn.

From the 1970s to the present, the line between Filipino American poetry and Filipino poetry in English has been complicated by the movement of established poets from the Philippines to the United States. In particular, the Asian American Writers' Workshop, which was established in New York in 1991 and has since developed connections throughout the United States, has provided a space where Philippine-trained poets such as Luis Francia and Eric Gamalinda have been able to address Asian American and Filipino American audiences and thus participate in the formation of **Filipino American literature**.

The **Filipino American anthology** became crucial to the artistic growth of Filipino American poetry. Many of the poetry-specific anthologies represent the poetic rift between a lyric tradition and a postmodern aesthetic of constructed forms that make a speaking persona of the poem or the poet difficult to locate. Students at San Francisco State published *Flips: A Filipino-American Anthology* in 1971 and reclaimed the sobriquet of "Flips" for a generation of poets staking out their poetic space as Filipino Americans. Kearny Street Workshop later published *Without Names* in 1985, substantiating the lyric tradition, which was later picked up by younger poets in the 1990s in collections such as *Returning a Borrowed Tongue* and *Flippin': Filipinos on America*. The recent anthology *Babaylan* reclaims a women-centered poetics while consistently questioning the U.S.- and Philippine-based positions of women poets. Furthermore, the theorization of poetry and the related process of making meaning in general—poetics—has resulted in the *Pinoy Poetics*, which simultaneously engages and counters the turn to poetics in the U.S. experimental poetry community, which often neglects the Filipino American poetry contributions to U.S. poetry and reflects the continuation of the dynamic between figures like Villa and Bulosan inherited by twenty-first-century Filipino American poets.

Filipino American poetry is further complicated by poets' connection to creative writing MFA programs for education and employment as poets and literary critics. Filipinos such as the Tiempos were active in creative writing programs from the beginning of the Iowa Writers Workshop. Many Filipino American poets gain artistic employment as creative writing faculty, visiting writer positions, and the poetry reading circuit organized around the MFA programs centered in the United States. Poets such as Nick **Carbó**, Vince Gotera, Luis Francia, Eric Gamalinda, Eileen **Tabios**, Eugene Gloria, Barbara Jane Reyes, Marjorie Evasco, Catalina Cariaga, and R. Zamora Linmark comprise a new generation of poets who engage and expand the Filipino American tradition while building links with the Philippines. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization; Colonialism and Postcolonialism; Multiculturalism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America.

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J. GUEVARA AND SHERWIN MENDOZA

## ◆ FILIPINO AMERICAN SHORT STORY

Leopoldo Yabes, a major anthologist and critic of the Filipino short story, claimed in the early 1940s that the short story was the most developed of English-language literary forms in the Philippines. In the period from the 1920s up to **World War II**, while the Philippines was still a U.S. colony, short stories and poems in English could more readily find outlets for publication than novels, since many magazines in the colony published short fiction. One of the most noted short story writers during this early period, Paz Marquez Benitez, was also important as a teacher and supporter of English-language literature at the University of the Philippines. After World War II the short story as an artistic form would receive renewed attention as writers who had received training in the United States returned to teach creative writing in the newly independent country. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, short story writers of Filipino descent such as Oscar Peñaranda, Luis Syquia, and Sam Tagatac participated in more general **Asian American political activism**, and these writers would be influential in creating a Filipino American identity. The **Filipino American anthology** has become an important vehicle not only for short stories but also for defining **Filipino American literature** in general. Since the 1990s several anthologies have collected works set in both the Philippines and the United States, and contributors to these anthologies have been based in the Philippines, in the United States, or in both.

## THE PHILIPPINE SHORT STORY IN ENGLISH

The two most celebrated stories from the U.S. colonial period are Benitez's "Dead Stars" and Manuel Arguilla's "How My Brother Leon Brought Home a Wife." "Dead Stars" was first published in 1925, and it tells the story of a couple whose long engagement is jeopardized when the fiancé meets the visiting daughter of his

neighbor. However, whereas Benitez's story centers on middle-class characters with strong ties to the U.S. colonial administration, "How My Brother Leon Brought Home a Wife," the title story of the collection that won the first prize for short story in English in the Commonwealth Literary Contest of 1940, focuses instead on the impact of urbanization on a rural family. The story is told from the point of view of a boy in the countryside, and it dramatizes the events leading up to the encounter between his father and a brother who had gone to the city and married without his father's blessing.

In the two decades following World War II, the literary scene in English in the Philippines was dominated by New Criticism, which for the short story meant a close attention to the craft of forming narratives from the materials of words, images, and symbols. Edith and Edilberto Tiempo, who were both fiction writers, were the primary exponents of New Criticism, but perhaps the most admired writer in the Philippines at this time was Nick Joaquin. Joaquin's stories are consistently preoccupied with gender relationships and antagonisms, and the plots often turn on the travails of a Hispanized elite attempting to ward off both precolonial cultures and U.S. colonialism.

#### FILIPINO WRITERS IN THE UNITED STATES

Joaquin's career as a writer took off after he was noticed by Jose Garcia Villa, an important poet based primarily in New York who was nevertheless a major tastemaker in Manila from the 1930s until his death in 1997. Villa was best known as a poet, but, shortly after he moved to New York, he published his first—and last—collection of short stories in 1933. During this time Carlos Bulosan was working as a migrant laborer on the West Coast of the United States, and, in the first half of the 1940s, he began to publish stories that would be collected in *The Laughter of My Father* (1944). The collection, which drew from folk tales from around the world that were reworked to present a satirical image of the semifeudal order in the rural Philippines, was a best seller in the United States, and it was translated into several languages.

Bulosan is best known for his novel *America Is in the Heart*, which centered on the struggles of the *manongs*, young men who had migrated during the 1920s and 1930s to the United States and worked in agricultural fields, canneries, and in low-wage service jobs in the Pacific coastal states. After Bulosan's death in 1956, Bienvenido Santos would also write about the *manongs*, many of whom participated in the struggle to establish the United Farm Workers from 1965 to 1970, but who would be retired or nearing retirement as Santos wrote. Although Santos was not himself a manual laborer, his stories are notable for the sensitivity with which he depicts his characters' sense of loss and displacement as they attempt to make lives for themselves in the United States after World War II. On the other hand, Santos's friend N.V.M. Gonzalez wrote his stories of Filipinos in the Philippines. Like Bulosan, Gonzalez

drew on memories of rural provinces in the Philippines for much of his material. He is best known for his accounts of people on the island of Mindoro, from swidden farmers to sailors to the middle class of clerks and teachers.

When Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in 1972, both Santos and Gonzalez were abroad, and they would spend much of the period of the Marcos dictatorship teaching in the United States. Ninotchka Rosca, on the other hand, was among the writers and journalists detained as part of the general clampdown on critics of the regime. After her release Rosca fled to the United States, and her *Monsoon Collection* (1983), which was first published in Australia, alternates between stories set in the Philippines and scenes of imprisonment and torture under the Marcos regime. The stories are highly sensitive to gender and power, and these topics would inform Rosca's work as a member of the Gabriela Network, an organization that aims to build solidarity between women in the United States and the Philippines.

#### THE FILIPINO AMERICAN SHORT STORY AND FILIPINO AMERICAN IDENTITY

Santos, Gonzalez, and Rosca were beneficiaries of both Asian American political activism and the subsequent rise of **Asian American studies**, which provided publication opportunities, institutional recognition, and audiences that would not have been available to earlier writers. An important center for specifically Filipino American activism and literature was the San Francisco Bay Area, which was the base for the group of writers who produced the *Flips* anthology of poetry in 1971. Three writers from this scene—Peñaranda, Syquia, and Tagatac—would contribute to the watershed *Aiiiiiii!* anthology of 1974. Tagatac's contribution, "The New Anak," is a story that reads like film reels spliced together and projected, with images ranging from the International Hotel to mountains in the Philippines to a montage of U.S. military ventures in Asia. The contributors to *Aiiiiiii!* and several of the *Flips* writers would also contribute to *Liwanag* (1975), a publication that, like Tagatac's story, attempted to combine literary and visual art within a single text.

Peñaranda, Syquia, and Tagatac's preface to *Aiiiiiii!* like the preface on Japanese and **Chinese American literature**, insisted on a difference between writers from Asia and those born in the United States—the former would be Chinese, Japanese, or Filipino whereas the latter would be Chinese American, Japanese American, or Filipino American. However, by the 1990s the line between Filipino American and Filipino literature was difficult to find. Both Peñaranda and Tagatac contributed stories to a collection, *Fiction by Filipinos in America*, that was published in Metro Manila in 1993. "The Visitor," Peñaranda's story, was first published as "Musings" in *Liwanag* and depicts a laborer in Alaska whose Native American lover had married and had a child in his absence. Tagatac's story, "Small Talk at Union Square," tells of

an encounter between a young middle-class Filipino American and a Filipino old-timer who, ironically, seems to have more in common with the Navajo man who got him a job in construction in San Francisco.

Cecilia Manguerra **Brainard**, the editor of *Fiction by Filipinos in America*, has been an important figure in linking Filipino and Filipino American literature. While *Fiction by Filipinos in America* brought a wide variety of stories, in particular about the *manongs*, to the Philippines, a collection that she edited and published in 2003, *Growing Up Filipino*, brought stories by writers based in the Philippines to the United States. In general, the **Filipino American anthology** has been an important medium for bridging the gap between Filipino American literature and Philippine literature in English, and currently writers, audiences, and the institutional and publishing infrastructure for these literatures are becoming more transnational and more tightly linked. **See also** Asian American Political Activism; Colonialism and Postcolonialism.

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SHERWIN MENDOZA

### ◆ FU MANCHU

Fu Manchu is a stereotype of Chinese created in 1913 by Sax Rohmer (1883–1959), a British writer. It is consistent with **Yellow Peril**, denoting a masculine threat of military and sexual conquest. This image's negative influence was far-reaching and pushed forward the anti-Chinese movement in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The creation of the stereotype is coincidental. One night in an alley in London's **Chinatown**, Rohmer happened to see a mysterious Chinese man and thought that he was kingpin of a dope-smuggling coven. This experience inspired Rohmer's two short stories and 13 novels from 1913 to 1959 about "the diabolic, torture-loving, gloriously mad Fu Manchu" (Mank 1994, 61), including *The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu*, *The*



*Mystery of Dr. Fu Manchu, The Mysterious Dr. Fu Manchu, The Mask of Fu Manchu, and Emperor Fu Manchu.*

The reason that this stereotype is so influential is that it echoes the then Yellow Peril and the anti-Chinese movement. Chinese began to immigrate on a large scale to the United States at the news of the gold rush. Although they proved efficient and hardworking and played a major role in California's statehood celebration in 1850, by the 1880s they were so strongly hated that the U.S. government passed laws to keep them out of the country. They became "strangers in America" and were considered a "population born in China, reared in China, expecting to return to China, living while here in a little China of its own, and without the slightest attachment to the country—utter heathens, treacherous, sensual, cowardly and cruel" (Takaki 1989, 109). The slogan—"The Chinese must go"—reflects the white worker's anxiety and hatred. After contributing to their adopted country, the Chinese laborers "had no more right to be in California than 'flocks of blackbirds have in a wheat field'" (50–51). The *New York Times* warned the whites of the heathenish dangers: "If there were to be a flood-tide of Chinese population—a population befouled with all the social vices, with no knowledge or appreciation of free institution or constitutional liberty, with heathenish souls and heathenish propensities . . . we should be prepared to bid farewell to republicanism" (100–101).

Yellow Peril, as the Chinese were called by the whites in the late nineteenth century, indicated the whites' anxiety. The white workers attributed their unemployment and low salary to the Chinese laborers' competition. They complained, for example, if there had not been Chinese labor forces for the **transcontinental railroad**, the companies would have been compelled to hire white workers with a high and satisfactory pay. When economic depression came, the Chinese laborers were set in the foreground as a target. According to Gary Y. Okihiro, the Yellow Peril perhaps originated from Charles H. Pearson, an English historian, who said in his *National Life and Character* (1893) that the whites' desire for tropical products and colonizing these areas brought technology and medicines that strengthened the nonwhites and introduced them to white science and industry. As a result, the nonwhites might become powerful enough to be the rivals of the whites (Okihiro 1994, 130–131).

The first time Fu Manchu shows up in Rohmer's first novel, *The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu* (1913), he drew the attention of the mainstream readers: "Imagine a person, tall, lean and feline, high-shouldered, with a brow like Shakespeare and a face like Satan, a close-shaven skull, and long, magnetic eyes of true cat-green. Invest him with all the cruel cunning of an entire Eastern race, accumulated in one giant intellect. . . . Imagine that awful being, and you have a mental picture of Dr. Fu Manchu, the yellow peril incarnate in one man" (Mank 1994, 61).

The Eastern intellect not only speaks fluent English but also is physically and intelligently strong. Furthermore, he knows very well how to combine the

Eastern/Chinese knowledge with the Western to control and rule the whites. His favorite statement indicates the source of his strength. "I'm a doctor of philosophy from Edinborough. I'm a doctor of Law from Christ's College. I'm a doctor of medicine from Harvard. My friends, out of courtesy, call me Doctor" (Mank 1994, 68). Such a deeply learned man poses a big threat because he vows the destruction of the whites. He competes incessantly with his stiff-upper-lip adversaries Sir Dennis Nayland Smith of Scotland Yard and Dr. Petrie, the narrator of the tales. It is a battle of wits, supernatural forces, and science. Fu Manchu is the first Asian leader in Anglo American literature, and he is an imminent presence in the Chinatown of Britain and America. This spooky crook and bad guy is always associated with murder and the darkness of night. The mainstream helps teach him something about technology. In return, Fu Manchu poses a peril because he is masculine, although his masculinity is tempered by femininity. He challenges and then threatens Western supremacy. He sometimes tortures the whites madly in incredible ways, and sometimes tries to extricate information he needs, even at the cost of his own daughter's virtue. But no matter how cruel and smart he is, victory goes to Sir Dennis Smith at the end of every story. That is to say, Fu symbolizes the cruel, dark, and evil, whereas Sir Nayland is the angel of justice. Worth mentioning is the fact that Fu Manchu dies at the end of two stories, and his creator had to bring him back to life to continue his series.

The wide spread of the stereotypical image of Fu Manchu results from the involvement of movie companies such as MGM and Paramount. MGM decided to make the tale into movies, and in 1932 Metro borrowed Boris Karloff, *Frankenstein's* monster, from Universal City to act as the Eastern monster in *The Mask of Fu Manchu*. It goes that Fu Manchu tries to find out the location of Genghis Khan's tomb to claim the tyrant's golden mask and scimitar so that he can declare himself Genghis Khan come to life again and lead millions of men to sweep the world, while Sir Lionel and Sir Nayland spearhead archaeologists to thwart the mad man's ambition.

The tales of Fu Manchu are really Orientalistic and exotic—the East is cruel, evil, ambitious, and sexy, in sharp contrast to the West's cooperation, bravery, and strength. Fu wants to be another Genghis Khan to lead Asians to sweep the world, to "Conquer and breed! Kill the white man, and take his women" (Mank 1994, 80). This image was projected in the advertisement for the premiere of *The Mask of Fu Manchu* in New York City in 1932. "Mad, Oriental tortures! Crazy, heartless desires! This oriental monster almost wrecked civilization with his love-drug" (82). Such an image, of course, ignites the whites' horror and hatred and provokes antagonism between the West and the East. But the success of this movie makes it one of the two horror films by MGM in 1932. Other movie companies follow suit, and the "kids would wet their beds after seeing it" movies did not slow down until World War II, when the Chinese government mounted a strong protest. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes.

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LONGHAI ZHANG

## G



### ◆ GANESAN, INDIRA (1960– )

Indira Ganesan is an Indian American novelist, essayist, short story writer, reviewer, editor, interpreter of Indian culture, feminist, and professor of English. Ganesan teaches writing and literature courses at Southampton College of Long Island University, New York, and Lesley University and serves as the fiction editor of *Many Mountains Moving: A Literary Journal of Diverse Contemporary Voices*.

Born on November 5, 1960, in Srirangam in Tamil Nadu, India, Ganesan came to the United States with her parents at the age of five. The Ganesan family settled in Rockland County, New York. After high school, Ganesan attended Vassar College, graduating with a major in English in 1982, and then she graduated with an MFA in 1984 from the University of Iowa. She has written two novels, *The Journey* (1990) and *Inheritance* (1998). She is working on a third novel titled *Finding Her Way Home*. Her other writings have appeared in *Newsday*, *Antaeus*, *Glamour*, *Seventeen*, the *Mississippi Review*, the *Women's Review of Books*, and the anthology *Half and Half: Writing on Growing Up Biracial & Bicultural*. Ganesan excels in her appeal to the reader's senses, as she describes the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of India, pleasant and unpleasant, giving a flavor of real India. In *The Journey* she describes Indian customs, such as the thirteenth-day feast to celebrate "the soul's passage from life to life" (27) and pilgrimage to the Trivandur's Temple of 500 steps (37), and in *Inheritance* the Hindu tradition of showing a girl to a prospective match and his family and worship at the temple (46–54, 128–29). The protagonists in both her novels are young women who desire fulfilling lives. Like Stephen Dedalus of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Renu and Sonil, the respective

protagonists of *The Journey* and *Inheritance*, come to realize that they must create their own individualities.

In *The Journey*, 19-year-old Renu Krishnan returns from the United States with her mother and younger sister Manx to Pi, an imaginary island in the Bay of Bengal that serves as the setting for both of Ganesan's novels, to grieve for her "twin" cousin Rajesh, who died in an Indian train accident. Being a creature of two cultures, Renu, who was born in Pi but raised in Long Island, fears that her own death is imminent: "The women of her mother's village say that if one twin dies by water, the other will die by fire" (3). She often dreams of three giantesses who threaten her with dire consequences if she renounces her "inherited weights." She fears that if she returns to the American way of life, she will face the fury of the gods.

The novel brings out the prejudices of westerners against Indians and of Indians against westerners, as well as the irrational partiality of each for the other's culture. When Renu's uncle Adda Krishnamurthi seeks the permission of Alvirez, the father of the European Alphonsa, Alvirez refuses: "No citizen would rest knowing a brown man sweeps a white woman into his arms at night" (65). And when Adda brings his European wife to his parents' home in India, she receives a cold reception. The look that Adda's mother gave her made Alphonsa lose her voice, and "for the rest of her life [she] would speak to no one save her husband and his best friend, Amir" (66). Ultimately, Alphonsa is driven to enter a convent, where she kills herself. On the other hand, Freddie Flat, an American hippie, loves all things Indian: "[H]e adopted Eastern ways, gave up meat for a while, exchanged his mother's blue-eyed Madonna for a goddess sitting on an open, perfumed lotus" (93–94). And, Manx, Renu's 15-year-old sister, treasures all things American, resulting in an affair with Freddie, who is twice her age.

Ganesan repudiates the Indian system of arranged marriages as the main cause of failed marriages. The narrator observes that "most of the women [in Renu's family] tended to marry with their eyes shut," and "disappointments were not uncommon" (46) even though matchmakers tried to match horoscopes.

The novel also criticizes a society that does not sanction widows' remarriage but cannot tolerate an unattached woman. Renu journeys to the interior of Pi to a place called Trippi, where she meets Marya the seer, who offers the possibility of self-creation. Marya confides in Renu why she became Marya the seer. She explains that she could have died of neglect after she left her husband because of his infidelity. Although people have differing opinions of her choice, she "chose [her] light" (127). She asks Renu why she is "stuck with the memory of the dead, this necrophilia." When Renu answers that "Rajesh is my twin," she exclaims, "But he doesn't exist as he was, only as you have created him." The seer advises Renu that "each one of us can be our own light. You can even be the Light of the World" (126). The novel ends

triumphantly, as Renu gets ready to return to the States “away from her superstitions and fears, away from her self-wrought sickness,” “stepping away from her inherited weights” (173–74).

In Ganesan’s second novel *The Inheritance*, the 15-year-old Sonil comes from mainland India to stay with her grandmother on Pi to recover from chronic bronchitis. Sonil, who has been brought up by her aunts in India, is eager to learn about her aloof mother Lakshmi, who lives on Pi, and her father, who departed India before she was born and who she later discovers is white. A *bildungsroman*, the novel describes Sonil’s experiences of love, rejection, and loss and her eventual self-realization and liberation.

The strength of *Inheritance* lies in its strong female characters that include Sonil’s mother, her aunts, who run their joint household without their husbands who work abroad, her beloved grandmother, and Sonil herself. The only man in the house is her opium addict great uncle, a “wraith-like man” (41) whose goings and comings are imperceptible. Sonil does not seem to mind the absence of a male presence: “We were a family of women . . . I didn’t think we needed men. My aunts largely managed without them and prospered. In fact, I think, without men we were stronger” (43).

When Sonil’s cousin Jani leaves their grandmother’s house to enter a convent, Sonil finds companionship in Richard, a 30-year-old American who is seeking spiritual enlightenment in India. They begin an intense affair, described in sensuous language. Kissing and being kissed by Richard gives her a dizzy sensation and makes her feel as if she were “transported in another world” (91). Sonil says of Richard: “He was everything that no one in my family was; it was everything I wanted to be” (146). When Richard abruptly ends the relationship, Sonil begins to understand and to forgive her mother’s neglect of her. Having once compared her mother to “the bird which abandoned her young in other birds’ nests” (117), Sonil now realizes that her mother had perhaps herself been abandoned by Sonil’s American father. When her mother’s second lover, Ashoka Ram, visits on the death of Sonil’s grandmother, her mother reveals her past to Sonil. She refuses to marry Ashoka.

Sonil’s cousin Jani also refuses to marry the man her family has chosen for her. Jani escapes the marriage by entering a convent. When Sonil visits her at the convent, she learns why Jani will not marry C.P. Iyengar: “Loving Asha, she couldn’t love C.P.” (156). Sonil herself feels the urge “to kiss Jani, pull her toward me, make her leave the convent. Who needed boys anyway?” (156–157). The novel ends with Sonil realizing the true meaning of her inheritances: “My family is ingrained in my actions. . . . Yet there are parts of me that are nothing like them. . . . I do not have to be like my mother. . . . Yet a shard of her exists in everything I do” (192). She is now set on a course to determine her own identity.

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HARISH CHANDER

◆ GAWANDE, ATUL (1965– )

Atul Gawande is an Indian American surgeon, science writer, and professor at Harvard Medical School and Harvard School of Public Health. Born in Brooklyn, New York, to immigrant parents, Gawande was raised in rural Athens, Ohio. The son of a urologist father and pediatrician mother, he attended Stanford University where he received a BSA in 1987. He then completed a master's degree at Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar (1989) before earning an MD (1995) and an MPH (1999), both from Harvard University. A physician actively engaged in both research and writing, Gawande has been recognized for his ability to combine an interdisciplinary perspective with the more accessible voice of a popular science writer. His appeal is comparable to that of Stephen Jay Gould or Oliver Sacks. His capacities as a teacher and critical observer are inextricable from the responsibilities and privileges of his role as a public intellectual and innovator in the field of medical science.

Written in the autobiographical mode, Gawande's earliest publication appeared in the online magazine *Slate*, where he chronicled five adrenalin-soaked days as a surgery resident. This foray into writing led to a more sustained study of his experiences as a physician-in-training. He reached a wider readership in 2002 when he published *Complications: A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science*. It was a National Book Award finalist for nonfiction and a *New York Times* Notable Book. Translated into 17 languages and published in more than 100 countries, *Complications* received other honors as well: it was named an American Library Association Notable Book, a *Boston Globe* Best Book, a *Discover* magazine Best Science Book, and a finalist for the L.L. Winship/PEN New England Award.

The text, a collection of essays, is divided under three section headings: fallibility, mystery, and uncertainty. Through detailed analyses of actual cases (among them, morbid obesity, chronic pain, and necrotizing fasciitis, or flesh-eating disease), Gawande explains how all three concepts are interpretive lenses through which the American medical system and the practice of doctoring may be viewed. He highlights the

prevalence of error in medical care as a function of collective as well as individual failings; he also illustrates the ways in which diagnoses often fall short of the desired results because certain medical phenomena are just outside of the range of typical understanding. Gawande's approach does not so much undermine or apologize for the medical profession's weaknesses as claim a space for change, flux, and, ultimately, informed evaluation and improvement. Overall, his writing is characterized by an anecdotal, self-referential style interlaced with qualitative and quantitative observations about his professional milieu. By using a subjective "I," he positions himself explicitly in an active knowledge-making community but also recognizes his limitations as a scholar-practitioner. His target audiences are not only physicians or affiliates in the health-care field but also readers interested in the moral, legal, ethical, and philosophical dilemmas that ensnare the medical profession.

Gawande's work acknowledges that because patient care is essentially a series of diverse interactions within structured institutions, it is profoundly risky and unpredictable. He thus situates his writing in the interrogatory space between authority and expertise on the one hand and uncertainty and experimentation on the other. As suggested by the honesty of his book's title, Gawande values a physician's ability to analyze and improve the status quo. His concern has translated into practical improvements in surgery protocol, especially in conjunction with the Center for Surgery and Public Health at Brigham and Women's Hospital where he has served as assistant director since 2004. He has been involved with devising a bar code system to prevent surgeons from inadvertently leaving instruments or other operating room paraphernalia in patients, as well as a 10-point scale that gauges the likelihood of postsurgical complications. Evaluating and improving surgical performance, implementing better safety measures, and alleviating errors are among his top concerns as an academic.

Whether he discusses the high costs of medical malpractice, the efficacy of publicly rating physician care, or the frustrations experienced by medical trainees and patients alike, the breadth of topics that Gawande tackles reveals a comprehensive investment in the human drama of illness and recovery. Since 1998, he has served as a staff writer of the *New Yorker* and contributed to the *New England Journal of Medicine's* "Notes of a Surgeon" column. His work has appeared in *The Best American Essays 2002* and *The Best American Science Writing 2002*. He has composed or collaborated on articles for such peer-reviewed journals as *American Journal of Surgery*, *Annals of Internal Medicine*, *Surgery*, *Health Affairs*, and the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Since 2003, Gawande has multitasked as an assistant professor of surgery at his alma mater, Harvard Medical School, and as a general and endocrine surgeon at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. In 2004, he joined the faculty of Harvard School of Public Health as an assistant professor in the Department of Health Policy and Management. Recognition for his writing and research initiatives has been steady;



the American Association for the Advancement of Science awarded his 2004 *New Yorker* article "The Bell Curve" its annual Science Journalism Award. In it, Gawande examines relative levels of care offered to patients suffering from cystic fibrosis, a genetic disease that compromises lung function and eventually proves fatal. Intermin-gling personal narrative, institutional analysis, and case study-type examples, he writes from the point of view of an investigative journalist. He examines the multiple dimen-sions of the patient-caregiver relationship and determines the ways in which qualifiers like "poor," "average," and "best" in terms of treatment (and when applied to doctors) rely on a number of factors beyond technical expertise or reputation. In 2006 Gawande received a "genius grant" from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation as part of the organization's annual Fellows Program. The \$500,000 award acknowledges the demonstrated merits, intellectual potential, and innovative thinking of a number of American leaders in various disciplines. Improving global health-care remains among Gawande's ongoing research goals.

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NANCY KANG

### ◆ GAY MALE LITERATURE

Gay male Asian American literature may be defined as literature produced by Asian American authors that represents male homosexuality, homoeroticism, and/or other modes of nonnormative sexuality and desire. (For information on lesbian or queer female Asian American literature, see **Lesbian Literature**.) Since the majority of texts that contain identifiably gay or queer male characters have been published since the 1980s and since the scholarly field of queer **Asian American studies** has emerged even more recently, each of the terms in *gay Asian American literature* is open to debate. Here, *gay* designates male characters or speakers who either self-identify with that label or whose predominant mode of sexual attraction is directed toward other males.

*Asian American* includes both U.S. and Canadian writers of Asian descent (regardless of where the literary work itself is set), whereas *literature* mainly refers to novels, short stories, personal essays, plays, and poems. These delimitations leave aside “gay” literature written by Asian authors in locations other than North America and works originally published in Asian languages and translated into English. Nonetheless, even within these boundaries, there has been an extraordinary proliferation of gay Asian American literature during the past 20 years or so whose thematic concerns and literary styles are as diverse and variegated as the larger field of Asian American literature itself.

This body of work acquires much of its significance when read within the context of the history of Asian immigration and racialization in North America. Many scholars have noted how the legal, economic, and cultural means by which peoples from Asia were ascribed “racial” characteristics from the nineteenth into the twentieth centuries simultaneously attributed gendered and sexualized traits onto the immigrants and their descendants. Although these processes of ascription were by no means uniform (being differentiated, for example, according to specific Asian ethnicities), they generally resulted in stereotypes that continue to persist into the present. With regard to the gender and sexuality of males of Asian descent, those stereotypes have typically revolved around images of effeminacy and emasculation, passivity or asceticism. Scholars such as Richard Fung, David Eng, and Nguyen Tan Hoang, among others, have analyzed the ways in which these stereotypes are referenced and reinforced in various forms of cultural expression, especially film and literature.

The most infamous response to this coalescing of the feminized or asexual Asian male was voiced in the introductions to the Asian American literary anthology *!!!!!!!!!* (1974). In the preface and in the essay “An Introduction to Chinese- and Japanese-American Literature,” the editors criticized racist portrayals of male Asians as effeminate and homosexual and consequently called for a remaking of Asian American manhood, particularly through the reinvigoration of language. Although feminist critics have challenged the masculinism intrinsic to this cultural nationalist position, it is only recently that queer Asian American studies scholarship has begun to acknowledge how these conditions have placed gay Asian American literature in an acutely fraught position. In addition to the homophobia and racism that permeates North American culture, gay Asian American literature must also contend with masculinist and homophobic impulses within Asian American communities and families, as well as with racialized vectors of desire and disgust within largely white gay social arenas. It is within the context of these broad historical and cultural forces that the politics of gay Asian American literature acquires its most resonant critical edge.

This complex history, coupled with the perceived lack of images of Asian men as attractive and desirable in mainstream popular culture, has rendered the politics of

representation—and its corollary, the politics of interracial (predominantly Asian-white) desire—important and pervasive themes. Andy Quan's title story in his fiction collection *Calendar Boy* (2001), for example, satirizes the protagonist's attempts to recreate the Asian male image according to the same standards of physical beauty that permeate Western culture, even as it recognizes the motivation to do so. Another story in *Calendar Boy*, "What I Really Hate," humorously plays up the rice queen/potato queen dynamic (white men who pursue Asian men/Asian men who pursue white men) operating at gay clubs. Its devastating irony notwithstanding, Quan's story reveals the complicated positioning of Asian men within these highly wrought spaces of desire by showing how the Chinese Canadian narrator is both repelled by and craves the rice queen's regard, while simultaneously distancing himself from what he deems the naive and embarrassing behavior of gay Chinese immigrants.

Perhaps the most notorious treatment of this queer interracial dynamic resides in David Henry Hwang's Tony Award-winning *M. Butterfly* (1988), a play set during the Vietnam War era in which the French diplomat Rene Gallimard engages in a 20-year-long affair with the Chinese communist spy Song Liling, presumably under the delusion that Song is a woman. Troping on Western Orientalist fantasies of the East and redeploying the myth of the submissive self-sacrificing Japanese woman's abiding love for the arrogant American soldier Pinkerton in Puccini's opera *Madama Butterfly* (1904), Hwang reverses the gender roles at the end of the play, with Song revealing himself as a man and Gallimard donning the kimono before committing ritual suicide. In doing so, *M. Butterfly* deconstructs the gendered, sexualized, and racialized means by which the East and the West are culturally and politically represented.

As *M. Butterfly* demonstrates, interracial power relations are especially politically charged in texts set in imperial or neocolonial contexts. Jessica Hagedorn's acclaimed *Dogeaters* (1990), for instance, features as one of its first-person narrators the queer hustler/DJ Joey Sands, whose pedigree as the son of a Filipina prostitute and an African American GI references one of the "byproducts" of decades of U.S. military presence in the Philippines. The sexualization of neocolonialism is further illustrated in Joey's backstory relationship with the American GI Neil Sekada, as well as in his hookup with the German art film director Rainer. In the course of their week-long liaison, Rainer asks his "informant" about the legendary shower boys who lather themselves with soap on stage for the pleasure of the mostly Western tourists and GIs, showing again the exploitation of racialized bodies and the commodification of colonial desire. Monique Truong's exquisite *The Book of Salt* (2004) also underscores the hierarchies of power that inhere in interracial, colonial relationships. Drifting back and forth between the narrator Binh's past in Vietnam and his present during the interwar period in Paris as Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas's live-in cook, the novel describes how Binh is first ejected from Saigon when his clandestine affair with the

French Chef Bleriot is exposed and then is abandoned by the racially mixed American expatriate Lattimore, who uses Binh to pilfer Stein's notebooks. As if patriotically responding to this sexualized layering of French and U.S. imperial interventions in Vietnam, at the end of the novel Truong has Binh seek out Nguyen Ai Quoc, his fellow countryman with whom he spent one night in Paris two years prior, and who would later be known in the annals of history as Ho Chi Minh.

The conflicted father-son relationship in *The Book of Salt*—Binh's father condemns his son's homosexuality even from beyond the grave—is also central to Bino Realuyo's *The Umbrella Country* (1999). Set in Manila during the martial law period of Marcos's rule, the novel delineates the emergent gay sexualities of Gringo, the reticent 11-year-old narrator, and his older brother Pipo, whose proclivities for transgender activities (he is the three-time winner of the neighborhood children's "Miss Unibers" contest) earn him his father's wrath in the form of physical beatings. Despite Daddy Groovie's imperious lectures on how to be a "man" and his drunken violence, the two boys manage to express their understated desires—Pipo through a painful encounter with the *bakla* Boy Manicure and through sexual explorations with a circle of neighborhood boys, and Gringo through his affectionate friendship with the newspaper seller Boy Spit. Like *The Umbrella Country*, R. Zamora Linmark's *Rolling the R's* (1995) takes up issues of transgender play and father-son struggle, mixing humor and cutting irony in its nonlinear, multigeneric portrayals of the fifth graders of Kalihi, Hawaii. In contrast to Edgar Ramirez's unapologetic gender-bending homosexuality, for example, the less gay-assertive Vicente de los Reyes is severely reprimanded by his father when he plucks up the courage to sing Donna Summer's "Enough Is Enough" on the youth's makeshift stage. *Funny Boy* (1994) by Shyam Selvadurai provides another example of these intertwined themes of gender nonconformity, emergent homoeroticism, and displacement. Similar to *The Umbrella Country*'s merging of the personal and sexual with the public and political, *Funny Boy* charts Arjie's cross-gender identifications and sexual awakening against the backdrop of the 1970s Sri Lankan conflict between Sinhalese and Tamils, closing with the family's forced exile to Canada.

Whereas patriarchal authority in these texts frequently asserts itself over and against the son's nascent homosexuality, intergenerational relationships between non-familial males assume an array of meanings. In addition to the texts above, several personal essays gathered in Justin Chin's *Burden of Ashes* (2001)—such as "The Beginning of My Worthlessness," "The Swedish Psychologist," and "The French Ambassador," set during the author's youth in Singapore—display cross-age and cross-race sexual encounters. Whereas Chin largely represents his younger self as an actively desiring subject, Alexander Chee explores the difficult terrain of child sexual abuse and its aftermath in his novel *Edinburgh* (2001). In highly allusive and introspective prose, *Edinburgh* traces how the Korean American protagonist Fee deals, on

the one hand, with the love and loss of his childhood friend Peter, and on the other, with the molestation of himself and 11 other choirboys by the director Big Eric. Although the novel is cognizant of the politics of interracial desire, its primary focus lies in disentangling gay male love between adults from pederastic exploitation.

These coming-of-age portraits of sexually emergent gay youth constitute part of the larger field of “coming out” narratives. Noël Alumi’s *Letters to Montgomery Clift* (2001) embeds these elements within the trajectory of the immigrant narrative. The novel tracks the experiences of the Filipino narrator Bong, who is dispatched to California following the capture and torture of his parents during the Marcos regime, finds comfort in composing letters to and seeing visions of the dead closeted movie star Montgomery Clift, learns of his father’s brutal torture and execution, slowly recovers from his practice of self-mutilation, forms a relationship with the Japanese American screenwriter Logan, and finally reunites with his mother in the Philippines. Joel Barraquiel Tan’s poignant and hilarious essay “San Francisco” (anthologized in *Growing Up Filipino*, 2003) also pays respect to the mother-son relationship, starkly contrasting his mother’s no-nonsense compassion with his estranged father’s denunciation of his son’s homosexuality.

To the extent that homosexuality in diasporic Asian cultures is interpreted at times as a Western affliction, it is interesting to note that some texts represent the process of returning to the protagonist’s Asian “homeland” as an integral part of becoming a gay or queer Asian American subject. In various ways, Norman Wong’s title story in *Cultural Revolution* (1994), Lawrence Chua’s novel *Gold by the Inch* (1998), several stories in Russell Leong’s *Phoenix Eyes* (2000), and Han Ong’s novel *The Disinherited* (2004) engage with this theme, demonstrating that relations of power and desire are not only structured by racial difference but also by class, age, and national affiliation.

Although the majority of gay Asian American literature has taken prose forms, there have been a number of poetry books and dramatic productions that explore such issues as homoeroticism, race, body image, stranger sex, religion, and AIDS. Formally ranging from the highly mannered and restrained to the unruly and open-ended, these texts include Russell Leong’s *The Country of Dreams and Dust* (1993); Timothy Liu’s *Vox Angelica* (1992), *Burnt Offerings* (1995), *Say Goodnight* (1998), *Hard Evidence* (2001), *Of Thee I Sing* (2004), and *For Dust Thou Art* (2005); Justin Chin’s *Bite Hard* (1997) and *Harmless Medicine* (2001); Andy Quan’s *Slant* (2001); Joel B. Tan’s *Monster* (2002); and R. Zamora Linmark’s *Prime Time Apparitions* (2005). Noted playwright Chay Yew’s dramatic trilogy *Whitelands*—which includes *Porcelain* (1992), *A Language of Their Own* (1994), and *Half-Lives* (1996)—similarly addresses themes of interracial desire and violence, immigration and AIDS, and father-son relationships. Justin Chin has also published a collection of performance pieces titled *Attack of the Man-Eating Lotus Blossoms* (2005).

In addition to several collections of Asian American lesbian literature, there also exist a number of anthologies that include gay-themed texts and erotica, such as *On a Bed of Rice: An Asian American Erotic Feast* (1995), *Rice: Explorations into Gay Asian Culture and Politics* (1998), *Queer PAPI Porn* (1998), *Take Out: Queer Writing from Asian Pacific America* (2001), and *Best Gay Asian Erotica* (2004). **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Orientalism and Asian America; Queer Identity and Politics; Racism and Asian America; Sexism and Asian America.

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MARTIN JOSEPH PONCE

### ◆ GILL, MYRNA LAKSHMI (1943– )

Born to an East Indian father and a Spanish Filipina mother, Lakshmi Gill was raised in Manila, Philippines, a product of two cultures. A poet, novelist, short story writer, editor, and English instructor, Gill has published many volumes of poetry that include *Rape of the Spirit* (1961), *During Rain, I Plant Chrysanthemums* (1966), *Mind-walls*

(1970), *First Clearing*, *An Immigrant's Tour of Life* (1972), *Novena to St. Jude Thaddeus* (1979), *Land of the Morning* (1980), and *Gathered Seasons* (1983). Indubitably personal in character, Gill's poems bring forth her experiences as a woman, daughter, sister, wife, parent, and teacher, as well as her eclectic religious views, her deep love for her philosophical father, and her metaphorical homelessness as an immigrant. She collected some of her best poems in *Returning the Empties: Selected Poems, 1960s–1990s* (1998). She has contributed poems and short stories to multicultural and world literature anthologies, in addition to editing an anthology of poems written by Asians in Canada and Asian Canadians for the spring 1981 issue of the *Asianadian* magazine. *The Third Infinitive* (1998), which recounts the protagonist's search for identity, is Gill's only published novel to date and echoes her own life experiences. She married William Godfrey, with whom she has three children, Marc, Evelynne, and Karam Keir. Gill has held English teaching positions at Notre Dame University, Nelson, British Columbia; Mount Allison University; University of Victoria, Victoria; and the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. She presently lives in Vancouver, British Columbia, and is working on a second novel.

Growing up in two cultures, Asian and North American, Lakshmi Gill aspires to "achieve a synthesis of the two cultures" (Murphy 1970, 418). Gill's poetry and fiction are thus autobiographical in their subject matter and themes. In the poem titled "In This Country," included in *Returning the Empties*, the poet sees herself as "the playground clown standing astride the seesaw of seasons, in a balancing act" (21). A few of her poems in this collection, such as "April 4," "Storyteller," and "Puja for Papa," are memorials for her father. "Puja for Papa," for example, reflects her deep love for her father, as she hears his voice assuring her in a dream that one day she will come home to India and "you will flow back into your beginnings" (167). In "I Tell You, Mr. Biswas," the poet responds to the title character in V.S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961), who struggles his whole life to build his own home and thereby gain independence; in Gill's poem, the speaker declares that "my homelessness is my freedom," disavowing any effort to cultivate roots in a particular place (90). A number of her poems, such as "My Son Dreams in Sackville," "A Winter Scene," "Marc, Gatherer," "Returning the Empties," and "Mixed Conditionals," celebrate her children. In "Mixed Conditionals," written on her fiftieth birthday, the poet counts her life's blessings, considering even her failures as blessings in disguise (20). "The Night Watch" brings out the narrator's responsibilities as a mother. "On the Third Year after Her Death" is a poem written in remembrance of her sister who died of breast cancer. Poems like "The Poeteacher" and "Legacy" explore the hard lot of a teacher. The first poem describes the harsh reality faced by the speaker, who must raise three children on the meager salary she receives as a half-time teacher after her husband leaves her. "Legacy" shows the immigrant

teacher's hurt when an Asian student complains to her department head: "Why is she teaching English?" (19). The speaker of "In Search for New Diction" ponders the ways humankind has visualized its relation to gods: "What need for perfection/Who will burn the old words?" (26) Leslie Sanders has aptly remarked in the *Toronto Review* that Gill's poems reveal "the lifelong reflections of a woman who sees, thinks, and feels deeply, turning her estrangement and pain into understanding and insight" (1999, 105). And in her short story "Carian Wine," which tells of a girl trying to get her drunken father to bed, Gill seems to be reminiscing her experience with her own father.

*The Third Infinitive* relates the story of a half-Indian, half-Filipina girl named Jazz who grows up in the Philippines. The novel describes her convent school education and her struggles in her search for a national and religious identity. Jazz is clearly based on the author's own experience growing up in Manila in the 1950s and recalls Stephen Dedalus of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Joyce's protagonist rejects his family, religion, and country, professing that "I will not serve that in which I no longer believe" (247). Like Joyce's Stephen, Gill's Jazz rejects Filipino culture and nationalism, as well as blind faith in religion, seeking instead the freedom to choose her own path. Jazz's sisters, on the other hand, embrace nationalism, Filipino culture, and religious faith. Jazz is puzzled at Mary's behavior that she was so silent and compliant when Jesus suffered: "What a life! To have borne a child into the world, just to see it suffer. And be unable to do anything about it" (61). Jazz dares to question the catechism, demanding to know from the Jesuit priest why the world needs to be saved again if Christ has already saved it (59). Out of the three infinitives of the catechism—"To know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him" (64)—Jazz chooses the third infinitive of service to God, which is really the service of fellow humans to create "a new day" for humankind (140). Unlike Stephen Dedalus, Jazz's determination of her life plan comes not from an epiphany but rather from logical reasoning and her father's influence.

*The Third Infinitive* deplores the role of women in the patriarchal society of the Philippines. Although Jazz's father and mother seek to develop their daughters' talents fully, Philippine society denies women equal opportunities. Jazz's father shudders at the thought of his daughters being treated as "chattel," and therefore decides to send them abroad (136). Ironically, however, her father is less liberal when it comes to his wife, having "stopped her education" and not permitting her "to strike out on her own, to release her creativity" (95). He can never accept her doing any business on her own. Once when he goes away from the country for almost a year, she runs a successful restaurant; however, when he returns, he closes it. What he expects from her is "to be at his side during business dealings, host the endless cocktail parties, look very attractive" (95).



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HARISH CHANDER

◆ GISH, LILLIAN. See Jen, Gish

◆ GOLD MOUNTAIN

Coming to America, immigrants have carried with them their own notions about the meaning of the New World. Whereas the Puritans came to build “a city upon a hill,” the Chinese ventured across the Pacific Ocean to find the Gold Mountain. Invented by the early Chinese immigrants who came to California shortly after the discovery of gold, the notion “Gold Mountain” has been used in reference not only to California but also to the city of San Francisco, which for a long time was the most important port of entry and home to the nation’s largest Chinese community. The term was used in reference to the United States later on, when the Chinese population began to disperse to other parts of the nation beyond California. Rather than being a precise geographical term, the term reveals Chinese immigrants’ economic motivation and their perception of the New World, a motivation and perception that have been shared by millions of immigrants from other parts of the world.

From the beginning of Chinese emigration to the 1960s, an overwhelming majority of Chinese immigrants in the New World came from the Pearl River Delta region in Guangdong Province in South China. That region was one of the first areas in China to be connected to global markets in modern history. And for a long time during the Qing Dynasty, the provincial capital, Canton (present-day Guangzhou), existed as the sole port for China’s international trade. People in the Delta region were the first in China to learn about the United States and the gold in California.

It is not surprising, therefore, that early California-bound immigrants from this region were motivated by economic considerations. To further understand the extent of their economic motivations, it is necessary to consider the longstanding gulf in income between China and the United States, which was expansive in the late nineteenth century.

In the 1860s, for example, a Chinese working for the Central Pacific Railroad Company in the West would receive a monthly wage of about \$31. Others working in different occupations and locations got paid less, including those who would agree to work in agriculture in the South for \$22 a month. According to contemporary estimates, rural workers in the immigrants' native land at the time earned \$8 to \$10 a year, which means that the average immigrant worker's earning was 26 to 46 times higher than the wage of his fellow villager back in China. Therefore, sending a family member, who was invariably a young male, to America was often a family strategy in taking advantage of opportunities in the increasing global economy at the time. The young immigrant bore grave responsibilities and, as is evident in so many cases, regularly sent money to the loved ones back home. The money that the immigrants made and saved would also improve their class status, turning lower-middle-class people into landlords and property owners.

The standard of living in the United States was also considerably better than that in China, especially in the villages in rural south China. There was much more and better food, especially meat, in America than in the homeland communities. Chinese immigrant laundry workers in pre-**World War II** Chicago, for example, could have chicken every Saturday. Back home in the villages, by comparison, few could afford to have it once a month. They could also have soda several times a day, which was a luxurious item that was out of the reach of ordinary people in the villages.

The image of the United States as a land of economic opportunities has remained strong among the Chinese. This is because the economic gap continued to widen between China and the United States until recent years, when China's unprecedented growth began to shift the longstanding economic relationship between the two countries. A large number of the post-1970s Chinese immigrants are intellectuals, who have arrived in the United States since the 1980s as graduate students. Though they came for the declared purpose of pursuing knowledge and doing research, the unstated economic benefits for coming to the United States are obvious. By becoming a graduate student at an American university, a fresh Chinese college graduate could make at least five to six times more than an established university professor did in China in the late 1990s, who earned a monthly salary of less than \$150.

But the image of Gold Mountain does not represent an entirely and simplistically romantic picture. From the very beginning, the Chinese have been aware of the uncertainties and hazards that were intimately associated with the lives of "Golden Mountaineers." The pursuit of their dream meant long—often decades-long—absences from their family. And the dream remained unrealized in many cases, as some struggled with poverty and others simply vanished. Therefore, folksongs in the emigrant communities as early as the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries contained not only praises for the Gold Mountaineers but also stern warnings for young girls not to marry them.

More importantly, for the Chinese, the Gold Mountain was also a place full of racialized discrimination, which started to surface soon after the arrival of the Chinese forty-niners. Discriminatory activities came primarily in two forms: legislation and violence. Such legislation existed at the local, state, and federal levels, undercutting the economic interest of the Chinese, attacking their cultural traditions, and even threatening to erase their presence in the United States. As examples of legislation at the state level, early in the 1850s, California levied a foreign miners' tax, primarily targeting the Chinese. The state legislature of California also tried to ban immigration from China, but its measure was declared unconstitutional because immigration was in the jurisdiction of the federal government. Government's anti-Chinese policies also existed at the local level. San Francisco, in particular, passed numerous anti-Chinese ordinances. One of the most notorious is the Queue Ordinance, which stipulated that Chinese inmates must have their hair (queue) cut right after their arrival at the county jail. Because the queue had acquired much symbolic significance for the Chinese, the 1867 ordinance was a blatant attack on the cultural identity of the Chinese. The United States Congress started to pass anti-Chinese legislation with the Page Act of 1875, which intended to restrict the arrival of Chinese women. In 1882 Congress passed the infamous **Chinese Exclusion Act**, banning Chinese labor immigration for 10 years and reiterating the principle that no Chinese could become naturalized citizens. The principle had been established by the 1790 Naturalization Act, which stipulated that only free white men could become naturalized citizens. The ban on Chinese immigration became permanent in 1904. The Exclusion Act is just an indication of institutionalized anti-Chinese racism in the legal system, which affected every aspect of Chinese American life.

Chinese in nineteenth-century America also encountered violence. Besides assaults that Chinese suffered individually, numerous physical attacks occurred on Chinese communities throughout the American West, destroying property, killing innocent individuals, and driving away the rest. One of the most violent is the 1885 massacre, in which mobs killed 51 Chinese laborers who worked in the largest coal mines along the Union Pacific Railroad in Rock Springs, Wyoming. Although the brutal massacre shocked the entire nation, no culprits were brought to justice, and the surviving Chinese moved out. The lack of justice in cases like this is attributable in part to the anti-Chinese sentiments that had wide popular support throughout the country.

It must be noted that the Chinese did fight such institutionalized racism. In the court of law, for example, they fought numerous battles to protect their rights and fundamental constitutional principles. They won a few battles, but it was extremely difficult for the politically powerless and numerically small community to win the war for social justice by itself. Social injustice prompted some Chinese to question the validity of the United States as a Gold Mountain, which became the subject of debates

among Chinese Americans in the prewar years. Some argued that the Gold Mountain for them now existed in China.

Since then, especially since the **civil rights movement** of the 1960s, the Gold Mountain has changed significantly. Institutionalized racism has decisively diminished. In 1943, the United States government abolished all the Chinese exclusion acts, giving Chinese immigrants the right to become naturalized citizens and allowing 105 Chinese to enter the country each year, which was based on the racist quota system established by the 1924 immigration act. The 1965 Immigration Reform Act abolished the quota system, opening the door for Asian immigration. As a result, Chinese emigration from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and ethnic Chinese communities in places such as Southeast Asia and Korea increased dramatically. The post-Mao reform that started in the late 1970s triggered a new wave of emigrants from mainland China. Post-1965 immigration has transformed and dramatically regenerated Chinese America. Anti-Chinese racism had significantly curbed the growth of the Chinese American population, which was only slightly over 102,000 in 1930, more than eight decades after the arrival of the Chinese forty-niners. Slowly, it went up to about 150,000 in 1950. In 2000 it exceeded 2.8 million—a twelvefold growth since 1960.

Chinese America is also far more diverse than ever before. Unlike in the early years when Chinese immigrants came predominantly from the Pearl River Delta, today Chinese immigrants arrive from different parts of China and from different Chinese communities throughout the world. Moreover, for a long time before 1970, the Chinese were concentrated heavily in two service occupations, namely the laundry business and the restaurant industry. Today, the Chinese population is far more diversely distributed in many industries. One of the new industries in which the Chinese have achieved a high profile is in high tech. It is their remarkable achievement in education that has enabled an increasing number of Chinese Americans (both U.S.-born and immigrants) to take advantage of opportunities in such newly emerged and high-paying industries. In much of the twentieth century, even white ethnic Americans had to wait at least one generation before they could join the ranks of the middle class. Now a significant number of Chinese newcomers can achieve their Gold Mountain dream just a few years after arriving in the United States. Although many Chinese Americans live in poverty and the struggle for social justice is far from over, there is a widespread belief among the Chinese that the Gold Mountain remains golden. **See also** Racism and Asian America.

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YONG CHEN

### ◆ GONZALEZ, N.V.M. (1915–1999)

Nestor Vicente Madali Gonzalez, fictionist, poet, and essayist, born on September 8, 1915, is universally acknowledged to be among the first-ranking writers of the Philippines, though his works also enjoy international acceptance, with translations into German, Russian, Chinese, and Bahasa Indonesian. Among the many honors bestowed on him are such impressive recognitions as three Rockefeller grants (1949–1950, 1952, and 1964), first prizes in the *Philippines Free Press* short story contest (1964) and the Palanca short story contest (1971), a Union of Writers of the Philippines Award (1989), a Cultural Center of the Philippines Award (1990), and the Philippine Centennial Award for Literature (1998). Gonzalez's principal occupation was professor, although he failed the University of the Philippines' entrance examination and never earned a college degree. In 1949 he became the first nondegree holder to teach courses at the University of the Philippines, from whose faculty he retired in 1967. He was visiting professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, from 1966 to 1968 and thereafter was tenured at California State University, Hayward, retiring in 1982. In 1987 he received an honorary doctorate from the University of the Philippines. In 1998–1999 he was the Regents Professor at UCLA. He did no significant scholarly studies, however. Instead, he wrote a substantial number of essays that contextualize Philippine literature and address problems faced by writers. The most salient essays have been reprinted in his collections *The Father and the Maid: Essays on Filipino Life and Letters* (1990); *Kalutang: A Filipino in the World* (1995); and *The Novel of Justice: Selected Essays, 1908–1994* (1996).

Gonzalez's 65-year literary career began with prestigious publications. At age 16 his poem "Guitarist" was published in *Philippine Magazine*, the most revered periodical in the prewar Philippines. In January 1934, four of his poems were published under the variant surname "Gonzales" (which he used in the 1930s) in *Poetry* magazine in the United States. Despite his poetic precocity, Gonzalez turned to prose fiction, beginning with a short story in the September 1933 issue of *Philippine Magazine*. However, he never ceased to write poetry.

The linchpins of Gonzalez's reputation are his short stories, which he assembled into seven volumes: *Seven Hills Away* (1947), *Children of the Ash-Covered Loam* (1954), *Look, Stranger, on This Island Now* (1963), *Selected Stories* (1964), *Mindoro and Beyond*

(1979; emended edition 1989), *The Bread of Salt and Other Stories* (1993), and *A Grammar of Dreams and Other Stories* (1997). As in his uncollected short stories, Gonzalez's prose style is simple, direct, and empirical, reminding more than one critic of Ernest Hemingway. The plots, however, are so static that they recede into vignette, even tableau. Some readers attribute this to the faithful representation of slow-moving peasant life, the nonlinear plots conveying the rhythmic patterns of life of the Mindoro *kaingineros* (slash-and-burn farmers) in particular. Others consider the stories plotless, even pointless, because, as an anthologist remarked in 1958, "Nothing much happens in them" (Roseburg 1958, 150). The cause of this torpor, according to the anthologist, is the style: "At times it leaps and then all of a sudden slows down and becomes sluggish and lumbers along like a debris-loaded stream" (Roseburg 1958, 151–152). The possibility that the languor merely boils down to the imitative fallacy, however, is countered by the careful construction of the stories.

Critics have detected Joycean and Jamesean strains in the schema, and the architectonics are often symbolic, as they are in "Dry Heaven." More than an ironic juxtaposition of the pointless quest for fish by two sport fishermen and the pointed quest for souls by Father Eugenio, the overarching motif involves the futility of much human questing. Like the individual stories, the collections are architected. A case in point is *Mindoro and Beyond*, consisting of 21 stories drawn from three previous volumes. Each of the six sections into which the stories are grouped increases the degree of sophistication, subtlety of tone, and juxtaposition of components. The reprinting of stories from volume to volume might even replicate the effect of the circular plots, creating recurrent but fixed points of reference in individual stories and collections.

Perhaps because Gonzalez's artistic vision is cosmic, his stories sometimes seem inscrutable or ambiguous. In the appropriately titled "In the Twilight," for example, readers are left to determine whose account to accept—Major Godo's or Dan's. This tiptoe situation reminds us that truth is not always transparent. The Gonzalez worldview, seemingly involving timeless, immutable physical objects accurately perceived by our senses, accommodates the contrary view that our perceptions of reality may be tenuous, even unreliable. That Gonzalez should not be thought of as merely a bucolic local colorist is evident not only from his worldview but also from the social criticism embedded in his stories. He does not inject the venom of Ninotchka Rosca nor does he historically contextualize as Linda Ty-Casper does, but he nonetheless lacerates unjust social practices and arrangements, often by reportage, depicting apparently personal afflictions such as loneliness or suffering. Readers connect the individual predicament with the social malady (e.g., "Pare Lucio" is not solely the story of one man's encounter with the judiciary; it exposes arbitrary "justice" in general at the *municipio* level). In *Seven Hills Away* the transition from the specific situation of the individual to the more widespread human condition is facilitated by the absence of the first-person

singular point of view. Another aspect of Gonzalez's fiction that has generally received accolades is his renderings in English of peasant dialect. That he was well qualified to translate from Tagalog to English was established by 1943, when he placed third in the *Liwayway* Tagalog short story contest. But the degree to which he succeeded in rendering local and regional expressions has drawn praise even from harshly critical commentators such as the foremost Filipino formalist critic, Edilberto Tiempo, who considers Gonzalez largely an artistic failure.

Two of Gonzalez's three novels have garnered major literary prizes, *The Winds of April* (1940), an Honorable Mention in the first Commonwealth Literary Contests, and *The Bamboo Dancers* (1959), both the Jose Rizal Pro-Patria Award and a Republic Cultural Heritage Award. *A Season of Grace* (1956), however, the best of the three, won no such prizes, and even it has elicited a good deal of negative critical reaction. *The Winds of April*, an autobiographical first-person narrative, has a *bildungsroman* quality about it and is picaresque in its episodic construction. It has virtually no plot, instead consisting of lengthy descriptive passages (sometimes finely rendered) and accounts of events such as the narrator's visit to the city and his lumber-selling trip to Capiz. The characters do not grow, even when they are fetchingly presented, as in the case of the narrator's father and the Japanese medicine salesman. Gonzalez did achieve an objective narrative stance and did attempt social criticism through the narrator's contacts with different settings and people of varied social strata. As a whole, however, *The Winds of April* is a series of fragments; the one unifying element—the narrator's controlling consciousness—is insufficient to impart full coherence to the text.

*A Season of Grace* exhibits the maturation of Gonzalez's work in the succeeding 16 years. The local color is still present, but it does not preclude a narrative flow, which *A Season of Grace* has, albeit a sluggish one. *A Season of Grace* also has a five-part overall design: three middle sections sandwiched between two shorter ones, which constitute a prologue and an epilogue respectively. The scenes that recur, with variations, at the beginning and end reinforce this structure. For instance, a coerced "gift" of mats to a corrupt *municipio* official is exacted at both the beginning and the end. Throughout the novel the cyclical nature of the lives of the *kaingimeros* is depicted. Just 12 major incidents happen in the approximate one-year time setting of the novel, and these involve recurrent problems unanchored in any definite time frame. Furthermore, events from the past are recalled and combined with the events of the time setting, thus adding to the aura of timelessness that the novel exudes. The lives of the main characters, Doro and Sabel, revolve around the crop cycle: clearing the land, planting, trying to defend the growing grain from predators such as rats, and harvesting. Meanwhile, the parallel human life cycle of birth, growth, aging, and death links humans to external nature, leading readers to realize that the fictional world is not so

much temporally defined as spatially explicit. Palpably specific are the ash-covered loam and the mangrove swamps; elusively ephemeral are the time markers.

Adding substance to the novel is the transparent social criticism, far better integrated into the artistry of the work than it was in *The Winds of April*. An enduring element of the cyclical life patterns of the *kaingineros* is the human predators, in the novel embodied in the rapacious Epe Ruda and his wife Tiaga. They are the only available suppliers of such staples as clothes and kerosene. Credit is extended on the *duplihan* (double-borrowing) system—the debtor must return twice the amount borrowed. This arrangement ensures that the already impoverished farmers only sink more hopelessly into even further debt with each passing year. Though such exploitive practices are presented objectively and without didacticism in both *The Winds of April* and *A Season of Grace*, in the former we encounter them as spectators; in the latter we experience them because they are interwoven into the texture of the tale. For instance, the fact that Sabel and Doro have, at the end, two children (Eloy and Porton) and Sabel is again pregnant, whereas Tiaga has just suffered a miscarriage and so is still childless, is a powerfully ironic commentary on the riches, accumulated through greed, of the Rudas of the world, and the impoverishment, due to honest, hard work, of the Doros and Sabels.

There is consensus that *The Bamboo Dancers* is a retrogression from Gonzalez's standard. For the first time, Gonzalez leaves rural Mindoro, which he knew intimately from experience, and attempts an international novel, set in the United States, Canada, Japan, and Taiwan. The gravitation of Gonzalez's plots toward the disunified is, predictably, exacerbated by such a wide scope of settings, leading one critic to conclude that the story is "a mere travelogue" (Daroy 1966, 31) and another to opine that "as a work of art, the novel is a failure" (Demetillo 1987, 69).

The protagonist, Ernie Rama, is a sculptor, but his creativity has been stultified. His brother Pepe suggests that he try driftwood art, a sardonic reflection on his rulerless meanderings around the world. He is ambivalent in many ways, including his sexual orientation, which of course symbolically reinforces his lack of artistic fecundity. The book's title prepares us for his unsettled status, referring as it does to the *tinikling* (bird dance), a traditional Filipino art in which dancers must deftly leap to prevent the ankles from being clipped by bamboo poles, alternately opening and closing. The two poles symbolize Asian and Western orientations respectively, the two cultural influences that produce Ernie's ambivalence (a trait of his character that Gonzalez himself called attention to) and intellectual paralysis. Gonzalez has also emphasized that Ernie is no hero. In fact, his name is ironic, a pale reflection of the truly intrepid Ernest Hemingway (Ernie to his associates), whose manly exploits in male proving grounds (e.g., bullring, battlefield, big game hunt) put into the shade Rama's excursions, for instance to the carp pond of a hotel. "Rama" in Hinduism is a



deified hero, an incarnation of Vishnu, precisely what Ernie is not. Ernie's American counterpart is Herb Lane, ambivalent and innocuous in the United States but a juggernaut of destruction in Taipei, where he gets drunk, attacks his girlfriend, and runs over a Chinese girl with his jeep. His name, too, is an ironic misfit. An herb is often used for medicinal purposes, but Herb Lane is not the path to healing the alienation and self-divisions of humans in the modern world. The havoc wrought by Lane may only be a microcosm of the cataclysm that humans can bring on themselves, as the Hiroshima locale may ominously remind the reader. Although Ernie's near drowning may betoken a rebirth, there is no certainty that this is the case. Ernie's self-imposed isolation from others, especially older people (who embody traditional cultural values), may ultimately lead to self-annihilation.

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L. M. GROW

#### ◆ GOTANDA, PHILIP KAN (1951 – )

A *sansei* (third-generation) Japanese American playwright, producer, director, and actor, Gotanda is primarily known as a playwright and has received a Guggenheim Foundation scholarship, three National Endowment for the Arts Artist Grants, three Rockefeller Playwriting Awards, the 1989 Will Glickman Playwriting Award, a PEW

Theater Community Group National Theatre Artist Award, a Gerbode and McKnight Foundation Fellowship, the Theatre Communication Group/National Endowment for the Arts Directing Fellowship, and Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Writer's Award.

Born on December 17, 1951, in Stockton, California, Philip Kan Gotanda was exposed to the arts while growing up, and he wrote songs about being **Asian American** and played in bands from junior high school through college. He eventually befriended David Henry **Hwang**, a Chinese American playwright who is also a musician, because of their mutual interests in music. They played in a rock band, Bamboo, with R.A. **Shiomi**. Gotanda attended the University of California at Santa Cruz in 1969, intending to study psychology to eventually become a psychiatrist. In 1970 he went to Japan and studied pottery with artist Hiroshi Seto, and he received a BA in Asian studies from the University of California at Santa Barbara in 1973. His experiences in the pottery field later informed his plays, *Ballad of Yachiho* (1996) and *Yohen* (1997). He studied law at Hastings School of Law in San Francisco to satisfy his parents, who expected him to become a lawyer, completing his law degree in 1978. Following in the footsteps of Frank **Chin**, a pioneer in creating the Asian American theater community during the post-World War II era, Gotanda is an influential dramatist of the 1980s and 1990s, part of the so-called second-wave Asian American theater community, along with David Henry Hwang, Momoko **Iko**, and Wakako **Yamauchi**. He nurtured the next wave of Asian American writers, such as Cherylene Lee, Jeannie **Barroga**, Han Ong, Canyon Sam, and Charlie Chin.

As Gotanda was always interested in music, his first play, titled *The Avocado Kid, or Zen and the Art of Guacamole*, was a musical inspired by "Momotaro," a famous Japanese folktale. Catching the attention of Mako, artistic director of the East West Players, the first professional Asian American theatre company in the United States, founded in 1965, this musical was staged in Los Angeles by the East West Players in 1979. Then it was staged in San Francisco by the Asian American Theatre Company, founded in 1973, the third professional Asian American theatre company. At this time, Gotanda was a clerk at North Beach-**Chinatown** Legal Aid in San Francisco, but eventually he gave up his career in the legal field. He never took the bar exam. His second musical about a third-generation Japanese American rockstar titled *Bullet Headed Birds* was staged by the Asian American Theatre Company in 1981 and the Pan Asian Repertory Theater in New York in November 1981.

Despite the fact that Gotanda was born after the internment of Japanese Americans during **World War II**, many of his plays are drawn from the internment experiences of his parents' generation. His father, Wilfred Itsuta Gotanda, was from Kauai, Hawaii, and, upon completing his medical degree at the University of Arkansas, he opened his medical practice in Stockton, California. Gotanda's mother, Catherine Matsumoto, was a schoolteacher from Stockton. At the outbreak of World War II, Gotanda's

parents were separately sent to an internment camp in Rohwer, Arkansas, and Wilfred Gotanda married Catherine Matsumoto and settled in Stockton after they returned from the internment camp. Gotanda was the youngest of their three sons. Although Gotanda's parents did not talk about their internment camp experiences very often, theirs as well as their generation's experiences in the internment camps and their lasting effects became a central theme in many of Gotanda's plays, such as *A Song for a Nisei Fisherman* (directed by David Henry Hwang, produced by the Asian American Theatre Company in San Francisco in 1980), *The Wash* (produced in San Francisco by Eureka Theatre Company in 1987), *Fish Head Soup* (produced in Berkeley, CA, by Berkeley Repertory Theatre in 1991), and *Sister Matsumoto* (produced in Seattle by Seattle Repertory Theater in 1997). Unlike his contemporary playwrights such as Lane Nishikawa, whose internment camp plays are set in the camps, Gotanda's internment camp plays are set after the war and explore the lasting psychological effects of racism and camp experiences on Japanese Americans, including internalized racism and self-hatred.

*A Song for a Nisei Fisherman*, a play drawn from Gotanda's father's experience, is considered the opening part of a Japanese American family trilogy that includes *The Wash* and *Fish Head Soup*. *A Song for a Nisei Fisherman* is about Itsuta "Ichin" Matsumoto, a **nisei** (second-generation Japanese American) son from a family involved in the fishery business, who wants to be a doctor. Though the play is not chronologically arranged, it shows Itsuta's life through a series of scenes, from his impoverished Hawaiian childhood and experience in an internment camp to fatherhood and retirement. While depicting the protagonist's struggles in racist American society and pressures from his Japanese American family, Gotanda explores the theme of emotional isolation and the generational gaps.

Gotanda's next play, *The Dream of Kitamura*, is a punk-rock fantasy play drawn from stories collected from Gotanda's family, friends, and his dreams, and it was produced in San Francisco in 1984, whereas the aforementioned surrealistic play titled *Bullet Headed Birds* was produced at the Pan Asian Repertory Theatre in New York in 1981. However, what gained Gotanda's entrance into mainstream American theatre was the production of *A Song for a Nisei Fisherman* and *The Wash* at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles in 1991. Whereas *A Song for a Nisei Fisherman* is based on nisei men's experiences, including Gotanda's father's, *The Wash* is drawn from the story of a nisei wife who left her neglectful husband to begin a new life as an independent woman, even though such self-asserting behavior was unheard of in her generation. This play's dramatic action occurs 40 years after the internment camp, and its main female character, Masi Matsumoto, replaces her husband's dirty laundry with clean clothes every week. Exploring the husband-wife relationship on the one hand, Gotanda exposes racism within the Japanese American community on the other. For

example, the husband Nobu opposes interracial marriage and does not recognize his daughter Judy's marriage to an African American man. Consequently, he refuses to meet his only grandson, Timothy. The play was originally workshopped at the Mark Taper Forum's New Theater for the Now Festival in 1985 and then premiered at San Francisco's Eureka Theater in 1987. It was made into a motion picture in 1988, with the screenplay by Gotanda and directed by Michael Toshiyuki Uno.

Unlike the first two plays in the Japanese American family trilogy that focus on second-generation Japanese Americans, *Fish Head Soup* is about a sansei (third-generation Japanese American) son named Matt Iwasaki, who stages his death by drowning to erase his Asian American identity. Consequently, Matt's father is devastated by his son's death and becomes emotionally unavailable to his family; Matt's mother begins an affair with a Caucasian man whose obsession is Oriental femininity; Matt's brother suffers from the shock and guilt of his experiences in the **Vietnam War**. The self-centered Matt returns home in San Joaquin Valley to mortgage the family house to help finance his film about his dysfunctional family, and he reveals the secret of the supposed drowning to his family. While facing typical problems with the racist film industry, the son also faces opposition from his mother for filming only Japanese Americans because she believes that no one is interested in Japanese Americans, who—she unconsciously believes as her son does—are second-class citizens. Thus, the play demonstrates internalized racial prejudice that was passed on generationally after the **Japanese American internment**.

*Sisters Matsumoto*, a Chekhovian realistic drama, deals with the camp experience's immediate psychological impact, as the play is set in late 1945 Stockton, California, when three sisters of a wealthy family, Grace, Chiz, and Rose, are released from the Rohwer camp, with their parents dead and the prewar family fortune gone. Grace, the oldest sister, is rational and traditional, while the middle sister, Chiz, is an assimilationist who wants to be integrated into mainstream America. The youngest sister, Rose, for whom the older sisters are trying to arrange a marriage, is nostalgic. Their differences cause different views toward love, family, and identity. Although the victimization of Japanese Americans during World War II is a prominent theme in Gotanda's plays, he also exposes faults within the Japanese American community, as he does in *The Wash*. As Gotanda displays in *A Song for a Nisei Fisherman*, when Itsuta expresses his racist bias toward his son's relationship with a Chinese American woman, and in *The Wash*, in which the father refuses to acknowledge the existence of his only grandson, a product of interracial marriage, in *Sisters Matsumoto*, with the war and camp experience in the backdrop of the play, Gotanda reveals classist bias within the community while examining Japanese Americans' struggles in a racist culture and the economic aftermath of war. Although the play feels autobiographical and is, in fact, drawn from Gotanda's mother's life and grounded in historical events, it is fictitious and

explores Japanese American women's reintegration into American society. The play premiered at the Seattle Repertory Theater with Gotanda's friend and artistic collaborator Sharon Ott as a director and in three-way collaboration with the San Jose Repertory Theatre and the Asian American Theatre Company in 1999, and later it was coproduced with Boston's Huntington Theatre Company in 2000. The play received mixed reviews.

Some of Gotanda's plays problematize the Asian American stereotypes and discrimination perpetuated in the media, an issue many of his contemporary Asian American dramatists, such as Edward **Sakamoto** and Lane Nishikawa, addressed. Gotanda was inspired by various veteran Asian American actors and created the main character Vincent Cheng. *Yankee Dawg You Die* contrasts Vincent, an experienced Asian American actor, to Bradley Yamashita, a young novice actor, and creates inter-generational conflicts between Vincent, who sells out to the typecasting practices, and Bradley, who despises Vincent's willingness to accept demeaning Asian roles. In the end, their roles are reversed when Vincent lands on a respectable role in a Japanese American production whereas Bradley cannot refuse a stereotypical yet lucrative role. This dramatic satire of two generations of Japanese American actors in a racist movie industry was drawn from Gotanda's first experiences working with Asian American dramatic artists and was one of the first Asian American plays to depict a dignified homosexual Asian American character (Vincent). It was produced by the Berkeley Repertory Theater in 1988.

In the 1990s, Gotanda turned his attention to the film industry, producing *The Kiss* (1992), *Drinking Tea* (1996), and *Life Tastes Good* (1999). *The Kiss*, a 13-minute, black-and-white movie Gotanda wrote, directed, produced, and starred in, recounts the story of an introvert named Wilfred Funai, who accidentally finds his previously unknown potential as a hero when his gay colleague chokes during a meal. Gotanda presented this film to various film festivals, including the Sundance Film Festival, and received San Francisco's Golden Gate Award in 1994. *Drinking Tea* (1996) is another film that Gotanda wrote, directed, and produced. It is 30 minutes long and is about the process and effect of dying on an old, second-generation Japanese American couple. This film was also presented at the Sundance Film Festival. Gotanda wrote and directed a feature-length, color movie titled *Life Tastes Good* with Dale Minami as a coproducer. This film was also presented at the Sundance Film Festival and other film festivals, including the San Francisco Asian Film Festival.

While working on films, Gotanda wrote *Ballad of Yachiyo*, a play based on his paternal aunt, Yachiyo Gotanda, who was born and raised in the small town of Mana on the island of Kauai and committed suicide by taking ant poison at the young age of 17. Gotanda's father hardly talked about his oldest sister, but she was mentioned accidentally during dinner, and Gotanda worked on this play for 10 years until he finally

started writing its draft when his wife Diane was in the hospital. He has seen two pictures of his aunt—one taken around the time of her death and the other at her funeral. To write this play, Gotanda interviewed his relatives and conducted research at the Oral History Center at the University of Hawaii. Set in Kauai, Hawaii, in 1919, the play is about the coming of age of the female title character Yachiyo, who is sent to a pottery artist, Hiro Takamura, and his wife to become a live-in servant while acquiring the social polish necessary for a Japanese bride through tea ceremony and flower arrangement lessons. It chronicles the changing relationships among Yachiyo, the artist, and his wife, until Yachiyo becomes pregnant and commits suicide.

Although Gotanda's indebtedness to Asian American theatre companies is well-known, his plays have also been produced or coproduced by non-Asian theatres since the 1990s. *Fish Head Soup* premiered at Berkeley Repertory Theatre and was directed by Oskar Eustis, who also directed *Day Standing on its Head* at the Manhattan Theatre Club in 1994. Berkeley Repertory Theatre and Costa Mesa's South Coast Repertory co-commissioned *Ballad of Yachiyo*, a play about a love triangle that went tragically wrong. It premiered in Berkeley in 1995 and was produced in Costa Mesa in the following year. Likewise, the Asian American Theater Company, San Jose Repertory Theater, and Seattle Repertory Theatre collaborated on *Sisters Matsumoto*.

Critics praise Gotanda for his abilities to create a wide range of plays that have distinct styles, themes, and techniques, such as realism, surrealism, and musical. To keep the inspiration and the process of making plays fresh, Gotanda restructures the way he creates every five to seven years. Despite the fact that many of his plays, such as *Fish Head Soup and Other Plays* and *No More Cherry Blossoms: Sisters Matsumoto and Other Plays* are published by the University of Washington Press, his plays have not received wide scholarly attention yet. Perhaps *Yankee Dawg You Die* is the only play that has attracted scholarly interest. Some of the critical studies on *Yankee Dawg You Die* include James Moy's *Marginal Sights: Staging the Chinese in America* (1993), Robert Vorlicky's *Act Like a Man: Challenging Masculinities in American Drama* (1995), and Josephine Lee's *Performing Asian America* (1997). In the interviews by David Henry Hwang and by Robert Ito, Gotanda expresses his concerns regarding the financial troubles Asian American theatres such as the Asian American Theatre Company, the East West Players, and the Pan Asian are facing in recent years.

Gotanda's other plays include *American Tattoo* and *Jan Ken Po*. *American Tattoo* is a play based on Japanese American internment camp experiences, and it was read on stage in Berkeley, California, by the Berkeley Repertory Theatre in 1982. Gotanda wrote *Jan Ken Po* in collaboration with David Henry Hwang and R.A. Shiomi, and it was produced in San Francisco by the Asian American Theatre Company in 1986. *Day Standing on Its Head* is a Kafkaesque play featuring a middle-age Japanese American law professor named Harry Kitamura. It was produced in New York by the Manhattan

Theatre Club in 1993 and received mixed reviews. This play was anthologized in *Asian American Drama: 9 Plays from the Multiethnic Landscape* and in *But Still, Like Air, I'll Rise*, both published in 1997. In collaboration with Dan Kuramoto, Danny Yamamoto, and Taiji Miyagawa, Gotanda wrote and privately published *in domination of the night*. It is a spoken-word performance with a combination of jazz and poetry in which Gotanda plays the role of Ozu, and his coauthor Kuramoto plays Mr. Moto. It was produced in San Francisco by the Asian American Theatre Company in 1994. *Beans from Pieces of the Quilt* was produced in San Francisco by Magic Theatre in 1996. *Yohen*, a play that deals with a troublesome interracial marriage between an African American, James, and his Japanese war bride, named Sumi, was produced by Berkeley Repertory Theater in San Francisco in 1997 with Timothy Douglas as a director. It was later produced in Los Angeles by the East West Players in collaboration with the African American Robey Theatre Company in 1999. *[F]loating weeds* was produced in San Francisco by Campo Santo and Intersection Theater in 2001, and it was during this time that Gotanda was inspired to write a play about the cycle of male violence, *A Fist of Roses*. *The Wind Cries Mary* is a one-act play inspired by *Hedda Gabler* by Henrik Ibsen and was produced by the San Jose Repertory Theatre in 2002. This play portrays a Japanese American version of Ibsen's nineteenth-century heroine and a nisei daughter of an entrepreneur named Eiko, who is based on Gotanda's cousin. The play is included in *No More Cherry Blossoms*, along with *Sisters Matsumoto*, *Ballad of Yachiyo*, and *Under the Rainbow*, a play of two one-acts. *Under the Rainbow* was informally read at Locus Arts in San Francisco in 2002 and includes a one-act play titled *natalie wood is dead* and *white manifesto and other perfumed tales of self-entitlement*. The former one-act play depicts an unhealthy relationship between a mother who pursues Hollywood perfection and her daughter who is not willing to live up to her mother's expectations; the latter work looks at white males' obsession with Oriental women. *A Fist of Roses* premiered in 2004 and is an all-male-cast play that deals with male violence in relationships. This play also involves the audience, as they are asked to answer questions on a card and turn it in before the play starts. Later in the play, the actors read the cards filled out by the audience that briefly describe the audience's involvement in violence. *After the War* is set in postwar Japantown in San Francisco, and *Manzanar: An American Story* is an orchestral work about the Japanese American internment during World War II with spoken text written by Gotanda. He collaborated with Kent Nagano, maestro of the Berkeley Symphony and Berlin Philharmonic, and composers Jean-Pascal Beintus, David Benoit, and Naomi Sekiya.

As a director, Gotanda worked on *Uncle Tadao* by R.A. Shiomi, and *The House of Sleeping Beauties* by David Henry Hwang. An associate artist at the Seattle Repertory Theatre, Gotanda lives in San Francisco with his actress-producer wife Diane Takei. They have no children. He is also a cofounder of the Asian American Musicians

Organization. He collaborates with diverse types of American theatres, as well as international theatres, to expose his works to a wide range of audiences. In interviews, Gotanda expressed that as a playwright working off camaraderie among multiethnic groups and dealing with the issues of what it means to be Asian American, he was concerned that there was a lack of unity among the multiethnic communities in the early 1990s. What has worried him in recent years is the financial difficulties facing Asian American theatre communities. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Racism and Asian America.

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KYOKO AMANO

◆ GOTO, HIROMI (1966– )

Born in Chiba-Ken, Japan, Hiromi Goto immigrated to British Columbia, Canada, in 1969. Eight years later, Goto's family moved to the small town of Nanton, Alberta, where her father began to cultivate mushrooms on a farm. Much of Goto's literature is influenced by her childhood experiences of social and political racism and the effects of bigotry—especially on children. In 1989, Goto graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Calgary—although some sources claim it was the University of Alberta—,where she participated in the university's reputable Creative Writing Department, under notable authors such as Nicole Markotic,



Aritha Van Herk, and Fred Wah. Goto currently resides in British Columbia, where, from 2003 to 2004, she was the writer in residence at the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in Vancouver.

*Chorus of Mushrooms* (1994) is Goto's first novel, and the winner of the regional Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book. The novel features Marasaki (Muriel) as its protagonist, as she experiences many forms of the intergenerational conflicts that are common to many Asian North American novels (in Canada, for instance, Judy Fong Bates's *Midnight at the Dragon Café* and Wayson Choy's *The Jade Peony*). Murasaki searches for her missing grandmother, Naoe (a partial narrator of the story), while the text interweaves magic realism and mythology into the original plot; the reader must interpret the actual events that have occurred from the folktales that seep in. The novel addresses the significance of the subconscious, especially in terms of dreams and memory, fantasy and storytelling. *Chorus of Mushrooms* is a significant text as it moves away from the tradition of Japanese Canadian memoir and historical fiction that re-creates World War II or directly discusses the aftermath of Japanese American internment (Joy Kogawa, another Japanese Canadian author, famously wrote *Obasan* in 1981 at the beginning of Japanese Canadians' fight for redress). Instead, it likens itself with the Asian American literary genres that address intergenerational domestic struggles and minority isolation in small-town Canada. The distance that is suggested between Naoe and her daughter, who is fully assimilated and refuses to speak Japanese, is painful but eased by Marasaki's curiosity in the Japanese language. *Chorus of Mushrooms* has been awarded the co-winner of the Canada-Japan Book Award in 1995 and the Grant MacEwan College Book Award, 2000–2001.

Goto's second full-length novel is intended for adolescents but continues to address ideas of racism, isolation, and fantasy. *The Water of Possibility* (2001) is a text through which Goto can access a younger generation with the aim of teaching them about the ideas of migration and ethnic unbalance for a more youthful audience. Sayuri, the 12-year-old hero of *The Water of Possibility*, moves with her family to a small town in Alberta, where she and her brother, Keiji, discover a secret world through their cellar door. In this magical place, Japanese mythology becomes reality, as animals talk and folktales come alive. In a highly allegorical manner, Keiji is captured by Patriarch, a dominating fox, from whom Sayuri must rescue her little brother. After overcoming various fantastical obstacles, Sayuri is able to save Keiji and eliminate the overbearing power of Patriarch. Again, Goto's interest in magical realism is employed as a bridge between the Eastern and Western worlds, feminism and patriarchal oppression—the contemporary twenty-first century and the myths and legends of previous generations. Like in the medieval romances in the Western literary canon, Goto uses allegorical characters and supernatural figures as metaphors for contemporary social ills: racism, alienation by the dominant group, and the necessity of fighting against racist discourses.

Also published in 2001 is Goto's speculative fiction novel *The Kappa Child*—winner of the James Tiptree Jr. Award, an honor bestowed on novels that address gender within the science fiction and fantasy genres. Again set in the Canadian prairies, *The Kappa Child* combines Japanese folklore with the Western intertext of *Little House on the Prairie*—a source that Goto admits to being personally fond of while she was a child. The novel features four Japanese Canadian sisters as they suffer under their father's tyranny in different ways. The protagonist struggles with the patriarchy of her abusive father and dysfunctional family (she initially distances herself and cannot relate to her sisters) but is able to gain subjectivity through her immaculate conception pregnancy of a Kappa Child. Goto's typical marriage of Japanese mythology and Canadian realism is interjected with visual/popular culture and science fiction (it is revealed that the protagonist's mother is a former alien abductee). With this text, Goto joins other Asian Canadian novelists, such as Larissa Lai (*When Fox Is a Thousand* [1995], *Salt Fish Girl* [2002]), who address Asianess, gender, and sexuality through a mergence of the speculative genre with ethnic studies.

In her collection of short stories, *Hopeful Monsters* (2004), Goto elaborates on her previous work by inserting atypical characters into realist situations. The works undermine the Victorian (and beyond) notion that femaleness is monstrous, by examining gender and corporeality ironically, subversively, and, most importantly, empathetically. Again, Goto counters racist ideologies by recalling experiences from her childhood as an Asian Canadian in a predominantly white, prairie community. Monsters appear in various forms throughout the collection, ranging from the villains featured in childhood nightmares (bogeymen in the closet, creatures under the bed), archetypal figures like the mummy or a city-crushing lizard, to contemporary, psychological monsters, such as sociopaths and pedophiles. Yet Goto's monsters are not "Others," but members of twentieth-century society, as they argue with their mothers, nurture their children, and use the washroom—to highlight the arbitrariness of marginalization and alienation. "Camp Americana" features a Japanese grandfather of Asian Canadian children. The assimilated grandchildren disgust him with their disrespectful and abhorred behaviour; he, in turn, frightens them with his severity and rage. Maternity is another theme addressed in *Hopeful Monsters*, as one mother is devastated by the guilt of running over her child, and another woman is ostracized for refusing to breastfeed. Women, at numerous times throughout the text, consider themselves to be monstrous when their bodies change or refuse to regain their pre-pregnancy shapes. Again, intergenerational conflict appears in *Hopeful Monsters*, as second- and third-generation Japanese Canadians are deemed monstrous by their elders for excessive assimilation. In "Drift," a Japanese Canadian mother is repulsed by her daughter's overt sexuality, and, more specifically, her lesbianism; whereas other stories address issues of interracial marriage and racial hybridity. *Hopeful Monsters* forces the reader to adopt the perspective at times of the

dominant ideology and at other times, of the marginalized Other, to highlight both the inherent monstrosity in us all and the constructedness of self-other binaries.

In addition to her published books, Goto's short fiction has appeared in various publications, including George Bowering's edited collection *And Other Stories* (2001), Smaro Kamboureli's anthology *Making a Difference, Canadian Multicultural Literature* (1996), and in journals such as *Blue Buffalo* (Summer 1992), *Grain* (Fall 1992), and *Ms.* (Fall 1996). Goto is also an accomplished poet whose work has appeared in anthologies like Taien Ng-Chan's *Ribsauc* (2001) and journals such as *Prairie Fire* (Winter 1997) and *Contemporary Verse 2* (Winter 1994). Furthermore, Goto contributes to the literary world with her critical theory, in which she examines ideas of alienation, marginalization, corporeality, and migration. Some of her essays include "Alien Texts, Alien Seductions: The Context of Colour Full Writing" that appeared in Christl Verduyn's collection, *Literary Pluralities* (1998), and "Translating the Self: Moving Between Cultures," which was featured in *WestCoastLine* (Fall 1996). See also Assimilation/Americanization; Feminism and Asian America; Japanese American Internment; Racism and Asian America.

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## ◆ GRAPHIC NOVEL

Asian American graphic novels, a longer form of the comic book, usually about 100 pages, are now coming of age and winning awards. Oriental villains, such as **Fu Manchu**, have been a part of the comic book narratives since the beginning. Now such stereotyped figures are less prominent as Asian American comics emerge. The sequential art form of the graphic novel evolved from its original discourse forms of the daily and Sunday cartoon strips, the political cartoons, and the comic book formats. Art Spiegelman created a graphic memoir about the Holocaust, *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, which won a special Pulitzer Award in 1992. Its sequel, *Maus II*, won the Eisner and Harvey Awards, special cartoon and graphics awards. With such recognition, other publishers started to release their own graphic novels. Then followed Asian American graphic novels, such as *One Hundred Demons* (2002), *Same Difference* (2004), *American Born Chinese* (2006), and Adrian Tomine's *Shortcomings* (2007). However, there are some important precursors to these important novels: the works of Henry Kiyama and Stan Sakai.

Perhaps the first graphic representation of sequential art of the Asian American experience is *Four Immigrants Manga: A Japanese Experience in San Francisco* (1904–1924) by Henry Kiyama. He was born in Neu in Tottori Prefecture, Japan, in 1885. Kiyama studied at the San Francisco Art Institute and the New York Art Students League. His interests were in perfecting classical Western art, yet the irony is that he will probably gain more importance in Asian American literature for being its first cartoonist. Frederick L. Schodt, a researcher and translator who discovered the manga in 1999, claims *Four Immigrants* may very well be the first comic book or graphic novel ever printed. *Famous Funnies: A Carnival of Comics* with its 36 pages published in 1933, is often considered the first comic book. However, *Four Immigrants* with its 52 episodes at 104 pages was published in San Francisco in 1931.

*Four Immigrants* was originally published in a dual language format in which the participants speak in their own languages—the Japanese immigrants speaking Japanese and the American natives speaking English, though the translated version by Schodt uses only English. The book examines in graphic detail the story of four Japanese emigrants, who renamed themselves with the English names of Henry (the artist), Frank (the businessman), Charlie (the politician), and Fred (the farmer). These historically important episodes cover such events as landing at **Angel Island**, trying to find jobs in San Francisco, seeing President Taft, surviving the great earthquake, witnessing the trials and tribulations of picture brides, participating in the patriotism of World War I, gambling in **Chinatown**, and, finally, leaving for home.

In episode 45 about World War I, an **issei** (first-generation) Japanese decided to fight to prove he was patriotic, though in the end he was still denied citizenship. Another important theme is how the Japanese experience compares to the lives of

Chinese immigrants. Whereas the Chinese tried to maintain their culture, the Japanese immigrants dressed in Western attire and tried to assimilate, yet they were often confused as Chinese or another Asian. In episode 26, San Francisco authorities tried to segregate the Japanese school students by putting them with the Chinese students, keeping both away from the Caucasian children. However, Japan protested and Theodore Roosevelt pressured the school system to have the policy changed, and Japanese children were again allowed to attend regular schools with the Caucasian children. The Chinese children remained segregated.

The last episode, 52, ends with a mention of the Immigration Act of 1924 (see **National Origins Act**), which would prevent Asians from immigrating to America, though not restricting Europeans. Kiyama himself did not leave in 1924, and he probably would have remained in America until his death. However, while visiting his homeland in 1937, **World War II** broke out. Not being able to return, he remained in Japan until his death in 1951.

Another important influential cartoonist is Stan Sakai, whose character Usagi Yojimbo remains an important figure in Asian American graphic novels. Sakai has received over 20 Eisner Award nominations and has won three times. This character, Usagi Yojimbo, first appeared along with Peter Laird's Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles in 1984 in the comic *Albedo*, volume 1, number 2. Sakai has since published over 20 graphic novels using the same character, including a space version: Space Usagi. Usagi, a rabbit, is based on the seventeenth-century samurai Miyamoto Musashi (Japan's greatest samurai) and the character in the famous film by Akira Kurosawa: *Yojimbo* (bodyguard). These graphic novels, though about Japanese samurai lore, were written from a Western or an Asian American point of view. These novels were part of the invasion or appropriation of Asian pop culture with its anime, manga, and games that would become part of American pop culture. Usagi would even make cameos in the television animated series *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Other cartoonists such as Frank Miller would also explore the samurai tradition in *Ronin* (1983–1984), situated in a futuristic dystopia. *Samurai Jack* (2001–) and *Afro Samurai* (2007) also use the Japanese samurai mythos in a Western context.

The Filipino American perspective is one of the backgrounds for the graphic novel *One Hundred Demons* by Lynda Barry, which delves into her life while growing up in a multicultural neighborhood in Seattle. Barry is multiracial with a Filipina mother and Caucasian father. The book is part autobiographical, with some of the chapters focusing on the relationship between herself and her mother. Furthermore, the tension between her mother and her Filipina grandmother is explored.

An important Korean American graphic novel is Derek Kirk Kim's *Same Difference and Other Stories* (2003), which won three awards: Eisner, Harvey, and Ignatz Awards. Kim was born in 1974 in Kumi, Korea. He moved to America at the age of eight and

lived in Korea for two years when he became an adult. The book, though fictional in nature, has autobiographical elements, especially the parts about growing up as a Korean American. Kim completed the book with monies from a Xeric Foundation Grant established by Peter Laird, a cocreator of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. "Same Difference" is the longest story or novella at 86 pages with an additional 12 much shorter stories. In the novella, Simon Moore and Nancy, two Korean American friends, share many experiences in Oakland and the Pacifica. He ponders upon what could have been as he tries to salvage his lost youth. One day in Oakland while eating in a restaurant with Nancy, he sees Irene waiting for a bus and tells the story about the high school dance. Irene wanted to go to the dance with Simon, not as a date, but just as friends. Simon made up a story that he could not go. This lie caused him much pain because he liked Irene, but he did not want others to think that Irene was the only person he was capable of getting on a date, which was probably true, but in retrospect it should not have mattered that Irene was blind, while Simon was a Korean American geek. It was all the same difference.

In another overlapping story, Nancy had been receiving letters from Ben Leland, who was writing to a Sara Richardson. Sara must have lived in Nancy's place before. Nancy was curious and opened a letter. It was a love letter, and Nancy wrote back as Sara. When Nancy wanted to know what Ben looked like, Nancy and Simon traveled to Pacifica, Ben Leland's home address. Pacifica is also Simon's hometown, where he went to high school. Surprisingly, they discover that Ben is Asian. In the end, Simon bumps into Irene and discovers that she is doing well and getting married. He bumps into a married couple, Jane and Eddie, whom he knew in high school. They seem happy and have a child with another one on the way. According to Simon, everyone's life seems to have improved and seems to be better than his own. The story ends with Nancy leaving an apology note for Ben on his doorstep. This apology becomes the perfect coda to the story, for it shows a maturation in Nancy for her chaotic actions. Perhaps it also points to a way out for Simon, who is stuck in his neurotic stasis.

*American Born Chinese* (2006) by Gene Yang emerged as another important graphic novel. It won an Eisner Award for Best Graphic Album (2007). *American Born Chinese* is in color and continues to win critical awards and favorable reviews. Three simultaneous story lines are told: one about the legendary and rambunctious Monkey King from Chinese lore; one about Jin Wang, a middle school student just trying to fit in; and another about Danny, a white student who is embarrassed by his Chinese cousin Chin-Kee, a living and breathing stereotype. In the end, all three plots collide literally, and things are not what they seem.

Adrian Tomine, a Japanese American cartoonist, released the graphic novel *Shortcomings* (2007). Previously, Tomine won the Harvey Award for Best New Artist. He is a forth-generation Japanese American whose stories are not usually about Asian

American topics. This artistic power is in his ability to write realistic female characters and write about the complexities of male/female relationships. *Shortcomings* is about the adventures of Ben Tanaka, who deals with his Asian cultures trying to survive in the American landscape. It also covers those complexities about gender relationships that he is known for in his other writings.

Asian Americans have been a part of the comic book establishment for years. Artists and writers such as Korean American Jim Lee helped to invigorate and influence the industry. Lee personally revitalized Marvel Comic's X-men series. However, what is different now is that Asian American comic artists such as Adrian Tomine are seeing that the Asian American experience itself is a worthy topic in its own right.

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Korean War (1950–1953)

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# H



## ◆ HAGEDORN, JESSICA (1949–)

Filipino American novelist, poet, multimedia artist, songwriter, playwright, and screenwriter, Hagedorn's work explores such concepts as colonialism, postcolonialism, race, class, and gender. Although her work often focuses on the Filipino American immigrant experience, Hagedorn's oeuvre defies the boundaries of any one classification. She has been ambivalent about being labeled an **Asian American** writer, stating, "While labels like *Asian American literature* may serve to identify a certain kind of immigrant narrative, in a way they can hinder us" (Cheung 2000, 32). However, she does recognize such labels as necessary means to create access to the readership market (ibid). For example, events in Hagedorn's most renowned novel, *Dogeaters*, take place in the Philippines, not the United States. The novel is a collage of prose, poetry, historical documents, and screenplays and lacks a central character. Instead, it presents a tableau of the Marcos-era Philippines and the aftereffects of Spanish and American colonialism.

Jessica Hagedorn was born in a wealthy household in the Santa Mesa section of Manila, the Philippines, on May 29, 1949. She immigrated to the United States with her mother and two brothers at the age of 14 after her parents separated. No longer wealthy, they moved to California where her mother's sisters resided. The beat culture of the era attracted Hagedorn to the arts and then to the American Conservatory Theater. For Hagedorn writing articulated "the need to express my confusion about being here in this strange environment" (Cheung 2000, 25). Finding limited opportunities for an actress of color, she focused on her writing. In 1972 Hagedorn's first published work of poetry was included in the collection *Four Young Women*. The poet, Kenneth

Rexroth, the editor of the collection, mentored Hagedorn, introducing her to James Baldwin, Gary Snyder, and Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones. In that same year her play *Chiquita Banana* was published in the collection of plays *Third World Women*. Around that time, Hagedorn took part in the Kearny Street Writers' Workshop, formed to aid the Asian American art community. At the Kearney Street Writers' Workshop, Hagedorn says she first received the "tag" of being an Asian American writer (ibid).

In 1975 her first compilation of poetry, titled *Dangerous Music*, was published, the same year she formed the rock band called the West Coast Gangster Choir. In *Dangerous Music*, Hagedorn delves into the dangers of being a woman of color and the allure of music and into the Filipino immigrant experience in the lone short story in *Dangerous Music*, "The Blossoming of Bongbong." Later, the character of Bongbong resurfaced in a stage version, *Tenement Lover: no palm trees/in new york city*, produced in 1981 and published in the first anthology of Asian American plays *Between Worlds: Contemporary Asian-American Plays* in 1990. She also worked with and was influenced by Ntozake Shange and Thulani Davis at the alternative nonprofit art space Intersection for the Arts. Together they took part in the Bay Area Poets Coalition and worked on the anthology *Third World Women in the Early 1970s* and the dramatic production *Where the Mississippi Meets the Amazon*. In addition to writing poetry, Hagedorn expressed her love of music through song lyrics. Her band, the West Coast Gangster Choir, combined theatrical performances with multimedia. In 1978 Hagedorn relocated to New York City and renamed the band the Gangster Choir. There she joined the Basement Workshop. Also in 1978 she wrote and produced the play *Mango Tango*. In 1981 her collection of poetry and prose pieces *Pet Food & Tropical Apparitions* was published. *Pet Food & Tropical Apparitions* includes poetry and prose that center on the bohemian lifestyle of artists. In particular, the novella *Pet Food* explores the beat world of protagonist George Sand (taken from the pen name for the nineteenth-century French novelist Amantine Aurore Lucile Dupin, Baroness Dudevant) and her interactions within the community of artists. Hagedorn gives a graphic portrayal of artistic communion and its combination with the counter-culture of open sexuality and drugs.

As a multimedia artist, Hagedorn performed in the experimental art spaces the Kitchen, Franklin Furnace, and the Danspace Project in the late 1970s and early 1980s. She often collaborated with other artists in the 1980s. She was in the performance trio Teeny Town with African American writer-performers Laurie Carlos and Robbie McCauley on a serial work focusing on racism in pop culture (Hagedorn 1989, 13).

The same year her play *Tenement Lover: no palm trees/in new york city* was published in *Between Worlds* (1990), Hagedorn published her first novel and perhaps her most famous work, *Dogeaters*. It won the American Book Award from the Before Colum-



bus Foundation and was a National Book Award Finalist. True to her multimedia background, *Dog eaters* contains a flurry of activities. Hagedorn employs multiple narrative forms, such as poetry, epistolary writing, fictive and real newspaper clippings, scripted dialogue, *tsismis* (gossip), and ethnographic writing along with narrative prose. This collage of various narrative forms complements the multiple narrative threads that interconnect the Filipino hustlers, working-class, oligarchic families, resistance fighters, and the president and first lady that inhabit Hagedorn's novel. From Joey, an Afro Filipino hustler negotiating his role in the sex-tourism trade, to the "Iron Butterfly" (avoiding the actual moniker steel butterfly), first lady of the Philippines abusing her power under the guise of beautification, Hagedorn represents multiple strata of Manila society and a large amount of Philippine history in the novel. The critic Don Shewey of the *New York Times* wrote, "What's remarkable about *Dog eaters* is that Hagedorn encapsulates a huge amount of this historical material, but she does so by running it through a variety of pop-culture filters (movies, music, radio plays, commercials)" (2). The novel begins in 1956 with the perspective of a young girl, Rio Gonzaga, who observes her cousin Pucha's enthrallment with Hollywood movies and glamor and her inversely corresponding distaste for Philippine cinema. Hagedorn herself describes Rio as "a detached narrator" (Cheung 2000, 28). Rio is raised in a privileged home in Manila under the supervision of her glamorous mother and wealthy father. Her intermittent first-person perspective throughout the novel provides postcolonial observations of gender, class, and race difference. She notes how her cousin Pucha seeks to emulate her mother's Rita Hayworth-like demeanor to attract and manipulate wealthy men. In one chapter Rio describes how her maternal grandmother is treated not like a family member but like a servant because of her native Filipino lineage. However, the Gonzaga family treats Rio's paternal grandmother with the utmost deference because of her pure Spanish blood. This highlights the theme of mestizo heritage in Hagedorn's oeuvre. Hagedorn herself is mestizo and has stated that Rio's life paralleled her own (*ibid*). At the end of the novel, Rio returns to the Philippines after having immigrated to the United States. In *Gangster of Love*, Hagedorn's follow-up sequel to *Dog eaters*, the protagonist has this same background and could be thought to be the character Rio.

Whereas Rio observes the machinations of power in Manila, the other main narrator of *Dog eaters*, Joey, actively takes part in them. Joey is the illegitimate son of a Filipina prostitute and a black U.S. soldier. He makes his living as a male prostitute hustling foreign tourists like Rainer, who take part in the sex tourism industry in Asia. Rainer is a famous film director from Germany, invited by the first lady to screen one of his films at the inauguration of a new cultural center. After Joey seduces Rainer, he steals Rainer's belongings and in his flight unwittingly witnesses Senator Avila's assassination. Joey realizes his own life is in jeopardy because the same people responsible

for killing Senator Avila, the head of the opposition to the president, will certainly kill any witnesses to the assassination. Joey goes into hiding but is betrayed by his pimp and father figure Uncle. He narrowly escapes the assassins and flees through an underground network of resistance fighters, finding himself in a guerrilla-training compound.

These various narratives constitute Hagedorn's strong critique of the Marcos government. However, Hagedorn does not overtly name the dictator Ferdinand Marcos or the first lady Imelda Marcos in the novel. Instead, the two appear by title, and Imelda Marcos appears quite often in the text as "Madame" or "Iron Butterfly." Despite this reluctance to name names, the novel reflects actual events during the Marcos era. The chapter "Paradise" alludes to the scandals surrounding the building of the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCCP), commissioned by President Marcos. In the novel the first lady orders construction to continue immediately, even though a construction accident has claimed workers' lives. She prioritizes the timely opening for an international film festival over the search for dead bodies in the rubble. In the same chapter, Joey witnesses Senator Avila's assassination—an allusion to Benigno Aquino's assassination. Aquino was running against Marcos in a presidential election that threatened to end martial rule. The chapter "Bananas and the Republic" is an interview between an American journalist and the first lady that references her large shoe collection, harkening to Imelda's infamous shoe collection she displayed in an interview with Barbara Walters in the 1980s. The display of wealth invigorated criticism that the Marcoses were siphoning money from Philippine funds for their own extravagance.

In 1993 a collection of Hagedorn's work, *Danger and Beauty*, was published. *Danger and Beauty* is dedicated to the late Kenneth Rexroth who provided the opportunity for Hagedorn's first publication *Dangerous Music*. In the introduction Hagedorn writes that Rexroth provided her an "esoteric and streetwise literary education" (x). Rexroth provided access to the literary community of San Francisco, personally introduced her to poets, accompanied her to bookstores, and welcomed her into the artistic environment of his home. She writes, "I am awed by his library of ten thousand books in all sorts of languages; a kitchen stocked with Japanese goodies; Cubist paintings on the walls; and a living room where you might chance upon James Baldwin, Gary Snyder, or Amiri Baraka (then known as LeRoi Jones)—in town for a hot minute" (ibid). Hagedorn explores her beginnings as a writer and her negotiation with an ethnic writer identity. Her statement, "The year 1973 is when I begin discovering myself as a Filipino-American writer," leads to her first published exploration of her identity as an ethnic writer (x). "Identity has been discussed, refuted, celebrated, collapsed, reconstructed, and deconstructed . . . Who are we? People of color? Artists of color? Gay or straight? Political or careerist? Decadent or boring? Or just plain artists? . . . [we are] artists of color who write, perform, and collaborate with each other, borders be

damned" (ix). Most of *Danger and Beauty* is a collection of Hagedorn's works in her previously published books *Dangerous Music* and *Pet Food & Tropical Apparitions* or her contributions to other published compilations such as *The Third Woman: Minority Women Writers of the United States* (1980), edited by Dexter Fisher, and *The Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology* (1989), edited by Shirley Geok-lin Lim, Mayumi Tsutakawa, and Margarita Donnelly. Of the four sections in *Danger and Beauty*, the last, "The New York Peep Show: 1982–2001," is mostly composed of her previously unpublished writings.

In 1996 Hagedorn's second novel, *The Gangster of Love*, was published. Semiautobiographical, the protagonist "Rocky" Raquel Rivera, like Rio in *Dogeaters*, has a glamorous "Rita-Hayworth-like" mother and immigrates to the United States. However, *Gangster of Love*, unlike *Dogeaters*, centers on Rocky's narrative of her immigrant experience. Rocky immigrates to the United States with her mother Milagros and brother Voltaire, leaving behind her father and sister in the Philippines. Before her parents' separation, Rocky was accustomed to her mother's extravagances; however, in California, the family must acclimate to a less wealthy lifestyle. Rocky's mother, Milagros, begins a catering business selling *lumpia*, Filipino egg rolls. Besides finances, the family also struggles with Voltaire's bouts of mental illness. The family's arrival coincides with the year of Jimi Hendrix's drug-induced death. Sex, drugs, and rock and roll are prominent themes in the text. Several times in the novel, Jimi Hendrix appears to Rocky in philosophical, identity-exploring, psychedelic dreams. The title of the novel itself is the name of Rocky's band, an echo of Hagedorn's own band, the West Coast Gangster Choir. Rocky begins a love affair with Elvis Chang, a fellow band member and then, when the band moves to New York, has an affair with her bohemian friend Keiko. Rocky eventually sobers to the realities around her when she becomes pregnant. Her change in life status and views coincides with the splitting of the band.

Hagedorn's third novel, published in 2003, *Dream Jungle*, integrates different types of narratives, interspersing excerpts from Pigafetta's chronicle of Ferdinand Magellan's expedition around the world throughout the main narrative. She brings light to the fact that Magellan did not finish his aim of traveling around the world but instead met his end in the Philippines, at the hand of a chieftain named Lapu Lapu. *Dream Jungle* uses a more conventional novel structure than her two previous novels. Divided into three parts, the narrative spans the life of Zamora López de Legazpi, a patriarchal Spanish tyrant who "discovers" the native "stone age" boy Bodabil from the tribe Taobo. The first part of *Dream Jungle* focuses on the life of Zamora, the discovery from his perspective, and the physical and sexual abuse of his maid's daughter Rizalina, who was named after the famed Philippine national hero José Rizal. By the second part of the novel Rizalina, now Lina, works as a prostitute in Manila to escape Zamora. Her transformation from girlhood to womanhood coincides with the change

in focus from the Spanish colonial age to the American colonial age. Lina begins a romance with Vincent Moody, an American actor who is the lead actor in a movie about the **Vietnam War** being filmed in the Philippines, an allusion to *Apocalypse Now*. The cast and crew's participation in the sex tourism industry is Hagedorn's critique of U.S. influence, demonstrating the seedy manipulations of Hollywood glamor in the Philippines. The film's location is the same as the "discovery" of Bodabil, triggering Paz Marlowe, a journalist covering the making of the movie, to seek the truth about Zamora's "discovery" of the Taobo. Although in the third part of the novel Marlowe seeks out definitive evidence to prove the legitimacy of Zamora's story, Hagedorn does not provide a definitive answer. Zamora dies, and Hagedorn gives a glimpse of Lina's next stage in life in Santa Monica, California.

In 1993 Hagedorn edited and wrote the introduction to *Charlie Chan Is Dead: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Fiction*. The anthology includes the work of both published and then-unpublished Asian American writers, such as Carlos Bulosan, Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Amy Tan. In the introduction, Hagedorn states she wanted to include an "array of cultural backgrounds" and avoided imposing any kind of "theme" to allow the authors to submit their "riskier" work (xxviii). The title of the anthology is part of a conscious effort to debunk Asian stereotypes, to resist what Hagedorn refers to as the "aping of our mythologized Hollywood universe" (xxiii).

*Charlie Chan Is Dead 2: At Home in the World (An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Fiction)* was published in 2004, with different contributions from writers in the first edition and additions from authors not in the first anthology, such as Jhumpa Lahiri, Chang-Rae Lee, and Karen Tei Yamashita. While in the first edition Hagedorn did not directly address the exact definition of *Asian American literature*, she does in the second. Hagedorn's answer to the question "What is/what makes Asian American literature?" is that it is "expanding and evolving" (xxix). For instance, Hagedorn argues Asian American literature is not simply about discovering new and upcoming authors but also looking to the past and giving new audiences to unearthed works, such as that of the author José Garcia Villa (xxx).

In 1998 the stage adaptation of the novel *Dogeaters* was performed in San Diego at the Mandell Weiss Forum of the La Jolla Playhouse. The theater critic Dan Bacalzo wrote that the play *Dogeaters* "provides a critical introduction to the history of colonialism and imperialism that characterizes the Philippines' relationship with the West" (2001, 642). Unlike the novel, however, the stage adaptation employs the Marcos's names, and the character of Imelda Marcos is a more prominent role. Theatre Communications Group published *Dogeaters: A Play about the Philippines* in 2006.

Hagedorn has won several awards to support her writing. During the 1980s, she won MacDowell Colony Fellowships in 1985, 1986, and 1988. In the 1990s she

received several fellowships to support her writing *Dogeaters* into a film and then a staged version. She won a National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowship in 1995, the Sundance Theater Lab Fellowship in 1997, and the NEA-TCG (National Endowment for the Arts/Theatre Communications Group) Theatre Residency Fellowship in 1998. In 1994 she was presented the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund Writer's Award along with nine other distinguished authors, including Sherman Alexie, bell hooks, David Mura, and Wakako Yamauchi. In 2001 she was awarded the Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Literary Fellowship in fiction. In 2002 the Sundance Institute had her as part of their Screenwriters' Lab. In 2005 Hagedorn again was invited to the Sundance Institute Theatre Lab to work on her first musical, *Most Wanted*, with composer Mark Bennett. Like her previous works, *Most Wanted* deals with glamor and issues of race, inspired by the events surrounding the murder of fashion designer Gianni Versace. It was produced at the La Jolla Playhouse in October 2007. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Colonialism and Postcolonialism; Filipino American Literature; Filipino American Novel; Filipino American Poetry; Filipino American Short Story; Racism and Asian America.

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MARIA THERESA VALENZUELA

#### ◆ HAHN, KIMIKO (1955–)

New York City-based poet and daughter of a Japanese American mother and a German American father, Hahn has married twice and has two daughters from the second marriage. She completed a bachelor's degree in English and East Asian studies at the University of Iowa and a master's degree in Japanese literature at Columbia

University. She is a distinguished professor in the English department at Queens College, City University of New York.

Hahn has published seven poetry books. *The Unbearable Heart* (1995) received an American Book Award. *Ear Shot* (1992) was selected for the Theodore Roethke Memorial Poetry Prize and an **Association for Asian American Studies** Literature Award. Her other works are *The Narrow Road to the Interior* (2006), *The Artist's Daughter* (2002), *Mosquito and Ant* (1999), *Volatile* (1998), and *Air Pocket* (1989). Her poems and essays have also appeared in many literary magazines and anthologies. She wrote 10 portraits of women for an HBO two-hour special program titled *Ain't Nuthin But a She-thing* in 1995.

Hahn's poems are characterized as kaleidoscopic, which means that multiple voices and perspectives come up simultaneously in fragments. Her poems not only present her voice as a biracial daughter, a mother, a lover, a poet, and a professor, but also echo classical Japanese stories such as *The Pillow Book*, *Tales of Genji*, *Momotaro*, and *Tosa Diary*, as well as theoretical texts such as those of Karl Marx, Luce Irigaray, Sigmund Freud, and Judith Butler. She also scatters Japanese language in her poems. These multiple voices of people and texts, the present and the past, English and Japanese, the East and the West, intermingle in her poems. Her writing style resists linearity and male-Western-English-centered discourses and disrupts readers' line of thought. With this style, she succeeds at creating a new space of articulation for her body, desire, and identity with sensuous and poignant word choices. In short, she creates a new poetic aesthetic for and as an Asian American woman.

Another unique trait of her Asian American woman poetic aesthetic is that her poetry is quite conscious of political events. In her earlier works, she wrote about political issues such as the South American political turmoil, American slavery, homelessness, and so on. She concerned herself with child prostitution or the sacrifice of female virgins for religious purposes in developing countries. Her recent works are strongly influenced by the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, since she has lived in the neighborhood of the tragedy. As she states in an interview, her poems come from her personal experience, which is inseparable from the political, and her writings equally explore both personal and political spheres, which give complexity and richness to her poems.

"A Hemisphere: Kuchuk Hanem," in the award-winning poetry collection *The Unbearable Heart*, fully illustrates her kaleidoscopic poetic aesthetics. In this poem, Hahn deploys two historical figures, Kuchuk Hanem, an Egyptian dancer and a mistress of the renowned French writer, Gustave Flaubert. Positing their problematic relationship as the axis of the poem, Hahn interweaves Edward Said's *Orientalism* and her personal experience of being a biracial daughter. Multiple perspectives intersect, and nineteenth-century Egypt and Paris intermingle with twentieth-century New York and

Chicago. The confusion of time and space in the poem gives readers an impression of disorder and irrationality. However, by disturbing the borders and fixity of time, space, and human figures, Hahn challenges the problematic Orientalist representation of women of color and complex power relations between the West and the East. Another important theme of the poem is **biraciality** and the problems of sexuality and family relations that biraciality generates. She questions if her being partly white makes it difficult for her to associate with oppressed Asian women and if her writing about them ironically renders her Orientalist. On the other hand, she confesses her uncomfortable feeling of being with her white father, assuming that people may think she is his sexual companion. Here, she unburies the issue of uneven power relations between the West and the East and how it still affects the imaginary of American people and puts her biracial identity in an awkward social and family position.

The situation of biraciality in Asian American literature has been debated in Asian American literary studies. Some argue that biraciality threatens the ethnic unity of the Asian American community. Hahn states in an interview that it took her years to understand her position in Asian American literature. When she was a teenager, she engaged in the Asian American political movement, and she felt as if her being part white made her half enemy. Yet she explains that her works are equally influenced by Japanese literature, American canonical writers such as T.S. Eliot and William Carlos Williams, and Asian American literature. Thus she is culturally multiracial, and her racial and cultural multiplicity is reflected in her poems. She understands the tension along the color line but attempts at negotiating her whiteness and Asianness in her writings. Asian American literature has developed partly by embracing diversity. There should be no doubt that her biraciality and her attempt to negotiate different races and cultures contribute to enriching and complicating Asian American literary discourses.

In her recent poetry collection dedicated to her daughter Miyako, *The Narrow Road to the Interior*, Hahn deploys Japanese classical writing styles *tanka* and *zuihitshu*, which do not have a Western equivalent. *Tanka* is composed of 31 syllables with 5 lines, and it looks like a cluster of fragments. *Zuihitshu* literally means “running brush” in Japanese, and it is a mixture of prose and poetry. In “Pulse and Impulse” from the collection, Hahn explains that *zuihitshu* is a feminine writing that is essentially fragmented and resists order and rationality. These writing techniques enable her to further develop her kaleidoscopic and fragmented poetry. In this collection, she also employs an e-mail correspondence style and explores the possibility of dialogues in poetry. By exchanging conversations with her friends in e-mails, she discloses her fear of losing husbands, lovers, youth, daughters, and, most importantly, her mother, who was killed in a car accident when Hahn was 38 years old.

The loss of her mother is a haunting theme in her poems, as her mother pops up frequently in fragments. Hahn unexpectedly remembers her mother in the middle of

stanzas, and the whole structure of the poem is disturbed by her outbursts of grief, regret, and love for her mother. These poems show readers what it is like for Hahn to lose her mother and how a mother never leaves a child's heart, even if she passed away a long time ago. With a fragmented poetic style, Hahn writes about her mother frequently, and uses her poetry as a way to cope with her loss and to talk to her mother.

With new ways of writing her poems, Hahn invites us to look at her kaleidoscopic poetic world in which the depth of human desire, identity, life, and death are interwoven. Her poems thus show a new sphere of the Asian American literary experience.

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KAORI MORI

◆ HAN, SUYIN (1917–)

Suyin Han is the pen name of Rosalie Elizabeth Zhou Guang-Hu, who was born in 1917 in Henan Province, China, to a Belgian mother and a Chinese father. Han received a Chinese upbringing and was educated in China, Belgium, and the Royal Free Hospital in London, from which she graduated in 1948. In the interim she married a Guomindang (nationalist) officer who was killed in 1947 while fighting in the Chinese civil war. After completing her studies, she practiced medicine in Hong Kong and then Southeast Asia, where she lived with her second husband, an officer in the British colonial police service. This relationship soured, and she subsequently married Indian army colonel Vincent Ruthnaswamy, who died in 2003. Han currently lives in Lausanne, Switzerland.

A prolific writer of novels, biographies, historical studies, and memoirs, Han has for over 40 years served as a bridge between China and the world. Her writing reveals a rare full-fledged bicultural inheritance and sensibility. Nevertheless, her emotional and intellectual attachments are to her birthplace, and arguably her most significant work was done during the years of the American blockade (1950 to early 1970s) when China was the target of a Red scare and tagged as a figure of danger in the Western cultural imaginary. During and after this period, Han had unprecedented access to senior Chinese leaders and wrote important biographies of Premier Zhou Enlai and Chairman Mao Zedong. In various historical and nonfiction works and a multivolume autobiography published between 1965 and 1992, she sought to explain the causes of revolution in China and her reasons for supporting it. She recounts in compelling detail China's experiences of neocolonial subjugation and humiliation, of the damage



wrought by corruption and civil war, and of the gross misery that was the lot of the common people during the prerevolutionary era. Much to the chagrin of cold war ideologues, Han posited a causal link between Western and Japanese aggression and exploitation and the rise of communism in China. She also tried to explain and report on complex events, such as the Hundred Flowers Movement, the Great Leap Forward, and the Great Cultural Revolution, sometimes with mixed success. Her memoirs sounded these themes while portraying her familial and personal upheavals as a microcosm of wider social developments. Against the easy Orientalist assumption that Chinese matters were essentially “irrational,” Han helped to foster cross-cultural exchange, giving her largely Western readership insights unavailable elsewhere.

Han was helped in her raconteur efforts by the large readership won by her second novel and still best loved work, *A Many-Splendored Thing* (1952). A love story set in Hong Kong, the novel was subsequently made into a movie starring William Holden and Jennifer Jones. Titled *Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing*, it won three Oscars at the 1955 Academy Awards, including one for Best Song. Han subsequently wrote *And the Rain My Drink* (1956), *The Mountain Is Young* (1958), *Two Loves* (1962), *The Four Faces* (1963), *Till Morning Comes* (1982), and *The Enchantress* (1985).

Like her first novel, *Destination Chungking* (1942), many of these works are semi-autobiographical in nature, with a large cast of characters and relatively spacious plots. Character is always defined in the close texture of society. Recurrent topics include imperialism, neocolonialism, interracial relationship, female subjectivity and autonomy, and the color bar. *Destination Chungking* handles events surrounding Han's first marriage but is largely a journeyman work. *A Many-Splendored Thing* tells the story of a doomed love affair between British journalist Mark Elliott and the widowed Eurasian doctor Han Suyin, who dreams of returning to China to practice but is faced with the prospect that authorities there would not allow her paramour to accompany her. Eventually Elliot is killed in the **Korean War**.

*And the Rain My Drink* documents the experiences of various Asian and British characters caught up in a guerilla war and is in parts a critique of British counterinsurgency efforts during the Malayan Emergency (1948–1960). Set in Nepal and India, *The Mountain Is Young* relates the experiences of writer and schoolteacher Anne Ford, who leaves her abusive husband for Unni Menon, an Indian engineer engaged in an aid project in Kathmandu.

*Two Loves* brings together two novellas (*Cast but One Shadow* and *Winter Love*), one of which is loosely based on an incident that touched off two days of rioting in Singapore in 1950. The riots were sparked by a Singaporean high court decision to transfer the custody of a Maria Hertogh, then 13, to her biological Dutch Catholic parents after she was brought up Muslim by a friend of her grandmother. Maria was separated from her family by the turmoil caused by the war, and many believed that her

eight-year sojourn with her Muslim foster mother amounted to an adoption. The second novella depicts a love affair between two women medical students in London during **World War II**.

*The Four Faces* is a political satire centered on the events of a writers' congress held in Cambodia. *Till Morning Comes* is a historical saga that tracks the experiences of Chinese doctor Jen Yong and American journalist Stephanie Ryder from the period spanning the end of the Second World War to the eclipse of the Red Guards. Against the wishes of their respective families, the two fall in love and marry. They have two children—a son born in China and a daughter born in the United States—but are separated by political turmoil in China and McCarthyism in the United States. Jen is killed during the Cultural Revolution, and Stephanie is eventually reunited with her son after China opens up. These familial misfortunes help to make the wider argument that Sino-American relations did not have to take the disastrous turn epitomized by the wars in Korea and Vietnam. Overall, the novel offers an illuminating insight into the early years of struggle and revolution in China.

*The Enchantress* is unlike anything else written by Han. A historical fantasy set in eighteenth-century Europe and Asia, it tells the story of a pair of Swiss twins, one of whom has a gift for making lifelike mechanical dolls, whereas the other has supernatural powers. After they are orphaned, the two make their way to China and then Thailand. Along the way they get involved in political and palace intrigues and an assortment of romances, and eventually they find their way home.

Taken as a whole, Han's literary career has most likely been damaged by her label as a writer of romance. *A Many-Splendored Thing* is an early example of the now hugely popular Asian memoir fiction genre. Insofar as some works in this area have a tendency to peddle exotica and Orientalist asseverations, the association of Han with this work in the public mind has opened her to similar charges. As the foregoing suggests, however, her writing is superior, for her characteristic maneuver is actually to use the reader's libidinal investment in a taboo-inflected relationship to probe sociocultural normalization by encouraging empathetic understanding and appreciation of alternative political, cultural, and sexual arrangements and practices. It might be said Han offers in her writing a humanism and internationalism worthy of the name, and those who criticize her wider polemical commitments would do well to take on board this feature of her work. In addition, Han may be credited with putting Hong Kong and Malaya on the literary map of English studies, having contributed to the internationalization of the latter. *The Mountain Is Young* can be profitably read as a variation on E.M. Forster's 1924 novel *A Passage to India*. Given the ideological rehabilitation of imperialism in certain circles in the United States, Han's emphasis on individual and collective self-determination is certainly as important as ever. Her work repays close attention and is arguably overdue for critical reconsideration.

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WAI-CHEW SIM

## ◆ HAWAIIAN LITERATURE

The literary culture of Hawaii, a branch of literary studies that variously incorporates **Asian American**, **Asian Pacific Islander**, Native or indigenous, colonial and postcolonial, and transnational area studies, is a contested intellectual terrain. The territory of Hawaii is correspondingly contested—claimed politically by Native land rights and indigenous sovereignty movements on the one hand, and by the federal politics of the U.S. mainland on the other. From a complex colonial history, Hawaii emerges as a place where the local and the global meet, through the practices of post-national corporate capital and through the development of a distinctive local Hawaiian cultural identity. But nothing is static and fixed in a place that is constantly eroded by waves and recreated by volcanoes. Indeed, the continuing controversy concerning the nature of Hawaiian literature as variously "Asian" or "Pacific Islander" has given rise to the periodic debate over whether the **Association for Asian American Studies** should be renamed the Association for Asian Pacific American Studies.

So much has been written about Hawaii by outsiders, from the time of European discovery to the present, that the definition of what can be classified as *Hawaiian* literature is subject to debate. Present-day indigenous Hawaiians are descended from Polynesian, Marquesan, or Tahitian migrants who settled the islands in 1000 AD. The Hawaiian archipelago was "discovered" by the British explorer James Cook in 1778. Hawaii was governed by a monarchy until 1893, when the government of Queen Liliuokalani was overthrown in a coup led by wealthy American plantation owners and replaced first with a provisional government and later with a republic. In 1898, Hawaii was annexed to the United States of America, and it became the fiftieth state in 1959. Statehood was a controversial shift in the status of the islands: statehood served the interests of the local-born descendants of immigrant laborers, who could exercise full voting rights as U.S. citizens; indigenous Hawaiians, however, saw

statehood as a further obstacle to their claim of sovereignty and the return of Hawaii to indigenous rule. As a self-governing territory of the United States until statehood in 1958, Hawaii was free of the immigration restriction or exclusion acts that prevented the use of cheap foreign, especially Asian, labor on the mainland. Hawaii has the largest percentage of Asian Americans of any U.S. state; these people are predominantly of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean ancestry, and they descend from the immigrant laborers brought to Hawaii to work on the sugar plantations from the mid-nineteenth century, though there has been ethnic Chinese settlement in Hawaii from the late eighteenth century.

The state of Hawaii has two official languages: English and Hawaiian; the written form of the latter was developed by Protestant missionaries in the 1820s. The Office of Hawaiian Affairs, created by the 1978 Constitutional Convention, promotes the indigenous Hawaiian culture, including language instruction, both as part of the regular public school curriculum and in special Hawaiian-only language schools. Many residents of Hawaii speak Hawaiian Creole English or pidgin (see **Hawaiian Pidgin**), a dialect developed among Asian immigrants from China, Japan, the Philippines, and Korea. The controversial status of pidgin in relation to Standard English, particularly in the context of Hawaiian education, is engaged by writers such as R. Zamora Linmark in *Rolling the Rs* and Lois-Ann **Yamanaka** in such novels as *Wild Meat and Bully Burgers* and *Blu's Hanging*, and her verse collection *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre*. Writers such as these establish important connections between language and culture, between Hawaiian Pidgin and local working-class culture. Yamanaka has been particularly vocal in her opposition to the substitution of Hawaiian Pidgin with Standard English, insisting that the suppression of the local Creole language will result in the extinction of the distinctive local culture.

It has been observed that the literary culture of Hawaii is divided ethnically into an Asian American literary scene, centered on the activities of the Bamboo Ridge Press, and a more recent indigenous Hawaiian literary scene, centered on *'Oiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal*. The Bamboo Ridge Press was founded in 1978 to publish literature by and about Hawaii's people; however, it has been accused of practicing a narrow localism in the kind of authors and texts it publishes and a willful refusal to deal with the cultural implications of the Native Hawaiian sovereignty movement. Bamboo Ridge Press publishes two volumes each year: an issue of the literary journal entitled *Bamboo Ridge*, and either a book by a single author or a themed anthology. Most of the best known Hawaiian writers of Asian descent have been published by Bamboo Ridge Press: writers such as Lois-Ann Yamanaka, Nora Okja **Keller**, and Cathy **Song**. The journal *'Oiwi* was established with the mission of promoting and sustaining the revival of the literary heritage of Hawaii's indigenous peoples. The inaugural issue was published in 1999.

Important Hawaiian writers of Asian heritage include Milton **Murayama**, a Hawaiian-born, second-generation Japanese American novelist. His three novels, *All I Asking for Is My Body*, *Five Years on a Rock*, and *Plantation Boy*, deal with the same immigrant Japanese family and their lives as workers on a sugar plantation in a small company town. Much of the dialogue takes the form of pidgin and, taken together, the three novels constitute a history of the Japanese community in Hawaii through the twentieth century. Garrett **Hongo** is a Japanese American poet, raised in California but born in the town of Volcano, Hawaii, which inspired the title and subject of his 1995 memoir, *Volcano*. The memoir recounts his personal journey of recovery that allowed Hongo to overcome what he has described as his early alienation from his past and from his full cultural identity. Sylvia A. **Watanabe**, a short story writer and essayist, was born on Maui and lives part of the year in Honolulu. Her award-winning short story sequence *Talking to the Dead* is set in a Hawaiian village where traditional and modern values clash and interweave. Lois-Ann Yamanaka, mentioned above, is a Japanese American poet and novelist whose work has drawn controversy not only for her extensive use of Hawaiian Pidgin but also because of her engagement of sensitive issues, including domestic violence and child abuse. The 2004 film *Silent Years*, based on her screenplay, directly addresses the issue of child sexual abuse. In 1998 her novel *Blu's Hanging* was awarded a fiction prize by the Association for Asian American Studies; however, the award was withdrawn following accusations that her portrayal of Filipino Hawaiian men perpetuates damaging stereotypes. A very public debate ensued, with notable Asian American writers such as Maxine Hong **Kingston** defending Yamanaka. Kingston herself, a California-born writer of Chinese descent, lived for many years in Hawaii and wrote about her experiences in a series of short essays published as *Hawai'i One Summer*. Wing Tek **Lum**, Darrell H.Y. **Lum**, and Eric **Chock** are three influential Hawaiian writers of Chinese descent whose work explores the influence of Hawaiian experience and cultural conditions upon inherited ethnic culture, within the context of Chinese American experience more broadly imagined. Darrell Lum and Eric Chock are the founders and editors of Bamboo Ridge Press and, as such, have guided the development of Asian writing in Hawaii since 1978.

Cathy Song was born in Honolulu of Chinese and Korean ancestry; she was educated on the mainland but returned to live in Hawaii upon graduation. She was the 1982 winner of the prestigious Yale Younger Poets Award for her collection *Picture Bride*, which engages the issues of Asian immigration to and exclusion within U.S. society. She has since published two poetry collections: *Frameless Windows, Squares of Light* and *School Figures*. Among notable Hawaiian writers of Korean ancestry is the novelist, short story writer, and dramatist Gary **Pak**. Born in Hawaii, Pak claims that pidgin was his first language, and much of his writing engages the difficult lives of early Asian migrant workers in Hawaii, though the complex cultural makeup (Asian, Native,

and *haole* or Caucasian) of contemporary Hawaii is also an important aspect of his work. Nora Okja Keller is a novelist of Korean descent who came to fame with her best-selling novel *Comfort Woman*, about the forced sexual servitude of Korean women under Japanese military occupation, and the sequel *Fox Girl*, which deals with American involvement in the international sex trade in Asian women. Keller is also a coeditor of an influential anthology of Hapa writing, *Intersecting Circles*, by women of mixed Asian American descent.

The kind of multicultural ethnic mixing that is explored in Keller's anthology also informs the work of many Hawaiian writers. R. Zamora Linmark was born in the Philippines, raised in Hawaii, and divides his time between Honolulu, Manila, and San Francisco. Linmark draws upon the mixed ethnic, pop, and gay cultures of Hawaii in his novel *Rolling the R's*, his frequently anthologized stories, and his poetry collection, *Prime Time Apparitions*. Rodney Morales is a short story writer and novelist of Puerto Rican descent, born and raised in Oahu. His novel *When the Shark Bites* was inspired by the 1970s Native Hawaiian activist George Helm and concerns the history of a contemporary Native Hawaiian family. The stories collected in *The Speed of Darkness* reflect the multicultural nature of Hawaii through the points of view of child, adolescent, and young adult narrators. Morales's concern is to complicate perceptions of the ethnic identities both of individuals and of their communities. Other significant contemporary Hawaiian writers include Kiana Davenport, who is the author of the novels *Shark Dialogues*, *Song of the Exile*, and *House of Many Gods*; and also the authors of such coming-of-age books as *Blue Skin of the Sea*, by Graham Salisbury, and *Punahou Blues*, by Kirby Wright.

The radical racial mixing that is a consequence of Hawaii's colonial and postcolonial histories renders even the concept of multiculturalism inadequate to describe the kind of polycultural literary production that characterizes the contemporary literatures of the islands. Compounding the difficulties of definition, or even description, is the mistrust with which critical paradigms are greeted in a context where "Eurocentric" perspectives are shunned. As Stephen Sumida has so perceptively commented, the term *local* has been mobilized in Hawaiian literary circles to capture the particularities of history and of location or place that are generative influences on Hawaiian literatures. Consequently, even the concept of Hawaii as a unitary place is a construction that resulted from the successful conquest and unification of the islands as the Kingdom of Hawaii under Kamehameha I in the 1790s. The development of a distinctively Hawaiian literature, a local literary culture, is also a construct, a historically contingent legacy that results from the histories of indentured servitude by which immigrants from Asia were brought to Hawaii.

In Hawaii the concept of multiculturalism, which is so often used to refer to relations between immigrant cultural communities and the mainstream, breaks down

under pressure from indigenous or Native Hawaiian groups that are not immigrant and so do not identify with the ideology of multicultural tolerance or coexistence. Similarly, the Native Hawaiian experience is not one of *postcolonialism*, which may be used productively to describe the formation of cultural nationalisms among Hawaiian immigrant groups. Instead, Native Hawaiians have properly had an unending colonial experience, which has more in common with other Pacific Islander histories, such as that of the Maori people of Aetoroa/New Zealand or American Samoans, than with the liberation of the United States from British colonialism. However, the complexities of a polyethnic, multiracial, and local literature are not repulsed by the literary cultures of Hawaii; rather, these complications are engaged productively in ways that reflect upon the production of “minority” literatures in the U.S. mainland and elsewhere. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Asian Pacific Islanders; Chinese Exclusion Act; Colonialism and Postcolonialism; Multiculturalism and Asian America.

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DEBORAH L. MADSEN

### ◆ HAWAIIAN PIDGIN

Linguists characterize Hawaiian Pidgin as a genuine language rather than a true pidgin, as a cultural marker identifying those who belong to Hawaii. It contains words *hana’ed* (borrowed) from Chinese, English, Hawaiian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, Tagalog, and other languages brought to Hawaii by adventurers, immigrant workers, and others who settled in the islands.

A pidgin is a transition language for people of different cultures who share no common language but must communicate. It is cobbled together from basic forms of verbs and nouns from the languages being used. A pidgin has no native speakers.

Hawaiian Pidgin began when eighteenth-century seagoing traders used a Chinese-English pidgin with the indigenous people of the islands. As trade with Asia increased and whaling vessels frequented the Pacific, contact grew between Europeans and the people of Hawaii, as did the use of pidgin. By the time the whaling industry began to fade, other industries were becoming commercially viable in Hawaii, notably sugarcane, which saw its first plantation established on Kauai in 1835, pineapple, and coffee. These industries required the importation of laborers well into the twentieth century to work the fields. Workers, mostly single men, came by the thousands from China, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Portugal, Puerto Rico, and other countries, adding to the linguistic mix and making necessary the use of pidgin to communicate.

In the late nineteenth century, immigrant workers were allowed to bring their families to Hawaii. The children of these families picked up and disseminated not only their parents' languages and the Standard English taught in the schools but also the pidgin that was already being spoken in Hawaii. By 1900 children growing up in Hawaii were beginning to acquire pidgin as their first language, making it no longer a pidgin but a Creole. Linguists today classify Hawaiian Pidgin as Hawaiian Creole English, a true language. Local speakers of Hawaiian Creole English, however, generally refer to it as pidgin. According to linguists at the University of Hawaii, by the 1920s pidgin was spoken by the majority of Hawaii's population.

For many years English-speaking people who neither use nor understand Hawaiian Pidgin have denigrated it as broken or bad English. This is understandable, considering that Hawaiian Pidgin uses many English words but uses them differently from the way they are used in Standard English. In addition, Hawaiian Pidgin, as a true language, has its own grammar that is different from the grammar of Standard English, further frustrating those who expect English words to conform to the conventions of Standard English. For instance, Hawaiian Pidgin uses the word *stay* for the present tense of "to be," as in "I stay here" to mean "I am here." To express the past tense, as in "He went to the store," a speaker of Hawaiian Pidgin will add *went*, pronounced "wen," and say, "He wen go store." Further, Hawaiian Pidgin speakers leave out words that Standard English speakers consider essential, such as the preposition *to* and the article *the* in the previous example, or even verbs. In Hawaiian Pidgin, "He strong" means "He is strong." The Standard English question "Would you like a piece of candy?" is expressed in Hawaiian Pidgin as "You like candy?" Speakers of Hawaiian Pidgin frequently use *one* when speakers of Standard English would use *a* or *an*, as in "I like one mango" or "He one local boy."

Hawaiian Pidgin is pronounced differently from Standard English, too. The *th* sound of Standard English is pronounced in Hawaiian Pidgin as *da* or *ta*, turning *that* into *dat* and *thing* into *ting*. The final consonant is often not sounded, making *better* into *bettah*, or, more likely, *mo bettah*, as comparisons are intensified by adding *mo*



(more). Pronunciation is not the only element that affects the sound of Hawaiian Pidgin. Speakers of Standard English generally make their voices rise when asking a question, but speakers of Hawaiian Pidgin use a downward inflection, frequently with a *yeah* or *eh* at the end, as in “Dat one good movie, yeah?”

The pidgin spoken by a true kamaaina (literally, “son of the land”) may be virtually unintelligible to visitors, but dozens of Hawaiian Pidgin words and phrases, many of them actually Hawaiian, have become so common that virtually everyone in the islands understands and uses them. Among them are *mahalo* for “thank you,” *pupus* for “appetizers,” and *kokua* for “help.”

Traditionally, the use of Hawaiian Pidgin has been blamed for the low standardized test scores of students in Hawaii’s schools. However, efforts to ban or even discourage the use of pidgin among school-age children have been equally persistent and ineffectual. In 1987, the Hawaii Board of Education ordered that only Standard English be used in classrooms and school-related settings, except when Native Hawaiian or other foreign languages were being taught. The public response was loud and immediate. Ultimately, the board watered down its order, ordering teachers to encourage the use of Standard English. The heated debate sparked by the initial order is said to be the first in which pidgin received widespread public support. The issues remain unresolved, and the debate continues. Defenders of pidgin charge that the debate is divided along lines of race and social class, with speakers of pidgin marked as poor, ignorant people of color. The other side argues that race has nothing to do with it. They say that anyone who wants to be financially successful in the United States must be able to communicate in Standard English, and that allowing the widespread use of pidgin interferes with that goal. Most have conceded that, at the very least, pidgin is an essential part of Hawaiian culture. Its place in the classroom is still at issue.

In the autumn of 1998, a group of faculty members and students in the Department of Second Language Studies at the University of Hawaii began meeting to discuss language issues. Calling themselves Da Pidgin Coup, they issued a position paper in November 1999 stating that teachers should teach standard forms of English but that pidgin should be respected as a language. The paper sets out strategies for teachers to help children build on whatever language they bring to school. The idea is not to discourage pidgin or any other language but to help learners build on what they already know. Da Pidgin Coup, whose position paper is available through the Web site of the Charlene Sato Center for Pidgin, Creole and Dialect Studies, says there is “plenty of room for Pidgin and English to coexist peacefully and be mutually enriching” (Charlene Sato Center).

The decades-long debate about pidgin has resulted in a renaissance of serious literature written in Hawaiian Pidgin in recent years. Milton **Murayama’s** 1975 novel *All I Asking for Is My Body* is frequently cited as an inspiration by Hawaii’s current crop

of writers. A tale of a Japanese family in Hawaii during the plantation days, the book depicts some of the characters using pidgin. Hawaiian authors since then have written entire books of serious fiction or poetry in pidgin. Lee Tonouchi, who calls himself the pidgin guerrilla, and Lois-Ann **Yamanaka**, whose work has won several major national awards, are among the leading authors of literature written in Hawaiian Pidgin. See also Hawaiian Literature.

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CLAUDIA MILSTEAD

◆ HAYSLIP, LE LY (1949–)

Le Ly Hayslip is a Vietnamese American memoirist and philanthropist. Born Phung Thi Le Ly in the village of Ky La, South Vietnam, Hayslip married an American engineer and immigrated to the United States, where she wrote two autobiographical books, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* (1989) and *Child of War, Woman of Peace* (1993). Although **Vietnamese American literature** features other writers who published memoirs and novels before her, Hayslip became the first Vietnamese American writer to gain national prominence. *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* was favorably reviewed in major American venues like the *New York Times Book Review*, and Oliver Stone adapted her books into the film *Heaven and Earth* (1993). Besides being an author, Hayslip is also a philanthropist, founding the East Meets West Foundation to bring assistance to Vietnam.

Hayslip belongs to the first generation of Vietnamese American writers, a cohort that grew up in South Vietnam and that has distinct memories of the nation and its culture and language. Although most of these writers write and publish in Vietnamese, a few have written in English, notably Tran Van Dinh (*No Passenger on the River*, 1965; *Blue Dragon, White Tiger*, 1983); Minh D. Trinh (*This Side, the Other Side*, 1980); Nguyen Ngoc Ngan (*The Will of Heaven*, 1982); Nguyen Thi Thu-Lam (*Fallen Leaves*, 1989); and Nguyen Cao Ky, the former prime minister of South Vietnam (*Twenty Years and Twenty Days*, 1976; *Buddha's Child: My Fight to Save*

*Vietnam*, 2004). With the exception of Thu-Lam, all of these writers are male. Hayslip is distinct from them not only because of her gender but also because of her class background. Whereas all of these writers are middle-class or elite and highly educated, Hayslip was born into a peasant family in a small village and received little formal education. Much of the ground combat during the **Vietnam War** was fought in the countryside among villages like Hayslip's, and she is also unique among the writers for being the only one to have fought for the National Liberation Front (NLF), known pejoratively by Americans and South Vietnamese as the Viet Cong. Her participation in the NLF, at first voluntary and later coerced, became controversial in the deeply anticommunist Vietnamese American community. Some members of the community also viewed her attitudes toward the postwar Vietnamese communist regime as being too conciliatory and not critical enough of human rights abuses. American audiences, however, looked favorably upon Hayslip's appeals for reconciliation between Vietnam and the United States, recorded in her autobiographies and in Stone's film.

Hayslip's first book, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*, was cowritten with Jay Wurts. It is a highly readable and dramatic account that intercuts stories of her youth and young adulthood in South Vietnam with a narrative about her eventual return to a reunified Vietnam in 1986. The narrative of her time in Vietnam documents not only her life but also serves as an ethnography of Vietnamese rural culture and customs and as a history of the upheavals experienced by the Vietnamese people, caused by decades of warfare. Some of Hayslip's earliest memories were of French colonial soldiers and the warfare between them and the Viet Minh, the anticolonial army formed by Ho Chi Minh that eventually defeated the French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. By 1964 American troops began to arrive in large numbers in Da Nang, a major city not far from Hayslip's village. Soon large-scale fighting broke out between Viet Cong forces on one side and American and South Vietnamese troops on the other. For a short time Hayslip's service for the Viet Cong makes her into a local heroine, but she discovers quickly that the war is a no-win situation for the peasantry. South Vietnamese troops arrest her on suspicion of being a Viet Cong guerilla and torture her. After her release, the Viet Cong, who no longer trust her, put her on trial and sentence her to death, a sentence commuted by her executioners into rape. When her mother barely survives a mass execution ordered by the Viet Cong, Hayslip decides she must leave Ky La. She and her mother flee to Saigon, where they find work as a rich man's housekeepers. But when Hayslip is seduced and impregnated by her employer, the man's wife evicts Hayslip and her mother, who are forced to survive by selling goods in the black market. Hayslip witnesses her sister's transformation into a prostitute servicing American soldiers, and at one point she prostitutes herself to an American soldier to support her family. The lowest point of the war, however, is when her father, who stayed behind in war-torn Ky La, commits suicide.

Hayslip eventually finds work in a tea bar entertaining Americans and becomes involved with a few of them. Eventually she meets Ed Munro, an older civilian contractor, who becomes her first husband and who takes her to the United States in 1970, five years before the war's end. Hayslip returns to Vietnam in 1986, a historically significant year when the communist government initiated its policy of Doi Moi, or renovation. Doi Moi was meant to address the failures of communist economic policy from 1975 to 1985, when, in conjunction with an American embargo and the refusal of the American government to pay reparations for war damages, Vietnam's economy was devastated. With no official relations between the United States and Vietnam in place by 1986, Hayslip's return is a fraught one. She is one of the first Viet Kieu (Overseas Vietnamese) to return to her homeland. She witnesses tremendous poverty and the downfall of the employer who impregnated her, with whom she makes peace. She reunites with her mother, sisters, and long-lost elder brother, who had fought on the communist side, and she concludes her narrative with a call to her readers to forgive those once considered enemies. This narrative of forgiveness, in conjunction with the classic account of **assimilation/Americanization** and immigrant success that is a part of her story, has helped the popularity of her book with American readers.

Hayslip followed the success of *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* with a sequel four years later, *Child of War, Woman of Peace*. The sequel tells of the years between Hayslip's arrival in the United States in 1970 and her return to Vietnam in 1986; it also narrates Hayslip's life in the United States after 1986. Unlike the first book, the sequel was cowritten with her eldest son, James Hayslip, and is characterized by a straightforward, linear plot, in comparison to the first book's splicing of past and present stories. Perhaps because of this less dramatic structure, the sequel was less critically well received than the first book. Another possible reason for the lesser popularity of the sequel was its domestic subject matter, which some readers might have seen as more mundane than the wartime story of the first book. *Child of War, Woman of Peace*, as its title suggests, privileges the adult Hayslip's postwar life. The book focuses on her travails as an immigrant, entrepreneurial working mother who constantly makes bad choices in her romantic affairs. Interestingly, this sequel also provides an account of the writing process of her first book. She documents how she handwrote and then dictated early drafts of her manuscript to her son James and then found her cowriter, Wurts. In an interview Hayslip went into further detail, stating that she and Wurts worked closely and exchanged drafts, with Hayslip having final approval of any changes Wurts had made.

*Child of War, Woman of Peace* traces Hayslip's American journey from her arrival in San Diego. Even more so than the first book, the sequel depicts Hayslip's life as a universal immigrant story of loss, hope, and success, both of the material and spiritual kinds. Hayslip finds herself the young wife of a much older white man, Ed Munro, who fathers her second child; and she must cope with his suburban American family and the strange customs

and practices of American life, seen through an alien's eyes. When Ed returns to Vietnam during the war for another civilian contracting job, Hayslip goes along to visit her family and falls in love with an American soldier with whom she has an affair. Soon after Ed and Hayslip return to the United States, Ed falls sick and dies. Hayslip then falls in love with another American, Dennis Hayslip, whom she marries and who becomes the father of her third child. Although Dennis returns to South Vietnam to rescue Hayslip's sister before the fall of Saigon, he also turns out to be alcoholic and abusive, and, soon after he and Hayslip separate, he dies in an accident. Hayslip works her way up from an assembly-line job to running restaurants and buying houses, achieving a middle-class success that she ultimately finds alienating. With all of her romantic endeavors a failure, Hayslip turns to spirituality, writing, and philanthropy as a way of confronting her traumatic past. The book ends with Hayslip bringing her three biracial children to Vietnam, where they meet their relatives, and beginning her charitable work to send assistance to postwar Vietnam. Like the first book, the sequel concludes with a call for forgiveness, peace, and humanity, a message that enhances her **model minority** status.

Oliver Stone's version of Hayslip's story is a relatively faithful adaptation that attempts to account for most of the events of both books. *Heaven and Earth* is the third part of his Vietnam War trilogy (the first two being *Platoon* and *Born on the Fourth of July*). The major deviation from the books is Stone's decision to create a single composite character, played by Tommy Lee Jones, to embody all of Hayslip's various love interests. Otherwise, the film hews closely to the central message of Hayslip's work: that a war-torn Vietnam, and those who survived the conflicts fought on its soil, can be healed and rendered whole. **See also** Biraciality.

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### ◆ HONGO, GARRETT KAORU (1951 –)

Garrett Hongo is a Japanese American poet, essayist, editor, playwright, memoirist, and distinguished professor of the College of Arts and Sciences and professor of creative writing at the University of Oregon. Among his many contributions to American literature, Garrett Hongo is most well-known for his second collection of poetry, *The River of Heaven* (1988), which won the prestigious Lamont Poetry Award and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry.

Garrett Hongo was born in Volcano, Hawaii and raised in Kahuku, on the North Shore of the island of Oahu and later in Gardena, just south of Los Angeles, California, where his family moved when he was 11. He received his bachelor's degree from Pomona College in 1973, graduating with honors and receiving a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship to live in Japan for a year, where he wrote many of the poems for his first book, *Yellow Light* (1982). Following his stay in Japan, Hongo briefly attended the University of Michigan, where he was awarded the Hopwood Poetry Prize. Hongo then moved to Seattle in 1975, where he served as poet-in-residence for the Seattle Arts Commission. There he founded the Asian Exclusion Act theater group, which premiered his play *Nisei Bar & Grill* in 1976.

In 1978 he coauthored a collection of poetry entitled *The Buddha Bandits Down Highway 99* with Alan Chong Lau and Lawson Fusao Inada, in which he published "Cruising 99," an epic poem later also published in *Yellow Light*. In "Cruising 99," Hongo demonstrates his early prowess in the music of the long poetic line, chronicling a road trip in nine distinct parts. The poem opens with "A Porphyry of Elements," a dramatic catalog of the landscape at the journey's beginning. Here, Hongo explores the notion of origination, recognizing the history of the land down to its geological formation—an act of reverence. Chant-like, his use of repetition not only marries the land's history but also effectively establishes a slow, building rhythm, reminiscent of a car beginning a long journey.

The poem's successive sections further demonstrate Hongo's versatility in rhythm to build the emotive. Part 2, "A Samba for Inada," plays with rhyme to establish a fun, samba-like rhythm in quatrains, while part 5, "Palmistry Fantastica," ends with the voice of a palmist, both humorous and mystical. Her words essentially forebode the coming of the hermit who closes the poem, first through the boys' encounter with him (told from their perspective) in part 8, "Pilgrimage to the Shrine," then through the hermit's own words in part 9, "Confession of the Highway / The Hermit Speaks." The hermit is the ghost of Manzanar, an ancestor forged by the collective cultural memory of **Japanese American internment** for the boys on this journey.

Already an accomplished writer in 1978, Hongo left Seattle to study under esteemed poets C.K. Williams and Charles Wright at the University of California, Irvine. His memoir *Volcano* (1995) briefly chronicles his experiences as a graduate

student of poetry. In 1980 he earned his master of fine arts and was selected as one of only four winners in the annual *Discovery/The Nation* Poetry Contest.

Characterized by his Whitmanesque poetics and lyrical skill in infusing his writing with emotion devoid of sentimentality, Garrett Hongo is the author of two books of poetry: *The River of Heaven* (1988) and *Yellow Light* (1982). Set largely in the urban landscape, *Yellow Light* is a collection of what Maxine Hong Kingston calls on the book's back cover "songs of grief and songs of praise" for Hongo's life as a Japanese American in post-World War II Hawaii and California, exploring issues of origins, family, history, cultural identity, belonging, racism, colonialism, and assimilation.

The first poem in the collection, "Yellow Light," is set in a Los Angeles neighborhood. The undercurrent of claustrophobic violence in the scene is interrupted by the portrait of a woman walking with her groceries who remembers the flowers of May. However, each of these beautiful natural images disintegrates as the poet reminds us that it is now October in a seething Los Angeles.

The yellow light depicted in the poem refers not only to the invasive billboard light rampaging through the refuge of natural beauty but is also a reference to the invasiveness of "yellow" as a racial category and all of its inherent stereotypes—a prominent theme explored throughout the collection in poems such as "Cruising 99," "Roots," "Stepchild," and "Something Whispered in the Shakuhachi." In "Stepchild," the Japanese American experience is compared to the proverbial mistreated stepchild in the American family. The poem begins by describing the first military enforced, mass evacuation of American citizens in history—when, in February 1942, Japanese American families were evacuated from Whidbee Island onto the Winslow ferry in Washington State.

The American audience, however, is unable to completely capture the scene. Initially, the families' belongings are said to be wrapped in pillowcases; immediately thereafter, the narrator corrects this description, which is then revealed to be a translation for an audience ignorant of Japanese culture that would not know what the word *furoshiki* meant. Openly critical of the history of racist policy with which the United States has treated Asian Americans, Hongo cites narratives of the consequences of immigrant workers living under the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Anti-Alien Land Law of 1913, the Exclusion Act of 1921, and Manzanar, using his poetics to both humanize Japanese forebears and to revise American history and its fairy tales.

Demanding the truth, as well as cultural and historical recognition, the narrator honors the voices of the dead—*nisei* workers who speak through stories that he must uncover since his own elders have been silenced. Excerpts taken from the testimonies of Tokio Akagi, Paul Chikamasa Horiuchi, and Carlos Bulosan detail the excruciating, dangerous work on the railroads and in the fields and the coal mines.

The narrator, however, seeks a kind of reconciliation, if only to release the rage after confronting the tremendous grief of cultural memory. He recognizes that, though

there is a need to hate, rage is consumptive and ultimately self-defeating. Thus, faced with the bleak reality that the yellow may never be truly accepted as Americans, the narrator must find his reconciliation within. Still other poems movingly describe Hongo's childhood memories of Hawaii and Gardena and family stories before his birth, including a portrait of his grandfather in "Kubota"; his father's winning at gambling and buying him a Walt Whitman book in "Winnings"; and the story of his middle name, Kaoru, as told by his grandfather in "*Issei*: First-Generation Japanese American."

*The River of Heaven* marked Garrett Hongo as having the "poetic skills to match his amplitude of feeling" (back cover) according to William Matthews. Most striking is Hongo's inherent sense of the music of a poem, the carefully crafted sound—evident through his keen use of assonance, consonance, and alliteration—amplifying the emotional content of his poetry. Firmly rooted in Kahuku, Ka'ū, Hilo, Mendocino, Morro Rock, and Los Angeles, Hongo evokes the past through lyrical and imagistic narratives—the ancestry of the plantation, the volcano village, the city streets, the war ended. Dedicated to his father and grandfather, the collection opens with "Mendocino Rose," a poem set near the Golden Gate on a drive along the Pacific Ocean, which links California to Hawaii. The land, symbolized by the Mendocino rose, is overwhelmingly powerful and beautiful; its growth is wild, lavalike—an image echoed through the placement of the poem's lines. Hawaii surges through a love song on the car stereo sung by Hawaiian falsetto Gabby Pahinui and becomes a healing dirge. The song playing is "Ka Ipo Lei Manu," an elegy written by Queen Kapiolani for her husband, King Kalākaua. Her words of aloha, as sung by Pahinui, are made manifest in a lei. Here, through song, the Mendocino rose overcomes the broken and reigns triumphant over the remnants of the abandoned.

Following this poetic praise of poetry and the land are two parts organizing the succeeding poems. The first one, focusing largely on Hawaii, opens with "Nostalgic Catalogue" to frame the world within which the collection dwells. The poem ends with an image of legacy and inheritance, perhaps depicting Hongo's poetic project as he sees it. The theme of cultural and historical inheritance, and the responsibility of the poet to bear witness and tell the truth, is further explored in "Ancestral Graves, Kahuku," "Could-Catch," and "Pinoy at the Coming of the World."

For Hongo, the past, while monolithic, is too easily forgotten in the onslaught of American amnesia and must be retrieved. However, he also asserts that confronting the cultural and familial past, although painful, is a necessary journey, a crucial part of healing that offers a sense of belonging and peace. In "My Unreal Dwelling: My Years in Volcano," a poem for his grandfather, the dying narrator must own up to his mistakes before leaving this life. Similarly, in "O-Bon: Dance for the Dead," the narrator longs for both communion and reassurance from the ancestral. Here, the narrator,



longing for absolution, calls to the dead to help him tell the story and to comfort the living as the story of loss and grief is told.

The second part of the collection recognizes that a cohesive unification with the past and true reconciliation through the nostalgic is a fallacy. History is not simply a war between truth and untruth to be waged between political or cultural factions but *is*, leaving us raw and open to the grief and loss in death's wake as the world continues around us. However, Hongo also astutely asserts that the indifference of the natural world is not cruel; rather, it exists as part of the beauty that holds within it the power to inspire and heal. In the closing poem of the collection, "The Legend," the narrator prays for the night sky to enfold the body of a victim of random street violence, Jay Kashiwamura, to whom the poem is written in memoriam. Yet the night sky is also an invocation to the ancient and celestial as one and the same. From the story told to Hongo as a child, the poem refers to the myth of Orihime Boshi (Weaver Girl) and Kengyuu Boshi (Puller of Cows), lovers separated by Amanogawa, the River of Heaven, or the Milky Way. According to the story, they are allowed to meet once a year, when Orihime may cross a bridge of magpies. Here, the weaver girl becomes an angel of death, meeting the dead as they enter Heaven.

The collection's title, *The River of Heaven*, is thus a reference to celestial and ancestral beginnings. And, as such, it simultaneously pays homage to one of Hongo's poet forebears, Matsuo Basho and to the art of haiku by referencing one of Basho's most celebrated poems describing Sado Island. The intertextual reference is deliberate yet subtle, fitting for this collection of ancestral and historical explorations of origination and all that shapes us from the celestial dust of being.

Seven years after publishing *The River of Heaven*, Hongo published his memoir *Volcano: A Memoir of Hawai'i* (1995). Framed as an extended Greater Romantic Lyric in prose, the memoir depicts his return as an adult to Volcano, Hawaii, deftly weaving familial history with volcanology, botany, and Hawaiian *mo'olelo* (stories) of Ka'ū. Invariably longing for a reconnection with the village of his birth and to lift the mysteries shrouding his family and, in particular, the memory of his grandfather, Hongo chronicles his journey through the forgotten and barely remembered, away from childhood exile and grief of diaspora and toward a deeper knowledge of his own beginnings and sense of belonging.

He writes in the concluding chapter of the wealth reaped from the journey treading the slopes of Kīlauea that "what radiates as knowledge . . . is that there is a beauty in belonging to this earth and to its past, even one locked in mystery and prohibition, unstoried, that exceeds all the passion you can claim for it" (1996, 339). His story, ultimately, is one of continuous renewal through belonging. Thus, the Hāpu'u, the indigenous Hawaiian fern tree—described as immortal and said to live a lifetime of 30 years before falling, only to rise from the trunk of its birth, sinking its roots in the

earth again and again—is a prominent metaphor for Hongo, who closes his memoir with the following lines: “I wish you knowing. I wish you a land.” In 1996 Hongo’s *Volcano* won the Oregon Book Award for Nonfiction.

Aside from his own collections, Garrett Hongo has also edited prominent anthologies such as *The Open Boat: Poems from Asian America* (1993) and *Under Western Eyes: Personal Essays from Asian America* (1995), as well as *Songs My Mother Taught Me: Stories, Plays and Memoir* by Wakako Yamauchi (1994), and *The Missouri Review*. His poems and essays have appeared in *American Poetry Review*, *Antaeus*, *Field*, *Georgia Review*, *New England Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Parnassus*, the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *New Yorker*. He remains widely anthologized as one of the most important contemporary American voices. As such, Hongo was profiled in the PBS television series *Moyers: The Power of the Word*. A grand testament to his scholarly and artistic merit, Hongo was also the recipient of several prestigious fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and (twice) the Rockefeller Foundation.

Garrett Hongo has taught poetry at several colleges and universities, including the University of Southern California, the University of California, Irvine, the University of Missouri at Columbia, Pitzer College, Vanderbilt University, and the University of Oregon, where he is currently distinguished professor of the College of Arts and Sciences and Creative Writing.

Garrett Hongo’s third poetry collection, *The North Shore*, is forthcoming. He resides in Eugene, Oregon, with his wife, Shelly, two sons, Alex and Hudson, and daughter, Annalena. **See also** Asian Diasporas; Assimilation/Americanization; Colonialism and Postcolonialism; Japanese American Poetry; Racism and Asian America.

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BRANDY NĀLANI McDOUGALL

### ◆ HOUSTON, JEANNE WAKATSUKI (1935–)

Jeanne Houston's autobiography about life in the internment camps and after, through the eyes of a child seeking to define her place in the United States, *Farewell to Manzanar* (1973, coauthored with her husband James D. Houston), has become a classic of Asian American literature. The book opens with Houston, her husband, and their children visiting Manzanar 30 years after she left it, implying that the autobiography is an important act of memory and coming to terms with the past. Jeanne, the youngest of her family's 10 children, was a child when the entire family was relocated to Manzanar, and her narrative becomes an important story of *issei* and *nisei* negotiations with institutionalized racism and its effects.

Specifically, Houston uses the account of her father's psychological decline as a metaphor for the effects of institutionalized racism, the injustice and indignity inflicted upon the *issei* and *nisei* generations. Beginning with her descriptions of how internment changed the structure of Japanese American life—the father's traditional role as head of the family was invalidated by the fact that he could no longer provide for them or make decisions and the mother's family meals, for example, were replaced by the communal mess hall—and continuing through her individual process of shifting identification. Houston uses the memory of Manzanar to describe the ways Japanese Americans have had to rethink their national and cultural affiliations and loyalties. When she returns to California at the age of 10, she has clearly internalized certain racist attitudes and unconsciously devalued her Japanese heritage, accepting negative perspectives toward people of Japanese ancestry. This difficult period is complicated because she longs to fit in at school and become a typical "American" girl. Nonetheless, she is not allowed to become a Girl Scout, and some parents forbid their daughters from socializing with her. Jeanne faults herself for these attitudes, viewing them as a result of her own failings. Her endeavor to fit in involves, at one point, a succession of disguises—to be like everyone by looking like everyone—including that of majorette, a nun's habit for confirmation, and an exotic carnival queen costume.

Ultimately, the autobiography highlights a girl's confrontation with her own history and her search for individuality in a country of shifting racial prejudices. By the end of the narrative, Houston manages to carve a place for herself by making individual choices and understanding the meaning of family. Her story reflects a process of self-acceptance, offering a positive account that does not elide the ambivalence felt by Japanese Americans.

In 1976 Houston and her husband wrote the screenplay to the TV movie version of *Farewell to Manzanar*, which was nominated for two Emmys, including Outstanding Writing in a Special Program, and won the Humanitas Prize from the Lilly Foundation. She also collaborated with Paul G. Hensler on his autobiography *Don't Cry, It's Only Thunder* (1984), the story of his experiences as an American soldier who worked with orphans during the Vietnam War. In 1985 she published *Beyond Manzanar: Views of Asian-American Womanhood* (1985, Capra Back-to-Back series, along with James D. Houston's *One Can Think about Life When the Fish Is in the Canoe*, 1985), a series of autobiographical essays on specific issues related to the representation of Asian American women. The title essay, "Beyond Manzanar," limns Houston's adult perception of her mother's role as a Japanese American wife and mother. She acknowledges the **Asian American stereotypes** and intelligently invalidates many of them, particularly those that refer to these women's supposed lack of agency in their own lives. Another essay describes working on the *Manzanar* film, an experience that led her to relive many hidden memories. In "The Geisha, the Good Wife, and Me," Houston analyzes the metaphors generally used in the West to think about women, particularly Asian women, and critically applies them to her own situation as a Japanese American married to a Caucasian.

Houston's first novel, *The Legend of Fire Horse Woman* (2003), once again examines Japanese American women's roles and relationships through the story of three generations: Sayo, who came to the United States as a picture bride in 1902, her nisei daughter Hana, and **sansei** granddaughter Terri. Set in Manzanar, the narrative shifts from the present in camp to the past through Sayo's memories. The stories of each of the women are told separately (Sayo's in italics) and stress the particular problems that each generation had to negotiate: Sayo's issues of loyalty, Hana's journey toward agency and a personal voice, and Terri's coming of age. The novel's title refers to the sign of the Fire Horse, under which Sayo has been born, a sign unlucky for women because it is supposed to make them too powerful to marry because they cannot be tamed by their husbands. The women Houston portrays in her novel deal with questions of independence and self-definition while appearing passive and quiet. They are not victims; rather they undergo individual itineraries of self-assertion and discovery, often consciously deviating from conventional customs. Houston uses these characters to unveil the hidden strength behind the perceived passivity of Japanese American women by having

them make decisions or act independently, overcoming the obstacles they perceive that limit personal freedom and autonomy.

The novel, a family story that spans the twentieth century, also examines the history and culture of Japanese Americans. The author chooses not to discuss the political climate, as she did in her autobiography, centering rather on personal stories of women's processes of liberation, confidence, and self-respect in the middle of racial and sexual oppression. In a sense, this novel encapsulates the issues that Houston engaged in *Farewell to Manzanar* and her essays: the story of triumph over adversity and women's empowerment that arises from honest awareness of the dignity of one's place in the world and the capacity one has to define her own destiny. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Japanese American Autobiography; Japanese American Internment; Racism and Asian America.

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ROCÍO G. DAVIS

#### ◆ HOUSTON, VELINA HASU (1957–)

Velina Hasu Houston is a playwright, poet, screenwriter, essayist, and professor. She is of Japanese, African American, and Native American Indian descent. Houston grew up in Junction City, Kansas, near the U.S. Army installation Fort Riley, where her father was transferred. As the child of an African American father and a Japanese mother, Houston's upbringing was not only marked by her dual heritage but also by Fort Riley's multiethnic community, which included immigrant Japanese and European women and their American husbands. After studying journalism, mass communication, and theater at Kansas State University, Houston moved to California and

graduated with an MFA from the University of California at Los Angeles. She received a PhD in critical studies from the School of Theatre at the University of California, where she is currently professor of theater and director of the master of fine arts in dramatic writing. She also taught at the School of Theater, Film, and Television at the University of California at Los Angeles. Houston has been awarded numerous fellowships from foundations such as the Japan Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Foundation and has garnered awards such as the Remy Martin New Vision Screenwriting Award, the Lorraine Hansberry Playwriting Award, and the 2003 Silver Medal from the Pinter Review Prize for Drama for her play *Calling Aphrodite*.

Houston has been adamant in her refusal to be pigeonholed as a playwright, particularly according to her dual heritage. Moreover, she has emphasized that there should be no boundaries concerning her subject matter or where her plays are produced. Although Houston has clearly dramatized and addressed Amerasian experiences in her dramatic and essayistic work, her plays and essays can also be seen as innovative explorations of multiethnic American life on the whole, as reflected in her numerous plays, which include *Asa Ga Kimashita* (*Morning Has Broken*, 1981), *Amerasian Girls* (1982), *American Dreams* (1984), *Thirst* (1986), *My Life a Loaded Gun* (1988), *Albatross* (1988), *Necessities* (1991), *Broken English* (1991), *Tokyo Valentine* (1992), *Kokoro* (*True Heart*, 1994), *As Sometimes in a Dead Man's Face* (1994), *The Matsuyama Mirror* (1995), *Hula Heart* (1996), *Ikebana* (*Living Flowers*, 2000), *Shedding the Tiger* (2001), *The Lotus of the Sublime Pond* (2001), *Point of Departure* (2001), *Waiting for Tadashi* (2002), *The Ideal and the Life* (2002), *The Eyes of Bones* (2005), *The Peculiar and Sudden Nearness of the Moon* (2006), *Calling Aphrodite* (2007), and *The House of Chaos* (2007). Houston has also edited the important drama anthologies *The Politics of Life: Four Plays by Asian American Women* (1993) and *But Still, Like Air, I'll Rise: New Asian American Plays* (1997). She has also written and coproduced documentary films such as *Desert Dreamers* (2006) and *Cherry Blossoms and Apple Pie: Japanese Women Who Changed America*.

Houston's critically acclaimed play about Japanese war brides, *Tea*, has become a classic of contemporary American theater. It received the National First Prize at the American Multicultural Playwrights' Festival and was further selected for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize as one of the Best Ten Plays by Women Worldwide. *Tea* received its world première at the Manhattan Theatre Club in New York in October 1987 and has since been produced throughout the United States and worldwide. Its twentieth anniversary production took place at the Pan Asian Repertory Theatre in New York in April 2007. It is the last part of a trilogy, following *Asa Ga Kimashita* (*Morning Has Broken*) and *American Dreams*, which is partly based on the story of Houston's parents. Whereas the first part is centered on the life of her Japanese mother

in Japan and her decision to marry an African American/Native American soldier, the second part charts the arrival of the couple in the United States and the problems and prejudices they face. Finally, *Tea* is set 20 years later in 1968, and it departs from the autobiographical framework through a focus on the life of five war brides: Himiko Hamilton, Chizuye Juarez, Setsuko Banks (whose character is based on Houston's mother), Teruko MacKenzie, and Atsuko Yamamoto, who, after leaving Japan, were settled with their American husbands (of various descents, as their last names indicate) in remote parts of the country, such as Junction City, Kansas. The four women have met at the house of the deceased Himiko to perform a ritual farewell for her. Using a lyrical language and a seemingly realistic style including flashbacks, Houston offers her audience a variety of viewpoints of the same story, thereby deconstructing any illusion of objectivity.

Their stories are partly gleaned from interviews Houston conducted herself with 50 of the international brides who moved from Japan to Kansas between 1946 and 1960 and who were part of about 100,000 marriages between Japanese women and American soldiers during the occupation of Japan. As their history has been largely ignored and undocumented, *Tea*, which is dedicated to the Japanese women of Kansas, is also Houston's attempt at preserving and staging their stories. The urge to save and document the stories of one's ancestors has always been of particular importance within a context of immigrant writing and presents part of the nexus between personal and public history and, in this case, also a part of immigrant women's historiography. The rules of a traditional Japanese tea ceremony provide the structure for the play, divided into a prelude (Invitation to Tea) and five scenes (The Art of Tea, Selecting Tea, Serving Tea, Cold Tea, Perfect Drinking Temperature). Japanese culture is further conveyed synaesthetically with music (traditional Japanese melodies), costumes (kimonos), props (tatami room, pile of Japanese sitting cushions), and food (o-shushi, furoshiki, sashimi, etc.).

Nonetheless, according to Houston, the play is built on tea practices as rituals of everyday life instead of as ceremonies. Consequently, in the opening scene the stark aesthetics of the Japanese setting and any notion of a harmonious tea ceremony are contrasted with the harsh, tragic, and shrill realities of the women's lives as exoticized foreigners in the American Midwest and thus far removed from Frank Chin's rhetoric of "food pornography." From the first image of Himiko removing a pistol from her kimono sleeve, it becomes obvious that the atmosphere in Himiko's house, the play's claustrophobic setting throughout, is just as tumultuous inside as the political situation in 1968 outside. An overall surreal notion of time gone out of joint is enforced through Houston's use of realism and its continuous transcendence. The play's setting is representative of the two levels between which the narrative shifts: a representation of Himiko's spiritual limbo and her house.

The women who have gathered at Himiko's house to clean it and to have tea together have not done so out of friendship but out of duty, as despite living in close proximity in a small community, none of them are friends and they have hardly ever been in contact before. Significantly, it is Atsuko, the somewhat hypocritical head of the local Buddhist chapter and one of Himiko's sharpest critics, who first arrives at Himiko's house. Atsuko considers Himiko a prostitute and despises her psychological instability, while also ignoring her situation as a battered wife. Atsuko also criticizes Chizuye for her assimilated American ways and continues to promote traditional notions of subservient Japanese instead. By twice pairing Atsuko in an antagonistic character relationship (with Himiko and with Chizuye), Houston explicitly deconstructs any dreamy notions of communal alliances, whether based on gender, nationality, or common experiences. The marked differences between their individual personalities are reflected in the way they bow and take their tea, their degree of assimilation, and the education of their children. Houston further addresses racial prejudices in both American and Japanese society and the in-between position not only of Himiko but also of all war brides, trying to negotiate between the Japanese, American, and Asian American facets of their identities.

Himiko's suicide and the fear it causes in the other four women finally functions as a catalyst and forces the women to confront their own situations, past, and future. While, during the course of the play, the women's biographies are revealed—partly through the perspectives of their husbands and children, who are also impersonated by the five women—they also gradually begin to share the often traumatic experiences and anxieties that mark their life in Kansas. The motif of a family member who commits suicide and whose soul remains restless and thereby acts as a cathartic ghostlike figure for surviving family members and friends is common in Asian American fiction and drama, such as Fae Myenne Ng's novel *Bone* (1993) or Rick A. Shiomi's play *Uncle Tadao* (1990), for example. Drawing on Jacques Derrida's concept of "hauntology," the study of ghosts and haunting, You-Me Park argues that to see the use of ghosts within women's writing as alternative modes of living is highly ambiguous, because ghosts only become powerful once they are removed from material life (2000, 164–165). However, this cannot be applied easily in Himiko's case, because she already assumed an autonomous status in shooting her husband before her suicide, which was not directly triggered by her husband's death but by that of her daughter.

If, on the other hand, ghosts are seen as outward signs of inward fears, as Ilan Stavans has explained in the context of Hispanic literature and culture, Houston's use of ghosts may be seen as exemplary. Although *Tea* starts with the violent, albeit self-determined, act of Himiko's suicide, the play ends with the four women participating in a Buddhist chant, perhaps indicating that their newfound communication may not only release Himiko's soul from limbo but may even develop into a sort of alternative



community for the remaining women. Houston avoids a definite closure of the play but establishes the women's Amerasian children as hopes for the future. Furthermore, although Himiko dies, Houston directs our gaze toward the survival skills of the four other Japanese women, who emerge not so much as passive victims but as survivors of various historical and personal tragedies. In that sense, Himiko's suicide, particularly following her active part in dealing with her abusive husband, also differs from what James Moy has described as the endless list of suicidal Asian characters in early popular American cinema (1993, 85–86).

Houston's plays and her adoption drama, *Necessities*, which features an Irish American protagonist, do not belong to the category of more conventional immigrant family and Asian American kitchen sink drama. They are rather dramatic experiments in capturing the paradoxes caused by a clash of public and private spheres. By necessity, her choice of subject matters entails the danger of didacticism, for example, in the form of embedded "history lessons" and a reliance on the continuing importance of the issues discussed. This can be seen in *Kokoro* (*True Heart*), which Houston based on the true story of a Japanese mother in California who tried to commit suicide with her young daughter according to the Japanese practice of *oyako-shinju*, or parent-child suicide. However, by personalizing her subject matter, chosen from the broad canvasses of **Asian American**, Asian, and American history and politics, Houston manages to examine macro-level issues through a micro-level perspective, which, through its universal character, escapes sinking into irrelevance.

Stan Yogi's classification of Houston's work as postmodern Asian American literature is appropriate in the sense that she is at pains to point out that there is no one, monolithic Asian American experience (1997, 147). Houston's plays are often marked by the constant exposure of the necessity to maintain the fluidity of one's identities, not least as a means of survival. In *Tea* her characters literally become other characters through Houston's device of double-casting and are thus, together with the audience, almost forced to adjust their perspective. A heterogeneous perspective is further achieved through multilingual and multidialectic language. Houston addresses highly complex issues through an aesthetic mixture of docudrama, social realism, epic theater devices, satire, and dream imagery, which, according to Houston, is informed as much by Japanese folklore as by Anton Chekhov's work (author's interview with Houston). Thus, while fully acknowledging her primary cultural orientation as Japanese, Houston aims at a perspective beyond narrow identity politics. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization.

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CHRISTIANE SCHLOTE

### ◆ HSIUNG, SHIH-I (1902–1991)

Also known as Xiong Shi-yi, Hsiung Shih-I is a Chinese dramatist, novelist, translator, and professor of English. He is known primarily for his translation of Chinese dramas into English and his own literary creations in both English and Chinese. Born in 1902 in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province, China, Hsiung graduated from Beijing Normal College in 1923. He taught English at schools and universities in Beijing, Shanghai, and Jiangxi Province, while at the same time he was engaged in literary translations and creations. From 1939 to 1942 he taught Chinese Yuan drama at Cambridge University. Beginning from the 1950s, Hsiung resumed teaching, alternately at London University, Nanyang University in Singapore, the University of Hawaii, and St. Lawrence University in Canada. In 1963 Hsiung moved to Hong Kong, started Tsinghua College, and acted as its head until retirement in 1982. In 1991 Hsiung died in Beijing.

Hsiung combines both Eastern and Western cultures in his literary writings, and drama was his lifelong pursuit. Before he went to England, he translated many works by Shakespeare, George Bernard Shaw, Sir James Barrie, Thomas Hardy, and Benjamin Franklin into Chinese. In England, his original plan was to study Shakespeare, but, upon the advice of his English mentor, he decided to write a history of Chinese drama as his PhD dissertation. In the meantime, he found Western images

of Chinese highly stereotyped and wished to present to Western readers a truly Chinese play. In 1934 Hsiung finished the translation of *Lady Precious Stream*, based on an old Chinese play *Wang Baochuan*, which was a great success in Europe and the United States. The play consists of four acts. The first act is Hsiung's own recreation for the purpose of dramatic interest and scene setting, but also for the elimination of what he considered to be the superstitious and immoral aspects of the original drama. The story tells of a prime minister's daughter, Precious Stream (which is transformed by the author from the original Precious Bracelet into the present name to make it consistent with his own creation) and her choice of a husband. In the play Precious Stream falls in love with Hsieh, a brilliant but poor young man, whom she chooses at the cost of being deprived of family inheritance. Hsieh and Precious Stream live poorly in a cave. Later Hsieh is enlisted, goes to war, and is rumored dead, but the truth is he has become king of the western regions and is pursued by the princess of the western regions, though he remains faithful to Precious Stream and is finally reunited with her.

Hsiung had great difficulty in getting this play accepted for performance. Finally he was fortunate enough to win the support of E.V. Rieu of Methuen. The play was staged at the Little Theatre in London on November 28, 1934, and later went through a respectable 105 performances. By the fall of 1936, it was in repertory in seven countries and four languages. More significantly, the costumes were designed by Hsiung's friend Mei Lanfang, the famous Chinese Peking opera master. *Lady Precious Stream* is considered the first English adaptation of an actual Chinese play. It is also the first time that a play was staged by a Chinese director on Broadway, though it received mixed reviews from both Britain and the United States. Brooks Atkinson made the observation that the play was an "amiable fraud" (qtd. in Harbeck 1996, 244). In China, the play was accused of catering to the taste of Western viewers/readers. Hsiung however was quite philosophical about the criticism. As a dramatist and scholar, he kept a sober mind that *Precious Stream* was a great commercial success, which was what he needed at that time to support himself. In 1935 he started the translation of *The Romance of Western Chamber*. In the introduction to the play, Hsiung recommended that it was a great Chinese play, and, in the postscript to *The Professor from Peking: A Play in Three Acts*, Hsiung mentioned that G.B. Shaw confided privately to him that he preferred *The Romance of Western Chamber* to *Lady Precious Stream*, but the actual performance did not achieve success.

Hsiung's *The Professor from Peking: A Play in Three Acts* was written in English and published by Methuen & Co. Ltd. in 1939. The preface was authored by Lord Dunsany. In the postscript the author stated that he wrote the play in English mainly because he wanted to give a brief account of the past 30 years of happenings in China, which include the May 4th Movement, the Northern Expedition, and the resistance

against Japanese invasion. The author listed the distorted and stereotyped images of Chinese in Western discourses and wrote satirically that the Hollywood representation of Chinese should be reversed.

*The Bridge of Heaven* (1943), Hsiung's novel written in English with a preface by the English Poet Laureate John Masefield, received high praise from the English novelist H.G. Wells. It was translated into French, German, Spanish, Swedish, Czech, Dutch, and Chinese. The novel narrates the vicissitudes of Li Ta Tung's family and the social turbulence from the late Qing Dynasty to the Xinhai Revolution (1911). Influenced in his childhood by his uncle Li Kang, Li Ta Tung, the protagonist, was sympathetic to Sun Yat-sen's revolutionaries. Later he went into a church university, received Western influence, and then eloped with his fiancée Lotus Fragrance to Peking and became involved with the Reform campaign. The last chapters of the novel concentrate on the efforts of the revolutionary party in the decades before and after 1900 to overthrow the Manchu dynasty. This novel presents a dramatic narration of the incidents and a realistic portrayal of the Chinese family at that time.

Hsiung also wrote novels and plays in Chinese, of which the *Lady on the Roof* was adapted into a movie in Hong Kong in 1959.

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GUANGLIN WANG

#### ◆ HUA, CHUANG (1937?–)

Although little is known about novelist Chuang Hua, she has made an undeniably significant impact on Asian American literature since the publication of her influential novel *Crossings* (1968). Much like the protagonist of her novel (which is speculated to be at least partially autobiographical), Hua was born in China before immigrating to England and later the United States. Hua continues to live an enigmatic life, choosing not to participate in the field of **Asian American studies**, to the development of which her work was so foundational. Nonetheless, her novel has made an enormous impact on Asian American literary scholarship, as it represents a unique modernist eruption that portrays Chinese American migrants as psychologically

complicated, intricate characters. Hua's text has a significant influence over the more recent interests within Asian American studies that address ideas of gender, feminism, perpetual migration, fetishization, visual culture, and Overseas Chineseness.

*Crossings* first appeared in 1968, published by the reputable Dial Press, but quickly went out of print. Circulating at a time concurrent with Asian American civil rights strikes, *Crossings* addresses racial unrest both in the United States and abroad (the Vietnam War, discomfort in the relationship between the United States and Japan/Japanese in the United States, and the increased migration of Chinese immigrants after the 1943 repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act, for instance). Readership of the novel was low, possibly because of the density and inapproachability of its hyper-modernist prose. Furthermore, many Asian American texts at the time were scopophillic for the dominant culture to gain "authentic," sociological insight into marginal cultures, and *Crossings'* ethnographic tone did not coincide with the desired style of approachable, revelatory voyeurism that mainstream audiences desired. Interestingly, most of what we know about Hua stems from the autobiographical elements of this novel.

*Crossings* begins amid the urban-modernism of the European metropolis, as Fourth Jane meets her French lover and recalls her father's life—an act that is prompted by a glance at the wristwatch that she has inherited from him. The novel shifts through time and space, as Fourth Jane recalls various family memories, including her mother Ngmah's annual birthday celebrations and a screening of family home videos, only to have the narrative suddenly switch into an account of her sparse apartment in France and interactions with her film-journalist partner. In one episode, Fifth James, the firstborn son, marries a Caucasian woman, inciting rage from his parents, and especially Dyadya (his father), who feels that his exclusion from the wedding epitomizes shameful behavior. As the novel progresses, Fourth Jane's depression becomes evident through her obsessive behavior, insomnia, and constant migration. When Dyadya's patriarchal power begins to dwindle, Fourth Jane finds that her lover is controlling her as well, as he Orientalizes her as a pseudomuse, pressuring her to represent an aesthetic ideal for his own creative consumption. In unmarked interludes, Fourth Jane recalls her previous lover, by whom she was (temporarily) impregnated, leaving the reader to question, *who* is punishing Jane more for this indiscretion? Alongside Fourth Jane's guilt over her aborted pregnancy resides the guilt over rejecting her family (and by metonymic extension, her culture) and moving to France. Although published in the late 1960s, this novel prophetically addresses many of the concerns that would later arise in the 1970s through the 1990s, regarding gender studies and transnationalism in Asian American studies, respectively.

In the preface to the novel, Amy Ling notes that *Crossings* is "Asian America's first modernist novel," aligning Fourth Jane's fragmented and unbalanced cultural identity

with the novel's nonlinear, unconventional style (1986, 2). Dialogue goes unmarked without either formatting methods to indicate where speech begins or ends (at times, dialogue appears in the middle of paragraphs without indications) or references to who is speaking. Several critics, including Monica Chiu, Lesley Chin Douglass, and Amy Ling attribute the narrative's stream-of-consciousness style to modernist influence, and some go so far as to liken the form to the various themes addressed in the novel (namely, migration, ethnic destabilization, and trauma). Chiu, for instance, notes that "[m]odernist angst arises in *Crossings*' temporal and spatial orders, by which Hua's text is ultimately disordered" (1999, 112), and Douglass articulates that the novel is "primarily a formalist commentary on [an] Asian American sense of displacement in America" (1995, 54). Unfortunately, 1960s and 1970s mainstream audiences were not receptive to Hua's verbal aesthetic, and rejected the novel as neither a modernist success nor an approachable example of Asian American literature. Nonetheless, in the 1980s, Amy Ling reintroduced the novel to literary audiences, praising it as a precursor to the influential Asian feminist writers of the late 1970s, most notably, Maxine Hong Kingston, author of *The Woman Warrior*. With renewed interest from both literary and cultural studies spheres, *Crossings* was celebrated again with a third release in May 2007.

Not only is the novel reflective of the literary works of Hua's modernist contemporaries, but, like many modernist novels, *Crossings* is influenced by the twentieth century's intrigue with visual culture. Amy Ling's essay, "A Rumble in the Silence," describes *Crossings*' anachronism, beginning with Fourth Jane's relationship with a French film journalist. "This affair," says Ling, "is constantly invaded by Jane's past, by memories of family, by dreams, nightmares, and visions, by crossings geographic and chronological" (1982, 30). Of this fragmented disordering, Ling notes that "[t]wo actions are proceeding simultaneously and the narration jumps back and forth between them, a technique we are accustomed to in cinema but encounter less frequently on the printed page" (33). By adopting a literary style reminiscent of cinematic editing (for instance, the rapid editing of montages, codified flashbacks/forwards that appear without warning), Hua's textual style recalls the visual influences of the modernist period—which address the fast paced, disorienting, and episodic lifestyle of the twentieth century.

China appears throughout the novel in various forms, including anecdote, film footage, memory, magazine, and analogy. Fourth Jane's Parisian lover, a journalist, insists that she return to China to help "rebuild" it—with the understanding that China was being destroyed by communism. Yet Jane argues that she cannot return, because she has as little ownership over China as it has over her, and because her identity is a hybridity of both China and the United States. Fourth Jane, the middle child of the family and the holder of the gender-ambiguous name (in the family "Chuang" is the masculine and "Hua" is the feminine attribute), emphasizes the liminality of Asian Americans in the late 1960s with her inability to fully belong to either the Eastern or Western world.

Modernist fragmentation works well as a mirror for Asian American dislocation and anxiety in Hua's contemporary 1960s context, and earlier generations of racial segregation, racist social policy, and indentured servitude. *Crossings*, however, is strikingly different from earlier Asian American ethnographic accounts, as Fourth Jane's family breaks away from the traditional representation of working-class, proletarian Chinese characters and is instead a family with great fortune and luxury in North America (this is in contrast, for instance, from texts such as Louis **Chu's** *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, 1961). The frequent trips to restaurants that occur throughout the novel, Fourth Jane's career as a Wall Street stock broker, and an inventory of Dyadya's wristwatch collection work to illustrate how much the family has assimilated into Western capitalistic ideology—but also highlight their uniquely wealthy success within that framework. Her domestic conflict and the hands of Dyadya's simultaneous Western and Eastern dominance (Dyadya embodies Western assimilation but still enforces Chinese traditions) provoke Fourth Jane to eliminate herself from her family and relocate in the space between the two patriarchally charged places: Europe and Asia. **See Also** Assimilation/Americanization; Feminism and Asian America.

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JENNY HEI JUN WILLIS

#### ◆ HWANG, DAVID HENRY (1957–)

David Henry Hwang is a playwright, screenwriter, and librettist who is best known as the author of *M. Butterfly*. Born in Los Angeles, California, David Henry Hwang received his BA degree in English from Stanford University in 1979 and then taught

writing in a high school in Menlo Park, California, before attending the Yale School of Drama from 1980 to 1981. Although he did not finish a degree, he studied theater history before leaving for New York City, where he thought the professional theater would provide him a richer education than the student workshops at Yale. He holds an honorary doctorate from Columbia College in Chicago. Currently he lives in New York City with his wife, actress Kathryn Layng, and their son, Noah.

Hwang is considered the first **Asian American** playwright to bring Asian and American themes to Broadway and Off-Broadway theater. His plays explore issues of ethnicity and cultural identity, religion and ideology, gender roles and stereotypes, East and West relationships, among other things. When his first play *F.O.B.* was accepted for production at the prestigious National Playwrights Conference at Connecticut's O'Neill Theater Center in 1979, he was only 22 and just graduating from Stanford. Producer Joseph Papp brought the play to New York's Off-Broadway circuit, where it won an Obie Award as the Best New Play of the Season in 1981. *F.O.B.* touches on the conflict between FOBs (fresh off the boat) and ABCs (American-born Chinese). Steve, who comes to the United States from China, tries to win the affection of Grace, a first-generation Chinese American. Their relationship is interrupted by a visit from Dale, Grace's American-born cousin who dislikes Steve because Steve's presence reminds him of his nonwhite ancestry that he prefers to ignore, deny, and abandon. Grace plays the intermediary role between the two men, with insight into the plights of both FOBs and ABCs. Steve announces himself to be the great god of war Gwan Gung, but Grace tells him that Gwan Gung is dead in the United States; nevertheless, her contact with Steve reawakens her own fantasy, Fu Ma Lan, a great woman warrior. Dale refuses to accept both myths, for he has struggled for so long to overcome his Chineseness, but Steve's presence forces him to reexamine his values. While Dale attempts to humiliate the immigrants, Steve, in monologue, becomes the embodiment of every immigrant who once made their contributions to the building of the United States, especially those who helped to build the **transcontinental railroad**. Finally, the cultural kinship binds Steve and Grace, and Dale is left alone at the end of the play. The familiar issue, assimilation and Chinese identity, is enlivened by Hwang's innovative use of a Chinese theatrical tradition that portrays major characters as figures from Chinese mythology. Critics, including Frank Rich of the *New York Times*, responded positively to the play's humor and its use of Chinese mythological figures.

Like *F.O.B.*, Hwang's next two plays focus on the Chinese American experience. *The Dance and the Railroad*, which is a 1982 Drama Desk Nomination, Pulitzer finalist, and CINE Golden Eagle Award, depicts two nineteenth-century immigrants working on the transcontinental railroad and trying to sort out their pasts while confronting uncertain futures in the United States, whereas *Family Devotions*, also a



1982 Drama Desk Nomination, examines the conflict between a well established Chinese American family of fanatical evangelical Christians and an atheist uncle from mainland China. In *The Dance and the Railroad*, Hwang chooses a historical incident, the Chinese labor strike of 1867, to dispel the long-standing stereotype of Asian males as little coolies. The play is set on a mountaintop near the transcontinental railroad camp. Lone is a 20-year-old worker, forced by his parents to abandon his studies at the opera school to go to the United States to earn money, while Ma is a naïve 18-year-old worker who arrives in the United States four weeks previously with dreams of wealth. Lone escapes to the mountaintop each day to practice arduous dance steps that he has learned in the opera school because this daily practice is the only way to maintain his individuality and prove his distinction from other workers on the railroad. One day, Ma follows Lone to the mountaintop and pleads to be taught some of the movements associated with the depictions of the god of war Gwan Gung but is refused and challenged by Lone. Ma accepts Lone's challenge to hold a locust position, a metaphor for immigrant experience, throughout the night. The next day, Lone returns excitedly to the mountaintop with the news that the Chinamen have won the strike and agrees to teach Ma the steps of Gwan Gung because he is moved by Ma's unyielding spirit in holding the locust position. Surprisingly, Ma is no longer interested in the heroic god of war but invites Lone to perform his own invented opera, which is no longer the glorification of the god Gwan Gung but the celebration of every Chinaman. To some extent, Hwang suggests that the ancient myths alone do not have meanings for the Chinese in the United States, but rather the spirit of these myths must be embraced and adapted to the spirit of the modern American warriors.

*Family Devotions* is set in contemporary California. A thoroughly assimilated Chinese American family is visited by their uncle Di-gou, who has lived for 30 years in mainland China. His sisters, pious fundamentalist Christians, are shocked to find out that he is an atheist and rejects the legend of See-Goh-Poh, a Christian who allegedly saved his soul at the age of eight. Di-gou, in turn, is confused by the family's crass materialism and thus comes to ask his sisters to renounce their faith and return home with him. Later, the sisters and their daughters tie Di-gou to a table, assailing him with the Word of God and See-Goh-Poh. However, he breaks his bond and exposes See-Goh-Poh as a fraud whose crusade is a trick to conceal an unwanted pregnancy. As Di-gou continues his vehement speech, the sisters die. The play can be seen as Hwang's angry indictment of the Christian fundamentalist mind-set, for the family in the play has been corrupted by Christianity and consequently has lost its true beliefs.

Hwang's next two plays, jointly entitled *Sound and Beauty*, are one-act plays set in Japan. In these plays, Hwang moves away from the previous assimilation and cultural identity of Chinese American immigrants to the stories of tragic love of Japanese. The first, *The House of Sleeping Beauties*, is an adaptation of a novella *Nemureru Bijo* by

Yasunari Kawabata, who becomes one of the characters in this play. The play is set in a brothel where elderly men sleep beside naked and drugged virgins to learn to accept their own mortality. In Hwang's version, Kawabata comes here to research a book but becomes spiritually involved with Michiko, the elderly proprietress. Later, he commits suicide by self-poisoning and is rocked to his final eternal sleep in her lap. The second, *The Sound of a Voice*, is about a samurai warrior who goes into a forest to kill a bewitching female hermit but instead falls in love with her.

Produced in 1986, *Rich Relations* is Hwang's first work not about Asian experience and his first critical failure. It is the first of his plays to contain an all white cast. Keith is a prep school debate teacher on the run with Jill, his student and girlfriend. They arrive at the Los Angeles mansion of his father Hinson. Hinson is an amusingly hopeless technophile who left the ministry to become a wealthy real estate baron. Long ago Hinson was raised from the dead through the love of his sister Barbara, but now Auntie Barbara is perched on the balcony, threatening to commit suicide unless Keith marries her cable-addicted daughter. *Rich Relations* explores the ties between wealth and love, modernity and eternity, sacrifice and resurrection. Like *Family Devotions*, it also attacks evangelical Christianity and crass materialism, yet the lack of newness in technique and ideas displeased the audience and critics.

However, Hwang bounced back from his failure with *M. Butterfly* in 1988. Debuting in Washington DC and quickly moving on to Broadway, the play pleased audiences and many critics, thus earning him a second Obie Award, a Tony Award for the Best Play of 1988, the Drama Desk Award, the John Gassner Award, the Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Play, and a Pulitzer finalist. *M. Butterfly* made Hwang the first Asian American to win the Tony Award for Best Play. The play is based on an article in the *New York Times* concerning a French diplomat, Bernard Bouriscot, arrested on charges of turning over embassy documents to his Chinese lover Shi Peipu, who turned out to be not only a spy but also a man. Bernard Bouriscot admitted that he had never seen his lover naked because he thought she was modest and it was a Chinese custom. Hwang was struck by the story and provided a plausible reason in *M. Butterfly* to explain why, after 20 years of cohabitation, Bouriscot had learned nothing, including the true sexuality of his lover. The original title is *Monsieur Butterfly*, but it was shortened to *M. Butterfly* at Hwang's wife's suggestion, which seems more mysterious and ambiguous. *M. Butterfly*, as its title suggests, is the reworking of Giacomo Puccini's sadly romantic masterpiece *Madama Butterfly*. In Hwang's *M. Butterfly*, the diplomat Rene Gallimard is the counterpart of Puccini's westerner, Pinkerton, falling in love with Peking opera singer Song Liling, who is fantasized by Gallimard to be the counterpart of Puccini's Cio-Cio-San, Madame Butterfly. Gallimard's fantasy toward Song makes him unaware of Song's gender and motive until Song removes makeup and changes into men's clothes near the end of the play. In despair and desperation,

Gallimard dresses himself like Madame Butterfly and then commits suicide. The suicide of Gallimard at the end of *M. Butterfly* can be seen as a warning. This tragic ending, on the symbolic level, advises people in the West to cultivate a balanced cultural understanding and to adjust their views of the Orient; otherwise they, like Gallimard, may come to a dead end when dealing with people in and of the East. In other words, both a sense of racial supremacy and imperialist mentality need to be eradicated. Hwang's *M. Butterfly* explores the issue of gender and racial stereotyping, of dominance and submission, and of the fantasy that the West holds for the East. *M. Butterfly* has sometimes been regarded as an anti-American play, a diatribe against the West's stereotypes of the East. Yet it can also be viewed as a plea to all sides to cut through respective layers of cultural and sexual misconception, to deal with one another truthfully and respectfully for mutual good. In many ways, *M. Butterfly* continues the thematic preoccupations that are obvious in Hwang's earlier plays, such as the use of Peking opera, the Asian stereotypes, and the conflict of Asian and American values. Furthermore, *M. Butterfly* marks a considerable advance in Hwang's dramatic technique over his earlier plays. His earlier plays are usually chronologically presented on realistic sets, whereas *M. Butterfly* begins with a retrospective monologue by Gallimard in his prison cell, and many flashbacks to European and Asian places are introduced throughout the play.

Following the success of *M. Butterfly*, Hwang collaborated with composer Philip Glass on *One Thousand Airplanes on the Roof*, a science fiction drama concerning a character who may have been kidnapped by visiting aliens. In the play, the protagonist is uneasy in the world in which he presumably lives, constantly on the run from both the here and now and a half-remembered encounter with visiting aliens. Although it is science fiction, it largely exposes people's sense of alienation in contemporary times. Hwang also worked on film scripts, including a screen adaptation of *M. Butterfly*. In 1992, his one-act play *Bondage* opened at the Humana Festival of New Plays at the Actors Theatre of Louisville, Kentucky. Like *The House of Sleeping Beauties*, it is set in an exotic brothel. The play begins with Terri, the female dominatrix, in a session with Mark, both of whom are covered from head to toe in black leather so that their faces and their respective ethnic identities are concealed from the audience. The play also consists of a fantasy game in which the races of two characters are constantly changed, thus further exploring the themes of racial, gender, and political stereotyping and intricate power relationships. *Face Value*, a full-length work, appeared in the following year. The New York production of this play, which Hwang admits was hastily and insufficiently revised, closed during previews. In 1994, based on Hwang's screenplay, the film *Golden Gate* was released, which depicts the persecution of Chinese Americans by the FBI during the Joseph McCarthy Era of the 1950s, when they were suspected of having ties to the communist revolution in China. FBI agent Kevin Walker

investigates laundryman Chen Jung Song, who has collected and sent funds to his friends' poor relatives in China. Song has been in prison for 10 years before committing suicide. Agent Walker, in disguise, courts Song's daughter, who is a law student trying to clear her father's name. The play *Golden Gate* largely demonstrates the question of allegiance. Hwang may be suggesting that the extent of minority people's otherness remains difficult to prove to the satisfaction of those in authority.

In 1996 Hwang's *Golden Child* opened at the Joseph Papp Public Theatre in New York, concerning the struggle between values of traditional Confucianism and Christianity confronted in a family in 1918 China. The play won an Obie Award in 1997 and gave Hwang his second Tony nomination. *Golden Child* is inspired by the stories that Hwang's grandmother told him of his great-grandfather's break with Confucian tradition through his conversion to Christianity. The play focuses on Eng Tieng-Bin, a young Chinese businessman and his three wives: the scornful first wife Eng Siu-Yong, the scheming second wife Eng Luan, and the beautiful third wife Eng Eling. After Eng Tieng-Bin has stayed in the capitalistic Philippines for three years, he comes under the influence of a Welsh missionary, is attracted to Christianity, and thus is determined to become a Christian. The missionary tells Eng Tieng-Bin's three wives that according to Christianity, one man marries just one wife, which means the other two must persuade their husband to convert to Christianity and stay married to only one wife, thus triggering a power struggle between the three wives. The story is told in flashback by Ahn, the golden child of the title, who, as a 10-year-old, witnesses this power struggle in the household. The first wife, proud and old-fashioned, is not so flexible. Being addicted to opium, she is a rather tragic figure yet is smart enough to realize the only way to maintain Ahn's status as Eng Tieng-Bin's favorite child is to let Ahn become a Christian. The second wife is a born opportunist, and thus embraces her husband's new idea. The third wife, madly in love with Eng, is romantic and amenable. Yet, at the end of the play, the power struggle leads to a near-tragic ending. Indeed, much of the play centers on the different meanings of Christianity for the members of this Eastern household. Christianity is attractive to Eng Tieng-Bin because it not only allows him to move ahead socially but to satisfy his yearning for independence. Becoming a Christian can free him from fulfilling filial obligation as he does, although he is torn between what he has seen and what he has been. His parents chose his first two wives for him, and he must hide his yearning for the third wife, his true love, so as not to offend the other two. Therefore, for Eng Tieng-Bin, Christianity is a gateway to a modern life and a way to get rid of ancestor worship. Yet, for the first wife, it is a dangerous threat to the order and stability of their household; for the middle wife, it is a wonderful opportunity to sweep away the other two wives; for the third wife, it is a mysterious force to be dealt with in ways that please her husband. Although it seems to be a power struggle among the three wives, it is indeed a clash between

Western and Eastern values. The characters in *Golden Child* find it especially difficult to give up their belief in ancestor worship and ancestral ghosts. In the play Hwang seems to suggest that modernization brings both fortunes—the eventual unbinding of Ahn’s feet, and misfortunes—the disorder and instability of the household. Following *Family Devotions* and *Rich Relations*, Christian fundamentalism appears again in *Golden Child*, but this time Hwang takes a more forgiving attitude toward it. According to Hwang, *Golden Child* is an antifundamentalist play in a larger sense, that is, against any belief system that casts things in black and white.

In 1996 Hwang collaborated with composer Bright Sheng on *The Silver River*, which was based on a Chinese legend and premiered at the Santa Fe Chamber Musical Festival in 1997. He also made a preliminary adaptation of Heinrich Harrer’s *Seven Years in Tibet*, although he was not the scriptwriter of record when the film was released in 1997. In 1998 the Trinity Repertory Company of Providence, Rhode Island, opened Hwang’s adaptation and abridgment of Henrik Ibsen’s *Peer Gynt*. Ibsen’s work was concerned with references specific to his culture, such as the internationalism of his time and attacks on the Swedish foreign minister. Yet Hwang’s version shows attempts on his part to interpret those references specific to his own times. He shortens Ibsen’s epic drama to two hours and adds many symbols. Hwang next collaborated with Linda Wolverton and Robert Falls in writing the book for the pop musical *Aida*, with music by Elton John and lyrics by Tim Rice. In 2001 Hwang’s overhauled version of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein’s *Flower Drum Song* premiered in Los Angeles, directed by James Longbottom. It was the musical’s first major revival since it opened in 1958. Hwang’s version of the play won him his third Tony nomination. Written by C.Y. Lee, the 1958 version of the play tells a story about a mail-order bride, Mei Li, who is going to marry a nightclub owner Sammy Fong, but Fong is already falling in love with a nightclub stripper Linda Low. However, in Hwang’s reversal of the story, the central theme becomes the tension between the older generation’s keeping the tradition and the younger generation’s desire to assimilate into American culture. Although the character of Sammy Fong disappears, Mei Li and Linda Low are retained, and Mei Li becomes a refugee from mainland China. The setting is a traditional Chinese theater that has staged Chinese operas but is being transformed by the owner’s son into a Western-style nightclub. The father, Master Wang, sticks to traditional Chinese culture, whereas his son Ta is obsessed with modern American culture.

In 2001 Hwang cowrote with Laura Jones and LaBute the screen adaptation of A.S. Byatt’s novel *Possession* and wrote the teleplay for the NBC miniseries *The Lost Empire*, directed by Peter MacDonald. He made his acting debut in the 2001 digital short film *Asian Pride Porn*, directed by Greg Pak. In 2004 Hwang adapted Peter Sis’s book to a children’s play *Tibet through the Red Box*, which tells the story of a 12-year-old boy Peter and his father, who is sent by the Russian government to film the Chinese

building a road into Tibet. During his three-year absence, Father and Peter try to connect across space and time. His father's letters from Tibet transport Peter's imagination on a magical journey to a land full of monks, lamas, and abominable snowmen. *Ainadamar*, directed by Peter Sellars, with music by Osvaldo Golijov, was produced by the Santa Fe Opera in 2005 and Lincoln Center in 2006. Hwang also wrote the book for the 2006 Disney Broadway musical *Tarzan*, with music and lyrics by Phil Collins. His newest play, *Yellow Face*, reportedly a reworking of his once failed Broadway experiment *Face Value*, premiered in 2007 at Los Angeles's Mark Taper Forum and New York's Public Theater. Hwang also wrote the texts for three dance pieces, Ruby Zhang's *Yellow Punk Dolls*, *Dances in Exile*, and Maureen Flemming's *After Eros*.

David Henry Hwang has been awarded numerous grants, including fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim and Rockefeller Foundations, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the Pew Charitable Trusts. He has been honored with awards from the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, the Association for Asian Pacific American Artists, the Museum of Chinese in the Americas, the East West Players, the Organization of Chinese Americans, the Media Action Network for Asian Americans, the Center for Migration Studies, the Asian American Resource Workshop, the China Institute, the New York Foundation for the Arts, Urban Stages, Asian Professional Extension, Second Generation Productions, the Asian American Federation of New York, the California State Legislature, the city of Houston, the Asian American Theatre Company, the Asia Society Washington Center, and the Cherry Lane Theatre. In 1994 Hwang was appointed by President Bill Clinton to the president's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. In 1998 the nation's oldest Asian American theater company, the East West Players, christened its new main stage the David Henry Hwang Theatre. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Assimilation/Americanization.

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JUN LU

## ◆ HYBRIDITY

Hybridity describes a duality or dichotomy created by a welding together of two disparate, often diametrically opposite, or otherwise unconnected parts. Building on scientific concepts and terminologies of biological hybridity—the result of cross-fertilization in plants, crossbreeding in animals, and, by extension, the interchange or amalgamation of different ethnicities or cultures—social sciences and literary studies have reconceptualized the condition of the hybrid to refer to various forms of combinations in society and their changing manifestations. We can therefore distinguish between biological (including racial or ethnic) hybridity, cultural hybridity, and the hybridity of literary genres. The latter is significantly interlinked with the awareness of a hybrid condition in their representations in literature and culture.

As a concept, hybridity developed out of the natural sciences as they emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In his writings on hereditary traits and lineage, Charles Darwin contributed much to what Victorian science came to conceptualize as a theory of race or racialism. It was a central and controversial issue in the development of both biological and social sciences, closely interlinked with theorizations and representations of other cultures or ethnicities. Taken up by colonial discourse analysis and postcolonial studies, the concept of a hybrid nation, culture, or individual, resulting from the effects of colonization and later the neoimperialism of globalization has created a discourse on cultural hybridity that seeks to divorce it from the negative associations inherent in racial theory.

The ongoing reconceptualization of hybridity as a concept, in fact, encapsulates larger shifts in the understanding, usage, and evaluation of different hybrid conditions. The seminal discussion of its history and shifting definition is Robert J.C. Young's *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (1995). He discusses the impact of nineteenth-century racial science on contemporary reactions to ethnicity, including the similarly changing understanding of diaspora. He further links the expanding range of hybridities, now often evoked in the plural as well, to Mikhail Bakhtin's conceptualization of linguistic hybridity. It is the foundation of literary concepts that poses a hybridity of and within genres. In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin defines *hybridization* as "a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance" (1981, 358).

The main significance of this idea of hybridity is its positive evaluation as intentional or organic. If ethnic hybridity had been a highly problematic issue in the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century and early postcolonial writing built on and to an extent further consolidated this understanding, Bakhtin's emphasis on the productive aspects of hybridization became transformed by Homi Bhabha into a mode of resistance against dominant cultural powers. Such an adaptation of racial and linguistic hybridity to constitute a cultural concept capitalizes on the recognition of the connection between colonizer and colonized, in terms of identity formation, as a reciprocal if unequal site of exchange. To criticize the hegemony of nationalism, in itself a legacy of the nineteenth century, interconnected with nationalism as well, Bhabha has further underlined the conceptual indeterminacy of the nation itself. In direct counterpoint to Benedict Anderson's influential *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983), Bhabha rejects the idea of the "imagined community" created through the print media, especially as a hegemonizing structure that is necessarily productive or unifying. In that it works through exclusion, Bhabha stresses in his introduction to *Nation and Narration* that those who cannot be contained "articulate the death-in-life of the idea of the 'imagined community' of the nation" (1990, 315). Although particularly pertinent with reference to postcolonial nation-states, this critique has proven immensely useful and popular in the reappraisal of discourses on diaspora and minority cultures. Although central to the discussion of intermarriage across ethnic groups, the formation of multiculturalism, and the problem of the hybrid as an embodiment of this cultural interchange in globalization, cultural hybridity has been further extended to describe the experience of the globalized individual.

This conceptualization has become so prevalent that it has come under increasing critique. It is seen as symptomatic of a structural crisis caused by a globalizing consumerism and its shaping of the multicultural imaginary. In *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalisation, Deterritorialisation and Hybridity* (1995), Nikos Papastergiadis pointedly speaks of hybridity's function as a "multi-purpose globalising identity kit" (2000, 169) in social, political, and cultural discourse. In this context, hybridity has been accused of obfuscating the power of neoimperialism. In *Beyond Postcolonial Theory* (1998), E. San Juan Jr. includes it among the terms that have ironically helped to obscure instead of clarify discourses on cultural diversity, ethnic minority groups, and diasporic self-representation beyond the confines of the postcolonial. He further traces its exploitation in the "now fashionable celebration of U.S. cultural diversity" and its commodification (134). More recently, discussions of hybridity in Asian American cultural representations have been strengthened by analyses of similar diasporic cultures. The work of Ien Ang on both **Asian American** and Asian Australian literature has been of particular importance in emphasizing the growing diversity of



such diasporic or hybrid experience and its cultural formations on a global scale. Such reassessments, however, have begun to absorb hybridity in discussions of multiculturalism, its potentials, and its problems at large. **See also** Asian Diasporas; Multiculturalism and Asian America.

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TAMARA S. WAGNER

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# I



## ◆ IKO, MOMOKO (1940–)

Momoko Iko is a Japanese American playwright, poet, essayist, and teacher. With Wakako Yamauchi, Iko was a pioneer, part of the first wave of Japanese American playwrights. Her best known work, *Gold Watch* (1972) was the first play written by a Japanese American woman produced in the continental United States and, like Yamauchi's better known *And the Soul Shall Dance*, was broadcast by PBS. In a series of powerful and provocative dramas, Iko explores the devastating effect of racism and the internment on Japanese immigrants and their descendents.

Iko's background provided her with models and material. Iko was born to Kyokuo and Natsuko Iko in Wapato, Washington. Critic Stephen Sumida has noted that this area was settled by Japanese immigrants who moved from Seattle and Tacoma to rent farmland on the Yakima Indian Reservation, which was under federal jurisdiction, to circumvent state antialien land laws and to establish the first North American senryu (a Japanese satiric poetic form) club in the early 1900s (2001, 214–215). In 1942 Iko's family was evacuated, first to the Portland Assembly Center and then to Heart Mountain Relocation Center in Wyoming. After **World War II**, the family moved to New Jersey as migrant workers but eventually settled in Chicago, where their house became a center for the Japanese American community.

Iko started writing personal essays and fiction in college, first at Northern Illinois University and then at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, graduating with honors in 1961. She also studied at the Instituto Allende in Mexico and the University of Iowa's Writers' Workshop, later recording her struggle to become a writer and the influence of her mother and of writer Nelson Algren in an autobiographical essay

"A Memorial Service Is Not a Story" (1986). Seeing a production of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* provoked Iko's realization of both "the political potential of the theater" and "the parallel characters and situations from Japanese American life" (Uno 1993, 106), but it was some time before a notice about a playwriting contest sponsored by the East West Players prompted Iko to write *Gold Watch*, using material from an unpublished novel whose main characters were loosely based on her parents. It shared the contest's 1970 top prize with Frank **Chin's** *Chickencoop Chinaman*, although conflicts with their landlord kept the East West Players from producing either play as planned. Instead *Gold Watch* was produced in 1972 at the Inner City Cultural Center in Los Angeles. The 1976 PBS television production directed by Lloyd Richards was also accepted by the Monte Carlo International Television Festival in 1977, giving *Gold Watch* national and international exposure.

A powerful drama, *Gold Watch* covers the fall of 1941 through **Pearl Harbor** to late spring of 1942, just before the evacuation of a Japanese American farming community in the Pacific Northwest. The protagonist Masu Murakami is an independent but poor truck farmer, living crop to crop on credit. Much of that credit has been extended by fellow Japanese immigrant Tanaka, who runs the Japanese grocery and dry goods store in town. Tanaka appreciates Masu and being in the United States because in Japan neither their friendship nor his success would have been possible because of his family's low status. Masu came from a better family but became the black sheep when he decided to stop studying to be a Buddhist monk. Sent to live with an uncle in Hawaii, he had eventually worked his way to Washington. Having suffered his family's disapproval, Masu values American freedom and egalitarianism, despite his poverty and the prejudice of the white community in town. The initial conflict in the play revolves around Masu's unwillingness to allow his American-born and Americanized son Tadao to buy the football shoes he fervently desires. After Pearl Harbor, the father-son conflict becomes more serious as Tadao, influenced by Tanaka's kibe (born in the United States but educated in Japan) son Hiroshi and stung by the increasing verbal and physical assaults he and others in the community have had to endure, vehemently argues that they should return to Japan while Masu adamantly refuses. In a Christmas conversation, Masu tells Tadao about the life experiences that have shaped his attitudes but also expresses his understanding of Tadao's bitterness at feeling rejected by his own country. The first act ends with Masu writing a letter apologizing to Tadao about the football shoes and giving him the gold watch he had bought in a pawnshop when he first came to the United States. The second act jumps to the spring of 1942 amid reports of increased violence against the Japanese community and arguments about the community's appropriate response to the evacuation order. Masu is incensed that the government has reneged on a promise that the farmers would be able to harvest their crops and is mistrustful of promises of protection for any property left

behind. Masu's position leads to a fight not only with Tanaka and the minister, who have urged cooperation, but also with his wife Kimiko, who is resigned and practical, and a rupture with Tadao, who still wants to return to Japan. The day before the evacuation is to take place, Kimiko tries to repair Tadao's relationship with Masu, but Tadao remains angry. Their farm is attacked by white night riders, who try to break into their shed. Masu is killed defending his property, although Tadao comes to his defense, fighting off the night riders who flee when Tadao gets one of their guns. Tadao takes the gold watch, which he had earlier given back to Masu, and walks away while Kimiko holds Masu's body, crying *okinasai* (wake up).

*Gold Watch* is riveting drama; it is also thematically unusual. Although, like better known works such as Yamauchi's *And the Soul Shall Dance* and Hisaye Yamamoto's "Seventeen Syllables," it is a family drama showing *issei-nisei* intergenerational conflict and the hardships of immigrant farm life, it is more explicitly political, directly addressing white racism and the evacuation. We also get glimpses of a wider cross section of the immigrant community, giving a fuller picture of prewar Japanese American life and allowing Iko to present a greater range of attitudes toward Japan and immigration and toward the United States and the evacuation order. This contributes to one of the most striking elements in the play: the reversal of the usual generational attitudes, as it is the younger generation that is nostalgic for Japan and the older generation who rejects Japanese ideas of *filial piety* and hierarchy and embraces the American ideals of freedom and individualism.

Although *Gold Watch* is her only readily available play, Iko continues writing, exploring important subjects with a sharp eye and breaking new ground. *When We Were Young* (1974) inspired Yamauchi to adapt her short story into the play *And the Soul Shall Dance*, launching her playwriting career. *Second City Flat* was produced at the Inner City Cultural Center in Los Angeles in 1978. *Hollywood Mirrors* (1978), a spoof on Asian stereotypes, was the Asian American Theater Workshop's first musical. *Flowers and Household Gods* (1981) traces the distorting and often devastating effects of the internment on three generations of a Japanese American family—the broken dreams, alcoholism, and embitterment that resulted directly from the internment and the emptiness of assimilation to which others have turned to achieve a superficial success. In *Boutique Living and Disposable Icons* (1988), Iko satirically continues her examination of identity, assimilation, and racism.

Although primarily known as a playwright, Iko has worked in other forms and venues. Working in Chicago for the Japanese American Service Committee, she wrote and produced several films: *Social Services: Seeking a Human Dimension* (1975), *Issei: A Quality for Survival* (1975), *Values and Attitudes I, II, III* (1975), and *Whatever Will Be* (1981). She has been a teacher and visiting scholar in Chicago and Los Angeles. In addition to the autobiographical essay "A Memorial Service Is Not a Story" on her

struggles to become a writer, Iko has also published a long autobiographical prose poem "And There Are Stories, There Are Stories" (1977), examining race in her parents' lives and her own. These last two works are enlivened by her conversational style, jazzy street language, and blunt honesty.

*Gold Watch* remains the only play that has received much critical attention; critical comments on Iko's later plays have been mainly in reviews. Iko has received awards from the East West Players, the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Zellerbach Foundation but remains understudied for such an important pioneer in Asian American drama. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Assimilation/Americanization; Japanese American Internment; Racism and Asian America.

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FLORENCE AMAMOTO

### ◆ INADA, LAWSON FUSAO (1938–)

Lawson Fusao Inada is a Japanese American poet, literary critic, and professor emeritus of English at Southern Oregon University. As a **sansei** (a U.S.-born third-generation Japanese American), Inada was born in Fresno, California, in 1938. His grandparents were sharecroppers, and his maternal grandparents ran the Fresno Fish Store. Inada's father became a dentist before **World War II**. In May 1942, when he was only four years old, his family, together with other Japanese American families, were confined in concentration camps, because "aliens"—those of Japanese ancestry—were not considered trustworthy and/or loyal to the United States after the Japanese bombing of **Pearl Harbor** in Hawaii. His family was moved several times during the concentration, from the Fresno County Fairgrounds to a concentration camp in Arkansas and then to a camp in Colorado. After the war, he finished high school in Fresno, living in a poor neighborhood of Japanese Americans, blacks, Chinese Americans, Armenians, Filipinos, Chicanos, and Okies, where he began to develop a fascination with the rhythm of jazz because of the influence of his Chicano and black

friends. He entered the University of California at Berkeley, where he spent most of his time listening to jazz, which later became the greatest influence for his poetry-writing career. After graduating from Fresno State University, Inada earned an MFA from the University of Oregon. At the same time he joined the black and Chicano set to play bass and started to study jazz, following jazz musicians such as Miles Davis, Coltrane, and Billy Holiday. Phil Levine introduced him to writing when he returned to Fresno. He went to the University of Iowa to study writing, and in 1966 he moved to Ashland, Oregon, where he lives with wife and two sons and has taught writing at Southern Oregon College ever since. He has also taught at various other universities—the University of New Hampshire, Lewis and Clark College, Eastern Oregon State College, Wayne State University.

According to Chinese American novelist and critic Shawn **Wong**, Inada rose to prominence in Asian American poetry almost by accident. He was discovered from a picture by Frank **Chin** and Jeffery Paul **Chan** when they were looking for Japanese American poets. Afterward the four of them became the celebrated “Gang of Four” in the circle of Asian American literature and collaborated in two groundbreaking anthologies of Asian American literature. In 1971 Lawson published his first book of poetry, *Before the Wars: Poems as They Happened*, which was the first Asian American book of poetry written by a single author. The significance about the collection is that this group of jazz poems was published by a major New York publishing house, which was a rare occurrence in the 1970s. In 1992 he published his second collection *Legends from Camp: Poems*, which was based on his experience in the concentration camp as a Japanese American during World War II. It is again considered a pioneering work in Asian American literature. The personal, idiosyncratic poems reflect on the complex identity of Japanese Americans. In 1997 he published another rich and varied collection, *Drawing the Line: Poems*, which is about the Japanese Americans who refused to go to the internment during World War II. *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience* (2000), an anthology of writing, artwork, original documents, and propaganda that he edited, reveals what evoked the internment camps in World War II.

Some of Inada’s works are very highly acclaimed. After being named Oregon State Poet of the Year in 1991, for instance, he won an American Book Award in 1994 with his second collection, *Legends from Camp: Poems*. Apart from reading his poems at various festivals, community functions, and colleges all over the country, Inada is also one of the 21 poets honored at the White House to read his poems for a Salute to Poetry and American Poets. Often, he performs his poetry in concerts with the accompaniment of various musicians. Live performance, among other things, is his favorite form of publishing. Because of his influence, Leslie Marmon Silko, the distinguished Native American writer, has claimed that he is “a poet-musician in the tradition of Walt

Whitman and James A. Wright" (qtd. in Lauter, Yarrow, and Raymond Paredes 2005, 791). In 1994 Inada won the honor of Guggenheim Fellow in poetry. He is also the winner of the Pushcart Prize. In 1997 Inada received the Oregon Governor's Art Award and two National Endowment of the Arts Poetry Fellowships. Being considered by many the father of Asian American poetry, he was designated the fifth poet laureate of Oregon (2006–2008) in August 2006. He is also the Steinbeck Chair at the National Steinbeck Center in Salinas, California. So far, Inada's poems have been published widely in anthologies, magazines, and newspapers.

As some critics have pointed out, Inada is a significant figure in Asian American poetry and literature for both historical and aesthetic reasons. In 1974 he met three Chinese American writers and critics—Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, and Shawn Wong. Together they edited the first groundbreaking Asian American anthology, *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers*, which is an endeavor to uncover long forgotten works written by earlier Asian American writers. They introduced the then invisible writers to mainstream American readers for the first time in the history of American literature. Inada himself discovered many Japanese North American writers, some of whom, such as Toshio Mori, John Okada, Hisaye Yamamoto, and Joy Kogawa, have become influential Japanese American and Canadian writers in North American literature today. These authors would inspire and mentor many new Asian American writers in the years to come. Inada in particular has made a significant contribution through creating a colorful part of Japanese American poetry in the tapestry of multicultural American literature. In 1991 the so called Gang of Four collaborated for the second time and edited their second anthology, *The Big Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature*, an expanded version of *Aiiieeeee!*. Both of these anthologies have become fundamentally important books in Asian American literature and history, and they have served as rich and indispensable research materials for scholars and students alike in the field of Asian American literature and **Asian American studies**.

Apart from the two landmark anthologies, Inada has also collaborated with other authors in collections of literary writing, such as *The Buddha Bandits Down Highway 99: Poetry* (1978), a collection of prose and lyric poems coedited with Garrett Hongo and Alan Lau, and *In This Great Land of Freedom: The Japanese Pioneers of Oregon*, Los Angeles, Japanese American National Museums (1993), coedited with Mary Worthington. Inada has also published numerous critical essays, including a book chapter "Of Place and Displacement: The Range of Japanese American Literature" in *Three American Literatures: Essays in Chicano, Native American, and Asian American Literatures for Teachers of American Literature* (1982), "Introduction to Yokohama" for the novel written by Toshio Mori (1985), "Introduction to *No-No Boy*" for the only novel written by John Okada, and "Introduction to *Unfinished Message: Selected Works of Toshio*



*Mori*" (2000), for a compilation of stories and letters written by Toshio Mori. These critical essays introduce originally unknown Japanese American authors to American readers, and these collections have become fundamental research materials for later generations of Asian American writers and scholars.

In most of Inada's poems, displacement and loss of identity are major themes and concerns. In some pieces he writes about the loss of the name and the experience of being taken to another time and place. The trauma that the Japanese Americans experienced in the internment during the war has left them a wound that can hardly heal. Some scholars have compared his treatment of the Japanese traumatic experience with that portrayed in the Jewish writing about the Holocaust. In one of his poems in *Legends from Camp*—"Legends of Lost Boy," he presents a boy whose house, street, trees, dog, food, and even his name are taken away, and who first follows a water truck in the street but then is totally lost. Inada's use of metaphor and analogy in the poem is effective in conveying the sense of loss for the Japanese American community. Finally it is the boy's reconnection to the community of other Japanese people that makes him realize that "he was found." The traumatic experience in the camps has retribalized the Japanese Americans in the sense that it brings all Japanese Americans together. As it has later turned out, the internment camps became extremely significant designations and distinctions that are even more important than one's name for the Japanese Americans who shared the same experience. "Which camps were you in?" has become the first question people ask each other when they meet. It is so pivotally important that sometimes they recognize each other simply by following that code—the name of the camp.

Literary scholars have studied the aesthetic value of Inada's poetry from different perspectives. Among them, some scholars have discussed his prosody, the sophisticated rhythms and musical structure of his poetry, especially the relationship between jazz and his writing. Other scholars have compared the musicality of his poetry to that of Whitman. For instance, in Juliana Chang's essay "Time, Jazz, and the Racial Subject: Lawson Inada's Jazz Poetics," she expounds "the jazz poetics that work to redress the pain of the racial trauma" (Chang 2001, 134–154). Inada's poetry suggests that there is more than one way to tell a given story, and that many stories are embedded within a given story or within what we know as history. This antiessentialist multiple sense of time challenges the standard notion of time or history that is equally important for all subjects. Many of Inada's poems reshape time as multilayered and variable. One can hear the echo of history through repetition in many lines of his poems. This is "the repetition with a difference" according to Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (qtd. in Chang 2001, 153) and a nonlinear, nonteleological aesthetics of change. Chang finds that Inada's jazz poetics of repetition and improvisation evokes the troubled past, and his poetics of syncopation enact the rhythm and status of the racially marginalized subject as one outside standard national historic time, knowledge, and race. In jazz, one may hear the sounds of

freedom—for the music has been a powerful voice for people suffering unfair treatment because of the color of their skin or because of other political or social reasons. It makes something familiar into something fresh—like a familiar song, and something shared into something personal—like a tune everybody knows. Jazz developed in the United States in the very early part of the twentieth century in New Orleans, near the mouth of the Mississippi River. The population in that city was more diverse than anywhere else in the South, and people of African, French, Caribbean, Italian, German, Mexican, American Indian, and English descent all interacted with one another. African American musical traditions mixed with others, and gradually jazz emerged from a blend of ragtime, marches, blues, and other kinds of music. It is in this mixed music that Inada found the soul and spirit that effectively expresses the content of his poetry.

Jazz undoubtedly has become the perfect form that provides the Japanese American poet with a way to articulate and rethink the painful past of Japanese Americans in the United States. Inada emphasizes that in jazz, “music speaks for itself” (qtd. in Chang 2001, 154). For Inada, music is not only the form but also the content. The relationship between music and writing is reciprocal and mutually beneficial in his poetry. Music works like a lingua franca in the minority community. It is a tradition, a legacy, an enduring philosophy of adaptability, ingenuity, and creation; of humor, wisdom, and resourcefulness; of individuality and collectivity; of power and empowerment; of the strength and beauty of human spirit. He considers his jazz poetry, which is usually written with a revolutionary edge, as a tribute to jazz musicians and singers. *Before the War*, for instance, starts with tributes to musicians like Charlie Parker, Lester Young, Louis Armstrong, and Billy Holiday, and it ends with poems written for Miles Davis and Charlie Mingus.

Cultural influence is another focal point in the study of his poetry, for Inada thinks that to understand the meaning and impact of the internment camps, Japanese culture must be understood. In Inada’s poetry, one can easily recognize the influence of haiku, a short Japanese poetic form, which represents the condensed and delicate way the Japanese people express themselves. This structure leaves the poem open for the reader to complete and creates an open space that the reader is supposed to enter into. The two-part structure can also make the reading into the discovery of something hidden that suddenly becomes clear. It depends mainly on intuition and strict discipline of structure, content, restraint, and subtlety. Pieces like “Listening Images” are poems of this type. The particular way of articulation helps the poet to express the subtle dilemma and confusion of the in-between state for the Japanese Americans, who are neither complete Japanese nor complete Americans.

Besides Japanese culture, Western culture, or culture from other parts of the world, has also had an impact on the poet. Readers can hear the echo of philosophers and writers from all ages and places in his words, for instance, Franz Kafka, Rainer Maria Rilke,

Francisco Garcia Lorca, Pablo Neruda, and some ancient Chinese poets. As a student of Buddhism, Inada finds the poetry of Chogyam Trungpa and Thich Nhat Hanh to be inspiring. This type of hybrid writing is original and revolutionary mainly because it is the concoction of Eastern and Western thinking and culture. Critics have done research on Inada's use of the rhetorical devices, such as his use of repetition, metaphor, simile, irony, symbolism, analogy, and allusion, which play a significant role in Inada's poetry. Just as his friend Shawn Wong once said, "If there were such a position as Poet Laureate of Asian America, Inada would be unanimously elected to the post" (<http://californiawriter.blogspot.com/2006/03/lawson-inada-starts-renaissance.html>).

Inada's achievements aforementioned have proved that he is the best qualified person for that position.

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WEI LU

### ◆ INDIAN AMERICAN ANTHOLOGY

To some extent, the field of **Indian American literature** has been forged by literary and critical anthologies—collections of multiple genres and with multiple contributors—published within the last 15 years. These include *Our Feet Walk the Sky: Women of the South Asian Diaspora* (1993), *A Lotus of Another Color: An Unfolding of the South Asian*

*Gay and Lesbian Experience* (1993), *Living in America: Poetry and Fiction by South Asian American Writers* (1995), *Contours of the Heart: South Asians Map North America* (1996), *Between the Lines: South Asians and Postcoloniality* (1996), *A Part, Yet Apart: South Asians in Asian America* (1998), and *Bolo! Bolo! A Collection of Writing by Second Generation South Asians Living in North America* (2000). However, the terms *Indian American* and *South Asian American* are often conflated. Most anthologies use the former term but usually acknowledge the preponderance of Indian American contributors and texts due to their dominant numbers relative to immigrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and other South Asian nations.

As Rajini Srikanth and Shankar argued in the critical anthology *A Part, Yet Apart: South Asians in Asian America* (1998), even though a small group of Indian (and other South Asian) Americans had immigrated to the United States since the late nineteenth century and larger groups since the Immigration Reform Act of 1965, Indian American literature—with the exception of Bharati Mukherjee's works—had not been readily welcomed into **Asian American studies**, a field traditionally comprised of Chinese and Japanese Americans. Thus, throughout the 1990s, Indian American writers and scholars chose to represent themselves by editing numerous literary and critical anthologies. These anthologies were often collaborations between two individuals or small groups, many of whom were not yet well established scholars.

Since the late 1980s, the quantity and variety of Indian American literature written, published, awarded international prizes, and taught in the university curriculum has increased dramatically. The mid-1990s witnessed a simultaneous explosion of these writings and a steadily growing reading public comprised of post-1965 second-generation South Asian Americans entering colleges and universities who sought self-representation in ethnic studies courses. This mirrors the trend among other marginal Asian American groups to produce literary anthologies to represent themselves such as *Flippin': Filipinos on America* (1996), *Watermark: Vietnamese American Poetry and Prose* (1998), *Tilting the Continent: Southeast Asian American Writing* (2000), and *Babaylan: An Anthology of Filipina and Filipino American Writers* (2001). In goals and style, the Indian American anthologies also follow the path of earlier, broader multi-genre and multiethnic based Asian American anthologies such as *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers* (1974), *The Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology* (1988), *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writings by and about Asian American Women* (1989), *Home to Stay: Asian American Women's Fiction* (1990), *Charlie Chan Is Dead: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Fiction* (1993), and *Asian-American Literature: An Anthology* (2000), among others.

Emmanuel Nelson's critical anthology, *Reworlding: The Literature of the Indian Diaspora* (1992), situated Indian American and Indian Canadian writers within the global diasporic context of Indian writers in the South Pacific, Caribbean, Singapore, United

Kingdom, United States, Canada, and Africa. Although the book's title refers to the Indian diaspora, the essays include early discussions of a larger group of South Asians in North America—Pakistani American Sara **Suleri**, Sri Lankan Canadian Michael **Ondaatje**, Indian American Ved **Mehta**, and Indian Canadian Rohinton **Mistry**. C.L. Chua's essay compares Bharati Mukherjee and V.S. Naipaul and examines Mukherjee's evolution as an American artist in the tradition of Henry Roth, Isaac Singer, and Bernard Malamud.

The pioneering work of undergraduates at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1991 led to the publication of the first South Asian American literary anthology, *Our Feet Walk the Sky: Women of the South Asian Diaspora* (1993). This collection of short fiction, poems, and personal and critical essays was edited by the Women of South Asian Descent Collective and published by a small independent press, Aunt Lute Books, in San Francisco. It was organized thematically rather than by genre or ethnic differences among the various South Asian groups represented. Descriptive section titles range from "Lighting the Fire beneath Our Homes" and "The Fear That Comes from Their Eyes," to "She Will Not Be Shamed," and "My Feet Found Home." It includes an especially wide range of voices—both first-time published authors for whom writing in English was a challenge and second-generation Americans whose native language is American English. It also includes writers who were still unknown—such as Gaurangi Kamani—later known as Ginu Kamani, whose stories "Maria" and "Waxing the Thing" were subsequently published in her own short story collection *Jungle Girl* (1995). Similarly, now well-known academics have their early works included in this anthology: Chandra Talpade Mohanty's essay, "Defining Genealogies: Feminist Reflections on Being South Asian in North America," and Inderpal Grewal's "Reading and Writing the South Asian Diaspora: Feminism and Nationalism in North America," which have since been much cited and reproduced.

Rakesh Ratti's *A Lotus of Another Color: An Unfolding of the South Asian Gay and Lesbian Experience* (1993) includes poems, essays, autobiographical and semiautobiographical stories, and interviews by gay and lesbian South Asians in the United States and elsewhere. It also contains a glossary of South Asian terms, a glossary of gay terms, and a directory of resources for South Asian lesbians and gays.

These anthologies were followed by Roshni Rustomji-Kerns's *Living in America: Poetry and Fiction by South Asian American Writers* (1995), and the Before Columbus Award-winning literary anthology *Contours of the Heart: South Asians Map North America* (1996), edited by Sunaina Maira and Rajini Srikanth. The latter simultaneously recognizes itself as "a South Asian anthology," "expected to focus on the experiences of being South Asian" (xix) and contests simple labels by including varied voices from writers of different backgrounds, representing a wide range of often contradictory experiences. It is a collection of both original and reprinted personal and

academic essays, short stories, poetry, interviews, and photographs, including those by well-known writers such as Meena Alexander, Chitra Divakaruni, Shani Mootoo, Bapsi Sidhwa, and Agha Shahid Ali, among others. The foreword by physician memoirist Abraham Verghese and the afterword by historian Sucheta Mazumdar provide valuable insights on the emerging South Asian populations in the United States and Canada in the mid-1990s.

Deepika Bahri and Mary Vasudeva's critical anthology *Between the Lines: South Asians and Postcoloniality* (1996) focuses on South Asian and South Asian American writing in the early 1990s. Although it highlights the postcolonial—and not necessarily the Asian American—aspects of South Asian identities, it includes some essays and interviews (such as with Meena Alexander and Gayatri Spivak) that deal with conflicted and overlapping terms—*South Asian*, *postcolonial*, and *Asian American*. It has thus laid the groundwork for future studies of South Asians within both global and American contexts.

Almost concurrently, the multidisciplinary anthology of critical essays *A Part, Yet Apart: South Asians in Asian America* challenges the field of Asian American literary studies to include South Asians within its canons, established on the earlier nationalistic definitions of Asian American literature as provided by Frank Chin et al.'s *Äiiiiiiie! An Anthology of Asian American Literature* (1974). Although critical anthologies such as Nelson's and Bahri and Vasudeva's had brought attention to some Indian American literature, *A Part, Yet Apart* was the first collection of varied opinions from scholars, students, and community activists attempting to situate the South Asian American presence within the well established Asian American literary and sociocultural frameworks. The introduction "Closing the Gap? South Asians Challenge Asian American Studies" provides an overview of South Asian American immigration history and literary development and challenges the exclusion of South Asian American literature from the Asian American canon despite their expanding literary output. Literary analyses include Ruth Hsiao's essay "A World Apart: South Asian Americans and Diaspora" about writers such as Bharati Mukherjee, Michael Ondaatje, and Abraham Verghese, and Samir Dayal's essay on Meena Alexander's 1993 memoir *Fault Lines*. Lavina Shankar's essay "The Limits of (South Asian) Names and Labels: Postcolonial or Asian American?" theorizes the complexities of South Asians' evolving names and categorizations by examining the self-presentation of the two best known Indian American literary figures: Bharati Mukherjee and Gayatri Spivak.

Recent anthologies include *Bolo! Bolo! A Collection of Writings by Second Generation South Asians Living in North America* (2000). The editors of this collection of stories, poems, and essays made it their goal to explore and celebrate storytelling about communal South Asian immigrant histories and identities. First-time writers appear

alongside established ones. Essay titles include Debjani Mukherjee's "The Other in My Space: South Asian American Women Negotiating Hyphenated Identities" and Jyoti Sehgal's "Seeking an Identity." The challenge of finding publishers for literature by unknown authors continues. Thus, like several early anthologies edited and funded by collectives and published by nonacademic presses, this was edited by the Kitchen Table Collective and funded privately by the South Asian Professionals' Networking Association, Canada.

The 1990s thus witnessed an explosion of both literary and critical Indian American (and South Asian American) anthologies. Most were multidisciplinary, multigenre, and included diverse voices from both scholarly and nonacademic communities. The proliferation of anthologies highlights a historic moment in the South Asian American community's self-definition through its burgeoning literary output and the analysis of their own immigration history and literature, within both a North American and a global diasporic context. **See also** *Àiiièèèèè!*; Asian American Studies; Asian Diasporas; Colonialism and Postcolonialism; Gay Male Literature; Lesbian Literature.

#### *Further Reading*

Bahri, Deepika, and Mary Vasudeva, eds. *Between the Lines: South Asians and Postcoloniality*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996.

Maira, Sunaina, and Rajini Srikanth, eds. *Contours of the Heart: South Asians Map North America*. New York: Asian American Writers' Workshop, 1996.

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

Shankar, Lavina D., and Rajini Srikanth, eds. *A Part, Yet Apart: South Asians in Asian America*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998.

LAVINA DHINGRA SHANKAR

### ◆ INDIAN AMERICAN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

An autobiography is the life story of a person told by him or her. Indian American autobiographies assume importance, for they are accounts of Indian immigrants' lives, written by the subjects themselves. These autobiographies have become valuable records of the Indian immigrants' lives and experiences in their native homeland, India, and their adopted homeland, the United States. An examination of these autobiographies reveals that their subjects immigrate to the United States because they consider it the land of promise, "the nearest thing to heaven on earth" (Shridharani 1939, 186), where they can attain happiness, something not possible under present

circumstances in their native land. However, even in the New World, they keep their cultural heritage, ways of life and mores, and their food habits and predilection for curries and spices. Common features of these autobiographies include the subjects' assertion of their humanity, their efforts to remove the common American misconceptions about India and Indians, and expression of their nostalgic remembrance of the love of their parents, especially that of the mother, family ceremonies, and celebrations. The typical American's picture of India had "little basis in reality," because to most Americans, "It [India] was a confused jumble of yogis, snake charmers, and maharajas" (Saund 1960, 39–40). As for Indian women, the prevalent view was that they were completely subservient to men and had no will of their own.

To this date, there are only eight published Indian American autobiographers, four men and four women. Although they know about America's history of racial discrimination and have experienced racial prejudice, they believe in the future of America as a country of racial equality, individual freedom, constitutional democracy, and equal justice. Since the practice of the art of autobiographical narrative flourishes in a democratic society that believes in the value of the individual, the United States provides the most fertile ground for it. As Karl Weintraub points out, autobiography "concerns a major component of modern man's self-conception: the belief that whatever else he [or she] is, he [or she] is a unique individuality, whose life task is to be true to his [or her] very own personality" (1982, xi). The Indian American men autobiographers include Dhan Gopal Mukerji, Krishnalal Shridharani, Dalip S. Saund, and Ved Mehta; the women autobiographers include Bharati Mukherjee, Lakshmi Gill, Meena Alexander, and Meheroo Jussawalla. We will discuss the autobiographical works of Indian American men first because they were written first, and then those of Indian women.

Among the Indian Americans, Dhan Gopal Mukerji (1890–1936) leads the way in the writing of autobiographies. *Caste and Outcast* (1923; reissued with a new introduction and afterword, 2002) is a pioneer work that tells of Mukerji's life to the age of 25. It is divided into two parts, namely, "Caste" and "Outcast." In the first part, the author assumes the persona of a wise adult as he interprets the Indian (especially Hindu) culture, religion, and rituals for Western readers; in the second part, he adopts the persona of an innocent learner and uses a self-deprecating tone as he attempts to interpret the American culture from his experience in the United States. The author grows up in a Brahmin household, receives early religious instruction from his mother, receives initiation as a priest at the age of 14, wanders in quest of spiritual enlightenment for two years, and then comes home to attend the University of Calcutta. Finding little spiritual solace, at the age of 18 the author decides to go to Japan. He does not tell anybody about his date of departure except his mother, who tells him, "I think you will do very little when you go to Japan. The song is in the throat of the bird;



the bird will not find it by wandering in the sky" (2002, 136). True to his mother's prediction, he does not stay in Japan for long. Because he does not like the treatment of workers in the mill, he leaves for the United States. Arriving in the United States, he finds himself in the position of an outcast, because he cannot observe any of his Indian traditions. In the United States, the 19-year-old author studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

In the chapter titled "Initiation into America," Mukerji experiences culture shock, racial discrimination, and exploitation. Finding only menial jobs, he is compelled to live as a social outcast on the fringes of society and is exploited first by socialists, then by anarchists, thereafter by spiritualists. He also gets culture shock when he meets an American woman who asserts that she is a divorced woman, not a widow (164). As a student, he finds no "intellectual stimulus" in his university and thinks his fellow students apathetic and uninterested in questioning and probing their professors (147). Like the narrator in Filipino American Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart* (1946), Mukerji's authorial narrator suffers privation, racial discrimination and exploitation. But unlike Bulosan's narrator who never loses his "faith in America," Mukerji's arrives at a more balanced conclusion. "Both India and America are mad. India has been mad with peace and America is mad with restlessness. It is this madness that has drawn me to both. Europe is a poor fare for my hungry Hindu soul. I want the fecundity of America" (223). Mukerji seems to be advocating a syncretic approach to life, combining the best elements of both cultures.

The chief merit of Mukerji's *Caste and Outcast* lies in its exposition of Indian culture, spirituality, religion, and rituals. In Indian society, religion and culture are intertwined. Mukerji's father, who was a lawyer, was a well read man who lived through the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857. He told his children "strange tales" like those of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, and he sent Mukerji to a Scottish Presbyterian school. The son held his father on a high pedestal as if he were a god, but he had a more open and intimate relationship with his mother. As Mukerji's narrator puts it, "A Hindu woman's education initiates her into the primal wisdom of the race and trains her emotion through ritual" (2002, 66). The mother plays the central role in the religious and spiritual training of her children in Mukerji's autobiography. She teaches her children: "All religions are one. There have been prophets before, there will be prophets again, and prophets are here. You are your own prophet" (55). The author remembers the reaction of his mother when he brought home a picture of Jesus Christ given him by the teacher in the missionary school with the advice to get rid of false Hindu gods and worship Christ, the only true god. Instead of getting angry with his son, she put Christ's picture next to Vishnu's and exclaimed, "He who brings about a quarrel between God and God is a more dangerous sinner than he who causes war between man and man. God is one. We have given Him many names. Why should we

quarrel about names?" (53). The author explains that Hinduism is a practical religion in the sense that its main purpose is that "we should find friendship, love, and spirituality in our souls," and the main purpose of its rituals is to strengthen "the moral fibre of man" through continual drilling (51–52). As his mother described it, "Ritual is a flower-laden way by which you teach the young to be law-abiding" (52). The author learns that "there is a ritual for every hour of the day in India" (47). His mother used to recite to her children "from memory parts of the epics, the old religious tales of India" (49).

In the training of her daughters, the mother laid greater emphasis on symbolism. For example, she explained the importance of the wisdom god Ganesa's four hands to her daughters that they represent the four Vedas. When God was revealing the Vedas, he did it so fast that it took four hands to write them down. As a result of their mother's instruction, the narrator's little sister becomes well versed in the Hindu sacred books, and, when the narrator loses a piece of silver, his sister comforts him by quoting from the Upanishads: "We realize God by renouncing the things of the world" (Mukerji 2002, 53). Daughters are also given training in manners, such as how to walk and how to serve food (63). The author holds the view that "[a] man never interferes with a woman's sphere." In the household "her will is the law," pointing out that the wife in India is called "sahadharmini, meaning 'leader in spirituality' or 'companion of the soul'" (131). Additionally, the author describes the wedding ceremony of his brother's marriage, which includes the would-be couple's encircling the fire seven times and exchange of vows, and the role of the matchmaker in finding a suitable match. With the renewed interest in India in the twenty-first century, Dhan Gopal Mukerji's *Caste and Outcast* by virtue of its excellent interpretation of Indian culture and exposition of Indian immigrant experience in the first decades of the twentieth century will find new readers, assuring it a permanent niche in the literary history of Indian Americans. In the ultimate analysis, *Caste and Outcast* is an autobiography that promotes understanding and appreciation of Indian culture and people; it is also a bridge builder between India and the United States.

Another Indian lawyer's son, Krishnalal Shridharani (1911–1960) in *My India, My America* (1941), expounds the Hindu way of life, Indian struggle for freedom, Indian educational system, and Gandhi's satyagraha, using comparison as a method of analysis. He has described "the most intimate and the sacrosanct aspects of the character of his or her own people and another great people [Americans] whom I love and admire" (173). Whereas Dhan Gopal Mukerji is a Brahmin, who belonged to Bengal, Krishnalal Shridharani is a Vaishya, who came from Gujarat. Whereas Mukerji was almost penniless, Shridharani was awarded a scholarship by the maharajah of Bhavnagar for higher studies. Before he came to the United States in June 1934 as a student to attend Columbia University in New York, he was already a well-known

writer in Gujarati and had written both poems and plays. He was also an ardent nationalist who had studied in Gandhi's Gujarat Vidyapith and Tagore's Visva-Bharati and had taken part in Gandhi's famous Salt March to Dandi as one of the 60 members handpicked by Gandhi to protest the British government's salt monopoly in 1930. They were arrested and served time in Sabarmati Jail in Ahmedabad. Having lost his father at the early age of eight, Shridharani was raised by his mother and uncle. While he was a student at Dakshinamurti Boarding School, which he attended for seven years, a teacher who had lived in California aroused in him the desire to see the United States, "the Land of Liberty" (29), and his American teachers at Visva-Bharati University further stimulated him for further studies there. That dream came true when on his graduation from Visva-Bharati in 1934 the maharajah of Bhavnagar awarded him a scholarship to pursue advanced studies in the United States.

Shridharani points out that the newly arrived Indian immigrant experiences a culture shock as he or she has to exchange his or her "skytow culture" of the native country for the "rooftop culture" of America. He or she is required to adjust not only to "a new climactic and topographical environment," but he or she has to undergo "a process of mental adjustment" as well (1941, 155). He had to face the layman's erroneous impression that "all the natives of India have evil eyes and evil intentions," largely drawn from Hollywood and British movies such as *Drums*, *Gunga Din*, *Clive of India*, and *Lives of a Bengal Lancer* (52). At times, Shridharani was taken for a fortune-teller, a magician, or a freakish animal because of the turban he wore. He thus declares in unequivocal words: "Indians are not . . . Maharajahs, Swamis, fortunetellers, elephant boys, and snake charmers so often as the people like any others, plain flesh-and-blood creatures, with common likes and dislikes, with human charms and drawbacks" (108). He notices that a sari-clad Indian woman is sometimes taken for a gypsy.

Shridharani is a judicious interpreter of the Hindu philosophy, seeing both its strengths and weaknesses. He points out that Hindus believe that all life, not just human beings, is holy, as opposed to the Western view that is concerned only with human beings. Hindus are also inclined toward theoretical perfectionism, which is reflected in their decision-making. To illustrate, he relates the legend of King Harish Chandra who sold his wife, son, and himself to keep the promise he had made to God, who came to him as an undertaker. Hindu mythology tells the story of King Shivi, to whom a pigeon comes, seeking protection from the hawk. The hawk asserts its right over the pigeon, claiming the pigeon is its natural food and that a just king will give it over. However, the king refuses to surrender the suppliant pigeon to the hawk. He does not mind, however, giving the hawk his own flesh, equivalent to the weight of the pigeon. But the pigeon is in fact Agni, the god of fire, and it becomes so heavy that a few pieces of the king's flesh would not balance the scales, and he finally steps on the scales to make the ultimate sacrifice. Thereupon, the god Agni appears before the king,

blesses him, restores his body, and makes him whole again. Hinduism does not consider itself the sole way to God's realization, as it holds that "Truth . . . is one, but there are many approaches to it" (Shridharani 1941, 339). Also, unlike Christianity, it does not claim that Hindus have the exclusive rights to the Pearly Gates. When a liberal minister who had asked him to give a lecture on the Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy commented that Gandhi could not enter Heaven because he was a pagan, Shridharani responded that he could not agree with his host's view because "Gandhi's life had been the closest approximation of 'Christ's life'" (340). He added that if Gandhi were denied entry to Heaven, few of other mortals could be admitted.

Shridharani also makes interesting comments on the status of women in India. He refutes that the Indian woman is an oppressed creature by pointing out that she is "the ruler of the social life of her family and her community," "the guardian of the family prestige," trainer of her children in cultural values, family traditions, and social graces. He considers it wrong to assume that the Indian village woman is a mere "beast of burden" "because she works for the family, considering it her duty" (Shridharani 1941, 206–211). While most Indian women had been expressing their personalities through their work for home and family, they made their first appearance in public life as they participated in Gandhi's nonviolent satyagraha movement of the 1930s. However, Shridharani concedes that whereas the Americans and other Westerners emphasize women's individuality, Indians value women's motherhood. As a result, in the Indian society, the "woman's own needs and desires as a flesh-and-blood creature" (204) are often ignored at the altar of the family, limiting her to finding only vicarious pleasure in the achievements of her own family members.

Shridharani prefers the American education system to the Indian education system that the British instituted. The Indian system is governed by rote learning—"the tradition of textbook parrotry"—and as such it does not encourage wider readings into the subject matter (Shridharani 1941, 64–65). He finds fault with the Indian examination system. As he puts it, in India, examinations are given to "find out what the student does not know, while in America they are used to discover what he knows." He is all praise for the "unheralded" quiz because "it has kept me glued to my assignments throughout my years of study in America" (68). He also likes the American students' practice of working their way through college. In his opinion, "the idea of studying and working for a living at the same time" holds great attraction for him (73). Yet another feature of the American education system that impresses Shridharani is the "free discussion between professors and students," and "an equality of status" between teachers and students in "exchange of questions and answers and informal argument" (64). Lastly, he is impressed by the fact that American women were "really and vitally a part of the college and all its activities," while Indian women in the coeducational institutions "were still having difficulty raising their eyes above their sandals" (54).

A follower of Gandhi, Shridharani wrote his Columbia University PhD dissertation on Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence, which was published as *War without Violence: A Study of Gandhi's Method and Its Accomplishments* (1939). Adopting Gandhi's methods, Shridharani gives "A Blueprint of Bloodless Revolution" (282–297) in which he spells out the different steps to be followed in launching a successful satyagraha or nonviolent direct action movement. Satyagraha is an effective weapon because, as Gandhi puts it, "Even the most despotic government cannot stand except for the consent of the governed, which consent is often forcibly procured by the despot. Immediately the subject ceases to fear the despotic force, his power is gone" (293). In Shridharani's own words, "For the tyrant has the power to inflict what we lack strength to resist" (288). It is to be noted, however, that Shridharani insists that satyagraha is most effective when it "becomes a movement of the people," and he emphasizes it as "one of the methods and not as the method" (550).

In the epilogue to *My India, My America*, Shridharani expresses his faith in both the United States and the New India. He admires "the texture of the American character and the quality of the American culture" enough to believe that the hope of the world really lies in this country [America], the powerhouse of democracy." At the same time, he also sees a bright future for the renascent (independent) India as the "sanctuary of peace" (1941, 602).

The next Indian American autobiography to be considered is *Congressman from India* (1960), written by Dalip S. Saund (1899–1973), who had been a congressman from the 29th District from January 3, 1957 to January 3, 1963. Born in a Punjab village, Saund obtained his BA with honors in applied mathematics from Punjab University in 1919, and, in the summer of 1920, he came to the United States to study agriculture at the University of California at Berkeley. After majoring in agriculture for a year, he transferred to mathematics and completed two degrees in mathematics, a master's in 1922 and a PhD in 1924. Although he had initially come to the United States with the intent to return to India after completing his studies, he decided to become a farmer and make the United States his permanent home. He had to face heavy odds for lack of money and prejudice against Asians—especially people from India, China, and Japan. However, fired with the ambition of becoming a full-fledged member of American life, Saund did not lose hope and worked steadfastly to win citizenship eligibility for the Indians. He campaigned long and hard for the purpose, and his efforts bore fruit with the passage of the Luce-Celler Act in 1946, which allowed "Hindus," people of South Asian descent, to apply for citizenship. Saund applied for citizenship in 1949 and received it. After serving as a justice of peace for Westmoreland County from 1950 to 1955, Saund ran as a California Democrat for a seat in Congress and won the election. He was reelected twice, and during his second term as a congressman he wrote his autobiography.

Saund remembers the family values taught to him by his parents, relatives, and the village headman. He was taught to salute and bow his head before his elders, to listen to prayers sung by his father or mother, and to say his own prayers at bedtime (14). His family also taught him to give food and shelter to strangers and to feed teachers, preachers, and strangers. The village headman taught him not to use abusive and insulting language. When the village headman heard him cursing a classmate, he took him to a well and asked him to look into it and say something. He did as he was told and heard the well echo his words. The headman explained to him that he would hear his own words repeated to him in his dealings with people. His mother's parting words still rang in his ears: "Son, make friends everywhere and no enemies" (12).

While Saund was growing up, the movement for Indian independence was gaining momentum. Great Britain, having promised the people of India a measure of self-government at the end of World War I, not only reneged on this promise but also curbed civil liberties with the promulgation of the Rowlatt Acts. Under Gandhi's leadership Indian National Congress asked the people to defy the ban on peaceful assemblies. Saund was inspired by Gandhi's theory of passive resistance. Gandhi distinguished a passive resister from a coward by pointing out that while a coward "submits to force through fear," a passive resister "submits to force under protest" (1960, 28). Saund recalls being with Gandhi when faced with a demeaning order from a British officer. The officer had commanded that all Indians "passing through a certain alley, where an Englishwoman once had been assaulted," crawl on their bellies. Gandhi exclaimed that even though he weighed "less than a hundred pounds," no power on Earth could "make me crawl on my belly" (ibid).

Saund was equally inspired by Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, in which Lincoln defines democracy as the "government of the people, by the people, and for the people" (1960, 39) and Woodrow Wilson's speeches that the Indian newspapers carried during World War I. Woodrow Wilson's phrases, such as "make the world safe for democracy," "the war to end war," and "self determination for all peoples" (ibid) stirred Saund's heart and mind and aroused in him the desire to study in the United States. On his arrival in the United States, however, he found an atmosphere of intense prejudice against Asian people prevailing in California in the 1920s. At that time, Asians could not become citizens or own property or lease farm lands because California's Alien Land Act of 1917 debarred them (1960, 41). Even when he became a citizen, Saund had to face discrimination as he contested election for a judge in Westmoreland. One resident told Saund that he could not vote for him because he wanted an American to be the judge in Westmoreland. When asked by Saund whether he found any fault in his Americanism, the person responded. "Well, you're a kind of an American, I suppose, but I can trace my own origin to a family that came over the Mayflower." Another voter told him that, while he agreed that Saund would make a

good judge, he just could not “go for a Hindu for judge” (80). Because of deep-seated prejudice against the Hindus and Asians in the older generation, Saund failed in his objective to become a judge in 1950. He did not harbor any ill will or bitterness against his opponents, however (81). Saund’s qualities of head and heart won him the position of the judge in the next election, and then the coveted position of the congressman thrice, but he was incapacitated as a result of a stroke before he could run for a fourth term.

As a congressman Saund fully supported the civil rights legislation. He was opposed to the idea of a second-class citizenship. He held that all American citizens should be given equal rights under the law and believed that discrimination against any citizen in any form was “repugnant to the ideals which all Americans cherish” (1960, 192). He emphasized that only by following these ideals “the future of the great political experiment launched by the Founding Fathers will be assured” (*ibid.*).

During his 1957 visit to India as a representative of the U.S. Congress, Saund received a rousing reception wherever he went. He witnessed that the Indian people were “enjoying their freedom and democracy” (1960, 153). He did not believe that Indians would ever embrace communism, “where a minority rules by force, where free thought is suppressed, and the individual is merely regarded as a tool of the state” (184). As he puts it, “I cannot conceive of a situation where the individualistic Hindus, the followers of Mahatma Gandhi, will ever consent to accept a doctrine that denies God and curtails human freedom” (153). He was privileged to address the joint houses of the Indian parliament, and he concluded his speech with the remarks: “If democracy and freedom are to survive in this world, there must be a close liaison between the two greatest democracies of the world, the Republic of India and the United States of America” (181). Saund emphasized that the United States was given the leadership of the Free World because of its “democratic system of government that recognizes the dignity of man” (184).

Lastly, we consider the autobiographies of Ved Mehta (1934–). Having lost eyesight to cerebrospinal meningitis and having lost hope to receive proper education as a blind student in India, Mehta came to the United States at the age of 15 to study at the Arkansas School for the Blind in 1949. Entering the school in the ninth grade, he did well in his studies to graduate as class salutatorian in 1952. From Arkansas, Mehta headed to Pomona College, California, where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in his junior year and received his BA in 1956. He then studied modern history at Baloil College, Oxford University, which awarded him a BA (honors) in 1959. On his return to the United States, he attended Harvard University on a fellowship, receiving his MA in 1961. The same year Mehta joined the *New Yorker Magazine* as a staff writer and stayed with the magazine until 1994. Mehta wrote a series of autobiographies, which he calls “Continents of Exile.” The first in the series is *Daddyji*, which appeared

in 1972, and the last is *Red Letters*, which came out in 2004. Others include *Mamaji* (1979), *Vedi* (1982), *The Ledge Between the Streams* (1982), *The Sound-Shadows of the New World* (1984), *The Stolen Light* (1989), *Up at Oxford* (1993), *Remembering Mr. Shawn's New Yorker* (1998), *All for Love* (2001), and *Dark Harbor* (2003). In this series of 11 autobiographies, Mehta shines as an interpreter of Indian family and culture, in addition to being a remarkably honest chronicler of his life. *Daddyji* and *Mamaji* are portraits of the author's parents, and *Vedi* is an account of the author's life at the Dadar School for the Blind. *The Ledge Between the Streams* recounts Mehta's life from the age of 9 through 15; *Sound-Shadows of the New World* chronicles his first three years at the Arkansas School for the Blind. *The Stolen Light* and *Up at Oxford* cover his Pomona and Oxford years, respectively. *Remembering Mr. Shawn's New Yorker* is an account of the author's life as William Shawn's protégé. *All for Love* narrates Mehta's romantic affairs; *Dark Harbor* deals with the dilemmas he encounters in building a house of his own in a dark harbor in Maine, and *Red Letters* focuses on the secret love affair of his father. Mehta states his mission as an autobiographer thus, "All I'm trying to do is to tell a story of not one life, but many lives—and through those stories, to try to say something that's universal" (Dong 1985, 57).

To understand the writer's Indian experience, one needs to read *Mamaji* to find out the difference in behavior of the physician father and the superstitious mother to their son's blindness. While the senior Mehta explained to his wife that the doctors have told him that meningitis has "permanently damaged Ved's optic nerves, and as a result he would never be able to see again" (Mehta 1979, 318), she cannot accept her son's blindness and consults astrologers and quack doctors to seek a cure. She follows their instructions to a T. The quack doctor tells her to give Ved four pinches of Sulemani Salt and the "pill of life" with breakfast every day for two weeks. Another typical Indian experience told by Mehta in the same book is how relatives in India flock to a hill station if one has a house there. In Mehta's own words, "To have a house in Simla, with its salubrious climate and its quiet hill life, was to issue a general invitation to relatives" (265). He sees that "a train of Daddyji's relatives and of Mamaji's were constantly arriving at Glenarquart and staying for weeks and months," thereby converting the house into a little camp. *The Ledge between the Streams* describes in its chapter titled "Pictures of Marriage" a typical arranged marriage from the selection of a groom to marriage preparations, to the wedding ceremony and various rites. The book also brings out the hardships of the displaced persons or refugees in the wake of India's partition.

As for the author's American experience, we consider *The Sound-Shadows of the New World* and *Dark Harbor* for illustrative examples. In the former, Mehta informs us about the difficulties he had to face to adjust to the American way of life, food, and education system. He also occasionally experiences racism and religious bigotry. A



classmate tells him in a geometry class that “she didn’t want to hear what a ‘darky’ had to say” (Mehta 1986, 387), and a piano teacher who fails to convert him to Christianity gives him low marks in “cooperation, courtesy, and attitude” (258). However, Mehta endures it all, remembering his father’s advice about not losing one’s temper under any circumstances. In *Dark Harbor*, Mehta tells the story of his building a home in Maine for the woman he has fallen in love with. In the process, he learns that he is his father’s son, a product of the Indian patriarchal culture, when he tries to treat Linn, the woman he marries, in the same way his father had treated his mother, that is, taking her approval for granted. He understands the true meaning of the clash of cultures, as he realizes that he, unlike his father, must watch his words and behavior if he does not want to jeopardize his marriage.

We now turn to the autobiographies written by Indian American women—Bharati Mukherjee, Lakshmi Gill, Meena Alexander, and Meheroo Jussawalla. *Days and Nights in Calcutta* (1977; rev. ed. 1995), cowritten by Bharati Mukherjee and her husband Clark Blaise, is the first important autobiographical work by an Indian American woman, who rejects a hyphenated identity and prefers to call herself an American of Indian origin and who writes about diasporic and immigrant experiences. Mukherjee was born in 1940 in Calcutta in an upper-middle class Brahmin family. She went to school in Great Britain and Switzerland, where her father worked on his pharmaceutical research. On the family’s return from Europe, she attended Loreto Convent School, the University of Calcutta for her BA (with honors) in English, and the University of Baroda, Gujarat, for her MA in English and ancient Indian history. She came to the United States in 1961 to attend the Writers’ Workshop at the University of Iowa on a scholarship and earned her MFA in creative writing in 1963. Her initial plan was to get her degree in creative writing and return home to marry a suitable groom her father had selected from their caste and class. However, the experience at the University of Iowa changed her, as she fell in love with Clark Blaise, a fellow student from Canada, and the two married on September 19, 1963, after a brief courtship of two weeks. Mukherjee stayed on at the University of Iowa for doctoral studies and received her PhD in English and comparative literature in 1969. She became a Canadian citizen in 1972, but in 1980 she moved to the United States with her husband and two sons, becoming a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1989. *Days and Nights in Calcutta* is the only autobiographical work that Mukherjee has written so far, and with her husband. A house fire, broken hand, and car accident in the early months of 1973 impelled Mukherjee, who had not visited India for 14 years, to leave Canada with her husband and two sons to spend a year with her family in Calcutta (now called Kolkata).

To the westerner Blaise, India is an amazing and intriguing land full of “contrasts, hierarchies, discomfort, and small abuses; dignity, abasement, protocol, theater,

humor, affection" (Blaise and Mukherjee 1977, 12). Mukherjee returns to India only to find out what she would have become if she had followed the traditional course her family had expected of her. However, she is in for a lot of disappointment, and, by the time she is ready to return to Canada, she has already lost her "childhood memory of wonder and promise" that she had carried with her while in Montreal (285). She "no longer liked India in the unreal and exaggerated ways I had in Montreal" (284).

Mukherjee tries to reconnect with a number of her friends, only to find that she could not live the circumscribed lives they were living. Every day she meets one or more of these old and new friends and finds that the Hindu tradition expects daughters to obey their parents and, after marriage, to worship their husbands. Sita, the heroine of the epic *Ramayana*, is said to have jumped into a fire test to prove her purity, and Savitri is said to have her husband back from the door of death by her prayers to the god of death. In the popular Hindu imagination, Sita and Savitri are role models for all married women (232–233). In Sita's case, the ordeal by fire was a proof positive of her purity, so Rama took her back and made her the queen of Ayodhya. Another account, however, mentions that even the ordeal by fire did not satisfy the people, who asked for her banishment. She found refuge in Sage Valmiki's hermitage, where she gave birth to twins. In an accidental meeting, Rama recognized the twins as his sons. Sita did not want to live any longer, however, and prayed to Mother Earth to take her in, and the Mother Earth split and took her in. Mukherjee remembers that as a child she had played the role of Satyavan, while a younger cousin had taken the role of Savitri, another older neighbor the role of Yama, the spirit of death. Mukherjee is shocked to learn that her married friends could not do anything without the permission of their husbands. In a Bengali home, Mukherjee learns from her friends that "a husband would consider it demeaning to get himself a glass of water (especially in presence of guests) or to pour his own tea" (230). On the other hand, Mukherjee does not have to seek her husband's permission in spending money. For example, she excites the envy of a female visitor when she gives money to her blind grandmother who had encouraged women's education in her family (226).

Mukherjee is surprised to learn that Hindus—even those who consider themselves rational and modern—believed in "healers, palmistry, astrology, and miracles" (1977, 177). The 13-year-old Mukherjee was told by a palmist that she was "destined for a middle-class Bengali woman's life, to please my husband and elders . . . to pray to the household gods" (218). Mukherjee comments that by going abroad and marrying outside her caste and class, she has "cheated' fate" (218).

Mukherjee has had her share of experience with racism and discrimination. While in Blyth, she considered herself superior to her cousins; in European schools in England and Switzerland she felt that she was a minority because of her color: "I felt I was a shadow person because I was not white" (1977, 182). She also notes that while

she is “painfully visible” because of her brown color, she cannot make herself “visible as a writer” (169). In London, she used her “facility in English” as one of her main “strategies of survival” and “making friends among the British” (182). However, she is not surprised that the aggressively nationalistic world of Canada would not accept her material that deals with Indians living in India. As she reveals in her 1995 edition, Bharati Mukherjee experienced “racial harassment” in Canada during the years from 1960 to 1980 she spent there. Those incidents include “removal to a seat in the back of an inter-state bus, not being served in stores, and racial slurs in Toronto Rosedale subway station” (1995, 302).

Mukherjee witnesses and participates in the preparations for her first cousin Jaya’s traditional Bengali marriage and the festivities, ceremonies, and rituals that accompany it. The family had spent months buying things for the wedding. However, she regards traditional marriages as a meaningless, ceremonial parade. Mukherjee is unable to understand why so much money is wasted on buying gold ornaments for the bride—from bangles to bracelets, necklaces to earrings. She is further puzzled to learn that her cousin Jaya would be wearing multiple pairs of earrings. A professional bride dresser—“who can fix up to six pairs on a bride’s ears”—will be hired (1995, 258). In contrast, Mukherjee and Clark’s marriage was such a simple affair that it took only five minutes in a lawyer’s office during a lunch break.

Mukherjee thus concludes her passage to India: “Though in my fiction I may now be ready to construct new metaphorical Indias more real to me than the literary types, I must first persuade North American readers that the stereotypes are also—if only partially—correct” (1995, 298).

Myrna Lakshmi Gill (1943–) is an Asian American poet and novelist who has written poems and a novel that are strongly but not strictly autobiographical. Born of East Indian and Filipino parents, Gill is a product of two cultures. Gill’s poems reflect her experiences as a woman, daughter, sister, wife, parent, and teacher, her love for her father, and her homelessness as an immigrant. *Returning the Empties: Selected Poems 1960s–1990s* is a representative selection of Gill’s poetry. A few of her poems in this collection, such as “April 4,” “Storyteller,” and “Puja for Papa,” are memorials for her father. “Doxology Grandmother” is a tribute to the speaker’s grandmother (60–61). In “I Tell You, Mr. Biswas,” the poet responds to the title character in V.S. Naipaul’s *A House for Mr. Biswas*, who struggles his whole life to build his own home and thereby gain independence; the speaker declares that “my homelessness is my freedom,” disavowing any effort to cultivate roots in a particular place or homeland (1998, 90). A number of her poems, such as “My Son Dreams in Sackville,” “A Winter Scene,” “Marc, Gatherer,” “Returning the Empties,” and “Mixed Conditionals,” celebrate her children. “The Night Watch” considers the speaker’s responsibilities as a mother. “On the Third Year after Her Death” is a remembrance of her sister who died of breast cancer. Poems

like “The Poeteacher” and “Legacy” explore the hard lot of a teacher. The former poem describes the harsh reality faced by the speaker, who must raise three children on the meager salary she receives as a half-time teacher after her husband leaves her. “Legacy” shows the immigrant teacher’s hurt when an Asian student complains to her department head: “Why is she teaching English?” (19).

Gill’s *The Third Infinitive* relates the story of a half-Indian, half-Filipino girl named Jazz who grows up in the Philippines. The book describes her convent school education and her struggles in her search for a national and religious identity. Jazz is clearly based on the author’s experience growing up in Manila in the 1950s and recalls Stephen Dedalus in James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Like Joyce’s Stephen, Gill’s Jazz rejects Filipino culture and nationalism, as well as blind faith in religion, seeking instead the freedom to choose her own path. Jazz’s sisters, on the other hand, embrace nationalism, Filipino culture, and religious faith. Jazz is puzzled at Mary’s behavior that she was so silent and compliant when Jesus suffered. Jazz dares to question the catechism, demanding to know from the Jesuit priest why the world needs to be saved again if Christ has already saved it (59). Out of the three infinitives of the catechism—“To know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him” (64)—Jazz chooses the third infinitive of service to God, which is really the service of fellow humans to create “a new day” for humankind (140). Unlike Stephen Dedalus, Jazz’s determination of her life plan comes not from an epiphany but rather from logical reasoning and her father’s influence.

*The Third Infinitive* deplores the role of women in the patriarchal society of the Philippines. While Jazz’s father and mother seek to develop their daughters’ talents fully, Philippine society denies women equal opportunities. Jazz’s father shudders at the thought of his daughters being treated as “chattel,” and therefore decides to send them abroad (1993, 136). Ironically, however, her father is less liberal in his treatment of his wife. He “stopped her education” and did not allow her “to strike out on her own, to release her creativity” (95). He could never accept her doing any business on her own. What he expected from her is “to be at his side during business dealings, host the endless cocktail parties, look very attractive” (95).

Meena Alexander has also made a significant contribution to the genre of life writing with her *Fault Lines: A Memoir* (1993; revised and expanded edition, 2003). Since it is professedly a memoir, one needs to distinguish it from autobiography in that it has a limited scope and coverage of the subject’s life. It covers not only a few aspects of the subject’s life during the first 25 years, but it mixes past and present. The title of Alexander’s memoir has both a denotative and connotative meaning. Denotatively, it means “a mass of faults” (1993, 3); connotatively, it implies Alexander’s place as a woman in four different societies—Indian, North African, British, and American—that she has inhabited. It is not a linear account but a collection of memories. Raised

in India and the Sudan, Alexander receives her higher education in the United Kingdom and comes to the United States after her marriage to an American. As Alexander moves from India to the Sudan, Great Britain, and the United States, she finds a different status in each society. As a result, she considers herself being “cracked by multiple migrations” (3) or she finds “multiple beings locked into the journeys of one body” (2).

Since different societies have different expectations of women, Alexander describes the difficulties and dilemmas she has to face in being a woman—having a woman’s body—in the three geographical regions: the Pacific, Africa, and the Atlantic. In England and the United States, Alexander also has to face prejudices against women from the Third World. Owing to multiple displacements, she does not have an integrated personality but rather a fractured one. To use the author’s own words, she is writing “[a]bout being born into a female body; about the difficulty of living in space” (1993, 4). She is also writing “in search of a homeland” (4)—a safe and secure environment to live and write. Alexander is attracted to living in the United States because it is billed as “the land of opportunity” and “dreams” (202), and she is exhilarated by its “compulsive energy” (202). She raises the question, “Can I become just what I want?” Her response is that she can do so “only up to a point” because of “my dark female body” (202).

In marked contrast to Indian hierarchical system, authoritarianism, and “the great weight of the centuries” (1993, 199), Alexander prefers the United States’ “struggle for social justice, for human dignity” (203), and the “notion of perpetual present” (198), as it conforms to her own dream of an ideal world. Here she seems to imply that the United States, though not perfect, is certainly the best place for living and writing for an independent-minded person like her, who does not fall in for an arranged marriage and limited education for women. Like the metaphorical stone-eating and fire-eating girls, she is an achiever, ambitious enough to stretch her potential to its limits, not a quitter like those girls who jump into wells rather than fight social evils. Alexander’s is a memoir extraordinaire in the sense that it purports to be an authentic self-recollection of her experiences, her inner life, “the truth of the body” (121), especially in the revised version.

While the first version has nothing but undiluted praise for her maternal grandfather Ilya’s role in her upbringing, the revised version shows him in his true color, as it reveals his sinister side in that he hurts her sexually and robs her of her childhood innocence. The only hint we get in the first version that there may be another side of Ilya is Alexander’s statement that “there was always a desire to tell the stories of my life, to write of Ilya’s garden,” for which she “needed a fictional form that would allow me more than the intensities of the lyric voice” (1993, 120). While she moves to the Sudan at the age of five, Alexander ritually returns to Kerala for

13 years every summer to visit Ilya. As she explains in the revised version, she had to rewrite the memoir because she “was tormented by the feeling that I had written a memoir that was not true” (2003, 241). Alexander did not mention the pain caused her by her maternal grandfather in the first version, perhaps because of deference to family honor and social decorum. In the revised edition, she poses the question, “How could I not have known what happened to me?” and answers it with the statement, “[O]f course I knew, I simply couldn’t bear to remember” (242). One could perhaps add that she could not bear to tell. Living in North America liberates her to tell the dark secret of her life she could not bear to tell in the first version. When in the summer of 1997 Alexander started experiencing severe back pain, headaches, and numbness in her torso, the therapist helped her to remember her trauma of sexual abuse in the past and cope with it (238–240). It was, however, in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, that she began to rewrite her memoir in New York but completed it in her mother’s home in Tiruvella, Kerala (229). Back in Tiruvella, she vividly remembers the “teak desk where I had to lie down as he [Ilya] touched my body” and the “white wall where I pressed myself back trying to escape” (240). She justifies the rewriting of the memoir: “My aim is not to cross out what I first wrote but to deepen that writing, dig under it, even to the point of overturning one of the most cherished figures I created” (229).

*Fault Lines* is different from other Indian American women’s autobiographical narratives in that it describes female sexuality, sexual desires and passions, and the experiences of menstruation, childbirth, and suckling a baby. Additionally in the revised version (2003), it probes Alexander’s trauma of sexual abuse by her so-called beloved maternal grandfather. At the age of 17 in Khartoum, Alexander has a passionate affair with a Czech student who returns to Prague. Again, in England as a student she becomes the passive recipient of male desire. However, at the age of 19 she herself feels a burning desire for a man: “The intensity of sexual passion forced me back into my bodily self, made me turn against the ‘reason’ of the world” (2003, 139). To quote her words, “I could not give myself, as I phrased it then, to him, nor could I turn away” (141). Perhaps this unsatisfied sexual desire took a toll on her body, and led to her so-called nervous breakdown in the summer she turned 19 (141), and she was unable to read for two months.

To get a proper perspective on Alexander’s views of the treatment of women in four different societies, we consider her experiences. She rejects India, the land of her birth, because living in India would have reduced her to the position of “a dutiful wife” (2003, 2), with no life of her own. Alexander’s Tiruvella home environment is protective and constrictive, as is symbolized by the barbed wire that encloses its garden and by Indian society’s code of conduct for women. Indian society did not expect women to write about their sexual desires and experiences. She is saddened to think

that Indian “restrictive ideology” did not permit Sarojini Naidu to make poems “that voiced the body” (128). While she had hope in the post-independence new India, in its promise of equality and social justice (117), that is lost by Indira Gandhi’s imposition of repressive measures to curb all opposition in the Emergency Rule of 1975–1977. Nor does she like the Sudanese treatment of women because of its imposition of the horrors of “clitoridectomies” — “barbarous mutilation,” and practice of the custom of bride price (120). She is dismayed to read the tales of Mahdi’s harem women standing in a ring and ululating for “the hairy-chested, white-haired old man” (96). When she goes to Nottingham University, England, for graduate studies, she does not find herself accepted as a member of the British community. Having obtained her PhD, she returns to India to teach. After her marriage to an American, she comes to the United States, where she thinks she can make of herself what she wants to be. She realizes that she has to write herself into being (73). She explains to her friend Gauri, “I don’t think I could survive if I didn’t write. Just now reading the poem set in the Tiruvella of my childhood, and in Kozencheri too, standing in a small bookshop on the Upper West Side, I felt I was breathing again. But it stings me to write all this. In India, I rest, I just am, like a stone, a bone, a child born again” (176). Gauri agrees and comments, “We have the right to change our identities” (176).

However, Alexander has experienced her share of racism. It is because ordinary Americans stereotype her into a sweet, gentle, and docile East Indian woman, with no mind of her own. A few examples will suffice. Walking along a street in Minneapolis with her one-year-old son Adam, she brushes past a motorbike leaning against a tree, and a white man in a black leather jacket and slicked black hair yells at her, “You black bitch” (2003, 169). Once the chairman of her department at a Jesuit university calls Alexander into his office and remarks: “It has been pointed out to me that you do not publish in the area you were hired, British Romanticism” (114). Thereupon, Alexander points to a book lying on his table and requests him to look at its contents. The man is puzzled when he reads names like Coleridge and Wordsworth on which Alexander has written. Alexander observes that the problem is that the man could in no way “put together my body with any sense of the life of the mind” (114). On another occasion after Alexander clad in a sari has read a poem, a fellow poet follows her and remarks, “Yes, really, you look so . . .” He adds, “But your words are fierce. Where do they come from?” The man’s words make her burst into laughter, and then he walks away bewildered (188).

Just as in other Indian American autobiographical narratives, *Fault Lines* describes some aspects of Indian culture, such as wedding ceremonies, festivities, and foods. While her own marriage with David Lelyveld is a brief court wedding attested to by three friends as witnesses, Alexander’s mother’s is a traditional Kerala Christian marriage. Alexander has her mother Mary describe her wedding in some detail, from the

proposal of a suitable boy to Mary's parents and a suitable girl to George's parents by Alexander's distant cousin who knows both families, to the wedding preparations, wedding in the church, and wedding feast in a specially made *kotil* (a tent with a sloping roof). Men are served food on banana leaves, which are placed on mats in the *kotil*, while women are served food inside the house. There are three fish dishes: *meen veyichede*, *meen patichade*, and *meen varathade*. Then there are meats—both *olothiede*, curried, and chicken, *eriseri* with lentils and ghee—and papadam, an appetizer (2003, 217–218). She also mentions the white Benares tissue sari, a matching silver tissue blouse, and silver chappals. Seven priests and the metropolitan bishop marry the couple, and the groom slips the mangalsutra over the bride's neck, as an "icon of marriage" (221).

The last Indian American woman's autobiography to be examined is Meheroo Jussawalla's *On Six Dollars to America: A Tale of Adventure, Courage and Reward* (2007). It tells the life story of the first woman dean of the Osmania University, Hyderabad, who left India for the United States in search of academic freedom that was denied to her during Indira Gandhi's Emergency rule in 1975–1977. It paints a glorious picture of the United States, and a grim one of India under Indira Gandhi's Emergency rule. Jussawalla first visited the United States as a student in 1957 under the PL 480 Program, when she took noncredit courses at the University of Pennsylvania while finishing her PhD dissertation in industrial finance, and later in 1969 as an exchange professor when she taught at Hood College and gave lectures at Vassar, Elmira, and Cedar Crest (2007, 43). As she puts it, "Censorship of the press had been imposed for the first time in Independent India by promulgation of a Central Censorship Order on June 26, 1975, which was the year I resolved to leave the country. Academic freedom was the *raison d'être* for my resolve to join the exodus of academics and professionals" (63). During those visits she had enjoyed academic freedom "in full measure" and "had grown to love the country and the people and the fact that hard work was rewarded" (43).

As the Reserve Bank of India had imposed foreign exchange controls under the direction of Indira Gandhi, Jussawalla comes to the States with only six dollars, the official amount that Indian citizens going to the United States were allowed. She asserts that "[o]ne had to be a card carrying member of the Communist party to be in the favor of the government" (2007, 62). Her daughter was already in the United States as a graduate student at the University of Utah. With the help of relatives and friends, she got a temporary permit to work and received appointment as a faculty member at St. Mary's College, Baltimore; she worked there for two years, then received permanent residency, and was appointed a research associate at the East-West Center, Honolulu, and now she continues to work as emerita senior fellow economist with the center, an expert in information technology. She became a U.S. citizen in 1983. In sharp contrast to her experiences with discrimination in India, her experience as a faculty member and researcher in the United States has been positive.



Jussawalla's autobiography shows us glimpses of her Parsee family, culture, her wedding, and her husband's funeral. Being a Parsee, she was born into the Zoroastrian faith that originated in Iran, but in the ninth century its followers came to India after they were driven out by Islam and settled in big cities like Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta. Parsees believe in one Supreme Being called Ahura Mazda and in the three principles of Good Thought, Good Word, and Good Deed (2007, 9). Her family encouraged her to receive higher education, and even though she lost her father at the age of 12, she continued her education and earned her master's degree in economics from Madras University. She had a happy arranged marriage with an electrical engineer for 26 years before her husband died. Hers was a typical Parsee wedding, arranged by her mother. She remembers the so-called interview to which she was subjected, and that her wedding was solemnized in a huge garden set aside for celebrations and watched by people living in high-rise apartments surrounding the garden. She also describes her husband's funeral, which was a ghastly ritual. The dead body was tied to a white muslin cloth and taken to the Tower of Silence to be eaten by vultures. Being a woman, she was not allowed to enter the tower to watch (48). While living in the United States, Jussawalla throws a coconut in the deep flowing water on a fixed day every month for good luck.

As she compares the American educational system with India's, she finds the American system superior. While the Indian system favors rote learning and cramming for the final examination, the American counterpart encourages independent thinking and writing research papers, using students' independent judgment to bear on issues in their fields (2007, 46).

While working in India, Jussawalla had to face a good deal of gender discrimination. However, in her adopted country, she does not face any kind of discrimination. Working at the East-West Center and the University of Hawaii, she experiences an environment of "academic collegiality" and "understanding of diverse cultures and traditions" (2007, 81). Jussawalla concludes her autobiography with her statement: "My quest for academic freedom and the many difficulties I endured in that process gave me strength and courage, and I am hoping that my story will serve to inspire others who come after me" (150).

The true value of Indian American autobiographies lies, then, in the authenticity of the narrators' perception of themselves and in their responses to the crucial question of whether living in the United States has fulfilled their dreams. Like other ethnic autobiographies, they will be best remembered by their answers to the question: Have their subjects found their true home (*nadu*) in the United States? As is manifest from the foregoing discussion, while Dalip S. Saund, Ved Mehta, Bharati Mukherjee, and Meheroo Jussawalla seem to offer a definite yes, Dhan Gopal Mukerji, Krishnalal Shridharani, Lakshmi Gill, and Meena Alexander appear to say a muted yes. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Nationalism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America.

*Further Reading*

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HARISH CHANDER

## ◆ INDIAN AMERICAN FILM

Although it is the literature of Indian American writers such as Salman Rushdie, Bharati Mukherjee, and Jhumpa Lahiri that is most often the subject of scholarship, it is film that has caught the popular eye. Film is the most popular and significant cultural medium in transnational Indian cultural and political economy. Interstitially located between Hollywood and the global Indian film industry (including Bollywood—India's Hindi language globalized film industry, located in Mumbai),

Indian American film has emerged as both a national and transnational medium in the last few decades. Indian American films are located in relation to the expanding power of Bollywood, which has sought to challenge the domination of Hollywood cinema by positioning itself as a global cinema. Indian and South Asian diasporic identities are centrally configured and contested through cinema, its production, and consumption.

While South Asian, particularly Indian, media are consumed globally, the production of South Asian diasporic media is centered in the West, specifically the United States, Canada, and Britain. The most visible Indian American films are independent feature-length narrative films, but there are other types including experimental shorts, documentaries, and Hollywood and Bollywood extravaganzas. Although films like *The Sixth Sense* and *The Dukes of Hazzard* are made by Indian American filmmakers, feature-length narrative films about Indian Americans, such as *Mississippi Masala*, *Monsoon Wedding*, *American Desi*, *The Namesake*, and *Touch of Pink* more significantly affect Indian American communities. South Asian diasporic, and specifically Indian American, cinema is a developing cinema that negotiates the dominant discourses, politics, and economies of multiple locations. Thus, Indian American films function significantly as part of the shifting economic, political, and cultural relations between global capitalism, North America, and the postcolonial nation-state, raising questions regarding the cultural politics of diasporas located within local, national, and transnational processes.

References to the long-standing institution of Indian cinema abound in these films. Indian American film is able to employ the visual cultures of both India and the United States, often using both to create a hybrid genre of film that has crossover appeal to Indian American and mainstream audiences. Many of the films deploy decidedly less melodrama than their Indian counterparts. However, they may borrow other ubiquitous elements associated with Indian film, such as musical numbers, mythological and religious references, and family and social drama. These features have been used to various effects, including challenging a "white gaze." At the same time, these elements are viewed as colorful and exotic by Orientalist consumption processes that frame the "Indian" in Indian American film as perpetually foreign, traditional, and exotic.

One of the first feature-length films, *West Is West* (1987) avoids the family as the focus of the film, instead offering a quirky narrative about an Indian tourist's visit to San Francisco in the 1980s. Set in the nontouristy Tenderloin district, the film, starring Ashutosh Gowariker (director of *Lagaan* and *Swades*) as Vikram, depicts the protagonist's thwarted attempts to stay legally in the United States and his unusual forays into the punk scene during these endeavors. Ending with a musical number, the film is unexpected in its combination of narrative elements.

In Canada, state support to encourage the development of multicultural artists in the national cinema and film industry allowed some South Asian filmmakers to explore the genre. Writer and director Srinivas Krishna's film *Masala* (1991) emerged as a challenge to tokenist and inadequate systems of state multiculturalism at the same time as the national cinema tried to reimagine itself within a multicultural framework. The film is a satirical blend of multiple genres (musical, mythological, and melodrama) that shrewdly address the racism of the nation-state and the heteronormativity and class ambition of South Asian communities through a critique of class, gender, and visual normativities. Using violence, memory, and musical numbers to portray and thwart desires, *Masala* brilliantly presents a South Asian diasporic send-up of both *Desi* (an increasingly popular term designating pan-South Asian racial and ethnic identity) cultural politics and North American racism.

Mira Nair was the first South Asian American (woman) director to gain access to Hollywood and was not followed by another until the emergence of M. Night Shyamalan almost 10 years later. Nair's entrance into the film industry was greatly facilitated by her location as a filmmaker in India. Nair migrated from India to the United States, and her first major film *Salaam Bombay!* (1989), a fictionalized depiction of Bombay life told from the perspective of those who are disenfranchised the most—homeless children and female sex workers—played in many film festivals and art house theaters. The film was somewhat controversial, criticized by those who felt she pandered to the West with images of a destitute and victimized India in her role as native informant or cultural insider. Her second major release, *Mississippi Masala* (1992), starred Sarita Choudhury and Denzel Washington. A complex film about a family exiled from Uganda that resides in Mississippi, it addresses issues of immigration and racism and inaugurates the visibility of South Asian Americans. The film, like *The Joy Luck Club* (1993), inspired heated debates among Indian Americans for its depiction of an interracial relationship between a South Asian American woman and an African American man.

Nair has also completed a short film entitled *II'09'01* based on the true story of Salman Hamdani, a Muslim American man who disappeared in New York during 9/11. The film depicts his family's anxiety and pain as they are repeatedly harassed with accusations that he was the missing hijacker until his remains are discovered among the rubble of the World Trade Center, where he had apparently rushed to aid distressed survivors, and he is named a hero. Nair's latest film *The Namesake* (2006) is based on Jhumpa Lahiri's novel of the same name. Employing both Indian and Indian American actors, the film tells the story of a Bengali first-generation immigrant couple and their oldest child, Gogol Ganguli.

Thematically, these and other films tackle similar topics in their content, such as racism, multiculturalism, and constructions of home, as well as gender and sexual

politics. Many of these films, negotiating their location in the West, carefully identify the political, economic, and social ramifications of Eurocentrism and racism for Indian American communities.

Smaller U.S. "independent" productions such as *American Desi* (2001), *ABCD* (1999), *Mitr (My Friend)* (2001), *American Chai* (2001), *Namaste* (2002), and *Chutney Popcorn* (2000) have also emerged onto the scene and are targeted specifically for South Asian audiences. Indian American filmmakers have had difficulty accessing the means of production and distribution. For some, access has been developed not through the channels of Hollywood or indie circuits, but rather through the networks established for the transnational circulation of Bollywood and other South Asian media. *American Desi*, for example, had little access to mainstream theaters and instead played at venues in major metropolitan locations with South Asian communities that regularly feature Bollywood films. A film festival circuit in which Indian American and Indian cinema is promoted is also becoming more established within larger metropolitan areas. The presence of so many Indian American films indicates the growth and establishment of a Desi public sphere in North America, especially for filmmakers who are able to acquire the material resources to produce a low-budget film that can be distributed on DVD and video through ethnic retail venues.

Thematically, several of these recent films by South Asian American filmmakers, like *American Desi* and *Namaste* reify heteronormativity in their interrogation of Indian American or Desi identities. These films made by 1.5- and second-generation Indian Americans frequently depict second-generation Indian Americans as caught between worlds. The culturally nationalist films that characterize Desi identity as being caught between two cultures inadvertently forward a homogenous, normative, and transparent understanding of Desi subjectivity. Few render the possibility of culture as open and dynamic, instead seeking to define Indian America as suspended between the Manichean binary of East and West, in lieu of a space that is heterogeneous and hybrid. For example, *American Desi*, *Namaste*, and *ABCD*, while explicitly focused on issues of belonging and authenticity in Desi culture, rely on asserting normative gender roles and sexual practices to consolidate these identities.

*Chutney Popcorn* and *Touch of Pink* appealed to non-South Asian gay and lesbian viewers. *Chutney Popcorn* features the director and writer Nisha Ganatra as a lesbian daughter trying to get pregnant for her married, infertile sister. Because of its limited distribution, the film has been primarily available on video. The film criticizes how heterosexuality, marriage, and reproduction are at the center of respectability and acceptance in Indian American communities; within the film, the lesbian daughter seeks to prove herself by succeeding where her sister has failed. The film emphasizes how those lesbians are marked as outside of Indian American communities as inauthentic and Western. *Touch of Pink* (2004) focuses on Canadian gay Muslim Alim,

who avoids coming out to his mother by living in London until it becomes necessary for him to divulge his identity and attend a family wedding. Not a simple narrative about the homophobia in South Asian communities, the film deploys the ghost of Cary Grant as a father figure to Alim, who continually thwarts his attempts to negotiate his desires and identities. Importantly, the film aligns his queer sexuality with his mother's nonnormative gendered and racialized desires.

The globalization of the Indian film industry and the return of diasporic filmmakers to their homelands have increased the transnational cultural flow between North America and India. The globalization of Bollywood has affected the production and circulation of Indian American and diasporic films with the result, most recently, of blurring these categories with such films as *Fire* (1996), *Monsoon Wedding* (2001), *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), and *Water* (2005). With increasing globalization, some migrant filmmakers, such as Deepa Mehta and Mira Nair, returned their cameras to the homeland of India to explore the changes in cultural, social, and economic processes in urban middle-class culture in South Asia. For example, Nair's *Monsoon Wedding*, winner of many festival prizes and award nominations, presents a wealthy Punjabi family in New Delhi as they prepare a lavish wedding for the daughter's marriage to a diasporic man from Houston, Texas. Combining elements of Hollywood and Bollywood, the film was one of the highest grossing "foreign" films in U.S. history.

Conversely, Indian films are being increasingly filmed and set outside of India, so that Bollywood and other Indian cinemas are now ubiquitous in the diaspora. Extensive distribution networks have been created within immigrant communities in North America to circulate films that are able to reach wide audiences that have become central to the process of imagining community. In transnational migrant communities, heterogeneous South Asian diasporic artists and intellectuals have wrestled with cultural production, elucidating the histories and politics of racism, colonialism, and modernity. In recent years, the language of Indian American identity and cultural production has been the language of cinema. **See also** Asian Canadian Studies; Asian Diasporas; Colonialism and Postcolonialism; Gay Male Literature; Lesbian Literature; Multiculturalism and Asian America; Nationalism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America.

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## ◆ INDIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Indian American writers have developed an increasingly prominent role within the arena of Asian American literature. Once referred to as East Indian Americans, these writers have also been categorized as South Asian Americans. This dual appellation is due to the desire to distinguish between Native American writers, once labeled Indians or Indian American writers, from the writers who emigrated from India. The development of this area of study within American literature began slowly, but, once it began, the field exploded. This expansion of literary awareness reflects the changing demographics within the United States. The influx of immigrants from India began to increase rapidly after 1965, when discriminatory immigration laws were altered as the need for educated, trained workers increased. Now called the “brain drain,” the U.S. practice of enabling large-scale immigration of the most outstanding applicants from other nations had a particularly strong influence on emigration from India. With the expanded arrival to the United States, the problems encountered by this group wove themselves into Indian American culture and were reflected in Indian American literature.

By no means unique to the world of minority or immigrant writings, the writings of Indian Americans reflected experiences connected to cultural diversity within the United States. In keeping with this, the issues of racial divisions coupled with religious and cultural differences are reflected in much Indian American writing. Additionally, the conflicts between established Indian American enclaves and those of recent arrivals are shared in the literature. These differences are often dramatic—not only do Indian immigrants come from five major religious groups (Hindu being the most dominate group with over 900 million followers living in India), the large nation is also subdivided into 29 states. Each region of India has a distinct identity created by different climate and landscapes and reflected in the cultural traditions. These differences are part of the uniqueness found in Indian American literature, and one of the reasons why it is difficult to categorize it broadly.

A further complication reflected in the literature of Indian immigrants to the United States comes with the legacy of the Indian caste system. Although the Indian caste system was in formal use for many generations, it is now seen as a block to equality. In fact, in 1950 the Indian government stated that caste-based discrimination was illegal, as reflected in the Indian constitution. There are now systems in place to assure that jobs are disseminated across class lines, although this reinforces definitions based upon birthright. Nonetheless, the values of the caste system are adhered to informally in the United States, specifically in terms of marriage. Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra, and one group excluded from the main society that was called Parjanya or Antyaja, are the distinct categories into which an individual is born. The Parjanya or Antyaja group, now called Dalits or Harijans, was once called “untouchable” and was

for a long time seen as outside the caste system entirely. This legacy presents itself in modern Indian American fiction. Many writers portray second-generation Indian Americans in conflict with their parents over issues of marriage and dating outside of caste expectation. Even more significant are the stories that tell of conflicts when individuals desire to date or marry outside of the Indian American community. Along these lines, the conflicts reflected in Indian American writing reveal a tripartite struggle—issues of displacement, issues of conflict within the larger, seemingly homogenized, American culture, and issues within the multiplicity of Indian American cultural diversity.

### POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES

Many of the issues noted above relate to the colonial heritage of Indian American writers. India was under British rule to varying degrees starting in the mid-1700s, but it did not become an official part of the British Empire until 1858. This situation was to continue until after the close of **World War II**, when in 1947 India gained its independence after a series of large-scale protests and upheavals. What had been known as the British Indian Empire became partitioned into two sovereign states, the Dominion of India and the Dominion of Pakistan, which later split into the modern-day Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The Dominion of India, now called the Republic of India (1950), and the other areas in the region are points of investigation for students of postcolonial studies. As the academic world continued to expand its interest and investigation into postcolonialism, the work of many of the writers listed below became increasingly valuable in understanding the current cultural and political ramifications of the long period of colonialism. Needless to say, the writing of Indians who immigrated to England has a significant presence in the world of postcolonial studies. However, just as the work of Vikram **Seth** for *A Suitable Boy* (1993) and Arundhati Roy for *God of Small Things* (1997) won prizes in England, the work of Bharati **Mukherjee** carved inroads into the American literary front. In conjunction with the fictional works of Indian American writers came influential postcolonial critics, most notably Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, who entered into the national consciousness in the 1970s and 1980s. Their combined work has influenced generations of scholars focusing upon American literature. In different ways, each discusses the varying representations of identity and the implausibility of defining an individual according to any social, cultural, or political definition of a stable identity.

Like other literary movements, the field of postcolonial studies is fraught with complex debates over definitions of whom and what the field encompasses. Although the British colonies tend to be the major focus of such research, in most part due to the vast amounts of world territory held under the empire's control, the field does



include the work from other European expansion, notably France, Spain, and Portugal. Now called postcolonial studies, terms like the *Third World* had been a common way to refer to literature of onetime European colonies.

Many scholars mark the publication of Edward Said's (1935–2003) *Orientalism* (1978) as the beginning of postcolonial studies. Said himself was born in the British-controlled section of Palestinian Jerusalem, prior to the creation of Israel after World War II, and moved to Egypt at a young age. Having been educated in the finest schools in both his homeland and the United States, Said was in the unique position to analyze the various ideological ruptures between the East and West. His work focuses upon the political and cultural bias inherent in interpretation. In the appellation *Oriental*, Said explained the method by which westerners created a false monolithic image of Middle Eastern culture. He articulated that this blanket approach to Asian culture served the agenda of Western colonization. Although Said's theories have met with their fair share of criticism, the work he began continues to influence the intellectual community and is reflected in the work of many Indian American scholars and writers.

One example is the work of Homi K. Bhabha (1949–), an Indian American postcolonial theorist. In his book *Location of Culture*, Bhabha discusses the need for Western cultural analysis to develop a more receptive and fluid approach to the East. By this, he reconnects to the arguments made by Said and others that decry the universalizing perceptions of Eastern cultures. Bhabha describes the habit of binary definitions employed by cultural analysts that create a too rigid system of categorization. The very ideas of West/East, civilized/savage, and center/margin are brought into question by his work. Ultimately, Bhabha unearths the automatic assumptions held in such binary formulations to argue that the Western domination implicit in such linguistic structure needs to be rethought and altered.

## GENDER ROLES IN INDIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Another major line of investigation that can be traced through Indian American literature relates to gender roles. Coming out of the feminist tradition and merging with the work of postcolonial studies, the work of many scholars centers upon Indian American literature because of its ability to combine the two fields with ease. By approaching such literature with this dual focus, the idea of imperialism and female subjugation can be traced and explored in its modern-day incarnations. In this way, the issues of race, class, sexuality, and gender become fluid categories for analysis and interpretation. The writing of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1942–) is particularly useful because of its broad-based approach to literature and theory. Spivak was born in Calcutta, West Bengal, studied English at the University of Calcutta (1959), and then moved to the United States to study comparative literature. Her early work, for which she received her PhD in 1974 from Cornell University, was on W.B. Yeats. However,

after graduating she concentrated her energies on literary criticism. Involved in the theories of deconstruction, Spivak has produced readings of Marxism, feminism, and postcolonialism. An example of this is her critical essay "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," which connects works from Emily Bronte, Jean Rhys, and Mary Shelley. Spivak's work demonstrates how the ascendancy of Jane Eyre comes upon the back of "the other," the Creole woman Bertha. Spivak uses her powerful analytic skills to demonstrate the complexities of reading such work in light of female empowerment, while acknowledging the subjugation of "the other."

In a different capacity, the writing of Meena **Alexander** places the complexities of modern concerns over gender within a larger comment upon identity issues. As the author of several highly acclaimed books of poetry and prose, Alexander's memoir *Fault Lines* links gender to changes in subjectivity. Alterations in the construction of gender become apparent as Alexander changes nations, moving from her home to a university position in India, then to England, and finally ensconcing herself in the United States. Along with these personal alterations of her subject position, first as a daughter and then a mother, Alexander also links to the larger movements of feminism in the United States. By interweaving the stories of other women into her narrative, Alexander is able to address issues of gender as felt by women of other social classes and incorporate them into a body of work that connects to the work of other Indian American writers.

## WRITERS AND THEORISTS

Bharati Mukherjee (1940–), like many writers labeled as Indian Americans, was born and in part educated in India. Having lived in England, Canada, and the United States, Mukherjee's work reflects the cross-cultural tension stemming from such migration. In particular, her novel *Jasmine* (1989) combines the pressures of immigration with the added anxieties of an illegal status. Her work on identity formation is seen in her other writings, such as *Desirable Daughters* (2002) and its sequel *The Tree Bride* (2004). These novels delve into the isolation felt by members of Indian American communities, and these issues are expanded in her more recent work. Much like in Mukherjee's writing, the questions about gender roles and identity are presented in the work of other Indian American writers.

One example is Bapsi **Sidhwa** (1938–), who was born in British India, which became the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in 1947. The effects of living through the partition can be seen in her writing, most prominently in her 1988 novel *Ice Candy Man* (renamed *Cracking India* in its 1991 U.S. edition). However, the influences of multicultural and multilingual identities can be found in all of her novels.

The writer Salman Rushdie (1947–) is perhaps the most well-known Indian expatriate writer. Even nonacademic American audiences are aware of his work because of

the violent reaction to his fourth novel, *The Satanic Verses* (1988). Upon publication of this novel, a fatwa (religious edict) was issued against the author's supposed blasphemous writing. This notoriety overshadows the depth and beauty of Rushdie's work. In fact, many critics cite the publication of his 1980 novel *Midnight's Children* as the beginning of literary recognition for the Indian diaspora. Although Rushdie has lived and taught in the United States for many years, he maintains his British citizenship; therefore, his inclusion as a member of the Indian American literary community is problematic. Nonetheless, Rushdie's work has had a dramatic impact on both writers and thinkers working the fields of Indian diaspora studies and writing fiction within the developing body of the Indian American literary canon.

Like Rushdie, Jhumpa Lahiri was born outside of the United States. However, Lahiri soon moved to the United States and spent her youth traveling between Rhode Island and India. Lahiri's first novel, *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), is a collection of nine different tales that center in places as varied as the East Coast of the United States to the streets of Calcutta. Each reflects Lahiri's views on life in both nations and the difficult position of those who straddle the two.

In total, the work of Indian Americans writers is just beginning to move to the foreground of the American literary consciousness. Although writers and thinkers have been addressing both the works and the issues presented by Indian American writers and intellectuals for some time, it is only now that postcolonial studies and tales of immigration and assimilation are coalescing into a unified body that has taken on the label of Indian American writing. Although the terminology is fraught with inconsistencies, the writing that is being produced under this rubric is an exciting expansion of literary and theoretical work. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization; Colonialism and Postcolonialism; Feminism and Asian America; Orientalism and Asian America.

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VERONICA HENDRICK

### ◆ INDIAN AMERICAN SHORT STORY

Although Indian American writers have, since the 1970s, published literary works in multiple genres—poetry, short stories, novels, memoirs, and personal essays—there has been a proliferation of short fiction collections within the last two decades. These include Bharati Mukherjee's *Darkness* (1985) and *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988), Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Arranged Marriage* (1995) and *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* (2001), Ginu Kamani's *Jungle Girl* (1995), Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), Meera Nair's *Video: Stories* (2002), and Rishi Reddi's *Karma and Other Stories* (2007).

Several renowned Indian American writers—including Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Divakaruni, and Jhumpa Lahiri—first garnered prestigious awards for their short story collections and only later gained attention for their novels. Indian American male writers have not written short fiction and are famous for other genres. Ved Mehta is renowned for his memoirs, *Daddyji* (1972) and *Mamaji* (1979), autobiographical and political essay collections, and prolific writings in the *New Yorker*; Amitav Ghosh for his large-scale historical novels, including *In An Antique Land* (1993) and *The Glass Palace* (2002); and Vikram Seth for his epic novels in verse and prose, *The Golden Gate: A Novel in Verse* (1986) and *A Suitable Boy* (1993). In contrast, most Indian American short story collections have been written or edited by women.

Indian American short stories were initially included within Asian American anthologies such as *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writings by and about Asian American Women* (1989) and *Charlie Chan Is Dead: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Fiction* (1993). Simultaneously, throughout the 1990s, several South Asian, specifically **Indian American, anthologies** provided new publishing venues, introduced short fiction by new writers, and reproduced those already known. These include *Our Feet Walk the Sky: Women of the South Asian Diaspora* (1993), *Living in America: Poetry and Fiction by South Asian American Writers* (1995), *Contours of the Heart: South Asians Map North America* (1996), and *Bolo! Bolo! A Collection of Writings by Second-Generation South Asians Living in North America* (2000).

As with other literature, the categories Indian American and South Asian American are often conflated. Two early short fiction collections edited by Nurjehan Aziz focused on South Asian American and Canadian women's experiences: *Her Mother's Ashes and Other Stories by South Asian Women in Canada and the United States* (1994) and *Her Mother's Ashes 2: More Stories by South Asian Women in Canada and the United States* (1998). Although Aziz includes some short fiction by Indian Americans such as Meena Alexander, Ginu Kamani, and Gita Kothari, the majority are Canadian writers—Anita Rau Badami, Lakshmi Gill, Uma Parameswaran, Shani Mootoo, and Shauna Singh Baldwin, among others—many of whose texts overlap in style and content with their American counterparts.

Whereas Aziz focuses on short fiction by women, Shyam Selvadurai's eclectic and more recent collection *Story-Wallah: Short Fiction from South Asian Writers* (2005) situates both male and female writers within the larger landscape of South Asian diasporic writers from Singapore, Trinidad, Fiji, the United Kingdom, Malaysia, Guyana, South Africa, and Canada, including Sam Selvon, Zulfikar Ghose, Michael Ondaatje, Kirpal Singh, and Monica Ali. However, the well-known Indian Americans included in this collection are again the more commonly represented women writers—Jhumpa Lahiri, Bharati Mukherjee, and Ginu Kamani.

Bharati Mukherjee's 1988 short story collection *The Middleman and Other Stories* first paved the way for the explosion in **Indian American literature**. Completed with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, it won the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction and received glowing reviews from the *New York Times Book Review*, *Washington Post Book World*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Village Voice*, and other nonethnic publications. Mukherjee's mainstream appeal is evident, as the stories were first published in *Playboy*, *Mother Jones*, and the *Literary Review*; some were reprinted in *Best Canadian Stories*, *Best American Stories of 1987*, *Best American Stories of 1989*, *The Editor's Choice: The Best Short Fiction for 1987* (1988), and *Playboy Stories: The Best of Forty Years of Short Fiction* (1994).

Mukherjee acknowledges her literary debt to her friend and inspiration Bernard Malamud and dedicates her first short story collection *Darkness* (1985) to him. Published in Canada while Mukherjee lived in Montreal with her Canadian husband Clark Blaise, *Darkness* focused on the negative aspects of immigrant life in an overtly racist Canada. In contrast, the short stories in *The Middleman* (1988) represented a more positive, nuanced vision of immigrant life in the United States and were more deftly crafted. The award-winning final story "The Management of Grief" explores in a taut, restrained narrative the emotions of the Indo Canadians who lost family members in the hijacked Air India flight in Ireland. The story "Jasmine" (from *Middleman*) about an illegal, Indo Trinidadian immigrant au pair's relationship with a University of Michigan professor and his wife inspired Mukherjee's later acclaimed novel *Jasmine*

(1989), about an ambitious young Punjabi Hindu widow who rushes to embrace the promise of life in America.

Most of Mukherjee's stories deal with themes of immigrant displacement, alienation, and assimilation, the uprooting and transplanting of cultures, histories, and identities, and implicitly or explicitly question what it means to be or become reborn as an American. Unlike other South Asian American and Canadian authors who have confined themselves to representing their own communities—Divakaruni and Lahiri usually depict Bengali immigrants; Kamani Gujaratis, Baldwin Sikh, Canadians; and Mootoo Indo, Trinidadians—Mukherjee dared to represent non-Indian, multiethnic Americans, including an Israeli from Baghdad ("The Middleman"), an Afghani exile in Manhattan ("Orbiting"), and a Vietnamese American ("Fathering"), among other multiethnic immigrants.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, who was born and raised in Calcutta like Bharati Mukherjee and was her student at the University of California, Berkeley, received critical acclaim with the publication of her first short story collection *Arranged Marriage* (1995). The 11 stories include plots and characters set in both India and the United States. Many of Divakaruni's Bengali female protagonists struggle to find their own identity—whether in the Indian or the American context—as they juggle the pressure "to be the perfect wife and mother, like the heroines of mythology" (298), like the protagonist of "Meeting Mrinal" or Abha in "Affair"; or as they reject the roles of perfect daughter ("The Word Love") or subservient widowed daughter-in-law ("Clothes"). The collection won the Bay Area Book Reviewers Award for Fiction, the PEN Oakland Josephine Miles Prize for Fiction, and the 1996 American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation. Divakaruni's stories have been included in anthologies including *Best American Short Stories* and *The Pushcart Prize Anthology*.

Divakaruni's second short story collection, *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* (2001), focuses on a wide range of female characters struggling to define their identities, find a sense of belonging within the American context, and accept the psychological repercussions of the tiny, unnamed errors and disappointments that constitute everyday life's sadness. The narrative point of view shifts between different characters. In the opening story, "Mrs. Dutta Writes a Letter" (from *Best American Short Stories* 1999), the aging Bengali widow Mrs. Dutta feels like a burdensome misfit, and questions the definition of happiness while visiting her Americanized son's and daughter-in-law's home in the United States. Divakaruni depicts unfulfilled **lesbian** desire in "The Blooming Season for Cacti"; a strained father-daughter relationship as an adult woman copes with her dead mother's memory in "The Love of a Good Man"; and the emotional distance between an adult brother and sister due to immigration in "The Intelligence of Wild Things." Most of Divakaruni's protagonists are middle-class Bengali immigrant women who often face minor but undeniable disillusionment, despite the fairy tale promise of living in the

United States. Perhaps because, as the founder of the organization MAITRI, she sheltered many abused Indian women, Divakaruni's narrative is often explicitly focused on feminist concerns, and the male characters are usually not sympathetic.

Genu Kamani (who initially published her work as Gaurangi Kamani) moved from India to the United States with her family at the age of 14 and wrote her debut short story collection *Jungle Girl* (1995) while she was in her late twenties. Stories from Kamani's collection have also been published in Asian American and Indian American anthologies—"Maria" and "Waxing the Thing" in *Our Feet Walk the Sky: Women of the South Asian Diaspora* (1993); "Ciphers" in Wu and Song's *Asian American Studies: A Reader* (2000); "Waxing the Thing" in Jessica Hagedorn's *Charlie Chan Is Dead 2: At Home in the World* (2004); and "Just Between Indians" in Selvadurai's *Story-Wallah* (2005). They have also appeared in collections such as *Best American Erotica 2000*. Kamani's stories explicitly deal with themes surrounding female sexuality and have shocked some readers, because they expose the intricacies of gender and class struggles as related to sex. Most of the stories, except "Just between Indians," are set in an India that is portrayed as simultaneously sexually repressive, oppressive, and covertly empowering for upper-class prepubescent young girls, sexually exploited female servants in affluent urban households, and other powerless women. The short story collection was reviewed favorably in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Seattle Times*, and the *Village Voice*; a review in *The Oregonian* compares her "nimble sensuous and cheekily outrageous" work to that of R.K. Narayan and Donald Barthelme (Upchurch 1995, D6).

Unlike Kamani, whose book was published by a small independent press and did not get widespread media attention except on the West Coast, Jhumpa Lahiri's short stories received worldwide publicity quite early. Even before she won the Pulitzer, the *New Yorker* named Lahiri as one of the 20 best young writers in the United States. Her debut collection, *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), won both the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the Ernest Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award in 2000, thus establishing her as an American writer, not just an Asian American or Indian American writer. First published in the *New Yorker*, Lahiri's stories have been included in mainstream nonethnic anthologies such as *More Stories We Tell: The Best Contemporary Short Stories by North American Women* (2004), where she is positioned among such celebrities as Toni Cade Bambara, Margaret Atwood, Joyce Carol Oates, Sandra Cisneros, and Grace Paley, and *The Best American Nonrequired Reading, 2005*.

Lahiri was born in the United Kingdom and moved with her family to Rhode Island at age one; she is one of the few writers who depict second-generation Indian American experiences. Lahiri's characters struggle between multiple roles and relationships as they negotiate between different cultures, trying to bridge varied forms of miscommunications. The title story "The Interpreter of Maladies" deals with the unfulfilled lives of an Indian medical translator and tour guide, Mr. Kapasi, and the

frustrated, spoilt, selfish, adulterous Bengali-American 20-something, Mrs. Das, who leads the older man to fantasize about an impossible romance. The opening story “A Temporary Matter” deals with the potential dissolution of a young second-generation Indian American couple’s marriage, as they are unable to cope with the grief of a still-born son. “Mrs. Sen’s” and “The Third and Final Continent” provide depictions (based on the experiences of Lahiri’s parents) of traditional Bengali arranged marriages and the lives of immigrant wives who followed their professional husbands to the United States in the late 1960s and 1970s. Lahiri’s stories provide realistic vignettes of the social and cultural lives of highly educated, upper-middle class Bengali immigrant families in the Boston area. Her narrators use gentle irony and are usually not judgmental of the characters. Unlike most other Indian American female writers, who primarily represent women’s experiences, most of Lahiri’s protagonists are male, and her narrative point of view and sympathy often lies with the male characters.

Rishi Reddi’s *Karma and Other Stories* (2007) was composed over the course of a decade, according to the writer, who eventually gave up a career in law to write. Like Jhumpa Lahiri’s, most of Reddi’s stories are set in—and evoke the sights and sounds of—Boston and its suburbs, even though Reddi did not grow up in Boston but in England and in Wichita, Kansas, where her family moved when she was 14. The interrelated stories represent multigenerational family members and extended groups of friends, belonging to a Telugu-speaking community from Hyderabad, India, which acts as an extended family. The opening story, “Justice Shiva Ram Murthy,” was first published in the *Harvard Review* and selected in *The Best American Short Stories 2005*. Some stories feel similar to those by Lahiri and Divakaruni because they are subtle explorations of unfulfilled (or mildly unhappy) lives of educated, affluent, professionally successful Indian American legal immigrants in the late twentieth century. However, Reddi’s focus on a community that has not been earlier represented in Indian American fiction, her vast range of sympathetic characters of different ages and genders, and her nuanced depiction of their conflicted feelings about being at home in the United States, are refreshing.

Besides the Indian American writers mentioned, other well-known South Asian American and Canadian short fiction writers include Indo Canadian Shauna Singh Baldwin, whose short story collection *English Lessons and Other Stories* (1996) provides poignant portrayals of the cultural, religious, and gender identity dilemmas faced by Sikh immigrants to Canada and the United States since the early twentieth century. Shani Mootoo, a Canadian writer of Indo Trinidadian origin, published *Out on Main Street and Other Stories* (1993). She portrays Indo Trinidadian lesbian women, in either Trinidad or Canada, facing internal psychological conflicts due to familial or societal pressures. Many stories deal with concerns regarding hybridized gender, sexual, racial, and ethnic identity and could easily have been set in the United States. Tahira Naqvi, Pakistani American translator of Urdu fiction, has written two short story collections, *Attar of*



*Roses and Other Stories of Pakistan* (1997) and *Dying in a Strange Country* (2001). Whereas the first collection is located in Pakistan, the latter is set in small-town Connecticut. It presents the challenges of cultural assimilation faced by Muslims (especially women) in the United States as they reconcile the traditional teachings of the Koran with the pragmatics of living and raising families in affluent New England suburbs. Although these other South Asian American and Canadian writers have been acknowledged in academic circles, they have not received the same level of mainstream media or critical attention as the Indian American writers—Mukherjee, Divakaruni, Lahiri, and Kamani.

Thus, in the last two decades, Indian American women writers have made enormous contributions to the development of the genre of the short story. The publication of their fiction by mainstream presses, reviews in respected newspapers and journals, and their achievement of prestigious awards signify the inclusion of the Indian American short story within evolving definitions of American literature. See also *Assimilation/Americanization*; *Lesbian Literature*.

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LAVINA DHINGRA SHANKAR

#### ◆ INOUE, DANIEL K. (1924–)

Daniel K. Inouye is a Japanese American member of the U.S. Senate, a decorated World War II combat veteran, a Medal of Honor recipient, and author of *Journey to Washington*, his 1967 autobiography. Daniel Inouye served five years in the Hawaii Territorial House of Representatives and Senate, and since 1959, when he became the

first congressman elected from the new state of Hawaii, he has continuously represented the state of Hawaii in Washington, DC. He was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1962 and has continued to be reelected to that office ever since. Inouye was the first American of Japanese descent to serve in Congress, and the first to serve in the Senate. He achieved national recognition in the 1970s as a member of the Watergate Committee and again in 1987 when he chaired the Iran-Contra Committee. He has sponsored legislation on countless issues, including national security, Native Hawaiian and Native American rights, health care for children, education, affordable housing, maritime transportation, and the protection of natural resources. Among his legislative accomplishments is the resolution in which the United States apologized for its role in the overthrow of the kingdom of Hawaii. Among Inouye's honors are the Sonny Montgomery Award from the National Guard Bureau for exceptional support of the nation's defense, the Advocacy Conference Congressional Award from the National Breast Cancer Coalition, and the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun from the government of Japan. He presently chairs the Senate Defense Appropriations subcommittee. *Daniel K. Inouye: An American Story*, a 2003 film produced by Heather Giugni of Juniroya Productions, tells Inouye's life story.

Inouye's initial political success was inextricably connected to his role as a wounded and decorated World War II veteran of the famed 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the "Go for Broke" regiment composed of soldiers of Japanese ancestry. Both his military service and his long, distinguished service in government are strongly linked to the Inouye family's sense of obligation to the United States for the opportunities it has provided.

The story of the Inouye family in the United States begins with a fire in Japan that destroyed not only the home of Wasaburo Inouye, the senator's great-grandfather, but also the homes of two neighbors. Because the fire started in the Inouye household, the family was honor-bound to pay damages to the other families. To earn the enormous sum of \$400, Wasaburo sent his son Asakichi to work in the sugar plantations of Hawaii for \$10 a month. Because the contract was five years long, Asakichi asked to take along his wife Moyo and their only son Hyotaro, leaving their two daughters behind. In Hawaii, on the island of Kauai, Asakichi worked long hours but could send only a dollar or two back to Japan each month. To supplement his wages and retire the debt more quickly, Asakichi opened a community bathhouse, charging laborers a few pennies to clean themselves at the end of the workday. Moyo began to bake and sell tofu cakes to make more money. Still, at the end of the first five years, they had paid off less than a fourth of the debt. Realizing they must remain in Hawaii another five years, the Inouyes sent Hyotaro to school to learn English and brought their daughters to Hawaii. Hyotaro grew up and moved to the island of Oahu, where he met and married Kame Imanaga, an orphan. A year later, the future U.S. senator Daniel K. Inouye

was born. By the time the debt was repaid after 30 years, when Daniel Inouye was nearly five, the family had become thoroughly Americanized.

Inouye says in *Go for Broke*, an excerpt from his 1967 autobiography, disseminated on his U.S. Senate Web site, that if it had not been for the fire in his great-grandfather's home, "I might have been a Japanese soldier myself, fighting on the other side." Instead, when **Pearl Harbor** was attacked on December 7, 1941, he was a 17-year-old high school senior hoping to become a doctor. A Red Cross volunteer who taught first aid, Inouye responded immediately after the attack, reporting to a station in Honolulu where he worked nearly nonstop for several days. After the initial attack, Inouye went to McKinley High School during the day and volunteered at an aid station, working 6 P.M. to 6 A.M. Like other *nisei*, American-born citizens whose parents were born in Japan, Inouye considered himself American rather than Japanese. Facing accusatory looks and remarks from so-called real Americans, *nisei* experienced a false sense of guilt and wanted the chance to prove their loyalty to the United States. In early 1942, 120,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry living on the mainland were imprisoned in camps. In Hawaii, the FBI identified and held 1,000 alleged suspects of Japanese ancestry.

In September 1942, Inouye enrolled in premed studies at the University of Hawaii. When he learned in 1943 that the War Department was willing to accept 1,500 *nisei* volunteers, he quit school and his work at the medical aid station to join. In all, 10,000 *nisei* in Hawaii dropped what they were doing and volunteered for combat. Inouye's father, Hyotaro, agreed that his son should go because of *on*, the Japanese concept of indebtedness that must be repaid at every opportunity. Because the United States had been good to the Inouye family, Hyotaro explained, now it was time for Daniel to return the goodness.

Inouye became part of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, trained at Camp Shelby in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and left in May 1944 for Europe as a sergeant. He saw combat in Italy, receiving a battlefield commission as a second lieutenant in October 1944. In April 1945 during an attack to capture a heavily fortified ridge called Colle Musatello, Inouye was wounded in the stomach while taking out two machine gun nests with grenades. While attempting to throw his last grenade, Inouye suffered a wound that nearly tore off his right arm. He shouted for his men to stay back, then managed to throw the grenade with his other hand, killing the German soldier who was reloading to finish him off. Another German soldier shot Inouye in the leg, sending him rolling down the hill. When his men followed to help, Inouye ordered them back up the hill to keep fighting. Inouye was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions, but not until 2000, when President Bill Clinton awarded the medal to 20 Japanese American veterans of World War II. Until then, only one World War II veteran of Japanese ancestry had received the Medal of Honor. Ten of the men honored in 2000 had been killed in action.

After the war ended and Inouye had recuperated from his wounds, he went back home to Hawaii, where he returned to college and became involved in reviving the local Democratic Party. In 1948 he married Margaret Shinobu Awamura, to whom he remained married until her death in March 2006. They had one child, a son. Inouye graduated from the University of Hawaii in 1950 with a BA in economics and government, and he received his JD from George Washington University Law School in 1952.

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CLAUDIA MILSTEAD

### ◆ IRANIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Iranian American literature is a compilation of works written by Americans of Iranian descent with themes around migration, assimilation, **hybridity**, and return to Iran. Whereas Iran has a literary history that spans two thousand years, Iranian American literature marks its beginning in the twentieth century. The majority of works that fit under this rubric are written by Iranian exiles or the children of exiles in the United States.

There are two waves of Iranian immigration to the United States. The first began in the 1950s after the oil boom in Iran. The Iranian government preferred to train their own citizens in engineering and technical fields rather than inviting guest workers from their neighbor countries in the Arab Gulf Peninsular. Thousands of Iranian students, mostly male, were sent abroad to receive their college degrees. Many returned to Iran, but a respectable portion of these Iranian students married American women and chose to remain. The second wave of Iranian immigration, the largest in its history, was after the 1979 toppling of the Pahlavi dynasty of Reza Shah by the Islamic regime led by Ayatollah Khomeini. According to the 2000 census, there are currently 338,000 Iranian Americans. However, in 2004, the Iranian studies group at MIT conducted an independent research that placed the population at 691,000. The largest population of Iranian Americans can be found in Los Angeles, which has been humorously referred to as "Tehrangelles."

Nahid **Rachlin** (1947–) is one of the first and most prolific Iranian American writers. She was born in Ahvaz, Iran, and came to the United States to attend college as an international student. She broke convention when she did not return to Iran and chose instead to remain in the United States and marry an American man, from whom she has her last name, Rachlin. Her debut novel *Foreigner* (Norton, 1978), about an Iranian American woman who returns to her family in Iran with her American husband, won critical acclaim. Books following this first novel are *Married to a Stranger* (E.P. Dutton, 1983), *Veils: Short Stories* (City Lights, 1992), *The Heart's Desire* (City Lights, 1995), *Jumping over Fire* (City Lights, 2006), and her memoir *Persian Girls* (Penguin, 2006). A feminist writer, her writing is characterized by a poetic melancholy and straightforward prose. The women protagonists experience layers of alienation until finally reaching their own self-created space. Her memoir, *Persian Girls*, documents her sorrowful childhood in Iran, where the losses and sense of displacement that she endures early in her life create the artist she has become.

There are a respectable number of Iranian American authors, and they are included in the comprehensive Iranian American anthologies edited by poet and scholar Persis Karim. The majority of Iranian American writers are women, and the popular genre has been memoir. Authors who have made the bestseller list are Azar Nafisi (*Reading Lolita in Tehran*, 2003), Tara Bahrapour (*To See and See Again: A Life in Iran and American*, 1999), Azadeh Moaveni (*Lipstick Jihad: A Memoir of Growing up Iranian in America and American in Iran*, 2005), Gelareh Asayesh (*Saffron Sky: A Life Between Iran and America*, 1999), Firoozeh Dumas (*Funny in Farsi: Growing Up Iranian in America*, 2004), and Roya Hakakian (*Journey from the Land of No: A Girlhood Caught in Revolutionary Iran*, 2004).

Tara Bahrapour (1968–), daughter of an Iranian father and an American mother, is the writer of the memoir *To See and See Again: A Childhood in America and Iran* (1999). Bahrapour left Iran with her family at the age of 11 and grew up in Palo Alto, California. She returned to Iran for the first time after the revolution in 1994. Her memoir is humorous, insightful, and breaks stereotypes of Iran with its political sternness. As a journalist she has written for the *New York Times*, the *Village Voice*, *Travel and Leisure*, and the *New Republic*. She currently writes for the *Washington Post* and is working on her next book.

Azadeh Moaveni (1976–), the author of the *New York Times* best seller *Lipstick Jihad: A Memoir of Growing up Iranian in America and American in Iran*, was born in Iran and raised in Paolo Alto, California. She returned to Iran after college and worked as the Middle East correspondent for *Time* magazine and later the *Los Angeles Times*. *Lipstick Jihad* (2005) was her first book. Her latest work was *Iran Awakening*, the memoir of the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Shirin Ebadi. Moaveni coauthored the memoir.

Firoozeh Dumas is the author of *Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing up Iranian in America*. She is the first Middle Eastern American to be nominated for the James Thurber Prize for American Humor (2005). She was born in Abadan, Iran, and migrated to the United States at the age of seven. Her book was on the best seller lists of both the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *Los Angeles Times*. She was a finalist for the PEN/USA 2004 Award for her first memoir. Dumas also performs her one-woman show *Laughing without an Accent*, which ran in 2006 in Mountainview, California.

A rising voice in poetry is Roger Sedarat, who is an assistant professor at Borough Manhattan Community College. Sedarat, whose father is Iranian and mother American, is the author of *Dear Regime: Letters to the Islamic Republic* (Ohio University Press, 2007), his first book of poetry and winner of the Hollis Summers Poetry Prize, Ohio. His work addresses the Iranian regime in playful and vivid language. Sedarat combines the American poetic tradition and Iranian tradition in his lyrical poetry.

Persis Karim, a poet, coedited the first Iranian American anthology along with Mohammad Mehdi Khorrami, *A World Between: An Anthology of Iranian American Writings* (1999) and edited the recent *Let Me Tell You Where I've Been: New Writing by Women of the Iranian Diaspora* (2006). The daughter of an Iranian father who was born and raised in France and a French mother, Karim was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area. As a poet her work has appeared in numerous magazines and journals, and as a scholar she teaches at San Jose State University. Self-labeled as the midwife of Iranian American literature, her anthologies have created a strong community of Iranian American writers, both famous and lesser known.

Iranian American literature is a growing field and an important addition to the growing conversation by Iranian and Iranian diaspora authors. With the expansion of **Asian American studies** programs to include West Asian material and the growing interest in Middle East/Middle Eastern American issues, these works are now commonly part of university classrooms, creating a new awareness of Iranian American identity and literature. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Asian Diasporas; Assimilation/Americanization.

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### ◆ ISSEI, NISEI, SANSEI

The terms *issei*, *nisei*, and *sansei* refer to Americans of Japanese descent residing in the United States. Issei, referring to the first-generation Japanese, began to migrate to Hawaii and the western United States in the 1880s. The constant pressure from the United States and other European powers led to domestic political, cultural, social, and economic changes in Japan. Favored by the new Japanese leadership, the 1868 Meiji Restoration was an attempt to move Japan from an oligarchy to a modern capitalist nation-state. According to historian Sucheng Chan (1991), these changes created some necessary preconditions for emigration; however, they did not account for the pattern of departures from Japan. As in the case of the Chinese, most issei who left the country after 1885 originally came from a relatively small region in southwestern Japan. Unlike the Chinese, most from this region were, by no means, the nation's poorest.

Following the **Chinese Exclusion Act** of 1882, Japanese workers were sought after by U.S. industrialists as replacements for cheap Chinese labor. Issei labor was desired for more than two decades. Efforts to exclude Japanese took on different forms because the United States was careful not to agitate the rising power in the Pacific. None of the laws affecting Japanese immigration explicitly excluded them, including the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907. As a result of the Gentlemen's Agreement, the Japanese government stopped issuing passports to Japanese laborers. Like the Chinese from the previous decade, only a select group of Japanese diplomats, students, and politicians were allowed entry into the United States. Married issei men who decided to settle in the United States could send for their wives, whereas bachelors could either return to Japan to get married or ask relatives back home to find them brides. The Japanese government encouraged issei farmers to send for their wives because they saw the importance of developing cohesive familial and agricultural communities in the Americas. In addition, it was a means to relieve Japan's population pressure.

The Immigration Act of 1924 barred immigration of all but a few Japanese. Since Japanese were encouraged to bring wives and antimiscegenation laws were prominent, the ban produced distinct generational groups in the Japanese American community. The issei thought of themselves as sojourners, but they considered their nisei (second-generation) children to be Americans. They envisioned the nisei to be the cultural bridge between the traditional Japanese and new American cultures. The formation of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) was significant for nisei during **World War II** but led to generational ideological tensions. JACL members believed that the best way to prove their loyalty to the United States was through total assimilation—to be more American than Americans. The kibei were second-generation Japanese Americans who were sent to Japan for education and returned as adults. They had a precarious relationship with their U.S.-raised counterparts. Unlike the nisei, the kibei did not necessarily believe in total assimilation and were more connected to Japanese values and customs.

During World War II, 120,000 Japanese Americans, two-thirds of whom were U.S. citizens, were forcibly removed from their homes after the bombing of **Pearl Harbor** on December 7, 1941. President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which authorized the secretary of war to define military areas. Consequently, persons without permission to enter or remain in these areas could be excluded as a military necessity. Military order, posted on telephone poles, called for the evacuation of “all persons of Japanese ancestry, both aliens and non-aliens” on the western halves of California, Oregon, and Washington in early March 1942. Many issei and some nisei leaders, including officers of various patriotic community organizations, Japanese language school teachers, martial arts instructors, Shinto and Buddhist priests, and newspapers editors were rounded up under the suspicion of being “loyal” to Japan. This accusation was later found unsubstantiated by an investigation conducted by the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) and the FBI. The Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) had, in fact, concluded “categorically” that both issei and nisei were loyal to the United States.

Hawaii was in much danger after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and martial law was enforced immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor; however, the 150,000 Japanese in Hawaii were not interned. The removal of Japanese residents, which comprised 37 percent of the islands’ total population, would have crippled their economy. Instead, 16 assembly centers on the mainland were set up at fairgrounds and race-tracks and facilitated the internment of Japanese Americans to concentration camps. These camps were located in the most isolated and desolate areas in the United States. The smallest camp housed 8,000 persons and the largest 20,000, while the average capacity was 10,000. According to Mae Ngai (2004), what was more troubling than the unpleasant environment was that the internees’ families started to disintegrate. The status and authority of the issei fathers, whose average age was 50 in 1942, began to erode once they lost their role as breadwinners. The older nisei, especially those who were block leaders and earned significantly more money, instantly acquired power, status, and independence.

The rift grew between issei and nisei with kibeï aligning with issei. Kibeï were proud of their heritage and outspoken against their incarceration, whereas nisei, especially members of the JACL, were the United States’ most ardent apologists and wanted to be accepted as Americans. Thousands of internees either requested repatriation to Japan or renounced their U.S. citizenship as a form of protest and resistance, while others showed their loyalty by serving in the military during World War II. Approximately 25,000 nisei served in the military, and, in all, 18,000 served in the 442nd, the segregated all-nisei infantry. The 442nd went on to become the most decorated unit of its size and became a great source of pride for the Japanese American community. It received seven Presidential Distinguished Unit Citations, while its members



earned more than 18,000 individual decorations, including a Congressional Medal of Honor, 47 Distinguished Service Crosses, 350 Silver Stars, 810 Bronze Stars, and more than 3,600 Purple Hearts.

When the war ended, issei, nisei, and their sansei children were forcibly pushed back into society. They returned to the hostile outside world confused, ashamed, and fearful. Many had sold their properties at extremely low prices due to their uncertain future. Some who still owned property found their homes vandalized and dilapidated, and their personal possessions stolen or destroyed. Some moved to the Midwest or the East Coast where they had relatives. Others were sheltered at churches and other social service agencies. Issei men, now in their sixties, found work as gardeners and janitors, and their wives worked as domestic servants. Some nisei men, along with veterans of Chinese and Filipino descent, were able to get a college education and buy homes because of the GI Bill.

For a long time, the history of internment brought shame, pain, and anger to the Japanese American community. However, as the sansei came of age and were influenced by the Asian American movement and radicalism of the 1960s, they began the redress movement in the early 1970s. Former internees broke the silence and started to talk about their experiences. After two decades of struggle, Japanese Americans won redress legislation in August 1988 and in November 1989 they won the guarantee of symbolic and monetary payments the following year through an entitlement program. An official letter of apology signed by President Bush and a one-time payment of \$20,000 was distributed to senior former internees beginning in October 1990. Most recipients of the redress were the nisei, since most issei had already passed away and only a handful of sansei experienced internment.

Initially, the redress campaign made little progress due to ideological differences among the Japanese leadership and the resistance of many nisei to the idea. Even after the passage of the bill, some were uncomfortable and even angry about monetary compensation. It suggested to them that the U.S. government was trying to pay them off for past injustices. However, many nisei and sansei also felt that monetary redress, along with an official apology, was the most effective way to prevent the U.S. government from repeating such acts to anyone else. The redress movement brought the Japanese American community together. It created a greater sense of community and stronger feelings toward sansei identity. More importantly, it broke the silences of pain and shame for a group of U.S. citizens who were racialized, marginalized, and incarcerated based solely on national origins. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization; Japanese American Internment.

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KEVIN D. LAM

### ◆ IYER, PICO (1957–)

An internationally recognized travel writer, novelist, and prolific journalist, Iyer's work has appeared in such periodicals as the *New York Review of Books*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *Harper's*, the *New York Times*, *Salon*, and perhaps most famously, *Time* magazine. His formative contributions to the genre of travel writing have theorized the act of voyage as a professional and intellectual endeavor, not a mere diversion or leisure activity. He writes regularly for magazines, occasional essays for *Time*, and shuttles between California, rural Japan, and such diverse destinations as Tibet, Yemen, and Easter Island.

Iyer was exposed to the traveling lifestyle at an early age. Born in Oxford, England, to professor parents from India, he grew up between their home in California and his British birthplace. A gifted student, Iyer attended Eton on scholarship, excelled at Oxford University, and later completed his graduate training at Harvard. After high school, he trekked across South America and back to the United States. During graduate school, he embarked on a grueling set of excursions across Europe as a writer for the Let's Go guidebook series. Although frenzied and underfunded, he credits these early forays into the traveling lifestyle as a form of training for his eventual career. A literature specialist, he taught briefly at Harvard before being hired as a correspondent for *Time* in 1982. Generous with its vacation allotments, the magazine allowed Iyer to travel to Asia for the first time the following year. The eye-opening experience provided the material for his first travel book *Video Night in Katmandu: And Other Reports from the Not-So-Far East* (1988). It was the freshness of perspective that this book offered that ignited Iyer's reputation as an author and raconteur.

Just as his travel writing merits comparisons with that of Jan Morris and Paul Theroux, Iyer's ethnicity elicits comparisons with other Indian-born writers of the West: Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, and Rohinton Mistry. Although aware of this intellectual heritage, Iyer chooses not to privilege the country of his kin but rather considers himself a product of multiple identifications. His unique position between the cultures of England, the United States, and India has given him a choice of selves and the freedom to construct his own vision of a "global soul."

Over the course of his publishing career, he has produced both fiction and nonfiction. Prevalent themes include the search for home, postmodern rootlessness, exile and migration, the East/West divide, the desire to belong, the combined perils and pleasures of globalization, and the metaphor of the journey. A scholarly monograph entitled *The Recovery of Innocence: Literary Glimpses of the American Dream* (1984) is a work of literary criticism often omitted from bibliographies of the author. More current versions tend to focus on his anecdotal travel writing: *The Lady and the Monk: Four Seasons in Kyoto* (1991), *Falling Off the Map: Some Lonely Places of the World* (1993), *Tropical Classical: Essays from Several Directions* (1997), *The Global Soul: Jet Lag, Shopping Malls, and the Search for Home* (2000), *Imagining Canada: An Outsider's Hope for a Global Future* (2001), and *Sun After Dark: Flights into the Foreign* (2004). His two novels are *Cuba and the Night* (1995) and *Abandon: A Romance* (2003). Apart from editorials, reviews, and articles, he has also collaborated on a number of essay collections.

Iyer uses the subjective "I" in much of his nonfiction, a choice that combines the vulnerability of the autobiographical eye with the knowledge-producing gaze of the confident observer. Apart from being a literary critic, he is also a cultural commentator whose experiences are a fusion of reading, research, and risk-taking. He explains in numerous interviews how the work of travel writing demands scrupulous detail, personal reflection, imaginative effort, and a perpetually seeking, unpretentious approach to life. His methodology is based on the desire to articulate something unique, idiosyncratic, or underappreciated in each location, whether it be human or nonhuman in nature. The adventurous spirit that infuses the genre, according to Iyer, is essentially a hybrid or mongrelized one; writing "on the move" is an appropriate medium for an increasingly pluralistic, polyglot, and multinational audience. At the level of composition, the process involves prodigious note-taking and an alertness to external stimuli that may not be present when the writer is in more familiar surroundings. Other concerns include accuracy of observation and care in editing to preserve reader interest while maintaining clarity. Also paramount is the ability to record impressions quickly given the transient nature of time and memory.

Much of Iyer's work is sprinkled with irony, wonder, and an attraction to minutiae that are often omitted from conventional approaches to the foreign or exotic. He suggests that the de- and refamiliarization process that travelers undergo is actually a catalyst for self-formation. The exploring writer surrenders to change, liberation, and the revelation of new truths. Using personal anecdotes such as his feelings of utter displacement and erasure when his house was destroyed in a fire (an episode detailed at the start of *The Global Soul*), Iyer compels readers to appreciate themes that appear simple but are deeply complex. These include the difference between internal and external baggage, the similarities between feeling loss and being lost, the act of taking

one's leave versus forced leave-taking, the contest between novelty and inherited tradition, and the paradoxical equation of journey and destination. Spirituality and religion (especially Buddhism), the evocative connotations of darkness, and the uneasy position of the foreigner are preoccupations that recur in many of Iyer's works.

Because he composes for a mixed audience and not just a specialized peer group, Iyer's technique combines a hyperawareness of place and a scrupulous regard for the capacities of language to affect the nature of the worlds being conveyed. Writing for him is both physical transit and intellectual, spiritual, and personal transport.

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NANCY KANG

# J



## ◆ JAPANESE AMERICAN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The Japanese started to arrive in America in the nineteenth century, though no Japanese American autobiographies were written until the early twentieth century. The first notable autobiographies were written by women, and, just as noteworthy, more autobiographies thematize the **Japanese American internment** experience in **World War II**. What follows is a brief discussion of major Japanese American autobiographers and their works produced in the past eight decades.

Two early autobiographies were written by women. Etsu Inagaki Sugimoto (1874–1950), an immigrant, wrote one of the earliest Japanese American autobiographies, *A Daughter of the Samurai* (1925), which looks back at the narrator's childhood in her home country of Japan while recounting the kind of education she received and the social and cultural customs of the Japanese. The values that she was inculcated in are loyalty, bravery, and honor, which characterize the spirit of samurai. The second part of the autobiography focuses on Sugimoto's life in California with her Japanese merchant husband and her forced return to Japan after her husband's death. The narrative ends with her permanent return to the United States with her daughters. Sugimoto makes no mention of racism in the United States, though implicit criticism of her adopted country can be found in the autobiography. Another early autobiography is Kathleen Tamagawa's (1897–1979) *Holy Prayers in a Horse's Ear* (1932). The child of a marriage between a Japanese man and an Irish woman, Tamagawa writes about her parents' interracial marriage and her own biculturalism, her acclimation to a life in Japan, where her father took his family to Yokohama as a silk buyer, and her own marriage to a white American and the couple's global travels.

Monica Sone (1919–) published *Nisei Daughter* in 1953. Inspired by the Chinese American Jade Snow Wong's autobiography *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (1945) that narrates a young Chinese American girl's growth in San Francisco, Sone's autobiography deals with essentially the same period as its Chinese predecessor, though its geographical locale is mostly set in Seattle, where Japanese Americans were ordered to evacuate. Sone recounts almost idyllic memories of her childhood on the waterfront of Seattle, where her parents owned a small hotel, but contrasting this peaceful prewar life are the hardships and humiliating ordeals Sone's family suffered at the concentration camps—first at Puyallup and then at Minidoka. Sone returned to the internment camp to visit her parents a year after her departure for college. Sone wrote the book partly to educate readers about her Japanese American family and their community, partly to denounce the government's racist and oppressive mistreatment of a people, and partly to describe the realization of her bicultural heritage and the development of her own cultural and racial identity. Also scrutinized are the psychological aftermaths of camp life on *nisei* Japanese Americans like Sone and how they internalized racialized victimization.

Daniel Inouye (1924–) wrote *Journey to Washington* (1967) with the assistance of Lawrence Elliott before his reelection to the United States Senate, chronicling the growth of a young Japanese American boy into a war hero and eventually a prominent legislator. The book narrates Inouye's childhood experience up to his entry into national politics. The dominant themes are patriotism, loyalty, and heroism. Inouye expresses an unequivocal American identity when after **Pearl Harbor** the government called on Americans to join the fight against fascism. A strong sense of determination, resilience, and optimism is clearly conveyed throughout the narrative. Whether faced with racial problems in school, racial hatred following Pearl Harbor, or life-threatening situations in World War II, Inouye remains determined to succeed in his American Dream through a hard work ethic and belief in American ideals and values.

Jim Yoshida (1921–) collaborated with Bill Hosokawa in writing *The Two Worlds of Jim Yoshida* (1972). Yoshida's is different from other Japanese American autobiographies written about Japanese American experiences right before, during, and immediately after World War II, for the majority of them focus upon the evacuation and internment of Japanese on the West Coast. Yoshida's work deals with a unique experience of an American of Japanese origin detained in his ancestral country, with which the United States was at war and for which he was forced to serve under its flag. It is the story of a man without a country. When World War II broke out, Yoshida took his father's ashes to Japan, where he was drafted to fight in the Japanese Imperial Army in China. The two worlds Yoshida refers to are apparently the United States and Japan, between which he was emotionally torn while physically stuck in Japan. The autobiography delineates two major issues: Yoshida's conscription and service to the Japanese

army and his legal battle with the United States government to reclaim his American citizenship. To atone for what he was forced to do during his Japanese years, Yoshida volunteered his service to his birth country by willingly joining U.S. troops in Korea to fight another war—the **Korean War**—in the early 1950s.

Jeanne Wakatsuki **Houston** (1935–) and James D. Houston (1934–) started to collaborate on Jeanne's personal experience of internment at Manzanar in the late 1960s and published *Farewell to Manzanar: A True Story of Japanese American Experience During and After the World War II Internment* in 1973. The autobiography presents firsthand accounts of the internment experience at one particular concentration camp during World War II. While the book focuses on the family of the Wakatsukis, it also attempts to include the experience of Japanese Americans beyond the circles of family and friends. As is true of other similar accounts of the wartime incarceration, *Farewell to Manzanar* does not merely recount or denounce the internment, but it takes on the onus of exploring and confronting the role of racism in the U.S. government's implementation of a race-based decision. The Houstons contrast the different lifestyles that the Wakatsukis lived before, during, and after the internment and the war. Jeanne's story is chronicled in her struggles with her racial and cultural identity and in her efforts to assimilate into the mainstream culture. Her struggles are characterized by a desire for acceptance in a racially divided society. The end of *Farewell to Manzanar* stages Jeanne's return to the concentration camp with her husband and their three children, thereby providing both a physical and psychological closure to what she believes to be a shameful experience.

Bill Hosokawa (1915–) is known for two autobiographies: *Thirty-five Years in the Frying Pan* (1978) and *Out of the Frying Pan: Reflections of a Japanese American* (1989). Hosokawa's personal experience of internment during World War II, his encounters with racial discrimination, and the Asian American experience in general are the principal concerns of many of his newspaper columns that he eventually collected into *Thirty-five Years in the Frying Pan* and *Out of the Frying Pan*. Hosokawa digs to the bottom of the Japanese American internment that he, his wife Alice, and their son Michael endured at Heart Mountain by tracing both the political and racial motivations of the government's decision to incarcerate Japanese Americans. Hosokawa investigates the causes of such mistreatment by scrutinizing the links between race and political status in the United States and the reasons why the Bill of Rights applies to certain citizens and not others, including his family and his ethnicity under war circumstances.

Yoshiko **Uchida** (1921–1992) published an autobiography, *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese-American Family*, in 1982, followed by another, *The Invisible Thread: An Autobiography*, in 1991. Both narratives recount the Japanese American internment experience. *Desert Exile* delves into issues of identity, racial and cultural

heritage, and the psychological effects of this racially motivated exile of Japanese Americans. Uchida not only narrates her blissful childhood lived among different ethnic groups and her racially more aware years during college, but also examines her ambivalence about being American in Japan and being Japanese in America. *The Invisible Threat* recaptures the essence of Uchida's first autobiography, except that it was written for a younger audience and with new perspectives informed by Japanese Americans' redress movement. In the latter Uchida expresses her positive views of Japan and affirmatively reiterates her Japanese American identity.

David Mura (1952–) is a **sansei** poet who writes autobiographies. He published *Turning Japanese: Memoirs of a Sansei* in 1991, followed by *Where the Body Meets Memory: An Odyssey of Race, Sexuality & Identity* in 1996. *Turning Japanese* was first written as a collection of essays published previously on various topics, such as cultural identity, racial politics, and sexuality from the viewpoint of a sansei. *Where the Body Meets Memory* delves into the same issues that Mura explored in his first autobiography, with emphasis on race, sexuality, and identity, though the book includes stories about his parents and grandparents, which makes it more of a memoir than an autobiography.

Another poet writing autobiography is Garrett Hongo (1951–), who takes the name of his birth village for his narrative: *Volcano: A Memoir of Hawaii*. Hongo left Hawaii at the age of six and settled in Los Angeles with his parents—a move that his memoir concentrates on. Hawaii seems like a paradise lost to the narrator, who is now on a quest for self-identity through researching his family history and the land that is the site of that history. Thus, history and geography occupy prominent places in the autobiographical narrative.

George Takei (1937–) is an actor writing autobiography. Known as Sulu to fans of the TV series *Star Trek*, Takei wrote *To the Stars: The Autobiography of George Takei, Star Trek's Mr. Sulu* (1994), which reflects his ethnicity and his career path. Like Frank Chin's novel *Gunga Din Highway* (Takei was cast in Chin's televised play *The Year of the Dragon* in 1974), *To the Stars* examines the important issue of representation of Asians in Hollywood. As a former internee in World War II, Takei also looks into the Japanese American internment and its effects on his parents. Even though Takei's book focuses on the self and his family, his message about subverting **Asian American stereotypes** and self-representation forms an important theme throughout the narrative. **See also** Issei, Nisei, Sansei; Korean War; Racism and Asian America.

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GUIYOU HUANG

## ◆ JAPANESE AMERICAN INTERNMENT

The mass eviction and imprisonment of more than 120,000 Japanese Americans during **World War II**, 70 percent of them U.S. citizens, is the single-most important event in Japanese American history. Internment is one of the most researched topics in **Asian American studies**, and it is routinely taught in U.S. law schools as an unprecedented example of the U.S. government's failure to protect the constitutional rights of a racially defined group of citizens. Today, more than 60 years after the event, Japanese American internment has acquired new meaning in light of the racial profiling, detention, and deportation of Arab and Muslim Americans following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States.

In 1942 many high-ranking government and military leaders rejected the view that Japanese Americans, simply by virtue of race and ancestry, should automatically be considered a threat to national security. However, this idea was allowed to dominate in the press and stigmatized the entire Japanese American population as potential enemies. The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC), formed by an act of Congress in 1981, concluded in their 400-page report *Personal Justice Denied* that the internment "was not justified by military necessity" but rather by "race prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership" (1997, 18).

On February 19, 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt signed into law Executive Order 9066, which gave the secretary of war permission to establish areas "from which any or all persons may be excluded as deemed necessary." Eventually these exclusion zones came to include all of California, the western halves of Washington and Oregon, and the southern half of Arizona. From March 31, 1942, through November 1942, all Japanese Americans were removed from these areas. In the official euphemisms employed during the war, they were first "evacuated" to one of 16 temporary "assembly centers" (all but three located in California) and later transferred to one of 10 long-term "relocation centers," built in isolated desert and swampland locations: Gila River and Poston in Arizona; Jerome and Rohwer in Arkansas; Manzanar and Tule Lake in California; Granada (Amache) in Colorado; Minidoka in Idaho; Topaz in Utah; and Heart Mountain in Wyoming. Poston opened first on May 8, 1942, and Tule Lake was the last to close on March 20, 1946. Since the end of the war, most published writing and public discussions about these places use the terms *concentration camp* and *internment camp*.

At their peak occupancy in November 1942, the 10 camps held 106,000 internees, but the total number in WRA custody during the war was 120,313, a figure that includes children born in camp, seasonal workers released from assembly centers, transfers from the Department of Justice internment camps and from Hawaii, institutionalized persons, and "volunteer" evacuees. Living conditions at both the assembly and relocation centers were substandard; the most serious problems concerned sewage and sanitation, overcrowding, food shortages, inadequate medical and educational facilities, and a chronic, debilitating lack of privacy. Communal toilets and showers did not have partitions, and whole families, regardless of size, were housed in single rooms, at most 20 × 25 feet, with no running water or floor-to-ceiling partitions. Housing did not adequately protect against severe weather conditions. Internment was a complex event that cannot be fully understood except through multiple political, social, and psychological issues. However, at the center and circumference of all specific issues or episodes of the internment are two fundamental ironies. One is the difference between the treatment of Japanese Americans in Hawaii and on the West Coast; the other is the government's method of hastening to certify the loyalty of interned Japanese Americans soon after their imprisonment by making them eligible for combat duty and for release from the relocation centers.

On December 7, within hours of the attack on **Pearl Harbor**, FBI agents swept through Japanese American communities and arrested individuals previously identified as potential security risks. All together, about 8,000 were placed in five internment camps run by the Department of Justice, one in Hawaii and four on the continent. After this point, however, the experience of Japanese Americans in Hawaii and on the continent diverged. General Emmonds, in command of Hawaii after it was put under martial law, never supported mass internment. Unlike General DeWitt, who

headed the Western Defense Command and was responsible for the fate of the West Coast's nikkei population, Emmonds did not view the Japanese in Hawaii as a collective security threat and realized that removing 158,000 people who comprised more than one-third of the local population would bring the economy of Hawaii to a standstill. Less than 1,118 individuals from Hawaii were interned.

In February 1943, scarcely one year after the internment had begun, a loyalty review was undertaken at all camps to begin resettlement of internees. This was the most divisive episode of internment, its repercussions still felt today within the Japanese American community. Internees were required to answer a questionnaire commonly referred to as the loyalty oath. Although its original purpose was to recruit nisei volunteers for a segregated combat unit, it was used to clear all internees for resettlement. Loyalty was determined by yes/no answers to Question 27: "Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?" and Question 28: "Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power or organization?" These questions brought to the fore internment's bitter contradictions: that loyalty could in fact be determined on an individual basis and that Japanese Americans could in fact be defined as loyal citizens, the two points that had been previously considered impossible and thus justifying the military necessity of internment. Further, many nisei felt that their civil rights should be restored before they were asked to give their lives to defend such rights. Recruitment of nisei volunteers was not successful; only 1,200 volunteered from the camps, compared to 10,000 from Hawaii. Those now identified as "disloyals"—about 10,000 internees eligible to register who did not answer with an unqualified yes, including 4,600 or 20 percent of interned nisei males—were targeted for segregation at Tule Lake, which became a tragic symbol of everything that was wrong about the internment. Once Tule Lake became designated as a segregation center for disloyals and their family members in July 1943, its administrative policies became more punitive. A stockade was built and prisoners were beaten, while at the same time extreme pro-Japan forces were allowed to terrorize the camp. The loyalty oath and its offshoots—draft resistance, renunciation of citizenship, and expatriation—fractured the Japanese American community. For several decades it was too painful a subject for open discussion.

The impact of internment on Asian American literature is clearly visible in the history of Japanese American writing. The majority of nisei and sansei writers raised in the continental United States have written something on internment, and these internment narratives, whether comprising a whole text or only part of a larger work, have been continuously produced from 1942 through the present and reflect four periods of internment memory.

The first period comprises the literature written and published within the camps themselves. Nisei artist Mine Okubo's *Citizen 13660* (1946), a diary of drawings and text recording daily life at Tanforan and Topaz, is one of the most widely read and highly estimated works from the camp period. Other important nisei writers are Mitsuye Yamada and Toyo Suyemoto. Issei writing can be sampled in Jiro and Kay Nakano's *Poets Behind Barbed Wire* (1984) and Violet Kazue (Matsuda) de Cristoforo's *May Sky: There Is Always Tomorrow* (1997). Photos and film footage from within the camps provide another source of on-site internment memory, such as Spotted Dog Press's *Born Free and Equal* (2001), a reprint of Ansel Adams's 1944 photo essay on Manzanar, and *Impounded: Dorothea Lange and the Censored Images of Japanese American Internment* (W.W. Norton, 2006). *Something Strong Within*, a video based on home movies of the internment, was produced by the Japanese American National Museum for its 1994 exhibition "America's Concentration Camps: Remembering the Japanese American Experience." Curator Karen Ishizuka later wrote a narrative history of the organization of this exhibit, published as *Lost & Found: Reclaiming the Japanese American Incarceration* (2006), which doubles as a highly readable single-volume overview of the internment.

The second period of internment memory from 1945 through 1960 has been characterized by Carolyn Chung Simpson as the era of the Japanese America's "absent presence" in national consciousness (2001, 11). During the postwar decades, Japanese Americans tried to put the past behind them and to concentrate instead on recuperating the staggering economic losses of the war years. Although some of the enduring works of Asian American literature were written during this period, they went largely unread until the movement era. These works include Hisaye Yamamoto's classic story "The Legend of Miss Sasagawara," two stories that were added to the original manuscript of Toshio Mori's *Yokohama, California*, whose publication was postponed from 1942 to 1949, Monica Sone's autobiography *Nisei Daughter* (1953), and John Okada's novel *No-No Boy* (1957).

The third phase of internment memory, from the sixties through the eighties, is the era of "breaking silence," an expression that appears frequently in Asian American discourse from this time. Literary works that had been published between 1945 and 1960 were rediscovered and reprinted, and many new internment narratives appeared, including Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's coauthored memoir *Farewell to Manzanar*, Edward Miyakawa's novel *Tule Lake* (1979), several novels by Yoshiko Uchida, the foremost writer on internment for young readers, and sansei poet and activist Janice Mirikitani's *Awake in the River* (1978) and *Shedding Silence* (1987). Lawson Fusao Inada and Joy Kogawa, whose writings symbolize the literary front of redress movements in the United States and Canada, published their pioneering works, *Before the War* (1971) and *Obasan* (1981), respectively.

The idea of redress was proposed at the JACL 1970 national convention and eventually led to the formation of three national committees and many local groups around the country. The redress movement gained momentum in the late seventies and reached a turning point during public hearings conducted in 1981 by CWRIC. Their official report, *Personal Justice Denied* (1982–1983), is based on a study of government archives, internment scholarship, and public testimony from people involved in implementing internment and from hundreds of former internees and their descendants. The report led to the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which wrote into law all five of the commission's recommendations for redress, including an official apology and symbolic payment of \$20,000 to each of the more than 80,000 survivors.

In the fourth and current period of post-redress, post-9/11 internment memory, authors of celebrated internment narratives have produced second and third books on the subject, such as Lawson Inada's *Legends from Camp* (1992) and *Drawing the Line* (1997), Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's *The Legend of Firehorse Woman* (2005), and Canadian novelist Kerri Sakamoto's *One Hundred Million Hearts* (2003). Unpublished or out-of-print writings continue to find their way into print, as with Toshio Mori's posthumous collection of fiction, *Unfinished Message* (2000), which includes a novella written in Topaz. Some well-known writers have published their first explicit internment narratives, such as Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* (1997), which includes a character named Manzanar Murakami; Cynthia Kadohata's *Weedflower* (2006), a novel about Poston for young adults; and Perry Miyake's *21st Century Manzanar* (2002), a blend of realism and science fiction that imagines the return of internment. For new writers, internment continues to provide a focus for whole works, as in Julie Otsuka's *When the Emperor Was Divine* (2002), or a key element within a larger framework, exemplified by Naomi Hirahara's mystery series about LA gardener Mas Arai. All of these post-redress narratives are marked by efforts to explore the inherent but previously underexamined transnational and multicultural dimensions of internment history. Inada, Miyake, Houston, and Kadohata, for example, emphasize intersections between Japanese and Native American histories; Yamashita's Manzanar Murakami is connected to six other narrators representing Chicana/o, South American, African American, pan-Asian, and Japanese American cultures; and Hirahara and Sakamoto emphasize trans-Pacific war memory through characters representing kibeï, victims of the Hiroshima atomic bombing, kamikaze pilots, internees, 442nd veterans, and Japanese who immigrated to the United States after the war. **See also** Issei, Nisei, Sansei.

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GAYLE K. SATO

## ◆ JAPANESE AMERICAN LITERATURE

The development of Japanese American literature flows out of the larger movement within the United States that focuses upon the lives and situations faced by Asian Americans living in the United States. Japanese American literature distinguishes itself within **Asian American literature** through a focus upon experiences distinct to this group. Most specifically, literature reflects the treatment of Japanese Americans by the U.S. government during the time of **World War II**. During the years 1942–1945, the U.S. government forced thousands of Japanese families to relocate to large internment camps. In addition to the exploration of public policy, Japanese American fiction discusses the social ostracism felt by Japanese Americans during this time. Unique to this community, wartime suspicions became vocal accusations, and many families suffered social reprisals for their Japanese ancestry. Although these experiences continue to be reflected in the work of contemporary writers, current work embraces the modern conflicts encountered by Americans with a blended identity.

Asian American literature became a category within or against the canon of American literature in the later part of the twentieth century. This development was directly influenced by progress made by several minority groups in social and literary recognition. The work of African American literary critics and writers and that of individuals involved in the discipline of women's studies helped establish a basis for **Asian American studies** within the academy. Quite naturally, the work of scholars focusing upon minority writers began to approach the work of Asian American writers as a distinct and fertile area for investigation.

## HISTORY OF JAPANESE IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

The first recorded large-scale immigration of Japanese workers to Hawaii was May 17, 1868. A group of 153 Japanese migrants, traveling on a ship called the *Scioto*, went to work at the Hawaiian sugar plantations. The numbers of Japanese immigrants in Hawaii rapidly increased, and, in July 1898, when Congress passed the Newlands Resolution annexing Hawaii to the United States, these Japanese workers came under the immigration policies. Under the presidency of William McKinley (1843–1901), the Organic Act was signed, which dictated the governmental structure of the territory: The state was admitted to the Union on August 21, 1959. At the same time that Japanese culture was developing in Hawaii, immigration to the continental United States was underway. By May 14, 1905, the Asiatic Exclusion League was formed in San Francisco to prevent Japanese and Korean immigration; however, Japanese immigration continued relatively unimpeded until 1907. By this point, due to pressures from labor unions and politicians, Japanese immigration was restricted: From 1908 to 1924, many Japanese brides were allowed into the nation. This situation was different from that experienced by the Chinese. The **Chinese Exclusion Act** of 1882 disallowed all petitioners' entrance into the community. Nonetheless, by 1924, all Japanese immigrants were prevented admittance to the United States. These restrictions stayed in place until 1952, when a quota system allowed 100 immigrants per year.

## WORLD WAR II AND JAPANESE AMERICAN INTERNMENT

Arguably, the most significant event for Japanese Americans was the bombing of **Pearl Harbor**, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941. Not only did this prompt the United States into an open declaration of war against the empire of Japan, it called into question the loyalty of Japanese American citizens. Because of reaction to the Pearl Harbor bombing, in which 2,335 sailors and 68 civilians died, Congress passed the resolution for war unanimously. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882–1945), who was in office for an unprecedented four terms, was responsible for issuing Executive Order 9066, which led to the incarceration of 120,000 people in **Japanese American internment** camps throughout the Southwest. The justification for their imprisonment was that they posed a national security risk, despite the fact that the majority of the captives were American citizens and almost half of them were children. Many of these Japanese Americans were detained in the camps for up to four years, during which time homes, jobs, and family connections were disrupted or destroyed. It is therefore not surprising that a good deal of early Japanese American literature reflects upon the devastation represented in the internment camps.

Ironically, while most Japanese Americans were suffering great humiliation and the loss of personal liberty, others were actively fighting on behalf of the very nation that distrusted them. Many Japanese American soldiers took the opportunity to prove their

loyalty to the United States by joining the military. Despite this overt sign of loyalty, these troops were greatly mistrusted. They were treated with suspicion and were assigned to segregated, all-Japanese American units. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team and the 100th Infantry Battalion were deployed to action in both Northern Africa and Europe, and both received record numbers of honors for their actions in the war. One of their most famous exploits came in the form of rescue of the Lost Battalion, a unit that was caught in the midst of German territory. Because of the efforts of the Japanese American soldiers, many of whom did not make it home from the war, 275 U.S. soldiers were saved from annihilation. The Japanese American troops had one of the highest mortality rates, earning them the nickname Purple Heart Battalion.

#### JAPANESE AMERICAN LITERATURE WITHIN ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES

In the period following the war, Japanese Americans continued to suffer from the legacy of their internment and the suspicions of their country. As a result, a movement for social equality began. The period of the mid-1900s, most noticeably the 1960s and 1970s, reflected a growing awareness of Asian American civil rights. The development of this particular approach to American civil rights grew from the organizational structures that helped both Native American and African American people redress some of the discrepancies faced in legal and social treatment. One way in which the changes were reflected was in the shift in laws that governed the rights of citizens. The Civil Liberties Act of 1988, "Restitution for World War II internment of Japanese-Americans and Aleuts," was one such legal victory, in which the figure of 20,000 dollars was allocated as reparations for each individual who had been forced into the internment camps. Signed by President Ronald Reagan (1911–2004), this law included a \$1.25 billion education fund. In keeping with this were other legal victories. Educational and workplace laws were enacted to prevent segregation and discrimination. Additionally, changes in high school and university curriculums began to reflect the experiences of Asian American history.

Quite naturally, the work of Japanese American writers began to be studied as a subsection of Asian American literature or within the context of American minority literature. Collections of scholarship started to include analysis of Japanese American literature as a distinct genre. However, there was and still is contention as to who is able to be included underneath the label of Japanese American. The main contention seems to focus upon the identity of the writer, specifically asking how far back one's ancestry has to go to embrace the title. Does one have to have been born in the United States of immigrant parents to be able to claim authenticity? Or can an individual be newly arrived to the nation yet claim knowledge of both cultures? The newest wrinkle in this essentializing process is presented by writers who are not Japanese by decent, yet embrace Japanese American culture either through time spent living in Japan or a deep investment in the language and culture within the United States. The debate about



inclusion in the cannon of Asian American and/or Japanese American writers continues to be fought. Writers who are of **Asian American** descent yet write about life outside of the narrow confines of racial experience are sometimes excluded. Similarly, nonethnically Asian or Japanese American writers who nonetheless focus upon the immigration and social experiences of Japanese Americans sometimes find an uncomfortable home within this body of literature. This particular problem is by no means unique to Japanese American literature. In fact, as the nation moves forward and identities continue to expand and blend, the questions about who is able to either claim or reject an ethnically or racially specific title will no doubt become more complicated.

### JAPANESE AMERICAN LITERATURE SUMMARY

The development of the body of Japanese American literature can be traced back to the work by Kai-yu Hsu and Helen Palubinskas titled *Asian American Authors*, 1972. As part of a larger discussion, Japanese American literature was one of three main subjects considered as part of the continuum of Asian American literature. The other two groups reflected in the work were Chinese and Filipino writers. This text focused specifically on native-born American writers of Asian descent. This work was followed up by David Hsin-Fu Wand's *Asian-American Heritage: An Anthology of Prose and Poetry*, which came out in 1974. In addition to Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino writers, this text considered writers from North and South Korea, expanding the understanding from where in Asia a writer could hail. A final seminal text to note is *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers* (edited by Frank **Chin**, et al., 1974). Although now criticized for philosophical and political statements and a limited conception of Asian American literature, this text is in part responsible for the development of the field of Asian American literature. By the early 2000s, the inclusion of Asian American writers in American literature is a standard marker of a well conceived text. Additionally, anthologies of Asian American literature are produced by most of the leading academic houses. Within these anthologies, several of the writers below are often referred to as significant members of the Japanese American literary canon.

### THE NISEI WRITERS

The nisei writers began to publish their work in the 1930s. Nisei refers to second-generation Japanese Americans and, therefore, includes many of the people who lived in the United States during the time of World War II. As noted above, these people faced the harshest treatment by the U.S. government because their allegiance to the United States was doubted. In response to this suspicion, over 110,000 citizens of Japanese descent were sent to internment camps for the duration of the war. From this experience came a host of writers who struggled to comprehend how the nation to which they were devoted had suddenly turned against them.

The work by Monica **Sone** (1919–), *Nisei Daughter*, came out in 1953 and discusses the double bind of being rejected by her homeland and equally unwelcome in her accessorial home. Not only was the author questioning the attitudes of the nation toward Japanese Americans, she delved into the new position in which these individuals found themselves. *Nisei* is the Japanese word indicating native born, which reflects Sone's status as a child of Japanese immigrants (referred to as *issei*). *Nisei Daughter* is the tale of her experiences as a child living first in Seattle's skid row and then later at one of the Japanese internment camps to which she and her family were forced to move. She reflects the difficulty she had growing up within an American culture that disliked her Japanese ancestry. In her discussion, she addresses the equally problematic press to adhere to her Japanese cultural roots. She reflects the tension of this dual identity through discussion of religion, education, dress, and food.

Another nisei writer is Toshio **Mori** (1910–1980). Born in Oakland, California, and raised in San Leandro, Mori was sent for internment at Topaz War Relocation Center in Utah. His work *Yokohama, California* (1949) was initially scheduled to be produced before the war, but his contract was canceled. After his release from Topaz, this collection was published. Two other works were produced during his lifetime: *The Chauvinist and Other Stories* (1979) and *The Woman from Hiroshima* (1980). Recently, a posthumous compilation titled *Unfinished Message: Selected Works of Toshio Mori* (2000) has been produced to share Mori's unpublished work.

Another example of nisei writing is the work of John **Okada** (1923–1971), titled *No-No Boy* (1957). This is, perhaps, the most famous piece of writing to reflect upon the postwar experience of Japanese Americans. Okada presents the complicated situation of the main character named Ichiro, a conscientious objector, who must contend with life immediately after the close of World War II. Okada develops a complex setting called "Jap Town," a small Seattle community in which Ichiro is connected with many returning Japanese Americans: they are coming home from war, jail, or internment camps. Okada himself had been interned at Minidoka, Idaho, and was released to join the U.S. Armed Forces. His novel reflects the no-win situation suffered by many Japanese Americans after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and its influence on identity.

Hisaye **Yamamoto's** (1921–) story "The Legend of Miss Sasagawara" was published in 1950. Like many other nisei writers, Yamamoto's story draws upon her personal experiences at an internment camp, Arizona Poston Relocation Center. Yamamoto's work pays particular attention to the situation of Japanese American women, which is reflected in her short stories such as "Seventeen Syllables" and "Yoneko's Earthquake."

Modern writers such as Karen Tei **Yamashita** have moved away from the Japanese American experience as the content of her work. Instead, she considers the experience

of Japanese Americans as they work and travel abroad. Her works *Brazil-Marú* (1992) and *Through the Arc of the Rainforest* (1990) underscore the need for multicultural identities and emphasize the limitations of both linguistics and ethnic barriers.

Lois-Ann **Yamanaka's** writing is focused upon the experiences of Japanese and other Asian Americans living in Hawaii. Her work uses dialect to convey the realism of her characters. Yamanaka is well recognized as an outstanding writer, having received multiple literary awards. However, she has also received criticism for her descriptions of Asian Americans, including a public indictment that one of her portrayals was racist. These are a few of her better known works: *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre* (1993), *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers* (1996), and *Blu's Hanging* (1997). Her latest work is titled *Behold the Many: A Novel* (2006).

Poet Janice **Mirikitani** (1941–) does not belong to the nisei writers because she is a third-generation Japanese American, called a sansei. Nonetheless, Mirikitani spent time as an infant in the Rohwer internment camp in Arkansas. Mirikitani's work speaks out against various forms of abuse and oppression. Not only was she the victim of racial and political discrimination due to her Japanese ancestry, Mirikitani suffered poverty, child abuse, and sexual abuse in the form of incest. Her work in social outreach and poetry addresses these issues. Mirikitani has published three volumes of poetry, *Awake in the River* (1978), *Shedding Silence* (1987), and *We, the Dangerous: New and Selected Poems* (1995).

Milton **Murayama** (1923–) was born in Hawaii to Japanese immigrants and lived with his parents on the compound of a sugar plantation. While attending the University of Hawaii, Murayama briefly worked in the military until the bombing of Pearl Harbor. He was soon reconnected to the military as a translator and returned to university after the war. While working on his graduate degree, Murayama completed a novel titled *All I Asking for Is My Body* (1975), which reflects upon his childhood experiences on the plantation, as do *Five Years on a Rock* (1994) and *Plantation Boy* (1998). Murayama's work focuses upon the conditions immigrant workers must face and connects the themes of racial and class exploitation. His work has also been produced in dramatic form.

The work of modern Japanese American writers continues to expand upon the experiences unique to their situation within the country; however, the work of some of the writers noted above demonstrates a global perspective. Japanese American writers are by no means limited to investigations of ancestry or of hardships specific to Japanese Americans within the United States. In fact, much writing clearly develops themes of continuity with other immigrant populations that suffer due to unfair labor practices. Additionally, the question of language and cultural difference is shared by writers outside of the Asian American canon. At the same time that writers focus upon the uniqueness of the Japanese American position, the assets gained from the benefit

of a dual cultural background, others are looking at ways to create a world identity. These writers address the global community and look for ways in which the lines of race, nation, language, and class can be diminished, if not completely erased. **See also** Asian American Studies; Issei, Nisei, Sansei.

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VERONICA HENDRICK

### ◆ JAPANESE AMERICAN POETRY

The poetic expressions of Japanese Americans have traditionally been regarded by critics as beginning with the nisei, or second generation, in the 1930s. According to this construction, the issei, or immigrant Japanese, who began immigrating in sizable numbers in the late nineteenth century, were mostly men seeking to make money so that they might return to Japan, establish families, and never again live in the United States. Although this narrative contains considerable truth, it overlooks a small body of issei writings that bear examination. Nisei, coming of age in the 1930s, established literary communities with mostly English-language publications. The central event in Japanese American history was the mass eviction in 1942 of the western state communities and their incarceration in concentration camps in the interior West and in Arkansas. Wartime and postwar nisei poetry is understandably concerned with this experience. Yet the war created a gap in Japanese Americans' poetic activity, a gap that began to fill only with the emergence in the 1960s of the civil rights and racial consciousness movements. While nisei continued to write, sansei and even yonsei (third- and fourth-generation Japanese Americans) developed vibrant literary communities with new aesthetic and thematic concerns.

The recovery of the earliest Asian American poetry in English culminated in the publication, in 1996, of *Quiet Fire: A Historical Anthology of Asian American Poetry*

*1892–1970*, edited by Juliana Chang. The work of Japanese American poets such as Jun Fujita, Sadakichi Hartman, and Yone Noguchi (father of the artist Isamu Noguchi) received quite possibly its widest audience almost a century after its first appearance. As with the earliest Japanese American fiction, writers seemed to cling to Japanese forms and themes or else to embrace new modernist modes. Hartman imported Japanese forms to the high modernism of New York's Greenwich Village. Another issei poet, Bunichi Kagawa, immigrated in the 1920s and wrote about issues of identity, which was more typical of later nisei writers. Largely absent from this literary history, however, is the small but significant body of issei poetry written in Japanese and published in community newspapers and periodicals. Many issei, and some nisei, continued to write in Japanese well into the twentieth century, even during the war years, and little of this work is translated and available.

Most nisei writers were young adults during the wartime incarceration. The oldest nisei established a literary culture in the 1930s, publishing community newspapers and magazines such as *Reimei*, *Gyo-Sho*, and *Current Life*. Iwao Kawakami was a key figure in this prewar culture as a poet and a literary advocate. Other important prewar poets included Chiye Mori and Hisaye **Yamamoto** (better known today for her short stories). Although wartime imprisonment broke up literary communities, it did not deter young writers from spawning a new literary culture behind barbed wire. These writers included Taro Katayama, Ruth Tanaka, Miko Tamura, and Taro Suzuki. The most active new nisei literary communities resided in the Poston camp in Arizona and the Topaz camp in Utah. At Topaz, the makeshift literary magazine published poems by Toyo **Suyemoto**, quiet depictions of a brutal nature that, in the view of critic Susan Schweik, embedded a critique of the incarceration. In Suyemoto's poem "In Topaz," for example, the speaker sees a hard desert surface covered by snow and asks whether such harshness will last forever, then ends on an expression of hope for release. Suyemoto continued writing and publishing through the end of the twentieth century. Other nisei writers gained prominence only after the war. The earliest work of Mitsuye Yamada, written during and shortly after imprisonment in the Minidoka camp, was not gathered in a book until the 1976 publication of *Camp Notes*. Unlike Suyemoto, Yamada openly expresses outrage over injustices, and her subjects range far beyond the wartime incarceration to contemporary racism and sexism.

Perhaps the Japanese American poetry best known to readers is the work of sansei and yonsei writers. Some of these poets were alive during the war, but most were born later. The oldest of these poets still write frequently about the camps. The titles of all of the volumes by Lawson Fusao **Inada**, and most of the poems they contain, refer to the incarceration, even though many of them also concern a California boyhood and early experiences with jazz. Janice **Mirikitani** has also written extensively about both the incarceration and the postwar shedding of Japanese Americans' silence about their

experience. Both Inada and Mirikitani have also played crucial roles in unearthing early Japanese American poetry, Inada as a coeditor of *Aiiieeeee!* (1974) and *The Big Aiiieeeee!* (1991), Mirikitani as editor of *Ayumi: A Japanese American Anthology* (1980). Many poems by James Masao Mitsui are also historical, concerned with the camps and with Japanese Americans' connection with Japanese culture. Sansei David **Mura**, based in the Midwest, is a transitional poet, writing long meditations on his family's experience in the camps but also writing about popular culture, South Africa, a survivor of the atomic bomb, sexualities, pornography, and filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini.

Among younger poets, perhaps only Lee Ann **Roripaugh** devotes extensive attention to the wartime incarceration. Roripaugh's quiet meditations on her family's imprisonment in Wyoming draw upon Japanese culture and belief. Others such as Amy Uyematsu, Sharon Hashimoto, Kimiko **Hahn**, and Garrett **Hongo** may allude to the camps, but they prefer to examine more current events. Uyematsu's poems are lively observations of everyday life or, more recently, Zen meditations on weather, animals, and stones. Hongo's poems are deeply rooted in cultural spaces and are quietly narrative and elegiac. Hahn's poems are more stridently political, though their subjects are as likely to be coal miners, residents of men's shelters, and Flaubert's sexual politics as her own racial community. Among the few Japanese American poets whose work can be described as formally experimental, Hahn has enjoyed the most prominence. She practices what critic Traise Yamamoto calls "a poetics of fragrance," an examination of the ways in which language has constructed a repressive politics of the body that must be reclaimed before women can create their own narratives. *The Unbearable Heart* (1995) is her most ambitious volume, a study of global Orientalism's claims on Asian women's bodies.

The strident call for Asian American cultural nationalism passionately advanced by Frank **Chin** has had little effect on Japanese American fiction, but Hongo, in the introduction of his anthology *The Open Boat: Poems from Asian America* (1993), provoked controversy among poets. While "ethnic pride" might have had a claim over poets in the 1960s, Hongo argues, it must not be allowed to restrict them to expressions of anger and bitterness. In fact, Hongo professes his fondness for the European and American literary traditions and rejects Chin's categories of authentic and inauthentic Asian American literature. He claims that the poets he most admires are those who value sound as much as, or even more than, meaning, and he rejects what he calls the "show-colors" of ethnic pride. Significantly, then, the two poems he selected from Inada's volumes are about jazz, not the camps. Among sansei and yonsei poets, controversy has revolved around the extent of their engagement with the wartime incarceration. Should they strive for "authenticity" and write laments for Japanese Americans' losses and rants against the racism of internment? Most of them

have answered with a more global vision that is probably more politically engaged than Hongo would like but that is also not restricted to the cultural nationalisms of the 1960s. Thus Mura mourns his family's losses during the war and also dissects his addiction to pornography. And Hahn invokes Flaubert and Lady Murasaki even as she analyzes contemporary domestic politics. And even Mirikitani, writing about the camps, also alludes to injustices in South Africa, Ethiopia, and El Salvador.

Formally, Japanese American poets have embraced Western practice. When they draw upon Japanese literary forms and motifs, they do so self-consciously. Thematically, they are becoming increasingly engaged in a global culture and politics. When they draw upon the experience of wartime incarceration, they contextualize it. **See also** Issei, Nisei, Sansei; Japanese American Internment; Nationalism and Asian America; Orientalism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America; Sexism and Asian America.

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JOHN STREAMAS

### ◆ JAPANESE AMERICAN SHORT STORY

If Anton Chekhov may be called the father of the Russian short story, then the parents of Japanese American short fiction, though less well known, are as easily identifiable. Both are nisei (second-generation) Japanese Americans, and both achieved perhaps their greatest fame long after their first stories appeared in print. Toshio **Mori**, born in 1910 in Oakland, California, started publishing in the 1930s in nisei community newspapers and magazines as well as mainstream journals. Hisaye **Yamamoto**, born in 1921 in Redondo Beach, California, started publishing poems in prewar nisei community newspapers and magazines. Her short stories appeared in the literary magazine of one of the 10 camps in which she and 120,000 other Japanese Americans were imprisoned during **World War II**, but mainstream publication of her

fiction began only after the war. Other Japanese Americans published stories earlier and later, but these two are the towering figures of the form.

Winnifred Eaton, though born in 1875 of a British father and a Chinese mother, may be said to have inaugurated Japanese American fiction. Working under the Japanese-sounding name Onoto Watanna, she published the first purportedly Japanese American novel, *Miss Numé of Japan: A Japanese-American Romance*, in 1899. At the same time, also as Onoto Watanna, she was publishing essays and short stories. In many of her stories, protagonists are biracial women involved in cross-racial romances. Though often their cleverness does not save them from defeats and sorrows, their industriousness is noteworthy. Critics have complained, however, that Eaton's very taking of a Japanese-sounding name, let alone her creation of characters who represent oversimplified bridges between East and West, renders her stories too vulnerable to a politics of gendered exoticizing. Yet they might have cleared a way for the novels of Etsu Sugimoto, such as *Daughter of the Samurai* (1925), which romanticizes Japanese culture for Western audiences. Critic Stan Yogi argues that in the 1930s nisei writers similarly assumed the role of cultural ambassadors, though with the onset of global war they frantically reversed course and tried to assert their Americanness. Issei, or immigrant, Japanese fiction in English generally made little impact, and the thriving community culture of the 1930s largely excluded them. Issei writing in Japanese has had even less effect, though it remains mostly untranslated and unavailable.

The parents of the Japanese American short story launched their careers, as stated, in prewar literary publications. Mori's work appeared not only in nisei publications but also in the mainstream press, alongside the works of William Saroyan, Langston Hughes, and Gertrude Stein. Saroyan even befriended Mori's literary ambitions, championing his first book, *Yokohoma, California* (1949). The book was originally scheduled for a 1942 publication but the war postponed its appearance, and Mori took advantage of the delay by adding two stories written about wartime Japanese experience. Yogi claims that Mori based his collection's form on Irish and U.S. models, James Joyce's *Dubliners* and Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, but their characters and settings are faithful renderings of issei and nisei life. Issei are portrayed nostalgically as stubborn but industrious and humbly generous. Like their Western models, these stories are notable not for relentless action but for subtle insights into character and quiet attention to the details of everyday life. Mori wrote other stories that were published decades later, but most of his postwar writing took the form of novels.

Yamamoto's book-length collection *Seventeen Syllables and Other Stories* (1988) appeared decades after the war, but her stories began appearing individually in the 1940s. Moreover, they appeared in mainstream literary magazines and garnered awards and acclaim for Yamamoto. These are carefully crafted stories exploring relations between men and women, parents and children, and ambitions and realities.



Their principal concern with families might suggest that Yamamoto was uninterested in political and social relations, but this is belied by several stories concerned with racism and with relations between Japanese Americans and other peoples of color. Yamamoto was the first important nisei writer both to discuss relations with the black community and to examine the problems of gambling and its effects on nisei families. In one of her best known stories, "The Legend of Miss Sasagawara," set in a wartime internment camp, the title character's alienation from her community reflects that community's own alienation from mainstream America. Ironies are compounded by the fact that Miss Sasagawara is also an artist, a poet, and dancer whose work baffles the young narrator. The most sophisticated irony abides in the fact that Yamamoto gives her protagonist a middle position, more sympathetic to Miss Sasagawara than others in the community yet unable to understand what she regards as the dancer's peculiarities. Justifiably, Yamamoto's stories have become a staple of courses in Asian American literature and women's studies.

Recognition came late to other nisei short story writers. Wakako **Yamauchi**, for example, began writing stories and plays in the 1950s, but her first collection, *Songs My Mother Taught Me: Stories, Plays, and Memoir*, did not appear until 1994. A friend of Yamamoto's, she turned to fiction to move beyond the confines of the stage, and so unsurprisingly setting is a vital element of her stories. Also vital is a recurring tension between mothers and daughters, heightened by the strictures of issei culture. After the racial consciousness movements of the 1960s, older writers were rediscovered, and their work was mined for political content. Meanwhile younger writers, mostly sansei and yonsei (third- and fourth-generation Japanese Americans) made overt political statements against racism, sexism, environmental degradation, and colonialism; but their work took literary shape mostly in poetry. A notable exception is Lonny **Kaneko's** story "The Shoyu Kid," made famous for being anthologized in *The Big Aiiieeeee!* (1991). It uniquely comments on the wartime incarceration through the lenses of sexuality and pederasty, hinting at the range of moral degenerations that derive from institutional racism.

As for postwar Japanese American prose generally, the best known works take longer forms, in novels and memoirs. Memoirs of internment by such writers as Monica **Sone**, Yoshiko **Uchida**, and Jeanne Wakatsuki **Houston** are frequently taught in Asian American literature courses, alongside the graphic memoir *Citizen 13660* (1946) by Miné Okubo. Since the 1970s only a scattering of Japanese American short fiction has received notice. One surprising source of such notice is the group of writers clustered around *Bamboo Ridge*, a literary magazine based in Hawaii that has become the focal point of a thriving literary community. Clara Mitsuko Jelsma, Susan Nunes, and Sylvia **Watanabe** are among these writers. Watanabe, the best known of the group, published *Talking to the Dead* in 1992, and several of its stories have since been

anthologized. These stories risk but always thwart an exoticization of their Japanese Hawaiian characters and locale. They remain constantly aware of the tenuous presence of Japanese in Hawaii, bringing together multiple customs and cultures that always risk clashing. Another Japanese Hawaiian writer, Jessica Kawasuna Saiki, has written many stories set in prewar and wartime Hawaii, about multiple layers of prejudice and social exclusion. An artist, Saiki also illustrates her fiction. Her collections include *Once, a Lotus Garden* (1987) and *From the Lanai and Other Hawaii Stories* (1991), both published by New Rivers Press.

Northern California has produced two short story writers with a strong sense of place. David Mas Masumoto is better known today for his essays and book-length meditations on nisei farming, such as his acclaimed *Epitaph for a Peach: Four Seasons on My Family Farm* (1995), but his early works were short stories whose concern with the land foreshadows the themes of his later essays. R.A. Sasaki's stories in *The Loom and Other Stories* (1991) often parallel generational conflicts within Japanese America with cultural conflicts between Japanese Americans and European Americans. In the story "Seattle," for example, according to critic Traise Yamamoto, tensions between a nisei mother and her sansei daughter complicate the latter's relationship with a Japanese man and a desire for American happy endings. In the title story, according to Yamamoto, a sense of an ideal motherhood is tested against a mother's self-effacement. Sasaki's title story has been frequently anthologized.

Perhaps representative of a new kind of Japanese American writer, the shin-issei, or postwar and recent immigrant, Mary Yukari Waters has achieved honors and acclaim for her collection *The Laws of Evening* (2003). But her stories are less about Japanese America than about postwar Japan and its adjustments to the effects of losing a war and absorbing Western customs and cultures. The individual publication of these stories in some of U.S. literary culture's most prestigious journals, such as *Shenandoah*, *TriQuarterly*, and the *Missouri Review*, and their reprinting in annual prize-story anthologies, have made Waters the most prominent Japanese American writer of the new century and suggest that her talents appeal to an audience beyond the Japanese American community. Most of her stories are quiet, lyrical meditations. In one, a university student urges his Japanese colleagues in postwar Japan to reinvent themselves, to adapt to the modern world but also to refuse to remain an occupied people. The story ends quietly on a mother's wondering whether her young son will remember his now-dead father and whether his memory will succumb to games of dodgeball and other mundane expressions of Western culture. Japanese widows, their husbands lost in war, are protagonists in many of these stories. The collection's publisher quotes from critics' glowing praise, but their comments—comparing the stories to haiku, describing their characters as exotic—effectively, if unwittingly, reduce the stories' value from the universal to the marginal and exotic.

The contemporary Japanese American short story, then, adapts modernist forms and techniques to Japanese American settings and characters, but it does so at the risk of being exoticized. That this seems unremarkable indicates not that the writers are apolitical but rather that mainstream literary culture now clears a space for an ethnic niche in which writers of color are embraced as part of a multicultural ethic. In fact, political engagement is quite possible within this niche, and writers such as Waters, who situate their stories in historical settings, frequently embed social commentary within their plots, whether their admiring reviewers realize it or not. This may not be the strident cultural nationalism espoused by Frank **Chin** and his allies and it certainly disappoints readers with revolutionary politics, but at least it promises to reach possibly sympathetic audiences outside the Japanese American community, readers who, if they abandon stereotypes of exotic Asians, can become allies in social and political change. More stridently activist Japanese American voices remain in poetry and drama, however, and more formally experimental writers such as Karen Tei **Yamashita** work mostly in the novel. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Colonialism and Postcolonialism; Issei, Nisei, Sansei; Japanese American Internment; Nationalism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America; Sexism and Asian America.

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JOHN STREAMAS

#### ◆ JASMINE (MUKHERJEE)

One of the most widely taught novels on American campuses, *Jasmine* (1989) is the third major work of fiction published by the leading Indian American writer Bharati **Mukherjee**. Set largely in the 1980s, *Jasmine* maps the spectacular journey of its titular protagonist. Born Jyoti Vijh to poor peasant parents in Hasnapur, a small village in the north Indian state of Punjab, she marries an ambitious young man named Prakash who names her Jasmine, and she moves with him to the nearby big city

of Jullundhar. Prakash's goal is to study in the United States but, while he is preparing to move to Florida, he is killed by a group of Sikh militants. Distraught by her loss, Jasmine decides to commit sati—the ancient Hindu ritual of self-immolation expected of widows—on the Florida university campus that Prakash had hoped to attend. After an extraordinary journey across national and continental borders, Jasmine enters the United States illegally. Before she can carry out her planned suicide, however, she is raped by an American nicknamed Half-Face. This act of violence and victimization becomes a transformative moment in Jasmine's life: in a radical gesture of retaliation, the demure Jasmine becomes Kali—the fearsome Hindu goddess of revenge—and repeatedly stabs Half-Face to death. Shortly thereafter Jasmine meets Lillian Gordon, a sympathetic Quaker woman who promptly christens her Jazzy and assists her in getting to New York City. There Jasmine lives briefly with an Indian immigrant family in a predominantly Indian section of Queens before becoming an au pair at the home of Taylor and Wylie Hayes, a fashionable American couple in Manhattan. There begins Jasmine's gradual Americanization. Astonishingly, though she has only a middle school education, she is hired by Columbia University to teach an introductory course in her native language. When the Hayes's marriage collapses, Jasmine becomes Taylor's lover. However, a chance encounter with one of her husband's killers at a Manhattan park disrupts the arrangement: Jasmine, now terrified, flees to rural Iowa, the American heartland. There she meets Bud Ripplemeyer, a white banker who prefers to call her Jane, and becomes his common-law wife. A few years later Taylor quite unexpectedly arrives from New York, and Jasmine, now pregnant with Bud's child, elopes with Taylor to California in search of new beginnings. The novel chronicles Jasmine's metamorphosis; the different identities she assumes—Jyoti, Jasmine, Jazzy, Jase, and Jane—signify the various stages in her rapid transformation.

Mukherjee has claimed in her interviews that the American literary tradition does not offer her any ready-made narrative structures that would enable her to tell her contemporary American stories of migration and mutation. Critics, however, have pointed out that *Jasmine* does indeed draw substantially from well established narrative forms. For example, *Jasmine* resembles the many "discovery texts" common to early American literature—the stories of adventurers and explorers who recount their impressions of and experiences in the new land they have discovered. Jasmine, like those early discoverers, offers the reader a fascinating view of the new nation that she is in the process of exploring and defining. Mukherjee's novel also has some of the features of settlement narratives, such as those of the early Puritan settlers, that narrate the settlers' appropriation of the new continent to claim it as their own. Jasmine, Mukherjee's protagonist, is in many ways a postmodern pioneer who is determined to conquer contemporary America and make it hers. In that sense, *Jasmine* is also similar to countless American conversion narratives, stories that document the incremental

Americanization of the new immigrant. Mukherjee's chameleon-like protagonist uproots herself from India and, despite initial setbacks, successfully reroots herself in the United States. Perhaps the most daring move that Mukherjee makes is her revision of a quintessentially American fictional form: the frontier narrative. Mukherjee's novel resembles the frontier narrative—in its protagonist's westward movement, voracious quest for new opportunities, search for adventure and freedom from the constraints of tradition, and the animating desire to reinvent oneself—but there is a fundamental difference. Unlike the conventional frontier narratives that centralize the white male protagonist and his heroic exploits, Mukherjee's novel places an immigrant woman of color at the heart of the drama.

*Jasmine* has received a great deal of scholarly attention. Many critics consider it one of the finest American novels about the immigrant experience. Some view it as a modern classic. Even the detractors of the novel acknowledge the elegant precision of Mukherjee's language, her ability to tell a compelling story, her comic touch and finely honed sense of irony. There are many detractors of the novel, and they are often scathing in their assessments. The harsh criticism comes primarily from Indian and Indian American critics of Mukherjee; the most noteworthy among them is Gurleen Grewal, whose "Born Again American: Immigrant Consciousness in *Jasmine*" remains one of the most devastating critiques of the novel. Grewal argues that *Jasmine* is a thoroughly unconvincing *bildungsroman*; she insists that its portrayal of easy assimilation is dangerously simplistic. The novel's refusal to engage issues of class and its celebratory and uncritical endorsement of the white male myth of the American Dream, Grewal points out, render it an inauthentic work. To some extent, the controversy that surrounds the novel defines the direction of the prolific scholarship that *Jasmine* continues to elicit. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization.

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### ◆ JEN, GISH (1956–)

Gish Jen (Lillian Gish) is a Chinese American novelist and short story writer. Jen is well-known for her three novels: *Typical American* (1991), *Mona in the Promised Land* (1996), and *The Love Wife* (2004); a collection of short stories, *Who's Irish?* (1999); and individual short stories published in the *Iowa Review*, *Fiction International*, the *Yale Review*, the *Southern Review*, *Nimrod*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, and the *New Yorker*. Her stories also have appeared in various anthologies. As a writer, Jen holds a significant position in **Asian American** literature. In her compelling literary works, Jen's exploration of the issue of identity in a multiethnic America speaks to Chinese Americans as well as other readers. Gish Jen won a Lannan Foundation Literary Award in 1999. In 2003 she received a Fulbright Teaching Fellowship for work in China. In the same year she was honored with a Strauss Living Award by the American Academy of Arts and Letters, which would support her writing process for five years.

In her three novels, Jen investigates the characters' pursuit of identity as a developing process: she portrays the Chang-kees' struggle in becoming Chinese American and defining their hyphenated identity in *Typical American*; depicts Mona Changowitz's interactions with people of varied ethnicities and races in *Mona in the Promised Land*; and addresses Janie Bailey's redefinition of whiteness in a multiracial family setting in *The Love Wife*, all with undertones of humor. Her fiction moves out of the setting of **Chinatown** and usually places her characters in American neighborhoods. Jen's works also highlight the diversity within Asian America and the multiethnic environment that her Chinese American characters have to confront in living in the contemporary United States. Jen carries on and at the same time breaks through the literary tradition of writing about Chinese American identity established by her predecessors, such as Jade Snow **Wong**, Maxine Hong **Kingston**, and Amy **Tan**.

Born in New York City in 1956 as Lillian Jen to immigrant parents from Shanghai, China, Gish Jen grew up in Yonkers and Scarsdale, New York. She completed a baccalaureate degree at Harvard University in 1977, attended the MBA program at Stanford University from 1979 to 1980, where she spent most of her time attending literature classes, and received a master of fine arts degree from the University of Iowa in 1983. She taught fiction writing at Tufts University in 1986 and was a visiting writer at the University of Massachusetts between 1990 and 1991. Jen has won numerous awards and fellowships. Currently she is a full-time writer and lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with her husband and two children.

Jen's acclaimed debut novel *Typical American* reviews the strategies of three Chinese American characters in their identity pursuit and in their reconstruction of home and space in the United States from the late 1930s to the 1960s. The protagonists, Ralph, Helen, and Theresa Chang, are educated first-generation immigrants from China. Being away from their homeland exacerbates their sense of homelessness,

a fact that motivates their attempts to build a space in the United States that can make them feel at home. Ralph came to the United States as a student with financial support from his family. Yet he has lost contact with his family and funding in war-torn China because of the Japanese invasion and then the civil war. When the communists gradually took over China, his return to his home country was hindered. Ralph's elder sister, Theresa, and her friend Helen fled China when Japanese troops invaded in the 1930s. In their American life, Ralph and Helen get married and have two daughters. The Chang couple later become proprietors for a restaurant, *Ralph's Chicken Palace*. Theresa receives her MD and becomes a doctor.

As Chinese nationals who are nevertheless disconnected from China and as American residents who are nonetheless aliens, the Changs' notion of identity and home has become ambivalent. The book portrays how Ralph, Helen, and Theresa, as a family unit and as individuals, negotiate a new space between their native culture and the host society in the process of becoming the "Chang-kees"—a Chinese American name they forge for themselves. In that process, Jen's novel conflates space, culture, and gender relations through the characters' experiences as Chinese diaspora who have crossed geopolitical, national, and cultural borders. The book describes the characters' respective responses to their displacement based on gender and race, in which they have to adjust not only to American society but also to their relations with one another as husband and wife (Ralph and Helen) and as brother and sister (Ralph and Theresa). In fictional form, Jen complicates the relations between immigrant men and women around the problem of home and identity and in the process poses the question: what does "typical American" mean? This novel was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award.

With support from the Guggenheim Foundation, Jen published her second novel, *Mona in the Promised Land*, in 1996. Along the route of contesting identities, Jen in her second book further explores the multiethnic reality of the United States. Set in a period from the late 1960s to the 1970s, the novel shows the intersections between ethnicity, gender, and religion as they play significant roles in the characters' identity pursuits. The young protagonist, Mona Chang, searches for her reconstructed—rather than prescribed—identity as a minority female individual through considering her situation as an American-born daughter of Chinese immigrant parents, interacting with people of different races and ethnicities, and converting to Judaism. The relations between Mona and African American characters in the novel compel the heroine and the reader to consider the position of Asian Americans as the "yellow"—between and beyond the problematic binary of white and black. By portraying the short-lived romance between Mona and Sherman Matsumoto, an exchange student from Japan, and how their American teachers and classmates in junior high school naturally team the two together because of their skin color, Jen questions the **pan-Asian ethnicities** in her fiction. In choosing to become a Jew, Mona debates the idea of being American with her first-generation

immigrant mother, Helen. For Mona, conversion to Judaism is her choice of being American, while for Helen the act of joining another ethnic minority group is not a way to embrace being American. She has raised her daughter in the United States to be American, not Jewish. The novel also touches upon the connections between race, sexuality, and adolescence when Mona searches for her female subjectivity and identity in her relationship with Seth Mandel, a Jewish American of German heritage. Near the end of the novel, when Mona is preparing for her wedding to Seth, she adds a suffix "owitz," usually associated with Eastern European Jews, to her Chinese last name "Chang" to coin a new family name, "Changowitz," that will be used by Seth, herself, and their baby daughter Io. Mona's naming strategy highlights the confirmation of her self-consciously constructed identity as a Jewish American woman of Chinese heritage. In this sense, Jen's novel transcends Asian America to portray a multiethnic America, and in the process points to the diversity and hybridity within Asian America.

In Jen's most recent publication, *The Love Wife*, the issue of identity is further challenged through the experience of Janie Bailey and her multiracial family. A Caucasian woman in her forties, Janie's identity is a problem as complicated as her family life. She is not only the wife of Carnegie Wong, a Chinese American man raised single-handedly by his immigrant mother from China, but also the mother of two adopted Asian girls and a biological biracial son. She and Carnegie adopted Elizabeth, an abandoned infant in the United States, with no information about her ethnic background except for her skin color and features that mark her Asian heritage. They adopted Wendy from China after failed attempts to have their own child. Miracle as it seems to them, Janie gives birth to their biological son in her forties. In this family, the structure of ethnic majority and minority seems to be reversed; Janie frequently feels like an outsider, a guest, an ethnic minority, and somebody with the wrong skin color. Janie is nicknamed Blondie by her Chinese American mother-in-law, Mama Wong, and her family. Ironically, she is the only family member who has learned Chinese. The already complicated situation is further challenged when Lin Lan, the nanny from mainland China, joins the family in keeping with the will of Carnegie's late mother. A Cultural Revolution survivor and relative to Mama Wong, Lin Lan changes the relationships between the couple and that between Janie and her children. The family members are forced to readjust the relations among themselves and to redefine their identities.

The narrative structure of this novel is unique. Instead of using a first-person or third-person narration, Jen chooses an alternating narrative. All the characters tell the story, except for the baby boy Bailey, who is too young to speak. With switching perspectives and different language styles, the reader learns about the events in this particular family from various points of view and in the meantime gets to know the personality of each character.



Even though Jen is now well-known by her novels, she started her career as a writer by publishing short stories. Under the name Lillian Jen, she published “Belying-Up” (1981) and “The Small Concerns of Sparrows” (1982) in the *Iowa Review* and *Fiction International*, respectively. Thereafter she adopted the name Gish Jen for all her publications. Many of Jen’s short stories have been praised for their complexity and diversity and have been anthologized repeatedly. Some of her short stories trace the Chang family’s life in the United States and are narrated from different perspectives. Some stories have the father Ralph as the main narrator, while others are told from the point of view of the elder daughter, Callie. Before the publication of her first novel, *Typical American*, Jen had received acclaim for her short stories. “In the American Society” (1986) addresses racism that the Changs face when they try to fit into their American neighborhood and attempt assimilation. Another short work, “Water Faucet Vision” (1987), an *American Short Stories 1988* selection, witnesses the fight between the Chinese American father and mother, Ralph and Helen, through the eyes of their elder daughter Callie. “Birthmates” (1994) does not portray the Changs. Instead, it relates how a marginalized individual, Art Woo, struggles in his career and in American society. This story was selected for *Best American Short Stories 1995* and was chosen by John Updike for *Best American Short Stories of the Century* (1999). Some of Jen’s stories portray bi- and multiracial families. The title story of her collection, *Who’s Irish*, features a family of a Chinese American mother, an Irish American father, and their biracial daughter. The story is told by the first-generation immigrant grandmother from China, who ends up moving out of her daughter’s house and living with her daughter’s Irish in-laws. The novella from the same collection, *House, House, Home* narrates the story of Pammie, a Chinese American daughter, and her interracial marriage.

Jen has sought inspiration in her short stories for her novels. In her novel *Typical American*, for example, she incorporated elements from the story “In the American Society,” first published in the *Southern Review* and later included in her collection *Who’s Irish*. Her other novel, *Mona in the Promised Land*, integrated her short story “What Means Switch” (1990), which was previously published in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Thus, as many examples of her short fiction and novels demonstrate, Gish Jen’s work is marked by a continual exploration of the complex issues of identity, racism, and the multiethnic environment in the contemporary United States. **See also** Asian Diasporas; Asian American Literature; Assimilation/Americanization; Racism and Asian America.

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LAN DONG

◆ JIANG XIZENG. See Tsiang, H.T.

◆ JIN, HA (1956–)

In 1999 Ha Jin was awarded the National Book Award for his second novel *Waiting*, the first of a series of prizes and awards that his work would garner over the years. From his early poetic ventures in English, gathered in *Between Silences* (1990), to the quietly disturbing novel *War Trash* (2004), Jin has published extensively in both poetry and fiction. His novels and short stories are populated by deeply human conflicts, little epiphanies, and unexpected changes. This element of surprise is one among the many storytelling skills critics have found in Ha Jin. An even more commonly acclaimed narrative asset has been his elegant, deceptively simple style.

Ha Jin's eventful life has proved a constant source of inspiration. Born Xuefei Jin on February 21, 1956, he lived in China until 1985, when he traveled to the United States to pursue his doctoral studies. Jin's early years were spent at home with his parents. His father was an officer in the People's Liberation Army, which Jin himself would join at the early age of 14. When he turned 19, Jin took up a position as a

telegraph operator for three years before he started studying for his English degree. Echoes of the harsh conditions in which Jin grew up recur throughout his literary production: the traumatic Cultural Revolution starting in 1966, which deprived Jin of formal education for many years, his subsequent experience as a teenage soldier at the Chinese-Soviet Union border, or the more recent Tiananmen Square Massacre in June 1989. After these dramatic incidents, the writer, who was studying in the United States at the time, came to the decision never to return to China. It was then that he started attending creative writing classes. Soon after, in 1990, his first poetry collection, *Between Silences*, was published. In the book Jin intelligently uses both his personal memories and his own imagination to portray the China of the sixties and seventies. The book pays homage to those people silenced by a brutally confining regime, voiceless people who, as the author himself maintains in the preface, are as much the victims as “the makers of the history” (Jin 1990, 1).

Among the reviewers of Jin’s first book, there was a noticeable common admiration of his understated style. Jin’s penchant for understatement reappeared in *Facing Shadows* and *Ocean of Words: Army Stories*, both published in 1996. In *Facing Shadows*, another collection of poems, Jin continues to inscribe those feelings and events silenced by political forces and social circumstances, those sacrifices made in the name of China. Although there are a few references to recent events and to life in the United States, Jin owns that, at the time he wrote those poems, he could not shed the past but remained somehow tied to China. Thus, even apparently U.S.-centered poems such as “Lilburn, Georgia” hark back to his Chinese past and its concomitant cultural legacy.

*Ocean of Words* received the PEN/Hemingway Award for First Fiction, in great part due to what the judges described as a “simple style and understated beauty” (Thomas 1998, 1). The book tries to capture the everyday illusions, worries, and conflicts of the soldiers stationed precisely at the border between China and the Soviet Union during the Sino-Soviet crisis in the early seventies. Ha Jin’s characters try to keep their dignity while living under strict political monitoring. Sexual transgressions constitute a common potential threat to that confining system, as Jin vividly shows in some of the stories. In “Love in the Air,” for instance, a telegraph operator, a position Jin held for three years, falls in love with the unknown “hand” of a woman telegrapher. His attempt to meet her and start a relationship is eventually frustrated, since the loved hand has actually started an illicit telegraph love affair with another army telegrapher. The telegraph lovers are both expelled from the army, but this brings no consolation to the protagonist, whose briefly dreamed “love in the air” has permanently disqualified him for work as a telegraph operator. The omnipresence of the oppressive ideology is at times reminiscent of previous accounts of totalitarian regimes. This is best illustrated by the story titled “A Lecture,” where the final attempt at rewriting history is redolent of the protagonist’s tasks in George Orwell’s *1984*. All of the stories finally

reveal the sheer conflicts between legitimate human aspirations and a confining social and political system. Many of these stories succeed in doing so thanks to the ironic distance kept between the narrator's purported intentions in telling the story and what the readers make of it. For example, in the brief opening story, titled "A Report," the "bourgeois feelings" to be purged turn out to be nothing more than nostalgia and love for one's mother. However, the absurdity and injustice become all the more obvious because the point of view chosen is not that of the homesick soldiers, but that of the politically committed Red Army officer who, blind to the absurdity of his position, reports the incident.

The following book-length publication by Ha Jin, *Under the Red Flag* (1997, Flannery O'Connor Award), was lauded for the author's ability to transcend a specific time and place to delve into the depths of the human heart. Though still focusing on life in Northern China, this time the stories chronicle the toll that Mao's Cultural Revolution takes on the everyday life of the inhabitants of the small town of Dismount Fort, usually in the shape of personal dilemmas between the rigid communist ideology, on the one hand, and the individual needs and family traditions, on the other. Reviewers continued to praise Jin's restrained writing and cynical distance, although the author's narrative style was occasionally criticized as excessively simple. Most critics, however, praised Jin's understated, austere, and increasingly cynical style. This cynicism is present in "Winds and Clouds over a Funeral," where Ding Liang has to choose between complying with his mother's deathbed wish or following the party's directives. In the end, the manipulation of the truth allows Ding Liang to save face and keep his position in the party, but his mother's wishes are totally disregarded. Other stories deal with the risks of love or sexual relationships: in the opening story, "In Broad Daylight," a "broken woman" is publicly humiliated while her husband commits suicide; in "Man to Be" a brutal gang rape is organized and carried out, and, as a result, one of the perpetrators, the "man to be" (about to get married) becomes impotent; in "Resurrection" the castration is physical and voluntary, the only means the protagonist has to atone for the "bourgeois adultery" he has committed.

The first book-length novel by Ha Jin, *In the Pond* (1998) tells the story of Shao Bin, a promising painter and calligrapher who works in a fertilizer plant in post-Cultural Revolution China. At the opening, Shao Bin learns that he has been denied an apartment after working in the plant for six years, although some junior workers have been given one. Bin and other workers are outraged by the injustice, but the only one who eventually confronts the corrupt leaders is Shao Bin. Thanks to his artistic talents and his perseverance, he manages to denounce the leaders through a satirical cartoon and sabotage many of their schemes. Consequently, Shao Bin is constantly harassed, yet he continues his struggle until he is eventually rewarded with a promotion and a transfer to a new job where he can exercise his painting and writing skills.

Once more, *In the Pond* was well received because of its impeccable style and intelligent use of humor, which serves a clearly subversive and critical purpose in the book. Although the novel has been considered a political allegorical fable and is obviously concerned with political and personal corruption, it also depicts the discovery of the power of art and words to upset an oppressive and flawed system.

Jin's next novel, *Waiting* (1999), received the 2000 PEN/Hemingway Award and the 1999 National Book Award for Fiction. As the title suggests, the main characters spend the whole novel waiting for their eventual marriage. Lin Kong, an urban doctor married to a country woman with bound feet of whom he is ashamed, falls in love with a colleague, Manna Wu. Manna, a single nurse, patiently waits for the divorce that only comes after 18 years. In the meantime, however, many events have taken place that have turned their love bitter and even pointless. At the end of the book, Lin Kong is no longer sure that Manna is the woman he wants to spend his life with, and he turns instead to his (now) ex-wife and older daughter, Hua, for comfort. Lin Kong pleads with Hua to convince his ex-wife not to wait for him, but Hua vows that they will always wait for him. Thus the circle has been closed, and another cycle of waiting may begin.

When *Waiting* came out, there was general agreement among the reviewers that it was first a love story, albeit a rather peculiar one. In several interviews, Jin describes Lin Kong as "emotionally crippled" (Caswell 2000), partly because of the stifling atmosphere of the communist revolution. Lin Kong is somehow afflicted by a Joycean "hemiplegia of the will," a lack of agency that finally hurts the women around him. As in a classic tragedy, the character's flaws, in this case passivity and certain cowardice, bring about the bittersweet ending. Another interpretation that has been advanced regards *Waiting* as an allegory of the contrast between old and new China, respectively embodied in the old and new wife (Judges' Citation, National Book Award). However, it must be acknowledged that both old and new China connive in keeping the couple waiting, with their moral and social constraints. Formally speaking, most critics marvel at Jin's command of a recently acquired language and commend his classical style.

In Jin's next collection of stories, *The Bridegroom* (2000), the setting and focus continues to be China, although the historical background is no longer the Cultural Revolution, but a transitional period between Mao's death in 1976 and the late 1980s. "After Cowboy Chicken Came to Town" and "An Entrepreneur's Story" close that cycle, because they anticipate not only the new acceptability of the love for money but a quandary in Chinese society: how to reconcile Maoist ideology, with its resistance to capitalism and class exploitation, with the new policies of economic liberalization. "Saboteur," "Flame," and "In the Kindergarten" narrate little revenges or triumphs of victimized subjects. In "Saboteur," an abused teacher gets his revenge by spreading his contagious disease throughout the city where he had been unjustly imprisoned. Other stories go back to another recurrent theme in Jin's works: the difficult sexual mores of

communist Chinese society. "Broken" reveals the cruel manner in which a woman's life, especially her sexual reputation, is trampled and used for other characters' political ambitions. The title story, "The Bridegroom," tackles the painful situation of homosexuals in a country that labels them sick counterrevolutionaries or bourgeois criminals and subjects them to little less than torture.

In 2001 Ha Jin published his last book of poetry to date, *Wreckage*. Structured in six different sections, Jin traces the history of China from the continuous struggles to tame the Yellow River to the first encounters with the West. All of the poems depict a continuous epic of survival against natural disasters, famine, disease, war, opium, and European colonization. The closing poem, "Departure," seems to open a new cycle, in its exploration of the first instances of Chinese immigration to the West.

Jin's third novel, *The Crazy* (2002), is set in a northern city in the months preceding the Tiananmen Square Massacre. The book traces how the time Jian spends looking after his mentor, Professor Yang, who has suffered a stroke, deeply affects the young man. Unlike the previous novels in Ha Jin's career, *The Crazy* is told through a first-person narrator, Jian. This rather naive narrator is unaware that the seemingly deranged professor may actually be transforming his apparent dementia into a personal shelter and shield against the risks and strictures of the communist regime, a resistance to an oppressive system that acquires a national scope and reaches its climax in the chaos of Tiananmen Square. Jin intricately intertwines the personal and the political in this novel, while at the same time lampooning the absurd university "guerrilla wars," often triggered by envy, professional ambition, or sheer power hunger. Jin's style in *The Crazy* was generally praised for its conscientious restraint and classical storytelling flavor. Nevertheless, some critics found fault with the novel's structure and narrative style, which, in their opinion, did not come close to the quality of Jin's previous fiction.

In 2004 Jin published his last novel to date, *War Trash*, which became a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and once more received the PEN/Faulkner Award. *War Trash* constitutes the first-person fictional memoirs of Yu Yuan, a Red Army officer captured during the Korean War. At the prisoner-of-war camps run by the United States and the United Nations in South Korea, Yu Yuan is subjected to different political pressures, from both the procommunist Chinese and the pronationalist Chinese, admonishing him to choose repatriation to China or Taiwan, respectively. Throughout his ordeals first as a communist officer, next as an injured POW in hospital, and finally as a valuable translator in the different POW camps, Yu Yuan observes how brittle human loyalty seems to be and how easily human beings can be destroyed by political interests and by their own fear. Yet there are also unsentimental glimpses of ways in which human dignity can momentarily rise above moral corruption and eventually survive the brutality of life.

As several reviewers have pointed out, *War Trash* resonates with poignant current events, such as the Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib prison polemics, while at the same time keeping the universal, timeless appeal of documentary classics, such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* or prison narratives. Like his first novel, Jin's last novel has also been regarded as a moral fable, in which the protagonist faces a difficult moral choice. Paradoxically enough, Jin's most painstakingly realistic novel seems to be, at the same time, the most amenable to an allegorical interpretation. One of Jin's accomplishments in this novel, as Russell Banks argues, is the characterization of Yu Yuan, a quiet man, far from alluring, who narrates the story in a plain language and a convincingly true-to-life voice (2004). However, some reviewers have found fault with the novel's narrative style, which has been described as emotionally flat, more typical of a historical chronicle. And yet, for others, Jin's difficult and conscious choice of a meticulous documentary approach to the subject matter manages to enthrall and eventually move the reader.

In several interviews, Ha Jin has claimed that China seems farther and farther away from him, and he now feels closer to the United States. He has actually expressed his wish to write about immigration from a Chinese immigrant's point of view. In a recent interview for the *New York Times*, Jin maintains that *War Trash* is a transitional book, after which, he intends to set his fiction in the United States. Thus, his last novel, he says, constitutes "a way to test the water, a place where the Chinese, the Americans, the Koreans, interact" (Banks 2004). His next step is to write immigrant fiction, a move his readership is certainly looking forward to.

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BEGOÑA SIMAL GONZÁLEZ

### ◆ THE JOY LUCK CLUB (TAN)

*The Joy Luck Club* is a 1989 novel by Amy Tan portraying the conflicts between four Chinese immigrant women and their daughters, who have been raised in the United States. This critically acclaimed novel represents common themes in Tan's work. The novel describes the difficulties surrounding dual cultural identities, specifically Chinese American, but also transcends cultural conflicts by depicting the generational conflicts between mothers and daughters. The novel contains 16 interconnected stories divided into four sections. Each of the four sections contains four separate narratives told by different characters. This narrative technique allows Tan to move between the past and the present and tell stories using first-person narratives for several characters. *The Joy Luck Club* is one of Tan's most popular and critically acclaimed works. In 1989 it won the National Book Award and the *L.A. Times* Book Award.

Each section of narratives opens with a parable. The first parable is about a woman emigrating from China with a swan she had bought in Shanghai. The swan was supposed to be a duck that had stretched its neck in the hopes of becoming a goose; instead, it became a beautiful swan, too beautiful to eat. On the journey to America, the woman tells the swan that in the United States she will have a daughter, but her daughter's worth will not be measured by her husband. But when the woman arrives in the United States, immigration officials take her swan, leaving her with only one feather. The woman's daughter grows up speaking only English and drinking Coca-Cola, and the woman waits for the day she can give her daughter the feather and tell



her of its significance, but she is waiting until she can tell her daughter about the feather in perfect American English.

In the first section of the book, entitled “Feathers from a Thousand Li Away,” the first of the four narratives is related by Jing-mei (June) Woo. Her mother, Suyuan Woo, has died, and June’s father asked her to join her mother’s three friends to become the fourth member of the Joy Luck Club. Her mother’s friends urge June to journey to China to find her two half-sisters, children that Suyuan was forced to leave behind in China when she escaped during Japan’s invasion of Kweilin in **World War II**. But June does not want to make the journey because she feels unable to tell her mother’s story to her half-sisters. Her mother’s friends fear that their own daughters, like June, do not understand their stories and therefore are missing out, not only on their cultural heritage but also their family legacy. In the next three stories of the first section, the mothers, Lindo Jong, An-mei Hsu, and Ying-ying St. Clair, provide stories about their mothers and their relationship with them; therefore, the first section of the novel chronicles family history and begins a collection of stories spanning three generations. The stories in this section provide insight into the social norms of China and explain the difficult lives of Chinese women. The mothers are aware of the sexism in Chinese culture and want better for their daughters, but at the same time they do not want their daughters to forget Chinese customs or to grow up unaware of the struggle of the women in their families.

In the second section, entitled “The Twenty-Six Malignant Gates,” the daughters—Waverly, Lena, Rose, and Jing-mei or June—tell the stories of their memories and relationships with their mothers. The section begins with a parable about a mother telling her daughter not to go around the corner to ride her bicycle because she will fall and the mother will not be able to hear her cry. The girl wants to know how the mother knows for sure that she will fall. The mother explains that it is written in a Chinese book called *The Twenty-Six Malignant Gates*. The daughter does not believe her mother and wants to see the book, but the mother says that the girl cannot understand it because it is written in Chinese. The mother does not answer the girl when she asks more questions about the books, so the girl heads out on her bicycle, proclaiming that her mother does not know anything. The girl falls down on her bicycle before she reaches the corner.

The opening parable speaks to the daughters’ struggles to find independence and their mothers’ inability to relate Chinese culture to them in a way that they can understand. In this section, assimilation into American culture is addressed as the daughters struggle with their dual cultural identities. The mothers want their daughters to realize the American Dream without forgetting their heritage, and the difficult nature of these expectations is related by the daughters in their narratives. As a child, Waverly is a chess champion, but her mother, Lindo, brags about her all the time and pushes her to a

breakdown. Suyuan wants June to be a child prodigy like Waverly and forces her to take piano lessons. Suyuan wants June to be good enough to play the piano on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, but June does not live up to her mother's expectations. Lena's narrative describes the struggle to understand her mother and her life as a translator for her mother. Lena understands the Mandarin her mother speaks but does not understand the meaning behind those words. She often thinks her mother is speaking nonsense. In fact, when she serves as a translator for her, she edits her mother's words and the words of others to make them appear more mainstream and less eccentric. Rose begins her narrative by describing her marriage, which seems to be heading toward divorce. She then relates a story of her mother that occurred during her childhood. On a family outing at the beach, Rose's little brother falls off a reef and drowns. The family searches for him for hours, but they never find his body. Rose's mother, An-mei, returns to the beach and prays to God and at the same time offers appeasement to a dragon, who she believes has taken her son because one of her ancestors took water from a sacred well. The story depicts the blending of cultures immigrants experience and describes the family's—particularly An-mei's—sorrow over losing a child, an experience that transcends culture.

The third section of narratives, "American Translation," begins with a parable about a mother who tells her daughter that her bedroom is not arranged correctly. The mother believes that the daughter should move an armoire at the foot of the bed because it has a mirror, and mirrors at the foot of the marriage bed will cause "marriage happiness" to bounce off and go the opposite direction. The daughter thinks her mother is silly and superstitious, but the mother gives her a new mirror to face the old mirror, saying that the two mirrors will bring good luck and will bring her a grandchild.

In this section of the novel, the four daughters narrate their adult lives and struggles. Lena describes how she developed an eating disorder as a girl because her mother told her that for every grain of rice she left on her plate, her husband would have a pockmark on his face. Convinced that she is destined to marry a bully from her neighborhood with a pitted face named Arnold, she decides not to eat at all, wishing perhaps for Arnold's death. Her obsession with this develops years later into anorexia. When Arnold actually dies, Lena worries that her punishment might be ending up with her current husband, Harold. Harold makes Lena pay for half of everything in the household, so they can be "equal." However, the reality is that Lena works for Harold, making much less money, and was actually the person who helped him do well in his position. Her feelings of anger and resentment flare up when her mother visits one evening.

Waverly, on the other hand, has difficulty telling her mother that she is engaged to marry her boyfriend, Rich. She believes her mother, Lindo, hates Rich, so Waverly tortures herself about telling her mother. Once she finally decides to tell Lindo, she breaks down and cries. Once the two women talk, mother and daughter, Waverly learns

that her mother does not hate Rich and that she has misunderstood many things about her mother. Rose, An-mei's daughter, tells her story of receiving divorce papers from her husband, Ted. Ted wants Rose to leave the house because he plans to remarry soon. Rose speaks to her mother, who encourages her to stand up to Ted, and she finally does.

Jing-mei (June) narrates a Chinese New Year dinner party a few months before her mother's death, where Waverly hurts June by talking about June's much less successful career, adding to a rivalry that has existed since childhood when Waverly was a chess champion while June failed at the piano. On the verge of tears, June begins to clear the table, and her mother, Suyuan, tells her that she needs to ignore Waverly and gives June a gift of a jade pendant. Suyuan reminds June that while she does not have Waverly's ambition, she is a generous and kind person.

In the final section of narratives, entitled "Queen Mother of the Western Skies," the mothers narrate how they struggle to help their daughters overcome the obstacles in their lives to find happiness. This section opens with a parable of the same mother from the other parables talking to her new grandchild. The baby is laughing, and the grandmother wonders if it was best to teach her daughter to rid herself of her innocence to protect herself. The grandmother wonders about what is lost when we become too suspicious and overly concerned about the evil in the world. The grandmother then asks the baby if she is really the queen mother of the western skies and if the baby can teach her mother to lose innocence without losing hope.

An-mei tells the first story and describes how Rose refuses to speak up for herself and stand up to Ted. Then An-mei relates a story of her own childhood and how her mother, a concubine, committed suicide and told An-mei that she was killing her weak spirit so that An-mei could have a strong one. It was on that day, according to An-mei, that she learned to stand up for herself and shout if necessary. Ying-ying narrates the second story, lamenting over Lena's marriage. Ying-ying knows Lena's marriage is doomed, even if Lena cannot see it yet. Ying-ying has a secret past that she has never shared with Lena. Ying-ying grew up in a wealthy family but married a man who cheated on her, so Ying-ying aborted their unborn son. Lena, like Ying-ying, was born in the year of the Tiger, but Lena's Tiger spirit has not been released. Ying-ying decides that she will tell Lena about her past, so that Lena can release her Tiger spirit.

Lindo, on the other hand, describes Waverly, who is taking her honeymoon in China, as someone who is so American that she would never be confused as being Chinese. Lindo regrets not teaching Waverly more of the Chinese traditions and says that her efforts to raise a daughter who was half Chinese and half American were impossible. Jing-mei (June) relates the final narrative of the novel, as her mother cannot. June journeys to China to find her half-sisters, worrying that she will not be able to tell her mother's story. But when the two Chinese women see June, they embrace her and say "Mama," as if June has brought their mother with her.

Amy Tan has been praised for *The Joy Luck Club* for her ability to depict the conflicting Chinese and American cultures that can exist inside a person and the conflicting attitudes of different generations. Tan's work has been noted in particular, however, because she chose to give voice to immigrant mothers and not just the daughters who grew up with dual cultural identities. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization; Sexism and Asian America.

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CRYSTAL McCAGE

## K



### ◆ KADOHATA, CYNTHIA (1956–)

Cynthia Kadohata specializes in coming-of-age stories that track the efforts of adolescent protagonists struggling to establish an identity. This penchant for the creative excavation of the growing-up topos is a recurrent feature of the three generically diverse works that she has written for adults. It also explains her push in recent years into children's literature, where she has arguably found her metier.

Born in 1956 in Chicago, Kadohata spent much of her childhood in the South and experienced a nomadic upbringing moving, between a succession of places. These formative experiences underpin her first and arguably most successful novel, *The Floating World* (1989). In 1992 she published her second novel, *In The Heart of the Valley of Love*, and in 1995 her third, *The Glass Mountains*. Whereas *The Floating World* received glowing reviews, Kadohata's foray into futurist fiction in her second book had a mixed reception, with reviewers apparently confounded by the switch in genre. *The Glass Mountains*, a science fiction fantasy, was virtually snubbed. For almost a decade Kadohata did not produce any new work. Eventually, she was persuaded to try her hand at writing for children, and this led to the publication of the critically acclaimed *Kira-Kira*, which won the prestigious Newbery Award in 2005. Kadohata has since published two other books for children.

Kadohata was initially hailed as a fresh new voice in Asian American fiction when *The Floating World* appeared. Among other things, reviewers and critics were struck by her lean, elegant prose style, her skillful use of understatement, and her evocative depiction of landscape. Her witty, tender portrayal of various painful moments experienced by her characters also attracted praise. Much minority writing handles tensions that arise from racial prejudice and a bicultural heritage, with protagonists confronting a sometimes Hobbesian

choice between enclavism and absorptionism. In recounting the experiences of a Japanese American family as they travel through the South in the 1950s searching for work, *The Floating World* seemed to flout generic expectations. White America is conspicuously absent, or relegated to the backdrop. As an issue, the question of assimilation or nonassimilation is kept in abeyance. Instead, the novel concentrates on intra-familial dynamics from the perspective of its 12-year-old protagonist, Olivia. It charts her estranged, love-hate relationship with her grandmother, her close bonds with her brothers, and her resigned, painful acceptance of the growing emotional gulf between her father and her mother. It relates various incidents that have become part of family folklore and recounts Olivia's first experience of love and sexuality as she grows up and goes away to college. It also provides finely drawn portraits of various Japanese Americans whom she meets after her father takes on a job as a chicken sexer at a poultry plant in Arkansas, a job that involves separating male and female chicks, which was then dominated by Japanese Americans. For most readers, however, the novel's main impact is likely to stem from the sections recounting Olivia's family life before they settle down in Arkansas, in the haunting depiction of life on the road that forms the first half of the novel. In Japanese, the term *floating world* refers to an art form, *ukiyo-e* (literally, floating world pictures), that emphasizes the depiction of sad, transitory events, in particular the stylized world of the Japanese pleasure quarter and its demimonde denizens. Kadohata memorably uses the term to designate the floating world of motels, truck stops, and menial jobs that Olivia's family depends on as they make their way through the underbelly of the United States in the 1950s. In the process, the hardiness and resilience needed to endure a nomadic, hand-to-mouth existence is strikingly conveyed, but so is a certain beauty attached to transience and the philosophical acceptance of change as a given of the human condition.

For her second novel, *In the Heart of the Valley of Love*, Kadohata created an intriguing fictional world that is dystopian or apocalyptic. The novel is set in a 2052 Los Angeles, dominated by an oppressive government and an immense gulf between the haves and have-nots. The economy is in shambles, and gas and drinking water have to be rationed. Much of the population is unlettered or illiterate. The protagonist, 19-year-old Francie, is an orphan of mixed Asian and African descent who lives with her aunt and her boyfriend. Together they make a tentative living, trading on the black market and providing a delivery cum courier service for a number of small motel towns. Near the beginning of the novel, the aunt's boyfriend, Rohn, mysteriously disappears, killed perhaps in a robbery or picked up by security forces in one of their random sweeps. Francie and her aunt search for Rohn without success. The summer drifts by, and Francie ends up in the hospital after a car accident leaves her with a broken arm. Eventually she enrolls in a community college and works at the school paper, where she falls in love with Mark Trang, a loner who makes a living from various small-time scams and barter exchanges. The rest of the novel is relatively plotless and relates Francie's interaction with various

friends that she makes at the paper, including Jewel, a woman in her late thirties. On a visit to Jewel's parents one evening, Mark and Francie listen to Jewel's father relate a haunting childhood memory of how his father—Jewel's grandfather—had taken him to a secluded spot in the Pasadena Arroyo one day and buried something there, an experience that he imbues with spiritual significance although he does not understand why.

Mark, Francie, Jewel, and another close friend decide one day to find the spot. After some meandering they find it. They discover a buried metal cash box containing two gold rings, one inscribed with a dedication to Jewel's grandfather, the other to her great-aunt. Jewel tells them that her grandfather's marriage had been an unhappy one and that her great-aunt had never married: the box's contents underline in a compelling manner the transgressive but also transformative and redemptive power of love. Soon after the discovery, Jewel decides to move east to escape an abusive boyfriend. After she leaves, Mark and Francie dig up the rings to send as a present to Jewel, but they find that she has already preempted them. The box is empty save for a slip of paper that says, "Jewel, July 2052." Mark and Francie rebury the box with another note signed with both their names. They add the words: "In Love, August 2052."

Despite its dystopian veneer, *In the Heart of the Valley of Love* is upbeat and uplifting. In the matter-of-fact way with which characters deal with material deprivation and the lack of creature comforts, it points to consumerism and a throwaway culture as false, inauthentic solutions. Without being clichéd it endorses working-class and cross-cultural solidarity. It expresses an inspiring faith in the human ability to reach out and form enriching filiative ties.

Compared with Kadohata's first two novels, *The Glass Mountains* is relatively underwritten and poorly executed. It tells a complicated story of war on the planet Artekka, and of the protagonist's search for her parents. Since her move into children's literature, however, Kadohata's writing career has experienced a new lease on life. *Kira-Kira* (2004) tells the story of two sisters whose family moves from Iowa to rural Georgia in the 1950s and of how the family copes with tragedy when one of the sisters becomes desperately ill. *Weedflower* (2006) is worthy of note because it puts on the cultural archive the experiences of **Japanese American internment** at the Colorado River Indian Reservation during **World War II**. See also *Assimilation/Americanization*.

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### ◆ KANEKO, LONNY (1939–)

Lonny Kaneko is a sansei (third-generation Japanese American) poet, short story writer, essayist, and playwright. Although Kaneko considers himself primarily a teacher and secondarily a poet, he is known for short stories that examine Japanese American experiences during **World War II** at internment camps and their aftermath. Born on November 15, 1939, in Seattle, Washington, to Sanetomo Kaneko, a night watchman, and Lois Kaneko, the two-year-old Kaneko was sent to an assembly center in Puyallup, Washington, with his family at the outbreak of World War II; then the family was sent to the Hunt Relocation Center, commonly known as the Minidoka Camp, in Idaho. The family stayed there until 1945, when they were released from the camp and returned to Seattle. He received a BA in English in 1961, and, after studying poetry under Theodore Roethke, he earned an MA in writing in 1963 from the University of Washington with a thesis titled “Catchcan of Chicken Feathers in an Old Roost,” a collection of poems. He received the National Endowments for the Arts Fellowship in 1981–1982 and published *Coming Home from Camp*, a collection of poems drawn from his internment camp experience and the aftermath of World War II in 1986. He also was a fiction prize recipient from *Amerasia Journal*.

Kaneko’s career as a short story writer started in 1974, when a whimsical short story based on a classical Japanese fairy tale, “The Wife and the Kappa,” was published in *Playboy*. Many of Kaneko’s works are drawn from his internment experiences. In 1976 Kaneko’s story set in the Minidoka Camp during World War II was published in *Amerasia Journal*. This story, titled “The Shoyu Kid,” was then anthologized in *The Big Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature* in 1991. This coming-of-age story is told by the first-person narrator named Masao, who, with his friends, Jackson (Hiroshi) and Itchy (Ichiro), attempts to solve the mystery of the title character’s daily supply of chocolate bars. In the end, the Shoyu Kid reveals to the narrator and his friends that he receives chocolate bars from a red-haired soldier for playing with the soldier’s *chimpo* (penis). Kaneko uses multilayered images of chasing and trapping—the narrator and his friends chase the Shoyu Kid, the camp detainees trap an unidentified animal, and the American government detains Japanese Americans in the camp—to depict this story of betrayals in an internment camp while highlighting the contrast between those who have power (like Caucasian soldiers), and those who don’t (Japanese American internees, particularly children). Critics such as Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, David Eng, and David Palumbo-Liu examine the issues of racial and sexual identity in this story.

“Nobody’s Hero,” a short story anthologized in *Asian American Literature: A Brief Introduction and Anthology*, edited by Shawn Wong in 1996, also deals with the first-person narrator Masao’s experience growing up in the Minidoka Camp during the war with characters that appeared in “The Shoyu Kid,” such as Jackson (Hiroshi) and Itchy.



In this story, the young narrator and his friends decide to steal cigarettes from the canteen as a way for them to demonstrate their defiance toward the War Relocation Authority (WRA) because nobody, even adults, is doing anything to improve the detainees' circumstances in the camp. Like "The Shoyu Kid," this story focuses on the issues of Japanese American identity and Japanese Americans' lack of power. The main characters' act of theft, in an ordinary circumstance, would be considered a prank, but in the camp, this act becomes heroic for ignoring WRA officers' power and authority. However, in the end, Masao and his friends find themselves powerless, as the WRA ridicules their act in the camp newspaper.

Upon receiving a national Endowment for the Arts grant in 1981, Kaneko worked on poetry and produced *Coming Home from Camp*, published in 1986. This collection of poems also reflects the experiences of Kaneko's family in the internment camp and their lasting effects after the war. The title poem, for example, is told from three different points of view at different times: first, the mother remembers the family's post-war hardship in 1946; then, the father describes his disintegrating marriage and impoverishment in 1960; lastly, the son speaks in 1982, expressing the family legacy of unvoiced fear and anger while hoping to give his own children freedom. Likewise, other poems in this collection explore memories of the camp and family legacy. Kaneko's poems are anthologized in *An Ear to the Ground: An Anthology of Contemporary American Poetry* and *Ayumi: A Japanese American Anthology*, and his poem, "Requiem for John Kazuo Yamamoto, Sr.," was published in *Amerasia Journal* in 1982.

Kaneko turned his attention to essay writing in the 1990s. His essays also examine the lasting effects of the internment camp. "Of Rice and Bread" was anthologized in *Daily Fare: Essays from the Multicultural Experience* in 1993, and in this essay Kaneko recollects a memory of a Japanese American internee named Kaz whose thumbs were amputated. Kaz used to tell young Kaneko to eat his bread crusts; otherwise, he would lose his thumbs. This lesson in table manners turns into a rule of conformity and assimilation in Kaneko's mind, as it expresses that "breaking rules, even if the rules aren't clear to everyone, may result in swift emasculation, confinement, and loss of personal rights and dignity" (175) and haunts him. Through his recollections and observations of Japanese Americans in the camp during the war and their lives thereafter, Kaneko demonstrates how the camp experience created the generation of parents who chose assimilation to American culture (bread) over maintaining Japanese American heritage (rice) in parenting their children. "Journey to Minidoka," anthologized in *Where the Morning Light's Still Blue* in 1994, chronicles Kaneko's trip back to the Hunt Relocation Center, which is more commonly called Minidoka. As he drives, he recalls some snapshots from his memory, shockingly angry and hateful newspaper articles that he recently read, as well as some sympathetic newspaper editorials and letters from compassionate Americans. When he reaches Hunt, he finds few signs of the

lives of the 10,000 Japanese Americans interned there 50 years ago and realizes that Hunt has become civilized.

Although Kaneko is primarily known as a short story writer, he also contributed to the Asian American theater in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when Asian American theater artists were establishing professional Asian American theater companies in Hawaii and on the West Coast. Kaneko collaborated with Amy Sanbo, a playwright, and wrote *Lady Is Dying* and *Benny Hana*. *Lady Is Dying* was produced by the Asian American Theatre Company, the third professional Asian American theater company in the United States, with Frank **Chin** as the director in 1977. This play won the Henry Broderick Playwright Prize at the Pacific Northwest Writers Conference. *Benny Hana* was produced at Nippon Kan Theater in Seattle by Northwest Asian American Theater Company in 1984.

Kaneko's most recent publication is a short story titled "Old Lady" in the *Seattle Review*. Until 2005, he taught English at Highline Community College in Washington while living on an island outside of Seattle. He has two children, William and Shayna. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization; Issei, Nisei, Sansei; Japanese American Internment.

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KYOKO AMANO

### ◆ KANG, YOUNGHILL (1903–1972)

Younghill Kang has been at points in his lifetime a poet, scholar, literature professor, translator, museum curator, cultural ambassador, and writer. He is widely regarded by many to be the first Korean of significance to have written an English-language novel that had a widespread impact on the general American public, dubbed "the father of **Korean American literature**." Incredibly erudite and well versed in Korean, Chinese, Japanese, English, and American literary tradition, Kang was in all likelihood the most intellectually gifted writer to have ever written about Korean America.

Born in 1903 to a family of farmers in what is now North Korea, Kang showed early promise by becoming fluent in the Korean and Chinese classics. After the annexation of Korea by Japan, he became increasingly disillusioned with the state of his

country and sought to escape it through what would become a lifelong obsession with education. Moving to Seoul to pursue his studies, he then went to Japan in hopes of seeking knowledge of Western sciences. He returned to Korea and took part in a political demonstration against the Japanese occupation, for which he was arrested, beaten, and jailed by the Japanese police. He would be jailed once more after attempting to leave Korea through China and Siberia. Meanwhile, he studied English and began to realize that the United States was where he would be able to fulfill his intellectual pursuits. Turned off by the moribund state of Korea due to Japan's occupation, in 1921 he leapt at the chance to go abroad when a missionary offered to surreptitiously sneak him to the United States three years before the Immigration Act of 1924 banned Asian immigration completely. He would attend Dalhousie, a small missionary college in Nova Scotia, Canada, and then a year later move to Boston to continue his education, attending classes at Harvard College and eventually graduating with a BS from Boston University. Two years later, he returned to Harvard for a master's degree in English education, and in 1928 married Francis Keely, a Wellesley graduate with whom he would father a daughter and son. Gathering work for himself writing for the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, he began to work on his first novel, *The Grass Roof* (1931). During this time, he gained employment lecturing in New York University's Comparative Literature Department, where he befriended another instructor named Thomas Wolfe, who would later recommend his novel for publication to Maxwell Perkins at Charles Scribner's Sons and introduce him to New York's elite literary community. *The Grass Roof* was a success, gaining attention in popular literary reviews and introducing Korea and its colonial oppression to the mainstream. It gained Kang enough credit to merit a successful application for a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1932, becoming the first Asian ever to receive one. After moving his family to Rome and Germany to write his second novel, *East Goes West* (1939), he returned to the United States to begin working as an assistant professor at NYU and as a curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. By this time, Kang had become enough of a celebrity to be the focus of two congressional bills that called for his naturalization, but both were defeated. When **World War II** broke out, Kang decided to leave NYU to work for the U.S. government in various capacities until the war concluded, at one point writing propaganda against the Japanese. He would remain an academic journeyman for the rest of his life, lecturing at various colleges around the country to support his family while he continued to write reviews and translations, sometimes with the help of his wife, Francis. He died in 1972 at his home in Satellite Beach, Florida, due to complications from surgery after a stroke.

Kang's first novel, *The Grass Roof*, is a fictionalized account of his life in Korea before he came to the United States. While he clearly drew upon his own life as the basis of the novel, it would be a mistake to assume that he wrote it as a straightforward

autobiography, since he was aiming at a non-Korean, English-speaking audience and fashioned the book appropriately. Chungpa Han, Kang's fictional proxy, is born to a poverty-stricken family filled with scholars and poets who can recite classical verses for any occasion but earn nothing to feed themselves and their families. Chungpa nevertheless dreams of becoming a scholar and government official of Korea until Japan publicly announces the annexation of Korea and the nation is dissolved. Interspersed in the book are scathing portraits of Japanese cruelty against the Korean people as they attempt to politically and culturally eradicate them. In one scene, the day after the annexation is announced, the Japanese police arrive at his family's home and demand to know why they have not raised the Japanese flag instead of the Korean national flag, which his father had raised in mourning of the country. When his father does not answer, they begin to beat him. In a panic, his grandmother rushes in to protect him, only to be beaten herself as her sons and grandson watch in horror. The Japanese are not the only objects of Chungpa's contempt; Kang also manages to insert criticisms of American missionaries in Korea, which American critics, despite being entertained by his Eastern narrative, found disconcerting, labeling him ungrateful. Chungpa then embarks on his journey toward receiving an education that would lead him to Seoul, Japan, Canada, and finally, the United States. As a student without a country, Kang raises questions about his identity as a stateless being, the importance of nationhood, and legacy of imperialism. *The Grass Roof* was generally well received and successful, establishing Kang as a representative for the East, was translated into several languages, won France's Le Prine Halperine Kaminsky Award for Best Novel in Translation, and even received some interest from Hollywood for a film adaptation. Two years later, Kang adapted it for children as *The Happy Grove* (1933).

While mainstream American critics lauded *The Grass Roof* for its charming novelty and ethnographic value, both Asian American critics and Kang himself considered his second novel, *East Goes West*, the superior work. Kang weaves into the second fictionalized autobiography meditations on race, class, castes, exoticism, colonialism, materialism, capitalism, and the myth of a meritocracy. Written as a sequel to his previous work, *East Goes West* picks up where *The Grass Roof* left off, when Chungpa Han arrives in New York with only a few dollars in his pocket and the name and address of a contact. There, he comes to meet fellow immigrants from all corners of the globe, but in particular it is his relationships with other Korean immigrants that cause him to ruminate on his condition in the United States. In George Jum, he meets a former Korean envoy turned dishwasher who has fully assimilated into mainstream American society as best as he can, dressing dandy and pursuing a white Harlem nightclub dancer while spouting American colloquialisms. Through him, Chungpa extricates himself from his poverty of begging for meals at Chinese restaurants and sleeping with other homeless men in makeshift shelters. He soon discovers that he can only gain low-skill,

low-waged jobs while he pursues his studies, going up to Canada to study at a small college in Nova Scotia with the help of some missionaries. Dissatisfied with Canada, he returns to the United States, this time to Boston to continue his education, working in various positions as a houseboy, encyclopedia salesman, private librarian, and farm-hand. Back in New York, he meets another Korean, To Wan Kim, an older version of himself who is wiser, more jaded, even more scholarly, and well aware of the United States' racial caste system. Like George, To Wan also pines for a white socialite whose family has forbidden her from seeing him, and his despair for her results in his eventual suicide. Chungpa ends up working at a department store where he becomes disgusted with the inhumanity of selling commodities and leaves to become a kind of wandering scholar, floating in and out of libraries for his own enrichment. Following in the steps of George and To Wan, Chungpa falls in love with a white woman named Trip, whom he attempts to woo with his encyclopedic knowledge of literature and the arts, only to be patronized and mocked. Throughout the narrative, Kang sprinkles long meditations on the potential greatness and hypocrisy of the United States because of racial prejudices through a gallery of minority characters who rail against the injustice of being limited by the color of their skin. Because of these included elements, *East Goes West* was not as celebrated as *The Grass Roof* by mainstream American critics, who bristled at the many criticisms outlined by Kang's characters, and found the ambiguity of the final chapter, where it is unclear whether Chungpa marries Trip or not, unsettling. However, **Asian American** scholars would come to embrace it for precisely the same reasons, for Kang presciently touched upon issues that would be revisited in later generations of writers, including Carlos **Bulosan**, who explicitly names Kang as an influence in his own autobiographical work. Although there were indications that he was working on a third novel, *East Goes West* would turn out to be Kang's final full-length original work.

Other works by Kang include a translation of *Anatahan* (1954) by Michiro Maruyama, translation of *Meditations of the Lover* (1970) by Han Yongwoon, a book of translated poetry titled *Translations of Oriental Poetry* (1929), and various literary reviews for publications such as *Nation*, the *New York Evening Post*, and *New Republic*. He also wrote for popular periodicals on topics ranging from Japanese theater to Korean politics. **See also** Colonialism and Postcolonialism.

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DAVID ROH

#### ◆ KELLER, NORA OKJA (1965–)

Born in Seoul, South Korea, award-winning novelist Nora Okja Keller was raised by her German father and Korean mother. When she was three, Keller's family moved to Hawaii, where she later attended the University of Hawaii. Upon completion of a degree in English and psychology, Keller earned a master's degree from the University of California, Santa Cruz, specializing in American literature. Along with Lois-Ann Yamanaka, Cathy Song, and Juliet Kono, Keller is one of the most recognized female Asian American writers from Hawaii. She often speaks candidly about her childhood in Hawaii as a mix-raced **Asian American**, claiming that she fit in as part of the norm. While working at the **Bamboo Ridge** publishing house, Keller also contributed to the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* for a number of years in the mid 1990s, where she regularly published a column in the early 2000s. Keller's novels have become wildly popular, especially *Comfort Woman*, for which she has garnered significant praise but also criticism. Often working within the historical fiction genre, Keller's novels are a mix of haunting realism and mythical memory. Both of her novels discuss the aftermath of war for Korean Americans and the traumas that can be inherited from past generations. She currently lives in Hawaii with her husband and two daughters.

In an interview with a colleague from the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, Keller describes the conception of her most renowned novel. "In 1993," she recalls, "I went to a symposium at the University of Hawai'i to hear Keum Ja Hwang, who had been a comfort woman" (Burlingame 1997). The outcome of this experience was the short story "Mother Tongue" (1995), winner of the Pushcart Prize—later to appear in Keller's novel, *Comfort Woman* (1998). Historically, comfort women comprise the almost 200,000 (predominantly) Korean and Chinese women who were forced into serving

the Japanese military in government-run brothels. Controversy still exists over the actual historical events, and Keller is adamant that her representation is a fictional account that is grounded in historical fact. *Comfort Woman* envisions a character that endures the trauma of being a comfort woman and the psychological fragmentation that exists years later in the United States. Keller's novel, although fictional, awoke an enormous response in historians, sociologists, and (post)colonial and gender theorists.

Winner of the American Book Award in 1998 and long-listed for the United Kingdom's Orange Prize, *Comfort Woman* was a successful debut novel for Keller, evocative and acclaimed by numerous literary circles. The novel is narrated in two voices—Beccah's, the American-born daughter who, even in her adulthood, struggles to understand her mother's broken psyche, and Akiko's, revealed to be an abused comfort woman in **World War II**. Upon Akiko's death, Beccah begins to uncover the truth about her mother and is haunted by their troubled relationship—stemming mostly from Akiko's persistent enigmatic secrecy and what Beccah, in childhood, perceived to be strange overprotectiveness (against the evil spirit *saŋ*), jealousy, and madness. The novel begins with Beccah recalling a childhood memory wherein Akiko exhibits a sociopathic reaction to murder. "On the fifth anniversary of my father's death," Beccah recollects, "my mother confessed to his murder" (1998, 1). Later, Beccah recounts her humiliation upon finding her mother outside in the schoolyard harassing Beccah's teenaged classmates, or witnessing Akiko's hysterical dancing and clairvoyant visions. Beccah's narrative contains the disheartened tone of a child who feels forced into caring for her mother—a mother whom she loves but is, at times, ashamed of.

Akiko's narrative works in contrast to Beccah's. At times, Akiko adopts the typical voice of many Asian American, intergenerational narrators, as she contemplates her daughter's childhood in the United States. At other times, Akiko's tone is haunting and traumatized, as she recalls her childhood in Korea. As a child, Akiko is sold by her sister to the Japanese military as one of the laborers in their brothels. She recounts horrors of the camps, including the queues of soldiers waiting to be serviced, the speared corpse of an earlier comfort woman placed on display to discourage girls from trying to escape, and the maddening solitude that each girl felt. Later, when Akiko is married to a missionary clergyman, her body is no longer colonized by soldiers but, instead, by Western culture. In Hawaii, Akiko lives in a magical plane, where she communicates with spirits and transcends many social responsibilities. Akiko is guided by a "spirit mother," at the request of Induk, who strengthens her from the time when she escapes the Japanese brothel after an abusive abortion is forced upon her. *Comfort Woman* is a controversial exemplar of the conflicted mother-daughter narrative that is so prevalent in Asian American literature (consider Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, and Fay Myenne Ng's *Bone*).

Keller's work also expands to include short essays, including the humorous piece "A Bit of Kimchee," featured in the collection *Growing Up Local: An Anthology of Poetry and Prose from Hawaii* (1998) and "You'll Get Used to It," a work appearing in Camille Peri and Kate Moses's collection, *Mothers Who Think: Tales of Real-life Parenthood* (2000). Also in 2000, Keller, alongside Marie Hara, author of *Bananaheart and Other Stories* (1994), coedited an anthology of poetry, prose, and personal essays entitled *Intersecting Circles: The Voices of Hapa Women in Poetry and Prose*. In this collection female authors of mixed racial backgrounds examine their unique experiences and promote the beauty and empowerment of **hybridity**. In an interview, Keller proclaimed that "Being hapa [or mixed race] totally disintegrates all those easy categories of race." She cautions, "There is a danger and maybe a denial in believing that there is not possibility of crossovers" (Oi 2000). Works in the anthology are divided into three sections: a spatially motivated collection, "Citizens of Nowhere," a temporally named collection, "Through Yesterday to Grasp Her Wholeness," and the final group, "My Heart's Own Cathedral." Keller and Moses's book works to undermine essentialism and racism in a culture that predicates one's notion of subjectivity upon racial identification. Keller claims that *Intersecting Circles'* mandate is to "expand this idea of hapa apart from this imposed idea that we are either a bridge between cultures or are stuck between the cracks" (Oi 2000); the text instead moves away from homogenizing mixed-race subjectivities into an essential group and identifies the individual complexities of each experience. Contributors to *Intersecting Circles* include Ai, Cristina Bacchilega, Kathy Dee Kaleokealoha Kaloloahilani Banggo, Mei-mei Berssenbrugge, in addition to nearly 40 more authors.

*Fox Girl* (2003) is Keller's second novel and shares a level of discomfort with *Comfort Woman*. As the second installment of an anticipated trilogy (Keller claims that her third novel will focus on the development of Myu Myu and retain some of the same characters from her first two texts), *Fox Girl* examines the "colonial" relationship between the United States and Korea. Another historical fiction, Keller's second novel is set in a 1960s military town in Korea. Interested in the aftermath of the **Korean War**, *Fox Girl* centers on the representation of mixed-race adolescents (American and Korean) who realize that their futures are to be spent in a nihilistic world of despair and poverty. Deemed throwaway children, the teenagers are alienated from Korean society, which identifies their racial hybridity with impurity, and neglected by their American fathers, leaving them in a liminal space between two cultures that reject them. The camp town is ironically called "America Town"—and the community's culture clash (corner stores serve both kimchi and Coca-Cola) mirrors the complexity of the throwaway children's identities.

With the desire to flee the oppressive and rejecting community of "America Town," Hyun Jin follows the actions of her friend and several other women before



her—prostitution with the hope of either earning enough money to escape or winning the love of an American GI who will take her with him back to the United States. In an attempt to sell her virginity, Hyun Jin is gang raped and finds that the only way she can cope with her choices is to numb herself to the pain of her life. The only source of hope for Hyun Jin comes in the form of her friend's baby, whom Hyun Jin raises as her own. Like *Comfort Woman*, *Fox Girl* features a narrative of survival. The graphic realism is distressing and gritty but interestingly interwoven with the mythical presence of a fox spirit. The novel addresses the complexities of racial hybridity and the remnants of war that are marginalized decades later. The sad hopelessness felt by the characters in *Fox Girl* is even more resounding in light of what is identifiable as American cultural colonization and Westernization of the Asian Pacific Rim. Again, Keller focuses on precarious parent-child relationships, to link the idea of familial abandonment with cultural and national neglect.

Much criticism and controversy has stemmed from Keller's work, most notably in connection to *Comfort Woman*. Kun Jong Lee, for instance, discusses authentic Korean shamanism in the essay, "Princess Pari in Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman*," to address how Keller "rewrites" the original myth to show similarities between Akiko and her spiritual parallel. Lee contends that it is Induk who completes the transformation of Akiko into Princess Pari—a character who is idolized in *Comfort Woman* for courageously rescuing her parents from hell. Furthermore, Keller's novel, in combination with her participation in media attention about the subject of comfort women, has brought the idea of military sex slavery into mass culture. Responses have been mixed—with groups both supporting and skeptical of Keller's research. **See also** Racism and Asian America.

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JENNY HEI JUN WILLIS

#### ◆ KIM, MYUNG MI (1957–)

Korean American poet and educator Myung Mi Kim's poetry has drawn critical attention for the ways in which she aesthetically thematizes Korean immigrants' otherness, language barriers, diasporic experiences, and invisible presence in white American society, despite the fact that their identity interacts with the national identity of the United States.

Born on December 6, 1957, in Seoul, South Korea, Kim immigrated to the United States at the age of nine. As she said in an interview, the geographical transition at that age placed her in the "strange region of knowing and not knowing" the Korean language and culture (Lee 2000, 95), and these transnational experiences, oscillating between two languages, cultures, and histories, are frequently portrayed in her poetry. Kim completed a bachelor of arts in music and chemistry at Oberlin College in 1979, a master of arts at Johns Hopkins University in 1981, and a master of fine arts in creative writing at the University of Iowa in 1986. She has taught in high school and at San Francisco State University and now teaches as a professor in the Department of English at the State University of New York, Buffalo.

Kim has published four volumes of poetry, *Under Flag* (1991), *The Bounty* (1996), *Dura* (1999), and *Commons* (2002). All these books register her innovative, formal strategy, particularly marked by her experimental treatment of language and narrative, thwarting readers' conventional ways of approaching texts, which has resulted in the perception that her poetry is difficult and inaccessible. Indecipherable vocabulary, ungrammatical arrangements of words, and fragmented narratives with ubiquitous

blanks collaborate with Kim's thematic representation to challenge the dominant perspective on Korean immigrants as foreigners within the United States.

Regarding Kim's language, her American readers, mostly native English speakers, find her poetry visually foreign because of the Korean elements in various forms. "Into Such Assembly," for example, presents part of a Korean old song in the form of transliterated lyrics ("*Sung-Bul-Sah, geep eun bahm ae*," Kim 1991, 29), and "Cosmography" includes handwritten Korean words and their English translation (1999, 13). The otherness of Kim's poetry, derived from the presence of the foreign language, is more reinforced in a recent poem, "Siege Document," which begins with a Korean message that is also represented in the types of Romanization and phonetic rendering (2002, 76), and has another Korean message in the form of handwriting without English translation or even implicit connection to the context that non-Korean American readers could figure out.

This use of a lesser known Asian language, however, is not the only linguistic element that serves to make Kim's poetry enigmatic; Kim's English is far from Standard English or conventional poetic expression. Nearly every page of her books includes ungrammatical expressions, missing proper punctuation marks, truncated pieces of words, incomplete sentences, or phrases apparently making no sense. Here is an example that testifies to these linguistic features: "delay lights delay/boisterous staunch for-age fray/increment (trickling)/artillery signal fill page of address" (Kim 1996, 19). This passage is the whole text of the poem "[n]," which lacks a comma or period and the least necessary word units to make each line sensible. These anticipated constituents are instead replaced with irregular blanks between words that could signify various meanings. On the other hand, even the use of plain English frequently puzzles her readers. The poem "406," for example, provides multiple definitions of *perdu* and *perdure*, which readers may find in the dictionary, but these seemingly unambiguous definitions prove to be indistinct as well, because of the difficulty in being linked with the obscure letter "*pr*" in the preceding line and "The two are begun" in the following line (2002, 35).

Overall, Kim's English can be defined as almost unintelligible, similar to Anna O's speech, as delineated in one of the epigraphs of "Anna O Addendum" (Kim 1996, 35). Anna O is known to lose her native language for hysteria, and then her speech is full of incorrect uses of verbs, infinitives, verb tenses, and articles. Sharing the incomprehensibility of Anna O's speech, Kim's inclusion of the unfamiliar foreign language and defamiliarized English raises questions about the significance of languages, and these distinctively experimental features have caused her poetry to be considered in connection with language poetry. This poetic movement denies the conventionally conceived transparency of language as a method of conveying the whole meaning of language, for language poets believe that meaning is not transcendent but it naturalizes the

dominant ideology of society. Poeticizing the radical redefinition of language in ambiguous poetry, language poets invite readers to participate actively in the process of constituting meaning in text rather than passively learning determined meaning, in the same way in which customers purchase manufactured goods in a capitalist society.

Likewise, Kim's poetry asks for an alternative way of reading to explore the meaning of almost unintelligible passages without being restrained by standard grammar or syntactic rules. Blanks also wait to be recognized and filled in by readers' attempts to make connections between fragments. More significantly, Kim's radical disruption of language does not simply register aesthetic experimentation but underscores the interaction between language and Korean immigrants' ethnicity/identity. "Primer," for example, is referred to as "the study book" in the beginning (Kim 1996, 11), and its structure appears as such in that the subtitle of each poem of "Primer" is phonetic symbols [g], [n], [d], etc., which represent the sound of the first three letters of the Korean alphabet, Hangeul. But what readers discover from "Primer" is less the knowledge of the language than Korea's history, folklore, and suffering, which have been dormant as part of Kim's identity but as unknown as the language itself to her readers. In this way, the otherness of language, highlighted visually and audibly as well as cognitively in Kim's poetry, testifies to the poet's engagement with reality that defines her as an Other. The poet may look and sound foreign and incomprehensible, like Anna O's speech or Kim's strangely formulated pieces of words, so her status in American society is ambivalent because she is part of it but simultaneously prevented from integrating into it.

Another unique feature of Kim's poetry—fragments and blanks—interacts with Kim's experiment with language for the subject of Others-within. At first glance, Kim's poetry creates an impression that it provides certain narratives, incompletely conveying traumatic stories of nameless people's suffering, but these narratives are so curtailed and incoherent that the constitution of linear narratives is hard to anticipate. Fragmented narratives are, of course, nothing new in the history of poetry in English, as seen in high modernist poems in the early twentieth century. Yet Kim's strategy of providing disjunctive fragments correlates with the lack of documentation and invisibility of Korean immigrants in American history, as implied by wide blanks that are juxtaposed with numerous fragments of sentences or stanzas.

As a result, even when Kim poeticizes events or anecdotes significant in the history of Korean immigrants, they are rarely identifiable. Fragments in "Thirty and Five Books," for example, allusively render three different responses to the death of the young Korean American man Edward Lee during the Los Angeles riots in 1992. One comes from his mother, who says, "It could not be my son," and the other two from the *Los Angeles Times* and a Korean newspaper, which respectively published a color picture and a black-and-white picture of Lee's corpse (Kim 1999, 64–65). While the riots are remembered in the mainstream as one of the dark pages in history,

revealing the racial tension between whites and blacks, it served as an awakening of Korean Americans' identity and status as the Other in American society, as they observed their devastated businesses and the authority's disregard for calls for protective action. But Korean Americans' pain and suffering is not widely publicized, and the ambiguous images of Lee's tragedy in Kim's poem show how history remains elusive and obscure now.

Even when readers could identify the Korean people's stories, it is still indeterminate how they can be related to the subject of the whole text. The title poem "Under Flag," for instance, comprises collages of the **Korean War** and South Korea's postwar history, particularly principal moments of civil protests against South Korea's military dictatorship. The war served to reinforce the global expansion of the U.S. cold war foreign policy and precipitate Koreans' immigration to the United States, and South Korea's dictatorial regimes were supported by the U.S. anticommunist government. These transnational aspects of relations between the two nations, however, are largely unknown to American readers. Consequently, while the recognizable war element is represented in truncated pieces of images rather than in comprehensible narratives, the postwar history of an unidentified country appears to be a foreign affair, completely dissociated from the United States. Kim's intentional assemblage of disjointed pieces, radically condensing South Korea's history, therefore embodies the lack of her readers' understanding of their country's history and relations with the Other.

In this way, Kim's poetry captures the common omission of Korean immigrants' experiences and histories in the official record; if documented or publicized, they are frequently portrayed as alien or stereotypical. Hence, Kim's unintelligible vocabulary and amalgamation of fragments and blanks indicate the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of reviving Korean Americans' unwritten stories from deep-rooted forgetfulness in mainstream American society. Her innovative, formal strategy, which seems to hinder readers from understanding her text, in fact makes a point in that it is designed to denaturalize and disrupt dominant perspectives on language, history, ethnicity, and nation, and ultimately to blur the dichotomy of "us" and "them," a dichotomy that Korean immigrants have to confront in American society regardless of their legally acknowledged status. As the inflow of immigrants in the new global era instigates the need to redefine the significance of English ("What is English now?") and the national identity of "this 'America'" (Kim 2002, 110), Kim's poetry drives readers to recognize the mutual influence between "us" and "them."

Korean immigrants' identity and status is Kim's primary concern, but the subject of her poetry is not limited to it. In "Thirty and Five Books," the depiction of Lee's death in Los Angeles is followed by a brief juxtaposition of Koreans' suffering from the postwar division of the Korean peninsula and African Americans' slavery trauma (Kim 1999, 68). This passage is an example of her search for "the possibilities for transcribing what occurs in the traversal" between different peoples in different times and places

(2002, 110). Her latest book, *Commons* demonstrates that Kim's perspective is becoming more global. Poems in the book cover international histories, such as Andreas Vesalius's and Leonardo da Vinci's medical tests in the sixteenth century, the story of Korean diaspora survivor Olga Kim in Siberia, massacres in Kwangju, South Korea in 1980, and Sarajevo in 1992. Kim's exploration of these histories demonstrate her continuing poetic project: to give voice to the silenced and the marginalized and to make visible "an exponentially hybrid state of nations, cultures, and voicings" (108). See also Asian Diasporas.

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JOON HO HWANG

◆ KIM, RICHARD (1932–)

Born in Hamhung City, Korea, Richard Kim (Kim Eun Kook) is arguably the first successful Korean American novelist, if one uses the parameters to define **Korean American literature** as literature written in English by an author of Korean descent and published in the United States. Though broadly defined, such parameters omit literature by Koreans in the Americas written in other languages or translated from

Korean. Nonetheless, Richard Kim's fiction would have outsold them all, even though none of it is set in the United States. What little mention there is of the United States is relegated to the U.S. military presence in Korea. Among his many writings, his three most renowned works are two novels: *The Martyred* (1964) and *The Innocent* (1968) and a collection of short stories, *Lost Names: Scenes from a Korean Boyhood*.

Japan's occupation of Korea is the setting and source of conflict in Kim's collection of stories, *Lost Names: Scenes from A Korean Boyhood* (1970, republished by the University of California Press, 1998). Told from the point of view of a young boy, the stories recount the Japanese authorities' attempts to eradicate Korean culture and identity through acts such as forcing Koreans to adopt Japanese names, teaching only Japanese history in schools, and prohibiting the speaking of Korean in public. The more repressive the Japanese authorities become, the stronger the narrator's resolve to hold firmly onto his Korean name and culture. Like his father, depicted as one of the few Korean patriots who refused to flee the country, the boy becomes an unwitting model of Korean pride among his classmates and countrymen.

Kim's most popular work is his best-selling novel *The Martyred* (1964). Set in North Korea just before the outbreak of civil war in 1950, it develops the story of the capture and torture of 14 Christian ministers, and the murder of 12 of them, by North Korean soldiers and the attempts by both sides after the incident to spin it into favorable propaganda. Caught in the middle is the novel's narrator, Captain Lee, a former university instructor of world history, who is appointed to lead the South Korean Army intelligence investigation into the possible conspiracy of the two surviving ministers. Throughout, Captain Lee questions the value and the utility of religious faith in a world ever at war. Kim manifests the existential theme of suffering and sacrifice in the characters of the two surviving ministers and the eventual triumph of faith in the doubting Captain Lee.

*The Innocent*, published in 1968, was less critically acclaimed than *The Martyred* and in fact led to Kim's demonization among some South Korean critics for its perceived sympathies with the military government. The story centers on a post-Korean War military coup d'état, which, though Kim denied it, seemed to draw its historical precedent from the infamous 1962 South Korean military coup led by Park Chung Hee. Major Lee, the novel's narrator, is a reluctant military man, a moralist who despises bloodshed but who has a gift for military strategy. He comes under the influence of the coup's leader, Colonel Min, whose thirst for power clouds the logic and ruthlessness of the acts he employs to attain it. Throughout the story, Major Lee's confrontations with Colonel Min underscore the philosophical tensions of morality in a military-based society. Hard decisions have to be made, plots and counterplots hatched, and lives sacrificed at a whim. Told in retrospect, by the novel's end Major Lee wonders if the moral dividing line has less to do with biblical constructions of falls

from grace and thresholds of good and evil than with the harshly learned realities that inevitably shape innocence into experience.

Kim's two novels bring into stark relief for American readers the fact that the Korean War's most destructive and divisive consequences were not solely the psychological consequences that it had on American military veterans. *The Martyred* provides an insider's perspective on the run up to a war about which American readers often know very little. Kim's work is often associated with French existentialist writing; *The Martyred* is dedicated to Camus, whose insight into "a strange form of love," Kim writes in the dedication page of the novel, helped him "overcome the nihilism of the trenches and bunkers of Korea." Readers familiar with Camus's works, such as *The Plague* and the short stories in *Exile and the Kingdom*, can readily see their influence in *The Martyred* as well as traces of Camus's play *Caligula* and even Sartre's *The Wall* in *The Innocent*. Recently, Kim has been brought back into the fold of Korean and Korean American literary scholarship in the consideration of his work as cold war literature and literature that elucidates transnational perspectives current in **Asian American** literary studies. Korean literary scholars have come to value Kim's fictional work as postwar Korean literature. The shorter pieces from *Lost Names* provide informative accounts in Korean American literature of Japan's occupation of Korea and work conjunctively in analyses of other *bildungsroman* narratives of the occupation by Korean writers.

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GREG CHOY

### ◆ KIM, RONYOUNG (1926–1989)

Often considered one of a triumvirate of early Korean American novelists, Younghill **Kang** and Richard **Kim** being the other two, Ronyoung Kim's only novel, *Clay Walls*, was published in 1986 by the Permanent Press. Ronyoung Kim, also known as Gloria Hahn when she married physician Richard Hahn in 1945, was born in Los Angeles and grew up in that section of the city now known as Koreatown. In 1942 she



was crowned Miss Korea in Los Angeles, on the grounds of what is now part of the campus of the University of Southern California. Kim's father died when she was 12, leaving her mother to raise Kim and her four older brothers and younger sister by herself. In the off hours of her various jobs, her mother, Haeran (Helen) Kim, wrote poetry and essays for Korean-language publications and also held meetings at her home for members of Korean nationalist groups in Los Angeles. Kim eventually moved from Los Angeles to San Francisco, where she took a degree from San Francisco State University at the age of 50. Diagnosed with breast cancer, she died in 1989.

*Clay Walls*, an autobiographical novel, tells the story of the Chun family in three sections titled after the three main characters: Haesu, the mother; Chun, the failed father; and Faye, the youngest of three children. Chun and, in particular, Haesu, embody both the idealistic and tragic characteristics of Kim's own parents, who experienced the hardships of living in a United States that knew next to nothing about Korea or Koreans, instead recognizing them only as Chinese or Japanese and therefore subservient to the same all-encompassing anti-Asian legislation.

The novel's first and main narrative is the section on Haesu. In the opening, Haesu finds herself unable to finish the job of cleaning toilets for a white family in Los Angeles. Born into the aristocratic class in Korea, a *yangban*, Haesu is contemptuous of such domestic labor but will soon understand that service labor is as much as she will be allowed in her newly adopted country. In the course of searching for gainful employ, Haesu must also placate Chun, a conniving and desirous man of lower-class status, who coerced her parents into a marriage deal in Korea through the influence of an American missionary. When Chun inadvertently wanders into the middle of the historic March 1, 1919, demonstration against the Japanese occupation, he finds himself wanted by the authorities and barely manages to escape with his new wife to the United States. Living in Los Angeles, Haesu gives birth to three children, Harold, John, and Faye, and she becomes part of a small community of immigrant Korean Americans, some of whom have forged associations to raise money to help liberate Korea. Haesu finds that the politics and contentious personalities of the leaders of these groups are insurmountable obstacles to their potential effectiveness, but she is determined to find consensus among them. In the meantime, Chun's long absences from home to find work are both personally welcoming yet economically anxious periods. Abruptly leaving Korea with Chun and constantly bumping up against the United States' racial creed feeds a strong desire to move back to Korea.

Haesu eventually books passage for her and her children on an ocean liner commandeered by Captain Yamamoto, a Korean posing as Japanese. During the voyage, the captain and Haesu share an attraction to one another and engage in private philosophical conversations about their homeland and the choices they have made consequent to its occupation. His cover is discovered by the ship's steward, who is also a Korean

nationalist in the guise of a Japanese, who suspects the captain of being a traitor. Shortly after docking in Korea, the captain is assassinated and Haesu, as a result of her personal meetings with him and the steward, is implicated in the crime and brought in for questioning, where she encounters a former suitor, an unflattering Korean nicknamed Fisheye, who has traded loyalties and works for the Japanese police. The clampdown on liberties and any public expression of Korean culture, language, or loyalty and the trenchant atmosphere of suspicion and scrutiny create an almost immediate desire in Haesu to return with her family to the United States. Before embarking on the return trip, Haesu is reunited with Chun, who has won a small fortune playing cards with his shipmates and seems to have had little trouble skirting the authorities upon his arrival. They use some of the money to purchase a parcel of land in Qwaksan, in the hopes of someday returning when Korea is liberated.

The novel's second section on Chun alternates between his childhood experiences in Korea as a farmer's son in Sunchoun, who was fortunate enough to gain admittance to a Presbyterian high school, where he encounters Haesu and brokers a marriage proposal through the school's director, Reverend McNeil, and his life as an itinerant laborer in Los Angeles. Throughout the section, Chun is depicted as a dreamer with little ambition or expertise, other than to appease his penchant for gambling. He is taken advantage of in business opportunities, seldom wins at poker, but wins often enough to keep returning, cheats on Haesu while she is in Korea, and eventually loses the family's entire savings on a failed poker hand to the much more wily husband of the woman with whom he had an affair. Chun is a less well rounded character than a trope of what literary critic Sau-ling Wong might refer to as necessitous mobility, while other critics read his character as no more than the axis upon which Haesu's misfortune spins. His limited employment and gambling jaunts sometimes keep him gone for days at a time and a veritable stranger to his children. After losing the family savings, he moves further from home in his search for work. He ultimately finds a job as a hotel porter in Reno, where he ends up dying alone.

It is in the final section that Kim vests the hopes, development, and distinction of a generation of American-born Koreans. Written in the first person, Faye's section touches on the issues of second-generation identity development more common to readers of Asian American literature. It is also clearly the section to which Kim herself most strongly relates, given the first-person point of view of the narrative and that she was also a second-generation Korean American who grew up in the same setting as the novel. Faye's narrative forges the bond between herself and her mother, who is determined to provide for her children given the absence of their father and in the face of unrelenting racism. Haesu's struggle and sacrifice to support her family, her problems with Chun, and her interactions with Korean expatriate and nationalist groups stand in sharp contrast to Faye's blossoming American identity.

The verisimilitude of Faye's growth from childhood innocence into budding consciousness is grounded in the contrast of narrative points of view between Faye's section and the previous two sections written in the third person. Some critics read Faye's first-person narrative as a dialogue between her generation and her parents'. The novel closes at the outbreak of **World War II**, as the teenaged Faye helps the middle-aged Haesu sew her last of thousands of neckties. As Faye pleads for understanding among the older first-generation Korean Americans about the differences between the Japanese who occupy Korea and those who were incarcerated in concentration camps in the United States, Haesu must come to grips with the reality that she has lost her land in Qwaksan to the communists in North Korea and therefore her last link to her homeland. The end of the novel represents a new beginning for a new generation, as Faye breathlessly receives a letter from a Korean American suitor in Connecticut who speaks English without a trace of an accent.

Throughout Haesu's and Chun's sections, Kim develops familiar themes in the racial immigrant's experience: the inability to find gainful employ, acute acts of racial discrimination, and subsequent feelings of anger, hopelessness, and despair. Kim's novel is more often compared to Kang's *East Goes West* than to any of Richard Kim's works, because both are set in the early twentieth-century United States, the years of the first wave of Korean immigrants to the mainland. Published almost 50 years after *East Goes West* (1937) and nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in 1987, *Clay Walls* found a broader and more sympathetic audience than Kang's seminal work. Reviews of *Clay Walls* were, nonetheless, mixed, some mainstream critics finding nothing of the expectant exoticism from a tale of the Orientals in America, while others found little of the novel that resonated with Asian American issues of the time. Regardless, for nearly a decade, *Clay Walls* was the only **Korean American novel** in print. As a result, *Clay Walls* became a relegated classic as, often, the lone Korean American novel or work on many Asian American literature course syllabi.

The time frame in *Clay Walls* is similar to that in *East Goes West*—the baleful years of Japanese occupation in Korea—but the setting has shifted from New York in Kang's novel to Los Angeles, where Kim herself grew up. As mentioned, *Clay Walls* develops some of the same themes as *East Goes West*. Unlike *East Goes West*, there is the presence of a Korean American community in *Clay Walls*. Kim's novel touches on the fierce patriotism the first wave of immigrants felt, and the passionate and turbulent community meetings and subsequent splinter groups formed with different agendas about how to go about liberating Korea from Japanese rule. In the meantime, they all had to make livings and many had to raise children and find schools that would accept them. Faye's narrative portrays the eventual detachment of these second-generation Korean Americans from their parents' causes and control. Critics have read Haesu's section as a metaphor of Asian American feminist agency in the face of both American racism and a Confucian hierarchy that saw only a

place of servitude for women. Chun's gambling obsession has been construed variously as his only real hope for succeeding in the United States and as a metaphorical reflection of imperialism's obsession to acquire more land, thus the thrill of the game when the stakes are highest for Chun and his admiration for those who play high-stakes poker.

By the time *Clay Walls* was published in 1986, Kang and Richard Kim were out of print. Interestingly, many of the Korean American students who would have read the novel in college courses would have been from the 1.5 generation. These are mostly the children of the post-1965 wave of Korean immigrants to America—generations removed from Kang and Kim. Born in Korea, 1.5ers are most likely fluent in the language and culture of their parents, but they have been educated in American schools since late primary or junior high school. Thus the 1.5 designation: somewhere between first- and second-generation Korean American: too young to be considered first generation yet still too Korean to be considered fully second generation. *Clay Walls*, particularly for 1.5-generation Korean American students, is an account of a Korean American community that existed in the United States long before their parents' arrival. Ronyoung Kim depicts a dynamic community from the 1920s to the 1940s that has been until recently all but forgotten in contemporary Koreatown in Los Angeles. **See also** Feminism and Asian American; Korean American Literature; Racism and Asian America.

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GREG CHOY

◆ KIM, SUKI (1970?–)

Korean American fiction and nonfiction writer Suki Kim's debut novel, *The Interpreter* (2003), was a runner-up for the PEN/Hemingway Prize and was awarded the PEN/Beyond Margins Award and the Gustavus Myers Outstanding Book Award in 2004 and 2003, respectively. Kim has published a dozen nonfiction works in the *New York*

*Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Boston Globe*, and elsewhere. She was a 2006 Guggenheim Fellow in Fiction. Born and raised in Seoul, South Korea, Kim immigrated to the United States with her family when her father's business collapsed in a period of political and economic upheaval in South Korea in the early 1980s. While Kim's parents worked multiple jobs and long hours in Korean-owned markets in New York, Kim found herself deprived of her previous culture and forced to learn a new language at the age of 13; she speaks English with a lingering Korean accent. This early experience as a cultural exile has preoccupied Kim ever since, not to mention inspiring her first novel. Kim majored in East Asian studies at Barnard College, class of 1992, and studied at the London School of Oriental and African Studies with the intention of researching and translating Korean religious poetry into English. Frustrated with the paucity and poor quality of the translations of Korean literature compared to the ample translations and the recognition of Chinese and Japanese literature, Kim left England to become a professional writer in New York, an exiled American writer like Vladimir Nabokov, one of Kim's favorites.

*The Interpreter* follows the seemingly sumptuous yet inexplicably vacant life of Suzy Park, a 29-year-old Korean American court interpreter in New York City. While Suzy runs across multicultural references on a daily basis due to her interpreting job, her knowledge of two languages and cultures less enriches her life than causes her to feel stuck in a vacuum. Her noncommittal affairs with married American men also embody this stalemate situation. Despite Suzy's stylish life as a single Manhattanite and a consumer of fancy global products such as Starbucks, Prada, and Ralph Lauren, Suzy fails to connect to any culture or people, thereby revealing the downside of globalization today. Behind Suzy's inertia lies the mysterious murder of her parents five years before the novel begins. A few years after Suzy's father disowned Suzy as a whore, enraged by her interracial and extramarital relationship with her professor at Columbia University, both of her parents were shot to death by a random killer in the grocery store that they ran. To the traumatized Suzy, investigating her parents' murder becomes an ontological imperative for her to overcome her guilt and continue to live. As Suzy breaks out of her inertia and traces the eerie clues that await another type of interpretation, she is driven to the underworld of Korean gangs on 32nd Street, where exotic Korean pubs and billiards clubs line up. Suzy's playing of a novice sleuth unveils a series of family secrets, which she has failed to interpret. The hidden identity of her sister, Grace, and her parents' treacherous past as informants for the IRS bring out more profound questions for Suzy, rather than concluding her detection with the discovery of the killer, who has long been dead. Thus, the novel ends, or rather opens, with Suzy's calling into question the true meaning of *interpretation*; while the enigma of the vanished Grace is ongoing.

In a series of interviews, Kim states that "I really wanted to write an American book," rather than an "immigrant fiction." What America is about, according to Kim, is "killing your parents" (qtd. in Langer, 2003). By making Suzy's parents traitors to fellow Koreans

and having them brutally murdered, *The Interpreter* breaks away from traditional Asian American stories in which strong family/community ties are celebrated and often sentimentalized. Instead, Kim offers a compelling critique on the auspicious prospect of the multicultural United States as the novel reveals how the glorification of global virtues such as **hybridity**, difference, and mobility can cause dislocation and uprootedness in those who cannot readily move across national/cultural boundaries. Suzy's failure to mediate between cultures is aptly framed in the postmodern metaphysical detective story in which the quest of truth, far from disentangling a mystery, ends up raising epistemological questions on the nature of knowledge and truth. Often featuring an unprofessional sleuth who is accidentally dragged into an enigma, such as Eco's friar and Borges's librarian, the metaphysical detective story replaces the traditional whodunit question with a postmodern narrative of deciphering texts to show that the search for a killer amounts to nothing but the search for oneself. An ardent fan of Alain Robbe-Grillet, Kim creates a metaphysical detective out of a multicultural interpreter whose detection/interpretation testifies to the difficulty of cultural communication in the contemporary United States.

Kim's nonfiction works engage various topics from the single life in New York City to her memories of London to a meditation on political leadership. In 2002 Kim visited North Korea as a United States delegate to join the sixtieth birthday celebration of Kim Jong-il, the leader of the nation, in Pyongyang. Her travelogue of this event, "A Visit to North Korea," appeared in the *New York Times Review of Books*. Korean by birth and American by citizenship, Kim nevertheless refuses to be categorized as an Asian American author. Rather, Her writing demonstrates a genuine cosmopolitanism that never fails to remember the pain of finding one's place in a globalized world and the difficulty of truly understanding other peoples. The reviews of *The Interpreter*, interviews with the author, and links to Kim's selected projects can be found on the Suki Kim Web site.

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SOO Y. KIM

#### ◆ KIM, SUSAN (1958–)

Susan Kim is a Korean American playwright, writer for children's television, coproducer of a documentary and television shows, director of animation films, coauthor of graphic novels, and lecturer on dramatic writing. Kim's parents, a third-generation doctor and the daughter of a popular novelist/lyricist of the 1940s and

1950s in Korea, moved to the United States in the 1950s after the **Korean War** to finish Mr. Kim's residency. After the birth of their third child, the parents decided to settle down for the children, despite the parents' wish to return to Korea. While Kim led a shy and bookish life during her adolescent years, migrating from New York to Massachusetts to New Hampshire to Connecticut, she was fascinated by Tennessee Williams's plays in junior high school. This initiation to theater led her to act in high school and to found an improvisation theater group in college.

Graduating from Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, Kim coproduced television series for public television in New York and PBS until she found it unfulfilling and started playwriting. Beginning with her first full-length play, *Open Spaces*, winner of the Drama League Award in 1988, Kim has written a dozen one-act and full-length plays. Six one-acts were produced by Ensemble Studio Theatre (EST) in New York City. Founded by Curt Dempster, EST provided Kim with an artistic home where she developed into a major playwright over 20 years. All six one-acts revolve around outwardly accomplished yet deeply disillusioned individuals who are stuck in a dysfunctional marriage and/or surreal relationships. *Death and the Maiden* (1990) is set in Club Nirvana, where a game called Combat is waged between the sexes across barbed wires with toy rifles. Lorraine in *Rapid Eye Movement* (1991) suffers from two howling dogs, one that besieges her apartment and the other whose body her husband's spirit inhabits in her delusion. *Seventh Word, Four Syllables* (1993) explores a similar concern—a toxic domestic environment in the words of a *New York Times* review—through two disastrous marriages. *Pandora* (2001) testifies to the difficulty of remaining “us,” portraying a stalemate relationship that features a husband and a wife digging a hole for their daughter's dead pet.

Kim's examinations of disoriented individuals and their relationships investigate the issues of fantasy, obsession, isolation, loneliness, achievement, and failure: all conveyed in a condensed yet engrossing form. Kim's best known one-act, *Dreamtime for Alice* (1999), illuminates Alice's unnerving epiphany, her disenchantment from her upper-middle-class Manhattanite life and the im/possibility of spiritual redemption. Mysteriously left behind in an Australian desert from an outback bus tour, Alice recollects her devastating marriage and realizes how she has blown her life in her atheism. The moment Alice is dispossessed of everything but her “shadow, pride, flaws,” her desperate prayer is answered by a flood of dazzling light that quickly fades to black, a subtle ending that resists a glib answer. In another published play, *Memento Mori* (2003), two women, Kitty, who is old and bohemian, and Elaine, younger and uptight, sip “Vodkee,” as if nothing unusual were happening, in a restaurant in New York City where people have evaporated. As a wandering ghost and explosive sounds haunt the eerie scene, Kitty's last remark on the best party of her life that she had strikes the audience with a chilling analogy between the two apocalypses: the cold war and the post-9/11

contemporary. Despite occasional references to politics, Kim refuses to be categorized as an overly political writer. Similarly, although most of her plays present female characters and voice gender issues, she does not consider her works to be feminist plays. This is because Kim views feminism as a political label. Rather, her one-acts concentrate on ontological questions of faith and deprivation that are interpersonal and ubiquitous in contemporary urban life.

A versatile and prolific playwright, Kim has worked in different subgenres of playwriting. The notable plays unaligned with EST include Kim's adaptation of Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* for the stage (1993) and *Where It Came From* (2000), a semiautobiographical play. Committed to collaboration, Kim joined the 52nd Street Project that created an encounter of New York inner-city children and theater professionals to inspire original shows. The result of this project, *To Bee or Not to Bee* and *Scientist Meets Fish*, appeared in *Childsplay: A Collection of Scenes and Monologues for Children* (1995).

Kim's writing for children's television comprises another significant portion of her work, a career that she fell into by accident yet found immensely liberating and enjoyable. For the last 15 years, Kim has contributed multiple episodes for *Jojo's Circus*, *Dragon Tales*, *Stanley*, *Reading Rainbow*, *Are You Afraid of Dark?* *Higgley Town Heroes*, *PB&J Otter*, and *The Mystery Files of Selby Woo*. Kim's scripts for *Reading Rainbow* and *The Mystery Files of Shelby Woo* were nominated for the Outstanding Writing for a Children's Series in the Daytime Emmy Awards (2002, 2003) and the Children's Script for the Writers Guild of America Award (1999, 2000), respectively. In contrast to Kim's adult world, tainted with betrayals and disappointments, her episodes for children's shows illuminate the freshness and honesty of writing for and about children.

Since the late 1990s, Kim has expanded her range remarkably into nonverbal achievements. She directed two short animation films, *Driving Home* (1999) and *Mother Tongue* (2003); the latter was nominated for the Australia Film Institute Award for Best Short Animation. In 2004 Kim coproduced a documentary film, *Imaginary Witness: Hollywood and the Holocaust*. Narrated by Gene Hackman, *Imaginary Witness* follows the 50-year history of how Hollywood has responded to the Holocaust. When asked about the relationship between her playwriting and other nonliterary professions, Kim passionately recalls her experience of an intensely intelligent and organic collaboration in making the documentary. In the sense that all her works mirror and feed back into who she is, such an inspiring experience contributes to her growth as a writer. Even writing for television—work that Kim acknowledges can be limiting and frustrating—serves a purpose by reminding her of the basics of playwriting: “the importance of specificity, ways to establish and develop character, how to build conflict, and how to structure a piece” (personal interview).

As opposed to numerous Asian American writers who are preoccupied with hyphenated racial identities, Kim's plays do not involve racialized identity politics. In the case



of *The Joy Luck Club* and *Where It Came From*, the only plays of Kim's that center on Asian Americans, the playwright less tackles the question of ethnicity than narrates a family story of success/failure, community/isolation, and conciliation/betrayal, whose main characters happen to be **Asian American**. Raised in suburban New York in the 1960s with few Korean Americans around, Kim experienced ethnicity as something personalized and inflected by family history. This guided her to scrutinize close interpersonal relationships and their byproducts, including the issues of achievement, loneliness, fantasy, and depression, which Kim explicates are also Asian American issues.

Kim has served as a freelance council member of the Writers Guild of America, an organization that fights for basic rates and protections for TV, film, and radio writers. She has been teaching playwriting and screenwriting in the low-residency MFA program at Goddard College in Plainfield, Vermont. Kim's latest projects are two graphic novels, both coauthored with Laurence Klavan: *German Town* (2008) and *The Fielding Course* (forthcoming). **See also** Feminism and Asian America.

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SOO Y. KIM

### ◆ KINGSTON, MAXINE HONG (1940–)

Chinese American nonfiction writer, novelist, essayist, and journalist, Maxine Hong Kingston is best known for her work *The Woman Warrior*, an autobiographical blend of personal history, myth, and cultural history. She has published five books as well as essays and periodical pieces. When *The Woman Warrior* was published in 1976, it became the first **Asian American** work to be an instant commercial and critical success. Today, Kingston is the author against whom all Asian American authors are frequently measured and is considered the most influential Asian American author of the twentieth century.

Maxine Hong Kingston was born on October 27, 1940, to Chinese immigrant parents living in Stockton, California. Her Chinese name, Ting Ting, means "lone pine tree on a hill" and comes from a Chinese poem about self-reliance. Her father, Tom Hong, immigrated to the United States through Cuba to New York City, where he co-owned a laundry company, but by the time Kingston's mother, Brave Orchid, could join her husband, he had been cheated out of his part of the company. Her parents then moved west to Stockton, where Tom Hong managed a gambling house.

Kingston was the oldest of her parents' American-born children; her mother had two children in China, but they had died there.

Because of the time she was born, war would play an important role in Kingston's life. Her mother had escaped a war zone in China, and **World War II** was raging in Europe and Asia when she was born in 1940. According to Kingston, one of her earliest memories was being taken from a movie theater because she was crying while watching a war movie. She remembers watching her cousins go to war, and she remembers wishing for their safety and wishing that they would not kill anyone. In a 2007 interview with Bill Moyers, she says that she spent her birthdays wishing for an end to war. Her feelings about war would play a major role in the rest of her life, coming through in her political activism and in her art.

When Kingston started school as a child, she did not do very well because she refused to speak and covered all of her artwork with the ink from a black marker, which, according to Kingston, was meant to symbolize the black stage curtains and was modeled after the black curtains her parents had used for privacy. Her teachers did not understand the language barriers she was experiencing and labeled her as having an IQ of zero. Although she failed kindergarten, Kingston soon learned English in addition to Chinese and was an honor student at Sunset High School in Stockton, California. She was awarded 11 scholarships, which enabled her to attend the University of California, Berkeley; there, she majored in English and wrote for the school newspaper. Kingston graduated in 1962 and married Earll Kingston that same year. Earll Kingston was a stage actor and a Berkeley graduate. Their son, Joseph Lawrence Cheng Mei, was born in 1964.

After the birth of her son, Kingston, needing to make a living to support her writing, went back to school at Berkeley to earn a teaching certificate. During this time, she and her husband joined the antiwar movement over the **Vietnam War**, which had a strong presence at Berkeley, and, according to Kingston, the values of Berkeley really matched her own. She would continue throughout her life to be active in antiwar movements. In 2003 she was arrested, along with several other famous people, including Alice Walker, for protesting the United States-led invasion of Iraq. In an interview, she commented that the worst thing about being arrested was seeing that the police arrested the journalists first, so they could take the cameras and keep the pictures out of the press.

In 1965 the Kingstons both taught high school in Hayward, California, not far from Berkeley, but as the antiwar movement grew more violent and friends became involved with drugs, the Kingstons decided to leave California. In 1967, while the Kingstons were on their way to Japan, they stopped in Hawaii. They liked it so much that they stayed in Hawaii for the next 17 years. The peaceful and accepting environment in Hawaii provided a good place for Kingston to focus on her writing. It was in Hawaii

that she wrote her first and perhaps her most famous work, *The Woman Warrior: A Memoir of a Girlhood among Ghosts*, which was published in 1976.

*The Woman Warrior* is an autobiographical account of Kingston's having grown up within two cultures, Chinese and American, but the narrative is much more than an autobiographical account because Kingston mixes her personal stories with the stories of her Chinese ancestors and with Chinese myth. *The Woman Warrior* is often considered Kingston's own version of the *bildungsroman*, the classic growing-up story, as there are some predictable patterns: Kingston struggles against barriers set by her parents, her cultures, and society and searches for herself. Of course, the work is exceptional in that it is presented in Kingston's unique style of storytelling called talk-story. *Talk-story* is a term Kingston learned in Hawaii, as it is a term used frequently in Hawaiian culture, but this style of storytelling is a part of the Chinese peasant tradition in her family and one Kingston's mother, Brave Orchid, used to tell stories during Kingston's childhood. A talk-story is essentially a conversational storytelling technique, which Kingston has made famous in much of her work.

The most frequently anthologized chapter from *The Woman Warrior* is "No Name Woman." In this piece, Kingston relates the story of her Cantonese aunt on her father's side. In the story, the aunt's husband is away in the United States on a quest for gold when the aunt becomes pregnant. The villagers attack the family home because the aunt is such a disgrace. In the attack, the family's property is ruined and the aunt is humiliated, so much so that she commits suicide by drowning herself and her newborn baby in the family well. The family never again speaks of this aunt and will not even speak her name. The only reason Maxine hears the story from her mother is because she recently began menstruating and must remember to never disgrace the family. But instead of keeping No Name Woman's story silent, Kingston begins talk-stories about her aunt, trying to imagine what No Name Woman's life must have been like. By telling No Name Woman's story, Kingston recovers her existence and gives her value.

The rest of the book consists of stories about a variety of women, some historical and some mythical, all connected in such a way as to represent Kingston's own coming of age. In "White Tigers," a story that is also frequently anthologized, Kingston retells a myth about a legendary Chinese woman warrior who wears armor and pretends to be a man so that she can raise an army to fight against an evil baron who illegally drafted much of her village's male population into the military. Kingston takes the Fa Mu Lan myth and modernizes it by adding elements of modern Kung Fu movies to some of the scenes in the story, thus making an ancient Chinese legend seem more appealing to her modern audience.

The book reaches an emotional climax when Kingston finally explodes and tries to tell her mother 207 things that she wants to say. Literary scholar Charles L. Crow calls this scene an essential step in Kingston's liberation. Ultimately, Kingston is liberated

as she tells her readers about leaving Stockton and her family to go to college at Berkeley, and the final chapter of the book represents a peace, if perhaps uneasy, between Kingston and her mother, as the story is told as a collaboration, unlike the story of “No Name Woman,” which her mother told her only as a warning, not meant to be told and retold to others. This last chapter, entitled “A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe,” is about Ts’ai Yen, a Chinese poetess, who is kidnapped by barbarians and bears children who cannot understand the Chinese language. The poetess turns the sound of the barbarian reed pipes into songs in Chinese. The story is representative of both Kingston and her mother, who have taken stories and translated them for new generations.

Although most critics and readers responded with great praise to *The Woman Warrior* and the book won the National Book Critics Circle Award for nonfiction, a few have been quite critical of Kingston’s interpretations and techniques of blending personal history and myth. Frank **Chin**, also a Berkeley graduate and a Chinese American writer, has been the most vocal critic of Kingston’s work. He argues that *The Woman Warrior* offers fake myths and racist stereotypes, contending that Kingston’s publishers manipulated her into another Pocahontas. In his article “The Most Popular Book in China,” Chin calls Kingston a sellout for writing in the Western genre of the autobiography and that her interpretations of the Chinese myths are insulting to their culture.

Repeatedly, however, Kingston has said that her work is not meant to speak for *all* Chinese or Chinese Americans. She says one of her biggest concerns is that people assume they know or understand all Chinese people because they have read her stories. Kingston points out that her stories represent only one perspective and that the Chinese culture is more complex than that. She believes, however, that this will not be so much of an issue when there are many Chinese American writers who can voice their differing perspectives and show the world the complex experiences of their culture. She points out that the small village in China that she writes about in *The Woman Warrior* is not meant to represent all of China and that her experiences as a Chinese American in Stockton, California, might be very different from Chinese Americans who grew up in other places, such as San Francisco, for example. Some scholars have also argued that while Kingston has said that *The Woman Warrior* is not meant as a feminist book, it was published in 1976 during the second wave of feminism and points to clear oppression of women in Chinese culture; these scholars believe that Chinese American men like Chin may have felt misrepresented by the text.

In Kingston’s next work, *China Men*, published in 1980, she attempts to relate the male experiences in her family’s history. In *China Men*, meant as a companion to *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston tells the stories of her male ancestors who came to the United States in search of gold, built the **transcontinental railroad**, and fought in American wars. Although the success of *The Woman Warrior* has led it to be read and studied

separately, Kingston argues that to truly understand *The Woman Warrior*, one must also read *China Men*; the two are truly connected works. In *China Men*, she describes the racism and discrimination that these men experienced, even as they contributed to the building of a nation. *China Men* won the National Book Award for Nonfiction and the American Book Award. As in *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston uses myths to connect her stories and her imagination to fill in the gaps of history. For example, when she wrote *China Men*, she did not know the story of her father's immigration to the United States, so she imagined five different stories to describe how her father came to the United States.

According to literary scholar Charles L. Crow, the first two chapters of *China Men* set the stage for the wide range of narratives Kingston employs in the book. The first chapter, "On Discovery," is a retold Chinese story, and the second chapter, "On Fathers," is a fragmented memory of Kingston's father from her early childhood. In "On Discovery," Kingston tells the story of a fictional Chinese explorer named Tang Ao, who came upon a land of women and was captured and turned into a serving girl; he must then endure foot binding, ear piercing, and eyebrow plucking. While the story provides commentary on gender issues, Kingston also provides insight into the way Chinese men were most often treated when they came to the United States, as these immigrants were forced to give up their status, prestige, and educational background to become the lowest members of society. Many men, like Kingston's father, gave up careers as doctors and teachers in China to assume occupations like Laundromat owners. Kingston's father was once a poet and a teacher and became the owner of a laundry business when he came to the United States, an occupation generally associated with women, and then even that did not go well for him, as he was cheated out of his share of the business.

Kingston follows "On Discovery" with "On Fathers," a brief story that is an early memory of her childhood. The story reveals that Kingston knows little about her father, and he seems to be a kind of trickster or shape-shifter from Chinese folklore at times. Kingston remembers that her father was sometimes light and played with his children, but he would often be silent and angry and swear in Cantonese. Kingston says that since she does not know the stories of her father's past that she will make them up, he can correct her if she is wrong. So she uses pieces of stories and old photographs to tell her father's story and, in a way, gives him a voice, just as she did with "No Name Woman" in *The Woman Warrior*.

In 1984 Kingston returned to California with her husband when she accepted a position as a senior lecturer in English at the University of California, Berkeley. That same year, Kingston made her first visit to China to see the country that she had imagined in her books. She would say that seeing China confirmed her faith in her mother's talk-stories and in her own abilities to imagine. She said that many of the places she

saw and people she met were very much as she had imagined them to be. While teaching at Berkeley, Kingston published a collection of previously published essays and sketches, *Through the Black Curtain*, in 1987. That same year, she published *Hawai'i One Summer*, in which she explains how being accepted as a local in Hawaii helped her artistically.

In 1989 Kingston published *Tripmaster Monkey*, a novel about and narrated by a character named Wittman Ah Sing, a 1960s Berkeley graduate who turns beatnik. The title of the book alludes to drug culture and ancient Chinese culture. A tripmaster is the designated driver and safety net for a group of people taking trips on LSD or mushrooms. The tripmaster stays clean and directs the trips of his or her friends, a role Kingston said she often played in real life during her days at Berkeley. The monkey in the title is a reference to the Monkey King in ancient Chinese legend, who is one of the most well-known legends, as best portrayed in the famous novel *Journeys to the West* by Wu Cheng'en of the Ming Dynasty. The Monkey King is known for his trickery and deceit but remains helpful to a Buddhist monk who must make a journey across China to India to learn the sutras. Although the monkey is tricky and disobedient, he has a good heart. This blending of ancient and modern culture is often noted as a strength in Kingston's work, but this novel is much more of a modern work than her previous books.

In fact, critics and readers were surprised at the major differences between *Tripmaster Monkey* and Kingston's first two books. *Tripmaster Monkey* is about Wittman Ah Sing's quest to find himself, an important theme of the 1960s in which the novel is set. Ah Sing struggles with his American identity and his Asian heritage, much like the characters in Kingston's other works, but Ah Sing must negotiate his identity within the context of the free-loving culture of 1960s San Francisco. The plot of *Tripmaster Monkey* occurs in a period of two months in which the main character, Ah Sing, considers suicide but decides against it, falls in love, gets married—but not to the woman he is in love with—and loses his job at a store because he creates a pornographic toy display involving a Barbie doll. Wittman Ah Sing goes on to write an epic play in which he casts everyone he knows. The book concludes with the production of this play, and Ah Sing concluding the final performance with an intense monologue about everything from war to racism to American identity.

The reviews of *Tripmaster Monkey* were not as favorable as those for *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men*. In this work, Kingston comments on society, consumerism, racism, and more, and some critics have argued that the work is too didactic. But other critics have pointed to the success of the work, arguing that Kingston once again effectively tells the story of the Asian American male and his struggle within American society. John Leonard, a critic from the *Nation*, called *Tripmaster Monkey* the "Novel of the Sixties" (768) and responded to critics who were disappointed with *Tripmaster*

*Monkey* after Kingston's first two works by saying that Kingston has earned the right to write about anything she chooses and that we should all pay attention, no matter what she writes about.

Shortly after the publication of *Tripmaster Monkey*, Kingston accepted a position as distinguished professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1990. The next year, her father died, and her house was destroyed in the Oakland Hills fire of 1991. Also destroyed was the only copy of a manuscript she had been working on called *The Fourth Book of Peace*, a book that was supposed to be about the lost *Three Books of Peace* from ancient Chinese legend. According to legend, *The Three Books of Peace* were said to be able to teach humans how to avoid war and create eternal peace, but the books were supposedly burned by ruling powers in China. Ironically, Kingston's manuscript about these books was also burned. Kingston said she was discouraged by the fire and did not have the heart to rewrite her book, so, instead, she began work on *The Fifth Book of Peace*, published in 2003. While she was working on *The Fifth Book of Peace*, President Bill Clinton awarded her the National Humanities Medal in 1997, and she published *To Be the Poet* in 2002.

*To Be the Poet* is a collection of Kingston's lectures given at Harvard on her quest to become a poet after publishing her very successful books *The Woman Warrior*, *China Men*, and *Tripmaster Monkey*. In the recent book, which is a collection of note-like prose with interspersed verse and reads almost like a journal, Kingston offers insight into her creative processes. She writes about her process of writing *The Fifth Book of Peace*. She explains how difficult the process of producing such a long work can be, and at one point she even figures mathematically how many words she still has to write and how long it will take her to write them before she finishes. The mixture of Kingston's poetry and her narratives about living the life of a poet was well received and is considered by many critics to be an inspiration for aspiring writers. *To Be the Poet* marked the completion of *The Fifth Book of Peace* and the completion of a phase in Kingston's career. She says her plans now are to commit herself to verse and to be the poet she longs to be.

*The Fifth Book of Peace* came after the publication of the short collection *To Be the Poet*. Kingston has referred to *The Fifth Book of Peace* as a nonfiction-fiction-nonfiction sandwich, as the four sections of the book entitled "Fire," "Paper," "Water," and "Earth" move between autobiography and fiction. In "Fire," Kingston writes about the 1991 fire that destroyed her home and her manuscript for *The Fourth Book of Peace*. She describes what it was like driving home from a ceremony honoring her deceased father to find her entire neighborhood engulfed in flames. "Fire" also offers new insight into Kingston's relationship with her mother, Brave Orchid. Brave Orchid is now an old woman who needs help with many of her daily activities, but she has not lost the strength and fire that Kingston described in *The Woman Warrior*. Kingston also

describes a scene with her mother when Brave Orchid hides a family scroll that details the stories of her family's immigration. Brave Orchid hides the scroll from Maxine out of fear that Maxine will publish the story and cause the family to be deported.

In the next section of the book, titled "Paper," Kingston writes about her trips to China to interview people to find out what they knew about *The Three Books of Peace*, but the interviews were inconclusive. In the third section, "Water," Kingston continues the story of Wittman, her main character and narrator from *Tripmaster Monkey*. She relates how Wittman moves to Hawaii to hide from authorities after he has been drafted during the Vietnam War. In Hawaii, Wittman learns that, unlike many in the continental United States, the Hawaiians have great respect for the contributions and culture of the Chinese. In the final section of the book, "Earth," Kingston relates the stories of her writing workshops she held with Vietnam veterans, as well as veterans from other wars and family members of veterans. In diary-like form, Kingston honestly narrates the stories of the veterans who speak about how the war has touched them and others. The work is a culmination of Kingston's feelings about war and lessons human beings should learn about it.

Kingston reports in *The Fifth Book of Peace* that her mother has died and that one of her nieces had a vision of Brave Orchid walking in the clouds and meeting Kingston's father, who was holding an open shawl, waiting for her. The ancestors surround the two of them, and they walk together in the sky. The reporting of this vision provides closure to Kingston's readers who witnessed her struggle to find her place by sometimes rebelling against her parents in *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men*. Some critics have expressed concern that without the struggle with her parents and her history, some of Kingston's fire in her works could be lost, but Kingston's passion for peace in the midst of an ongoing war seems to assure more fire from one of the United States' most studied and loved authors.

Maxine Hong Kingston remains one of the most important Asian American authors and has inspired a new generation of Asian American work. Her status as an author who blends cultures to reveal honest experiences remains strong, despite some criticism over her interpretation of her Chinese culture. In a 2003 interview, Kingston said that she melds the Chinese and Western experiences and writes in a kind of fusion language in which English is empowered by Chinese tonalities. Kingston says that she also has great respect for the oral tradition of her culture, even though she is very much aware of what she is doing in writing some of it down. She has said that she sometimes feels badly for writing down the oral tradition, but it is her way of telling her story. And, to Kingston, being able to tell those stories is important to human sanity.

Kingston continues to work with veterans of war to help them tell their stories. She says that she hopes the art can help with the healing. She feels it is a part of her mission in life to tell the truth and help others tell the truth about their experiences. In



2006 she edited a collection of stories written by veterans and family members affected by war who attended her writing workshops. The collection, *Veterans of War, Veterans of Peace*, presents a variety of perspectives on war, including stories from combatants, war widows, and conscientious objectors. Some stories describe what it was like for veterans who came home from war to face post-traumatic stress disorder, homelessness, and substance abuse.

Maxine Hong Kingston has received numerous awards for her works and her lifetime of contribution to literature. A collection of her papers is held at the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley. **See also** Asian American Political Activism; Asian American Stereotypes; Feminism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America.

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◆ KOGAWA, JOY (1935–)

Japanese Canadian poet and novelist Joy Kogawa's most recognized work is her first novel *Obasan* (1981), but she has also produced multiple volumes of poetry, additional novels, and a work of children's literature. *Obasan* has been translated into Japanese, German, and Dutch and received several awards, including the Books in Canada First Novel Award, Canadian Authors Association's Book of the Year Award, the Before Columbus Foundation American Book Award, and was named a Notable Book by the American Library Association. She has been given numerous distinctions that include honorary doctorates from Canadian universities, being named a Member of the Order of Canada in 1986 and of the Order of British Columbia in 2006, the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Association for Asian American Studies in 2001, and the NAJC National Award by the National Association of Japanese Canadians in 2001. In 2004 the city of Vancouver designated November 6 as Joy Kogawa day.

Born Joy Nozomi Nakayama on June 6, 1935, in Vancouver, Canada, Kogawa resided in Vancouver until 1942, when she and her family were forced to relocate to an internment camp in Slocan, a ghost town in the interior of British Columbia. In 1945 the family moved to the small village of Coaldale, Alberta, where Kogawa's father was transferred by the Anglican Church of Canada to serve as a minister. In 2005 the Land Conservancy (TLC) of British Columbia led efforts to prevent Kogawa's childhood home from demolition. In 2006 the Save the Kogawa Homestead campaign was successful, and TLC acquired the home, now designated as a historic site by the Vancouver city council, with plans to turn it into a writers' retreat and a memorial for those evacuated and imprisoned during World War II.

Kogawa completed a teacher's training program for temporary licensing at the University of Alberta in Calgary (1953–1954). After teaching in an elementary school in Alberta for a year, she moved to Toronto, where she studied music at the Royal Conservatory of Music and theology at the Anglican Women's Training College (1956–1957). She later studied briefly at the University of Saskatchewan (1968). In 1957 she married David Kohashigawa (later changed to Kogawa), with whom she had two children, Gordon and Deidre. The couple divorced in 1968. From 1974 to 1976, Kogawa worked as a writer for the prime minister's office. After leaving that position, she began to work as a freelance writer. She was also a writer-in-residence at the University of Ottawa in 1978. Currently, she lives in Toronto and Vancouver.

SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Much of Kogawa's work returns to the internment of the Japanese Canadians during the Second World War. Immediately following the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, all people of Japanese ancestry, regardless of national citizenship,

were deemed enemy aliens by the Canadian government. While Canadians of German and Italian ancestry also had to register as enemy aliens, only those of Japanese heritage were sent to evacuation camps. In 1942, under the authority of the War Measures Act, 21,000 people were forced to leave their homes on the west coast of Canada, 13,000 of whom were Canadian citizens. Women, children, and the elderly were sent to detention camps in the interior of British Columbia, while men aged 18 to 45 years old were sent to labor in road camps. After the war ended, Japanese Canadians were given the option of either migrating to Japan or relocating east of the Rockies. After protracted negotiations between the National Association of Japanese Canadians and the Canadian government, a redress agreement seeking an official apology and reparations was signed in 1988. Details of the agreement include payments of \$21,000 to individuals affected by the internment, establishment of a \$12 million community fund, and \$24 million to establish the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, an interdisciplinary organization whose mandate is to contribute to the elimination of racism and racial discrimination in Canadian society. Affected individuals were permitted to apply to expunge criminal convictions accrued under the War Measures Act and, for those sent to Japan, for reinstatement of Canadian citizenship. The "choice" to return had been exercised by most under duress from authorities and was termed "voluntary deportation."

While the internment of Japanese Canadians clearly represented the pinnacle of anti-Japanese sentiments, it was by no means an isolated incident. Although the first Japanese immigrant, Manzo Nagano, arrived in 1877, in the twentieth century the Japanese, the majority of whom settled in British Columbia, were still considered foreigners to Canada. A number of restrictions governed their lives in Canada. For example, even those born in Canada who held Canadian citizenship were denied the right to vote. The federal franchise was only extended in 1948, and British Columbia gave the provincial franchise to Japanese Canadians in 1949. The absence of political representation was directly tied to the exclusion of Japanese Canadians from a number of professions. Licenses required to practice law, pharmacy, and forestry, for example, could only be given to those on voters' lists. On September 7, 1907, tensions that had originated in controversy surrounding the arrival of a boatload of illegal immigrants from Japan erupted in a Vancouver riot. Mobs of white Canadians tore through the Asian sections of the city, destroying property and attacking those they saw as obstructive. In 1908 the Gentleman's Agreement, limiting Japanese immigration to 400 persons a year, was signed.

Although Chinese and Japanese Canadians might have been perceived as a homogeneous pan-Asian population by non-Asians, they constituted two separate communities often in conflict given the domestic and international situations. In the nineteenth century, Chinese and Japanese laborers were seen as a threat to white Canadian

workers because of their willingness to work for substantially lower wages. There was also some degree of tension between Chinese and Japanese workers, who found themselves in competition for employment. Antagonistic relations were also fuelled by the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895. This war helped to establish Japan as a strong imperial power, a position that affected its overseas communities in various ways. In part because the Japanese government took a strong interest in the welfare of its immigrants, the Japanese were not subjected to certain exclusionary measures, such as the head tax that was imposed on Chinese immigrants entering Canada. However, the strength of the Japanese military later helped fuel perceptions of the **Yellow Peril** invading Canada.

Much of Kogawa's fiction focuses on the history of exclusion suffered by the Japanese Canadians in Canada. *Obasan* has been credited with playing a significant role in the redress movement as it drew much critical attention to the historical events of World War II. *Itsuka* was written while Kogawa was involved with the redress movement and depicts the complicated negotiations that took place within the Japanese community and with the Canadian government. The novel suggests that part of the difficulty in reaching agreement over the terms of reparations stemmed from differences of opinion between the **issei**, **nisei**, and **sansei** (first-, second-, and third-generation Japanese Canadians).

#### LITERARY HISTORY AND CONTEXT

Reviewers in both Canada and the United States were generally quick to recognize Kogawa's first novel as an important contribution to both literary and historical conversations. *Obasan* is often taught in university courses for the questions it raises about the writing of history, multiculturalism, ethnicity, and gender. *Obasan* was the first novel to write about the internment of the Japanese in Canada. It was the second to write about the situation in North America and was preceded by John Okada's *No-No Boy* (1957). Okada's only novel writes about the devastating effects of relocation camps on the Japanese community in the United States. Ichiro, the novel's protagonist, is stigmatized within his Japanese American community because he is a no-no boy who has been imprisoned for refusing the draft. Ichiro's mother represents the refusal of a segment of the issei population to assimilate into American society and is steadfast in her determination to return to Japan. Her death alleviates to a certain degree Ichiro's dilemma: he is torn between suffocating obligations to Japan, given his parents' loyalty to their homeland, and his own mixed feelings about the United States and his future. Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's memoir *Farewell to Manzanar* (1973), cowritten with her husband James Houston, also discusses the internment, but uses the form of nonfiction. Like Naomi, the main character in *Obasan*, Houston is a young child during the war. All of these texts address the significant psychological, physical,

and economic impact the evacuation had upon Japanese families in North America. They also explore the complicated relations the Japanese community in North America had to Japan.

Reading Okada's and Houston's texts alongside *Obasan* illuminates the differences between U.S. and Canadian internments. In many ways, the restrictions imposed by the Canadian government were much harsher than those of their American counterpart. Japanese Canadian families were typically broken up and family members sent to different relocation sites, a practice that was not common in the United States. Moreover, the Canadian government prevented Japanese Canadians from returning to the west coast after the war ended and only lifted those restrictions in March 1949. While interned, homes, fishing boats, and other possessions confiscated from Japanese Canadians were sold at reduced prices without the consent of their owners. Part of the proceeds from these sales was used to pay for the expense of relocation camps. On August 10, 1988, the American government signed a redress agreement with the Japanese American Citizens League. The Canadian government followed suit by reaching an agreement in September of that same year.

Critics of Asian North American literature have often commented on themes of silence, food, and mother-daughter relations that reoccur in Kogawa's fiction, and more broadly in fictional and nonfictional texts by Asian immigrant writers. *Obasan*, in particular, is often read alongside Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, and Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café*, because these texts also investigate Asian North American women's experiences of exclusion across generations. More recently, a number of Asian Canadian writers such as Hiromi Goto and Kerri Sakamoto have written novels that revisit the legacy of the Japanese Canadian internment. Goto and Sakamoto, along with Larissa Lai, Madeleine Thien, and Rita Wong, are part of an emerging generation of Asian Canadian women writers that are starting to garner significant critical attention.

## POETRY

Kogawa first began publishing as a poet and has produced seven books of verse. Although Kogawa is a prolific poet, her poetry has generally received little critical attention. Her early works of poetry include *The Splintered Moon* (1967), *A Choice of Dreams* (1974), *Jericho Road* (1977), and *Six Poems* (1978), a chapbook released by the League of Canadian Poets. Many of these poems tend to be brief and demonstrate a wry sense of humor and a certain sense of emotional detachment by the speaker. *The Splintered Moon*, published by Fiddlehead Poetry Books with a print run of 500, collects poems that previously appeared in Canadian poetry journals such as *Canadian Forum*, *Fiddlehead*, and *Canadian Poetry*. Many of these short lyric poems focus on the aftermath of failed romantic relationships and the struggle to forgive past injustices, personal and collective. A

*Choice of Dreams* opens with a series of poems about the Japanese Canadian speaker's trip to Japan and visits to wartime monuments. The second section, "Forest Creatures," also explores the effects of World War II, but considers, most notably in the poem "What Do I Remember of the Evacuation," how the events shaped Japanese Canadians. The third and final section of the volume uses abortion as a context within which to explore themes of birth and death. As the title of *Jericho Road* suggests, biblical imagery recurs throughout this collection, as do allusions to fairytales. For the most part, this early poetry tends not to explicitly engage with issues of race, ethnicity, and the experiences of Japanese Canadians in the same way as Kogawa's fiction.

*Woman in the Woods* (1985) and *A Song of Lilith* (2000) foreground gender issues and negotiate women's commitments. Whereas the dominant concern of *Woman in the Woods* is the end of the speaker's marriage, other sections deal with wartime experiences. "Road Building by Pick Axe," for instance, contains a found poem summing up the lifetime of an individual whose assets were sold by the Canadian government and used to pay for his internment. *A Song of Lilith* is the product of a collaborative effort with visual artist Lillian Broca. Kogawa's long poem recuperates the mythical figure of Lilith, Adam's first wife who has long been vilified by Christianity, by rewriting her as a feminist figure of independence. Fifty of Broca's paintings illustrate the seven sections of this poem. In *A Garden of Anchors: Selected Poems* (2003), poems such as "Washday," originally published in *Jericho Road*, work through problems of historical amnesia. This collection also contains several new poems.

## FICTION

By far Kogawa's most celebrated work, all 3,000 copies of the first print run of *Obasan* (1981) quickly sold out. On September 22, 1988, excerpts from *Obasan* were read by Ed Broadbent, leader of the New Democratic Party, to celebrate the brokering of a successful redress agreement between the Canadian government and the National Association of Japanese Canadians. Kogawa's first novel describes the internment from the perspective of Naomi Nakane, a single schoolteacher living in Cecil, Alberta. The death of Uncle Isamu Nakane and her caretaking responsibilities of her aunt Obasan prompt Naomi to remember her childhood and the ways in which events of World War II profoundly shaped her life. Both Naomi's mother and grandmother went to Japan to visit family during the war and became victims of the Nagasaki atomic bombing. This event is hidden from Naomi and her brother Stephen until they are adults. At this point, Aunt Emily, Obasan, and Nakayama-sensei share with them their grandmother's letters from Japan. The loss of Naomi's father is also linked to the war, as Mark Nakane develops tuberculosis after being sent to work as part of a road gang. In the absence of her parents, Uncle and Obasan look after Naomi and her brother. They are sent to live in Slocan, and then at the end of the war, to Alberta.

Naomi's paternal grandparents are initially interned in Hastings Park, where they stayed in former livestock barns, and then were ordered to New Denver. Aunt Emily Kato and her father are spared being sent to an interior camp and allowed to live in Toronto, but Aunt Emily protests the limitations of this reprieve. By refusing to recognize the Katos and Nakanes as constituting a single family unit, the government officials encourage the breakup of this family. The novel illustrates the dispersal of families and provides insight into the long-term effects produced by these government measures. Twelve years elapse before Naomi and Stephen see Aunt Emily again. While Stephen eventually becomes a renowned musician, he has very little contact with his family after he leaves Granton. Naomi mentions that she does not have any Japanese Canadian friends. The alienation of family members from each other speaks to the destruction of community and the collective trauma of internment.

The novel begins in 1972 with the death of Naomi's uncle. While it is generally written in a realist mode, *Obasan* also draws on the language of lyric poetry and the official discourse of government documents to contest the unjust treatment of Japanese Canadians. An image that recurs throughout the narrative is of stone bread made by Uncle from recipes given out at the Granton general store. Uncle would often improvise from this basic recipe by adding various ingredients, such as barley and carrots. That Naomi and Stephen had difficulty ingesting Uncle's overbaked loaves suggests the stone bread represents traumatic moments of Japanese Canadian history that are difficult to accept. Significantly, *Obasan* is able to swallow this bread by dipping it in homemade tea. Another key aspect of the novel is Naomi's silence when the family's neighbor in Vancouver, Old Man Gower, repeatedly molests her. Four-year-old Naomi cannot even confide in her beloved mother. Silence becomes a way of representing how Naomi is scarred by the childhood traumas of sexual abuse and internment.

*Obasan* documents the experiences of Japanese relocation camps in Canada. It provides insight into the physical challenges of living in cramped quarters without adequate heat, water, and plumbing, and the aftereffects that included the dissolution of families and communities. Included at the end of the text is a copy of the 1946 memorandum sent by the Co-operative Committee on Japanese Canadians to the House and Senate of Canada. Kogawa's novel incorporates revised sections of Muriel Kitagawa's journals and wartime correspondence. Kogawa has said on numerous occasions that a dream led her to Kitagawa's recently deposited papers at the National Archives in Ottawa. The novel expands a short story Kogawa had previously written, also called "Obasan," and published in the *Canadian Forum* in 1978.

Kogawa has spoken in interviews and at public lectures about the biographical similarities between Naomi, Aunt Emily, and herself. Like Naomi, Kogawa and her family were relocated to the interior of British Columbia, and both women eventually became schoolteachers. Although Kogawa resembled Naomi during the earlier part of

her life, she gradually transformed into a figure more like Aunt Emily. Kogawa has also stated that, as she maintained her distance from the Japanese Canadian community until the late 1970s, she bears an affinity to Stephen and his tendency to reject his family and past. Obasan and Naomi's mother are both loosely based on Kogawa's own mother, Lois, who was formerly a kindergarten teacher and a musician. The character of Nakayama-sensei is modeled on Kogawa's father, Gordon Nakayama, an Anglican minister. Kogawa's parents are both issei, first-generation immigrants from Japan.

*Itsuka* (1992), whose title translates loosely as "someday," is a follow-up text to *Obasan*. This novel finds Naomi now 40 years old and actively involved in the redress movement of the 1980s. This politicization of a previously very private Naomi occurs after Obasan passes away, and Naomi moves to Toronto to stay with Aunt Emily. Written long before Roy Miki's painstaking reconstruction of the redress story, *Itsuka* was, for a number of years, the only record of much of what had taken place. The novel was modestly revised and republished in 1993.

Most recently, Kogawa published *Emily Kato* (2005), a novel that substantially revises *Itsuka*. *Emily Kato* was rereleased on the sixtieth anniversary of the Nagasaki bombing. Although the basic storyline of *Itsuka* remains constant in *Emily Kato*, the latter makes substantial changes in characters and structure. For example, Nikki Kagami, the antagonist of *Itsuka*, remains but her presence is reduced and her manipulations shared with a new character named Peter Kubo. The most significant addition to *Emily Kato* is the increased role given to Anna Makino and her family. The text tells us of the death of Anna's parents (which parallels the death of Uncle and Obasan) and of the effects of Anna's sexual abuse by Brother Leroy and her sister Kim's abuse by her husband. The addition of these plot lines reduces the prominence and space devoted to the political machinations of the redress campaign, although it remains the organizing theme of the book. The actual historical events and actors in the telephone conference fictionalized in chapter 33 are described and documented by Miki's *Redress*.

In both the original and the revised editions, Kogawa leaves these two narratives largely untouched: Naomi's partisan view remains the same, as does the harsh portrayal of the conflicts that take place. However, major changes occur to the representations of childhood abuse. In *Itsuka*, the assault takes place on Naomi. Placed in the middle of a flashback to Pastor Jim's fire and brimstone, the assailant is a stranger, unnamed and described by his actions, not by his appearance. There is no description of touching in the narrative, and arguments can be made for and against Uncle understanding the nature of Naomi's distress when he comes to the rescue. The narrative is a cinematic recollection through the eyes of a child: an adult's questioning is not brought to bear, although it is deftly implicit in the narrative, which, while describing the arrival and approach of the stranger, contains no reference to his exit.



In *Emily Kato*, the childhood abuse is inflicted on Anna Makino, not Naomi, and it is an escalating seduction comprised of numerous acts perpetrated by Brother Leroy. For the most part, the violation is described through reportage by Naomi of what Anna told her, introduced and concluded with exchanges that appear in direct quotations. In essence, the abuse is recalled in anger by an outraged Anna instead of accessed through unspoken flashback without direct discussion by a child. Remaining as elements of the narration are its location in the sugar beet fields, the pursuit, the child's removal of the soiled underpants, and the male figure (Uncle in *Itsuka* and Mr. Makino in *Emily Kato*) swishing them clean in the ditch. This substantial rewriting is required by the new narrative, in which Anna personifies another kind of trauma and another response to trauma, a change that works to focus attention on the subject and away from its biographical significance in the psychoanalysis of Naomi.

Of the constants, Kogawa retains the diaristic approach, even though she omits the initial orientation by month and year in the earlier part of the book. Unchanged from *Itsuka* is the playing out of suffering and brutality along the various registers of nature. The elderly struggle with illness and death. The kitten, also carried forward from *Obasan*, struggles hopelessly to escape the outhouse. A new addition on a continuing theme, the spiders in the jar consume each other, and the cat eats the frogs. There remains the awareness of the multiplicity of mass traumas. Father Cedric remains to give voice through his ancestry to the Armenian genocide and the genocide of Native North Americans, and the bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima are also present in the discussion, with the incorporation of the reference bombing of the World Trade Center in its concluding pages. Most critically, however, the theme of community remains the same.

*The Rain Ascends* (1995), nominated for the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize, returns to issues of justice, forgiveness, and family that recur throughout Kogawa's writing but departs from her other works of fiction by examining them from the perspective of a white Canadian woman. Although this novel has not generated the kind of critical acclaim that *Obasan* continues to receive, Kogawa has mentioned in interviews and at public speaking appearances that she considers it to be her most important work. In this third novel, Kogawa paints a portrait of Millicent Shelby, the daughter of a much respected Anglican minister guilty of sexually abusing hundreds of young boys. Millicent struggles with the implications of this knowledge and tries to reconcile it with the image of a heroic father she had always adored. The prologue to the book recounts Reverend Shelby receiving honors by the town of Juniper, and the pride Millicent felt for her father as a child, a moment that illustrates just how far the Shelby family's fall from grace and respectability is.

As an adult, Millicent is torn between the desire to protect her father from the consequences of his actions and the need to have him accept responsibility for his crimes.

Although Eleanor, Millicent's sister-in-law, argues repeatedly against protecting her father, Millicent is only finally compelled to break her silence when her own son admits that his grandfather had once molested him. Consequently, Millicent speaks to the bishop about this matter but achieves a less than satisfactory outcome. Like much of Kogawa's other writings, biblical imagery abounds throughout much of this novel. There are, for example, clear allusions to the Old Testament story of Abraham and his willingness to sacrifice his son, Isaac.

*Naomi's Road* (1986), Kogawa's first work of children's literature, reworks the storyline of *Obasan* for a younger audience. It is the first juvenile novel to write about Japanese Canadian experiences during the Second World War. The book has been translated into Japanese and published in Japan as *Naomi no Michi*. *Naomi's Road* has been used as a resource for schools in both Japan and Canada. In 2003 the Vancouver Opera was awarded the commission to produce *Naomi's Road* as an opera, score composed by Ramona Luengen and libretto by Ann Hodges. The opera toured elementary schools in British Columbia, Southern Alberta, and Washington State (2005–2006), and was also performed at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa (2006). In the original edition of the book, Matt Gould's simple line drawings provide impressions of the physical and emotional landscapes as experienced by Naomi. The expanded version of *Naomi's Road* (2005) features visuals by Ruth Ohi, a children's book writer and illustrator. Ohi's accompanying drawings are less angular and more detailed than Gould's interpretations of the text. This revised edition also contains more details about Naomi's family and a new ending that discusses the disappearance of Naomi's mother. The book begins with a letter from the author that provides historical context for the story. Kogawa's preface emphasizes the common national identity that binds all Canadians together, regardless of ethnic heritage.

This story is told from the perspective of six-year-old Naomi and begins in the warmth of her loving family home in Vancouver. Sections of *Obasan* are reproduced in this book but reframed in a narrative that fleshes out Naomi's childhood. For instance, the Japanese fable of Momotaro, a boy that climbs out of a giant peach to a childless elderly couple, is told in both *Obasan* and *Naomi's Road*. Changes to the original version of *Naomi's Road* and *Obasan* include the substitution of a scene with Naomi and a friend playing with matches for one with a hen attacking baby chicks and the insertion into the storyline of a young white Canadian girl named Mitzi. Naomi and Stephen first encounter Mitzi a year after they are relocated to Slocan. During their walks to the newly built school, the children pass by Mitzi, who utters racist comments at them. Eventually Mitzi and Naomi become close friends, thus representing the attachment the family begins to feel toward Slocan and the possibility of overcoming prejudice. The family's experiences in Slocan also provide a sharp contrast to the even harsher conditions they endure when they are forcibly moved to Granton, Alberta.

Unlike *Obasan*, news of the deaths of Naomi's parents is never directly announced in the original version of *Naomi's Road*. Naomi instead has a dream about her mother and father singing in a burning flower that Uncle and their minister interpret as a vision about how to exist in tumultuous times. **See also** Japanese American Internment; Multiculturalism and Asian America; Pan-Asian Ethnicities; Racism and Asian America.

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CHRISTINE KIM

#### ◆ KONO, JULIET SANAE (1943–)

Hawaiian poet, writer, and educator Juliet Sanae Kono (nee Asayama) was born on July 16, 1943, to a family of Japanese immigrants who came to the islands as contract laborers and then became independent sugarcane growers. A sansei (third-generation Japanese American), Kono was the youngest of two daughters. Her father's family traced back to Kumamoto Prefecture in Kyushu, Japan, while her mother's kin hailed from both Hiroshima and Yamaguchi. She attended Chiefess Kapi'olani Elementary, then went on to Hilo Intermediate and High School. Kono's writing began in the 1970s, and the writer credits the sister of the protagonist in the film *Picnic* (along with Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, and other confessional writers) with inspiring her choice of careers. In 1988 Kono graduated from the University of Hawaii at Manoa with a bachelor's in English, followed by a master's in English in 1990. She taught at a number of institutions following graduation: Leeward Community College, Windward Community College, and Kapi'olani Community

College. In 1995 she accepted a tenure-track position at Leeward Community College, where she has since been teaching freshman composition and creative writing. Kono has received a number of awards: the Elliot Cades Award for Literature (1991), the American Japanese National Literary Award, the Kapalapala Po'okela Award for Excellence in Literature, and the Hawaii Award for Literature (2005). She is also the recipient of a U.S./Japan Friendship Commission Creative Artists Exchange Fellowship. Her publications include two books of poetry—*Hilo Rains* (1988) and *Tsunami Years* (1995). Apart from these two collections and her busy teaching schedule, Kono found the time to contribute to *On a Bed of Rice: An Asian American Erotic Feast* (1995) and to coedit (with Cathy Song) an anthology called *Sister Stew: Fiction and Poetry by Women* (1991). Her latest work, *Ho'olulu Park and the Pepsodent Smile* (2005), involves numerous short stories about the Japanese American community. With the exception of *On a Bed of Rice*, Kono's other projects have been published by Bamboo Ridge Press, an organization that she has supported through numerous writers' workshops and readings.

Kono acknowledged in an interview that the tsunami of 1946 served as a watershed moment for her family: discussions of the past could often be divided into "before" and "after" events. At the time, the Asayama family had been living near the mouth of the Wailoa River, across from what is now Lili'uokalani Park. Though all of her family miraculously survived, the tsunami devastated the entire area known as Shin-Machi and swept over a hundred people out to sea. In a strange twist of fate, the family would be spared a second time in the 1960 tidal wave that took the lives of 61 people—the water rose to the very edge of the family's house. Not surprisingly, the tsunami became the subject of Kono's second collection of poetry, *Tsunami Years* (1995).

Little scholarship has been leveled at Kono's work. In *And the View from the Shore: Literary Traditions of Hawai'i*, Stephen Sumida only briefly mentions her work as part of a larger pastoral tradition in Hawaiian literature that often concentrates on childhood themes and experiences. Rob Wilson identifies Kono as being party to a "diverse cultural-political commitment" (Wilson 2000, 141); his reading of Kono's poem "Yonsei" highlights what he sees as resistance to American culture's threat to ethnic traditions and sense of difference. Dennis Kawaharada's interpretation of a particular poem is unfortunately mired in the political storm surrounding Bamboo Ridge. In "Local Mythologies," Kawaharada chides the perceived tendency of local Japanese writers to discourage Native Hawaiians from asserting their culture and identity through their art. Kawaharada goes so far as to call Kono's poem "A Scolding from My Father" in the Bamboo Ridge collection *Growing Up Local* (1998), a prime example of "provincialism" that plagues local Asian literature; Kawaharada argues that the only reaction a reader will have to the

racial politics displayed in the poem is to wonder “Wow, are the local Japanese really that stupid?” (2001, 202).

Kawaharada’s analysis does little justice to the complexity of Kono’s work. Kono’s first collection, *Hilo Rains* (1988), offers a theoretically and technically challenging look at the concept of ethnic identity. *Hilo Rains* begins with two particularly poignant pieces—“Grandmother” and “Face.” Together, they set the stage for the later discussion of Japaneseness in the book; both poems use visually incomplete or damaged images of the immigrant’s body. The reference to “silhouette,” “shadow,” “smashed bones,” and “flattened face” directly correlates to the history being addressed, a history that resides only in memories of a woman of the first generation and the trains from the plantations. This dual sense of loss becomes the context by which the overall Japanese experience in Hawaii is cast. Hawaii is, after all, the place where “Everything Japanese is buried,” as cited in the words of a grandmother figure in the poem “Grandmother and the War” (1988, 22), or simply obliterated as is the case with Shin-Machi in “Tsunami: April Fool’s Day, 1946.” The short story “Ojichan,” which is placed at the end of part one, brings this theme to a close with the retelling of the story of Urashima Taro, a traditional Japanese folktale of a lost fisherman. In the grandfather’s, or Ojichan’s version, Taro is swept out to sea by a tsunami and is saved by a turtle—the two stay out in the water for a “very long-u, long-u life” (51). The advanced age and illness of the grandfather, who has terminal cancer, make him the obvious parallel with the hero of the legend. But on another level, the grandfather’s rendition of the story is also symbolic of the dilemma faced by the first generation. Like the hero, the *kanyaku imin* (the first-generation immigrants) found themselves in a new land from which there was no return. There was no going back to Japan.

But rather than seeing this ironic duality of being both rooted and rootless as simply tragic, Kono moves into a glimpse of a new generation by the end of *Hilo Rains*. Closure comes with the emergence of a new theme, that of Obon (which is a yearly festival that celebrates the return of the ancestors to this world). The last poem, “Yonsei,” offers a description of the poet’s son, a fourth-generation Japanese individual. The son, a surfer, embraces the same sea that represents the loss of homeland for his ancestors; he seemingly lives far removed from the culture and lifestyle of the plantation cane-cutters. Nevertheless, the poet’s reflection on her son moves into a sense of connectedness as she realizes how they both share in the yearly ritual to visit the graves (*hakamairi*) and voices her hope that he will continue to honor that tradition after she is gone.

Whereas *Hilo Rains* contemplates the loss of homeland, *Tsunami Years* delves into more personal loss. The epigram citing Elizabeth Bishop opens this intimate exploration of the poet’s life: in many ways, these poems are a confessional in that they lay bare the emotions that not only emanate from profound hardship but also

are necessary in the creative act of rendering experience into art. The first section, entitled “The Elizabeth Poems,” is an intricate working of the themes of love and loss through complex poetic forms that yoke euphonic passages of desire and adoration with jarring, dissonant utterances. Specifically, in “What to Be,” the mother-in-law metaphorically cuts flowers and mingles with butterflies and bees in what appears to be a garden setting; this image is undercut with the cacophonous succession of images using words that denote the harsh reality that this picturesque image belies: Alzheimer’s is a difficult disease that often entails moments of intense emotional outbursts and/or physical violence enacted by the victim (the poet’s mother-in-law) in moments of confusion and dementia, as seen in the next poem, “Shower.”

The deployment of the tsunami as a signifier for recurrent loss as depicted in *Hilo Rains* returns in Kono’s second collection with the persistent references to water, the sea, and death. The line breaks and spacing in the poem “Caring for Mother” in section one evokes the image of waves and the destructive force they represent; these images become central to the middle section, “Tsunami Years,” which revolves around the loss of male children. The first reference appears in “Atsuko’s Wedding Day,” which mentions the “disappointment to come/when all our sons die” (1996, 64) due to miscarriages. Later in “School Boy from Up Mauka,” a poem dedicated to the students and teachers lost at Laupahoehoe School during the tsunami of 1946, Kono reverts to the perspective of a little boy whose last moments are imagined “as if the tale/of the Five Chinese Brothers/had come true” (68). The courageous, fragile innocence of the child in facing the oncoming rush of water is a prelude to two other losses—that of the poet’s father and son in the same year—in the last section, “Painter.” In “A Spin Around Town,” Kono draws her father’s survival of the 1946 tsunami into contrast with his losing battle with complications from diabetes. The stoic image of the male figure confronting his impending passing returns with the poet’s exploration of her son’s last moments—his homelessness, his multiple attempts at suicide, his bid for freedom from pain. For the most part, the son remains voiceless, emotionless, but inherently lost and childlike. Kono later writes in her rendition of her son’s funeral of an offering of continuity. This continuity operates on several levels: first, the Buddhist ceremony in this poem harkens back to the first book’s exploration of *obon* and *hakamairi*; second, the statement, “Mother, this is the way I come back to you” (1996, 165), can be read as both the voice of the dead son and that of the poet who shares the same fate as her mother, both being women who are/were destined to lose their sons. And womanly identity is what brings this collection full circle to the opening epigram and to the art of writing. Fittingly, *Tsunami Years* ends with a poem that again plays with the physical imagery of waves: “Painter” ushers us back to the garden and to a sense that poetry is a process like painting.

Kono's latest publication, *Ho'olulu Park and the Pepsodent Smile* (2004), involves her move from poetry into prose. Still present is Kono's consciousness of her heritage; however, the vehicle for discussions surrounding that past manifests in the theme of shame and how it literally shaped the formation of Japanese American history and identity in Hawaii. On the surface, a number of Kono's short stories speak of a fear that dictated the treatment of "loose" women, internees during **World War II**, and even those who chose to marry outside of the community. But a more complex reading reveals how shame is the result of internalized racism directed at the very idea of being Japanese. In "Japanese Tea Garden," a "haolefied" (someone wanting to be white) collaborator who leads witch hunts against other Japanese individuals is rewarded by seeing his stature grow in this very community; the story acknowledges that the real shame is carried by all Japanese for representing all that is "foreign" and "un-American." This is further highlighted in the story "Ho'olulu Park and the Pepsodent Smile," which follows the tribulations of a girl who realizes that her picture will never win the photo contest for this brand of toothpaste. Her hopes are dashed by her sister, who takes her aside to say, "Don't be stupid. Do you think you can win? You just wasted all your money, kid. Do you know who we are? No fool of a judge is going to pick you, a Japanese girl, no matter how beautiful your teeth. He probably looked at your picture and laughed" (2004, 152). The sister's words are confirmed as the young narrator stops by a local drugstore and sees in the window the pictures of the winners from Michigan, Nebraska, and Colorado—pictures of "beautiful haole children" (152). Other stories in this latest collection revisit the familiar experience of living with a mother-in-law with Alzheimer's and a son who is institutionalized, making clear that writing for Kono will remain intensely personal and personally inspiring. **See also** *Bamboo Ridge: The Hawaii Writers' Quarterly*; Issei, Nisei, Sansei; Racism and Asian America.

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### ◆ KOREAN AMERICAN ADOPTEE LITERATURE

Korean American adoptee literature became established in the United States because of the influx of adoptees caused by the devastation of the **Korean War** (1950–1953), the debilitating economic problems from the aftermath of the war, and finally the continuing social stigma of having children out of wedlock. Though this literature examines various themes associated with Asian American literature in general, such as alienation, identity, **filial piety**, self-perception, and culture clash, this literature includes other themes perhaps unique to adoptee cultural interactions, such as abandonment, rejection, reunions, cultural amnesia, the discovery of Asian ethnicity, being of mixed heritage, and imagined encounters with birth parents. According to Also-Known-As, a Korean adoptee organization, the majority of the world's Korean-born adoptees, some 100,000, grew up in the United States. Another 40,000 adoptees live in other countries. Within Korean American adoptee literature, one theme stands out above most themes: the need for acceptance by both or either culture, the adoptive, American, white culture and the Korean, other culture.

Three important anthologies allow readers to hear the words of Korean American adoptees: *Seeds from a Silent Tree* (1997), *Voices from Another Place* (1999), and *After the Morning Calm* (2002). All of these anthologies contain Korean American selections; however, only *Seeds* deals solely with Korean American selections. This work stands out as the first such anthology, which contains 45 readings, composed of poems and memoirs under the subheadings of “Roots Remembered and Imagined,” “Transplantation,” “Reunions,” and “Seeds of Resolution.” Within the “Roots” section, Sherlyn Cockroft’s “New Beginnings” (Bishoff and Rankin 1997, 10–17) shows how unforeseen circumstances caused her to be separated from her family. After her mother had divorced her father, she and her brother moved in with their father. But they did not get along with their stepmother. When the father was gone for extended periods to work, the stepmother beat them and denied them food, so the children ran away to return to their mother. Unfortunately, Sherlyn was separated from her brother, became homeless, and eventually found herself in an orphanage. In 1976 at the age of nine, Sherlyn was adopted by a family in Missouri. When she was old enough, she would later be reunited with her brother and mother.

Children of mixed heritage were often looked down upon by Korean society; sometimes such children found themselves in orphanages, abandoned. In *Seeds*, “The Unforgotten War” (Bishoff and Rankin 1997, 21–30) by Thomas Park Clemens, the forgotten war is not the Korean War but the story of the homeless children of mixed heritage. Clemens recalls how he was abandoned by his mother one day, when he was told to look down and not look back. When he did turn around, his mother was missing. He found himself, a half Korean and half American child, on the streets fighting for his life. Clemens compared himself to cream, being half and half: half white and



half Asian. Joining a gang for protection, the street kids became his family. Eventually, he found himself in an orphanage, again fighting for respect. Not fed enough nor loved enough, he survived. Then an American family was interested in adopting him. All of the sudden, he became special; he was given vitamins, medicine, and even more food to consume. Yet Clemens would not forget his warrior days and the price he had to pay for his mixed heritage.

Not all the stories about adoptees fit into the established themes about Asian American adoptees, some stories defy categories, such as this story about someone of mixed heritage called "What I Was Told" (Bishoff and Rankin 1997, 111–115) by K. Burdett. In this story from *Seeds*, K. grew up knowing that she was half Korean and half American. When she reached adulthood, she began to search for her birth parents. However, she did not have to travel to Korea because she was born in Washington DC. She found out that her mother was a blonde-haired, green-eyed German, Irish woman who had a relationship with a Korean American businessman. K. managed to find both of them and started to get to know them. Since she has a similar passion for films that her father had, she managed to be closer to her father.

Adoptees often have problems with their cultural and personal identity, which can be complicated when adoption records are lost or the wrong child is sent to the United States as a replacement. In "Remembering the Way Home," another story from *Seeds* (Bishoff and Rankin 1997, 116–120) by Deann Borshay, a Korean girl was adopted by an American family. When she arrives and is told that her name is Cha Jang Hee, she replies that they do not say her name right. They think she is confused. But she continues to insist that she has another name. When she is old enough, she investigates this. She discovers that she was switched before she was sent, for her real name is Kang Ok Jin. The original mother of Cha Jang Hee had changed her mind and did not give her up for adoption. Kang was sent as a replacement and was told not to reveal her real identity. For Deann Borshay, discovering the truth meant uncovering an important part of her identity.

Another anthology, *Voices from Another Place* (1999), contains poems and short vignettes with 47 readings. The editor of this anthology, Susan Soon-Keum Cox, is herself an adoptee. Most of the readings are by Korean American adoptees, but a few are about adoptees raised by European or Australian families. These stories catch different adoptees at various stages of abandonment and separation, ranging from anger to acceptance. In "My Han" (96–104) by Kimberly Kyung Hee Stock, the narrator oscillates between negative and positive emotions. First, Stock was abandoned by her biological family or mother. When she grew up, she visited a Korean orphanage to hold babies, and she met with pregnant teenagers who were about to give their babies up for adoption. She noted that the cycle of abandonment continues, which angers her because Koreans say that they value families, while they continue not

to accept her or these babies. Korean society still seems to force pregnant teenage girls to give up their babies because of the stigma of having babies out of wedlock. Before leaving Korea, she uses the Korean word *han*, meaning “unrealized dream,” as an expression of what she needs to feel complete. Her *han* is to meet her mother, for Stock believes that her mother must think of her daily, just as she dreams of her mother daily. Having replaced anger with peace, Stock simply wants to thank her for being her mother.

The pain or sadness of the abandonment permeates many of the stories of adoptees. In “Made in Korea” (Cox 1999, 3) by Jonathon Kom Hyo Sung Bidol, he remembers life in Korea and what patience means. One day, Bidol’s sister told him not to move, so he waited, yet his sister never returned. Indeed, he has been waiting ever since, for 25 years, and she still does not return.

People are ignorant about what Korean American adoptees must feel. Some adoptees just want to be accepted as family members, not looked upon as adopted foreigners. In “Stone Parable” (Cox 1999, 58–59) by Jim Milroy, his American family plants trees on 80 acres of land, not to make money but just to give back to the Earth. Jim, an adoptee, and his brother, born in the United States, play with stones as toys and imagine that they are all sorts of vehicles, like cars and trucks. Everyone who visits the tree farm and sees the stones understands that they are toys, representing vehicles with no problem. But not everyone who sees Jim accepts him as a seamless extension of his American family. Since his family accepts him as family, why can’t others do the same? The adoption idea stands in a similar position to the tree idea because it becomes a way to give back to society and “plant families.” Perhaps, such a plan should have been written in stone; then people might have accepted him without question.

Ethnicity is in the mind of the beholder. Self-perception is a key theme in “Kimchee on Whitebread” (Cox 1999, 74–81) by Kari Ruth. The narrator realizes that the problem is not in the way she looks but in the way people look at her. This story is similar to Jim Milroy’s parable of the stone. Growing up, Ruth, an adoptee, disliked looking in mirrors or taking pictures because she was reminded of what she was or was not. She even avoided other adoptees because they were like mirrors, reflecting what she did not want to see. However, when she moved to Korea to work, she felt that she fit in. Indeed, for the first time, her clothes fit her body correctly. She recalled an incident at the University of Arizona when a teacher called on her to discuss the problem of race. Ruth replied, “My family is white. I have no idea what you’re talking about” (Cox 1999, 79–80). She is tired of the wrong perception people have of her.

One Korean American adoptee memoir demonstrates a rare selflessness that delves into a deep inner peace. In “Abandoned” by Kelly Neff, the narrator maintains a surprising bit of optimism that contradicts all the negativity she endures. Neff tells us that she is a Korean adoptee, but that she was a replacement, a second choice.

Originally, Lee Kil Soon was the one who was supposed to be adopted. One day, when she discovered a pile of letters, she learned that her American family had picked Lee, completed the paperwork, bought clothes, and waited for her to arrive. They loved her completely and thought Lee was cute. Tragically before she was about to leave, she died of a brain aneurysm. The adoption agency quickly suggested a replacement and sent a picture. The family replied that the baby was ugly and could not replace Lee. But then they changed their minds. In memory of Lee, they would raise the replacement baby. When the narrator grew up, Neff made a trip to Korea, where she wanted to find the grave of Lee. When she did, she noticed that the grave was hidden away and not taken care of. She later returns with a pencil to rub Lee's name on a paper in remembrance. Perhaps to save cost, the same gravestone had a multitude of names of other children who died. As a way to show respect, she rubbed all the names of the dead onto paper, so that they would not remain eternally abandoned.

In *After the Morning Calm: Reflections of Korean Adoptees* (2002) by Sook Wilkinson and Nancy Fox, there are 26 readings, mostly narrations, letters, and a couple of poems. This book has a world vision with stories of adoptees who grew up in places like Norway and Australia; however, most were raised in the United States. A surprising amount of gratitude and acceptance for being an adoptee permeates these readings. For example, in another tale of an adoptee with mixed heritage, "Love the Life You Have" (19–26) by Dominic Pangborn, he learns that his Korean mother became pregnant from a service man, hid him away, and then gave him up for adoption. He was raised in Michigan. When he grew up, he earned a college degree and returned to Korea, only to discover his birthmother had died 10 years before. He met his Korean brothers and sisters and now keeps in contact with them. Pangborn feels lucky to have two families. More gratitude is shown in Susanne Penner's "Beautiful Women" (159–163), where she is thankful for all the mother figures in her life: her original Korean mother who gave birth to her, her foster mother who took care of her after she left the orphanage, and her American mother who raised her. Susanne feels blessed to have so many mothers.

Though many adoptees were reflective, they found problems with their own reflections because they were supposed to know what Asian ethnicity meant. Yet because of cultural amnesia, depending on the age they were adopted, some forgot the language, smells, and nuances of Korea. In "Quantum Leaping" by Robert Ogburn (Wilkinson and Fox 2002, 140–146), one day he accidentally catches his reflection in the mirror and is surprised at the Korean looking back. Catching his double in such a manner made him realize the chasm between what he felt about himself and what he felt he should look like. He felt that the reason for this was that he was not raised by Koreans. That all changed when he attended the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, which has plenty of Korean students. As he befriended his Korean classmates,

his attitude changed. He enjoyed hanging around Koreans and eating kimchi and *bulgogi*. With such interactions, his forgotten memories of his Korean childhood reemerged. "At college I was able to look into the mirror and began to recognize the face staring back at me" (142–43).

Another reading from *Morning Calm*, "American Blessings" (Wilkinson and Fox 2002, 121–128) by Paull Shin is a rags-to-cultural-riches tale. During the Korean War, Shin was homeless until a group of U.S. soldiers took him in as a houseboy. Dr. Ray Paull, a dentist, decided to adopt him. At the age of 18, he arrived in the United States with his new father, who asked him what he wanted to do. He insisted that he wanted to go to school, for he had never attended any school. He not only completed his GED, he went right through to a PhD and taught for some 30 years. After that, Shin wanted to give back to the country that he felt had raised him. He insisted that he was not a minority but an American, so he decided to run for the office of state senator in Washington State. In a district that was mostly white, he walked from house to house, hour after hour, and told his story again and again. Proclaiming that he wanted to pay the United States back for his blessings, Shin won against an incumbent. For his reelection, he again walked and talked, wearing out four pairs of shoes, walking nine hours a day for nine months. Shin won again.

"Just One of the Seeds from the East" (Wilkinson and Fox 2002, 89–96) by Stephen C. Morrison is about changing old attitudes. In 1999 Morrison decided to change Korean prejudices against adoption. He felt it was time for them to adopt their own Korean children, so he created Mission to Promote Adoption in Korea (MPAK). He managed to get a television station to do a special about why adoption would be beneficial. The station visited him and investigated his life in the United States. The show, entitled *This Is What Life Is*, did quite well with Korean audiences. His organization has since gained more acceptance. His hope is that in some 30 years in the future, Koreans will adopt as much as Americans and that most Korean adoptees will be able to be raised in their own country.

The media has a strong influence on Korean American children's perception of themselves. This is examined in "I'm Irish" (Wilkinson and Fox 2002, 59–66) by Pete Kearly. He recalls being confused when his American father told him that he was not Irish. His father explained that he was Korean. But a young Pete would say, "I'm Irish." Even John Wayne is Irish, so why couldn't he be "Irish"? He grew up not wanting to be the stereotypical Asian nerd from such films like *Sixteen Candles* or *Revenge of the Nerds*. When he saw Asian girls whom he went to school with, he avoided them because he did not want to associate with geisha or dragon ladies. He sensed there was an "illegitimacy" in how others interpreted his ethnicity.

Thomas Park Clement's "A Journey into the Past" (Wilkinson and Fox 2002, 42–47) is about an adoptee who becomes successful. He is a member of the Advisory

Council on Unification by South Korean President Kim Dae Jung and is on another visit to North Korea to help fight tuberculosis. Though he has made those types of trips before, this one would be different. At one point, he meets a five-year-old barefoot, homeless boy. In that boy, he sees himself and realizes that, though he is an inventor with over two dozen patents, a successful CEO of his own medical company, and someone who donates his time to worthy causes, he has forgotten his own cause and contends that every child has a right to be loved and has a right to succeed. "Our lives are a symbol of the inherent goodness in human kind" (47). The story ends by transforming into a manifesto for all orphans and adoptees.

Besides anthologies, longer memoirs are emerging, going into more depth about the lives of Korean American adoptees. Katy Robinson's *A Single Squared Picture: A Korean Adoptee's Search for Her Roots* tells the story of two families: American and Korean. She recalls being raised in Seoul and taken to the airport at the age of seven, when her name was Kin Ji-yun. The only thing she has from her childhood is a picture of her mom and grandmother at the airport. She remembers being renamed Catherine Jeanne Robinson and being raised in Salt Lake City by her American family. At the age of 27, she and her husband John visit Korea to see her original family. During the year-long visit, her Korean brother and sister take care of her. She also meets her Korean grandmother and father, but she cannot find her mother because her father and mother had divorced years before. Added to all this, she is unable to move from her bed for a few months because of a detached retina that must heal. Furthermore, while she is trying to get to know her Korean family, her American mother would also visit Korea. Nothing is as she thought it would occur. Indeed, life is more complicated, but life is also richer.

We do not often get the story of the birth mother's side. Sara Dorow's *I Wish for You a Beautiful Life: Letters from the Korean Birth Mothers of Ae Ran Won to Their Children* offers the voice of the birth mothers who gave up their children for adoption. Ae Ran Won is a shelter for unwed mothers. When you read these letters, to a degree, you can predict what you will find. Yes, regret and a wish for forgiveness are often present in those letters. These selections become companion pieces to the imaged voices or ghost sounds that some adopted Korean American children hear as found in the anthologies, memoirs, and novels. However, there is a degree of refreshing honesty in these selections that help to flesh out these once silenced women.

Most Korean American adoptee literature is composed of autobiographical memoirs, but the genre of fiction is starting to emerge. Marie Myung Ok Lee (a.k.a. Marie G. Lee) created the novel *Somebody's Daughter*. This work has a unique format for a novel about Lee Soon-Min (Sarah), who is adopted by a Minnesota family. The dual narrative in the novel also explores Kyung-Sook, the Korean mother's point of view. We learn that she became pregnant by an American and why she gave her daughter up

for adoption. The novel traces both of their stories simultaneously as they search to be reunited.

The literature of transracial adoption continues to grow. Hollywood stars have always been adopting children. However, now it has become fashionable for transracial adoption. With pop star singer Madonna adopting an African child and movie star Angelina Jolie adopting a Thai boy and a Vietnamese boy, it may seem chic to adopt transracially, but these Korean American stories point to the complexities of such adoptions and our need to reevaluate our perceptions.

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WAYNE STEIN

### ◆ KOREAN AMERICAN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Autobiographical writing has been pivotal to the development of **Korean American literature** from the beginning. These texts, some very traditional and others highly experimental in form, provide multiple perspectives on Korean history, immigration, and life in the United States. The abundance of narratives allows readers to appreciate the diversity of Korean American experiences through the twentieth century in both Korea and the United States. Writers narrate the events that led to the Korean American diaspora and explain changes in U.S. history, politics, and the sociocultural climate toward the situation of minorities.

A number of autobiographies center on life in Korea, serving also to introduce Asian history to the American public and revealing the connection that Koreans have to their homelands. The first known Korean American autobiography is Ilhan New's

*When I Was a Boy in Korea* (1928), part of a series of 21 books called Children of Other Lands Books, published in Boston, which aimed to introduce life in a foreign country to American children and were thus written in a formulaic fashion, privileging cultural detail over personal information. New describes Korean life and customs—holidays, food, coming-of-age rituals, and family life—in a generic fashion but which nevertheless allows readers to perceive the ways Koreans represent themselves. Richard Kim, in *Lost Names: Scenes from a Korean Boyhood* (1970), and Heinz Insu Fenkl, in *Memories of My Ghost Brother* (1996), offer complex and personal accounts of childhoods in Korea. Kim's autobiography, structured as a series of independent short stories, centers on his incipient awareness of the consequences of Japanese colonization for Koreans. Told from the boy's perspective, the stories of Kim's family life—the close relationships between his parents and grandparents, the Christian faith that gives them hope and fellowship, the blend of indulgence and irritation an older brother feels toward his little sister—are framed by the increasing tension that the Japanese in Korea feel as the war heads toward its dramatic close. The title story, "Lost Names," describes the point at which Koreans were obliged to replace their names with Japanese ones, a crucial moment in their uphill battle for dignity and freedom. The final story narrates the family's reaction to Japan's surrender and Kim's father symbolically passing on to his son the responsibility of preserving this history for future generations. Fenkl's *Memories of My Ghost Brother*, set in 1960s Korea, recounts his experience as a biracial child caught between the demands of his Korean family and community and his desire to connect with his white American father. Language, race, and class intersect in this narrative as the author revises his past through a doubled voice, alternating italicized sections with plain text narrative to reproduce his childhood experience and his adult reading of that experience. The text ends as the family embarks on the plane that will take them to the United States, signaling the end of the child's Korean life.

A unique case among Asian American literatures, several important Korean American authors have produced multivolume autobiographies. Younghill Kang, the first Korean American who published successfully in the United States and an important contributor to the genesis of Korean American literature, traces his journey from Korea to the United States in his autobiographical novels *The Grass Roof* (1931) and *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee* (1937). The first volume describes the process of Korea's modernization from the perspective of a young boy who embraces the new possibilities and immigrates to the United States in 1921, even as he expresses his appreciation and love for Korean traditional culture. Kang narrates in the third person, using a fictional name, Chungpa Han, though the events of his protagonist's life generally reflect those of the author. The narrative is formulated with an American public in mind—the text's tone explicitly acknowledges the implied reader

through a didactic mode of writing, detailed descriptions of customs and practices, and direct address—and Kang employs metaphors that American readers can identify with, framing his descriptions with constant comparisons between the East and the West, and between different Asian national groups. In 1933 Kang published a children's version of this book, *The Happy Grove. East Meets West*, Kang's second volume, opens where the first one ends, in 1921, with Chungpa Han arriving in the United States. The book, which reads like a picaresque novel, describes his life in New York City, the menial jobs he finds, his friendships with other Koreans, and his struggle for an education. By narrating his travels around the country and his personal experience of racism, class, interracial romance, politics, and capitalism, among others, the autobiography highlights the ambivalence of a man who finds himself caught up in the idea of the American Dream of financial success and comfort, while at the same time he recognizes himself as a possible victim of racial violence.

Other multivolume autobiographies include the work of Peter Hyun, Induk Pahl, and Sook Nyul Choi. Hyun, born in Hawaii but raised in Korea, narrates in the first volume—*Man Sei! The Making of a Korean American* (1986)—his life in Korea and China and opens the second, entitled *In the New World: The Making of a Korean American* (1995), when the family returns to Hawaii. These texts provide personal perspectives of historical events in Asia and Hyun's introduction to the New York theater scene. Interestingly, both books have the same subtitle, suggesting that Hyun believes that becoming a Korean American was a process that took an entire life and implied the blending of Asian and American racial, cultural, and political experiences. Pahl's trilogy, *September Monkey* (1954), *The Hour of the Tiger* (1965), and *The Cock Still Crows* (1977), describes her life in Korea with cultural detail and focuses on her extensive years of travel and work as an educator in the United States. Pahl's narratives are unique because of their strong emphasis on her Christian faith and the influence of Protestant spirituality on her perspective toward her experiences and her work. Finally, Sook Nyul Choi's autobiographical trilogy for children—*Year of Impossible Goodbyes* (1991), *Echoes of the White Giraffe* (1993), and *Gathering of Pearls* (1994)—narrates the life of a young girl, Sookan Bak, from the age of 10, during **World War II**, until her immigration to the United States as a college student. The texts convey a maturing girl's thoughts—her fears and anxieties, her little victories, and dreams—as well as the details of daily life during colonial occupation, war, life as a refugee, and her eventual immigration and her first year of college in New York.

Autobiographies on the immigrant experience also include Easurk Emsen Charr's *The Golden Mountain: The Autobiography of a Korean Immigrant (1895–1960)* (1961), which narrates his life from his immigration to Hawaii in 1904 at the age of 10 to his adulthood, and Margaret K. Pai's *The Dreams of Two Yi-Men* (1989), about the lives of her *yi-men* (immigrant) parents, Do In Kwon, who went to work in the Hawaiian



sugar plantations in the early 1900s, and her mother, Hee Kyung Lee, a picture bride. The most emblematic autobiography of immigrant life is Mary Paik Lee's *Quiet Odyssey: A Pioneer Korean Woman in America* (1990) which spans the first few decades of the twentieth century. This book's particularity lies in the fact that it was not published by Lee herself but rather recovered and edited by the historian Sucheng Chan, who provides a lengthy introduction and ample appendices, setting the personal story in its historical and cultural context.

K. Connie Kang, in *Home Was the Land of Morning Calm* (1995), also foregrounds family stories in her account of the Korean diaspora. She begins by describing her family's placid existence in Boshigol, in the northeastern part of the Korean peninsula, and traces the changes in the family's fortunes: her great-great-grandfather was a peasant who became a country judge in spite of a lack of education; her great-grandfather converted from a life of women and leisure to become a Christian evangelist; her grandfather fought with the Korean resistance against the Japanese; her father worked for the United Nations and the U.S. government in Asia. She eventually immigrates to the United States to become one of the first Korean American journalists working for a major American newspaper. As with other autobiographies, Kang links the personal with the public to illustrate how the lives of Koreans were definitively marked by imperialist interventions during the twentieth century, leading them to lives of successive displacements, as evidenced by her personal history. She also highlights an important didactic purpose to her story, which she envisions as helping mainstream Americans understand the history of Korean communities in the United States. The use of family relationships as autobiographical impulse is further realized in Helie Lee's *In the Absence of Sun: A Korean American Woman's Promise to Reunite Three Lost Generations of Her Family* (2002), which narrates her dramatic attempt to reunite her grandmother with her eldest son, trapped in North Korea. Lee had published *Still Life with Rice* in 1996, based on her grandmother's life and escape from North Korea in 1950. *In the Absence of Sun*, which becomes Lee's way of fulfilling her ailing grandmother's dream, reads like detective fiction, full of intriguing details about secret service agents and border guards, bribes and the manipulation of information, except that the story is an urgent personal quest for family connection and healing.

Adoption, which in the last decade has become an important issue in Korean American literature, protagonizes at least three autobiographies. *Ten Thousand Sorrows: The Extraordinary Journey of a Korean War Orphan* (2000) by Elizabeth Kim recounts a biracial Korean child's adoption by fundamentalist parents. The story opens with the young girl in Korea witnessing her mother's "honor killing" by her own family because of the stigma of having a biracial child and ends after the author has survived adoption in the United States and abuse by her parents and husband and becomes a journalist. Katy Robinson's *A Single Square Picture: A Korean Adoptee's Search for Her Roots*

(2002) and Jane Jeong Trenka's *The Language of Blood* (2003) both describe the experience of being adopted by white families and the return to Korea in search of their biological mothers. Both center on cultural estrangement and the desire to connect with a past that evolves successfully for Trenka and unsuccessfully for Robinson, who manages to reconnect with her father and half-siblings but never finds her mother. Trenka's text, a creative and well written account that weaves legends, plays, crossword puzzles, and dream sequences, artfully reveals how it feels to be caught between two ways of life and two mothers. These longer works and numerous short stories of adoption form a considerable portion of what is now sometimes called **Korean American adoptee literature**.

Other texts are highly experimental and have contributed to new ways of conceiving the autobiographical process. The most prominent example is Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée* (1982), almost certainly the Korean American text that has inspired the most scholarly examination. This multilingual, multidimensional, nonlinear, collagic, and highly intertextual life-writing exercise negotiates issues of colonialism and post-colonialism, memory and self-representation, the fragmented nature of personal and national identity, and the multimedia possibilities of language. The notion and possibility of performance, which Cha privileges in her volume, is taken up by the comedian Margaret Cho in her two volumes of autobiography, *I'm the One That I Want* (2001) and *I Have Chosen to Stay and Fight* (2005) which describe her cultural and generational problems with her parents and her struggle to become a performer. Cho's humorous texts deal with late twentieth-century urban issues—drugs and alcohol, class, race, and sexuality—and her traumatic early experiences in television and her comments on contemporary politics.

The number and diversity of works engaging the experience in autobiography has clearly shaped the development of Korean American literature, as we observe the constitutive character of these texts to the canon of the writing. Proposing more than merely historical or personal chronicles, many of the writers have challenged the limits of the autobiographical genre through their literary experiments, providing Korean American literature with inclusive diversity and innovation. **See also** Asian Diasporas; Colonialism and Postcolonialism; Korean American Literature; Racism and Asian America.

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## ◆ KOREAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Korean American literature comprises an abundant and diverse body of works. Yet as recently as 1990, survey courses in Korean American literature could have given ample time to the major works. In fact, at the time, one would have been hard-pressed to list enough major works in Korean American literature to cover a survey course, much less have found those works still in print. Admittedly, the field is still not nearly as well developed as **Chinese American literature** and **Japanese American literature**, but the growth of Korean American literature over the last decade and a half is testament to the coming of age of a new generation of writers.

Though he was not the first Korean American writer published, most chronologies of Korean American literature begin with Younghill **Kang**. Born in 1903, Kang's work, like that of most early Asian American writers, was rediscovered by contemporary scholars. He published two novels, among numerous other publications, in the

1930s: *The Grass Roof* (1931) and the more widely heralded *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee* (1937, republished by Kaya Press, 1997). The latter recounts the tragicomic exploits of its protagonist, Chungpa Han, and his three Korean compatriots as they attempt to acculturate themselves to life in New York in the twenties and thirties. Desiring the life of a writer, Han finds that his collection of Western literature more often obstructs his ability to make a living than sparks his muse. By the novel's end, he finds himself utterly alone, alienated from his homeland, which is occupied by the Japanese (a story recounted more fully in the prequel *The Grass Roof*), and hopelessly misunderstood in a United States whose population knows virtually nothing—and cares to know even less—about Korea or Koreans. *East Goes West* develops around the struggles that early twentieth-century Asian settlers experienced in a United States that literally legislated them as second class. The lives of periodic employment of Kang's characters disrupt their hopes of happiness and success. As much as they want to embrace the United States, their encounters with racism are blunt reminders that at best it can only serve as refuge, and they will never be embraced in return. Though then renowned publishing company Charles Scribner's Sons published his two novels, Kang, an immigrant himself, never attained the life of the writer that his protagonist envisioned becoming. One might speculate that he lacked a sympathetic, if not understanding, audience in the 1930s. After all, few Asian American novelists can claim to be struggling after having had two novels published by the preeminent New York publisher of their time. That Kang's work did not find an audience for its time takes one into **Asian American** history at a time when Asian immigration was strictly curtailed, citizenship laws for immigrant Asians were nonexistent, antimiscegenation laws prevailed, and alien land law acts prohibited Asians in various states from owning land. There was no viable Korean American community in the U.S. mainland, a consequence of the legislation just mentioned and of restrictions placed on the mobility of Koreans by Japanese authorities in Korea, and few readers of the time would have been sympathetic to Kang's implicit criticisms of the United States' attitude toward Asian immigrants. The success of the exoticized, high-mannered sojourner literature of **Lin** Yutang and **Chiang** Yee, much of it published soon after Kang's work appeared, was an indication of what American audiences were interested in knowing about Asians in the United States during Kang's time. He died in relative obscurity in New York in 1972.

It was not until 1964, with the publication of Richard E. **Kim's** novel *The Martyred*, that another Korean American novelist's work attained wide publication in the United States. Virtually all of Kim's fiction is set in Korea and is centered around Korean historical themes—the run up to the civil war in Korea in *The Martyred*; the 1962 South Korean military coup in *The Innocent* (1968); the baleful years of Japanese occupation, the March 1, 1919, uprising, and Korea's liberation at the end of **World**

**War II** in his collection of short stories *Lost Names: Scenes from a Korean Boyhood* (1970). As a result, Kim's work is barely included, if mentioned at all, in early anthologies of Asian American literature.

The 1970s saw Korean American writers on the brink of wider cultural production. Korean Americans writing in Korean were prominent in the journal *Jipyeongseon* (Horizon), published between 1973 and 1976. The renowned journalist K.W. Lee founded *Koreatown Weekly*, the first national Korean American newspaper written in English, which ran between 1979 and 1982. *Koreatown Weekly* drew attention to a burgeoning Korean American community in Los Angeles. Among its journalistic pieces, *Koreatown Weekly* also featured poetry, early literary reviews by scholar Elaine Kim, and both autobiographical and biographical writings about prominent first-wave immigrants.

The 1980s was a productive decade for Korean American literature. Theresa Hak Kyung **Cha's** postmodernist masterpiece *Dictee*, a work well ahead of its time in style and form, was released in 1982 but went out of press after its second printing the next year. Peter Hyun's autobiography *Mansei! The Making of a Korean American* (1986) brought greater attention to the baleful years of Japanese occupation in Korea and a greater awareness of early Korean immigration to and settlement in Hawaii. The short stories of Gary **Pak** and Ty Pak and the poetry of Cathy **Song** further developed a Korean American literary sensibility in Hawaii in the 1980s. In 1986 Ronyoung **Kim's** only published work, her novel *Clay Walls*, finds a broader sympathetic audience that was not present in the United States when Younghill Kang was writing for Scribner's. By the time *Clay Walls* was published, Kang and Richard Kim were out of print. As a result, *Clay Walls* became a relegated classic, as, often, the lone **Korean American novel** or work on many Asian American literature course syllabi. Mary Paik **Lee's** autobiography, *Quiet Odyssey: A Pioneer Korean Woman in America* (1990), follows her family's migrations from Hawaii to California and then up and down the California coast. Lee's autobiography would be the harbinger of the most productive decade in Korean American literature, and the afterword and appendices by Sucheng Chan provide essential historical grounding in the teaching and reading of many other Korean American works.

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951–1982) is a linchpin figure in Korean American arts and literature. In 1982 critics did not know what to make of *Dictee*, her only publication, and rather than admit it, simply left it alone. Consequently, it went out of print shortly after its initial publication. Cha was murdered in 1982 in New York City a few days after the publication of *Dictee*. Her work lay dormant after its release until it was revived and republished in 1995 by Third Woman Press. Since then Cha has become the inspiration for a generation of contemporary Korean American writers and artists, among whom her life and death has reached almost mythic status. The

volume of scholarly and creative work evoked by *Dictée* since its republication resulted in a renaissance of Korean American cultural production in the nineties. Works in homage to Cha's innovative prose and textual style proliferated. In 1994 Walter Lew, a poet and avid scholar of Cha's life and work, cofounded Kaya Press, an independent press based out of New York and Seoul, which emerged as a major publishing house of new and rediscovered works by Asian and **Asian diaspora** authors. Kaya also published the journal *MUAE* (literally, "without hindrance"), focusing on Korea-related artistic production and highlighting new works from Kaya authors. Lew's own homage to Cha, *Excerpts from Dikte for Dictée* (1992), has itself become a highly regarded and highly collectible work. One significant impact of Cha's work upon Korean American literature, among many others, was to extend, if not erase, its geographic and linguistic borders of the United States, and Standard English. Debut novels by Chang-Rae Lee, Nora Okja Keller, Susan Choi, Heinz Insu Fenkl, Patti Kim, and Mia Yun, to name only a few, hearken back to themes expressed in *Dictée* while also suggesting new paths for Korean American literature.

Chang-rae Lee's critically acclaimed first novel *Native Speaker* (1995) was hailed as a work of ethnic detective fiction, a genre picked up on in the more recent works of novelist Leonard Chang. Keller's 1997 novel *Comfort Woman*, as well as Therese Park's *A Gift of the Emperor*, published the same year, brought focused attention to the plight of Korean women as military sex slaves of the Japanese army during its occupation of Korea. Fenkl's *Memories of My Ghost Brother* (1996), like Richard Kim's work, is set in Korea. Yet unlike Kim's work, in Fenkl's novel the influence of the American military presence in South Korea from 1962 to the early seventies resonates throughout virtually every scene. Nation and nationalism are overriding themes in the relationship between young Insu, the novel's biracial narrator, and his eventual estrangement from his German father, an officer in the American military. For Insu and his Korean mother, the United States is less a compelling force than that of Americanism, a metaphor of desire that compels the Korean women in the novel to objectify themselves in the hopes of attracting an American soldier into marriage and a preconceived life of luxury in the United States. Fenkl, who is biracial, touches on a developing theme in Korean American literature. The themes of **biraciality** and binationality in *Memories* develop into narratives of inseparable yet irreconcilable split nationalisms, questionable birthright, and an acute sense and desire of belonging.

Works by Korean American writers in the nineties easily outnumber all of the works combined from previous decades. The production of Korean American children's and adolescent literature over the last decade and a half has been staggering. Subject matter covers a large range: immigration tales, generational and cultural conflicts with first-generation parents (old Korean values versus new American values), fitting in at school (encounters with racist bullies, making friends and introducing them to kimchi), growing up in Korea (as an only daughter, youngest daughter, daughter of a father who desires only

sons), tales from *Halmoni* (Korean roots and immigration), and surviving the **Korean War**. Marie G. Lee and Sook Nyul Choi are the two premier novelists in this genre; however, writers such as Helen Kim, Frances Park, and Lauren Lee have also produced a growing body of works. Marie Lee sets most of her stories in Midwest America, having been raised there, and her plots develop around protagonists in junior high and high schools who find themselves deeply conflicted about their Korean American heritage. Choi, who was born in Pyongyang and came to the United States to attend college, is intent upon educating young Korean Americans about Korea and Korean history. Her award-winning trilogy of novels, *The Year of Impossible Goodbyes* (1991), *Echoes of the White Giraffe* (1993), and *Gathering of Pearls* (1994), is based on her experience as a child refugee who fled North Korea with her family into the South and eventually found herself at a prestigious private East Coast college in the United States just after the Korean War. Lee's and Choi's works represent the broad scope of perspectives and high quality of writing in Korean American children's literature.

**Korean American autobiographies** and biographies, such as Hyun's *Mansei!* Lee's *Quiet Odyssey*, Connie Kang's *Home Was the Land of Morning Calm* (1995), Helie Lee's *Still Life with Rice* (1997), Soo-Young Chin's *Doing What Had to Be Done: The Life Narrative of Dora Yum Kim* (1999), and collections of personal testimonials such as *East to America* (Elaine H. Kim and Eui-Young Yu, eds., 1996) and *Korean American Women: From Tradition to Modern Feminism* (Young I. Song and Ailee Moon, eds., 1998) call attention to the presence of Koreans and Korean American communities in the United States well before the passage of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965, which is the historical starting point for that population of Korean Americans known as the 1.5 generation.

Concurrently coming of age with the 1.5 generation of Korean Americans are Korean adoptees, and their representation in the literature is growing. In 1997 Tonya Bishoff and Jo Rankin edited *Seeds from a Silent Tree: An Anthology by Korean Adoptees*, comprised of poetry and short memoir on the theme of Korean adoptee identity. Many of those pieces center on growing up in the Midwest. Currently, Minnesota has the largest population of Korean adoptees in the United States. Adoption of Korean babies by parents from Minnesota and other midwestern states was facilitated by the influence of Lutheran Church establishments and their missionary ties in Korea. It is perhaps not surprising that a prevailing theme in **Korean American adoptee literature** is searching out one's birth mother and resolving feelings of abandonment, isolation, and subsequent resentment toward Korea and things Korean. A number of the contributors to *Seeds from a Silent Tree*, where most of them were published for the first time, went on to contribute to other anthologies or to write their own books. In 2003 Jane Jeong Trenka, a Korean adoptee raised in Minnesota, won the Minnesota Book Award for Best Memoir for her publication *The Language of Blood*. It is significant that few Korean adoptee writers and artists self-identify as either Asian American or Korean American.

Though certain themes might resonate with those often elucidated in Asian American literature, to read those themes solely or primarily through an Asian American cultural lens is to read with partial blinders, as Trenka's work makes clear.

Settings in contemporary Korean American literature have broadened to reflect emerging Korean American communities, such as those in the Midwest, the surrounding suburbs of Los Angeles and Orange County, California, and Flushing Meadows in New York. Literary journals and presses in Hawaii, such as **Bamboo Ridge Press**, *Hawaii Review*, and *Manoa*, have recently showcased local Korean American writers. The *Asian Pacific American Journal*, published by the Asian American Writers Workshop in New York, devoted its second journal to emerging Korean American writers from the East Coast, and the first anthology of Korean American fiction, *Kori: The Beacon Anthology of American Fiction*, edited by Walter Lew and Heinz Insu Fenkl, was published in 2001. The turn of the twenty-first century finds many of those novelists who debuted in the nineties well into their third, fourth, and fifth novels and branching into other genres. Don Lee's acclaimed short story collection *Yellow* (2001) focuses on a new generation of American-born Koreans, where ethnic identity serves more as a backdrop to character development. Lee has since published his first novel. The success of Lee's *Native Speaker* seemed to give writers leave to diverge from the expected ethnic narrative. Suki Kim's *The Interpreter* (2003) was hailed as a murder mystery that takes "a refreshing break from the 'model minority' immigrant story" (Yoon).

Korean American journals and periodicals, such as *Korean Quarterly*, out of St. Paul, Minnesota, and *KoreAm* journal, the longest running independent Korean American journal, and innumerable Korean American student publications, continue to flourish throughout the United States. Theater Mu, based in Minneapolis and formed in 1992, is an established Asian American acting company whose seminal works include *Mask Dance* and *The Walleye Kid*, both of which deal with themes on Korean adoption. Sung Rno Lee has gained acclaim as a Korean American playwright, with productions of his play, *Cleveland Raining*, being produced throughout the country.

Interestingly, much recent scholarship on Korean American literature comes out of South Korea, where scholars have attempted to bring Korean American literature into the fold of Korean literature, reading, for example, Younghill Kang through the lens of émigré or exilic literature and Richard Kim's work as an extension of postwar Korean literature. In the States, critical issues swirl around transnational themes, constructions of gender, superficial divisions of genre, tropes of space and place, even issues of inclusion. After the enormous commercial success of Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker*, some Korean American literary critics raised issues of perceived audience and compromised standards of "authenticity," in a manner remindful of the criticism leveled against Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*. Nonlinear language, reapplied cultural traditions, and newly yoked conceits have deepened **Korean American poetry** to the extent that one



would be hard-pressed to make connections beyond the generic between the radically different poetics of Myung Mi Kim, Walter Lew, Suji Kwock Kim, Ed Bok Lee, and Casey Kwong. Within Asian American literature, Korean American literature is clearly one of the fastest growing, most diverse fields of cultural production and study. **See also** Asian American Children's Literature; Asian Diasporas; *Bamboo Ridge: The Hawaii Writers' Quarterly*; Chinese American Literature; Colonialism and Postcolonialism; Feminism and Asian America; Hawaiian Literature; Japanese American Literature; Korean American Adoptee Literature; Korean American Autobiography; Korean American Novel; Nationalism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America.

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GREG CHOY

### ◆ KOREAN AMERICAN NOVEL

Since the early twentieth century when Koreans immigrated to the United States, **Korean American literature** has portrayed the immigrant experience, generational issue, and racial consciousness with the colonial and postcolonial history of the Korean diaspora in its background. In the early period until the mid-1960s, mostly students, political exiles, the descendents of sugar plant laborers in Hawaii recorded

Korean immigrant lives crossing over the Pacific. Since the 1965 Immigration Act, Korean Americans have become a fast growing ethnic group, and new Korean immigrants and their offspring start to speak through literatures in both English and Korean. As one important venue for immigrant self-representation, Korean American novels run a thin line with **Korean American autobiography**. In this entry, making a distinction from life writings such as memoirs and autobiography, Korean American novels are loosely defined as book-length fiction, written by Korean American writers who search for a unique literary voice, incorporating the novelistic tradition of American literature with particular ethnic experience.

Granted the importance of autobiographic quest for self-identity in both fiction and growing-up narratives, numerous Korean American novels that have been published in the recent two decades move away from traditional ethnographic writing and explore a new possibility for Korean American novels. In this new trend, Korean American novelists create a heterogeneous and hybrid world where people of different races and ethnicities mingle and confront each other. In doing so, contemporary Korean American novels demonstrate multiple potentials as far as novelistic forms can go.

Given this transition from ethnographic to more multicultural, multiethnic, and transnational writing and aspiration for artistic achievement and its consequent breakthrough in genre, characterization, and techniques, Korean American novels could be divided into at least three kinds. The first group is autobiographic fiction, which employs novelistic fiction method while narrating real-life stories. Unlike the conventional writing of autobiography, such as Mary Paik Lee's *Quiet Odyssey* (1990), these novels do not necessarily follow a chronological order. Neither are they concerned with historical documentation of one person's life. Rather, loosely based on the author's life, these novels attempt to reconstruct life stories into art works, where they examine social and political issues and private emotion and psyche due to immigrant experiences. The first Korean American novelist, Younghill Kang's *East Goes West* (1937) offers an account of immigrant life in the 1920s following the travels of Chungpa Han through North America. Adopting a picaresque novel form, which was a prototype of the modern novel, Kang offers a strong social commentary about the demands and risks of assimilation, which positions it as an American classic. Whereas the postwar writers adopted various writing techniques, such as plot and narrative point of view, to make a clear distinction from conventional autobiography, the autobiographical tendency not only lingers but also becomes an essential element in contemporary Korean American novels such as Helie Lee's *Still Life with Rice* (1996), Heinz Insu Fenkl's *Memories of My Ghost Brother* (1996), Richard E. Kim's *Lost Names* (1998), and Patti Kim's *A Cab Called Reliable* (1997). Basing the narratives on a real person's life set in Korea, the first three novels create memory-writing of Korean

modern history. While these novels intend to bridge history and memory by stepping into the writer's personal life or a family member's stories, Patti Kim's novel adopts the ethnic growing-up narrative, which problematizes every aspect of the Asian American **model minority** myth.

The second group of Korean American novels includes novels that were published in the late 1980s and throughout and after the 1990s and zeroed in on fictionalizing Korean immigrant lives. Unlike their predecessors, these novelists forego the genre of memoirs and autobiography and hide their personal stories behind novelistic fiction. Their exploitation of the fiction genre produces extraordinary works such as Ronyoung Kim's *Clay Walls* (1987), Chang-Rae Lee's *Native Speaker* (1995), Susan Choi's *Foreign Student* (1998), Leonard Chang's *The Fruit 'N Food* (1996), and Suki Kim's *The Interpreter* (2003).

Chang-Rae Lee and Susan Choi earned critical acclaim by both prestigious literary circles in the United States and academic readership in Korea. Lee's *Native Speaker* creates an impressive but problematic character Henry Park, a private spy who happens to investigate the secrets of an aspiring Korean American community leader and politician John Kwang, later playing a significant role in stepping down and deporting Kwang and his family. Harping upon the usual theme of identity question of being Korean American, Henry's story rips open the closed community of Korean Americans in New York City, not merely cruising around it. In this rapturous encounter between Henry and the community, the Korean American Dream seems far away. Choi's *The Foreign Student* is set in a postwar Southern college town, portraying a Korean student who retains memory of the **Korean War**. Rather than an autobiographical narrative of student immigrants, Choi's novel interweaves a foreigner's struggle to search for his place with an American woman's efforts to resolve her traumatic memory of love affairs. Without any glimpse of Korean American community, unlike other Korean immigrant narratives, Choi's debut novel captures the moment of an emerging postwar immigrant generation. Ronyoung Kim's *Clay Walls* further moves back to the early twentieth-century Korean exilic immigrants in Los Angeles. Published in the late 1980s, Kim's novel excavates Korean American genealogy, rendering Korean American experience a historical hindsight.

Leonard Chang's *The Fruit 'N Food* and Suki Kim's *The Interpreter* offer fresh insights into Korean American urban legend mixed with racial conflicts between blacks and Koreans, murder mystery, and gangsters while portraying second-generation Korean Americans' identity crisis. Whereas his second novel *Dispatches from the Cold* (1998) still lingers in Korean immigrant experience through the secondhand reading of misaddressed letters, Chang's detective novel series, whose recent one is *Fade to Clear* (2004), moves much further away from typical ethnic narratives. Creating a private eye Allen Choice, a Korean American who is called ethnic dunce due to his lack

of knowledge of Korea and its language, Chang plucks a different tune from those with an insatiable thirst for another Amy Tan.

The third group encompasses miscellaneous novels of various genre, theme, and style, which apparently engage as little as possible with the Korean American experience. Some of the novels in this category deal with the Korean diaspora rather than Korean Americans. Beyond the nationalist context, these novels are often set outside the U.S. territory, mostly in Korea and sometimes Japan; even when set in the United States, the narratives do not directly follow the typical narrative of Korean American experience. Narrators are often Korean nationals, who later become exiles and diasporic subjects. In some cases, mixed-race Korean Americans are given voices. The scope of topics goes beyond the well trodden Korean immigrant struggle for survival and efforts to assimilation and covers various issues such as interracial relations, murder or disappearance mysteries, transnational adoption, and political issues including colonial and neocolonial military prostitution.

While critics have long exerted themselves with incorporating Chang-Rae Lee and Susan Choi into ethnic literatures portraying Korean American experience, their subsequent novels address in unique ways interracial relations and conflicts in the transnational era. Their recent novels, *Aloft* (2004) and *American Woman* (2003) respectively, further expand the concern of extra-ethnic interest, such as racial mixing and conflict by adopting narrative voices of different races, which is also traceable in their first novels. Don Lee's *Country of Origin* (2004) adds a refreshing tone to these new emerging voices of Korean American novelists, weaving through an in-between life of a young foreign State Department officer who is stationed in Japan, being a mixed-race Korean American from Hawaii, and who always faces questions about his racial identity, "What are you?" Gary Pak's *Children of a Fireland* (2004) is set in Hawaii and probes into the secretive past of a small town. In this haunting narrative, Pak foregrounds a geographical place as an intense site of memory in the place of a specific ethnic history.

Nora Okja Keller's two novels, *The Comfort Woman* (1997) and *Fox Girl* (2002), concern more with Korean national memory than with straightforwardly Korean American issues. Thematically dealing with sex slaves in colonial and postcolonial Korea, Keller explores diasporic memory of Korean history through interweaving dual narratives of the mother and the daughter. Whereas gender issue outstands in Keller's novels from a female perspective, Chang-Rae Lee's second novel *A Gesture Life* (1999) probes into a man's memory of Korean colonial history and the comfort woman issue. Dr. Hata, the main character, is a Korean American who passes for Japanese because he was adopted by a Japanese couple during the Japanese occupation of Korea.

Korean adoptees' memoirs and fictional narratives have also been recently published in good amount in response to the demands of grown-up adoptee Korean Americans.

Marie Myung-Ok Lee's *Somebody's Daughter* (2005) creates dual narratives between the adoptee daughter and her biological mother. The story culminates in two women passing each other one night. On the one hand Lee's novel revisits the familiar path of Korean American young generation's crisis of identity, interracial relations, and immigrant experience; on the other hand, the adoption experience adds a new color to old narratives, complicating the question of what is Korean American.

Korean American novels are diversified in theme, genre, and technique. With the identity question still being asked and explored and ethnographic desire lingering, Korean American novels have blazed a new path, adding new voices to the American novelistic tradition.

One remarkable trend in the development of Korean American novels is the growth of children and youth literature. Numerous Korean American writers produce impressive narratives of growing up as Korean American and incorporate Korean legends and cultural traditions into Korean American youth experience. Novels like Patti Kim's belong to this category. For the writers of children's novels, An Na's *A Step from Heaven* (2003), Sook Nyul Choi's *Year of the Impossible Goodbyes* (1991), and Linda Sue Park's *A Single Shard* (2001) are all noteworthy. See also Asian Diasporas; Assimilation/Americanization; Colonialism and Postcolonialism; Korean American Autobiography; Korean American Literature.

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SOOYOUNG KANG

### ◆ KOREAN WAR (1950–1953)

In the three years of the Korean War, over 1,000,000 Koreans and 54,000 Americans were killed. Additionally, thousands of people from other nations died in combat or as prisoners of war. Before the conflict, Korea had been divided by the United States and the Soviet Union. In support of North Korea were the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union. Both communist countries had a stake in promoting communism's growth in North Korea. China had a much larger role in supporting North Korea than the Soviet Union; however, the Soviet Union did provide advisors, pilots, and munitions. On the other side of the divide was South Korea, which was supported by the United Nations Command forces, made up primarily of American troops.

The name for the war is different in each country involved. In South Korea, it is referred to by its start date, the 6·25 War, or is called Hanguk Jeonjaeng, which translates to "Korean War." In North Korea, it is called the Fatherland Liberation War, but also known as the Korean War. In the United States, the war is called the Korean Conflict, because it was designated as a police action. This designation allowed the government to move into action in Korea without requiring a declaration of war from the U.S. Congress. And in China the war's formal title is War to Resist America and Aid Korea, although it is also referred to as the Korean War.

The build up to the war is based in the history of several other conflicts in Asia. One significant event was the 1894–1895 Sino-Japanese War, in which Japan defeated China and occupied portions of Korea. From this position, the Japanese were later able to win the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). By 1910, Japan had annexed Korea.

After the end of **World War II**, Korea was divided into two countries along the 38th Parallel. U.S. and Russian military had agreed upon this dividing line during World War II. When the Russian forces fought the Japanese presence in Korea, they stopped at the 38th Parallel, where formal surrender of Japanese forces was accepted. The Japanese above the 38th Parallel surrendered to the USSR and those below the line surrendered to U.S. forces. On September 9, 1945, Japanese forces in South Korea surrendered to the United States at the Government House in Seoul.

The U.S.-Soviet Joint Commission was established at the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers in December of 1945. The intention was that each region of Korea would have international oversight, the northern section administered by Russia and the southern section by the United States, for a period of four years. At that point, the United Nations would allow Korea to be independently governed. Although the international community approved of this plan, the people of divided Korea did not. Both regions erupted in violence.

The major piece of contention was the four-year period of trusteeship: after having been ruled by Japan for close to 35 years, the Korean people and government rejected the idea of any foreign involvement in the proceedings of their countries. In the south, the United States abandoned the Moscow Accords and called for elections. These elections were supported by the United Nations, and the U.S.-Soviet Joint Commission was disbanded and UN oversight took over. As a result of these elections, a man named Syngman Rhee became the first president of South Korea (1948–1960). Rhee had a strong anticommunist ideology and even stronger ties with the United States. Rhee had attended several American universities after escaping from the Japanese military that once controlled Korea. He received degrees from Georgetown, Harvard, and Princeton universities. Due to his strong affiliation with the United States, protests were mounted to decry the elections. The southern political parties claimed that the elections were biased and that local groups had been cut out of the process to rebuild the Korean government. In the North, the Soviet-backed Communist Party grew in strength. Kim Il-sung became the leader to represent North Korea. Not only was Kim Il-sung lauded for his part in repelling Japanese forces, he also had strong support from the Soviet Union. Kim Il-sung remained the leader of North Korea from 1946 until his death in 1994.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR

Although both the Soviet Union and the United States had vacated North and South Korea in 1949, the tensions represented by these opposing governmental systems remained in place. In the North, Kim Il-sung intended to spread his communist agenda throughout the region, and, in like form, southern leader Syngman Rhee planned to spread his ideology throughout the north. Various border skirmishes began

to take place, with the northern forces in the stronger position because of its Soviet backing. The Soviet tanks and munitions used to combat the Japanese forces in Korea during the Second World War were now available to move on South Korea.

Although the United States had withdrawn from the immediate area, it closely monitored activity in Korea from nearby. The United States defined the activity of North Korea as an act of international aggression rather than a civil war. The United States accused the Soviet Union of using the North Korean government as a pawn and blamed the Soviet Union for the violence. Although Russian leader Joseph Stalin supported the plan to unify Korea under northern rule, he did not want to make a clear declaration that would cause direct conflict with the United States. Similarly, the United States tried to decrease the possibility of another war by stating that the responsibility for the defense of Korea was held by the United Nations.

Nonetheless, by April 1950, Stalin gave the green light to Kim Il-sung. Not only did he provide Kim Il-sung with raw materials, Stalin approved of a northern attack on southern territories. On June 25, 1950, the North Korean army crossed the 38th Parallel and began to barrage the south. Although the southern army had been trained and equipped by the United States, it was sorely outmatched. With approximately 135,000 troops, North Korea rapidly set the southern army of 65,000 troops into retreat. By June 28, after massive air strikes, northern forces had overtaken Seoul. What would have been a quick operation leading to the surrender of South Korea was forestalled by outside intervention, most noticeably the United States.

## INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

In response to the hostilities, the United Nations drafted UNSC Resolution 82, which called for the northern forces to return to locations above the 38th Parallel and demanded that members of the United Nations desist from providing aid to the North Korean forces. The UN resolution to support South Korea was passed unanimously, in part due to the absence of the Soviet Union from the UN Security Council. A total of 16 nations joined forces with South Korea to fight off the northern invasion. By far the most active of these UN forces was the United States. President Harry S. Truman (April 12, 1945–January 20, 1953) supplied the majority of the ground forces, the naval power, and the air power used in the conflict. The American public was solidly behind the military action; however, Truman would later be chastised for circumventing Congress. Truman, claiming expedience, did not call for a declaration of war from Congress, relying instead upon the UN call to action.

Both the Soviet Union and North Korea protested the UN resolution. The Soviet Union stated that the resolution was illegal because all permanent members of the Security Council were not present for the vote. North Korea also protested the involvement of the United Nations, stating that the actions were internal and



therefore a civil war, not an international incident. Both of these complaints were rejected by the United Nations.

The U.S. military had retained a large presence in the Pacific region. In Japan, under the command of General Douglas MacArthur, American troops were preparing for deployment to Korea. Truman ordered MacArthur to provide air cover for the evacuation of U.S. citizens. Truman also sent U.S. military to protect Taiwan from involvement. After a desperate battle to retain control of South Korea, supplies began to arrive to support the flagging U.S. and South Korean troops. Air strikes by the United States targeted major North Korean cities and roads. Although this action facilitated the disruption of North Korean military actions, many North Korean civilians suffered as well. By September, the numbers of U.S. military forces had reached significant numbers to begin a counterattack.

After the Battle of Inchon in September, troops under the command of MacArthur recaptured Seoul and sent northern forces fleeing for safety. The North Koreans retreated across the 38th Parallel; however, the UN troops continued to pursue them. The choice to continue the war, with the new goal of reunifying Korea under southern rule, was a major change in policy. This influenced the UN objectives and reflected a changed agenda in American foreign policy. This shift in action influenced China, which worried that the UN forces would continue into Chinese territories. In fact, the idea that action against China would be necessary was shared by many military commanders of both the UN and U.S. forces.

The war escalated when, under the leadership of Chairman Mao Zedong, China began to supply its border. With limited help from the Soviet Union, China attacked U.S. forces in Korea. The United Nations had greatly underestimated the fighting capability of China and continued to advance to the Yalu River, the dividing line between the two nations. In the next encounters between UN and Chinese forces, the American troops suffered heavy losses and were forced to retreat. By the start of 1951, three major offensives by the combined forces of Chinese and North Korean troops had pushed the UN forces back to the 38th parallel. Control over Seoul was relinquished to the communists. The battle for control of Seoul would rage on. The city was recaptured by UN forces later in the year, but the city was in tatters. The majority of the original population had fled, and the remaining people faced devastating food shortages. At the same time, the U.S. forces were suffering from an unexpected change of command. General MacArthur was removed from command and charged with insubordination. He was replaced by General Ridgway. Although Ridgway was popular with the troops and the American public, the dismissal of MacArthur caused domestic protests in the United States.

The movement of both forces across the 38th Parallel continued until peace talks began. The United Nations decided to retain the border between North and

South at a point just slightly north of the 38th Parallel, called the Kansas Line. From that point forward, July 1951, the remainder conflict was a period of stalemate. Peace negotiation would begin that same month, although peace was not formalized until 1953.

## PEACE

While the peace talks continued for over two years, several skirmishes continued along the border of North and South Korea. Each side wanted to grab as much territory as possible before the formal lines were drawn. The negotiations were particularly lengthy because of issues surrounding the repatriation of prisoners of war. On July 27, 1953, the United States, now under the governance of Dwight D. Eisenhower, signed an armistice agreement with North Korea. South Korean leader Syngman Rhee did not sign the agreement. The 38th Parallel was established as the approximate divider between the two nations, with an accompanying large demilitarized zone to protect against any future incursions.

## REPERCUSSIONS

The Korean War sadly cost millions of lives and resulted in the division of the country into the same two sections that had been agreed upon prior to the hostilities. The dividing line of the 38th Parallel remained relatively unaltered after three years of turmoil. However, the devastation of North Korea and the cities throughout the region would produce long-term problems. Seoul, in particular, which changed hands multiple times, was left in tatters.

The number of military casualties has been reported differently by the nations involved in the war. However, approximately 2.5 million Koreans from both sides of the 38th Parallel died during the conflict, with North Korea losing a larger percentage. Almost half of all Korean deaths were civilians. Additionally, two million Koreans were wounded. China lost over 500,000 soldiers, with another 700,000 wounded. The official Chinese records report a much lower body count than those agreed upon by the United Nations and other sources. The United States lost over 36,000 men, and another 100,000 were wounded.

In addition to the grim statistics that number the dead, there are other equally horrific statistics relating to those who lived. The destruction of the countryside and the obliteration of family life created an impoverished community, both economically and emotionally. When the United States dropped its racially specific immigration quotas in 1965, many South Koreans were anxious to depart their tattered homeland. There was also a deluge of refugees coming from North Korea. Although the major influx of Korean immigrants to the United States did come after the close of the war, there were multigenerational Korean American families living primarily

in Hawaii and California. Like other Asian Americans, these individuals suffered from the various discriminatory practices of the early 1900s. However, because the majority of Koreans immigrated in the mid-1960s and early 1970s, they were privy to the social and legal progress made by other minority groups. Nonetheless, integration into the American community was a difficult process, and the literature written by first- and second-generation Korean Americans reflects the various dilemmas they encountered.

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VERONICA HENDRICK

### ◆ KUMAR, AMITAVA (1963–)

Indian-born scholar, poet, novelist, essayist, and professor of English, Amitava Kumar is best known for his genre-crossing reflections on writing, memory, globalization, loss, and identity. Acclaimed for his cinematic style of prose, Kumar has spoken frequently of the slippage between "I" and "eye" as he seeks to document the immigrant condition. Though often typed both as a postcolonial scholar and an Indian writer in English, Kumar's nonfiction and fiction works resist categorization through his focus on nuance, specificity, and movement rather than systemic structures. His frequent self-identification as simply Bihari, from his birthplace of Ara, Bihar, rather than Indian American or Indian, demonstrates this orientation toward detail.

Born in Ara on March 17, 1963, Kumar was raised in the nearby town of Patna. After winning a National Talent Search Scholarship sponsored by the government of India, he moved to Delhi to attend secondary school in 1979. Life in Delhi exposed Kumar to many new influences, including the performing arts, Indian New Wave films, and Marxism. Kumar went on to receive his baccalaureate in the Honors Program in political science at Hindu College, Delhi University in 1984, with additional qualifications in English literature and economics. In 1986 Kumar received a master of arts in linguistics from the same institution. That fall, he moved to the United States to pursue graduate work at Syracuse University, where he received a master of arts in English literature in 1988. Kumar completed his graduate work at the University of Minnesota in the Department of Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature, earning a doctorate in 1993 with a dissertation titled "The Politics of Culture and Protest: (Post)colonial Readings."

Kumar has taught at numerous institutions in the United States, including as visiting faculty at the State University of New York, Stony Brook, and Yale University. From the fall of 1993 to 1999, he served as an assistant professor of English at the University of Florida, Gainesville. Kumar was promoted to associate professor in 1999. Beginning in the fall of 2000, he worked as an associate professor of English at Penn State University, University Park. In 2004 Kumar was promoted to professor of English and then moved to Vassar College in 2005, where he holds the same position. His courses have included graduate writing seminars, undergraduate literary criticism, film, cultural studies, and postmodernism/postcoloniality. During his academic career, Kumar has been the recipient of scholarships and awards from many institutions, including the National Endowment of the Humanities, Dartmouth College, the MacArthur Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, Yale University, and the University of Avignon, Avignon, France.

Kumar's first book-length publication was a poetry collection, *No Tears for the N.R.I.* (1996), though he published widely as a scholar, journalist, poet, and photo essayist in journals such as *Economic and Political Weekly*, *Rethinking Marxism*, *American Literature*, *Kenyon Review*, *Critical Inquiry*, *Cultural Studies*, *Critical Quarterly*, *Minnesota Review*, *American Prospect*, *India Today*, the *Hindu*, the *Times of India*, and *Tehelka*. Kumar also served as the scriptwriter and narrator for the award-winning documentary on the descendants of indentured Indian laborers in Trinidad, *Pure Chutney*. While at the University of Florida, Kumar edited two volumes on radical pedagogy, *Class Issues: Pedagogy, Cultural Studies, and the Public Sphere* (1997) and *Poetics/Politics: Radical Aesthetics for the Classroom* (1999). Kumar came to prominence among U.S. scholars with his nuanced interrogation of the primary artifact of U.S. immigration in *Passport Photos* (2000). Widely hailed as an important contribution to burgeoning discussions of postcoloniality and transnationalism, *Passport Photos* received

the 2001 Myers Outstanding Book Award from the Gustavus Myers Program for the Study of Bigotry and Human Rights in North America. Organized in the form of a passport, with chapter titles such as "Photograph" and "Name," *Passport Photos* accomplishes the unusual task of producing an academic work that integrates photography, poetry, theory, and cultural criticism.

In addition to the volumes on pedagogy, Kumar edited three other collections that situate his concerns as a writer and scholar. First, he edited a volume of essays on V.S. Naipaul entitled *The Humour and the Pity* (2002). Kumar's interest in the juxtaposition of economics and aesthetics emerged succinctly in a collection of essays by economists, scientists, cultural critics, and public policy analysts on the relationship between cultural production and globalization, *World Bank Literature* (2002). Then in 2003, Kumar collected writings on exile and dislocation by the most famous of the overseas South Asian literati, including R.K. Narayan, Salman Rushdie, and Ved Mehta in *Away: The Indian Writer as an Expatriate* (2004).

Following his move to Penn State University in 2000, Kumar published *Bombay-London-New York* (2002), a survey of Indian fiction through the lens of literary self-discovery—part memoir, part criticism, part mythical literary history. In the summer of 1999, Kumar wed Mona Ali, a political economist originally from Pakistan. The decision of a Hindu Indian to marry a Pakistani Muslim prompted such strong reactions that it spurred Kumar to document the nature of sectarian conflict writ personal in *Husband of a Fanatic* (2004). The *New York Times* placed the book on their Editor's Choice list in 2005. Since his move to Vassar College in 2005, Kumar has published his first book-length work of fiction, *Home Products* (2007). The novel recounts the intertwined stories of two cousins, Binod, a journalist struggling to write a film script about a murdered poet, and Rabinder, an impulsive and optimistic criminal. Set in India, the narrative traces the interplay of success and despair, ambition and geography, featuring Kumar's home state of Bihar.

Amitava Kumar is currently a professor of English at Vassar College and is represented by the literary agency Aitken Alexander Associates. In addition to being on the editorial board of several publications, he coedits the Web journal *Politics and Culture*. See also Colonialism and Postcolonialism.

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◆ KWA, LYDIA (1959–)

An Asian Canadian novelist, poet, and clinical psychologist of Singaporean descent, Lydia Kwa immigrated to Canada where she received a BS in psychology and an MA and PhD in clinical psychology. In 1989 she won prizes for the poems that she submitted to two campus periodicals and published poems in *CV2*, a Canadian literary magazine. After graduating, Kwa worked as a psychologist but soon realized that she needed to focus on her writing. Kwa has published *The Colours of Heroines* (1994), a book of poetry, and two novels, *This Place Called Absence* (2000) and *The Walking Boy* (2007). She has also contributed to anthologies, including fiction to *Hot and Bothered* and poetry to *Swallowing Clouds*. Kwa is currently working on *Roadblock: Suite of Hands*, an experimental long poem; a novel set in Singapore in the 1960s–1970s; and a prequel and sequel to *The Walking Boy*.

Critics have described Kwa as a talented writer who explores unusual themes in historical Asian settings; feminists find her work especially resonant. In both of her novels, *This Place Called Absence* and *The Walking Boy*, Kwa addresses the issue of sexual identity by creating characters who defy conventional sexuality. Kwa's knowledge of modern theories of psychology plays a major role in her depictions of characters. Her novels portray ghosts or haunted people, a common theme in Chinese literature, in what could metaphorically be interpreted as a psychological manifestation of fear or the idea that one's actions will have resounding effects in one's own life and the lives of others. Kwa's works are strongly influenced by classical Chinese literature, such as *Dream of the Red Chamber* or the Japanese novel, *The Tale of Genji*. She has been praised for her thorough research in Chinese and Singaporean history and its incorporation into her work in style and content. Some critics overlook the classical Chinese literature that influenced Kwa and compare her novels to Chinese action films, such as Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* or Zhang Yimou's *Hero*.

In her collection of poetry, *The Colours of Heroines*, Kwa explores significant life experiences from her childhood in Singapore to the present day and depicts lesbian-themed ideas and situations. The book is organized into three sections: "Father: Mother: Tongue," "Translations," and "The Colours of Heroines." Written over a period of about six years, the poems address themes such as racism, colonialism, domestic violence, and erotic lesbian love. Kwa uses Chinese characters in a group of short lyrical poems in the "Translations" section of the book that explore images of the Chinese characters for *water*, *cleanse*, and more.

*This Place Called Absence*, Kwa's first novel, follows four women in two different story lines over the course of a century. Wu Lan, a Chinese Canadian psychologist, has taken a year's leave of absence from the clinic where she works to cope with her grief over her father's suicide. She begins to research her father's life and discovers the sex trade that took place in early twentieth-century Singapore. With this discovery, the

reader meets Lee Ah Choi, who is sold into prostitution by her parents, and Chow Chat Mui, who escapes her father's sexual abuse but ends up working for the brothel. The two *ah ku*, or prostitutes, Lee Ah Choi and Chow Chat Mui, become lesbian lovers and dream of escaping the opium death that befalls most *ah ku*. Ultimately, the reader discovers that Wu Lan is the granddaughter of Chat Mui. *This Place Called Absence* deals with the themes of sexuality, particularly uncommon issues to address from an **Asian American** perspective. Wu Lan, the main character, struggles with her lesbian identity and attempts to come to terms with it. Additionally, Wu Lan's discovery of her own ancestry serves to demonstrate the link between her present life in Canada and her Singaporean past. Wu Lan's situation parallels Kwa's own in many ways, as they are both psychologists who emigrated from Singapore to Canada and have each come to accept their own homosexuality.

Some critics praise Kwa's novel as a significant contribution to the genre of **lesbian literature**. Writing for *Lambda Book Report*, Juliet Sarkessian describes Kwa as a new talent from whom she anticipates distinctive and intriguing works in the future. *Booklist's* Carol Haggas claims that Kwa's depiction of disheartened women disturbed by ghosts and fateful situations evinces real emotion and drama. Other critics argue that Kwa was overly ambitious in her undertaking and fails to live up to expectations. In an *Advocate* article, Kera Bolonik expresses her belief that the book flounders because of Kwa's overly ambitious exertion. In a *Publishers Weekly* review, Jeff Zaleski praises Kwa's research and writing but argues that Kwa neglects to develop the majority of the themes she introduces.

*The Walking Boy*, Kwa's second novel, follows the journey of Baoshi, a hermaphrodite who was cast out by his parents as a young boy. Kwa brought to life the Chinese imperial court in the eighth century, depicting the decadence and corruption that consumed it, including its only female emperor. Baoshi is adopted by Harelip, a reclusive monk, who sends him on a quest to find the sculptor Ardhanari, Harelip's former lover. Along the way, the reader is introduced to Nü Huang (a historical reference to the female emperor Wu Zhao), who commits a series of atrocious tortures and executions. Her violent actions horrify Wan'er, her imperial secretary, a poet who takes the abess of Da Fa temple for her lover. Although it is considered a work of historical fiction, Kwa uses the present tense in writing *The Walking Boy*. On her personal Web site, she explains that she uses this form to give the readers the impression that they are experiencing the novel firsthand or as a dream vision. Kwa also includes aspects incorporated from classical Chinese literature, such as the author's prologue and written responses to poems. *The Walking Boy* challenges the roles of conventional sexuality, with a hermaphrodite as the main character and a homosexual monk his mentor. The novel develops many psychological themes, such as the rationalization of acts of violence and the desire for power.

*The Walking Boy* was generally well received by critics. Writing for *Quill & Quire*, Mary Soderstrom claims that the novel was a pleasurable read, reminiscent of a Hong Kong action film, but with a serious literary and philosophical significance. In a *Horizons* review, Claire Robson writes, "In an imaginative tour de force, Kwa wraps these colorful characters into a tightly written and compelling story and gives each a convincing voice" (35). See also Colonialism and Postcolonialism; Racism and Asian America.

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AIMEE WONG



## L



### ◆ LAHIRI, JHUMPA (1967–)

Indian American short story writer, essayist, and novelist Jhumpa Lahiri is one of the premier young authors writing in the United States today. Her Pulitzer Prize-winning debut collection of short stories, *Interpreter of Maladies: Stories* (1999), and her novel *The Namesake* (2003) have been widely praised by critics, and scholars have begun to explore her subtle use of tropes and astute commentary on the dual processes of immigration and assimilation. Set in both India and the United States, her work focuses on issues of dueling cultural identities and conflicts between generations that are separated by both social traditions and geography. However, critics have also noted that, although rooted in the particular experiences of Southeast Asians, Lahiri's fiction also examines such perennial themes as love, guilt, self-discovery, and alienation, causing her work to be enjoyed by a wide range of readers.

Born in London, England, to Bengali parents, Nilanjana Sudeshna Lahiri grew up in South Kingston, Rhode Island, although she spent considerable periods of her early life with relatives in Calcutta, India. Her father, Amar K. Lahiri, continues to be a faculty member at the University of Rhode Island Libraries, while her mother, Tapati Lahiri, who has an MA in Bengali, is a schoolteacher. Lahiri, the older of two sisters, became known as Jhumpa when an elementary school teacher began addressing her with this pet name. Some relatives were troubled that Jhumpa became Lahiri's primary name, a conflict between private and public manners of address that would be explored at length in her novel *The Namesake*.

Lahiri's parents, who were suspicious of American culture, maintained many Indian traditions and customs, such as speaking Bengali in the house and eating rice

and dal with their fingers. Although Lahiri grew up with a keen awareness that her home life was alien to her American peers, her parents reminded their daughters that they were not and would never be American. Lahiri has stated that as a child she felt that she led two separate lives, which negated each other and did not begin to merge for her until well into adulthood. Moreover, during the family trips to India, which were sometimes months long, Lahiri occupied a unique position as neither tourist nor resident in the vibrant world of Calcutta. This perspective of intimacy mixed with a degree of detachment strongly informs Lahiri's fiction and may help to explain her broad appeal to readers.

As a child, Lahiri wrote extensively in notebooks and in elementary school she collaborated with friends on short stories at recess. Although she published a number of stories in her high school's newspaper, she stopped writing when she entered Barnard College. After receiving a BA in English literature in 1989, she decided to study for a PhD in English. However, following a series of unsuccessful applications, Lahiri found a position as a research assistant at a nongovernment organization in Cambridge, Massachusetts. During this time, Lahiri began writing again, and she was soon accepted to the creative writing program at Boston University. She eventually received four degrees from Boston University: an MA in creative writing, an MA in English, yet another MA in comparative literature and arts, and finally a PhD in Renaissance studies. Despite her dedication to scholarly pursuits, Lahiri started to publish fictional pieces during the final years of her graduate studies. After receiving her doctorate, she was awarded a two-year fellowship at Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, an opportunity that enabled her to continue writing stories. Over the next seven years, Lahiri's short fiction appeared in such publications as the *New Yorker*, the *Louisville Review*, *AGNI*, the *Harvard Review*, *Salamander*, *Epoch*, and *Story Quarterly*, and she began garnering numerous literary awards. These stories were brought together in her debut collection *Interpreter of Maladies: Stories*, which appeared in 1999. In January of 2001 she married Alberto Vourvoulias-Bush, the deputy editor of the Latin American edition of *Time*. The two were wed in a traditional Bengali marriage ceremony in Singhi Palace in Calcutta. They have a son, Octavio, with whom she speaks Bengali.

Although many of the stories in *Interpreter of Maladies* had been published previously, this stunning collection was met with immense critical acclaim. The title story received the O. Henry Award, and the collection was awarded the PEN/Hemingway Award, an American Academy of Arts and Letters Addison Metcalf Award, and the Pulitzer Prize in 2000, a phenomenal achievement for a first book. Lahiri was subsequently short-listed for the M.F.K. Fisher Distinguished Writing Award from the James Beard Foundation, and she was named one of the 20 best young writers in the United States by the *New Yorker*. Critics hailed *Interpreter of Maladies* for its eloquent

prose and Lahiri's compassionate approach to the lives of Indian immigrants struggling to create meaningful relationships and establish new traditions in the United States. Although Lahiri probes facets of life unique to Indians, such as the effect of the independent movement in Bangladesh and the eating habits of South Asian immigrants, the stories were also noted for their sensitive exploration of universal themes that appeal to audiences unfamiliar with Indian customs.

The title story involves a family of Indian Americans vacationing in Konarak. Their driver and tour guide, Kapasi, explains that he also works at a doctor's office where he translates the maladies of patients from Gujarati for the English-speaking doctor. Mrs. Das, the attractive young mother of the family, displays a special interest in Kapasi's interpretive work, causing the tour guide to develop romantic fantasies about the possibilities of their future relationship. However, the immaturity and condescending attitude of the tourists are eventually exposed, as Mrs. Das confesses her adultery and Kapasi recognizes that the cultural distance between them is insurmountable. Marriage difficulties, a recurrent theme in Lahiri's fiction, are the focus of both "This Blessed House" and the first story in the collection, which focuses on a young Indian couple living in Boston. Although Lahiri was not married when she wrote "A Temporary Matter," she ably captures the painful consequences of a miscarriage on the union of Shoba and Shukumar, two second-generation Indian Americans. The couple is briefly brought together by temporary power outages in their neighborhood. During these unusual interludes, they share home-cooked meals and intimate conversations, which are somehow unavailable to them in the harsh light of their well established routines. However, their progressively revealing discussions lead to a series of confessions that threatens the longevity of their relationship.

The story "Mrs. Sen's," which describes an Indian woman who cares for a boy from a single-parent home, is based on Lahiri's own mother, who also babysat in her home. Lahiri wrote this story after thinking about how an American child would view her mother's habits and lifestyle, thus creating a moving portrait of the relationship between two lonely individuals. Another story that focuses on the developing cultural awareness of a child is "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" which is narrated by 10-year-old Lilia, who learns about the political turmoil between India and Pakistan and the hardships of immigration from the experiences of a family friend. A few of the stories, such as "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar," are set in India, but the majority examines the lives of Indians living in the United States. Significantly, Lahiri explores the subjectivities of Caucasian Americans with the same sensitivity that she bestows upon Indian characters. In "Sexy" she focuses on Miranda, a white woman who has an adulterous affair with a married Indian man. Although Miranda has a close friend who is an Indian woman, she seeks more information about her lover's life by browsing through Bollywood videos and paging through a Bengali primer.

The collection concludes with "The Third and Final Continent," which is based on the experiences of Lahiri's father. The narrator is a librarian who relocates from Calcutta to London to Boston, following the movement of Amar K. Lahiri's own journey to life in the United States. The Bengali narrator describes his first American meal of cereal and milk, his encounter with Mrs. Croft, his landlady, who lives alone despite her advanced age, and the process by which his wife joins him in the United States. He contrasts his achievements with those of the American astronauts who plant a flag on the moon, and, though the narrator finds his life ordinary by comparison, he has clearly been a pioneer in a strange, new world. Although the narrator's experience of immigration is central to the story, Lahiri's close attention to the relationship between him and Mrs. Croft demonstrates her abiding concern for the ways in which intimate connections are possible. These two characters develop a touching intimacy despite vast cultural differences and their own obvious comfort with isolation.

Although the critical reception of *Interpreter of Maladies* was largely enthusiastic, some reviewers found the stories set in India to be inauthentic and to rely on stereotypes rather than on the vivid details that characterize the other tales. Others mentioned Lahiri's tendency to overwrite and to provide excessive detail rather than allowing the reader to savor the contradictions of her characters. Despite these observations, positive reviews in the *New York Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Publishers Weekly*, and other periodicals cemented Lahiri's status as one of the most exciting new voices in American literature.

After winning a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2002, Lahiri followed the success of *Interpreter of Maladies* with the publication of her highly anticipated first novel, *The Namesake*. First excerpted as a short story in the *New Yorker*, *The Namesake* continues to explore the principal themes of immigration, assimilation, and identity found in Lahiri's previous work. Focused on the life of Gogol Ganguly, the son of Bengali immigrants living in the United States, the novel examines the relationship between names and identity, as well as the ways in which a sense of exile is passed on from immigrants to their children. Gogol is a pet name given to the protagonist by his father, Ashoke, who as a young man was almost killed in a train wreck in India. Ashoke is saved by rescuers who notice a book by the Russian writer Nikolai Gogol that he had been reading before the accident. After settling in the United States, Ashoke, an engineering student, and Ashima, his wife through an arranged marriage, begin a family. Following tradition, they plan to give their first son a name bestowed by his maternal great-grandmother, but the letter with the infant's name is lost, and thus Gogol is named for the writer who Ashoke believed saved his life.

Because Gogol does not learn the history of his name until he is much older, it comes to stand as a symbol of his feelings of displacement and marginalization in American society. The novel charts his development through adulthood, describing his

sense of cultural alienation and his rebellion against the strictures of his parents. With his growing dislike for Bengali classes and his family's periodic trips to India, Gogol cultivates a teenage American lifestyle of television and junk food under the newly adopted name "Nikhil." *The Namesake* follows Gogol through college and a series of relationships with women that expose his desire to embrace a way of life apart from his parents. However, the death of Ashoke leads Gogol back to his family and to marriage with Moushumi, a Bengali woman. Although this marriage eventually ends due to Moushumi's infidelities, the novel concludes with Gogol reading the work of his namesake, satisfied with both his Bengali community and his unique, American name.

*The Namesake* earned a mixed critical reception. Some reviewers again praised Lahiri's quiet, eloquent language and her subtle meditation on issues of identity, exile, and cultural conflict. However, others found her linear narrative structure to be tiresome and criticized her detached, descriptive style and the series of female characters who move in and out of Gogol's life without sustained development. Despite these observations, many readers were taken with Gogol's absorbing development and his attachment to his family, despite striking cultural tensions.

*The Namesake*'s vivid characters and engaging story drew the attention of Indian director Mira Nair who made the story "A Temporary Matter" into a short movie for the Public Broadcasting Service's *East West* series. In October 2006, Nair's film adaptation of *The Namesake* was shown at the London Film Festival. The movie, starring Kal Penn, Zuleikha Robinson, and Irrfan Khan, was released in the United States in March 2007. Lahiri has a small cameo in the film as Aunt Jhumpa.

In interviews, Lahiri has stated that the common question, "Where are you from?" is still problematic for her because answers such as Rhode Island, India, and the United States are all approximations of her complex origin. Like many of her fictional characters, Lahiri does not belong to a single place, and her identity cannot be labeled simplistically. Moreover, despite her background in critical scholarship, Lahiri prefers not to probe her own work for definitive meaning. Her fiction is testament to the shifting nature and complex loyalties of identity and to a conception of home as a place beyond geographic boundaries.

Lahiri continues to write and publish essays and stories in national magazines such as *Newsweek* and the *New Yorker*. Although she found the experience of writing a novel to be more demanding and difficult than composing short fiction, she enjoyed its more tolerant form, and she hopes to continue to write both short stories and longer narratives. Since having a child, Lahiri has stated that the experience of motherhood has been transformative for her, and she anticipates her future work to reflect this shift in her perspective and identity. She has taught creative writing at Boston University and the Rhode Island School of Design. Since 2005 she has been a vice president of the PEN American Center. In 2008 Lahiri published her second collection of short

fiction titled *Unaccustomed Earth* that consists of eight stories. Lahiri lives with her husband and son in Brooklyn, New York. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Assimilation/Americanization.

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STEPHANIE LI

### ◆ LAI, LARISSA (1967–)

Chinese Canadian novelist, poet, and essayist, Larissa Lai is known as one of the most innovative and progressive young Canadian writers of the contemporary period. She was born in La Jolla, California, grew up in St. John's, Newfoundland, and has worked in Ottawa, Calgary, and Vancouver as a writer, editor, researcher, and community organizer. She has a BA (honors) in sociology from the University of British Columbia, an MA in creative writing from the University of East Anglia in Norwich, England, and a PhD from the University of Calgary, where she was the Markin-Flanagan Canadian Writer-in-Residence during 1997–1998. She was writer-in-residence at Simon Fraser University in 2006 and has been awarded a postdoctoral fellowship for 2006–2007 at the University of British Columbia. She began an assistant professorship there in the Department of English in 2007. In summer 2007 she was one of the instructors at the Clarion West Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers' Workshop in Seattle. Her first novel, *When Fox Is a Thousand* (1995), was short-listed for the Chapters/Books in Canada First Novel Award. *Salt Fish Girl* (2002), her sec-

ond novel, was short-listed for the Sunburst Award, the Tiptree Award, and the City of Calgary W.O. Mitchell Award. She was awarded an Astraea Foundation Emerging Writers Award in 1995. Lai has published three chapbooks: *Sibyl Unrest*, a collaborative long poem written with Rita Wong; *Rachel*, a long poem narrated by the “replicant” or cyborg/android character in the film *Bladerunner*, who is programmed to believe that she is human; and *Nascent Fashion*, a meditation on the current war in the Middle East. A short story version of the *Bladerunner* reprise, “Rachel” was anthologized in *So Long Been Dreaming: Postcolonial Science Fiction & Fantasy*, edited by Nalo Hopkinson and Upinder Mehan (2004). She is also the author of the monograph *The Site of Memory: Chinaman’s Peak: Walking the Mountain* (1993), and a number of important essays on Canadian multicultural writing.

Lai’s fiction is characterized by her interrogation of identity construction that is based around race, class, gender, and sexuality. Her writing is “queer” in the broadest sense, queering not only the gender categories of male and female and the kinds of sexual relationships available to men and women, but the very category of “human.” Her interest in exploring science fiction genres and styles and ancient stories of the supernatural—of spirit possession and the like—enables her to question subject positions such as dead versus living, human versus android, and spirit versus embodied identities. The seductive power of the fox spirit drives her first novel; the transformative potential of new technologies casts a darker atmosphere over much of her second novel. A favored technique is the juxtaposition of mythical Chinese elements with narratives of contemporary Western civilization. In contrast with authors such as Wayson Choy, who bring the storytelling traditions of precommunist China into the fictive world of the narrative, Lai balances multiple narrative threads and weaves her own imaginative portrait of Old China.

*When Fox Is a Thousand* uses three interweaving points of view: the fox spirit, the Chinese poetess Yu Hsuan-Chi of the ninth century, and a third-person omniscient narrator who tells the story of Artemis, her mysterious seeming-double Diane, and her student friends in contemporary Vancouver. *Salt Fish Girl* juxtaposes two narrative points of view: that of the mythical figure Nu Wa in her nineteenth-century incarnation and the young girl Miranda, whose story is set in the futuristic corporation-city of Serendipity in 2044. Not only are narrative points of view interwoven, but different styles and genres are deployed to surprising and defamiliarizing effect. The murder mystery, in the closing section of *When Fox Is a Thousand*, complicates the question of who is ultimately guilty of the murder of Diane’s brother at the hands of “gay-bashers.” In the opening section of *Salt Fish Girl* Nu Wa’s story combines Chinese myth with the European story of the Little Mermaid, as Nu Wa describes her desire to become human after falling in love with a young man’s face, seen fleetingly through the watery surface of the river. This technique of narrative contrast and juxtaposition

emphasizes Lai's interrogation of storytelling as an epistemological tool, as a means of constructing the categories of identity through which we interpret experience.

History offers another lens through which Lai questions the role of narrative in constructing realities. In her essay "Corrupted Lineage: Narrative in the Gaps of History" (2001), she writes about the need for writers, and minority writers especially, to break the silences of the past. However, she acknowledges the importance of overcoming silence without uncritically reproducing the stereotypes and negative racialized and gendered subject positions of the past. Consequently, Lai retells the myths and folktales that are in a sense the history of her Chinese ancestry, but she "queers" the stories in the process, inventing possible roles for women, for women-identified women, that reinterpret the functioning of imperial Chinese patriarchy as it is currently represented. Lai breaks down monolithic definitions of institutions and relationships, as when the Fox tells how she played at palace politics, seducing, deceiving, and finally killing to become the first empress of China.

The power of femininity, of feminine sexuality, is a dominant theme in Lai's writing, but gender is always explored in connection with class, race, and sexuality. The Fox figure, for example, is at the age of 50 able to take on the body of a woman, at 100 a beautiful woman, and at 1,000 immortal and able to converse with the divine. Fox tells how, upon her fiftieth birthday, she had to inhabit the body of an old, ugly, and poor woman. This contrasts radically and ironically with her experience as a young, beautiful, and highly empowered woman in the imperial court.

The goddess Nu Wa, in the second novel, also possesses the power of self-transformation (and of immortality). She is recreated by Lai as a queer goddess, who falls in love with the poor daughter of a fishmonger, the salt fish girl of the novel's title. The second narrative thread, the futuristic story of Miranda, is connected to Wu Na through the peculiar smell of durian that Miranda bears. Miranda also seems to bear fish-like scales that are reminiscent of Wu Na's mermaid tail. These two signs or markers are revealed, as the complexity of the novel's double-plot unfolds, to be clues to a secret industry that produces genetically engineered factory workers that evoke the sweatshop conditions in which workers toil in the nineteenth-century Canton that Nu Wa inhabits. The dystopian representation of early industrial Canton and postindustrial North America extends Lai's interrogation of identity construction to embrace the prescriptive influences of global capitalism upon the possibilities for self-determination and human agency. Class is complicated by the proximity of humans and cyborgs, gendered as female, all smelling of durian, and all enslaved by their manufactured bodies. Sci-fi dystopia, magical realism, inherited mythologies both Oriental and Occidental, and cinematic discourses—all are interwoven in Lai's work to produce a brilliantly challenging and innovative "queering" of contemporary Chinese North American identities. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Asian Canadian Studies; Multiculturalism and Asian America.



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DEBORAH L. MADSEN

◆ LAKSHMI, VIJAY (1943–)

An Indian American writer of fiction and literary criticism, Vijay Lakshmi, residing and teaching in Philadelphia since 1982, was born and educated in India and received her doctorate in literature from the University of Rajasthan. She has won several awards—a Fulbright Fellowship at Yale, an NEH Summer Fellowship, and the Editor's Prize from Orbis (UK) for her story "Touchline." In addition to her acclaimed *Pomegranate Dreams and Other Stories*, she is the author of *Virginia Woolf as a Critic* and several short stories and scholarly articles.

Lakshmi's stories, like the early works of Bharati Mukherjee, are about the Indians who arrived in the United States in the 1960s. Primarily doctors, engineers, researchers, and teachers, they were not typical immigrants fleeing political upheavals or economic hardships. Assimilation into the mainstream, difficult for all newcomers, is fraught with even more complexity for Indian women who, at the intersection of loyalty to their past and the need to adapt, find their old world values holding them back. Coping with tensions generated by these conflicts is at the core of her stories.

The motif of pomegranate, a fruit valued in many cultures for its power to cleanse and heal the soul, and the use of first-person narrators link the selections in *Pomegranate Dreams and Other Stories*. In the novella-length title story of self-discovery, Juhi recalls the memories of her arrival in the United States 20 years ago. An adolescent then, she resented the family's exchange of a placid life in India for a small, rented duplex, nothing close to the glossy pictures of American life. The taunts of insensitive, ignorant, and bigoted schoolmates further added to her misery.

"Pomegranate Dreams" offers a glimpse into the lives of immigrants. Many achieve professional and financial success, but there are also those whose dreams remain elusive. Juhi's narrative reveals their accomplishments, as well as heartaches and unhappiness. In the course of events, she learns about their perseverance in the face of hardships, the **racism** in the Indian community itself, and the emptiness of the lives of many people she envied. Her gradual maturity helps her to transform her resentment into determination to become a successful filmmaker.

The "other stories" provide insights into women's perspectives of familial relationships. In "The City of Storks," Renu, an academic living in self-exile after an annulled

marriage in India, finds love unexpectedly and takes the bold step of living with a much older man from another culture. In "Mannequins," a middle-aged woman, chafing in her traditional, "restrictive" sari, is irritated by her teenager's comments about her clothes that make her conspicuously different from other mothers. The mother goes through an awkward, stressful process of buying her first Western outfit, only to discover that simply dressing in the new garments does little to close the growing gap between her and her children.

"Smokescreen," "Distances," and "Home," arranged in this order, depict the altering landscape of Anu and Manish's relationship. "Smokescreen," set in the third year of their arrival in the States, shows Manish so preoccupied with his career that he can barely hear Anu. When she talks longingly of home, Manish reassures her that their past is still with them. That they both still share their nostalgia leaves some hope for Anu. In "Distances," set a few years later, Anu is still in an exile's state of mind, sustaining herself with the sensual memories of her past, but Manish has gradually distanced himself from the past. The story ends with the narrator swinging between hope and despair as she observes Manish, who always walks faster, keep in step with her this time, suggesting his intended support. Yet her "trembling towards the next bend" (222) reflects her fear of their growing apart.

"Home" traces the growing rift between Anu and Manish. She has finally gone to work after the children have grown up. Having accepted that there is no going back "home," she has made her peace—or so she thinks—until one snowy evening, on her long train ride from the city, listening to a young Russian immigrant talk of her family and of her husband waiting for her at the train station makes Anu realize her meaningless existence and the coldness that has crept into her relationship with her husband.

"Greenwich Line" depicts another drifting relationship. Jeevan and Gauri have been meeting each other in distant cities and countries for seven years, both escaping the monotony of their loveless marriages. Gauri feels no torment of guilt for her betrayal of her husband, yet she cannot escape a feeling of emptiness. At the Greenwich Royal Observatory, standing across the meridian, she sees herself "straddling two worlds. Belonging to none" (210). Acknowledging that his duty toward his family will never allow Jeevan to leave his family, Gauri discovers that sheer disregard of conventions does not easily free one from the shackles of "some rusty moral code" (212).

"Touchline" draws attention to the emotional wrenching faced by immigrants in leaving their parents alone in their old age. The protagonist comes back to persuade her aging widowed mother to move to the United States. Her mother's living in the memories of her past life frightens her, for she does not want to be caught in the vortex of nostalgia once again. Returning alone, she is overpowered by a sense of failure as a daughter and struck by her immense loss—the price for severing with her past.

In these brooding narratives by sensitive introspective women, Lakshmi successfully unveils their souls with deft strokes and vivid images rendered in poetic prose. However, in the very strengths of her incisive portrayals lie her limitations. The repeated use of first-person point of view presents only the women's perspective, providing little insight into the conflicts and emotions of men in their lives. Sharing the angst of "the existential moments" (Reale 2004) in these women's lives is engaging initially but leaves one yearning for some courageous acts of reinvention from them. With experimentation in narrative technique and an expanded range of themes and characters, a talented writer like Lakshmi could certainly bring her future works to new heights. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization; Racism and Asian America.

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LEELA KAPAI

#### ◆ LAM, ANDREW (1964–)

A Vietnamese American journalist, short story writer, an editor for the New America Media, and commentator for National Public Radio's segment *All Things Considered*, Andrew Lam is a prolific author with numerous articles and essays that have been published in a variety of newspapers and magazines throughout the United States.

Born in Sai Gon, Vietnam, Lam left at the age of 11 on a C130 cargo plane. His family's first stop was to Guam, then to Camp Pendleton in San Diego, California, until they were finally relocated to Northern California. Lam's father, a former South Vietnamese general, reunited with his family in the United States a few years later. In an interview with Thuy Vo Dang for *Nha Magazine* on September 18, 2005, Lam states, "I had a particularly privileged childhood—went to French school, lived in a villa, had chauffeurs, servants, and visited or lived sporadically in many parts of the country during the war since my father was a general who got transferred a lot—Sa Dec, My Tho, Vinh Long, Da Lat, Da Nang, Nha Trang, Hue, Vung Tàu." These two

childhood privileges, attaining an education and being able to travel, transferred when he immigrated to the United States. Lam received a bachelor of science degree in biochemistry at the University of California, Berkeley, and a master's degree in creative writing at San Francisco State University. Moreover, his experiences with traveling have also been a constant in his life, as his job as a journalist has taken him to various parts of the world, especially to places like Hong Kong and even returning to his homeland, Vietnam.

Given Lam's influences and personal history, his significant contribution to the Vietnamese living in the diaspora (otherwise known as Viet Kieu or Overseas Vietnamese) has been the publication of his works, written in English, about the experiences of the Viet Kieu. In Richard Rodriguez's foreword to Andrew Lam's first collection of essays, *Perfume Dreams: Reflections on the Vietnamese Diaspora*, Rodriguez acknowledges a shift in Lam's audience. At first, Lam wrote to "outsiders," mostly the mainstream American public. Then as time passed, Lam "realized a responsibility to address a new generation of US-born Vietnamese who were without his memory of war and loss" (2005, xiv). As one reads Lam's words, one realizes that his stories, if read over a passage of time, have changed and matured, just as his audience has also now grown and has become multigenerational and even transnational in scope. Once again, in Lam's own words, "I write all sorts of stories, but I think I'm pretty much at this point pigeonholed as a Vietnamese American writer who writes about all things related to Viet Nam and the Diaspora. But my interests vary: Hong Kong cinema, Cambodia's struggle toward peace, Thailand's Muslim unrest, SARS, the environment, and even the cosmos—I'm riveted by what we discover so far among the stars. But yes, my short stories are mostly about adapting, dealing with the past and often from the point of view of Vietnamese Americans. And yes, my essays often are personal, and they're about how I feel about the world, and what identities mean to me, and so on" (Dang 2005). Lam's reflections about his writing through a diasporic Viet Kieu lens is highlighted not only in *Perfume Dreams* but also embedded in numerous articles and personal essays that he has written and conveyed throughout his career as a journalist and commentator. Articles and essays such as "My Vietnam, My America: Memories of Two Countries" (1990), "Letter to a Vietnamese Cousin: Should You Come to America?" (2002), and "For Catholic Church, Vietnamese are the New Irish" (2006) articulate the multiple and multifaceted identities of Vietnamese living in the United States, Vietnam, and abroad.

Befitting his years in the media and to public service, Lam has received numerous awards and recognition for his work. These include the 2006 PEN American/Beyond the Margins for *Perfume Dreams*, not to mention honors from the Society of Professional Journalists' Outstanding Young Journalist Award (1993), The Media Alliance Meritorious Award (1994), The World Affairs Council's Excellence in International

Journalism Award (1992), the Rockefeller Fellowship at UCLA (1992), and the Asian American Journalists Association National Award (1993, 1995). He was also honored and profiled on KQED television in May 1996 during **Asian American** heritage month and was bestowed a John S. Knight Fellow at Stanford University during the 2001–2002 academic year, studying journalism. Currently, Lam can be seen in a PBS documentary *My Journey Home*, which chronicles his travels to Vietnam. In addition, Lam is currently working on his first collection of (fictional) short stories. **See also** Asian Diasporas.

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NINA HA

#### ◆ LAU, CAROLYN LEI-LANILAU (1950–)

Born in Hawaii, Chinese American poet, artist, and scholar Carolyn Lau, also known as Liu Yuzhen, lives in Oakland, California, and Honolulu, Hawaii. She graduated from San Francisco State University and obtained a master's degree in English literature and creative writing in 1983, specializing in William Blake, Chinese poetry, and linguistics. She published a number of poems and prose writings, including *Wode Shuofa: My Way of Speaking* (1988), which received a 1987 American Book Award for Poetry, and *Ono Ono Girl's Hula* (1997), which won the 1998 Firecracker Alternative Book Award for Best Nonfiction Book and the 1998 Small Press Award for

Best Multicultural-Adult Book. Her poems have been anthologized in five books, including *The Best American Poetry of 1996* and *Chinese American Poetry: An Anthology* (1991), and have appeared in such journals as the *Bloomsbury Review*, the *American Poetry Review*, *Manoa*, *Yellow Silk*, *Parnassus: Poetry in Review*, *Amerasia*, *Chicago Review*, *Zyzzyva*, and *Calyx*. She had been a lecturer at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and at West Oahu, Tianjin Foreign Language Institute in China, and Cal State-Hayward. Lau is the founder of Hale O Hawaii Nei, an organization dedicated to promoting the cultures and traditions of Hawaii. Lau also won the Performance Award Oakland Cultural Arts (2003), the American Book Award (1989), and the California Arts Council Literature and Translation Fellowship (1989).

In 1979 Lau went to teach in China and familiarized herself with a number of contemporary Chinese writers and poets. She was deeply influenced by Chinese poetry and philosophy and tried to interpret Taoism and Confucianism through her poetic creations. From childhood she became familiar with the folktales, fairy tales, and ghost stories of China. Through both English translation and Chinese language, she read many Chinese literary works, including poems by Tao Yuanming, Du Fu, Li Bai, Ruan Ji, Bai Juyi, and Su Dongpo, and prose works by Han Yu, Wu Cheng'en, and Wu Jingzhi. She has commented that Bai Juyi's poetry combines history, personal life, and lyricism into one, whereas Tao Yuanming's work contains a kind of metaphysical flavor, simple in language and careful in observations, which is of great value to her writing. She also holds the view that the purpose of writing is to combine the philosophy of Zhuang Zi (Chuangtzu) with William Blake. It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that it is Chinese classical philosophy that guides her into the literary arena.

In *Wode Shuofa: My Way of Speaking*, one will find that many of the poems bear the imprint of Chinese philosophy and poetry. The 50-odd poems, which have frequent references to the literatures and arts of China, the United States, and Europe, reflect her education and teaching experiences in Hawaii, China, and California. The poems, especially those that are well related to classical Chinese philosophers and poets, show the emotional journey of a daughter, a mother, and a lover, a journey that delves into the psychological depth of a person split in identity wrestling. In her poem "One Meaning of Tao," for instance, she shows her understanding of Tao, and in "Regarding the Zhuang Zi" she expresses her view of Zhuangzi and her understanding of Taoism. In "Mencius Fulfilled by Escher," she uses engraving art to elucidate Zhuang Zi's famous motto "forgetting the trap as soon as the fish is caught," while in "A Footnote to a Dispute among Confucius Disciples" she describes the debate of whether a man is born evil or good—a debate that is found in the School of Mencius and the School of Xun Zi. Her longer poem "A Play Called 'Go'" is based upon a tragic love story of Tang Xuanzong (712–756), a Tang dynasty emperor, with her concubine Yang Guifei. Their love affair leads to the death of Yang Guifei and the downfall of the dynasty. The

poem, which is actually a variation of a similar poem by Bai Juyi, is an attempt on the part of the author to cross-reference the medieval flavor dominant in contemporary China with contemporary Western culture and to make a comparison and contrast between the purity of English and the complicatedness of languages as seen in the poetical lines. The language of Lau is difficult to understand, because it is usually mixed with allusions, whether historical or personal.

*Ono Ono Girl's Hula* is a book that defies easy categorization. It is a collection of essays that seek to break the conventional genre of autobiography, as the prose here combines autobiography, satire, and poetry. In this collection the author employs symbols and metaphors to describe her rebellious youth, her troubled marriage, her preoccupation with identity, and her attempt to keep a distance from other popular **Asian American** authors. In the book, Lau announces that the book is a writer's hula, a communication of a message of the author's struggle with and search for a mongrel identity. The book transcends temporal and spatial restrictions as she moves from ancient times to the present, from Hawaii to California to China and back to the United States; this circular movement, which is intentional, is what Lau is pursuing. Stylistically, the author mixes Hawaiian dialect, Hakka, French, English, and Chinese (Hanyu Pinyin) languages, giving her writing a flavor that is part Chinese, part Hawaiian, part William Blake, and part Lu Xun. Lau creates a multilingual environment which is a challenge to an essential categorization of identity, in which the cultural claims are pure and authentic, the affiliation claims to nationhood are fixed, and the fixed location is equated with a fixed identity. The book reads like an expression of identity crisis, as the author seems to be thwarted by the dominant cultural structure. The author's experimentation with different languages, her use of intertextual sources, and her indulgence of sensual gratifications break the traditional idea of genre and gender and are good manifestations that language is a function of the body.

*Ono Ono Girl's Hula* shows a schizoid narration of her story, as the author uses many sensual descriptions and ethnic backgrounds to invite the reader to ponder over the paradoxes of sexual and ethnic identity for a diasporic Chinese woman writer. Lau tries to discover her Chinese genealogy, which is diversified and difficult to define. Raised in California and Honolulu, she was allowed neither to speak the native language nor to have much contact with the *kanaka* side of her family. When growing up, she tried hard to integrate Chinese and Hawaiian accents in her life and into her writing and speaks alternately Hawaiian, Latin, French, and Chinese. Her use of pidgin in her writings challenges the purity of language and the related issue of fixed identity. The book therefore reads like a postcolonial narrative of resistance against any conventions. It gives the reader an impression of fiction, or poetry, or actually a mixture of much more. **See also** Hawaiian Pidgin.

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GUANGLIN WANG

◆ LAU, EVELYN (1971–)

A second-generation Chinese Canadian memoirist, poet, short story writer, and novelist, Evelyn Lau published nine books between 1989 and 2006 and has received recognition for both her prose and poetry. Born in Vancouver, British Columbia, where she still currently resides, Lau left behind her A-average transcripts along with parental pressures to go to medical or law school and has had no formal education since the age of 14.

Lau's career in writing began early. Her first published poems appeared in major Canadian literary journals when she was 12, and at 13 she won an essay contest in the *Vancouver Sun*, the prize for which was an opportunity to meet Pope John Paul II. The watershed moment in Lau's early life, however, was her decision to run away from home at age 14. The journal she kept of her two ensuing years on the streets—in and out of cities, social services, and strangers' homes; with harrowing accounts of her homelessness, hunger, beatings, drug use, and prostitution, as well as of her ongoing dialogue with her psychiatrist—would become *Runaway: Diary of a Street Kid* (1989). The abridged journal became a bestseller and then a CBC-TV movie, *The Diary of Evelyn Lau* (1993), starring Sandra Oh. This sensationalistic beginning has been both the boon and the bane of her writing career, as her lurid sexual history marked her in the mainstream imagination and her very public, bitter rejection of her Chinese immigrant family marked her in the **Asian American**/Asian Canadian community.

Since that controversial debut, Lau has gone on to win critical and formal acclaim for her writing. In 1990 she received the Air Canada Award for Most Promising Writer under 30. In 1992 she was presented the Milton Acorn People's Poetry Award for her collection *You Are Not Who You Claim* (1990). Also in 1992 she became the youngest poet yet nominated for Canada's most prestigious literary honor, the Governor General's Award; her collection *Oedipal Dreams* (1992) received finalist distinctions in the category of poetry. Her subsequent books of poetry have included *In*



*the House of Slaves* (1994) and *Treble* (2005). Lau's fiction includes the collections *Fresh Girls and Other Stories* (1993) and *Choose Me* (1999), as well as the short novel *Other Women* (1995). The essays that make up Lau's *Inside Out: Reflections on a Life So Far* (2001) form something of a sequel to *Runaway*, casting more insight on those formative early years both in the home and on the streets, and their ongoing legacy in her adult life.

Lau works in free verse and prose poems, as well as in a precise and vivid prose. In all forms, her work has often openly mined her years in the sex industry for material. The characters who populate *Fresh Girls* and *In the House of Slaves* form a carousel of sex workers—dominatrices, call girls, street girls—who with dangerously little difference fade into mistresses, girlfriends, and wives. It is characteristic of Lau's writing that her heroines are interchangeable: blank and indistinct in their naked intimacy. Her female subjects are un-raced, though their johns or lovers tend often to be older white men; they are un-placed, as her stories are set in the idea of cities rather than specific urban sites; and they are no less anonymous for sometimes having names. Lau's heroines, even in the more recent *Choose Me*, are defined by their structurally parallel situations: a relentlessly heterosexual relation of emotional and material powerlessness—one that belies the appearance of power. One characteristic scenario: "Kneeling with hands locked behind your back, you are not a forty-seven-year-old man ducking your forehead to the carpet. You are not crawling on your belly across the room to grip the handle of a drawer, to pull it open with your teeth, depositing a soft weight of slips and embroidered panties in my lap" (1999, 11). The overt hypersexuality of her subject matter has had the problematic effect, however, of long keeping her personal history in the forefront of readerly reception. The biographical reading this invites has frequently delegitimated the work and sexualized the author. Notably, not all of Lau's subject matter is sexual or sexually explicit in nature. Her essay "The Country of Depression" has drawn critical admiration for its scrupulous portrait of the depressive mind. Indeed, with or without its shock value, the force of Lau's language lies in her ability to catch the bright and finer shades of a crumpled heart or blighted psyche. She writes in *Other Women*, "Fiona had heard of women who allowed their lives to be ruined by men. She had prided herself on being too sensible and self-possessed for that, yet when they could not be together she came apart as though some stitches in her head had been snipped, as though a thread in her personality had been hooked onto his body, so when he left each time he pulled that thread and she began to unravel" (1995, 44).

Though Lau has increasingly secured her reputation as an accomplished writer in literary circles, her work remains quite marginal to Asian American/Asian Canadian literary scholarship. Her texts are not frequently taught in college courses under the rubric of ethnic literature, and there exists relatively little literary criticism published

on them. The reasons for this meager presence are not difficult to conjecture. Not only does she “withhold” the racialization of her protagonists (Gunew) so that her fictional and poetic texts chafe at the borders of ethnic scholarship, but she refuses to see herself in racialized terms. Lau has publicly proclaimed her aversion to the label “writer of color,” as well as to the infrastructures of multiculturalism. This is not the arena in which she wishes to operate. In an opinion piece for *The Globe and Mail*, she writes, “I do not want to read a great short story by a new writer and think first . . . that he or she is white/black/native/Chinese. . . . I think that if you do your work and do it well, then you have advertently or inadvertently opened up opportunities for others, and I am not at all sure that conferences like Writing Thru ‘Race’ create genuine opportunities for anyone” (1994, D3). This refusal to advance the agendas of social activism or identity politics has made Lau vulnerable to accusations of political retrogression. And, although it is not surprising that Lau would sensationalize her “bad girl” role, flouting the cultural authorities of racial scholarship, her stance is not one that denies the social reality of racism; it is rather one that responds to it differently. Hers is the defensiveness of the beneficiary of affirmative action, whose successes meet with the belittling insinuations of detractors that they are more than she deserved. **See also** Asian American Political Activism; Multiculturalism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America.

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ERIN KHUÊ NINH

#### ◆ LAW-YONE, WENDY (1947–)

Wendy Law-Yone is an internationally acclaimed Burmese American/diasporan Burmese journalist and novelist. Although her works include a broad range of contributions including book reviews, journalistic reports, novels, and short stories, she is primarily recognized for *The Coffin Tree* (1983) and *Irrawaddy Tango* (1993), two novels widely read in **Asian American studies** and literacy criticism courses.

Law-Yone was born in Mandalay, Burma (now Myanmar), in 1947, just one year before Burma's independence from nearly a century of British colonial rule, and was raised in the capital city of Rangoon. Her father, the late Edward Michael Law Yone, was the editor and publisher of the *Nation*, a prominent English-language newspaper in Rangoon, known for publishing radical political views critiquing postindependence communism and other undemocratic national ideologies. Just days before she was scheduled to leave home to study abroad at Mills College in Oakland, California, Law-Yone's father was incarcerated for refusing to censor the *Nation* in an era where civil disobedience and freedom of expression were strongly censored by Burmese officials. At the age of 19, she followed her father's fate and was herself incarcerated in Rangoon for several days after an unsuccessful attempt to leave Burma to meet her first husband Sterling Seagrave, an investigative American journalist and novelist. In 1973, Law-Yone finally arrived in the United States, where she eventually earned her bachelor's degree in comparative literature from Eckerd College in Saint Petersburg, Florida. Since 1975, she has been a book reviewer for the *Washington Post* and a freelance writer, contributing to a diverse range of publications. Many of her journalistic commentaries have discussed current events in Myanmar (formerly Burma), focusing on the political insurgencies driven by decades of civil unrest, the lives of student protesters opposing oppressive state policies, and the dire poverty confronting one of the now poorest nation-states in the world. She has also written three articles for *Architectural Digest* on the cultural, historical, and philosophical contexts of design. In 2002, Law-Yone was awarded the David T.K. Wong Fellowship at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, a prestigious writing award offered to authors of fiction who write about Asia in the English language. She recently reported in late 2007 that she currently resides in England, where she continues to write book reviews for the *Washington Post*.

Law-Yone was one of the first Southeast Asian American novelists to gain critical recognition in mainstream literary circles, particularly given the dearth of literature on diasporic Burmese experiences in the early 1980s when her first novel was published. Her writing style defies traditional androcentric and Eurocentric conventions of authorship, using nonlinear chronology where characters discursively narrate fragmentary retellings of their past experiences through a combination of their collective and individual memories. Although she has noted in several interviews that not all of her writings are necessarily autobiographical or representative of one specific cultural, personal, political, or social theme, many themes are microcosmic of Burmese and Southeast Asian histories and sociopolitical milieus. Many of Law-Yone's main characters, often young women, either witness horrifying forms of human suffering or are themselves the survivors of unthinkable acts of torture. As a coping mechanism, her characters repress these harrowing memories of the past and eventually exhibit

behaviors that border on what is considered clinical psychosis in Western psychological nomenclature. Intersecting themes of erotic desires, failed relationships, mental illness, sexual violence, and trauma are also prevalent in her works of fiction.

Law-Yone's first novel, *The Coffin Tree*, centers on the life of an unnamed Burmese woman who retells her lived experiences in the third-person narrative from early childhood in Burma to the present in the United States. After a political coup in Burma leaves their lives in great danger, the woman and her half-brother are suddenly uprooted from their village and exiled to the United States. As poor immigrants of color, the sibling duo is barely able to maintain a basic quality of life and struggle on a daily basis with the repressive realities of perpetual poverty. The unnamed woman's mental health deteriorates into a manic-depressive state, which results from a combination of acculturation difficulties, the deaths of her brother and father, and a humiliating romantic rejection. She eventually attempts suicide and is involuntarily confined to a psychiatric hospital for several months, where her mental state continually degenerates. Unlike other patients who entrust themselves to heal through the popularized group-therapy model advocated by mainstream Western mental health practitioners, this young woman does not so easily recover from her mental anguish and instead chooses to repress her thoughts and live vicariously through her past, both imagined and real. The asylum thus becomes a contradictory site: while it is supposed to be a haven for healing and self-discovery, it ultimately becomes an oppressive place where repressed memories manifest into deviant behaviors perpetuated by intense scrutiny of facility patients and personnel, as well as prolonged isolation from the outside world. *The Coffin Tree* vividly depicts intimate details of how one family copes with labor exploitation, poverty, psychological trauma, and racial discrimination while also disrupting popularized notions of the American Dream and **Asian American** success stories.

In the late 1980s during the rise of pro-democracy movements in Myanmar, which is still known as Burma to many, Law-Yone returned to her birthplace to report on the dire realities confronting the fragile nation under repressive rule by the brutal military junta. Her observations inspired the material for her second novel *Irrawaddy Tango*, another Law-Yone masterpiece, which book critic Carlin Romano from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* placed on the publication's selective list of notable books in 1994. The novel's setting is situated in a fictitious Southeast Asian nation of Daya, a metaphor of postcolonial Burma. A young woman known as Irrawaddy Tango has an obsession for tango dancing that eventually alters her fate from a nameless small-town village girl to the infamous trophy wife of Daya's much older dictator, known as Supremo. In this novel, the gendered body becomes a site of violence as domestic violence, emotional abuse, and sexual assault are central plot lines. From the start, their unstable marriage is mostly defined by routine

scenes of domestic violence, which is largely perpetuated by Supremo's inability to cope with two interrelated realities: his diminishing political power due to the rise of dissenting rebel insurgencies and his inability to produce an heir due to impotency. Tango is eventually kidnapped by rebel insurgents known as the Jesu, a marginalized ethnic minority group who had secretly conspired to overthrow her husband. The reader is exposed to graphic scenes where she is confined to an animal cage and continuously raped and tortured.

Ironically, she eventually becomes a leader and soldier for the Jesu until she is one day "rescued" by a white American male journalist named Lawrence, who suddenly transports her around Southeast Asia before they permanently settle in the United States. During her life as a new American, Tango drifts apart from her husband and leads a relatively miserable life filled with uncontrollable outbursts and rage. The real and symbolic loss of Lawrence, whom she originally called her liberator, is reflective of the experiences that many Asian immigrant women, particularly war brides, encounter when they confront estranged relationships in loveless marriages. The reader is frequently exposed to explicit scenes where Tango weaves in and out of frightening manic-depressive states. Like *The Coffin Tree*, *Irrawaddy Tango* is a story of disappointment, loss, and perpetual failure, a counternarrative that flatly rejects the romanticized notion that first-generation Asian American immigrants are **model minorities** without personal hardships.

Law-Yone has also published three short stories in edited collections. "Drought" (1993) was published in Alberto Manguel's anthology titled *The Gates of Paradise: The Anthology of Erotic Short Fiction*, a collection of sexually explicit short stories about provocative sexual desires and encounters. In this Law-Yone short story, the main character, a socially marginalized mixed-race girl whose indigenous mother committed suicide shortly after her European father abandoned them when she was an infant, lives a relatively uneventful existence in a war-ravaged village until a plane unexpectedly crashes in their village. A comatose white man involved in the accident involuntarily becomes a significant part of her life, and the unnamed girl narrates how she nurtures him back to health while simultaneously engaging in explicit sexual acts with him while he is physically unconscious.

"Drought" delves into provocative themes of adolescent sexual exploration and miscegenation anxieties. Indeed, her multiple sexual encounters with the man take place in secrecy but ultimately allow her to act on her most provocative desires. While her newfound sexual identity gives her some sense of empowerment and self-validation, it also creates a significant cognitive dissonance as she grapples with conflicting feelings of continuing with her secretive sexual explorations at the risk of being caught versus repressing her desires but feeling permanent regret of not experiencing sexual fulfillment. A common theme in Asian American literature with foci on mixed-race

characters, Law-Yone juxtaposes the girl's multiracial identity as both a blessing and a curse. Although the girl is admired by many locals for having white blood, she is also seen as impure, repulsive, and sexually undesirable by local village men. Her intense sexual exploration with the comatose man reaffirms her desire for power over her body and sexuality.

"The Year of the Pigeon" (1994) is another Law-Yone short story published in an anthology edited by Katherine Govier titled *Without a Guide: Contemporary Women's Travel Adventures*, a collection of travel memoirs written by other notable women, including Margaret Atwood and Alice Walker. This autobiographical essay traces the events leading to Law-Yone's imprisonment and subsequent escape from Burma in the late 1960s to reunite with her first husband during a time when travel by foreigners was highly restricted. Based on the metaphor of "running away from home" (1996, 41), Law-Yone details the painstaking process of her failed attempt to leave Burma, only to experience a humiliating capture by state officials, who imprisoned her for several days. However, she reports that she was treated humanely by prison personnel, a stark contrast to the fate of other Burmese prisoners who are ruthlessly tortured during their imprisonment. Separated from her husband for over a year, "The Year of the Pigeon" details how they corresponded through an elaborate code system and other evasive measures to elude Burmese authorities who were censoring her mail and closely scrutinizing her movements.

Law-Yone has two full-length novels in progress: *Wanting* and *The Old Burma Road*. The latter, which she worked on at the University of East Anglia during her fellowship tenure, is a family memoir recounting the events leading to the time when her two grandfathers, a British colonial officer and a mule-trading Chinese grandfather, meet on a legendary road that would forever change their fates. *The Old Burma Road* is also based on an essay that she published in Katherine Govier's anthology *Solo: Writers on a Pilgrimage* (2004), which is a collection of writings loosely based on autobiographical retellings of profound spiritual journeys.

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RACHEL ENDO

### ◆ LÊ THI DIEM THÚY (1972–)

A performance artist, playwright, poet, and novelist, lê is a prolific author whose works have been published in established literary magazines such as the *Massachusetts Review* and *Harper's Magazine*. Moreover, her plays have been performed at such venues as the International Women Playwright's Festival in Galway, Ireland, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Third New Immigrants' Play Festival at the Vineyard Theater in New York City, among other places. Although her work is multifaceted and crosses many literary genres, the uniformity in all of her writings is her ability to convey the Viet Kieu (or Overseas Vietnamese) experience, particularly of being displaced as a refugee.

Born in Phan Thiet, Vietnam in 1972, lê and her father fled their country by boat in 1978, leaving her mother behind. Typically using the water motif to signify exile and loss—of one's family, one's homeland, one's culture, and one's identity—lê documented her personal narrative in many pieces of literature. For example, in the play *Mua He Do Lua/Red Fiery Summer*, the protagonist describes a personal history that is both dream-like and all too real. The reader/audience is left to wonder what "it" actually is in the line "it begins with a dream I had / about a shoddy boat moving through water" (389). Is "it" lê's personal history, her remembrance of exile, her memories of departure from her mother or her homeland? The fragmented style of writing, as expressed in the short scene above, is repeated in much of lê's writings, whether they are part of her poetry, prose, or performance piece. Of these works, "Shrapnel Shards of Blue Water" best exemplifies the trauma caused not only because of her personal escape from Vietnam but also reveals the discord and alienation that the narrator feels once she immigrated to the United States. Through her words, the poet charts how her personal history and her life in Vietnam were silenced and negated when she arrived in the United States. The mantra in "Shrapnel Shards of Blue Water" of not equating Vietnam as only a war demonstrates a desire among many Viet Kieu writers who wish to share their stories and expose how their lives and their histories are not only about war but also about a struggle for survival, even after they have rebuilt their lives in a new and perhaps "foreign" country.

Thus, it is significant that much of lê's early work—such as her play *The Bodies Between Us* and her poems dedicated to her dead sister, including “Untitled” and “Big Girl, Little Girl,” both in the anthology called *Watermark*—culminated and were transformed into her 2003 novel *The Gangster We Are All Looking For*. This fragmented, lyrical text explores the life of its protagonist along with that of her father and mother as they try to rebuild their family in a distant and foreign land. Although the imagery of water was typically used by lê to create division and describe loss, it also has the ability to unify and bring about hope. Despite the hardship and struggle the protagonist and her parents experience throughout the novel, the last line is as follows: “As my parents stood on the beach leaning into each other, I ran, like a dog unleashed, toward the lights” (2003, 158). This image reveals the necessity to provide a sense of comfort and a positive assurance and affirmation for a better future to the readers. To end the novel with this last scene may be lê's way of showing that Vietnam is more than a war but rather a nation and a homeland for thousands of Viet Kieu like herself.

Given her talents, lê thi diem thúy has been bestowed with many honors and awards, beginning with receiving her bachelor's degree from Hampshire College and continuing with being a Radcliffe Fellow and a Lannan Foundation Resident. In addition, she received a Bridge Residency at the Headlands Center for the Arts in California, a New Works for a New World Grant from the New World Theater at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and the New England Foundation for the Arts.

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### ◆ LEE, CHANG-RAE (1965–)

Born in Seoul, South Korea, on July 29, 1965, Chang-Rae Lee moved three years later to the United States with his parents. He grew up in Westchester, New York, in a bilingual household, attended Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, and graduated from Yale University with a bachelor's in English in 1987. Afterward he traveled to the University of Oregon where he completed an MFA in fiction in 1993. Shortly after graduation he married Michelle Branca, an architect. For a year, he worked as an equities analyst on Wall Street before deciding to write full-time. His first novel, *Native Speaker* (1995), won the American Book Award and the PEN/Hemingway Award and considers the tense web of paternal, marriage and political loyalties in the life of a Korean American who works in an American espionage ring. His second novel, *A Gesture Life*, explores themes of cultural identity and assimilation through the narrative of an elderly physician who recalls taking care of Korean "comfort women" during World War II. His 2004 novel *Aloft* was also critically acclaimed and features Lee's first protagonist who is not Korean, but a disengaged and isolated suburbanite forced to deal with his world. These novels have been translated into French, German, and Spanish. Lee continues to write and publish short pieces in the *New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, *Granta*, the *Paris Review*, and many other prestigious literary journals. In 2005 the *New Yorker* magazine claimed him as one of its 20 writers for the twenty-first century.

Born to Young Yong and Inja (Hong) Lee, Chang-Rae Lee immigrated to the United States with his family in 1968. They settled in New York City, where Lee's father started a psychiatric practice. His mother, on the other hand, never became fluent in English and stayed mostly at home raising the family. Lee grew up knowing the professional success of his father's life and the homebound life of his mother's domesticity. The pronounced differences between the two led to Lee's observation of the sophisticated world of metropolitan New York, the inner-city struggles of Korean American neighborhoods and businesses and the quieter struggles in suburban life. His experiences of these worlds helped shape the inner tensions of his protagonists, whether **Asian American** or other. Often attributed as the first Korean American novelist, Lee publicly eschews the regionality or ethnic labels attached to his writing, hoping for—and many would argue achieving—a more universally themed approach to the American experience. To Lee, a writer's gifts and what language and insights he can fashion from a narrative matter more than mere story.

Graduating from Yale, Lee moved west to complete a master's in fine arts from the University of Oregon. There, he work-shopped the first chapter of what would later become *Native Speaker*. The class received the piece with great enthusiasm, and Lee completed the entire novel and submitted it for his master's thesis. He taught briefly at the University of Oregon before engaging his knack for figures as a stock analyst on

Wall Street. Deciding he loved writing too much to spend his life at a high-pressure desk job, he devoted himself to writing and supported himself by teaching at Hunter College in Manhattan. Eventually he secured a position at Princeton University teaching fiction and currently serves as the director of the creative writing department.

Lee's first novel, *Native Speaker*, was published in 1995. The protagonist, like Lee, is a first-generation Korean American. Henry Park works for a matter-of-fact yet ominous espionage company that decides to deploy him as a political worker for the local Korean candidate for mayor. Park's marriage to a white woman and the traumatic loss of their son creates an unstable atmosphere in his home, which makes it impossible for him to authentically integrate his work life with his home life. The main character's inner tension is further exacerbated by contact with his father and his father's grocery business—itsself a site of contentious race relations—and the home life Park experienced growing up. The reader slowly understands that a housekeeper in the elder Park's home stirs up wrenching feelings of dislocation and loss in the main character. Throughout the interwoven tales of his protagonist's three worlds, Lee uses poetic language and silences to underscore Park's sad ability to understand his own submerged emotions and his struggle to communicate his true nature to those closest to him. Exploring the impossible stance of a person caught between more than one culture and more than one set of expectations, Lee examines the political culture of immigrant or "hyphenated" groups, filial drama, and the realistic communication gaps inherent not only in any marriage but especially in an interracial one. Lee claims to be influenced by John Cheever's penchant for beautiful suburban ennui and Graham Green's thriller plot lines (Hogan 2007).

Published when Lee was only 29, *Native Speaker* garnered much acclaim from both American and European audiences and major awards including the Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award, an American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation, Quality Paperback's New Voices Award, the Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers Award, and the Oregon Book Award (Princeton). It was also an ALA Notable Book of the Year and a finalist for a PEN West Award. The critical response chiefly praised his poetic and precise language and the psychological acuity of his portrayal of the first-generation immigrant experience. Many noted that the lives of Lee's characters are so complicated and charged that the story never recycles any predictable tropes of marginalized experience.

Lee's second novel, *A Gesture Life*, explores the midlife reminiscences and circumstances of another Korean American protagonist, one who was raised in Japan and who fought in the Japanese Army in World War II. Franklin Hata spends time in an empty, sprawling Tudor home contemplating the "comfort women"—women forced into sexual servitude—that he encountered in the army hospital camps, especially the one with whom he fell in love. Amid the rape and cruelty of the women's lives, he was faced with

a moral decision whose aftermath still pains him. He also reflects on his relationship with his adopted daughter Sunny, whose raw emotions and ability to break with him, moving out on her own, cause him to reconsider the decision he made back in Japan. The cultural pressures to fit in both in Japan and in the United States cause Hata to consider that he had wanted to “pass through with something more than a life of gestures” (1999, 299). Lee’s ability to express this painful past through a character who regrets more than interacts with others gives heft to an otherwise plot-free narrative. Lee’s character realizes his estrangement from his mixed-race daughter may have resulted not from her difference, but from his practiced avoidance of facing up to his feelings and true desires (Aull 2007). Bringing a failed relationship with an Anglo woman into the mix, Lee creates a memorable and complex psychological portrait of a person beyond his own young experiences. The careful illustration of Hata’s model citizen behavior contrasted with the tragedy his choices precipitated in his romantic past are wrenching.

Garnering praise for its haunting meditative qualities, beautiful language, and emotional power, *A Gesture Life* won the Anisfield-Wolf Prize, Myers Outstanding Book Award, NAIBA Book Award, Asian American Literary Award for Fiction, ALA Best Book of the Year Finalist, and the *New Yorker* Book Award in Fiction (Princeton). This second work was also well received, albeit with sometimes less feverish enthusiasm than was given to *Native Speaker*. Many praised its ability to posit the past against a familiar and peaceful present to searing effect. Although straightforward in style like his first, Lee’s second novel seems to add cultural taboos, guilt, and sexual crimes to the themes of marginalization, crises of identity, and racial tensions. Critics often notice how Lee’s protagonists come to precise realizations slowly and with increasing pressure on other characters, themselves, and the reader.

Lee’s third novel, *Aloft*, follows the comfortable and anesthetized existence of Jerry Battle, an Italian American from Long Island. To give shape to his inner “not unhappy” (Pray 2004) spirit, Battle flies a Cessna in fair weather as a distraction from suburbia and family members each facing a brand of failure. Battle’s personal life, past and present, seems to charge at him and retreat, sometimes through his own detachment—sometimes through their differences with him. Although he may spend time contemplating his Korean ex-wife Daisy’s drowning 25 years before and the state of his relationship with his live-in partner of 30 years, Rita, and though he may find his daughter Theresa both pregnant and facing cancer, this protagonist remains inert, rising above it all in a plane to survey the kingdom he has acquired. He wonders if he should be “hailed off to the woods in back and shot in the name of every woman who was surely meant to enjoy more loving than she got but didn’t” (qtd. in Pray 2004).

*Aloft* received consistently positive reviews from Michiko Kakutani, the *Kirkus Review*, and *Publishers Weekly*, among others. Kakutani admired the subtlety with which

Lee holds a mirror up to the “glittering and treacherous promise” (2004, 1) offered by the American Dream and is able to overlook some of the more preposterous plot elements, given Lee’s acute understanding of his characters’ inner lives, whereas others admired its portrayal of immigrants, who seemed to blend less successfully with American life than one would expect. Given the tremendous success of his first two novels, one might not be surprised at the positive but sometimes tempered response to *Aloft*. Most praise the novel as another beautiful piece of realism—the fight to escape the quotidian. Other critics found Battle’s airy, passionless lifestyle hindered his ability to relate to a family only too happy to bask in comfort’s trappings. The author’s first attempt to write from the point of view of a non-Asian protagonist was met with concerns about credulity: The protagonist’s aloof hobby of flying and his selfishness and disinterest in family is sometimes read as an unconvincing transmutation of an Asian American into an Italian American from Long Island. In addition, Lee’s protagonist seems to exhibit ennui in the face of rather violent plot points, sometimes breaking the reader’s suspension of disbelief. Nonetheless, it marks a new direction in Lee’s work, and his protagonist’s race, he insists, is not a political stand or refusal of any kind but an artistic choice, much as his previous characters had been.

The book was optioned for film by Scott Rudin and Warner Brothers in 2004. A movie adaptation by Scott Conrad of the novel was being completed in May 2004, with Chang-Rae Lee serving as a consultant. The movie itself, as of this printing, has yet to come to fruition (Quan 2007). **See also** Assimilation/Americanization.

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CYNTHIA ARRIEU-KING

### ◆ LEE, C.Y. (CHIN-YANG) (1917–)

Chinese American novelist C.Y. Lee was born on December 23, 1917, in Hunan Province, China. His family moved to Beijing when he was 10. Later he enrolled at Shandong University in Jinan, Shandong Province, but Japanese invasion forced him to Yunnan, where he attended Southwest Associated University, from which he received his bachelor's degree in 1942. In the same year, because of the political and social turbulence in China, he went to Columbia University to study comparative literature and later transferred to Yale University to study drama with Walter Prichard Eaton, Eugene O'Neill's mentor. In 1947 he graduated with an MFA. From 1941 to 1943 he served as secretary to a *sawbwa* in Mangshih, China (*sawba* is a Burmese term for "chieftain" or "prince" in Mangshih, one of China's several Tai nationalities in Yunnan Province, next to the Burma border). He was the editor of *Chinese World* from 1949 to 1951 and *Youth China* from 1952 to 1953. In 1949 Lee won \$750 in a contest sponsored by *Writer's Digest* for his short story "Forbidden Dollar," which was anthologized in *Best Original Short Stories* that same year. He was also awarded a Commonwealth Club Gold Medal for Fiction for *Flower Drum Song*, which was made into a Broadway musical in 1958 by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II and later adapted into film.

During an interview Lee said that 40 percent is luck when talking about his success in English writing. So far Lee has written 11 novels and a collection of short stories; many of his novels, including *Cripple Mah and the New Order* (1961), *The Second Son of Heaven* (1990), *China Saga* (1987), and *Gate of Rage* (1991), analyze the effects of history on the lives of individuals and families.

His first novel, *The Flower Drum Song* (1957), after being rejected by many publishers, was finally accepted by Farrar, Straus and Cudahy in New York and received a favorable review from the *New York Times*. This novel was a dark-humored exploration of the difficulties of assimilation and generational conflict among American-born Chinese and their immigrant parents. The novel is set in the late 1930s in China and tells of how Wang Ta, the protagonist and eldest son of Old Master Wang, tries to navigate between the New World culture and the Old Chinese practices. Old Master Wang, although living in **Chinatown** in San Francisco, is out of step with American culture and never disentangles himself from traditional Chinese cultural practices. After

several frustrations, he gradually changes his traditional mind and acquiesces to his son's individual pursuit. *Cripple Mah and the New Order* (1961) is set in Beijing, which tells of the reactions of Cripple Mah toward the new social order as initiated by the Chinese communist revolution. *Lover's Point* (1958) is a melancholic novel that is a variation of unrequited love. Though the author consciously seems not to understand the dynamics, his description of the characters is interesting. *The Sawbwa and His Secretary: My Burmese Reminiscences* (1959, published in England as *Corner of Heaven*, which is much preferred by the author) is based on Lee's own experience on the China-Burma border as the secretary of a Chinese maharajah, which the author claims as the best years of his life. The novel was adapted into a television series that lasted for six months in Taiwan. *Madame Goldenflower* (1960), with Beijing as its background, tells of a Chinese prostitute who saves the city of Beijing during the Western Powers' invasion into China. *The Virgin Market* (1964) was created when Lee saw Aberdeen Market in Hong Kong, a fishing village where many poor people live. The fishermen compete with each other to see who can install an engine. They contest to determine who can raise more money to buy an engine and improve their lives. One of the families had picked up a Eurasian baby from the doorway and raised her. She had grown up to be a beautiful young lady. So the father, to raise money to buy a motor, secretly tried to sell this Eurasian girl, but his intention was discovered and refused by the mother. *The Land of the Golden Mountain* (1967) tells stories that happened among gold diggers in 1850, about a 16-year-old girl donned as a boy. The novel focuses on her difficult experiences and how she was loved by people. *Days of the Tong Wars* (1974) focuses on Chinese tongs during 1850–1890 in California.

Lee did not publish again until 1987, with a historical novel *China Saga*, which follows four generations of a family through a century of Chinese history, from the Boxer Rebellion through the Cultural Revolution. *China Saga* looks into more than 100 years of Chinese history in modern times, during the upheavals, including foreign invasions. The novel's protagonist Fong Tai, at age 19, is already fond of Western ways and refuses to accept a prearranged marriage. Though Fong Tai rises to some political prominence later, his favored reforms are dashed by the Boxers and he loses his life in the fighting. Fong's daughter, Brigid, escapes to France and returns to her homeland full of hatred for the Boxers and the old dynasty and fears the rape of China by European powers.

By 1910 Brigid is involved in the revolutions of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, followed later by the war against Japan and the rise of Chinese communism. When the People's Republic of China is founded on October 1, 1949, Brigid has become an aspiring actress, very confident and incredibly beautiful, and her affair with actor Bo Ho results in the birth of Mabel. Eventually Mabel marries and accepts the communist line, but she fears that the party is turning her two sons, Pang Sin and Jimmy, into robots. Both boys

become Red Guards in the 1960s, though later Jimmy's humanity triumphs over the students' traumatic damages. In 1976 Jimmy welcomes a new openness in China. The creation of true-to-life characters like Brigid and Mabel, Pang Sin and Jimmy in *China Saga* illuminates understanding of the political and cultural changes in China during those times, and therefore the book whets the reader's appetite.

*The Second Son of Heaven: A Novel of Nineteenth-Century China* (1990) is a fictional retelling of the rise and fall of Hung Shiu-ch'uan, who led the Taiping Rebellion in nineteenth-century China and ruled briefly in Nanjing as self-proclaimed emperor. In this novel, Hung assumes from his birth that he would become royalty. He uses Christian faith as a means to attract followers and wages a successful revolution against the Manchu dynasty. Once he achieves the royalty he has dreamed, however, he turns the Christian faith for his own personal gains and is drawn into the schemes of his subordinates. Finally he is defeated by the British General Charles Gordon, with a very sorry and ironical ending. *Gate of Rage* (1991) is a sequel to *China Saga*. *Changsan Girl* (2002), a collection of 24 short stories, is the only book published in Chinese by Lee. In 2003 Lee published his memoir *Road of Life: a Memoir*. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization.

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GUANGLIN WANG

### ◆ LEE, DON (1959–)

Don Lee is a Korean American novelist, short story writer, and editor. Before he published *Yellow*, his first book, Lee was best known as the editor of the influential literary journal *Ploughshares*, which he began editing in the late 1980s. *Yellow* is a collection of short stories that won the Sue Kaufman Prize for First Fiction from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the Members Choice Award from the Asian American Writers' Workshop. His second book, the novel *Country of Origin*, won an American Book Award, the Edgar Award for Best First Novel, and a Mixed Media Watch Image Award for Outstanding Fiction.

*Yellow* is set in the fictional California town of Rosarita Bay, located near San Francisco. The majority of the elegant, well crafted stories feature Japanese, Chinese, and Korean American men, most of whom are professionally successful and members of the **model minority**. Classified by profession, these characters include a famous

furniture designer, a wealthy entrepreneur, a consultant, a lawyer, and a doctor. Exceptions to these portraits of successful men are a biracial teenager of Filipino and white ancestry struggling to leave town and go to Annapolis, a working-class charter boat captain haunted by memories of his dead wife, and a woman computer programmer fleeing from a failed romantic past. The economic success of the characters is important because the collection is marked by subtle efforts at advancing the notion that the **assimilation/Americanization** of Asian Americans can be successfully accomplished by many, if not by all. Part of the way the collection carries out this task is through an equally subtle repudiation of **Asian American stereotypes**. Unlike some antistereotypical Asian American literature, which deliberately foregrounds stereotypes to debunk or satirizes them, *Yellow* stresses the relative normality of its characters. Most of the middle-class male characters do not, for example, wrestle with racial angst but are instead struggling with romantic relationships with a racially diverse group of women. This depiction of Asian American men engaging in sexual and romantic relations with **Asian American**, white, and mixed-race women affirms the masculinity and heterosexuality of Asian American men, refuting the perhaps widespread idea that these men are emasculated and asexual.

In terms of Asian American literature, Lee's particular innovation in *Yellow* is his refusal to explicitly acknowledge these stereotypes, with the significant exception of his title story. The protagonist of "Yellow" is Danny Kim, a handsome management consultant who is emotionally cold to his wife. His secret trauma is his racial self-hatred, born from watching his father humiliated by a white man, a position he fears to find himself in. In a collection that refuses to foreground racial discrimination or politics, "Yellow" is quite different in its exploration of racism. The contrast between "Yellow" and the other stories highlights how significantly the book as a whole departs from much of the Asian American literature that precedes it and that would resonate more comfortably with "Yellow." As a whole, *Yellow* implicitly stresses the accomplishments of the Asian American and civil rights movement in helping create an American world where multiculturalism and Asian American identity can be treated matter-of-factly. *Yellow* reinforces these facts about multiculturalism and Asian American identity by having a cast of characters that does not hail from one singular ethnic group but instead collectively represent **pan-Asian ethnicities**. As the sociologist Yen Le Espiritu argues in her book *Asian American Panethnicity*, the panethnic phenomenon is one of the ways that ethnically fragmented Asian American groups have massed their numbers for political and cultural gain. As she points out, and as *Yellow* affirms with its cast of characters and their professions, the panethnic movement is often led by, and serves the interests of, the Asian American middle class.

Lee's second book, the novel *Country of Origin*, continues with these same concerns about the diversity of Asian American identities by focusing on the racial



**hybridity** that is increasingly evident within Asian American populations. As the cultural critic Vincent Cheng argues in his book *Inauthentic*, Asian American populations are increasingly defined not by racial or ethnic purity, however such purity may be defined, but by racial and ethnic mixing. This mixing occurs between Asian Americans and whites but also between Asian American ethnic populations. Such mixing, as well as practices of cross-racial adoption, makes determining a country of origin increasingly problematic for many individuals, which is the allusion of Lee's title. In the novel, set in Tokyo in 1980, Lee uses the genre of mystery as the vehicle by which he also explores the problems, challenges, and opportunities posed by mixed-race identities and populations. Two of the novel's three major characters are of mixed-race ancestry. Tom Hurley, an American embassy official in Japan, is half-white and half-Korean, and passes for Hawaiian. He is investigating the disappearance of an American citizen in Tokyo, Lisa Countryman, who is half-black and half-Asian, but who looks white. Countryman, a graduate student in anthropology, has arrived in Japan ostensibly to do research on nightclubs and the sex industry, but with a secondary purpose: to find a record of her birth mother in the land from which she was adopted by an African American couple. The third character, Kenzo Ota, is the Japanese detective pursuing Countryman's case, and a neurotic misfit in his own society. Not surprisingly, Lee's plot draws these three characters into a hushed world where sex and crime are intimately tied to political power, economic manipulation, and racial discrimination.

Beyond the plot demands of a mystery, *Country of Origin* is concerned with the alienation of its characters, whether that may be due to a mixed-race background (Hurley), a mixed-race and adopted identity (Countryman), or to simply not fitting in with ethical and masculine codes (Ota). As the story unfolds, Lee takes advantage of his characters' alienations to stage discussions about racial identity and prejudice in both American and Japanese societies. Hurley experiences the obstructions put up by an Old Boy network in the American Foreign Service; Ota and Countryman, fluent in Japanese, witness antiblack racism among the Japanese; and Countryman describes the depth of prejudice directed by the Japanese against the Korean minority descended from colonial slave labor brought to Japan in the first half of the twentieth century. Interestingly, Lee makes a supporting character, Vincent Kitamura, a third-generation Japanese American, the most enigmatic and attractive personality of all. Kitamura is a CIA agent working undercover as an embassy official and married to a white artist, with whom Hurley has an affair. Exuding confidence and virility, Kitamura exemplifies Lee's interest in portraying strong, masculine Asian American men who counter the racist and sexist discourse of Western Orientalism. **See also** Biraciality; Civil Rights Movement and Asian American; Hybridity; Multiculturalism and Asian America; Orientalism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America.

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VIET THANH NGUYEN

◆ LEE, GUS (1946–)

Gus Lee is a Chinese American lawyer, corporate consultant, memoirist, and novelist, perhaps best known in the literary world for his breakout novel *China Boy* (1991), based upon his own life. Unlike many **Asian American** writers, Lee had no formal training as a writer, nor did he show early interest in writing or literature. As *China Boy* documents, he was the son of a Chinese army officer who fled communist China to come to San Francisco, where his family took up residence in the poor, primarily African American Panhandle neighborhood. Lee eventually went to West Point during the era of the **Vietnam War** but flunked out. After a stint in the army as a drill instructor and paratrooper, Lee went to law school at the University of California at Davis. He pursued a successful career as a military and civilian lawyer, near the end of which he wrote his first book, *China Boy*, as a memoir of his family for his daughter. The effort unexpectedly became a published, acclaimed novel and launched Lee into a full-time writing career. *China Boy's* sequel, *Honor and Duty* (1993), follows the first book's protagonist, Kai Ting, to West Point. Two other novels followed—*Tiger's Tail* (1996) and *No Physical Evidence* (1998)—as well as a memoir, *Chasing Hepburn: A Memoir of Shanghai, Hollywood, and a Chinese Family's Fight for Freedom* (2002), and a manual on ethics, business, and self-help titled *Courage: The Backbone of Leadership* (2006), cowritten with his wife, Diane Elliott-Lee.

The semiautobiographical *China Boy* is set in the 1950s and follows the adventures of Kai Ting as he copes with being the lone Chinese boy in a predominantly black neighborhood, a place where he does not fit in because he is neither black nor white. The racial dilemma that he confronts on the streets and in school is compounded by the domestic drama that ensues when his Chinese mother dies and his father marries Edna, a white woman from Philadelphia who rapidly makes clear her hatred for all things Chinese—and for Kai. Edna comes to symbolize the emasculating force of a xenophobic American society, one that Kai's father implicitly endorses in allowing Edna to run the household. Indeed, Kai's father, Colonel Ting, a refugee from

communist China, sees in the United States the promise of the future and China as the victim of its own feudal success in conquering its enemies, a history that has ironically led to a weak contemporary society incapable of using violence to determine its own fate. The United States, in contrast, is vigorous and powerful, and the Panhandle becomes a microcosm of how violence works globally. Here in the ghetto, the strong dominate the weak, as nations themselves do. Kai encounters this lesson in the Panhandle when he is subject to the bullying of Big Willie Mack, a black boy who is intent on taking Kai's property. Kai must learn how to defend himself, and he does so by learning how to box at the YMCA. The YMCA becomes his real school, where he is educated in the culture of a manly violence that will allow him to survive his neighborhood's tough streets and, eventually, defeat Big Willie Mack. Just as importantly, Kai's lessons in physical survival allow him to confront his stepmother Edna at the novel's end, when he cries, "You not my Mah-mee! *I ain't fo' yo' pickin' on, no mo'!*" (332). His declaration of independence from an emasculating white motherhood is tellingly delivered in both broken Chinese English and Panhandle black English. The young Kai exists between two cultures: Chinese immigrant and African American, and the memoir-cum-novel is evidence of how he eventually bridges these two cultures and their languages, until he (and his real-life model, Gus Lee) is able to wield a fluent, standard English in the writing of his youth.

In *Honor and Duty*, Kai Ting continues his martial education at West Point. Ironically, upon reaching West Point, Kai realizes that the African American culture he thought he has left behind is still present. Having been raised in an African American neighborhood in the Panhandle, Kai discovers that the Southern white cadets of West Point actually speak an English whose rhythm and intonations are inflected by black speech. Even if black people are mostly absent, their culture is not. So, while Kai is able to shed his black trappings, what the evidence of the two novels presents is that many black people cannot. Kai can master the violence of the streets and the violence of West Point in ways that allow him to assimilate, whereas most of the Panhandle residents' use of violence condemns them to fates much worse than upward mobility. The use of violence, then, means different things for different Americans, and, like other immigrants before and after him, Kai learns how to become an American partially by distancing himself from African Americans.

During his journey into assimilation, he also distances himself from his Chinese past, embodied most clearly in his father. If, as *China Boy* reveals, the Chinese father is insufficient in his ability to protect his son or teach him how to protect himself, then in *Honor and Duty* Kai must search for a new father figure. In one symbolic moment, he stands before a statue of George Washington as an unreachable father. Kai does meet a father figure in the character of Major Schwarzhedd, based on the real-life Norman Schwarzkopf, eventual commander of U.S. forces in Operation Desert

Storm. But in the end, Kai's efforts at becoming an American man have mixed results. He fails an engineering class and is forced to leave West Point, a fate with some irony, given how Asian Americans are stereotypically associated with scientific prowess. But he does meet a nice Chinese girl, an occasion that provides the novel with a romantic closure that compensates for the lack of closure concerning his military career, and, implicitly, of his quest for a virile American masculinity.

Subsequent to *Honor and Duty*, Lee's novels would mix elements of his legal and military background with the conventions of the thriller. *Tiger's Tail*, set on a U.S. Army camp on the tense border between North and South Korea in 1974, follows Jackson Hu-Chin Kan, a Chinese American U.S. Army prosecutor and veteran of the Vietnam War, who is on a mission to find a missing lawyer. That lawyer, who also happens to be Kan's best friend, was sent to investigate the mysterious activities of Colonel Frederic LeBlanc, the camp's staff judge advocate. Meanwhile, Kan must also struggle with his memories of killing an innocent Vietnamese girl in a firefight years earlier. *No Physical Evidence* concerns another Chinese American lawyer, Joshua Jin, a Sacramento district attorney whose wife has left him and whose daughter had died. At the same time that his personal life is falling apart, Jin is given a difficult case, the rape of a 13-year-old white girl in **Chinatown**. Dramatic complications ensue when the girl will not talk, and the leading suspect's defense attorney proves to be Jin's ex-girlfriend. In these novels as well as his earlier ones, Lee's own life and experiences clearly serve as some degree of inspiration, and in *Chasing Hepburn* he turns explicitly to memoir.

*Chasing Hepburn* details and partially imagines his parents' lives in a China conflicted by civil war and Japanese invasion. The title of the memoir refers to the movie star Katharine Hepburn, whose charismatic persona as an independent woman inspired his nontraditional parents. The memoir follows Lee's father to California, where he meets Hepburn, as well as Lee's mother, who is separated from her husband and must flee across China with her children during the Japanese invasion. Eventually, she is reunited with her husband in the United States, setting the stage for Gus Lee's own life and novels. Taking cues from his parents' hardships and his own struggles, Lee has written his most recent book, *Courage*, on the use of courage as the foundation for leadership and ethics, a topic on which he lectures nationally as an inspirational speaker. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization.

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VIET THANH NGUYEN

### ◆ LEE, LI-YOUNG (1957–)

Poet and creative nonfiction writer Li-Young Lee is Chinese American, but he was born in Jakarta, Indonesia, where his parents fled after being exiled from communist China. Lee has published three collections of poems, *Rose* (1986), *The City in Which I Love You* (1990), and *Book of My Nights* (2001). His awards include the Delmore Schwartz Memorial Poetry Award (1987), the Lamont Poetry Prize, a Lannan Literary Award for Poetry (1995), a Whiting Writers' Award (1988), an Academy for American Poets Fellowship for Distinguished Poetic Achievement, the William Carlos Williams Award from the Poetry Society of America, and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation. His memoir, *The Winged Seed: A Remembrance* (1995), won an American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation. Lee is frequently invited to read his poems at colleges and universities. He participated in the Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival in 1990 and 1996.

Lee's poems are rich in detail, full of emotion, and deeply personal. Common themes are loss, the challenges of communication, personal identity in a foreign culture, and the poet's relationship with his father. Lee frequently builds his poems by weaving a fragmented narrative around a central image. One reviewer has noted that because of the way Lee's poems are written, it is difficult to convey a sense of them without quoting the whole poem.

Lee has rejected his classification as a Chinese American poet, principally because he is not particularly interested in a dialogue with culture. He recognizes and accepts his ethnic heritage, however, and he believes that those who find empowerment in being considered ethnic writers should use the term. Ultimately, however, he wants to be considered just a poet, along with Whitman and Dickinson. Further, as a poet he wants to transcend those particularities such as gender, race, and class, and get in touch with something universal through his work. Lee prefers a dialogue with his truest self in his poems, a self free of its temporal, earthly roles, a self that is the universe. He believes that poetry is a yogic connection to the universe, a way of linking the individual to what

he calls “our biggest identity” (Bilyak 2003, 605). This link is possible, he believes, not only through writing poems but also through reading them. According to Lee, this linking with the universe, which he also refers to as achieving wholeness with the universe, manifests itself in poetry as total presence. For Lee, a poem should reflect total presence, a quality he sees in Robert Frost’s “Directive” and “West-Running Brook” and in some poems by Pablo Neruda. He says that the sense of total presence in Neruda’s poems is so strong it is retained in the English translation. These ideas of wholeness and total presence have their roots in Daoism (Taoism), whose texts Lee has read and admired. Lee has read widely in Eastern and Western literature. In childhood, he was schooled by his parents in the Bible and Chinese poetry. Lee’s father was a professor and later a Presbyterian minister who frequently discussed religion and philosophy with the family. In more recent years, when Lee held a job in a warehouse, he read Homer, Shakespeare, and anything else he could find. He particularly enjoys Kierkegaard, Meister Eckhart, and Rainer Maria Rilke. Lee places himself in line with poets like Donne, Milton, and Keats because they represent an approach to poetry that resonates with him. Lee has an equally strong resonance with Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson.

Lee’s life story is a complex one, full of exile and escape. He has revealed much of his life, not only in the memoir *The Winged Seed: A Remembrance*, but also in interviews he has granted over the past 20 years or so. A dozen of those interviews, conducted from 1987 to 2004, are collected in *Breaking the Alabaster Jar: Conversations with Li-Young Lee*, edited by Earl G. Ingersoll. Perhaps the best known interview in the collection is the one by Bill Moyers of PBS, originally published in *The Language of Life: A Festival of Poets*. In recent years Lee has deflected questions about his life, preferring instead to talk with interviewers about his work. However, it would be difficult to appreciate Lee or his poems without understanding the remarkable events that he and his family have experienced. His story begins with the story of his parents, both of whom were born and educated in China. They were expected to memorize 300 poems from the Tang dynasty by the time they graduated. Lee’s mother, Jiaying, was from an upper-class family. Her grandfather was Yuan Shih-kai, who served from 1912 until 1916 as the first president of the Republic of China. The family of Lee’s father, however, did not have high status. Lee says that his father’s father was a gangster and an entrepreneur. Because his parents’ marriage was frowned upon in communist China, the couple began traveling overseas soon after they married, eventually fleeing to Indonesia. In Jakarta, Lee’s father, Lee Kuo Yuan, helped found Gamaliel University, a Christian college, where he taught medicine and philosophy. Anti-Chinese sentiment under the Sukarno regime in Indonesia made the lives of exiled Chinese difficult, however. Lee says in *Winged Seed* that in 1959, when he was 18 months old, his father was imprisoned, ostensibly on a charge of working for the CIA on plans to bomb

military installations on Java. He was also accused of spreading dissension by teaching Western ideas. Lee contends that his father was innocent, guilty only of being Chinese and of inviting American scholars to visit Jakarta as part of an exchange program with Gamaliel. In addition to putting Lee's father in prison, government officials also closed down Gamaliel University.

Nearly every day of the 19 months that Lee's father was in prison, Lee's mother went to the prison and paid bribes in an attempt to visit her husband, leaving the four children in the care of servants. Lammi, the children's beloved nanny, taught them Indonesian folklore, including the frightening stories that were her specialty. She also occasionally took them home to her village. Lee retains such fond memories of Lammi that he traveled to Indonesia in an attempt to find her. When conventional means were unfruitful, he consulted a mystic, but he still was unable to find Lammi. In the days when Lee's father was in prison, Lee's mother used much of the family's resources to pay bribes to see her husband, and his father received such poor treatment in prison that he would suffer kidney trouble and other health problems the rest of his life. After a time, Lee's father was able to arrange his transfer to a mental hospital, where he was allowed visitors. There he received better treatment because the insane were considered less of a threat to the government than political prisoners were.

Lee did not speak for the first three years of his life, but he listened intently. He remembers visiting his father at the mental hospital and hearing him talk about the Kingdom of God. Lee's father soon began preaching weekly sermons that were attended by hospital patients and staff alike. When his father had served 19 months, he was to be transported with his family to a remote island, where they would be given a place to live but would not be allowed to leave. Fortunately, Lee's father learned of these plans and was able to tell his wife so she could liquidate their remaining assets and be prepared to escape. While the family was being transported to the island, a former Gamaliel student of Lee's father pulled up beside them in a boat and helped them escape. It was during the escape that Lee finally spoke, in Indonesian, using complete sentences. He spoke for 15 minutes, then stopped. Lee eventually regained the ability to speak, but he continued to suffer periodic bouts of muteness until he was seven or eight. He says he has not spoken Indonesian since that day the family escaped. He now speaks only English and Mandarin Chinese.

The Lees settled in Hong Kong with members of the Ling Liang Assembly, a Christian congregation. At one of the evening revival services they attended shortly after being rescued, Lee's father testified that he and his family had been saved by the hand of God. That testimony was the beginning of a ministry that would see Lee's father preaching to multitudes and baptizing hundreds each month in the ocean. Lee remembers seeing his father's face on posters and flyers in Hong Kong. He has said his father was as famous an evangelist in Hong Kong as Billy Graham is in the United States.

When Lee was six years old, his father suddenly decided to leave Hong Kong for the United States. The family first lived briefly in Seattle, then moved to East Liberty, Pennsylvania, where Lee's father attended Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. During the time that his father was studying for the ministry and later serving as pastor to a Presbyterian congregation in Vandergrift, Pennsylvania, he helped the children learn English by reading the Bible with them. When he was about 14, Lee acted as his father's secretary, writing down on Friday afternoons what his father said aloud as he prepared the Sunday sermon, and on Saturday helping his father memorize the sermon. Lee retains a firm knowledge of the Bible and a strong respect for it, especially the book of Exodus and those verses by David the Psalmist. Lee has said that he appreciates the Bible as literature, but he has also said that for him, the stories of the Bible were real, not merely literature. True to his upbringing, Lee knows equally well the poems of the Tang dynasty that his parents frequently recited and taught to the children. He draws on both the Bible and Chinese poetry as sources for his poems.

As a schoolboy in Pennsylvania, Lee had great difficulty speaking English. At home, with his siblings and the other immigrant children of the neighborhood, he had no difficulty speaking well enough to be understood. At school, however, he was ridiculed by teachers and classmates alike for his poor English, and, as a result, he frequently said nothing at all, returning to the silence of the first three years of his life. An account of his being ridiculed for his English appears in one of Lee's best known poems, "Persimmons." The speaker of the poem is a sixth-grade boy, undoubtedly Lee himself, who is punished by his teacher "for not knowing the difference / between *persimmon* and *precision*" (lines 4–5). When the teacher ignorantly brings in an unripe persimmon for the class to taste, the boy says nothing but sits back and watches as the others try the tart fruit. This incident is used to introduce other memories of language, love, and family, leading to a poignant moment between father and son. In the basement, the son finds two unripe persimmons wrapped in newspaper. He sets them on the windowsill of his room to ripen in the sun. About the same time, the father begins to understand that he is going blind. One night, pondering his impending blindness, the father sits up to wait "for a song, a ghost" (line 57). Sensing that his father needs something, the boy gives him the two persimmons, now fully ripe. Years later, the son returns home and finds three scrolls that his father painted some time ago. One is of two persimmons. The father, now blind, recalls aloud what it felt like to paint them. He remarks that he had painted persimmons hundreds of times with his eyes closed, but these he painted after he became blind. He says that some things, like the texture and weight of ripe persimmons, "never leave a person" (line 85), suggesting the importance of what the child gave him years earlier (Rose 1986, 17–19).

Lee's relationship with his father, who died in 1980, was complex, full of both love and contention. Lee remembers that his father frequently beat him without mercy, but



his overriding memory is of his father's tenderness. In "The Gift," from *Rose*, Lee's first collection, Lee demonstrates his father's great capacity for tenderness. The poem recounts the story of a seven-year-old boy being calmed by his father's soft voice as the man removes a splinter from the boy's palm. That account brackets the story of the boy, now grown, removing a splinter from his wife's thumb, using the same tenderness. At the end, the speaker recalls that as a boy he did not feel that he had narrowly escaped death from the splinter, but rather that he had been given "something to keep" (1986, 16, line 34). On a mundane level, the boy had been given the splinter that was in his hand, but the real gift is that the father taught him how to be tender.

Lee's father demanded the utmost respect from his children, never allowing them to look directly at him or to touch his head. When the elder man's health began to fail, Lee was his attendant, bathing and shaving his father, shampooing his hair, carrying him from the bed to the bathroom and back, and managing his medications. Lee recalls in his memoir that when the elder Lee died and the family got ready to sell the house and leave Pennsylvania, they saved a scrapbook of newspaper clippings and burned the rest of his possessions in a fire they kept going for two days and two nights.

It is important to note, however, that *The Winged Seed* is as much poem as memoir, and it sometimes contradicts not only itself, but also other accounts of Lee's life. For instance, Lee says in *The Winged Seed* that after his father died, the family burned "everything" but one scrapbook of his father's, which his sister saved (1995, 34). In the interview with Bill Moyers, however, he says that he inherited *all* of his father's books, including his Bible, and felt that he got to know his father on another level by reading the notes his father had written in the margins (Ingersoll 36; Moyers 262). So obviously "everything" was not burned as is suggested in *Winged Seed*. Further, the few dates provided in *Winged Seed* contradict the dates that Lee has provided in several interviews, and reconciling estimated dates in the memoir with dates of known events is difficult. For instance, Lee consistently says that his father worked as a greeter at the China exhibit of the Seattle World's Fair, which operated from April through October, 1962. He also consistently says that his father was in prison for nineteen months and that after he left prison, the family settled in Hong Kong, where his father became a well-known evangelist before leaving for Seattle. However, Lee has provided several different dates for his father's imprisonment and escape. In *Winged Seed*, he seems to give two contradictory dates. On page 46, he says his father was arrested in 1959, but on page 107 he writes that by May 1961, his father had been in prison a year, which would have his imprisonment beginning in 1960. In the interview with Bill Moyers, Lee says his father was locked up in 1958 (Ingersoll 2006, 30; Moyers 1995, 257). Lee's *Winged Seed* account of how many brothers and sisters he had is also difficult to follow at times, even when allowing for the brother who was left behind in China and the younger brother who died in Indonesia. These inconsistencies speak to Lee's

uprooted childhood, the vagaries of memory, and the poetic, fragmentary nature of *The Winged Seed*.

Lee has said that he wrote perhaps a hundred drafts of *The Winged Seed*. He wanted it to be both narrative and a prose poem, and he wanted it to be long enough to be a book, about 200 pages. Yet he also wanted the book to have the feeling of a lyric poem, seeming to occur in an instant. To accomplish this goal, he believed at first that he should write the book in one night. He tried for five years to accomplish this impossible task, finally managing to write a complete, if unsatisfactory, draft in three nights. He then wrote a series of three-night drafts, sending them to his publisher until finally his editor and publisher told him to stop. The published result is a passionate, nonlinear remembrance that speaks to a larger truth while sometimes being inconsistent in mundane matters.

Lee first wrote poems when he began to learn the English language, and the words seemed to him saturated with meaning. He did not begin writing poems seriously, however, until he took a writing class from poet Gerald Stern at the University of Pittsburgh. Stern has remained an important figure in Lee's life. In his foreword to *Rose*, Stern notes that Lee's Chinese cultural heritage is not only a fundamental element of his poetry but also possibly what makes it unique. While some critics agree, others, notably Zhou Xiaojing, argue that ethnocentric readings of Lee's poems are misleading and reductive. Further, they claim, to characterize Asian American literature in that manner is to marginalize it. These supporters of a more nuanced reading of Lee's work point out that Chinese immigrants to the United States have not maintained a fixed Chinese culture but have instead, like other immigrant populations, forged a new third culture that is neither wholly American nor wholly belonging to the old country. Several critics have noted that in the widely acclaimed "Persimmons," Lee disregards, or perhaps does not recognize, the Chinese cultural significance of several images in the poem. His use of the persimmons as a central image in much the same way that Western poets would employ it means, for some, that he writes more like a Western poet than one from Asia. Zhou, however, argues that Lee's use of imagery in his poetry is similar to the way imagery is used in classical Chinese poetry. She points out that Lee's poems typically unfold from a central image that acts as a unifying element for fragmentary scenes and narratives, allowing Lee to transform the poem into a lyric that deals with the abstract as well as the concrete. Zhou says that Lee uses both Eastern and Western ideas in his poems, noting the influence of both Daoism and Whitman.

Lee has indicated that poetry is a 24-hour-a-day job. Regardless of what he is doing, he feels that he is working on poetry. He believes that the mission of poetry is to reveal the divine, not in the sense of a divine deity, but in the sense of a yogic connection to the universe. In other words, he believes that poetry should bear witness of our true nature, the invisible. Further, he defines art as "the experience of an earthly

profane in the context of a divine presence" (Ingersoll 2006, 123). Lee has explained that death is inherent in every poem, just as it is present in everything. He notes that the body becomes invigorated by the inhaling breath. With the exhaling breath, however, it becomes soft and quiet. Poems, like other forms of writing or speaking, are designed for the exhaling, or expiring breath, and are therefore close to death. When Lee read several poems at a meeting of the Modern Language Association in 1990, he called them "poems of memory and failure" (author recollection). He said, "My work is about the urge for ultimate things, for shapeliness, for destiny" (author recollection). While Lee's first collection, *Rose*, focuses on the poet's complex relationship to his father, his second, *The City in Which I Love You*, is about personal identity. *Book of My Nights*, his third collection, is a metaphysical exploration of total presence.

Lee earned a BA from the University of Pittsburgh in 1979. He studied creative writing at the University of Arizona for a year and literature at the State University of New York at Brockport. He has worked as a graphics designer and as a warehouseman. He has taught creative writing at Northwestern and the University of Iowa, but now declines such job offers because he believes he is not a good teacher. Lee usually writes at night, sitting at the kitchen table and reading aloud as he writes. He meditates daily, a practice he was taught by his father. He is married to Donna, an American of Italian heritage. They have two sons. Donna's sister is married to one of Lee's brothers. Both families live together in a house in Chicago with Lee's sister and their mother.

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◆ LEE, MARIE G. (1964–)

Marie G. Lee, who also writes under the name Marie Myung-Ok Lee, is a Korean American novelist and essayist whose work, both for younger readers and for adults, focuses on themes of race and ethnicity. Her books, portraying experiences of identity formation, assimilation, and exclusion of Korean American immigrant families and adoptees, have received a number of awards, including Best Book Award from the Friends of American Writers, and a Best Book for Young Adults citation from the American Library Association. Her work earned her a fellowship to the MacDowell Colony, the oldest artists' colony in the United States. She has served as a National Book Award judge and has taught fiction writing at Yale University. She is currently writer-in-residence at the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America and lecturer in creative writing at Brown University.

Lee's first novel, *Finding My Voice* (1992), is intended, like the bulk of her earlier work, for young readers. The protagonist, Ellen Sung, is in many ways drawn from Lee's own difficult confrontations with prejudice when growing up in Hibbing, Minnesota, Bob Dylan's hometown. As the daughter of a Korean immigrant physician, like Lee herself, Ellen is different from her classmates, not just because she is wealthier and the only Asian in her class but also because she is under pressure from her parents to study long hours and to apply to several Ivy League colleges—in short, fitting the stereotype of the **model minority**, like Lee, who graduated from Brown University in 1986 and went on to work as a researcher on Wall Street. Suffering racial taunts and slights from teachers, classmates, and popular cheerleaders, Ellen is accepted to Harvard, fulfilling her father's dream, lands the football hero for her boyfriend, and survives a jealous rival's attack with a broken bottle but refuses to press charges. Although some critics see Ellen as a submissive Cinderella who fails to find a voice, this novel was among the first widely accessible works to express the struggles of young Asian Americans. As such, it gained appreciative readers who see in Ellen's trials a mirror of their own and in her victory hope for their own lives. Among the best known and most widely read of Lee's works, *Finding My Voice* is often included in booklists for readers looking for works dealing with multicultural issues.

Ellen Sung's story is continued in *Saying Goodbye* (1994) as she enters Harvard's premed program, following her father's ambitions. Again, the novel contains autobiographical parallels. Ellen is more interested in writing than in medicine; Lee, as a teenager, had articles like "Volunteer Work Does Pay Off" published in *Seventeen* and similar magazines, while also unsuccessfully submitting her fiction. However, the setting is reflective of the identity politics of the 1990s as Ellen finds herself involved in issues that bring her into conflict with her African American roommate, Leecia. With an African American student group, Leecia invites to campus a rap singer whose lyrics advocate violence against Korean immigrant storekeepers. Ellen is torn between

maintaining her friendship with Leecia and showing her loyalty to her boyfriend Jae, a Korean American whose family's store and livelihood was threatened by the 1992 Los Angeles riots. The growing complexity of the issues in Lee's work is also evident in *Necessary Roughness* (1997), about Chan, a Korean American boy who moves from multicultural California to an all-white Minnesota town. Confronted by prejudice and negative stereotypes and looking to fit in, he becomes a football player. Instead, he encounters bullying and harassment from peers who assault him in the team locker room and misunderstanding from his demanding father, who sees football as an activity unworthy of a serious Korean American student. At the end of the book, the family must also deal with the tragic, accidental death of Young, Chan's studious twin sister.

Lee has also written three novels for middle school readers. *If It Hadn't Been for Yoon Jun* (1993) explores the confusion experienced by Alice, a young Korean adoptee who sees herself as all-American and is reluctant when asked to befriend a recent Korean immigrant, Yoon Jun, who seems awkwardly alien and different. At first Alice is more interested in preserving her own popular image but learns to appreciate her Korean heritage and defends Yoon Jun against bigotry; she fully realizes his worth when he saves her from a car accident. *F Is for Fabuloso* (1999) shows the troubles of Jin-ha, another recent immigrant, as she attempts to adjust to an American school and helps her mother, who is having trouble learning English. *Night of the Chupacabras* (1999) is Lee's lightest and most humorous book, about young Korean Americans solving the mystery of a strange monster while on vacation in Mexico; while not typical of her work, it does include a glossary of Spanish and Korean words.

*Somebody's Daughter* (2005), Lee's most recent work, reflects a stronger connection to her Korean roots, as opposed to her previous books, whose young characters seem more concerned with fitting into mainstream America. This is the first of Lee's works published under the name Marie Myung-Ok Lee. Her decision to use her Korean middle name to avoid ongoing confusion with mystery writer Marie Lee seems significant, since she could have used her other middle name, Grace. This is also Lee's first book for adults, dealing with more mature themes than her previous work. It alternates between the stories of Sarah Thorson, a 19-year-old adoptee brought up by a Minnesota family, and Kyung-sook, Sarah's Korean birth mother, forced to give up her child after being abandoned by David, her American lover. Sarah has found it difficult to bond with her adoptive family, who are uncomfortable with any mention of Korea. Her attempts to deal with identity issues lead her to return to Seoul for a cultural exchange program, where she finds herself unprepared for the strange language, food, and customs. The book provides a memorable portrayal of the intricacies of cross-cultural encounters as Sarah meets a variety of Koreans and Korean Americans, a number of them impatient with her lack of knowledge of what is supposedly her own country and contemptuous of her background as an adoptee. Eventually she finds

sympathy from Doug, a Korean American who helps her in navigating the unfamiliar territory and becomes her lover.

Even more powerful is Kyung-sook's tragic story. A country girl, she dreams of being a musician but, coming to Seoul to study, is disappointed to find that nobody is interested in her beloved traditional Korean flute. She steps out of traditional boundaries as she drops out of school and moves in with David, who talks about bringing her to the United States and takes advantage of her sexual naiveté. When she becomes pregnant, David abandons her. Penniless, she returns to her parents' farm, where she gives birth under traumatic conditions. Her mother immediately takes the baby away, abandoning it outside a Seoul fire station. Lee researched this aspect of the book as a Fulbright Fellow at Seoul Women's University in 1997–1998, recording the oral histories of single mothers; their collective stories form the background of Lee's book. Forced by strict social mores to give up their children, years later they were willing to tell Lee their stories, with the hope that maybe their children would read the book and understand. While seeming to move toward a mother-daughter reunion, the book avoids this easy resolution; when Sarah appears on television searching for her birth mother, Kyung-sook recognizes David's features and her birth date, goes to Seoul to find her, but is confused and overwhelmed by the changes in the city, gives up, and goes home. The denial of a happy ending, while disappointing, is true to life, as Sarah continues to look for closure. This book was critically well received as showing an increasing maturity in Lee's work, not just in her portrayal of adult situations but also in its nuanced portrayal of both main characters and their dilemmas.

New stages in Lee's life, motherhood and advocacy, are reflected in her current area of focus. In a departure from her novels but also a continuation of the essay writing that she started in her teens, Lee is producing nonfiction. Her pieces have appeared in the *Washington Post*, *Witness*, and the *New York Times*, among others, and she is currently working on a book, *The United States of Autism*, which explores the impact of environmental pollution and mandatory vaccination programs on the increase in neurological disorders. Like her fiction, this work has a strong personal connection, as Lee's son, born in 1999, is autistic, and Lee has suffered from misunderstanding of what people perceive as her child's inappropriate behavior. Excerpts from this book have been published in *Newsweek* and in anthologies on parenting, and earned her the Richard J. Margolis Award for new nonfiction with a concern for social justice. At the same time she is also slowly working on her next novel. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Assimilation/Americanization; Korean American Adoptee Literature.

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DOLORES DE MANUEL

◆ LEE, MARIE MYUNG-OK. *See* Marie G. Lee

◆ LEE, MARY PAIK (1900–1995)

Mary Paik Lee is the author of *Quiet Odyssey: A Pioneer Korean Woman in America*, which records her life in the United States since her immigration in 1905. The book was published in 1990, under the editorial guidance of one of the leading Asian American historians, Sucheng Chan, who is Chinese American herself. The book is one of the very few memoirs by an Asian American woman, and the only **Korean American autobiography** by a Korean American woman. It spans the majority of the twentieth century, from young girlhood to advanced age. Lee's autobiography is important as a historical document, since hearing about the first group of Korean immigrants in the early twentieth century is still rare and often the Chinese and the Japanese were assumed the only groups of Asians in the United States at that time.

Born Paik Kuang Sun in Pyongyang, the capital of what is now North Korea, as the daughter of Paik Suk Koo and Song Kuang Do, Paik Lee left Korea with her family to escape the Japanese oppression. She became a U.S. citizen in 1960 and changed her name to Mary Paik Lee. First coming to Hawaii, her father worked as a sugar cane plantation laborer. Her father used to be a tailor while studying to become a minister in Korea. Since life in Hawaii was not promising, after the father desperately wrote to friends asking for help, in December 1906 the family finally moved to California, where Paik Lee lived the rest of her life. However, they did not settle in one place right away. Suffering from dire poverty, their life was migratory, roaming around California in search of jobs and better opportunities.

The first city they moved to in California was Riverside. Without any plan and with little money, Paik Lee's mother had to cook every day for 30 single men who worked in the citrus groves. Her father did not like the idea of his wife working, but that was the only way for the family to survive. They moved to Claremont when the mother's health got worse. Paik Lee's mother suffered from chronic illness, due to giving birth almost every year. The Paiks had 10 kids, and Mary Paik Lee was the first daughter. In Claremont, the father worked as a janitor, and the family first experienced "American life," living in a house with a bathtub and toilet. Since the payment from the janitorial job was so

low, the father decided to move again. They went to Colusa but could not find any jobs there. Wanting to help her family, Paik Lee found a housemaid job at her school principal's house. She had to work before and after school and during weekends. The working condition at the principal's house was harsh: she had to eat separately from the family after setting the table, and the food she could have was only a cup of coffee with no sugar and a thin slice of bread. On the weekends she had to wash and iron the family's laundry and linens. Paik Lee was only 11 years old at that time. While her father worked in a fruit orchard during the summer, he met a Korean and made plans to grow potatoes in Roberts Island. After the failure of selling the potatoes they harvested because of the Depression, the family had to move once again to Idria, where the father worked in quicksilver mines.

Paik Lee was educated by her parents and continued to go to public school wherever she went. Despite short stays at various places, she and her elder brother Meung Sun managed to graduate from school in Idria and were both eligible to go to high school. While her brother had to give up going to high school to support the family, Mary left home, pursuing her education. In Hollister, she got a "school girl" job, working as a housemaid in exchange for room and board. She stayed there working and studying for a year until she joined the family in Willows. Although the family in Hollister wanted her to come back, Mary could not because of her health, so she stayed with her family and started her second year of high school in Willows.

In 1919 she married a Korean man, Hyung Man Lee, whom she had met in Willows. Her husband, who was called H.M., left Korea in 1905, escaping from his stepmother's maltreatment. He first went to Mexico, where he was educated and named Antonio Eduardo Lee. Speaking Spanish fluently, he worked as an interpreter for the Korean National Association in Mexico City. When his first marriage ended with an explosion that killed his wife, Lee came to San Francisco, working in vegetable farms and orchards. At Willows, Lee started to work in the rice fields. After the marriage, the newlywed couple farmed rice together for a while. But since H.M. suffered from severe skin irritation, they moved to LA and later to Anaheim, selling produce. Their first son Henry was born there. Their second child, Allan, was born four years later. Their produce business succeeded so that Lee could help her parents and brothers who lived in Utah at that time, and H.M. also sent money to relatives in Korea. After 11 years of good business, they lost most of their savings because of the Great Depression. The Lee family resumed farming in El Modeno and some places between LA and Whittier. During this time, their third son, Anthony, was born. In 1950 the Lees quit farming and went to Whittier. After having a hard time finding a house to rent due to racial discrimination, they were forced to move to LA, where they bought and sold houses and apartments. In June of 1975, Mary's husband died. One year later, her first son Henry died in an airplane crash, which devastated her. Paik Lee herself died in 1995.



Her autobiography *Quiet Odyssey* contains many examples of sacrifice by the older generation for the younger generation. Lee spent many pages describing her parents' patient overcoming of the indescribable hardships that they confronted as early immigrants. Like any other early immigrants, once arriving in the New World, her father had to work as a farm laborer, tenant farmer, cook, and janitor. At one point she portrays her mother as having never raised her voice against her children, always doing whatever they wanted, despite continual pregnancy and subsequent illness. Her parents, and later her husband, were very resourceful, living off other peoples' throwaways and finding food and clothing from unlikely sources. As children, she and her brother picked out discarded lemons, scrubbed them clean, and sold them like new. While Lee's main purpose in writing her story seems to be to describe the hardships her family suffered, she does not complain. She was 90 years old when *Quiet Odyssey* was published in 1990, full of pride over what her children and grandchildren have accomplished. *Quiet Odyssey* offers a useful window into an important but little documented era for Korean Americans, a time when there was no comfort for immigrants struggling to survive in a new land.

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SOOYOUNG KANG

#### ◆ LEE, SKY (1952–)

Born in Port Alberni, British Columbia, Sky Lee is a well-known Chinese Canadian artist and author of both fictional and nonfictional texts. In 1967 Lee moved to Vancouver, where she earned a bachelor of fine arts degree from the University of British Columbia and later a diploma in nursing from Douglas College. In the late 1960s, Lee was one of the founding members of the Asian Canadian Writers' Workshop (alongside Paul Yee, Jim Wong-Chu, Sean Gunn, and Rick Shiomi)—a nonprofit organization working to promote the literary work of emerging Asian Canadian writers through publications (ACWW publishes *Ricepaper* magazine) and showcases. Early in her career, Lee worked at *Makara* magazine, a general interest publication that, in the mid-1970s, sought to subvert traditional periodical formats. Shortly thereafter, Lee was a member of the board of directors of Vancouver's Chinese

Benevolent Association. Lee's first publication is as an illustrator for Paul Yee's youth-oriented text *Teach Me to Fly, Skyfighter!* (1982)—a compilation of four short stories that examined Chinese Canadian childhood in mixed communities (Asian and Anglo Canadian).

*Disappearing Moon Café* (1990) is Lee's first novel and is one of the most recognized texts in Asian Canadian long fiction. The novel is the winner of the City of Vancouver Book Award, and was nominated for both the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize and the prestigious Governor General's Award. Like many of her **Asian American** counterparts, Lee addresses intergenerational conflicts and assimilation in *Disappearing Moon Café*, as the novel spans almost a hundred years between 1892 and 1987 and shifts its focus between Canada and China. The text traces four generations of the Wong family through its pioneering, female members, demonstrating how strength and empowerment, but also trauma and sin, are inherited qualities passed down from one generation to the next. Linking each woman to her mother and grandmother are the reinvented obstacles that each overcomes, alienation and racism (social or political), obstacles that evolve and modernize in each generation. As a historical fiction, Lee's novel evokes a recollection of the social and systematic racism in Canada, from the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway and indentured servitude to the Head Tax and **Chinese Exclusion Act** to contemporary ideas of **hybridity**, liminality, and marginalization. The anachronistic plot moves between past and present, alluding to the fragmented and destabilized cultural identities of the Chinese Canadians in each of the generations. Isolation is at the height of the experiences of Lee's characters, as they find themselves being countered by dominant ideology, their Chinese pasts, the hybridity of their Asian Canadian identities, and the intra-cultural challenges of family and community members. The novel's most contemporary narrator, Kae Ying Woo, looks back into her ancestral past to uncover a cultural identity, recognizing significant male figures, like the patriarch of the family, Wong Gwei Chang, but focusing on the experiences of her grandmother and great-grandmother instead. Kae's narrative unveils crises of incest and racial conflicts and questions the essentialist relationship between men and women in both the family and community. Typical to novels that address intergenerational conflict, Lee's text is concerned with the contrast between old traditions and modern, assimilated behavior—**Chinatown** and dominant culture. The novel's tone is fluid and elaborate—almost to the point of mythical. However, some critics, such as Gary Draper, accuse Lee of using melodramatic, hyperornamental language, claiming that "[h]ardly a noun walks free of a trail of adjectives" (1990, 49).

Also in 1990, Lee contributed to and was among a group of editors involved in *Telling It: Women and Language Across Culture*, a book of collective prose stemming from a conference by the same name that took place in Vancouver in 1988. The book, which features sections including "Creative Writing," "The Writer's Role in the

Community,” and “Voice(s)-Over,” addresses the importance of communication and dissemination of ideas by marginalized women. Contributors to *Telling It* (who include Jeanette Armstrong, Lee Maracle, and Joy Kogawa) take particular interest in exploring racisms and homophobias encountered by Asian, lesbian, and Native Canadian women. In the short story “from ‘Nancy Drew Mysteries’” (it is unclear from the anthology whether this is an excerpt from that text or is the actual title of the short story) the protagonist, Nancy, recalls memories from childhood of domestic abuse, that are interspersed with her present circumstance of being impregnated by Gregg—a “chink-lover” (151) who understands Nancy to be one of his many possessions. The narrative is fragmented and haunting, with aggressive language and graphic violence, providing gritty realism in contrast to the languid style of the historical sections of *Disappearing Moon Café*. Later, Lee contributes an essay entitled “Yelling It: Women and Anger Across Cultures,” wherein she rejects the responsibility of defining and explaining the significance of racism, homophobia, and misogyny to her reader and instead fantasizes a realist interaction with her audience. She comments on the successes of the Telling It conference and what she gained from the multiperspectival experience.

*Bellydancer: Stories* (1994) is a collection of 15 short stories in which Lee addresses various feminist and gender-related themes. The belly dancer in Lee’s text functions as a metaphor for survival, alluding to the original performances of belly dancing that occurred alongside women in labor to celebrate the creation of a new life. In “Bellydancer: Level One,” the first-person narrator recounts her birth story: born on a linoleum floor, broken mouthed, and abandoned by her drunk mother. For Seni, belly dancing is liberating because the gauzy veils that she places in front of her mouth hide the scars and, therefore, trauma of her past, liberating her, making her “feel like a real queen” (26). Later in the story, however, Seni questions the distinction between vanity and void, positing that they are “[p]itiful either way” (34). In a later story entitled “Daisy the Sojourner,” the Chinese Canadian narrator reminisces about a friendship she shared with a white woman, Minou, who is appalled to learn that her five-year-old daughter is being exposed to racism at school. Near the conclusion of the story, the narrator recalls, Minou “tapped her claws as if waiting for me to explain how my race could be racist towards other races. And don’t I wish I knew” (119). “Daisy the Sojourner,” like many of Lee’s stories, undermines the racism binary that contrasts the victim with the perpetrator and instead highlights the complexity of racism, prejudice, and other forms of essentialism that exist in Canadian society. Lee’s tone throughout *Bellydancer* is humorous, poignant, and ironic, as she analyzes and extrapolates upon earlier feminist, gender, and race-related discourses.

Although Lee’s short fiction has received an eager reception from literary audiences, it is her novel, *Disappearing Moon Café*, that has garnered the most attention

from Asian North American theorists and literary critics alike. Neta Gordon, for instance, draws on Lee's novel to address ideas of Canadian, feminist, and generic identity. In her essay "Charted Territory: Canadian Literature by Women, the Genealogical Plot, and Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café*," Gordon claims that Lee's novel, alongside other select texts by Canadian authors (such as Carol Shields's *The Stone Diaries* and Dionne Brand's *At the Full and Change of the Moon*) consist of what she terms "genealogical plots"—and that they "may be considered as part of the evolution in feminist literature that concerns itself more with context than with subject." *Disappearing Moon Café*, says Gordon, contributes to a unique subgenre of "identity novel" that privileges the community and group instead of the individual (2006, 166).

Other critics find Lee's novel to be a useful text with which to create a discourse or comparison to other narratives. Although temporality and spatiality are inherently linked, Lee's comparative criticisms seem to be divisible into groups that focus on one theme or the other. Jennifer Denomy's thesis "Secrets, Silence and Family Narrative" links Lee's novel with well-known Asian Canadian author Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*, suggesting that both novels' protagonists overcome different kinds of silences and secrets to uncover their ancestral histories. Donald Goellnicht compares motifs between Lee's novel and another well-known Asian American text in his essay "Of Bones and Suicide: Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café* and Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone*" to link the novels' representations of suicide and their characters' concern with the uncovering (and returning to China) of ancestral bones. Comparatively, critics such as Robert A. Lee consider Lee's novel in contrast to others' in terms of a spatial framework. Robert A. Lee's essay "Imagined Cities of China: Timothy Mo's London, Sky Lee's Vancouver, Fae Myenne Ng's San Francisco and Gish Jen's New York" highlights the similarities and differences in the representations of urban targets for the Chinese diaspora.

Lee's short fiction has appeared in a variety of locations, including Carole Gerson's *Vancouver Short Stories* (1985), wherein "Broken Teeth" appears before it became a part of *Bellydancer*. In the Fall 1980 issue of the *Asianadian*, Lee's contribution is a tongue-in-cheek, humorist short story entitled "Gig Goes Island Crazy." Lee continues to be a significant voice in Canadian literature, Asian North American theory, and feminist criticism. **See also** Asian Diasporas; Assimilation/Americanization; Racism and Asian America.

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JENNY HEI JUN WILLS

#### ◆ LEE, YAN PHOU (1861–1939?)

A Chinese American journalist and autobiographer, Lee Yan Phou (Li Enfu) is known for being one of the students in the Chinese Educational Mission established by Yung Wing and the first Asian American to publish a book-length, English-language work, *When I was a Boy in China* (1887). The autobiography describes his childhood in China and arrival in the United States, as well as selected Chinese cultural customs and practices. Born in Zhongshan, Guandong Province, in China, Lee grew up in moderately comfortable circumstances but was inspired to attempt an American education by one of his cousins. As part of the Chinese Educational Mission, he traveled to New England at the age of 12. There he boarded at the home of Sarah Vaille, attended Springfield High School and Hopkins Grammar School, and enrolled at Yale College in 1880. When the mission was cancelled by the Chinese government as the result of second thoughts on the part of the Chinese and anti-Chinese sentiment expressed by some Americans, Lee and his colleagues returned to China.

Lee served for three years as a Chinese naval cadet before he extricated himself and found a clerkship in Hong Kong. With the assistance of American friends, he made his way back to Yale in 1884. He paid his college expenses by lecturing and writing for such journals as *Christian Union*, *St. Nicholas*, and *Wide Awake*, the last of which was published by D. Lathrop and Co. The Boston publishing house hired him to edit a section of *The Chatauqua Young Folk's Monthly*. In 1887, Lathrop and Co. published Lee's autobiography, which drew heavily from his *Wide Awake* articles. In essence, Lee wove together his *Wide Awake* articles on Chinese customs and cultural practices with his own story of growing up in China and coming to study in the United States. Also in 1887, he graduated from Yale with honors in English, delivered a commencement address that commented on the **Chinese Exclusion Act** of 1882, and married his first wife, Elizabeth Maud Jerome. He published his second most famous work, "The Chinese Must Stay," which directly opposed Denis Kearney's call, "The Chinese Must Go," in the *North American Review* in 1889. Although he had two children with her, Lee and his first wife divorced in 1890. Besides trying his hand at medical school, farming, interpreting, and managing exhibits at world's fairs, Lee wrote for and edited various newspapers in St. Louis and New York. In 1897 he married his second wife, Sophie Florence Bolles. This marriage produced two more children, one of whom would have a son, Richard Vaille Lee, who would go on to edit the reprint edition of *When I Was a Boy in China* (2003). In 1927, Lee Yan Phou returned to China, where his grandson thinks he died in 1939 during the Japanese bombing of Guangdong, where he had settled.

When he was young, Lee was a kind of celebrity and certainly a novelty. Contemporary reviewers of *When I Was a Boy in China* acknowledged both his uniqueness and considerable skills as a cultural explicator. "With ingenious simplicity," a reviewer for the *Dial* wrote, Lee's autobiography "details the influential details in the author's child life, and in so doing presents instructive pictures of the domestic habits of the Chinese." Additionally, this reviewer acknowledged that Lee's work "correct[s], in some important particulars, beliefs that we have long cherished regarding the character and manners of that interesting and much misunderstood nation" (1887, 85). Lee's insider perspective, albeit distanced by some years and refracted through his class, gender, and regional position, provided insights that missionaries and other travel writers to China had not.

In spite of the pioneer status of Lee's work, *When I Was a Boy in China* has received relatively little critical attention. While Elaine Kim mentions Lee's autobiography in her groundbreaking *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context*, she downplays its significance, claiming that Lee failed to critique anti-Asian racism and represent working-class Chinese, all in an effort to be an "ambassador of goodwill" (1982, 24). In "Reading Her/stories against His/stories in Early

Chinese American Literature," Amy Ling also finds Lee's work lacking in similar regard when compared to the autobiographies of Sui Sin Far (see Edith Maude Eaton) and Onoto Watanna (see Winnifred Eaton). Moreover, Ling argues that Lee's work privileges his public life over his private experience. Her posthumously published essay "Yan Phou Lee on the Asian American Frontier," however, recuperates Lee as "an Asian American frontier man and founding father, nearly a century before the term 'Asian American' was coined" (2002, 274). In this revised reading of his work, Ling concentrates on the moments in the autobiography when he indicates, sometimes obliquely, his position in between worlds, his double consciousness, to use W.E.B. DuBois's term. Ling identifies these moments in the text's "fluctuating perspective," vacillating "declarations of preference" and "shifts in pronoun reference" (280). Floyd Cheung went on to make the case that Lee's work participated in a discourse of autoethnography. By combining the genres of self-centered autobiography with communally oriented ethnography, Lee used his personal authority to intervene in the political question of his day, namely, whether Congress should renew the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which was set to expire in 1892. Most recently, Rocío Davis has analyzed Lee's work as an early example of another genre, that of Asian American autobiographies that focus on the author's childhood. This surge of scholarly interest and the 2003 release of the reprint edition of Lee's *When I Was a Boy in China* testify to its continuing significance.

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### ◆ LEONG, RUSSELL (1950–)

Russell Leong is a poet, editor, essayist, documentary filmmaker, and short story writer. Born in Chinatown, San Francisco, California, in 1950, Leong was educated in local Chinese and American schools. His parents, brother, and English teacher encouraged him to write from an early age. He took one of the first Asian American writing/literature classes from Jeffery Chan at San Francisco State College, where he also earned his BA in 1972. Leong was part of the Kearny Street Workshop, a community-based workshop consisting of writers, poets, and filmmakers of Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese American heritage who linked their artistic creations with social and political activism. Leong pursued graduate studies at National Taiwan University in 1973 and 1974 and received an MFA from the University of California at Los Angeles in 1990.

*Phoenix Eyes and Other Stories* (2000), Leong's first short story collection, includes 14 stories from a 30-year span. It won the American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation in 2001. Some of the stories in this collection (some under a different name) appeared in several Asian American literature anthologies: "Thread" in *Asian American Authors* (1972), "Rough Notes for Mantos" in *Aiiiiieee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers* (1974), and "Geography One" in *Charlie Chan Is Dead: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Fiction* (1993). Leong's stories, essays, and poems have also been published in numerous journals, magazines, and newspapers, including the *New England Review*, *Tricycle: the Buddhist Review*, *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Zyzzya*, and *Disorient*. Leong's first poetry collection, *The Country of Dreams and Dust* (1993), won the PEN Oakland Josephine Miles Literature Award in 1994.

The poet and short story writer is also a noted editor. Since 1977, Leong has been the editor of *Amerasia Journal*, one of the primary journals in **Asian American studies** that reflects an interdisciplinary approach and covers social sciences and humanities research, as well as creative expressions. Leong is also the managing editor of publications at the UCLA Asian American Studies Center. He has edited several collected works in Asian American studies, Asian American literature, media and the arts, and ethnic studies, including *Frontiers of Asian American Studies: Writing, Research, and Criticism* (1989), *Moving the Image: Independent Asian Pacific American Media Arts, 1970–1990* (1991), *Asian American Sexualities: Dimensions of the Gay and Lesbian Experience* (1996), and *Los Angeles—Struggle toward Multiethnic Community: Asian America, African America, and Latino Perspectives* (1994).

In an interview with Gale's *Literature Resource Center*, Leong acknowledges his literary influences from diverse origins—from the Chinese inscriptions on Alcatraz Island, generations of students, Chinese writers Lu Xun, Sun Zi, and Mao Zedong, to Asian American playwright Frank **Chin**, Ethiopian film essayist Teshome Gabriel,



Filipino writer N.V.M. **Gonzalez**, Vietnamese master monk Thich Minh Ton, Italian novelist Italo Calvino, Yasunari Kawabata, Frantz Fanon, and early Theravada Pali Buddhist texts.

Leong's prose is clean, suggestive, impressionistic, meditative, and at times poetic. His stories tend to be episodic, journalistic, ethnographic, or at worst fragmented. Yet, such deviations from the tight structure of traditional novelistic devices serve well for the kind of stories he is telling and for the types of characters he creates. Together his style and stories express his ultimate fictional preoccupation with dislocation, identity, space, place, gender orientation, and the spirituality of Asian Americans, most of whom are single Asian males, gay or otherwise. The lives and worlds of these characters are anything but coherent, connected, purposeful, and organic. Leong's fictional world is like air and dust, like dreams, driven by wind and cloud, by passion and desire, and by the instinct and urge for transcendence.

Space and place play a central role in Leong's stories. In "Bodhi Leaves" the characters are refugees displaced from Vietnam who settled in Southern California after floating through refugee camps in Southeast Asia. The story centers on the efforts of the Vietnamese Buddhist monk, or *sifu*, to find artists to paint the bodhi tree leaves for a temple converted from a suburban tract home in Little Saigon, Orange County. While being instructed to "imagine how a bodhi tree appears under the skies of another county" (2000, 3), the first artist's attempt resembles more a banyan tree or a eucalyptus; the second artist paints a tree that lacks spirit; and the third, a 19-year-old Vietnamese in striped surfer shirt and baggy shorts, "transferred the image that existed only in his mind—molecules of light and darkness—onto the canvas" (11). In a poignant sentence, Leong surmises the experience of dislocation, or loss of place, to "distort a person's sense of balance and proportion and alter their perception" (6).

The experience of dislocation that characterizes the Vietnamese community also sets the tone for the sad, chilly, and ironic story of Eddie in "The Western Paradise of Eddie Bin." Eddie comes to San Francisco—paradise—as a Chinese immigrant, but faces bankruptcy, a broken marriage, and unemployment. Eddie Bin's Western paradise is but an ironic metaphor for the single Asian male character's maladjustment in American society. At the end of the story, Eddie is at the Greyhound bus station, leaving San Francisco for Los Angeles. Leong leaves us with the admonition that Eddie would float in the air and never send down roots (2000, 123).

The dislocated ethnic space of the Vietnamese in "Bodhi Leaves" and "The Western Paradise of Eddie Bin" enlarges to encompass broader space and place in Leong's other stories. In "No Bruce Lee" the character's lone bus ride on a Sunday afternoon traverses Santa Monica Boulevard and West Los Angeles to downtown, passing Beverly Hills, the Jewish section, the Korean stores along Olympic Boulevard, the Spanish section, and an Armenian bakery. The geographical space is also immediately cultural, ethnic, and

racial. In a bar, the narrator sees Asian, black, Spanish-speaking, a black with Indian blood, and people of undetermined sex. Through the numerous encounters and even a splash of passion and lust, the character still remains a loner, a drifter, and a displaced participant and observer of the culturally and ethnically diverse Los Angeles, a place that remains racially mixed yet divided, estranged, and strained.

The themes of dislocation, disconnection, and loss take a more complex twist in "Where Do People Live Who Never Die?" and assume a spiritual transcendence that characterizes many of Leong's stories. Andrew Tom, an associate editor of a museum magazine is a single Asian male, who has been separated from his parents since he was two years old, when his parents returned to help build the new China after liberation. Now on a journey to Chengdu, Sichuan, to learn more about the train wreck that allegedly killed his parents, Andrew is presented with complex and contradicting issues. Leong deftly reveals the emotions that Andrew has been burying all his life: his loneliness and displacement and his deprivation of and craving for parental love. The story ends with an elusive yet deep, mysterious, and universal connection that Andrew feels toward his parents: "They had also left traces of their presence, elements of water, fire, wood, metal, and earth that had drawn me back to them" (2000, 169). The quest for the truth of his parents' death turns into a spiritual quest, ending with a resolution that embraces the Buddhist and/or Daoist cycle of life and the fusion of the Chinese cosmology of the five elements.

In the culturally marginalized and isolated place and space, Leong's characters undergo a new kind of displacement as a result of the battle between passion and desire, gender disorientation, deviation from traditional family norms, thus suffering from samsara—desire and rebirth—and driven toward transcendence, spiritual or otherwise. "Geography One" is set in the post-riots Los Angeles and Orange County and is one of Leong's most poetic stories about dislocation, desire, passion, and the spiritual journey. It blends rich Vietnamese culture with evocative expressions of physical and sexual desire. With the imminent deaths of friends from AIDS and loss of love, the character is engaged in a struggle between the flesh and the spirit, loss and spiritual yearning. At the pivotal point of the story, the character is on his knees, listening to the Buddhist master speaking about sadness, happiness, unhappiness, and detachment. "The Sifu's words resounded, as sound does, in the spaces within me" (2000, 23). This story further exemplifies the inclination of Leong's characters to seek shelter, solace, and transcendence in Eastern spirituality while in torment.

Dislocation, isolation, and misconstrued sexual identity take on a metaphysical, philosophical, Buddhist, or fatalist bent in another series of Leong's stories. These stories employ a flashback that constitutes the center of the story and ends at a dramatic moment in the present where the characters are about to abandon their past lives and embrace something new. In "Phoenix Eyes," Terence, the narrator, is to don the gray

robe of a layman Buddhist, to take refuge in the five precepts after a life of 20 years seeking pleasure and in the aftermath of the death of a friend from AIDS. "Neither prayer nor desire worked to bring back anyone whom I love" (2000, 143). The path of Terence echoes the Buddhist cycle of birth, suffering, death, and rebirth. Something is reborn in Terence when he accepts the five precepts at the end of the story—no lying, no drinking, no stealing, no killing, and no improper sexual relations.

"No Bruce Lee" portrays a gay Asian male, another loner who once had a life as the maitre d' at Flamingo West, the Chinese supper club on the Sunset Strip, and his off-hours service as a masseur for gay Western men. Painfully marginalized, misplaced, and disconnected from his own history, tradition, and family, "Bruce" feeds on alcohol and passion. Paradise is an irony, a mark up for dislocation, not belonging, and homelessness. Unlike Terence, who retreats to the Buddhist world, "Bruce" heads for downtown LA with an unknown fate and undefined destiny. In "Samsara," a story about gay love and the loss of love, Leong gives full expression to human life that encompasses the range and dimension of emotion. The main character Alec voices the cycle of the samsara and of the unknown: "I did not know how could we escape samsara, the cycle of desire and rebirth without end" (2000, 116).

These 14 stories paint a chilly picture of displaced people and cultures; personal, sexual, and cultural identity; place, space, and faith; the multicultural and multiethnic Los Angeles as well as international space—China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, Thailand, and so on. At the same time, they also reveal Leong's sensitivity to the human experiences and his fictional clinging to transcendence. In an interview with Cynthia Liu, Leong speaks of a worldview that would help explicate his fictional and artistic intention: "Three phrases sum up my affiliation with my view of the world . . . Anima divina—divine spirit. Anima humana—human spirit. Anima mundi—spirit of the world, or universe. Along with the Buddhist Heart Sutra, that talks about form and emptiness" (Liu 2000, 15).

The collection of stories in *Phoenix Eyes* has generated significant critical response since its publication in 2000 by the University of Washington Press. Although research articles have not appeared in scholarly journals, many book reviews and interviews in major newspapers and magazines as well as in ethnic newspapers present meaningful interpretations of and responses to Leong's first collection of stories. These responses provide both stylistic and thematic insights into the understanding of Leong's work.

Jonathan Kirsch, the book editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, comments on Leong's power of observation and poetic sensibilities. He calls the book "a collection of startling and unsettling short stories" about Leong's take on the Asian experience in America. He regards Leong's style as "rich," "evocative," and "skillful." Kirsch praises Leong's power to shift "from the mundane details of a prostitute's life . . . to an almost

mythic scene of crisis and redemption" in "Daughters." In "Bodhi Leaves," "Leong shows us how memory and identity persist even in the melting pot of America." "His acute power of observation and his poet's gift for capturing the experience of transcendence are given full expression in the pages of *Phoenix Eyes*" (2000, E-1). In his review in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Leonard Chang also praises Leong's delicate sensibility throughout the collection. Robert Murray Davis, on the other hand, compares Leong to Hemingway and Steinbeck in his power to "reveal important traits of character as well as to establish a milieu" (2001, 341).

Along with praises for Leong's poetic sensibility and prose, some reviewers examine the form of his stories and note that these stories are loosely structured, jump from scene to scene, and are only slightly held together as a whole. While commenting that Leong succeeds at bringing the reader into "unfamiliar worlds and ways of responding to them," Robert Murray Davis observes that "the volume contains a master narrative that seems to be struggling toward the coherence and weight of a longer form" and that Leong "could have even greater success with a novel" (2001, 341). A *Publishers Weekly* reviewer considers the collection as an "impressionistic, uneven collection" and that "some of Leong's stories are slight, but the best of them exploit the stresses of sexual desire and family relationships, and probe the cultural forces shaping the immigrant experience" (2001, 61). Cynthia Liu writes that "Leong's fiction could be weighed down with a didactic impulse to show breadth . . . at the expense of depth" (2000, 13).

Other reviewers address the thematic concerns of Leong's stories and shed deep insights into his perennial concern for ethnicity, gender, and place. Bob Papinchak, in his *Seattle Times* article "Story Collections Draw Portraits of Their Different Worlds," states that Leong's book deals "effortlessly with minority groups, people on the fringe and characters on the edge" and that "Leong's collection coalesces into a telling amalgamation of stories of struggle and survival, of displaced persons seeking accommodation through desire and new identification" (2000, M8). Robert Murray Davis affirms that Leong "has presented important issues for Asian America" and "adopts the voices of various ethnicities—Vietnamese, Chinese (Asian and American born), and Filipino and sexualities to portray a side of that life usually kept from view" (2001, 341).

Reviewers also capture another important theme in Leong's stories: faith and transcendence. Robert Murray Davis recognizes Leong's "struggle toward serenity rather than its attainment" in his use of *samsara*, the Buddhist term for "the world of attachment and the folly of rebirth" (2001, 341). Cynthia Liu treats the three sections of the collection as displaying a deliberate thematic pattern for transcendence. She suggests that stories in the first section, "Leaving," "meditate upon separations"; the second section, "Samsara," "sets the irony of sexual and other couplings, visceral and very basic forms of attachment, against the Buddhistic notion of detachment"; and the

third section, "Paradise," portrays characters who "search for illusory places" (2000, 14). **See also** Asian American Political Activism; Gay Male Literature.

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JIE TIAN

## ◆ LESBIAN LITERATURE

Lesbian literature includes works by lesbian authors and lesbian-themed works by heterosexual authors. Lesbian literature is mainly concerned with issues of personal identity and politics similar to those pursued by contemporary feminists. Lesbian writers and their specific genre of writing always deal with psychological, social, political, and economic oppression from both the patriarchal oppression and heterosexual privilege. As compared with mainstream straight feminist and heterosexual literature,

lesbian literature often probes into various issues related to sexism and into the problems involved in finding a brand-new place for voicing their unique personal identity and life experience. The emergence of lesbian literature has possessed one of the richest and most exciting places in literary academy.

Homosexuality is an issue that involves race, sex, gender, class, and psyche. Homosexuality has long been regarded as “unnatural filthiness,” a threat to heterosexuality and to “that bastion of patriarchal power, the nuclear family” in both Eastern and Western cultures (Kendall 1996, par. 11). Homosexuals have been oppressed, by straight society at large and by their own families; “coming out”—making their homosexual identities known—is a painful and even dangerous step, and homosexual individuals often choose to remain silent and invisible.

Lesbian literature can be seen as an interpretation of the marginalization of lesbians and their nonstraight inner thoughts. It has gained special momentum after 1969’s significant Stonewall Riots event occurred in American Greenwich Village and later the birth of gay rights. The Stonewall Riots event marked a historic turning point when gay men and women renounced their victim status and fought collectively for their rights as normal people. Accordingly, in their own literary expression, lesbian writers often depict various lesbian-related themes and feminism issues, for example, the passionate attachment between two women, woman’s overemotional nature, woman-identified experience, and sometimes distorted mother-daughter relationships. Sometimes lesbian writers even consider themselves political separatists, and they dissociate themselves from heterosexual women, gay men, and some lesbians who are not willing to share their experience. For them, lesbian literature contains certain political undercurrents.

Homosexual relationship is the most prominent theme in lesbian literature, because one’s sexuality must be defined in terms of one’s sexual desire. A lesbian is often defined as a woman whose sexual desire is directed toward women. Besides this, there are other widely discussed themes, including secretly discovering one’s sexual orientation, one’s “coming out,” and dealing with homophobia and discrimination. Homoerotic and homosocial depictions are the two integral parts of lesbian literature. Usually, the same-sex attraction can appeal sexually to a same-sex reader. A sensually appealing description of women or the homosexual friendship as seen in female-bonding activity is often a prevalent treatment in lesbian literature. Lesbian literature’s first goal is to speak out lesbian’s sufferance as members of a sexual minority from minoritizing views. Indeed, lesbian literature has been for a long time deemed as a subculture and vulnerable to charges coming from heterosexist culture.

Generally, lesbian literature can be divided into two developmental periods, pre-Stonewall and post-Stonewall. Before the Stonewall event, there were certain famous lesbian writers, whose works were often viewed as classic lesbian literature. In those

classics, lesbian-related themes or issues may not be explicitly expressed or apparent to uninformed readers. In contrast, the post-Stonewall era has witnessed a rapid development in minority lesbian literary canon. During the 1970s, lesbianism and feminism were actually interwoven to fight against sexism. During this decade, Kate Millett with her representative *Sexual Politics* (1970) reflected the general trend of lesbian and feminist literature, and afterward minority lesbian writers declared more about their political stance.

Lesbian-themed works in Asian American literature have been published since the 1940s, beginning with Margret Chinen's play *All, All Alone* (1947), but Willyce Kim is recognized as the first Asian/Pacific lesbian who published a collection of poetry, *Curtains of Light* (1971). Barbara Noda, Kitty Tsui, Canyon Sam, Merle Woo, and Lisa Asagi share with Kim the effort to revise dominant versions of history and celebrate the "coming out" of Asian American lesbians; they have established a cannon of Asian American lesbian literature. Among them, Kitty Tsui, who emerged in the early 1980s with her representative poem "The Words of a Woman Who Breathes Fire" (1983), is one of the distinguished Asian American lesbian writers with her fire-breathing works that influenced later writers. The following lesbian writing represents a sampling of the prosperity of the previous pioneers. Mei Ng's only published novel *Eating Chinese Food Naked* (1998) depicts her sexual desire, erotic emotions, and the mother-daughter relationship. Sky Lee, a Vancouver-based lesbian writer, is often considered the most promising Asian American lesbian novelist. In her *Disappearing Moon Café* (1990), Lee tells the story of four generations of a Chinese family in Vancouver, Canada. In the same time, the Asian American feminist community is fighting hard against homophobia. For instance, *The Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology* includes several pieces of writing by lesbian writers. The aim of these pieces is to break the silence about sex that has been rooted in Asian American culture for so long a time.

Apart from lesbian fiction and poetry, there are other popular, accepted genres of Asian American lesbian literature, such as a great number of contemporary lesbian mysteries that seem to be attractive to sexual minorities, as well as romance novel, lesbian science fiction, lesbian detective story, fantasy, and horror that address the issues of feminist or lesbian separatist communities. Lesbian fan fiction writers have produced many works in which their fictional heroines are often paired in somewhat romantic and sexual relationships. Furthermore, lesbian erotica is no longer considered an evil way of sex writing and or a queer genre. Asian American lesbian writers have dealt with issues relating to women living communally and with their lives and emotional conflicts. Asian American lesbians have lived in silence or without visibility for a long time. Lesbian identities, lesbian values, and lesbian desires were always repressed in minority literature. This invisibility of lesbian writing has many reasons,

for example, gender, race, and the general environment. An Asian American lesbian is an ethnic minority and a nonstraight female. So minority lesbian writers must begin by questioning their own labels and identity—identities that are either self-imposed or imposed by others. For them, the question of marginalization is a primary concern, and the constructions of race, gender, and sexuality are often combined closely in Asian American lesbian literature. The questions of race, gender, and homosexuality for Asian Americans are complex, owing to decades of invisibility and silence intensified by racism and cultural and social marginalization. Therefore, Asian American lesbian literature emerged as an answer to break this awkward silence.

Contemporary Asian American lesbian writers have focused on the problems of race, gender, and homosexuality and have been shaping the lesbian movement. At the same time Asian American lesbians are becoming increasingly visible and diverse. The *San Francisco Bay Times*, for example, lists several meetings of Chinese lesbian writers with other South Asian, Vietnamese, and Japanese colleagues. Various outsiders struggle with living in an antagonistic environment and they raise their visibility with their literary representation.

It is worth mentioning that contemporary lesbian literary works are often published by several lesbian-oriented presses, while mainstream and popular publishing houses have not always been willing to accept lesbian writing. Thus, a number of exclusively women's presses have been set up to promote lesbian literature and lesbian sensibility. Mainstream white publishing houses did not believe that the market (mainly of heterosexual white people) could accept minority lesbian-feminist's sexually attractive and politically explicit writing. However, as the Asian American population increases, the market for lesbian literature and lesbian books has also greatly widened. Some large publishing houses are recognizing more and more Asian American lesbian writers.

In recent years, contemporary lesbian literature has taken the politics of role-playing into its consideration. The genres of lesbian literature have become diversified. And the division of the lesbian literary community has started to narrow; solidarity between lesbian sisters has been largely strengthened; and communication with gay men has been enhanced. Lesbian literature also has started to explore more meaningful themes and issues, among which, butch-femme relationship between lesbian couples is a big concern. Some argue that butch-femme relationship is encouraging because it redefines the possibility of lesbian sexuality and deconstructs heterosexism; others counterargue that this kind of erotic role division involves heterosexual issues and might reproduce the same patriarchal power. **See also** Feminism and Asian America; Sexism and Asian America.

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LI ZHANG

### ◆ LIM, SHIRLEY GEOK-LIN (1944–)

Known throughout the United States as a prominent Asian American poet, scholar, and professor, Shirley Geok-lin Lim also maintains an international reputation, newly hailed as "Malaysia's finest poet" and widely acclaimed as an important transnational novelist, memoirist, and critic whose prolific writing claims the themes of identity and difference, feminism and sisterhood, love and parenting, politics and the experiences of colonialism.

Shirley Geok-lin Lim was born on December 27, 1944, in Malacca, Malaysia. Her poetry has been said to enact an aesthetics of liberation in political terms (Tay 2005, 289), but also to represent a poetics of loss in personal terms (Wong 2007, xiii). These divergent yet complimentary forces are sometimes attributed to the powerful challenges Lim experienced as a child abandoned by her mother yet favored by her father, as a girl excluded for her gender yet rewarded for her intelligence, and as a writer celebrated for her insights into the construction of identity while bearing the representational responsibility of multiple subject positions whether "ethnic" (Chinese, Peranakan, Asian, **Asian American**), "regional" (Californian, American, Malaysian, Transnational), or "political" (postcolonial, leftist, feminist).

Lim published her first poem in the *Malacca Times* at 10 years of age, claiming at 11 to have found her destiny in poetry and thus still reserves her deepest intellectual loyalty to language. In "Lament," Lim makes clear the sacrifices exacted and betrayals felt as a result of her commitment to writing—and to writing in the colonizer's tongue. A comparison of Jacques Derrida's analysis of a colonial monolingualism to Lim's poetry and autobiography suggests that Lim's paradoxical relation to English has less to do with personal choice than political, social, and cultural conditions that offered English as the only mechanism through which to express self and to create the craft of literary work (Leow 2007). Ironically, contemporary nationalist politics in Malaysia requires that any writer of "national literature" write in Bahasa Malaysia, not in

English. Lim's status, therefore, as Malaysia's finest poet may be contested by politicians, though it would be defended by scholars. Lim has published numerous volumes of creative writing, including *Crossing the Peninsula* (1980), for which she won the Commonwealth Poetry Prize—the first Asian and the first woman writer to do so. Her other collections include *Another Country and Other Stories* (1982), *No Man's Grove and Other Poems* (1985), *Modern Secrets: New and Selected Poems* (1989), *Monsoon History: Selected Poems* (1994), *Life's Mysteries: The Best of Shirley Lim* (1995), *Two Dreams* (1997), *What the Fortune Teller Didn't Say* (1998), and *Listening to the Singer* (2007), a powerful collection of poems that represents her most important works of poetry.

Shirley Lim was the first person ever to win the highest honors— a First-Class Honors—bestowed by the British to a student in English at the University of Malaya. In the United States Lim earned her MA (1971) and PhD (1973) from Brandeis University on scholarship. An uncomfortable speaker of Chinese (Hokkien, a southeastern Chinese dialect), Lim's familiar, sensory response to Chinese nevertheless affords a viable connection to China—"My father raised us as traditional Chinese" (Fox, par. 37)—its history, and poets, and to the experience of the Chinese diaspora. Commenting on the cultural chauvinism still haunting Chinese life, "Pantun for Chinese Women"—one of Lim's most famous poems—sharply criticizes the practice of female infanticide as the speaker, a mother whose female baby is suffocated in ashes, cries "I cannot bear the waste," a sentiment of resistance shared by the author (2007, 68). Written in the unique and unusually complex poetic form of the pantun, a form original to Malay tradition dating back to the fifteenth century, the poem marks several interesting political gestures: here Lim ties China and Malaysia in a marriage of content and form that not only dismisses the political demand for cultural purity in Malay literary expression but which also indicts the Chinese diaspora, perhaps suggesting that the cultural practices of female subjugation travel both through time and across regions, an inheritance no woman should agree to bear.

Her autobiography, *Among the White Moon Faces: An Asian-American Memoir of Homelands* (1996; also published in Singapore in 1996 as *Among the White Moon Faces: Memoirs of a Nonya Feminist*)—winner of a 1996 American Book Award—carries this feminist theme as it traces a developing consciousness that finds liberation in unusual conditions: educated in a Catholic convent school in Malacca, Lim depicts the nuns as domineering and fickle but also reveals that she was there exposed to a dynamic of women's roles figured differently from the Confucian ones she learned at home, such that she transformed what might have been just another kind of subjugation into a different kind of freedom. The autobiography depicts the complications of Malaysian political and social upheaval as having ramifications that are personal, even bodily: "Every cultural change is signified through and on the body," thus her birth in

December 1944, “at the peak of Japanese torturous repression, and of food shortages and mass starvation,” makes a lasting impression: “Can an infant carry memories of hunger and terror, the whisper of rumors, the blackout of censorship? Can she imbibe the early darkness of days without electrical energy, the lackadaisical quiet of a mother’s malnutrition . . . ?” (38). The autobiography testifies that these events mark the body and the heart and affect consciousness itself. The struggles against oppression and racism, sexism and poverty are enacted against the external world but are also fought internally; hence the narrative depicts the role that intellectual training and international travel play in helping to change perspective.

Lim’s colonial education and white Christian teachers, the political domination of British power in Malaysia, and her father’s Westernized household (a fan of Hollywood, Lim’s father named Shirley after Shirley Temple because of their shared dimples) meant that the presence of the “white moon faces” in Lim’s daily life was unmistakable and powerful; nevertheless, the autobiography strikes a note for autonomous action: “We are all mimic people, born to cultures that push us, shape us, and pummel us; and we are all agents, with the power of the subject, no matter how puny or inarticulate, to push back and to struggle against such shaping” (65). Lim does not oversimplify by labeling colonialism as a force that only damages the purity of other cultures and people but instead reveals how identity is built in and against political and cultural oppressions of all kinds.

The second half of the autobiography focuses on adjusting to living in the United States, to being a young parent, and to meeting the challenges of the career world of an author and professor. Beaten herself as a child, Lim experiences learning to be a good mother as a conscious, fraught, and difficult passage: “To change the blow to a caress, the sharp and ugly words to careful explanation, the helpless choking rage to empathy, that is my struggle as a mother: to form a different love” (203). As she begins to publish her work in Malaysia and Singapore, Lim also develops her identity as an Asian American and as a feminist: “To grow as an Asian-American scholar, I needed more than books and a room of my own. I needed a society of scholars, an abundance of talk, an antagonism of ideas, bracing hostile seriousness, and above all a community of women” (227). This transition is emotional (her American-born son is her visceral link to Americanness) and intellectual. Here, the autobiography offers an interesting insight into the way a field of study is born and how institutions both subvert and support intellectual, political, and culture change. Lim records the surprised responses of her university students in California who with delight recognized her as their first Asian American professor and who listened to lectures intently, discovering stories about themselves and their heritage as Asian Americans, stories that were then taking hold as new courses were taught and programs in **Asian American studies** were formed on California campuses. The irony is not lost on Lim: “Setting out from a

nation that denied people like me an equal homeland, I find myself, ironically, making a home in a state that had once barred people like me from its territory" (230).

Lim is the author of three transnational novels, *Joss and Gold* (2001), *Sister Swing* (2006), and *Princess Shawl* (2008). *Princess Shawl*, which is specifically geared to the international young adult audience, features nine-year-old Mei Li whose journey affords her both historical and cultural knowledge that is in danger of being forgotten. In this story, Lim stays true to her interest in the impact of familial relations on individual character and personal courage as well as to her commitment to representing the intercultural connections within Asian communities and histories. *Joss and Gold* was originally intended as a modern revision of the *Madame Butterfly* story, but the story outgrows the themes associated with that classic narrative and thus moves to larger, more contemporary complexities spawned by a globalizing world, shifting social and professional roles, and different values. In this novel, time plays an important role in revealing the changes that societies produce—not just in terms of buildings and technologies but also in terms of identity. With financial success and social mobility, Li An, the main character, is free to raise her daughter as a single mother, unbeknownst to the child's father, an American named Chester. The story travels from Malaysia to the United States to Singapore, tracing the changes in attitudes and expectations of its characters, who as Leong Liew Geok observes in the novel's afterword, are challenged by their postcolonial and postfeminist world and all of its attendant demands. Asking for too much, the novel suggests, may not be wise—or necessary.

Lim's *Sister Swing* may be read as Asian literature or Asian American literature, or as transnational literature, representing the bizarre interconnectedness of discourses of power or freedom and their profound effect on and illusory presence in everyone's life. This novel tells the story of three sisters in Malaysia who wend their way to Southern California just after the **Vietnam War**, encountering the tail end of the Vietnam War era shifts in cultural values and the subsequent rebirth of the evangelical movement in the United States. When Swee and Yen take a motorcycle ride with their new boyfriends, Sandy and Wayne, to the Angeles National Forest, Sandy takes everyone down a trail to an isolated, rusting old mobile home to meet Keith, an old vet turned militiaman. Although the girls are quickly whisked off by Wayne ("We're out of here, babes," 86) when he realizes the nature of the organization Keith runs, it is not before a woman in the group takes stock of Swee and Yen, calling them "gook girls" and "hos," and not before Swee notes the swastika painted backward on the outhouse wall. Swee recalls the right name for the sign, Wan'zi, a Buddhist sign for right motion and enlightenment, but here, she knows, "It was a bad sign in America" (87). The appearance of the swastika, faded but nevertheless present, speaks volumes about the fascist past that it represents and warns of a future of racist aggression. The mingling of signs and their transmutation from enlightenment to ignorance, from right motion to

destruction mirrors the construction of the great cross of lights that Peik, the third sister, hopes to build above the city of Los Angeles as a towering sign of Christian enlightenment but which turns out to be the site of an act of involuntary manslaughter as Keith and Sandy (as his assumed accomplice) burn down the massive electric cross, killing two Mexicans asleep beneath it, parishioners who had volunteered to help build it. Reminiscent of the KKK's cross burning, an act motivated by the intent to intimidate and to symbolize racial superiority, Keith and Sandy's bomb ignites a firestorm of political talk about illegal immigrant labor, the homeless, the plight of veterans, and so forth. Lim's story subtly indicates that these master narratives of a master race do not die but find their representation in symbols or signifiers to which their proponents tie their constructed signifieds. The notion that there is any permanent or fixed meaning to the Buddhist Wan'zi or the Christian cross—or to any other sign of the self or Being itself—is here deconstructed: the sign in a particular context can serve any meaning. It can even contain completely oppositional meanings, if only in traces, or “embers,” Derrida's image of the burning remnant, ghostly presence. At the start of the novel, Swee leaves Malaysia to escape the ghost of her father, Ah Kong, but instead she encounters all the ghosts of American society and history, right down to the cross-burning prejudice and institutionalized racism of its history and up through its alienated Vietnam soldiers, veterans whose presence speaks to the dark side of American imperialism and political hegemony. Haunted by a history of being determined by culture and tradition, power and language, speaking to the ghosts of the social and political order in a discursive form that both invokes and provokes their presence, *Sister Swing* may be read as a spectro-poetics that seeks a séance with the history of its inheritance to awaken another way of living.

Among the nine texts that Lim has produced and which have greatly influenced the field of Asian American studies are volumes of which she has been either the editor or coeditor: *The Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology* (1989), *Approaches to Teaching Kingston's The Woman Warrior* (1991), and *Asian American Literature: An Anthology* (1999). Her commitment to creative writing and to the academy can be seen in two collections: *South-east Asian American Writing: Tilting the Continent* (1999) and *Power, Race and Gender in Academe: Strangers in the Tower?* (2000), in addition to her books on literary criticism, which include *Nationalism and Literature: Literature in English from the Philippines and Singapore* (1993) and *Writing South-east/Asia in English: Against the Grain* (1994). After winning the Commonwealth Poetry Prize (1980), Lim was the winner of numerous other prestigious awards and prizes: the American Book Award/Before Columbus Award (1990), the American Book Award (1997), National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) (1978, 1987), a Mellon Fellowship (1983, 1987), and a Fulbright Scholar (1996), to list a few. Lim has also been the chair of women's studies at the University of California, Santa

Barbara (1997–1999) and chair professor of English at the University of Hong Kong. Her work in women's studies includes her service on the editorial boards of *Feminist Studies* and *Women's Studies Quarterly*, though these are not the only journals with which Lim—who also was the founding editor of *Asian America: Journal of Culture and the Arts*—is involved, as she maintains an advisory position on at least 10 other journals. Her many interviews worldwide—at least 30, including *Asiaweek* (1999), *South China Morning Post* (1999), and in *The Diasporic Imagination: Identifying Asian-American Representations in America* (1999)—include radio and television interviews, such as *Fooling with Words*, a Public Broadcasting Station (PBS) special with Bill Moyers (Sept. 21, 1999). **See also** Asian Diasporas; Colonialism and Postcolonialism; Feminism and Asian America; Sexism and Asian America.

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## ◆ LIN, YUTANG (1895–1976)

Lin Yutang is a novelist, essayist, scholar, and translator who was well versed in both English and Chinese and used both in his creative writing. Surprisingly, the output in the former by far surpasses the latter, although almost all of his English writings have been translated into Chinese. Among his works that are well-known on both sides of the Pacific are *My Country and My People* (1935), *The Importance of Living* (1937), *The Wisdom of Confucius* (1938), and *Moment in Peking* (1939). His writings, humorous and witty, played an important part in spreading Chinese culture to American readers and are noted for their happy and optimistic attitude toward life.

Lin Yutang was born on October 10, 1895, in Longxi County, Fujian Province, China, and was raised in a Christian family. His father was a Presbyterian pastor who often instilled in the young Lin Yutang the importance of education and communicated his passion for all that was new and modern from the West to his children. When he was 6, Lin entered primary school. In 1912, at the age of 17, he was admitted to St. John's University in Shanghai, where he studied English, theology and philosophy. After graduation, he accepted a teaching position at Qinghua College in Beijing. Having taught at Qinghua for three years, he received a half-scholarship from Harvard and was admitted to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. In 1919 he went to the United States with his newlywed wife to study comparative literature at Harvard under Irving Babbitt and Bliss Perry. He left Harvard a year later because of economic constraints. Then he moved to France, where Lin Yutang worked with the YMCA for Chinese laborers at Le Creusot, a small town in France, from 1920 to 1921. Then Lin studied at Jena and Leipzig in Germany, where he received his doctorate in linguistics in 1923 with a dissertation topic *Altchinsische Lautlehre* (*Ancient Chinese Phonetics*). After four years of stay abroad, Dr. Lin returned to his native land in 1923, and he became professor of English at Beijing National University from 1923 to 1926 and was dean of Women's Normal College in 1926, and then professor and dean of the College of Arts and Letters at Xiamen University.

Lin's creative writing career can be divided into three periods: the first period started from the late 1920s to the early 1930s in Shanghai; the second period—which was the most important stage in his life—spanned from the late 1930s to the early 1960s; and the third period covered the time from 1966 to 1976 during his sojourn in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

During his period in Shanghai, Lin set up three influential magazines—*Lunyu* (*Analects*, 1923), *Renshijian* (*This Human World*, 1934), and *Yuzhoufeng* (*The Cosmic Wind*, 1935) and was the editor of all three. In early 1927 he was invited by Cai Yuanpei to work for the Wuhan nationalist government as a secretary of the foreign

ministry, but he quit the job shortly. From 1927, he devoted his entire energy to writing and produced many humorous and insightful essays, in addition to writing English articles for newspapers and journals. He became famous and was dubbed "the Master of Humor." During this period he also wrote two popular English textbooks, *The Kaiming English Reader* (1929) and *The Kaiming English Grammar Based on National Category* (1931), which had a huge circulation in China. At the suggestion of Pearl S. Buck, who won the Pulitzer Prize for her book *The Good Earth* and also the Nobel Literature Prize and with whom he formed a lifetime friendship, Dr. Lin published his first successful English book *My Country and My People* in New York in September 1935.

Through writing *My Country and My People*, Dr. Lin hoped to present a clearer picture of the Chinese and Chinese culture by crossing the barrier of the language. The book is divided into two parts. Part 1 deals with the fundamentals of Chinese life and their distinctive ethnic, psychological, and intellectual qualities. Part 2 introduces the multifaceted aspects of the Chinese, women, society, politics, literature, arts, and so forth. At that time in the United States, Chinese as a minority were discriminated against, as were the blacks. Instead of being called Chinese, they were commonly referred to as "Chinamen" or "Chinks," as most of them were working either in Chinese restaurants or in the laundry. In his writing, Dr. Lin attempted to censure this racial discrimination and reveal the strange curiosity of white men. Whenever they think of the Chinese, they would think of the skewed-eye yellow race, or they would associate the Chinese with silk, tea, chopsticks, opium, pigtailed men, bound-feet women, or even fortune cookies. Lin did succeed in presenting an authentic description of the mysterious Orient and the "inscrutable" Chinese. During a short period of four months, *My Country and My People* was reprinted seven times and was widely read by American readers. "The book burst like a shell over the Western world," according to the *New York Times* (qtd. in Lin Taiyi 1998, 6). "*My Country and My People* is the clearest and most interesting dissection and synthesis of China past and present that I have read," wrote Fanny Butcher in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* (ibid). "One of the most important and satisfactory books yet written in English on the character, life and philosophy of the Chinese people," wrote W.L. Langer in *Foreign Affairs* (ibid). "No one who wants to know either old or new China need go beyond the covers of *My Country and My People* . . . The whole gamut of matters Chinese is here treated with a deftness, a frankness, an intelligence, a subtlety seldom matched in any work," commented T.F. Opine in *Churchman* (ibid). Lin Yutang became internationally known overnight.

After the publication of his book *The Importance of Living* in 1937, it became a best seller in the United States, which was especially recommended by the Book of the



Month Club and occupied the top place on the best seller list for 52 weeks. Later it was translated into a dozen languages.

When commenting on life as a rhythmic poem in *The Importance of Living*, Lin Yutang wrote:

I think that, from a biological standpoint, human life almost reads like a poem. It has its own rhythm and beat, its internal cycles of growth and decay. It begins with innocent childhood, followed by awkward adolescence trying awkwardly to adapt itself to mature society, with its young passions and follies, its ideals and ambitions; then it reaches a manhood of intense activities, profiting from experience and learning more about society and human nature; at middle age, there is a slight easing of tension, a mellowing of character like the ripening of fruit or the mellowing of good wine, and the gradual acquiring of a more tolerant, more cynical and at the same time a kindlier view of life; then in the sunset of our life, the endocrine glands decrease their activity, and if we have a true philosophy of old age and have ordered our life pattern according to it, it is for us the age of peace and security and leisure and contentment; finally, life flickers out and one goes into eternal sleep, never wake up again. One should be able to sense the beauty of this rhythm of life, to appreciate, as we do in grand symphonies, its main theme, its strains of conflict and the final resolution. (1998, 29)

In his writing, Lin depicts vividly his approach to life, the enjoyment of home, his attitude on friendship, travel, and nature, the art of thinking, his views on humankind, the passion and wisdom of the East and the West, and, ultimately, his relationship with God in an easy, casual, but engaging language. "Dr. Lin has performed the inestimable service of distilling the philosophy of generations of Chinese sages and presenting it against a modern . . . background, which makes it easily readable and understandable," said a reviewer for *The Saturday Review of Literature* (qtd. in Lin Taiyi 1998, 7). Until his death in 1976, *The Importance of Living* had been reprinted over 40 times in the United States.

*Moment in Peking* (1940) is a novel set against a historic background of Peking (modern-day Beijing) and presents a panoramic view of the historic events starting from the Boxer Rebellion (1900) to the beginning of the second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945). It is merely a story of how men and women in the contemporary era grow up and learn to live with one another, how they love and hate and quarrel and forgive and suffer and enjoy, how certain habits of living and ways of thinking are formed, and how, above all, they adjust themselves to the circumstances in this earthly life where men strive but the gods rule. It is a novel of social history. Like *The Importance of Living*, it became a selection of the Book of the Month Club. To a certain extent, it is a classic depicting modern Chinese life.

Throughout his life Lin Yutang wrote 38 books. These include: *A Leaf in the Storm*, *The Vermilion Gate*, *Chinatown Family*, *The Wisdom of Confucius*, *On the*

*Wisdom of America, The Wisdom of China and India, Gay Genius: The Life and Times of Su Tungpo, With Love and Irony, Between Tears and Laughter, The Vigil of a Nation, Looking Beyond, Lady Wu, The Secret Name, The Chinese Way of Life, From Pagan to Christianity, The Red Peony, The Pleasure of a Nonconformist, The Flight of Innocents,* and so on. During the last 10 years of his life, he moved to Taiwan and wrote mainly in Chinese. The quality of his writing in these years compared with the first two periods was not as substantial as the earlier periods. His English writing paled his Chinese counterpart. His most cherished achievement during this period culminated in his compiling of the *Lin Yutang Chinese-English Dictionary of Modern Usage* in 1972.

Lin was awarded an honorary degree of doctor of literature by Elmira College in New York, Rutgers University in New Jersey, and by Beloit College in Wisconsin. In 1948 Lin Yutang became the head of the Arts and Letters Division of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris. He was made president of the Taipei Chinese Center, International PEN. In 1972 and 1973 he was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature. He passed away in Hong Kong on March 26, 1976. Because of his contribution to promoting cultures, he was often compared to the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci.

As a writer, wit, and citizen of the world, Lin Yutang has portrayed the soul of the Chinese people to the people of the English-speaking world in a way no person has done before. He is one who used his adopted language with artistry and brilliance to convey humanity's aspirations to preserve the precious values of the human spirit, which is the envy and admiration of native speakers. Lin Yutang once wrote a couplet to describe what he has intended to fulfill throughout his life:

With two feet I cross over the East-West cultures,  
With one mind I comment on the universal writings.

This has truly summarized the life of a literate son of the Orient and humane man of the world.

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◆ LIU, AIMEE E. (1953–)

Aimee E. Liu is a Chinese American writer. Primarily known as a novelist who has so far published three novels—*Face* (1994), *Cloud Mountain* (1997), and *Flash House* (2003)—Liu has also written a memoir and coauthored some nonfiction self-help books with other writers. One-quarter Chinese, Liu was born and bred in a white neighborhood in Connecticut. Before starting her career as a writer, Liu attended Yale University and received her BA degree in 1975 in painting. She soon gave up painting, for it could not prepare her for a living. After that, she has worked as a fashion model, flight attendant, and associate producer of NBC's *Today* show. She currently resides in Los Angeles, California, with her husband and two sons.

Starting to write at the age of 23, Liu's first book, *Solitaire* (1979), is a memoir about an eating disorder that she suffered from, and her battle with food, weight, and the pain of being in and out of the modeling profession as a teenager in the 1960s. The book not only won her many readers and much acclaim but also helped pull her out of 8 years of suffering. In the next 10 years, she coauthored several books on child care and self-help, including such works as *Bringing out the Best in Your Baby* (1986), *False Love and Other Romantic Illusions* (1990), *Success Trap* (1990), *The Academy Book of Childcare* (1991), and *The Codependency Conspiracy* (1991). She frequently gives public talks at universities and institutions. Currently she teaches as a member of the faculty of Goddard College's Port Townsend MFA program in creative writing. She also served as the 2002 president of the literary organization PEN USA.

In 1994 Liu published her first novel *Face*, a story that deals with issues of racial prejudice and intermarriage. Like Maibelle Chung, the protagonist of the novel, Liu did not closely examine her heritage until later in her life. Her first novel is based on her firsthand experience as a biracial: feelings of being in-between and the hyphenated identity. As some readers have pointed out, it is about the mingled fear and discomfort with which a woman confronts her heritage—both as a Chinese American and as the daughter of a renowned wartime photographer. Set in New York's **Chinatown**, the novel reveals Maibelle's conflicted feelings of being an outsider of Chinatown and the Chinese cultural context, with curly red hair and green eyes. Invited by Tommy Wah, one of her brother's former boyhood friends, she agreed to contribute pictures of Chinatown for a book about Chinatown that he is writing. Thus, Maibelle is drawn back to the Chinatown that she has tried to avoid and begins to investigate the place and its history. She takes pains to reenter the dysfunctional family. Like most Chinese American youths who are reluctant to admit their relationship with Chinatown and who are equally unable to leave it behind all together, Maibelle is caught in such a painful dilemma of wanting to leave but is never able to leave it totally behind. In the novel Liu presents a vivid tale about the unusual experience of the main character.

Liu's second novel, *Cloud Mountain*, written with a lyrical and haunting quality, is a story based on the lives of her grandparents, who had an interracial marriage, a very rare thing at the turn of the twentieth century. This autobiographical work has attracted a large readership since its publication. It mainly deals with the interracial marriage and life experiences of her grandparents. According to a friend of hers, it is about true courage and two people who dared to cross the barriers that a bigoted society had placed between them. Hope Newfield, the protagonist of the novel, portrayed after Liu's grandmother (Jennie Ella Trescott), is a young English teacher in California, tutoring Asian students. She falls in love with her student, a Chinese scholar, revolutionary, and a friend of Dr. Sun Yat-sen—Liang Po-yu (Liu Cheng-yu). On the man's part, it is a story of a man who devoted his life to the course of democracy in China, and, on the woman's part, it is a narrative about a woman who stood by her husband at all costs. As many readers have found out, the novel is quite ambitious in scope, both temporally and spaciouly, spanning the time between 1900 and 1940 and across the Asian and American continents. Liu's narrative traces the history of both countries one hundred years ago from the perspective of a family.

Liu's third novel, *Flash House* (originally the name of an Indian brothel), was published in 2003 and is considerably different from her first two in subject matter. This time, the novel is set in post-World War II India, the country that her mother loved because of the family's two-year stay there. Instead of writing another semiautobiographical novel, the author presents a plot-driven adventure. The protagonist of the novel is Joanna Shaw, who met her husband, a Chinese/American journalist Aidan Shaw, in the maze of mirrors at a beachside carnival, and is strongly attracted by his unique political beliefs. With their son Simon, she follows him happily to pursue his journalism career in India in 1949. There she runs a rescue agency—Safe House—for Asian prostitutes in New Delhi and saves a 10-year-old rape victim, Kamla. One day Aidan leaves Joanna asleep in their bed and sets out on what she has been told is an assignment. However, soon afterward Joanna is informed that her husband has died in an airplane crash in Kashmir. Refusing to believe her husband's death without the recovery of his body as proof, Joanna enlists the help of Aidan's best friend, an Australian journalist Lawrence Malcolm, and sets off for the northernmost reaches of India, the last place where Aidan was seen alive. Joanna also brings Kamla as the translator and her young son Simon.

There, their quest hits a dead end when they find the body of the woman journalist who was traveling with Aidan. Gradually losing her heart in locating Aidan, Joanna begins an affair with Malcolm, but she soon learns that Malcolm plays a key role with her husband in an espionage operation, as a result of which Aidan, with communist leanings, may have escaped to China. Using the political tension in the mountainous convergence of Kashmir, the Soviet Union, Outer Mongolia, Tibet, Afghanistan, and

China as the vehicle for progress, and Hong Kong, Calcutta, Milwaukee, and Washington as the backdrop, Liu creates multiple layers of suspense and bittersweet stories that carry the reader from the beginning to the end.

As some readers may have noticed, the story, told with a scissor-sharp precision, is not about politics or fidelity or even understanding but simply about the mutual ineptitude of love. The author seems to have told us that truth sometimes is indistinguishable from illusion, and they occasionally even overlap. So merely keeping a strong faith and belief in love or in anything valuable is inadequate; instead, struggling for what one believes in and never giving up on the things and people one loves is a matter of paramount importance.

Reading Aimee Liu's novels, one can make easy associations between her and Amy Tan. In fact, Tan is the Asian American author that she respects the most. She openly expressed her admiration for Tan in an interview by saying that if it were not for Amy Tan's success, she would not have developed an interest in publishing Asian American stories. Yet in spite of the same interest they share, the focuses of Liu and Tan in writing are different. Whereas Tan's interest is the Chinese American experience, Liu shows a greater concern with interracial relationships. No matter how different they are in their focus, both writers have made American readers sit up and listen to their experiences through their fascinating stories.

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WEI LU

#### ◆ LIU, ERIC (1968–)

A Chinese American writer, commentator, and essayist, Eric Liu is best known for his collection of essays *The Accidental Asian: Notes of a Native Speaker* (1998), which explores issues of assimilation and American identity, and for his work that articulates the political concerns of Generation X. Born in Poughkeepsie, New York, Eric Liu is the son of Chinese parents who emigrated from Taiwan. His childhood awareness of racial difference and the difficulties caused by feeling that he did not fully belong to a Chinese or American community would become the basis for many of his most powerful essays.

Liu graduated from Yale University and then went on to Harvard Law School, where he met and married a white woman. He began his career in politics and the

media as a speechwriter for President Bill Clinton and later served as the president's deputy domestic policy adviser during Clinton's second term. After working in the White House, Liu became an executive at the digital media company RealNetworks. He has written for the *Washington Post Magazine* and *USA Weekend* and often appears on CNN, CNBC, and MSNBC. *GQ* magazine included him among the "Pundits We Like," and *A. Magazine* named Liu one of the nation's 25 most influential Asian Americans. The World Economic Forum listed him as one of the 100 Global Leaders of Tomorrow in 2002.

Liu founded *The Next Progressive*, a journal of political thought in 1991, in part as a response to heated discussions in the media that decried the apathy and underachievement of members of Generation X, postboomer young people who became associated with a slacker mentality and approach to politics. *The Next Progressive's* layout was deliberately stark to focus on content rather than form and as a rejection of the showy images often used on Generation X audiences. Identifying his generation as pragmatic, media savvy, and beyond simplistic partisan politics, Liu sought to create a forum for this new progressive population. Liu even criticized the use of the term *Generation X* to describe his peers, arguing that the X connotes a false absence of identity and purpose that does not describe the dynamism and energy of his generation. *The Next Progressive* sought readers who reflected the high education level and professional attainment of many of its writers and who shared a desire for community- and grassroots-oriented politics.

Following the publication of his edited anthology *Next: Young American Writers on the New Generation* (1994), Liu secured his position as an unofficial spokesman for his generation. *Next* is a collection of essays by such writers as David Greenberg, Lalo Lopez, Ted Kleine, and Elizabeth Wurtzel, who examine various aspects and concerns of the twenty-something population. Many of the pieces focus on the multicultural realities of American life and express dissatisfaction with the ideologies of the baby boom generation. Although many reviewers found the anthology to be riddled with generalities and vague claims that only validated media representations of Generation X, other critics praised the book's attempt to move beyond the stereotypes that characterize young people in the United States. In his own contribution to the anthology, "A Chinaman's Chance: Reflections on the American Dream," Liu affirms his belief in the opportunities offered by the United States and explores the abiding optimism of his generation.

At the age of 30, Liu published his most notable book, *The Accidental Asian: Notes of a Native Speaker*, which was named a *New York Times* Notable Book and was featured in the PBS documentary *Matters of Race*. Critics largely praised *The Accidental Asian* as a thoughtful examination of racial identity and political matters, citing it as an important corrective on the primarily black-white discussion of race in the United

States. Henry Louis Gates Jr. called it “a major contribution to the literature that defines what it means to be an American” (back cover). In the book’s 10 essays, Liu explores his experiences as a second-generation Chinese American, describing his limited knowledge of the Chinese language, his father’s favorite American idioms, and his adolescent frustrations with his “Chinese hair,” which refused to be styled. As he questions which aspects of his personality are Chinese, American, white, and Asian, Liu offers a powerful critique of assimilation and the ways in which society attempts to categorize individuals according to racialized identities. His unique insights cover such topics as the meaning of **Chinatown**, the notion of Chinese as the “New Jews,” and growing fears of a “yellow planet.” Liu identifies the biological inheritance of his race “accidental” while affirming the freedom of Americans to create themselves anew. Toward the end of the book, Liu coins the term *omniculturalism* to refer to the “end product of American life” (1998, 201), which consists of a type of cultural **hybridity** based on democratic assimilation. *The Accidental Asian* can be read as both memoir and as a series of interconnected essays, much like the earlier classic of Asian American literature, Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* (1976). Moreover, the book’s title refers both to Chang-Rae Lee’s *Native Speaker* (1996) and Richard Wright’s *Native Son* (1940), indicating Liu’s deliberate engagement with voices on the margins of American society.

Liu followed the success of *The Accidental Asian* with *Guiding Lights: The People Who Lead Us Toward Our Purpose in Life* (2005). Examining the teaching strategies of such diverse instructors as a Hollywood acting coach, a gourmet chef, and a eurythmics teacher, Liu identifies five key concepts essential to transmitting knowledge and skills. These include learning about the unique strengths and abilities of students, helping them surmount inner difficulties, connecting the subject matter to other issues, interpreting relationships, and empowering students to become teachers themselves. Liu explores these strategies through the real-life experiences of instructors and students, using storytelling as a powerful pedagogic device in this moving meditation on mentorship and lifelong learning.

Currently, Liu lives with his daughter in Seattle where he writes the Teachings column for *Slate* magazine and teaches at the University of Washington’s Evans School of Public Affairs. He is also a fellow at the New America Foundation and hosts *Seattle Voices*, a well regarded television interview program. He continues to lecture across the country, speaking at conferences, corporations, and campuses. Among the numerous national and civic organizations that he works with are: the Washington State Board of Education, the Seattle Public Library, the Seattle Center Foundation, Common Cause, Demos, the Asian Community Leadership Foundation, and the League of Education Voters. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Assimilation/Americanization.

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STEPHANIE LI

◆ LIU YUZHEN. See Lau, Carolyn Lei-Lanilau

◆ LOH, SANDRA TSING (1962–)

Sandra Tsing Loh is an essayist, novelist, radio personality, composer, and performance artist of German-Chinese descent. She is known for her humor in the style of her writing and performances. Her Valley column appeared in *Buzz* magazine in Los Angeles in the 1990s, and she received the Pushcart Prize for Fiction for her story "My Father's Chinese Wives" (1997), which appeared in the *1999 Norton Anthology of Short Fiction* and other anthologies. The story details her widowed father's attempts to obtain a mail-order bride from China. Among Loh's books, *If You Lived Here, You'd Be Home By Now* was named one of the 100 Best Fiction Books of 1998 by the *Los Angeles Times*. Her *Depth Takes a Holiday: Essays from Lesser Los Angeles* is a monologue, and *A Year in Van Nuys*, a semiautobiographical novel. Her music includes the solo piano album *Pianovision* (1989) and composition work for the documentary *Breathing Lessons*, which received an Oscar in 1998. Another aspect of her work is her radio commentary for KCRW and National Public Radio (NPR). Loh has also performed one-person theater shows that humorously describe her experience. Although Loh discusses the plight and circumstances of ethnic Americans, she generally avoids depicting the experience of any one particular ethnic group, preferring to leave room for interpretation. In an interview with Gloria Goodale, Loh admits that she finds "theater based on racial exclusivity to be very limiting." Loh said that "anyone who has ever felt they didn't fit in somewhere, at some time" would be able to relate to her themes (1999, 18).

Critics have described Loh as a humorous, poignant writer of everyday situations. Though occasionally criticized for her lack of depth, Loh is generally praised as being unexpectedly insightful, considering the whimsical nature of her works. In a *Publishers Weekly* article, Sybil S. Scofield and Jeff Zaleski write that Loh's vivacious and cynical



work explores the lives of ethnic Americans living in LA. Her writing style is highly conversational with unorthodox typographical devices, charts and diagrams, and written descriptions of sound, while her radio programs vary pitch, tone, and speed of speech. In each case, Loh takes full advantage of the strengths of each medium; her ability to do so demonstrates her flexibility and talent as an artist.

Loh's first nonfiction collection, *Depth Takes a Holiday: Essays from Lesser Los Angeles* (1996) is a collection of humorous essays about contemporary topics ranging from IKEA to the television show *Baywatch*. Much of the humor in *Depth Takes a Holiday* is regional, centering on Los Angeles and the surrounding area. Many of the essays originate from Loh's time as a writer at *Buzz* magazine, and material from the book was later used for her one-person theater show *Depth Becomes Her*. Reviews for *Depth Takes a Holiday* were largely positive; Marlene McCampbell indicates that Loh's most acrimonious observations are tempered by her apologetic, self-deprecating wit. In a *Publishers Weekly* article, Genevieve Stuttaford claims that even those Loh satirizes in her writing will appreciate her sarcastic yet humorous portrayal of life in a modern city.

*If You Lived Here, You'd Be Home By Now* (1997), Loh's first novel, tells the story of Bronwyn Peters, a 30-year-old graduate student who struggles in poverty with her screenwriter boyfriend, living on her graduate fellowship and his unemployment checks. Although the two bohemians previously repudiated the glamorous Los Angeles lifestyle, Bronwyn finds herself envying her successful friends and wishing for material pleasures. The novel illustrates the superficiality of LA and the struggle to attain a higher scale of living. In a *Pacific Historical Review* essay, Krista Comer compares this work's narrator to Maxine Hong Kingston's *Tripmaster Monkey* (1989) and reads it as a coming-of-age story, indicative of a new American cultural and political context in which ethnicity/racial awareness is personified as an everyday, commodified phenomenon. Comer argues that, Loh, along with Cynthia Kadohata, Lisa See, Karen Tei Yamashita, and Lucha Corpi, have found "fresh newly relevant ways to represent western life at century's end" (2003, 405). In *Christian Science Monitor*, Merle Rubin praises Loh for offering a perceptive and clever view of the diminishing idealism of youth that is both moving and insightful. *Publishers Weekly*'s Scofield and Zaleski criticize Loh's delivery, writing that her sharp humorous attacks fail to live up to those in her previous works.

In Loh's semiautobiographical novel *A Year in Van Nuys* (2001), the main character, Sandra, struggles with aging, dieting, her judgmental sister, and her unfinished novel. Unable to keep her spirits up after seeing younger people achieve greater things than her, she is forced to seek professional help. Sandra finally unravels her therapist's mysterious advice, learning to give up lofty goals and to accept her age and station in life. *Publishers Weekly*'s Zaleski and others commend Loh's humor and style but note that her fast paced plot and humor slow at the end of the book. In a *Booklist* review,

GraceAnne DeCandido finds fault with Loh's negative attitude toward the one middle-aged person in the book but admits that the novel is disjointedly humorous and reminiscent of her short NPR commentaries. Clearly, Loh's talent for humor and satire as well as for writing about commodified American and global culture has been recognized throughout her fiction and nonfiction.

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AIMEE WONG

#### ◆ LORD, BETTE BAO (1938–)

Bette Bao Lord is a Chinese American author and human rights activist. Born in Shanghai, China, Lord has based her novels and her nonfiction memoirs on her family's history and their experiences in coming to the United States, and on the history of modern China.

Two major events in Lord's life happened almost by chance: her migration to the United States and the writing of her first book, *Eighth Moon: the True Story of a Young Girl's Life in Communist China* (1964). In 1946, her father, Western-trained engineer Sandys Bao, was sent to New York by the Chinese nationalist government to serve as a trade representative. His wife, Dora Fang, followed with their two older children, eight-year-old Bette and her sister Cathy, to join him, thinking that they would return to China within a few years. Their youngest daughter, Sansan, a toddler, was left with

an aunt. With the communist takeover in 1949, the family, unable to return to China, settled in the United States. As an undergraduate at Tufts University, Lord planned to be a chemist, changed majors to international affairs, and moved on to an MA at Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1960. She wrote *Eighth Moon*, inspired by her desire to share the dramatic story of Sansan and unable to find a writer willing to record it and able to speak both Chinese and English. The book tells the story of her family's departure from China, focusing on Sansan, left behind, who grew up believing that her aunt and uncle were her parents, toiling in fields and factories as part of the Great Leap Forward, Mao Zedong's attempt to industrialize China rapidly, and not knowing that her parents were in the United States. The memoir is vividly written as if told by Sansan herself, without Lord's voice intruding, focusing on Sansan's girlhood experiences of constant work, scanty food, and opposition from relatives who believed that as a socialist she should not rejoin her relatives in the capitalist United States; in 1962, when she was 17, Sansan rejoined the family. Shortly after, Lord happened to speak to a publisher, who encouraged her to write Sansan's story. The book was a popular success and was translated into 15 languages.

In 1963, Lord married Winston Lord, a young American diplomat who, in the early 1970s, became a key figure in the negotiations to restore relations between the United States and China; the communist takeover in the late 1940s meant that normal contact between the two countries had been suspended for over 20 years. Winston Lord's visits to China and the resumption of relations meant that Bette Bao Lord was one of the first Chinese Americans to reenter China in 1973 and see relatives whom she had not met since childhood. Hearing their stories of the excesses of the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s inspired her to start writing her next book, *Spring Moon* (1981), which was several years in the making. As she recorded their stories, she realized that political conditions in China would prevent her from telling her relatives' stories freely and thus shifted the book's focus to an earlier time, starting with her grandparents' and great-grandparents' lives in imperial China in the 1890s.

Very different from Lord's first work, *Spring Moon* has been called the Chinese *Gone with the Wind*. The title character, Spring Moon, grows up in a family of landowning scholars; as she lives to be 90, her story provides a panoramic view of the dramatic changes of modern Chinese history. She experiences life in large wealthy households of extended families, foot-binding, an arranged marriage, and witnesses the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, the activities of the early missionaries, the collapse of the empire and the establishment of the early republic, the rise of communism, and the Cultural Revolution. Interestingly, given her family's negative experiences under communism, the book creates in the character of Spring Moon's daughter Lustrous Jade a sympathetic view of the idealism of the early revolutionaries, the determination and selflessness of communist cadres and Mao's heroic Long March. Showing a continuity

between old and new in China, the book was a popular success, translated into 19 foreign languages, including pirated editions in Chinese.

In Lord's next book, *In The Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson* (1984), she takes on yet another form of writing. A children's book, it tells Lord's childhood story through the protagonist, Shirley Temple Wong, who, like Lord herself, leaves China in the 1940s to come to the United States. Its focus is on Shirley's assimilation to the United States; burdened by her parents' command to be a little ambassador to China, overcoming bullying and the language barrier, she is accepted by her classmates because of her interest and skill in baseball, the American pastime, and is finally chosen as the class representative to meet Jackie Robinson, the first African American in major league baseball. Remaining aware of her Chinese heritage, Shirley becomes part of the multicultural promise of the United States. The book received the 1985 ALA Award and remains popular in grade school classrooms.

When Winston Lord was appointed the U.S. ambassador to China in 1985, the couple went to live in Beijing, creating a new opportunity for Bette Bao Lord's writing. She was active as an ambassador's wife, conducting cultural programs that enabled her to meet a large circle of Chinese and hear their stories, wrenching revelations of sufferings during the Cultural Revolution, through personal interviews and tapes that were sent to her through friends. Her book *Legacies: A Chinese Mosaic* (1990) juxtaposes her memoirs of the period with these stories of political prisoners and exiles and with the events of the 1989 Tiananmen Square student protests; Lord left China in May 1989, as students were gathered in the square, and before the government's decision to repress dissent and fire on the students weeks later. The book interweaves hindsight with stories of past repression and present events and with the wishes of Chinese friends of Lord who urged her to speak out against current repression. As a timely read for those whose memories of the events of Tiananmen Square were still fresh, it enjoyed popular success.

Lord's most recent literary work is *The Middle Heart* (1996). Like *Spring Moon*, this novel spans the transition from traditional to modern China. Its three main characters, who come together in Shanghai in 1932, represent a cross section of Chinese society: Steel Hope, son of a wealthy clan; Lone Pine, a servant and poor scholar; and Firecrackers, a peasant orphan pretending to be a boy, who later becomes Summer Wishes, an opera singer. Their lives intersect as they and their children experience the Japanese occupation, war, and the communist takeover, rise to fame and power, are caught in the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, and suffer in exile, labor camps, and reeducation centers. The story ends with Steel Hope trying to save his granddaughter, a student in Tiananmen Square during the 1989 protests.

In recent years, Lord has been pursuing a second career as an organizer and advocate for human rights. She was chairman of the board of trustees of Freedom House,

an organization to promote democracy around the world, and is currently chairman emeritus. She has been on the boards of organizations such as Freedom Forum, which promotes worldwide press freedom, the Kennedy Center Community board, and the Council of Foreign Relations. She has received several honorary doctorates and in 1998 was awarded the first Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Human Rights, an award established in 1998 by President Bill Clinton honoring outstanding American promoters of rights. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization.

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DOLORES DE MANUEL

### ◆ LOUIE, DAVID WONG (1954–)

David Wong Louie is a Chinese American fiction writer and professor of English. Louie's first book, *Pangs of Love* (1991), a short story collection, won the *Los Angeles Times Book Review* First Fiction Award, the *Ploughshares* First Fiction Book Award, and was a *New York Times Book Review* Notable Book of 1991 and a *Voice Literary Supplement* Favorite of 1991. His novel *The Barbarians Are Coming* (2000) won the **Association for Asian American Studies** Prose Award in 2002. He was also awarded a Lannan Writing Fellowship in 2001. He coedited *A Contemporary Asian American Anthology* with Marilyn Chin.

Louie was born and raised in New York City. After receiving a BA in English from Vassar College in 1977, he worked at an advertising agency. In 1979 he entered the creative writing program at the University of Iowa and received his MFA in 1981. He currently teaches creative writing and literature at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Critics such as Sau-ling Cynthia Wong and David L. Eng have both noted Louie's incisive observation on Asian American male anxiety over progeny and paternity in his short stories. While not all of Louie's characters are explicitly identified as Chinese or **Asian American**, they invariably exhibit a nagging sense of dislocation. Although unlike their counterparts from the **Chinese Exclusion** era, post-1965 Chinese

American men are well assimilated and no longer experience legislative, political, and economic discriminations, yet they exhibit palpable anxiety over paternity and the imminence of extinction. In an interview, Louie talks about his characters' insecurity and sense of displacement as his way of articulating feelings of isolation growing up Asian in a predominantly white culture.

Except for the Chows in the short story "Displacement," all of Louie's other characters are American-born, unmistakably middle-class, and highly literate in things American, but they are still constantly plagued by illegitimate ownership, whether in spatial or biological terms. In the story "Birthday," the narrator Wallace Wong has recently broken up with his white girlfriend Sylvie, who loses the custody of her son Welby to her ex-husband Frank. Having built a rapport with Welby, Wallace does not mind losing Sylvie but cannot get over losing the boy. On Welby's birthday, he attempts to bond with him by taking him out for a baseball game; however, Frank refuses to let him see Welby. To claim his right over the boy, Wallace locks himself up in Frank's house to force the latter into conceding. While stalling in Frank's house, Wallace sees Sylvie return with her luggage and realizes he has lost not only the boy but also the woman to Frank. Failing to get any time with Welby, Wallace eventually can only make the icing for his birthday cake. "Birthday" exemplifies the theme of illegitimacy. Wallace's illegal occupation of Frank's house corresponds to his ineffectual attempt at claiming legal right over a boy who can never be his son. A literal intruder in the legitimate father's house, Wallace turns out an intruder in their familial harmony as well.

Another recurrent theme found in "Birthday" is the precarious relationship between a Chinese/Asian American man and a white woman. White women in Louie's works often appear as legitimating forces and castrating agents. Their approval facilitates Chinese/Asian men's struggle for assimilation; at the same time the power asymmetry between white women and Chinese/Asian men may result in the latter's emasculation. In "Birthday" Sylvie tricks Wallace into unknowingly stealing her ex-husband's stereo, only to prove his virility and love for her. Despite his efforts and eagerness to please, he fails to keep her. The end of the story indicates that Sylvie and her son return to her ex and that they will be reunited in familial bliss, with Wallace out of the picture and soon to be forgotten. An Asian American man's investment in a white woman for his integration into mainstream American society proves as elusive as it is pragmatic.

The ineffectual or emasculated male appears in several other stories in *Pangs of Love*, for example, "Social Science," "Bottles of Beaujolais," "Pangs of Love," "Warming Trends," and "The Movers." Like Wallace in "Birthday," the male protagonists in these stories fail to carry on a relationship with a white woman. The narrator Henry in "Social Science" is recently divorced but refuses to move out of the house he shared with his ex-wife. The realty agent lets him stay, on the condition that he would show

the house to potential buyers, but Henry agrees to the terms only so he can surreptitiously sabotage potential transactions. The beginning of "Social Science" immediately establishes Henry as the illegitimate occupant of the house. His ownership of the woman proves equally tenuous when the agent's favorite buyer, Dave Brinkley, tries to hook up with his ex-wife. Not only is Henry vacating his house for Dave, he is likely also losing his woman to him.

The male protagonist in "The Movers" is also depicted as an illegitimate occupant going through a rough patch with his white girlfriend. Left behind by his girlfriend in the empty house they have just moved into, the narrator is faced with a series of situations in which he resorts to lying to avoid potential problems. Without a white woman to confer legitimacy upon him, he has to pretend to get through difficult situations. First, he pretends not to notice when the former house owner's teenage son sneaks in with his girlfriend. When the girl's father drops by for her, he pretends to be the former owner and plays father. Aided by the twilight, he succeeds in pulling it off. But when the movers from the Salvation Army arrive with a truckload of furniture ordered by Suzy Tree, his girlfriend, they doubt if he could be the legitimate owner of the house and has the authority to sign for the furniture. Unable to prove his legitimacy, the narrator is saved by the young girl whose father he has fooled earlier. The young girl pretends to be Suzy and signs for the furniture. At the end of the story, the narrator tries to bond with the former owner's son, but the latter seems to consider him a weirdo and escapes abruptly. The absence of the white woman in this story implies the failure of legitimate ownership and of paternity.

The anxiety over progeny and paternity is closely related to the prospect of cultural extinction. It is logical to assume that the Asian American man doubts his ability to be a good father since he feels the constant threat from the dominant culture to assimilate. In this way genealogical crisis is closely linked to cultural extinction. In "One Man's Hysteria—Real and Imagined—in the Twentieth Century," a story within a story, the narrator-writer Stephen constantly worries about nuclear catastrophe and the prospect of extinction, which results in his fear of commitment. He hesitates in marrying his live-in girlfriend or in having a child. To battle the prospect of mass destruction, he strives to memorize poems, what he considers the only true words that his civilization can bequeath upon the devastated future generation. Although his ethnicity is not clearly alluded to, the narrator is described as having black hair, as does his imaginary son in the manuscript. The vulnerability of the narrator can then be read as the post-1965 Chinese/Asian American emasculation. The interruption of patrilineal transmission plaguing Louie's Chinese American male characters, according to Wong, is actually "a metaphor standing for a general societal affliction—that of cultural exhaustion" (1995, 188).

In an interview, Louie mentions how when he first tried to get published, he intentionally avoided writing about Chinese/Asian American characters, for he did not

think publishers and readers would be interested; at the same time, he also wished to give his stories a more universal appeal. Louie is not limited in writing about Asian characters only, nor is he restricted in male-only perspectives. Two of his short stories, "Displacement" and "Inheritance," feature female protagonists. Despite being told from the female perspective, both stories also center on the theme of dislocation and anxiety over progeny and parenthood. Wong discusses the politics of mobility in "Displacement" and talks about the protagonist Mrs. Chow as an artist figure, who has to negotiate between the principle of play and that of work. Louie's "Displacement" shows his sympathy to both American-born and foreign-born Asian lives. In his novel *The Barbarians Are Coming*, Louie further develops the aforementioned themes and presents father-son relationships in their distinctly touching and poignant moments.

Invariably applauded by its reviewers as witty, brilliant, and scathingly insightful, *The Barbarians Are Coming* depicts father-son relationships across three generations of a Chinese immigrant family. The protagonist Sterling Lung is a typical Louie character in the sense that he is highly assimilated and well versed in American culture but often feels insecure and out of place, and his relationship with his white girlfriend-turned wife ends in disaster. The only male among four children of Chinese immigrant parents running a laundry in Long Island, Sterling graduates from Vassar College and, instead of going to medical school as his parents wish, enrolls himself in the CIA (Culinary Institute of America) to take up French haute cuisine. After graduating from the CIA, he lands a job cooking lunch for a Connecticut ladies club and later on marries his wealthy Jewish American girlfriend, Bliss Sass. Much to Sterling's chagrin, their first son Moses takes after Sterling's father, Genius, enjoys Chinese food, and develops a close relationship with Genius. The second son Ira, to Sterling's comfort, takes after his father-in-law Morton and is Sterling's secret favorite. Since Sterling refuses to cook Chinese dishes for the club ladies, he is replaced by a Chinese immigrant whose major culinary qualification is his Chinese ethnicity. At Bliss's suggestion and not having much of a choice, Sterling moves his family into the Sass mansion. The enterprising Morton molds Sterling into a stereotypical Chinese cook on cable TV and then sells him for a profit to San Francisco public TV. Sterling thus relocates his whole family to Santa Cruz, hoping to start a new life there. Although his TV career is successful, his popularity is based upon his exploitation of Chinese stereotypes, and he and Bliss are growing increasingly estranged. Toward the end of the novel, Sterling moves out after Ira dies in an auto accident. Genius flies from New York to attend Ira's funeral but collapses and is hospitalized. While shuttling between Genius at the hospital and Moses at Bliss's, Sterling suddenly realizes what he has missed out. He comes to understand why Genius has always been cold and distant and how his fatherly love involves dutiful protection rather than explicit verbalization of feelings. Genius's



death marks Sterling's epiphany and reconnection with Moses, and patrilineal transmission is thus secured at the end.

The themes of assimilation, paternity, and Asian American masculinity in *The Barbarians Are Coming* are represented in alimentary metaphors. Such ordinary acts as cooking and eating in the novel are culturally coded, and a close reading of them sheds light on the entanglement of assimilation, sexuality, and paternity in the novel. With two books under his belt, Louie nonetheless describes himself as a slow writer, but he is certainly a writer from whom much can be expected. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Assimilation/Americanization; Association for Asian American Studies.

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### ◆ LOWE, PARDEE (1905–)

A Chinese American writer, Pardee Lowe is often regarded as a literary pioneer in **Chinese American literature**. Born in San Francisco on September 9, 1905, Lowe grew up in the home of first-generation Chinese immigrants. His father, Fat Yuen, was a successful businessman and leading figure in San Francisco's Chinese community, while his mother ran the family business, a small shop next to the family's home. Facing the pressure of assimilation, Lowe's father named all of his children after political figures or their wives. Lowe was named after George C. Pardee, who was the governor of California at the time. Like most Chinese American children, Lowe was educated in American public school and sent to private Chinese lessons. Although he resented having to learn Chinese in his early age, he undertook Chinese language lessons seriously in college. Lowe received his BA from Stanford University and an MA from Harvard Business School. During the 1930s, Lowe started to write a series of essays about Chinese immigrant communities to gain support for the Chinese War Relief Organization. Those essays later formed the foundation for *Father and Glorious Descendent* (1943), one of the earliest published autobiographical works by an American-born Chinese.

With descriptions of Chinese immigrant communities and their traditions, *Father and Glorious Descendent* became an immediate mainstream success in the postwar era when Chinese in the United States enjoyed unprecedented popularity because China was viewed as the United States' ally in Asia during **World War II**. The book also appeared likable for its protagonist's enthusiastic patriotism and expressions of a strong desire for assimilation. The general reader's positive response is best indicated in Helen P. Bolman's comments, "[The] author's love for America and his respect for his Oriental roots . . . show an excellent blending of the two cultures. The book will contribute greatly toward better understanding of one of our loyal minority groups" (1943, 287).

Although his book was welcomed as an example of how the United States' racial minorities can "succeed" through perseverance and hard work at the time of its publication, it becomes a controversial text in contemporary Asian American academic circles. On the one hand, *Father and Glorious Descendent* is dismissed by many in the field either as a document of self-contempt or as an assimilationist narrative, because Lowe's story reveals an urgent need for acceptance by white society. It has also been charged with promulgating popular **stereotypes** of Chinese Americans and uncritically accepting the necessity of assimilation. For instance, Sau-ling Cynthia Wong criticizes Lowe's food descriptions that present Asian Americans as exotic and unassimilable. Although acknowledging the historical and psychological significance of the book, Elaine Kim still comments that *Father and Glorious Descendent* is "a humiliating book" (1982, 63). On the other hand, it is valued as a tribute

to the ability of Chinese people to adapt to a foreign land without losing themselves or their culture in a hostile racial climate. The book's importance should not be totally dismissed, as Xiao-huang Yin argues, for "it is a testimony revealing the ardent desire of second-generation Chinese to seek admission into American society before the 1960s . . . The era's racial bias against Chinese effectively limited the degree to which Lowe could assimilate" (2000, 134).

Despite the controversy, Lowe's autobiography still stands as a significant account that expresses some of the important themes in early Asian American literature, including the struggle to assimilate into mainstream culture, conflicts between East and West cultural values, views on interracial marriages, the generation gap, the pursuit of the American Dream, the American-born Chinese's imperative to assert Americanness, and the anxiety to demonstrate patriotism as a loyal minority. For one, it is the earliest autobiographical account of Chinese migration and settlement in California. As an onlooker, Lowe describes a larger picture of a strong, cohesive ethnic community in his time by showing Chinese immigrants' struggles, survival, conflicts, and community building in the land of adoption. For example, he shows numerous success stories of immigrants building large businesses, such as laundries and dry goods stores. The Chinese immigrants developed a supportive network including clan and district associations, trade-guild organizations, benevolent societies, and tong. Linda Trinh Moser observes, "Providing more than just a social outlet, these groups emerged as intermediaries between Chinese immigrants and their adopted homeland" (2001, 235). Yet, in the process of adapting themselves, the Chinese American community in California also had to endure trials and tribulation, ranging from such major events as the Great San Francisco Earthquake at the beginning of the century to such everyday occurrences as dealing with widespread racism in a white majority. Because of the hostile environment, the Chinese community, Lowe explains, did not ask help from the government after the 1906 earthquake. In addition, Lowe does not hesitate to criticize the inhumanity of the immigration laws in the United States. He regrets his failure to help three Chinese orphans who were eventually deported to China, where they vanished in the Japanese invasion.

The book not only relates a crucial aspect of the early Chinese American experience but also reveals a typical cultural conflict between father and son, the immigrant and the American-born generation. When Lowe grew up, anti-Chinese prejudice was prevalent. As a result, Lowe strove to assimilate into the mainstream culture. Since childhood, Lowe shows his increasing admiration for American values and growing resentment of his Chinese cultural heritage. Lowe reveals his ambivalent attitude toward a root culture represented by his father. He admires his father for his success as a **Chinatown** leader, and the way his father could move smoothly between the two cultures and conduct business with both American and Chinese peoples. He gratefully

acknowledges his father's strength, talent, and adaptability. Yet, he shows his resentment of him when the father insisted on Lowe's learning of Chinese language and continually spoke of the way traditional Chinese children should act. The stubbornness of his father's Chinese mind became a source of constant conflict between father and son. Like most American-born Chinese children and adolescents, he gradually found his father's Chinese culture traditions unacceptable to his Americanized mind, so he moved away from his family and community and endeavored to enter mainstream society.

Lowe's growing distance from his father and family is typical of adolescent behavior; however, it is exacerbated by racist attitudes that he has internalized. As a strong believer in American values, he devalued his Chinese heritage, just as the larger American society did. Instead of questioning negative attitudes toward those of Chinese ancestry, he accepted them. For Lowe, living up to being the "glorious descendant" and gaining an understanding of racial identity proves to be a difficult and painful process. Once he experienced blatant racism against Orientals in white America, his American Dream was shattered. He initially encountered racism when he discovered that his father's white business associates found his desire to become a U.S. president humorous. On another occasion, when he was a high school student, he found that he could not find a summer job outside Chinatown because of his darker appearance and different ancestry. After his failure to find a job outside Chinatown, Lowe experienced a slight shift in perspective. He painfully realized that he could never have a chance to become fully accepted in white American society. Further, he saw that half of his identity was Chinese, and that he must reconcile with it, even if he initially did not want to. However difficult this shift may have been, Lowe gradually developed a mature understanding of his identity as a Chinese American and eventually reconciled with his father and his root culture. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Assimilation/Americanization; Racism and Asian America.

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SU-LIN YU

### ◆ LUM, DARRELL H.Y. (1950–)

Darrell H.Y. Lum is a local Chinese American playwright, short story writer, educator, and cofounder of Bamboo Ridge Press in Hawaii. Lum was born to a Chinese family—his father hailed from southern China while his mother was a local *pake* (Chinese) from Waikāne on the east side of Oahu. Growing up in lower Pauoa Valley, Lum attended Prince David Kawānanakoa Middle School and William H. McKinley High School (class of 1968). While at McKinley, Lum was active with the math team and entertained aspirations to become an engineer; however, the next year, while a freshman at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Lum was struck by extreme homesickness. This intense sense of separation is what prompted Lum to engage in a flurry of letter writing, eventually leading to the development of his particular style of the talk-story/short fiction genre that he is famous for.

Returning to Hawaii, Lum pursued a bachelor's degree in liberal studies, combining creative writing with video design. While studying for his master's in educational communications and technology, he met up with former classmate Eric Chock (who had attended the same schools with Lum since elementary days); they found that they were both involved in literary pursuits. They were also part of an exciting era known as the Hawaiian Renaissance, which was a reflowering of Hawaiian language, culture, music, and literature. The times brought an increased awareness of the lack of publishing venues for local writers, many of whom gave up their art after leaving the university. Thus, during one particularly intense session of pinochle, coupled with debates over the unfortunate lack of publishing outlets for local talent, the idea for Bamboo Ridge Press was born.

Apart from his involvement with Bamboo Ridge, Lum has been a prolific writer and educator. He has been active with the Kumu Kahua Theatre, a theatrical organization dedicated to productions that depict the people, cultures, and issues of the islands. Kumu Kahua has performed many of his plays, such as *Little Bit Like You*

(1993), *Oranges Are Lucky* (1996), and *David Carradine Not Chinese* (2005). His publications include *Sun: Short Stories and Drama* (1980) and *Pass On, No Pass Back* (1990). He has also served as one of several editors for two anthologies of creative writing: *Growing Up Local* (1996), a Bamboo Ridge collection devoted to local identity, and *The Quietest Singing* (2000), which features the recipients of the Hawaii Award for Literature. His writing is also featured in a number of anthologies by other publishers: *Asian American Literature: A Brief Introduction* (1996), *Into the Fire: Asian American Prose* (1996), *A Hawai'i Anthology* (1997), *Yellow Light, The Flowering of Asian American Arts* (2000), and *Charlie Chan Is Dead 2: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Literature* (2003).

Lum's academic career includes developing and implementing enrichment activities for disadvantaged high school students as assistant director of the Hawai'i Upward Bound Program at UH Mānoa from 1972 to 1974. His success working with this target population led to a longer appointment as an academic advisor from 1974 to 2005. During this time, he obtained his doctorate in educational foundations from the university. He has since served as a lecturer in education there, all the while maintaining his involvement with Bamboo Ridge, Hawaii Public Radio, and Kumu Kahua Theatre. He has also taught creative writing for Kapi'olani Community College and for the University of Hawaii at Mānoa's Outreach College.

Early critics of Darrell Lum's work often focused on the sociopolitical resistance his stories embody. Stephen Sumida offers one of the earliest analyses of Darrell Lum's work. In *And the View from the Shore: Literary Traditions of Hawai'i* (1991), Sumida links Lum's works with what he defines as a pastoral tradition that includes other local Asian American writers, such as Patsy Sumie **Saiki**, Milton **Murayama**, and Garrett **Hongo**. Sumida's analysis of Lum emphasizes the writer's use of the local language. In fact, Sumida cites Lum as "a master of local symbols, especially in his use of pidgin and creole vernacular" (1991, 98). Sumida goes on to declare that the depiction of real voices in literature by local writers like Lum involves a form of authority and rebellion, that the "use of pidgin in Hawaii's literature is seen as an implied declaration of independence from the standards imposed on Hawaii's polyethnic culture by a dominant one" (103). Rodney Morales's "Literature"—from the collection *Multicultural Hawai'i, the Fabric of a Multiethnic Society* (1998)—devotes a lengthy section to Lum's "Primo Doesn't Take Back Bottles Anymore." The fascination for Morales lies in this symbolic weight of the Native Hawaiian character, who stands as a "casualty of progress, Western hegemony, [and] global capitalism" (1998, 118).

Lum is also mentioned quite extensively by other researchers and writers who are quicker to identify the racial fracturing that has seemingly occurred among Hawaiian writers. The first to begin this more critical take on Lum and his Bamboo Ridge connection is Haunani-Kay Trask. Her keynote speech at the 1997 Multi-Ethnic

Literatures in the United States (MELUS) conference specifically targets Bamboo Ridge writers Garrett Hongo and Ronald Takaki for participating in what she calls “immigrant/settler consciousness.” For Trask, that these non-Native Hawaiian writers assert a “special island identity” implies that their works engage in the falsification of place and culture. In a revision of this speech, which was published as “Decolonizing Hawaiian Literature” (1999), Trask broadens her critique and includes a direct reference to Lum. Rob Wilson in *Reimagining the American Pacific* (2000) also cites Lum as having taken a good, hard, honest look at the problem of “authentically” defining local identity and local literature. Wilson goes further to identify a “troubled” and “wary/weary” dilemma posed by Lum’s work, within which there seems to be a tripartite division that is awkwardly maintained between local, continental **Asian American**, and Hawaiian. On the other hand, Dennis Kawaharada targets Lum’s “middle class anxiety” (2001, 212) and belief in the “mystical unity of the Local,” which supersedes the inequalities of the people living on the islands (221).

Apart from the provincial wrangling that underpins most local scholarship, Lum’s work stands as a testament to a life and culture that the writer cherishes. As he stated in an interview, his fiction encompasses his desire to capture the nuances of local life for a local audience. Perhaps this is the reason why Lum remains one of the more prominent playwrights on the islands. One of his first productions was a short piece entitled *Oranges Are Lucky* (1976), which can be found in Lum’s first collection of work, *Sun: Short Stories and Drama* (1980). The setting is simple: a small hole-in-the-wall Chinese restaurant, which serves as the gathering place for a birthday celebration for a local Chinese family’s matriarch, Ah Po. For the most part, the play revolves around the rather self-centered and somewhat unfilial comments by some of Ah Po’s progeny, including two grandsons, one who indicates a wish to record the family history from Ah Po but seems to ignore the moments when she lapses into storytelling mode, and another who blurts out to everyone, “Eh, she senile already. I dunno why I bother, waste time” (52). Though Ah Po is dismissed by many in her family as being demented in her old age, the play brilliantly features her monologues—the spotlight is often directed onto the grandmother as everyone else fades into darkness.

The play trumps the supposed dominance of the younger generation, which gathers in meaningless expressions of **filial piety**. Ah Po is left to ruminate, to capture her listeners in reminiscences that speak of the old ways. The lesson to be learned from her recounting of her marriage and her journey from China to Hawaii is the theme of sacrifice. Ah Po speaks of a husband who was once a philosopher hailing from a long line of scholars—they both came to Hawaii with the dream of opening a Chinese school. Unfortunately, their plans did not materialize, and the husband took a job as both a meat-cutter and an accountant. And one of the larger sacrifices came in the way of simply coming to the United States, where “They do not listen to their elders” (Lum 1980, 58). Ironically,

the play ends with Ah Po's birthday wish, which can be read as a sarcastic statement regarding the inattentiveness and indifference of her clan: "I make a wish . . . I wish to be American . . . da first president is George Washington" (61).

Lum differs from other writers because he offers a look at ethnic conflicts between groups that are not readily apparent to many. A comment made by Ah Po about the Japanese reflects tension between the Chinese and the Japanese, two groups that have not traditionally been depicted as being at odds with one another in local literature. Lum expands on this theme in the play *A Little Bit Like You*, which was first produced by Kumu Kahua in November and December of 1991. In fact, the fear of miscegenation is central to *A Little Bit Like You*, which features a Chinese-Japanese girl, Kay, who must sort out the strange sentiments of her grandmother who hates "pa-kes" (Chinese) and of her grandfather who is always grumbling about the "pa-ke boss." The play features the recurring image of a *manapua* (pork bun) vendor, who seems to incur fear in the character of Kiyoko, Kay's grandmother, in flashback moments. This bogeyman turns out to be Kiyoko's father, a symbol of Kiyoko's sense of shame: "You tink I donno who my fahdah? You tink I wanna go wit him? How come me? How come not one of da other children? How come, huh? I tell you why, cause I get pa-ke blood. She was gonna give me away cause I was pa-ke baby. Dirty. You no can jes peel the skin like one manapua and make um clean. Pau. Poho" (1991, 38). The play ends with the death of Kiyoko's husband, who helps his granddaughter come to terms with her multiple ethnicities.

In 1997 Lum produced a dissertation for his doctorate in education. The manuscript, *Local Genealogy: "What School You Went?" Stories from a Pidgin Culture*, became the fertile ground for his evolving understanding of the role racial and ethnic consciousness play in local literature. Lum's articulation of local-style communication and community interaction is based on the parallels he draws between Asian values of family loyalty, obligation, and reciprocity and the Native Hawaiian sense of harmony, which he argues "minimizes personal gain or achievement, and shares natural resources" (4). Such beliefs (and a number of the short stories within the dissertation) spurred the collection *Growing Up Local* (1998), which adheres to the concept of a multicultural Hawaii.

The most recent play of Lum's, *David Carradine Not Chinese* (2005), is by far his most theoretically complex work to date. The play features a Chinese family trying to answer the fundamental question: how does one accurately portray Chineseness to an audience? Of course, this quandary is what inevitably faces the playwright and, by implication, all writers who attempt to engage ethnic and cultural identity on stage. The Wat family's comical rendition of the *Five Chinese Brothers*, the 1980s Kung Fu series, Bruce Lee, and Charlie Chan for the Wat-Chu Society Talent Show masks a critical engagement with American pop culture's stereotypical ideas concerning the



Chinese, who have been reduced to monkish proverbial sayings and perpetual foreignness. As the character Cowboy relates: "The real Chinese only got the stupid parts. Only the white guys got the main parts. David Carradine not Chinese. Charlie Chan not Chinese. The real Chinese have always been number two . . . Number One Son, Master Po, even Kam Fong. Turn out it didn't matter what you wanted to be. Somebody else already decided what you could be. Laundry man, cook, railroad worker" (20). Given the trajectory of Lum's writing, *David Carradine Not Chinese* will not be the last to deconstruct popular misconceptions of Asian identity; however, it appears that the writer is looking to expand his analyses to speak to the larger problem of Americanization and the intrinsic **racism** that underlies its mainstream cultural proliferation. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization; *Bamboo Ridge: The Hawaii Writers' Quarterly*; Hawaiian Pidgin; Racism and Asian America.

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SERI I. LUANGPHINITH

◆ LUM, WING TEK (1946–)

A Chinese American poet, Lum was born on November 17, 1946, the youngest of three sons, to a second-generation father and a first-generation mother. After graduating from Brown University (Providence, Rhode Island) in 1969 with a degree in engineering, Lum moved to New York City, where he earned a divinity degree from the Union Theological Seminary in 1973. He spent the next three years in Hong Kong studying Cantonese and ancient Chinese poetry. In 1976 Lum and his wife, whom he

met in Hong Kong, moved to Hawaii, and since then he has worked for Lum Yip Kee, Limited, the family's real-estate firm, while playing an active role in the development of Hawaiian-based writing through his involvement with Bamboo Ridge Press, founded in 1978 by Darrell Lum and Eric Chock. While at Brown, Lum had begun to write poetry and served as editor of the campus literary magazine in his senior year, and in 1970 he received the prestigious Poetry Center Award, now called the Discovery/The Nation Award, which is given to promising young poets. But it was during his sojourns in New York City and Hong Kong, when he discovered the work of Chinese American playwright Frank Chin and ancient Chinese poets, that his writing acquired the thematic and political focus it has today. *Expounding the Doubtful Points*, Lum's first and only collection to date, begins with a dedication to T'ao Ch'ien (Tao Yuanming), a fourth-century Chinese poet, and Frank Chin. It received the 1988 American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation and the 1988 Outstanding Book Award from the Association for Asian American Studies. Since then, Lum has published more than 50 poems, one prose piece, and an essay, "Matrices, Paradoxes, and Personal Passions," which interweaves a discussion of Chinese American identity with the autobiographical background of specific poems. He has also coauthored a unique volume of poetry, *What the Kite Thinks* (1994), a linked poem written in collaboration with Makoto Ooka, Joseph Stanton, and Jean Yamasaki Toyama.

Although Lum's poems have been included in most anthologies of Asian American literature since the 1970s, there is little criticism of his work. Lavonne Leong speculates that this neglect may, ironically, be owing to Lum's readability, while Gayle Sato identifies the marginalization of Hawaii by scholars of Asian American studies as another factor. Critical analysis of Lum's writing has emphasized the importance of "translation," broadly defined. Shan Te-hsing, of Academia Sinica in Taiwan, discusses Lum's use of various ancient Chinese writers in *Expounding the Doubtful Points*, building on Balfantz and Wat's important but neglected article on Lum's use of the fourth-century Tzu Yeh songs as a basis for his own "Urban Love Songs." Balfantz and Wat describe a multilayered process of appropriation through which Lum gives voice to unrepresented Chinese American subjects. Reviewers of *Expounding the Doubtful Points* take issue with particular poems, but they generally agree on the book's overall strengths. The poems are praised for their insights into the open-ended legacies of racism and a twentieth-century Chinese diaspora, the psychology of family history and relationships, the value of poetry, and above all the richness of everyday life, and for a spare, accessible style, capable of expressing deep tenderness and passion through stark understatement or a deceptively calm surface.

Lum's mother died when he was 16, and his father before the publication of his first collection. These personal losses, together with a long history of psychic and cultural losses inflicted on Asian Americans through racism, generate many of the

59 poems in *Expounding the Doubtful Points*. However, this representation of loss is intertwined with poems of affirmation, especially those dealing with the birth and growth of Lum's daughter, born in 1981. The interplay of darkness and light, life and death, is central to Lum's poetic vision, embodied above all in frequent references to ancestral graves, where rituals of remembrance connect past, present, and future generations. Many poems in this collection are grounded in specific events and places—particular cemeteries and the rites performed there; meals with friends and family in homes, restaurants, and other specific settings; photographs commemorating special events; routines from daily life such as dropping off a child at school or getting her ready for bed at night. These snapshots or "slices of time," as Lum refers to his poems, represent relationships and experiences that have shaped the author's identity as a son, father, and Chinese American born and raised in Hawaii. At the same time, these affirmations of a geographically, ethnically, and racially specific identity are filtered through a belief in the universality of certain aspects of human existence. In many of Lum's poems, therefore, an utterly specific incident or observation is simultaneously understood as a timeless human experience. Because he favors exact description of specific moments in plain language, the balance between the universal and the particular appears at first to be weighted heavily in favor of the latter, but this very style infuses his "slices of time" with a deep sense of universal human experience.

Curiously, *Expounding the Doubtful Points* nowhere alludes explicitly to Lum's divinity degree, although the book as a whole is given an explicit autobiographical framework, but it could be said that questions of religious faith are fundamental to this poet's vision and practice. A key example is the titular poem "Expounding the Doubtful Points," which takes as its theme the reciprocal relationship between doubt and affirmation and illustrates a practice of moving from one to the other. "Expounding the Doubtful Points" is prefaced with the following quotation from T'ao Ch'ien: "A good poem excites our admiration/Together we expound the doubtful points" (1987, 57). It then describes an episode in which Lum and his wife are reading in bed before going to sleep. Lum's book is about a Chinese poet who believed that poets should write simply and directly about everyday life, and he is reading this because lately he has become doubtful about the artistry of his own plainly and simply written poems about ordinary life. When he tries to explain what he is reading to his Cantonese-speaking wife, she becomes exasperated with his flawed pronunciation; for example, one attempt to convey "Hsi Kun school of poets" sounds like "bacteria." And when he finally does hit on the right word and sound, she gets even more agitated because she hates the flowery Hsi Kun style of writing. He then hurries to clarify that he agrees with her, and all's well that ends well.

But this brief moment of tension has served to heighten the couple's affirmation of their marriage, represented here through the metaphor of shared taste in writers. As

the bedroom drama moves from separate books through uneasy conversation to happy relief in a shared reading at the end, the poem demonstrates the value of risk and uncertainty, as well as a practice of working through a doubtful point toward a resolution. Any collaborative practice of expounding the doubtful points, a practice that extends metaphorically from husband-and-wife to author-and-reader or any other relationship between two subjects, makes visible the bonds holding together marriages, readers and writers, and other kinds of communities.

Since 1987 Lum has continued to write family-centered poems in the autobiographical or confessional mode but has also been mapping new territory. One type of new poem is an attempt to reconstruct the lives of the first generation of Chinese immigrants, who were mostly single men or men separated from their families in China. Another type seeks to represent the Nanjing massacre of 1937; this project was inspired by a reading of Iris Chang's *The Rape of Nanking*, published in 1997. Roughly 50 poems in the Nanjing series have been completed, three of which are published in *Triquarterly* (Vol. 122, 2005) and six in *Amerasia Journal* (Vol. 32.3, 2006). Both groups of poems are heavily researched; for the Nanjing series Lum has read more than 40 history books in English, from which he appropriates anecdotes to render as narrative poems. Both groups of poems are also unusual among Chinese American writing being produced today. The heyday of Asian American literature dealing with "pioneering ancestors" was in the 1970s and 1980s, and there are few Chinese American authors, if any besides Lum, who are currently working on the subject of the Nanjing massacre. **See also** Asian Diasporas; Bamboo Ridge: *The Hawaii Writers' Quarterly*; Racism and Asian America.

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# M



## ◆ *M. BUTTERFLY* (HWANG)

Written by David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly* is regarded as the first play by an Asian American playwright to reach a mainstream audience, and thus, it also holds its place as a seminal drama of contemporary Asian American theater. In his play, Hwang offers a postmodern revision of *Madama Butterfly*, by Giacomo Puccini, a 1904 opera in which a Western man, Colonel Pinkerton, deceives a Japanese geisha, Cio-cio San. In *M. Butterfly*, Hwang subverts discourses of Orientalism of which, as Colleen Lye argues, “The Puccini classic is treated as paradigmatic” (1995, 261). Hwang deconstructs the Madame Butterfly storyline by having the worldly Western man, René Gallimard, a French diplomat, fall in love with an alluring Chinese opera singer, Song Liling, ultimately revealed to be a communist spy and a Chinese man. Hwang also loosely based *M. Butterfly* on a real-life spy incident from 1986 involving Bernard Boursicot, an accountant in the French embassy in Beijing, who became lovers with Shi Pei-pu, a Chinese opera singer. In the course of Boursicot’s trial for espionage, Shi was, in fact, exposed as a *he*; Boursicot maintained that he had never seen his lover naked, believing, according to Hwang, that her modesty was “a Chinese custom” (1989, 94). On February 10, 1988, *M. Butterfly* first premiered at the National Theatre in Washington DC and opened at the Eugene O’Neill Theatre on Broadway on March 20, 1988, starring B.D. Wong and John Lithgow (Pao 2001, 200). Director David Cronenberg adapted the play for the screen in 1993, starring John Lone and Jeremy Irons.

A play in 3 acts and 27 scenes, *M. Butterfly* moves in a nonlinear manner, as episodes of Gallimard’s past are intermingled with scenes from Puccini’s opera. Act 1

begins with Gallimard, having been convicted of spying for the People's Republic of China. Gallimard also reminisces about his youth as a socially awkward young man and his growing attraction and subsequent liaison with Song, which leads to his downfall. Gallimard imagines himself as Pinkerton with Song as his Butterfly. In Act 2, Hwang frames the drama in international espionage as Song passes information about the troop movements of the United States in the **Vietnam War** to Comrade Chin, of the communist government. To pacify Gallimard for insisting that they make love only in the dark, Song gives him a baby, supplied by Chin, even though Gallimard is married to a Western woman, Helga. As the ostensibly idyllic affair intensifies between Gallimard and Song, Hwang also represents the politics of East-West relations. Between acts 2 and 3, Song removes the traditional accoutrements of a typical Chinese woman to become a man in fashionable Western garb—a transformation that occurs within full view of the audience onstage. Song takes over the narrative in act 3 by giving details of his liaison with Gallimard and explaining the ways in which he manipulated Gallimard. Song exposes Gallimard's prejudices concerning Asian women and Western men by stating that, in Song, Gallimard believes that he has indeed found his fantasy woman, similar to the West's perception of itself as dominant and masculine with the East as feminine and submissive. In the climax of this act, Song strips down and forces Gallimard to face him, and in so doing Gallimard faces his own self-delusion. In the final scene, Gallimard dresses in Song's garb as Butterfly and reenacts Madame Butterfly's suicide from Puccini's opera.

Locating *M. Butterfly* in the cultural context of the late 1960s and 1970s enables Hwang to engage in the stereotypes of Asian sustained and disseminated by Western literature, theater, film, mass media, and popular culture for almost 200 years—from the short stories of Edith Maude Eaton (Sui Sin Far) and movies like *Year of the Dragon* (with Mickey Roarke, not Frank Chin) to the musicals *Flower Drum Song* and *Miss Saigon*. Alongside the popular perceptions of the Asian nation-states and its peoples, the historical context of the United States in Vietnam also obliquely structures the play with the debates around foreign policy for the United States in Asian countries. Hwang admits that he “purposely refrained from further research, for [he] was not interested in writing docudrama” (1989, 95). Hwang's speculations about the Boursicot-Shi espionage incident allow him to proceed from his position as an **Asian American**, not necessarily a Chinese American. As Pao observes, “In his deliberate conflation of various Asian national experiences or traditions (e.g., Chinese opera, Japanese geishas, the Vietnam War) in *M. Butterfly* [Hwang] parallels the blurring of ethnic differences in favor of a common Asian American experience that has prevailed until recently” (2001, 204).

In academia throughout the 1990s, critics from literary studies and **Asian American studies** heavily debated the ways in which *M. Butterfly* operates on a number of levels. Even as critics recognized the innovation and vision of Hwang's play, they also deliberated upon

the stereotypes of Asians (both men and female) that it depicts, the constructions and performances of gender and sexuality, and the history of imperialism, colonialism, and foreign policy of Europe and the United States throughout Asia. Feminist critics praised the play's subversion of the *Madame Butterfly* paradigm because *M. Butterfly* offered a revenge fantasy (Loo 1993, 177). Literary critics argued that the play still insists upon the misrepresentations of Asian women as "devious, manipulative, and cunning," while Asian males continue to be misrepresented as effeminate (Pao 2001, 201). Such critiques in the 1990s also highlight the tension in theoretical and disciplinary paradigms that grappled with essential ideas of man and woman, East and West, and postmodern notions of identity.

Even though attention to and criticism of this Asian American drama have arguably waned in recent years, *M. Butterfly*, 20 years after its initial performance and publication, lends itself this contemporary moment: in the aftermath of 9/11; in the relationship between China and the United States and foreign policy; in U.S. literary canon formation; and in sexuality studies. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Colonialism and Postcolonialism; Orientalism and Asian America.

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MARIE-THERESE C. SULIT

#### ◆ MAH, ADELINE YEN (1937–)

Writer, physician, and *New York Times* best-selling author for her autobiography entitled *Falling Leaves*, Adeline Yen Mah is one of the most prominent contemporary Chinese American authors. In her volumes she deals with the themes of memory and tradition, addressing both adults and children.

Mah was born in Tianjin, Northern China. Mah's mother, Ren Yong-ping, died two weeks later, due to medical complications related to childbirth. This was considered a sign of bad luck for the family. One year after his wife's death, Mah's father, Joseph Tsi-rung Yen, who was a wealthy and successful businessman, decided to remarry a beautiful French Chinese woman, Jeanne Prosperi, from then on called *niang*, the Chinese word for "mother." Mah was the youngest among her siblings, the *wu mei*, "fifth younger daughter," as she was derisively called (she had a sister, Lydia, and three brothers, Gregory, Edgar, and James; she would also have a half-brother, Franklin, and a half-sister, Susan). Besides being discriminated against by her family, she became the main target of her stepmother's physical and mental abuse, which is poignantly recorded in her debut volume entitled *Falling Leaves* (1997). Mah grew up in Tianjin, Shanghai, and Hong Kong (where she moved when she was 11), being constantly ostracized by every relative but her wise grandfather, Ye Ye, and Aunt Baba, who shared a similar destiny of isolation and scorn because she was not married and was financially dependent on her brother (Mah's father). In her early youth, Mah was sent to a boarding school, where she distinguished herself among the other students for her talent. A turning point in her life was when she won her first award for writing in an international playwright competition for students. She was 14 then. Prompted by this outstanding result, her father decided to send her to London to further her education. In 1957 she obtained a degree from London University College. She then studied at the London Hospital Medical School and at the Royal College of Physicians, and, once she completed her medical training in 1962 (she specialized in anesthesiology), she began her activity as a doctor. She moved to California, where she practiced anesthesiology at West Anaheim Community Hospital. She married Robert Mah, a professor of microbiology at the University of California, Los Angeles. She has two children: her son has followed his mother's steps in becoming an anesthesiologist, whereas her daughter works in New York in the field of publishing. Mah lives mainly in London and Southern California.

As it is possible to infer by the title of her autobiography that falling leaves return to their roots, in her adult years Mah felt a deep urge to plunge into her past to recompose the traumas she had never forgotten. The wind of freedom that had allowed her to spread her wings and acquire her independence in England and then in the United States, somehow blew her back to her roots, to China and the painful memories she had left, almost sealed, waiting to be faced. *Falling Leaves*, therefore, appears to be a sort of talking cure for the writer, besides providing the reader with a tremendous insight into the rise of communist China and the boom of Hong Kong as the capital of commerce. The story narrates the whole life of the writer, from her birth to her beloved Aunt Baba's death at 89 years of age, when Mah was 57. Besides voicing her longing for freedom and for the assertion of her identity, Mah explores some of the



most distressing and painful moments in her life, such as the death of her father (1988) and the consequent further abuse on the part of her stepmother, who prevented her stepchildren from reading the will until her own death two years later. An interesting characteristic of *Falling Leaves* is the use of Chinese ideograms, both in the chapter titles (written in dual languages, Chinese and English) and within the narrative. The autobiography proved to be extremely successful: besides selling thousands of copies in a short time, it has been translated into 18 languages, thus prompting the writer to retire from her career as a physician and devote herself entirely to writing.

In her second volume, *Chinese Cinderella, the True Story of an Unwanted Daughter* (1999), Mah retells the story of her life, addressing it to children. The book, structured as a series of short, chronologically ordered vignettes, explores the feelings of sadness and uneasiness of the writer as a child. Mah describes in detail her stepmother's taste for expensive French clothes and jewelry and her affection for her own children, thus creating a striking contrast with the way she mistreated her stepchildren, especially Adeline, who always got the last choice in everything, including food and clothes. Mah becomes a sort of Chinese Cinderella, mocked by everybody; in her case, however, no magic spell or Prince Charming would help her: Mah would rely only on her inner strength and her passion for studying and writing. In the author's note at the beginning of the volume, Mah clarifies her double intent in rewriting her autobiography: on the one hand she aims at intriguing her young readers with "the plight of a little girl" who was growing up in communist China; on the other hand, she wants to create an interest in Chinese language, history, and culture. In the preface, therefore, she gives account of Chinese names and numbers. The volume was very successful and received several awards: the Children's Literature Council of Southern California Award (2000) and the Lamplighter's Award from the National Christian School Association (2002).

Mah's following book, *Watching the Tree: A Chinese Daughter Reflects on Happiness, Traditions, and Spiritual Wisdom* (2000), mainly deals with Chinese culture and traditions, thus allowing the reader to become familiar with subjects such as Chinese herbs and medicine, Chinese language, Chinese food, Confucianism, fengshui, yin and yang, I Ching, *chi*, and Taoism.

*A Thousand Pieces of Gold: Growing Up through China's Proverbs* (2002) mixes personal memories with history and Chinese proverbs, thus showing how traditional wisdom can be applied to everyday life and can help to explain reality.

Her last book, *Chinese Cinderella and the Secret Dragon Society* (2004), is a fantasy adventure set during **World War II**. It is based both on a real incident and on the old Chinese legend of Ye Xian (Chinese Cinderella), as told by Duang Cheng-shi (800 AD) in his *You Yang Za Zu*. After being kicked out of the house by her cruel stepmother, Mah's main character, also called Ye Xian, bumps into Grandma Wu, a woman

who trains children in martial arts, and she joins the Secret Dragon Society of Wandering Knights. Together with other children belonging to the society, whom she befriends (these children often have a mixed ethnic background and each shares the same past as an unwanted child that she had), Ye Xian manages to succeed in several dangerous missions. This is a story of friendship but also of self-empowerment. What strikes the reader most, in fact, is Mah's creation of a young female character who manages to subvert the stereotype of the passive female child with bound feet: actually, Ye Xian can be compared to a woman warrior. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes.

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ELISABETTA MARINO

◆ MALLADI, AMULYA (1974–)

A novelist of Indian origin, Amulya Malladi is the author of four well received novels: *A Breath of Fresh Air* (2002), *The Mango Season* (2003), *Serving Crazy with Curry* (2004), and *The Song of the Cuckoo Bird* (2005). She earned an undergraduate degree in engineering from Osmania University, Hyderabad, India, and a master's in journalism from the University of Memphis, Tennessee. Since 2002 she has been living with her husband in Denmark.

In the tradition of writers like Bharati Mukherjee and Chitra Divakaruni, Malladi writes of Indian women living at home or abroad. Whether from the middle class, as in the first three novels, or a destitute living in an Indian ashram in her last work, they are strong and resilient, defying cultural norms. They do not go down silently but struggle valiantly in the face of adversity.

*A Breath of Fresh Air*, Malladi's first novel, has a well structured plot developed through multiple points of view. Set against the backdrop of the 1984 Union Carbide deadly gas leak in Bhopal, India, that killed thousands and injured many more, it is initially narrated by Anjali, a young military bride who inhaled toxic fumes while waiting for hours at the railway station to be picked up by her husband. Anjali survived with damage to her organs but with an awakening of her consciousness. Losing her idealism and the hope of transforming Prakash, her philandering husband, she took the bold step of seeking divorce in the face of opposition by her own parents and ensuing social ostracism.

Shifting to the present, 16 years later, Anjali, remarried to Sandeep, a college professor, is living in Ooty, India. Their only child, now 12, was born with severely

damaged lungs—a victim of the lingering effects of the Bhopal tragedy. Anjali and Sandeep are struggling against hope in keeping the child alive. The arrival of Prakash and his family in the same town upsets Anjali's precarious existence. Guilt-ridden on learning about Anjali's sick child, Prakash offers help, bringing further upheaval in her life. Subconsciously, she cannot help thinking of what her life would have been had Prakash not been unfaithful. The shift to Sandeep's narrative viewpoint allows an insight into the insecurities behind his façade of calm control. However, the narrative from Prakash's point of view adds little to the psychological complexity of the situation. The child does not survive, but the redemptive power of forgiveness strengthens the bond between Anjali and Sandeep.

In *The Mango Season*, Malladi highlights intergenerational conflicts. Priya, who had come abroad for further studies, has been living with her American lover for some time. Her conservative family, unaware of this arrangement, is pressuring her to marry one of their own caste. Hoping that a face-to-face encounter will soften the blow of her "engagement," Priya goes home in the summer—the mango season. Before she can find an appropriate time to make the announcement, she is deeply embroiled in family politics. The clashes between the patriarchal society's assumed rights to decide the children's future—their careers, marital alliances, even the selection of the gender of their children—and the younger generation's insistence on asserting their will create interesting twists in the plot and subplots. Priya's victory, partial at best, comes despite her cowardice to reveal the identity of her African American lover. The novel is clearly intended primarily for a Western audience, for it describes rituals, conflicts in extended families, the effects of globalization on the youth, and even recipes (with a glossary of terms); however, it adds little to enrich immigrant literature. As Savita Sarvate aptly observes, Malladi ends up with "a set of cardboard characters and hackneyed situations" (2003, 37).

With its catchy title, *Serving Crazy with Curry* is the story of Devi, whose "failures"—loss of yet another job, dead-end romances, and a recent miscarriage (revealed much later)—lead her to execute a carefully planned suicide. Her family of high achievers—a sister, the vice president of a start-up and married to a Stanford professor; father, with a successful second career in business; her maternal grandmother, a retired medical doctor in the Indian Army and an early rebel who had daringly divorced her drunkard husband—had made coping with her personal disasters impossible. Fortunately, her mother's unexpected visit saves her life. During the period of recuperation at her parents' house, she stops talking and turns to cooking fabulous, untraditional Indian meals, seemingly a better therapy than the sessions with her psychologist. There are numerous turns and twists in the plot, which ends with Devi's recovering her voice and the dysfunctional family's learning to communicate.

*The Song of the Cuckoo Bird* is Malladi's most ambitious work, set against a span of almost 40 years in India. Tella Meda, the ashram of the guru Charvi in a coastal town

in the south, shelters those who have no place in society. Among the residents are orphans, widows, discarded wives, and old homeless people. Kokila emerges as the central character holding the plot together. An orphaned child bride, she was supposed to stay in the ashram until reaching puberty. However, when the time came, she refused to go with her in-laws. Some landmarks in Indian history from 1961 to 1999, chosen arbitrarily by the author as the backdrop of the lives of Kokila and other residents, allow the author to touch a wide array of issues—the pernicious effects of the caste system, the limited lives of women in a traditional society, the exploitation of the weak and dependants, and the perpetuation of old customs, even as India progresses on other fronts. Once again, the women stand out for their courage and ability to survive. The novel's wide expanse, an array of themes, and several clearly delineated characters reward the readers' tenacity to wade through the long narrative.

Malladi's range of themes and characters, presented in a lucid style, along with the reading group guides, is meant to provide Western readers a glimpse of India. Her latest novel, *The Sound of Language*, published in December 2007, is about an Afghan refugee in Denmark and is a welcome foray into a new territory.

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LEELA KAPAI

#### ◆ MARA, RACHNA (1953–)

Born in India in 1953, Rachna Mara (Rachna Gilmore) lived in Mumbai (Bombay) until 1967. She was a voracious reader from her school days. A library situated in front of her house and secondhand bookshops helped her in getting reading materials. Her family moved to London, England, where she acquired a bachelor of science degree with honors from King's College in 1974. Three years later, she was awarded a bachelor of education degree from University of Prince Edward Island, Canada. Then Rachna worked with attorneys as a paralegal researcher and opened a pottery studio. She had a desire to write but was very much apprehensive of failure. Nonetheless, at the age of 30, Rachna started writing, and her first book, *My Mother Is Weird*, was published in 1988. Drawing on her own experience, the book portrayed

a child's thoughts comically about her mother's bad day. Her second book, *When-I-was-a-little-girl* (1989), was a recipient of the Morningside Book Panel Choice in 1989 and deals with the relationship between a mother and daughter with a dash of fantasy. In 1990 Mara moved with her husband and two daughters to Ottawa. She has written children's books, picture books, novels for teenagers, and adult fiction. Her pseudonym for adult fiction is Rachna Mara, and for other works she prefers the name Rachna Gilmore.

The connected stories in *Of Customs and Excise* (1991), an adult fiction, depict the lives of three women residing in India and Canada. They endeavor to realize their wants amid a clash of cultures, beliefs, and traditions. In India, Parvati wanted to keep her pregnancy secret from her new mother-in-law. Afterward, Mala, Parvati's daughter who is now a teenager in Canada, wants to throw off the yoke of customs binding her. These women, who had crossed borders to live in a new land, struggle to come out of the bondage of family, society, and class. The book was written with a poetic flavor. It was marked by Rachna's superb skill in depicting life in two countries, India and Canada. The novel was short-listed for the Best First Book and the 1992 Commonwealth Book Awards, Canada and Caribbean region, and won Ottawa's Carleton Book Award in 1993.

Rachna also wrote a trilogy. In the first one, entitled *Lights for Gita* (1994), Gita, who had come recently to Canada, cannot celebrate her favorite festival of lights, the Diwali. Her landlord objects to the lighting of *diyas* (small clay pots with oil for lighting). In a dark night of November, her friends are unable to attend the party that she has thrown. The longing for creating a beautiful garden is depicted beautifully in *Roses for Gita*, published in 1996. In the same year, *A Gift for Gita* came out. The world of Gita, who had by then settled comfortably in Canada, is turned upside down by an announcement from her father. The themes of the stories are universal in nature, as many characters had left their core families. Yet, they were part of the experience in the new land where they had settled. Rachna Gilmore describes the juxtaposition between ancestral and new experiences with acumen and verve.

Published in 1991, *Aunt Fred Is a Witch* narrates an encounter between Leila and her aunt Fred on a weekend. *A Friend Like Zilla* (1995) is a story of friendship between Zenobia and Zilla that develops in Prince Edward Island. The arrival of Uncle Chad changes the scenario, as he believes in perfection and Zilla is slow to learn things. The book was short-listed for many awards and was a recipient of the Canadian Children's Book Centre Choice in 1995. A little girl's fantasy in reversing the role of herself and her peers is the subject matter of the entertaining book *Wild Rilla* (1997). A child's spirit of mischief and protest marks *A Screaming Kind of Day* (1999), which received the Governor General's Award for Children's Literature Text in 1999. The boisterous color festival known as Holi is the theme of *Mina's*

*Spring of Colors* (2000). Mina is waiting for the Holi party, where there will be smearing of multicolored powder and throwing of colored water, with great enthusiasm. The story moves around Mina's relationship with her fussy grandfather and an invitation to the party for the newly arrived beautiful girl Ashley. The emotion, anger, and love of the 11-year-old Mina are portrayed very sensitively by the author. The book received the Canadian Children's Book Centre Our Choice Award in 2001. Tara, a 15-year-old Canadian girl of Indian descent, realizes the importance of cultures of homeland and the place of residence in *A Group of One* (2001). In school, she has to face awkward questions about her mother tongue, even from her teacher. In her mind, things like her relationship with Jeff, her friends, and news of the arrival of her grandfather are important. Rachna pens the life of a girl torn between her ancestry and her present surroundings superbly. This young adult novel was the recipient of the Jane Addams Children's Book Award Honor Book, New York Public Library Books for the Teen Age List, and the Best Children's Book of Bank Street College of Education in 2002. The fantasy novel *The Sower Of Tales* (2005) was meant for young adults and revolves around the intelligent and determined Calantha, who is on a quest for the Sower of Tales. The fast paced events captivate the reader. In 2006 the novel received an award from the Canadian Children's Book Centre Our Choice and the National Chapter IODE Violet Downey Award.

Rachna Gilmore has become an internationally acclaimed writer, with her books being translated into Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Somali, Turkish, Indian, and European. Her incessant zeal for writing can be witnessed in picture books like *Making Grizzle Grow*, *Catching Time*, and *The Flute* and in fantasy novels for children. Through her writings, she has caught the imagination of Indian immigrants all over the world who wrestle with ethnic and cultural identity. As the number of second and third generations of immigrants is increasing, Gilmore's books for children and young adults have found a place in many libraries and homes. Apart from writing, she has provided innumerable reading and writing workshops for children and adults.

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PATIT PABAN MISHRA

### ◆ McCUNN, RUTHANNE LUM (1946–)

A Chinese American writer of historical narratives, biographical novels, young adult fiction, and children's books, Ruthanne Lum McCunn (her Chinese name is Lum Loh Duk) is probably best known for her fictional biographies, especially her first biographical novel, *Thousand Pieces of Gold* (1981), which was adapted into a film in 1991, featuring Rosalind Chao and Chris Cooper. Her work has been translated into several languages, including Chinese, Danish, French, German, Greek, Mongolian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Swedish, and so on. Her children's picture book *Pie-Eater* (1983) won the Before Columbus Foundation's American Book Award and the American Library Association's Children's Books of International Interest Award in 1984. The biographical novel *Sole Survivor* (1985) was awarded Best Nonfiction Adventure by SW Booksellers Association in 1985. McCunn won a National Women's Political Caucus Distinguished Achievement Award in 1991. Her novel *Wooden Fish Songs* (1995) won the Women's Heritage Museum's J.F. McDonnell Award for Best Fiction in 1997. Another novel, *The Moon Pearl* (2000), was named The Best of the Best from American University Presses by the American Library Association in 2002.

McCunn was born in 1946 in San Francisco's **Chinatown** to Arthurita Randall Drysdale, of Chinese descent, and Robert Drake Drysdale, of Scottish ancestry. She grew up in Hong Kong, where she was educated first in Chinese and then in British schools. In 1962 she returned to the United States to attend college, first in California and later in Texas, receiving her BA in English from the University of Texas, Austin, in 1968. After college, she worked as a librarian and taught English at elementary, middle, and high schools in San Francisco before taking up writing as a career. While teaching, she took a creative writing course at San Francisco State University in 1976. Three years later, she published her first book, *An Illustrated History of the Chinese in America*, a children's book tracing the history of the Chinese in the United States. Because of rejections from publishers doubting the marketability of a book about Chinese America, McCunn had to use her retirement money to publish

this first book, but it sold out quickly, which encouraged McCunn to carry on her writing project of paying tribute to unsung Chinese/American heroes and heroines.

Dedicated to excavating personal narratives in Chinese and Chinese American history, McCunn portrays Chinese immigrants' struggles for acceptance by white society and underlines their achievements and contributions to their adopted country. While researching for her book on Chinese America, McCunn came across materials about Lalu Nathoy (aka Polly Bemis, circa 1853–1933), a Chinese American woman sold into slavery who later regained her freedom in an Idaho mining town. McCunn had originally planned to write a biography about Lalu/Polly but had to settle for a biographical novel because she was unable to verify certain details surrounding her heroine's life, especially her adolescent years in China, which McCunn considered crucial to an understanding of Polly Bemis in the United States. Growing up in a farming village in Northern China, Lalu Nathoy was born to loving but impoverished farmers. Because of drought-induced famines, she was sold by her father to a bandit leader in 1872, who resold her to a brothel, whose madam sold her to a slave merchant, who then shipped her to San Francisco, where she was auctioned off to Hong King, a saloon owner in the mining town of Warrens, Idaho. Hong King renamed her Polly and tried to force her into prostitution, but she managed to fend off her aggressors with the help of Charlie Bemis, a saloon keeper who befriended her and later facilitated the recovery of her freedom. With Charlie's help, Polly ran a successful boardinghouse in Warrens. She married Charlie in 1894, and the two built a ranch in Salmon River. Caring, generous, nurturing, and adept at nursing, Polly was respected and admired by her white neighbors and the Chinese settlers. She survived Charlie by 10 years, operated the ranch single-handedly, and continued to be an active and valuable member in town. A female pioneer well integrated into her community in the American West, Polly was an extraordinary figure in Chinese American history. Noting Polly's "power of personal imagination to translate Asian inspirations into American opportunities," Critic King-Kok Cheung observes how Polly subverted the submissive Chinese female stereotype and became a "self-made Chinese American [woman]" (1990, 143, 152). Critic Walter Hesford argues that *Thousand Pieces of Gold* appropriates the slave narrative but abstains from sheltering Polly in white protection. He compares the novel to its film version and points out how the latter predicates Polly's life on Charlie's, whereas the novel depicts her as an assertive and dignified woman capable of surviving on her own and bonding with the townspeople after her white husband's death.

Highlighting the individual experience in the Chinese American frontier history, *Thousand Pieces of Gold* offers an uplifting and remarkable account of a Chinese American woman. The tenet of recollecting and introducing forgotten heroes persists in McCunn's subsequent works. Also based on a true story, *Sole Survivor* reconstructs the 133-day adventure of Poon Lim at sea, a 24-year-old Chinese steward working on a British freighter during World War II. After the ship was torpedoed by a German U-boat



off the coast of Brazil on November 23, 1942, Lim was the only person to survive the shipwreck. Following her interviews with Lim over three years, McCunn recreated a captivating account of how a meek, dependent person rose up to the occasion, used his intelligence and ingenuity to battle harsh natural elements, persevered through the adversity, and matured into a resourceful person when he was rescued five months later.

Another fictionalized biography, *Wooden Fish Songs*, is about the immigrant-cum-horticulturist Lue Gim Gong (1860–1925), known as “the Citrus Wizard” for his contribution to Florida’s orange-growing industry. Lue’s tale is told through the voices of three women: Lue’s mother in the Chinese village of Toishan; Fanny Burlingame, a New England spinster who converts Lue to Christianity, supports his botanical interests, and helps him obtain his U.S. citizenship; and Sheba, a slave’s daughter working with Lue in the citrus groves. In its tribute to Lue, the novel also exposes women’s suffering by foregrounding the viewpoints of women from three different cultures.

McCunn continued her portraits of strong women and explored possible alternatives for them in the young adult novel *The Moon Pearl*. The book resulted from McCunn’s research on “self-combers,” women who plaited their hair rather than wearing wifely buns and pledged to spinsterhood in the Pearl River Delta of nineteenth-century China. *The Moon Pearl* follows the adventures of three young girls who refused to conform to the traditional roles expected of women—to be either wives or nuns. Cast out by their families, these women formed their own community and were able to gain economic independence, and eventually the villagers’ acceptance.

McCunn’s investment in reconstructing Chinese immigrant history extends to the Chinese in the Americas. For instance, her 2007 book *God of Luck* tackles nineteenth-century coolie trade to Peru. Writing across genres, McCunn also compiled *Chinese Proverbs* (1991), which introduces Chinese common sense, wisdom, and philosophy through 50 traditional Chinese proverbs, presented in both Chinese and English, accompanied by illustrations.

A conscientious writer whose work appeals to a wide audience, McCunn has promoted attention to Chinese American history through her writing and her activism. She was a member of the Chinese Historical Society of America and cofounded its annual journal, on whose editorial committee she also served. In addition, she has served on the advisory boards of several other Asian American cultural organizations, such as Asian Women United. **See also** Asian American Children’s Literature; Asian American Political Activism; Asian American Stereotypes; Chinese American Literature.

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SU-CHING HUANG

#### ◆ MEHTA, GITA (1943–)

Gita Mehta is an Indian American essayist, novelist, and documentary filmmaker. Born in New Delhi, Mehta belonged to a family of renowned freedom fighters and politicians of the eastern province of Orissa in India. Her father was Biju Patnaik (1916–1997), freedom fighter, industrialist, and chief minister of Orissa. Naveen Patnaik (1946–), her brother, is the current chief minister of the state. Mehta was raised in a convent in Kashmir from the age of three, because her father was jailed by the British and her mother was trying to set him free. She later went to Cambridge University, Great Britain, for advanced studies. She met a fellow student by the name of Sonny Mehta (aka Ajai Singh Mehta) and married him. Ajai Mehta became the president of Alfred Knopf. Although based in midtown Manhattan, New York, Gita Mehta regularly visits India in winter, where she has a house in New Delhi. Apart from being an essayist and novelist, she has covered important events happening around the world. Mehta has directed more than a dozen television documentaries for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), as well as for the National Broadcasting Company (NBC). Her *Datehine Bangladesh*, produced for NBC, was about the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971. She has also made a documentary on the first election in Indian Garjat (princely) states.

Gita Mehta and her husband are well-known in the literary circles of New York. At one of the Manhattan publishing parties, karma became the topic of discussion. She finished the *Karma Cola: Marketing the Mystic East* (1979) in about three weeks' time. The book catapulted her into fame, and she became one of the acclaimed Indian American

writers. In the 1960s, India was a haven for many foreigners coming in search of nirvana (enlightenment), ecstasy, religion, and mysticism. The counterculture of the 1960s revolved around the Beatles, Maharishi Yogi's prescription of *moksha* (salvation), sexual ecstasy of the hippies, and thrills from marijuana and LSD. Through interconnected essays, Gita Mehta wrote with wit and sarcasm about Indian mysticism as seen through her eyes and other people's perceptions. She wrote critically of the West's obsession with Indian spirituality. Gurus and transcendental meditation (TM) had become solace for the materialistic West, and Mehta exposed the claim that all Indians were acquainted with spiritual affairs. Forcefully and sarcastically, Mehta wrote about foreigners' infatuation with Indian godmen, sex, and drugs. In essays like "Om Is Where the Art Is" and "Sex and the Single Guru," the futile journey of hippies, the Beatles, and seekers of spiritualism to India were depicted humorously. Like the *Karma Cola*, her subsequent writings were focused on Indian history, culture, and mythology. *Raj, A Novel* (1989), with a temporal dimension from the last decade of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, is about the life of Princess Jaya Singh. Mehta took nine long years to finish the novel and used historical facts to develop the characters. Juxtaposed between colonial and free India, the social history of India is depicted through characters of the novel. The princess marries an Anglophile, Prince Pratap, and her life revolves around the conservative atmosphere of the kingdom. Only after India's independence does Jaya free herself from the purdah (veil) and apply for a position with the free Indian government. Mehta was scathing in her criticism against the British and the royalty of Indian princely states.

In *A River Sutra* (1993), Gita Mehta explores cultural diversity in India through different stories that are bound together by the holy river Narmada. In stories about diamond merchants, tea plantation managers, minstrels, courtesans, mullahs, and Hindu and Jain saints, the sutra (thread or string) is the theme running throughout the stories. The protagonist in the novel is a retired civil servant who is managing a small inn on the banks of Narmada. Each bewitching tale is like a rivulet pouring its contents into the long river of life. The river Narmada becomes a leitmotif in each of the enchanting stories. The beauty of the stories lies in its simplicity, sensitivity, and clarity, with the subject of love linking the people together. Even the flow of the river Narmada has the purpose of meeting her beloved, the Lord of Oceans. *Snakes and Ladders: Glimpses of Modern India* (1997), a collection of wide-ranging essays in 31 chapters, was written to educate the West and young Indians about postindependent India. In essays entitled "Who's Afraid of Being Indian?" "Losing It," and others, Mehta delineates various themes from independent India, such as its history, economy, political system, literature, mass media, movie industry, and American pop culture, with a great sense of understanding, objectivity, incisiveness, and sensitivity. The game of snakes and ladders is chosen as a metaphor to describe the unpredictable rise and fall of a character, which is

quite similar to India itself. *Eternal Ganesha: From Birth to Rebirth* (2006), Mehta's recent work, is about Lord Ganesha, the harbinger of good omen and the god of learning. Beautifully illustrated, the coffee table book describes the life of the lord and the philosophical ideas pertaining to Ganesha.

In spite of penning five books, Mehta is humble and has expressed her desire to write more so that she can have better command over the art of writing. Traveling among three countries—the United States, Great Britain, and India—she has gained a great deal of experience in describing India and its diversity before an audience in her homeland and in Western countries. Her journalistic background has helped her in writing essays that are investigative, analytical, and thought provoking. The characters in her novels are products of circumstances and yet endeavor to reach their lives' goals. In her fiction and nonfiction, India, with its varied culture, different religions, and long history, has been the focus of attention; India has also advanced into the modern age without jettisoning its rich culture and long tradition. Mehta's books have been translated into 21 languages and have been on the best seller list many times.

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PATIT PABAN MISHRA

#### ◆ MEHTA, VED PARKASH (1934–)

Indian American writer, autobiographer, biographer, essayist, social and political commentator, novelist, editor, journalist, and professor of creative writing, Ved Mehta's life story is the heartwarming saga of a human's struggles, determination, and success. Having lost his eyesight to cerebrospinal meningitis at the early age of three and failing to receive proper education in India, Ved Mehta applied for admission to

the Arkansas School for the Blind and was accepted. He arrived in Little Rock in 1949, graduating from the Arkansas school in three years as the class salutatorian, and continued his education at Pomona College for his BA, Oxford University for another BA (honors), and Harvard University for an MA. At the age of 26, he became a staff writer for the *New Yorker*, working for the magazine for 33 years until 1994. In addition to writing a number of works and contributing articles and short stories to various American, British, and Indian newspapers, Mehta has written a series of 11 autobiographical volumes titled *Continents of Exile*, which he started with *Daddyji* in 1972 and continued in a steady stream with *Mamaji*, *Vedi*, *The Ledge between the Streams*, *The Stolen Light*, *Up at Oxford*, *Remembering Mr. Shawn's New Yorker*, *All for Love*, *Dark Harbor*, and completing the series with *The Red Letters* in 2004. In *The Ledge between the Streams*, Mehta says, "I sometimes feel I am leading two lives—the life I'm remembering and interpreting and my ordinary, day-to-day life" (1984, vii). Each of the 11 volumes reveals a small segment of his life. Mehta's other books include *Face to Face*, *Walking the Indian Streets*, *Fly and the Fly-Bottle*, *The New Theologian*, *Delinquent Chacha*, *Portrait of India*, *John Is Easy to Please*, *Mahatma Gandhi and His Apostles*, *The New India*, *The Photographs of Chachaji*, *A Family Affair*, *Three Stories of the Raj*, and *Rajiv Gandhi and Rama's Kingdom*. He has also held numerous teaching positions at universities and colleges, which include the prestigious Rosenkranz Chair in Writing at Yale University, 1990–1993, and the Randolph Distinguished Professorship of English and History at Vassar College, 1994–1996. Mehta is married to Linn, and they have two children, Alexandra Sage and Natasha. He lives in New York City.

Mehta's works can be divided into two main categories—social and political, and biographical and autobiographical. His *Walking the Indian Streets* is a travel book about his experiences in Delhi, Kolkata (then called Calcutta), and Kathmandu (Nepal) during his one-month stay in 1960. His *Fly and the Fly-Bottle* (1963) and *The New Theologian* (1966) are reports on contemporary British philosophers and historians, and contemporary Western Christian thinkers, respectively. They are based on the author's conversations with leading figures in philosophy, history, and theology, and their followers. *Delinquent Chacha* is a comic novel, relating the adventures of a poor relation who lives by his wits. *The Photographs of Chachaji* is a documentary that Ved Mehta directed based on Chachaji's normal activities on a typical day and on special occasions, such as attending a family wedding and going on a pilgrimage to the Ganges for expiation of sins. *The Portrait of India* (1970)—a collection of 50 essays that first appeared in the *New Yorker*—is a sequel to *Walking the Indian Streets*. This book was followed by *John Is Easy to Please* (1971)—a collection of six sketches of eminent literary personalities, including the Indian writer R.K. Narayan and the American linguist Noam Chomsky. Mehta wrote *Mahatma Gandhi and His Apostles* (1977) based on his talks with a number of disciples of Gandhi in India and England. He learned that Gandhi believed that "there was no

boundary between public and private morality in any society" and that "he could expiate the sins of others by taking them on himself" (124). The business tycoon Birla tells Mehta that Gandhi once told him, "I would not mind living with Satan, but I don't think Satan would live with me for long" (124). Birla also confides in Mehta that he "never agreed with his [Gandhi's] notions on economics" (63). Mehta's *The New India* (1978), *A Family Affair* (1982), and *Rajiv Gandhi and Rama's Kingdom* (1994) can be read together as the political history of India after independence. *The New India*, for example, demonstrates how the prime minister, Indira Gandhi, during the Emergency rule in 1975, tried to silence her critics and opponents and launched a draconian program of forced sterilization, and thus invited her downfall in the 1977 general elections.

Concerning the second category of his writings, which are titled *Continents of Exile*, in the prologue to *All for Love* Mehta writes, "In the series, I explore many continents, real and imagined, that I have inhabited and from which I have been exiled, and also examine some of the things about my personal history, things . . . I had no idea even existed . . ." (2001, 2). *Daddyji* and *Mamaji* for the most part portray his parents' lives long before their marriage, Ved Mehta's head-shaving ceremony in 1935, and his illness as a result of meningitis. They are rich in detail about his ancestors, including excerpts from the diary of Mehta's maternal grandfather, which records births and deaths, weddings and illnesses, and calamities and vacations. *Vedi* is an account of Mehta's life at the Dadar School for the Blind. With the blind child, the reader hears, sings, smells, touches, and tastes, but the reader never sees the place, as all visual imagery is shunned (1982, 74). The reader sympathizes with the child who has developed his own system of telling time and rejoices with him as he plays touch games like tug-of-war.

*The Ledge between the Streams* recounts Mehta's life from the age of 9 through 15. It presents a seemingly idyllic world destroyed by the partition of India, with its communal rioting that turned millions of people into refugees. The Mehta family could not understand why Hindus and Muslims who had "lived together like brothers" for centuries (1984, 298), had suddenly become enemies. While members of the Mehta family "liked the British," they "put the blame" for the Hindu-Muslim discord on the British policy of "divide and rule," first favoring Hindus over Muslims and then Muslims over Hindus (298–299). The chapter "Pictures of Marriage" describes a typical arranged marriage according to Hindu customs, from the selection of a groom to marriage preparations and to various wedding rites and ceremonies. Through it all, *The Ledge between the Streams* brings out the strength of the Indian family system, as Ved Mehta's father is ready to make any sacrifice to educate him.

In *Sound-Shadows of the New World*, Mehta tells of the first three years in the United States at the Arkansas School for the Blind. Resolute, Mehta adjusts to the American way of life, food, and education; starts living on his own; and excels as a student. Only occasionally does he experience racism and religious bigotry. A classmate

tells him in geometry that “she didn’t want to hear what a ‘darky’ had to say” (1986, 387), and a piano teacher who fails to convert him to Christianity gives him low marks in “cooperation, courtesy, and attitude” (258). However, Mehta endures it all, remembering his father’s advice about not losing one’s temper under any circumstances.

Two other major autobiographies, *The Stolen Light* and *Up at Oxford*, deal with his college years in California and Oxford, England, respectively. In *The Stolen Light*, Mehta proves his mettle as a student among the sighted, refusing help or special consideration because of his handicap. He challenges himself academically, participates in campus student life, revives the International Relations Club, writes for the college newspaper, and has normal relationships. Mrs. Ethel Clyde, the socialist millionaire philanthropist who is his father’s patient and friend, supports him financially at Pomona and gives him the money to spend two summers writing an autobiography. He uses the autobiographical project as a way of winning over JoAnn, his reader and friend. But when she remains outside his reach, he uses the autobiography to discover his talent as a writer.

In *Up at Oxford*, Ved Mehta reminisces about his days at Oxford, his conversations with important personages, and the sounds, smells, and tastes of his undergraduate life. His parents loom large in this book as they visit him, his father traveling as a companion and doctor to Mrs. Clyde. Ved Mehta confronts new difficulties in moving around Oxford because of its “winding paths and lanes, oddly placed buildings and trees, roaring lorries and cars, weaving bicycles and scooters,” and sidewalks cluttered with standing bicycles (1993, 78). He confesses, “At Oxford, I had come to deny my Indianness, even my Americanness, and tended to adopt unwittingly the mannerisms and attitudes of the people I admired” (428).

*Remembering Mr. Shawn’s New Yorker* is the eighth book in the autobiographical series. It is a warm tribute to William Shawn, who was the editor in chief of the *New Yorker* from 1952 to 1987. Mehta tells of his work with Shawn and the importance he attached to his judgment. He gives a rare glimpse of Shawn’s genius at work. Shawn had meticulously edited all of Mehta’s books, chapter by chapter, except *Face to Face*. He edited both *Stolen Light* and *Up at Oxford* even after he had left the *New Yorker*.

The last three volumes of the autobiographical project are *All for Love*, *Dark Harbor*, and *The Red Letters*, and they were written in the twenty-first century. *All for Love* brings out a new autobiographical vein in Mehta that, after his experience with the psychoanalyst Bak, he is able to explore “interior worlds previously inaccessible to me” (2001, 345). He can now explore “the boundaries of time and memory, the clash of culture and self, and the meaning of place and exile—as I have experienced them” (345). Although he had laid down the rule that all his girlfriends treat him like any other normal person without any disability, he learns from his therapist that he must face his blindness and not “shrink from discussing it with anyone he wanted to be close with” (344). The therapist shows that none of the girls—Vanessa, Lola, Kilty, Gigi, or Stone—he had had

affairs with was perhaps suitable as a mate for him. *Dark Harbor* tells the story of Mehta building a second home in Maine for the woman he has fallen in love with and marries. In the process he learns more about himself when he tries to treat Linn in the same manner his father had treated his mother, taking her acceptance for granted. He realizes that he must watch how he behaves with Linn if he does not want to jeopardize his marriage (2007, 194). *The Red Letters*, the final book in the autobiographical series, deals with the author's accidental discovery of his father's love affair with the Hill girl, Rasil, whom he knew only as a family friend, and his dilemma whether or not to write about it. Mehta discovers that his mother knew about Rasil's relationship with her husband, but she tolerated it lest her protest should result in the breakup of her marriage. The book brings Mehta's story to a close, as the senior Mehta dies in India, and the junior Mehta continuing to love and respect him. **See also** Racism and Asian America.

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HARISH CHANDER

◆ **MELUS (MULTI-ETHNIC LITERATURE OF THE UNITED STATES)**

An academic and scholarly journal published in English for members and subscribing institutions by the Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States (MELUS) which was founded in 1973 during a Modern Language Association convention with the goal to reinvent American literature and expand American canonical literature. As an umbrella organization that intends to include all



people who are professionally interested in the multiplicity of American literature, MELUS employs varied approaches to bring attention to the literature of Asian Americans, African Americans, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, Latinos, and Americans of European extraction, such as Italians and the Polish, specifically, religious ethnic groups such as the Jews, who have been ignored, misread, or underrepresented in the past. Among these approaches stands remarkably the journal *MELUS*.

First published in a newsletter format in 1974, *MELUS* eventually evolved into a journal, which at first appeared two or three times a year and then in 1978, starting from the fifth volume, became a regular quarterly, issued in March (Spring), June (Summer), September (Fall), and December (Winter). The key figure in the creation and development of *MELUS* is Katharine Newman, the founder and then editor of this journal. By inviting established writers and scholars to contribute to the new journal, Newman made sure that the journal quickly got its name in academia. She was also enthusiastic to discover and promote upcoming writers by publishing articles by them and for them. This principle has become *MELUS's* brand.

From 1982 to 1985, the journal was edited by Wayne Charles Miller. Joseph T. Skerrett Jr. served as editor from 1986 to 1999. From 2000 until 2006, Veronica Makowsky edited *MELUS*. In August 2006, Martha J. Cutter took over the journal's editorship. Cutter is currently an associate professor with a joint appointment in English and African American studies at the University of Connecticut. She received her PhD in English from Brown University and has published widely in a variety of fields relating to the study of ethnic discourse and women's language. Her fields of interest are multiethnic literature of the United States, American women's writing, and African American literature. Betsy Huang of Clark University serves as the book review editor. The editorship of the journal is currently housed at the University of Connecticut.

*MELUS* presents research, scholarly essays, and interviews of interest to those concerned with the multiethnic scope of America's literature. Every issue has its own focus, such as *The Pressure of History; Oppression and Ethnic Literature; Between Margins and Mainstream; Ethnic Women Writers; Ethnic Literature and Music; Toward a New Literary History; Native American Literature; European Perspectives; Variety of Ethnic Criticism; Poetry and Poetics; Ethnic Biography; Confronting Exiles; Elusive Illusion: Art and Reality; Personal and Political; Loss, Melancholia, Resistance; and Variety of Ethnic Experience*. As of 2008, it has published 33 volumes.

The growth of *MELUS* has paralleled that of Asian American literature. From the very onset, Asian American writers and critics have been involved in the process. *MELUS* has published issues exclusively dedicated to the literature of Asian Americans, such as *Asian Perspective* (Vol. 19, No. 4, 1994), *Chinese American Literature* (Vol. 20, No. 1, 1995), *Asian American Literatures* (Vol. 24, No. 4, 1999), and *Filipino*

*American Literature* (Vol. 29, No. 1, 2004). *The Chickencoop Chinaman* by Frank Chin, *Picture Bride* by Cathy Song, *American Knees* by Shawn Wong, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* by Elaine H. Kim, and many other works by American writers of Asian descent have been reviewed in *MELUS*.

Endeavoring to engage its readers in interesting discourses, *MELUS* is open to a wide range of topics, general or specific, and to all scholarly methods and theoretical approaches. A desirable submission, whether theoretical or analytical, comparative within a single ethnic literature or cross-cultural, is between 5,000 and 7,500 words, including notes and works cited. The submission should be prepared according to the most recent edition of the *MLA Style Manual*. Essays dealing with American literature not written in English are also welcome, but foreign language titles and quotations should be accompanied by English translations. Contributors are advised to avoid sexist and racist language and other discriminatory overtones. *MELUS* only publishes articles by members of the Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States. To publish an article, an author needs to pay a due to gain membership status first. All submissions (originally addressed to the editor of *MELUS* at melus@uconn.edu) will be sent anonymously to at least two reviewers with expertise in the article's area, and recommended articles will be reviewed by the editor in person. However, the editor is responsible for the final decision. Every year, the *MELUS* journal editor and the editorial board confer an Award for the Best Article of the Year and the Best Graduate Student Article Award for the Year.

The journal is a not-for-profit publication, supported solely by dues of society members, institutional subscriptions, and funds from patrons. The editorial office is supported by the University of Connecticut at Storrs. Patrons of the society help achieve long-term goals. Individuals or institutions such as a university or college departments or programs can acquire a patronage by donating a yearly minimum contribution of \$250. Patrons enjoy a one-page advertisement in the journal for one issue and an acknowledgment on the back cover of the *MELUS* journal.

*MELUS* is indexed annually in the last issue (Winter) of each volume. It is also indexed and abstracted in American Humanities Index, Abstracts in Anthropology, Arts & Humanities Citation Index, Amer. Bibl. Slavic & E. Eur. Stud., Abstracts of English Studies, Chicano Periodical Index (now Chicano Index), PCI, MLA Intl. Bibl., and IBR (International Bibliography of Book Reviews of Scholarly Literature). Contributors over the last years include Uday Naval, Katharine D. Newman, Stewart Rodnon, Brom Weber, John Zebrowski, Richard Tuerk, Wololdymyr T. Zyla, Frank Chin, M. Thomas Inge, Evelyn Avery, Jean F. Yellin, Ishmael Reed, Wayne Miller, Edith Maureen Fisher, Robert J. Di Pietro, Milton Murayama, John M. Reilly, Gerald Thorson, Priscilla Oaks, S.E. Solberg, Luther Luedtke, Nancy T. Baden, Joseph T. Skerrett, Jr., Joe Weixlmann, Maria Wagner, Bruce-Novoa, Rose Mary Prosen, Wendell Aycock, Marilyn Nelson Waniek,

Paula Gunn Allen, Sheldon Hershinow, Rudolfo A. Anaya, Paul Lauter, Jules Chametzky, Thomas P. Riggio, Victor Doyno, Ronald Gottesman, Joseph Henry, Werner Sollors, Amy Ling, Carlos E. Cortés, Carla Cappetti, Veronica Wang, Shirley Geok-Lin Lim, Sharon Jessee, Shirley K. Rose, Hertha D. Wong, Ann Rayson, R. Baxter Miller, Fredrick L. Rusch, Carolyn Camp, Rudolph P. Byrd, Mary Katherine, Joyce Flynn, Dennis Flynn, Ellen Skerrett, James Farrel, Seiwoong Oh, Ann Folwell Stanford, Minako Baba, Patricia Wallace, Walt Nott, Nancy Lang, Ben Xu, Robin Ganz, Martha J. Cutter, Darryl Hattenhauer, Nina Scott, Cathy Song, and many more.

The ISSN of *MELUS* is 0163755X. Its correspondence address is *MELUS*, the University of Connecticut, Department of English, 215 Glenbrook Rd. U-4025, Storrs, CT, 06269-4025, United States of America. The phone number is (860) 486-2320, fax number (860) 486-1530.

#### *Further Reading*

The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States (MELUS) Web site. <http://www.ship.edu/~kmlong/melus>.

LINGLING YAO

#### ◆ MIN, ANCHEE (1957–)

Anchee Min is a foreign-born Chinese American woman writer, painter, photographer, and musician. She writes and gives speeches to make a living. She is particularly recognized for *Red Azalea* (1994), a memoir of her life growing up in Shanghai, China, during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Born in Shanghai on January 14, 1957, Anchee Min is the eldest of four children in her family. Leader of the Little Red Guard, she went through elementary school reciting Mao Zedong's *Little Red Book* and singing Madame Mao's operas. In 1974, together with many other middle school and high school students from cities such as Shanghai, she was sent to Red Fire Farm near the East China Sea to be educated by the farmers, which was in line with Mao's reeducation policy at the time. In 1976 she was chosen to audition for the leading role in *Red Azalea*, a film about the life of Mao Zedong's wife, Jiang Qing. Notwithstanding all the training and screen tests, she was never able to act the role because Jiang Qing was overthrown soon after Mao's death. After the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976, she worked as a set clerk and cleaner at a film studio in Shanghai for about eight years, copying scripts, mopping floors, and filling hot water for offices (Min 1994).

In 1984, with the help of a friend, the actress Joan Chen, whom she met in the film studio, Anchee Min left China for the United States on a student visa. She

attended the Art Institute of Chicago but was sent to the University of Illinois to take ESL (English as a second language) classes before being officially admitted into a degree program. She stayed at AIC from 1985 to 1990 and eventually earned a BFA and MFA in fine arts there. In 1991 Min married Qigu Jiang, an artist from Shanghai, who earned his MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1990. They had a daughter but were divorced in 1994. In 1999 Min married Lloyd Lofthouse, a high school English teacher. She now lives in California and China alternately.

Anchee Min writes with passion and draws most of her writings from her childhood during the Cultural Revolution. Critics such as Roxane Farmanfarmaian have asserted that Min achieves catharsis by reclaiming her childhood or the lingering impact the Cultural Revolution leaves behind. In a similar vein, Wendy Larson notes that Anchee Min writes specifically for Western audiences and emphasizes life during the Cultural Revolution.

*Red Azalea*, Anchee Min's first book, tells stories of the wounds Chinese people carry with them. The memoir's presentation of sexuality and sexual liberation is specific historically and culturally. It results from some memoirs she wrote in an English class and took her eight years to finish. As a *New York Times* best seller in 1995, *Red Azalea* has been translated into more than 20 languages. The book is different from many other narratives of the Cultural Revolution in that it bears sexual explicitness and focuses on transformative lesbian eroticism and desire. It specifically "represents lesbian sexuality as the primary means of emancipation for the protagonist" (Larson 1999, 434). It weaves, among other things, a love story in a narrative of the psychic wounds inflicted upon Chinese people during the Cultural Revolution. Anchee Min and her team leader start their lesbian relationship when she is laboring on the farm to which she was sent at the age of 17. The two lovers make love under the mosquito nets in their dorm on Min's eighteenth birthday. Nonetheless, their relationship terminates when Min is chosen to audition to play Madame Mao in a film back in Shanghai. It is in the film studio that Min finds herself in a relationship with her supervisor, whose sexual identity remains ambiguous.

There has been a subtle difference of opinion in the categorization of *Red Azalea's* literary genre—as memoir, fictionalized autobiography, autobiographical novel, or queer life writing. Irrespective of this difference, the book is examined broadly as part of life writing.

Some major critiques of *Red Azalea* focus on its representation of sexuality, agency, or symptomatic reading, to name a few. Some critics maintain that the book provides a new epistemic lens to examining sexuality in a transnational queer context. Others focus on queer life writing and determine that the text is more about search for a private self in sexual confession and expressing desire. Therefore, unlike many queer

writings in the Western context, the book does not really prioritize homosexuality, bisexuality, or heterosexuality.

*Katherine* (1995), Anchee Min's first novel, creates a whirlwind of the lingering throes of the Cultural Revolution and the excitement of China opening its doors to the West. The setting is post-Cultural Revolution China, where an American ESL teacher, Katherine, teaches English in the early 1980s. Through her interactions with her Chinese students, whose experiences during the Cultural Revolution still affect them tremendously, Katherine is able to observe ways the revolutionary consciousness perpetuates in Chinese people's daily lives. After arriving in Shanghai in 1982, Katherine meets Zebra, who is also the narrator in the novel. Zebra works temporarily in an electronics factory. She is from a poor working-class family, and she is expected to get married and move out of her home to make room for her brother and would-be sister-in-law. She attends Katherine's English classes because her factory intends to have her translate factory catalogs. She quickly befriends Katherine and becomes one of her favorite students. She fantasizes about Katherine and about the world in which she grows up. What makes this novel similar to *Red Azalea* is a sensual touch. It also portrays a love triangle among Katherine, Zebra, and Lion Head. Unfortunately, any love relationship involving a westerner like Katherine has some consequences. Eventually, Katherine has nothing but Zebra's friendship left. At the end of the novel, Zebra prepares to leave for the United States and is ready to experience the West in much the same way that Katherine experiences China.

*Becoming Madame Mao* (2000) is Min's first historical novel on Madame Mao's life. After three years of research, she wrote and published it. In this novel, Min weaves fictional elements into historical truth and demystifies historical views of Madame Mao's life and examines her as a human being.

*Wild Ginger* (2002), an autobiographical fiction, tells a coming-of-age story about Anchee Min's school years as a zealous Maoist in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It also tells of a tragic love story during the Cultural Revolution. Wild Ginger, Maple (the narrator), and Evergreen are good friends. Wild Ginger is a new transfer. Her father was French and committed suicide because of the prosecution of him as a spy, and her mother hanged herself because of the harsh realities they had to tackle. Wild Ginger pushes herself to be a Maoist by fervently participating in Mao quotation-citing contests and making her loyalty to Mao her first priority. Evergreen, a boy in her class, joins her, but she dismisses his admiration and secret love. In the meantime, the main character, Maple, likes Evergreen, is tortured by her feelings, and feels hurt by the close relationship between Wild Ginger and Evergreen. Even though Maple and Evergreen are finally together, Maple can never get over Wild Ginger, who kills herself for her impure thoughts of desire and love.

Anchee Min has also published *Empress Orchid* (2005) and *The Last Empress* (2007), a sequel based on her research of the Empress Dowager Ci Xi (Tsu Hsi), who

was in power for more than 46 years during the Qing dynasty in nineteenth-century China. Once again, in much the same way as she does in *Becoming Madame Mao*, Min endeavors to demystify a powerful woman in Chinese history. Nevertheless, she weaves fictional elements in the books that caution her readers not to take her presentations of Ci Xi as historical truths.

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DONG LI

◆ MIRIKITANI, JANICE (1942–)

A third-generation (sansei) Japanese American poet, dancer, editor, activist, and former poet laureate of San Francisco (2000–2001), Mirikitani was born in Stockton, California, and was only an infant when she and her family were interned at the Rohwer internment camp in Arkansas. In 1962 she graduated cum laude from UCLA, and she received her teaching credentials from UC Berkeley in 1963. Since 1965, Mirikitani has worked at the Glide Memorial United Methodist Church, headed by the Rev. Cecil Williams, whom she married in 1982. During and following the **Third World Students' Strikes** in 1968, Mirikitani was foundational

in promoting Asian American poetry, music, and dance. But she has always sought to bring together the voices of people of color, the disenfranchised, and the socially marginalized. She has published four books of poetry: *Awake in the River* (1978), *Shedding Silence* (1987), *We, the Dangerous: New and Selected Poems* (1995), and *Love Works* (2002). Additionally, Mirikitani has edited several anthologies, including two that concentrate on Japanese American artists and writers and several that collect the poems of young people and women who have suffered poverty and trauma. Currently, Mirikitani is executive director of Glide Church and founding president of the Glide Foundation. She has received numerous awards and honors for both her writing and her community activism.

From the beginning, Mirikitani's poetry has spoken out against both individual and state violence, and issues of racism, sexism, and class struggle are at the forefront of her work. Many of her poems focus specifically on the internment, giving voice to the silences that have surrounded the Japanese American experience. Hers is a poetry of witness, mourning, and remembrance, shot through with moments that celebrate survival against the odds and the grounding influences of intergenerational connection, particularly between women. The speaker's tone is often one of rage at the brutality that marks men's treatment of women, whites' treatment of people of color, and the U.S. nation-state's attitude toward the so-called Third World. Mirikitani's poetry consistently and insistently links the local to the international and the historical past to the personal present. Her themes largely focus on racial wounding and trauma, women's vulnerability to male sexual aggression, and the body as the site that manifests the violence of history. Her poetic project is an overtly political one that is geared toward issues of social justice and the possibilities for political change. She has frequently said that her social activism is inseparable from her poetry.

Beginning with her first collection, *Awake in the River*, Mirikitani ties many of her themes together through the figure of silence. Indeed, several poems and the title of one of the volumes include the word *silence* ("Shedding Silence," "Breaking Silence," "Prisons of Silence"), and several more depict silence as violent, dominating, and oppressive. It is associated with death, erasure of self, and the denial of choice, action, or agency. For those who are silenced, liberation comes only through refiguring violence as the means through which one "breaks," "shatters," or otherwise destroys the silence that would deny the ways in which the powerful victimize those they can. Empowerment, healing, and the path out of victimization come through the establishment of an inclusive collective "we," rather than through any single, abstract poetic voice.

Mirikitani frequently draws connections between forced silence and sexual victimization, and this linkage is particularly clear in poems where she depicts the ways in which Asian American women have been affected not only by racism and sexism but also by the history of U.S. wars in Asian countries. In "Spoils of War," Mirikitani

explicitly links the **Vietnam War** to the relationship between a white American man and a Japanese American woman. Here, sexual objectification is inseparable from imperialist domination and is compounded by a failure to distinguish between and among Asians and Asian Americans or to recognize an authentic humanity in either group. While an earlier version of this poem ends with the woman reconnecting to her Japanese heritage and leaving her white lover, a later version ends with the woman's murder. As she is dismembered, her killer—a white Vietnam veteran—brings down his knife to the rhythms of remembered march chants.

While these are the most overtly violent effects of the intersections between racism and sexism, Mirikitani also writes about psychic violence and the erosion of a sense of self for Asian American women. The poem "The Question Is" features a presumably male, non-Asian speaker who asks a series of questions that detail how Asian American women are the targets of an exoticizing sexualization that renders them completely Other, always foreign and always ready to sexually please. In poems like "Recipe," in which a speaker details how to tape one's eyelids to look more rounded, or "Doreen," in which the title character tries to look white and is killed in an accident that demolishes her face, Mirikitani suggests that internalized racism and sexism result in a denial of self that is nearly as destructive as physical death.

Mirikitani's understanding of how racism works does not assume that gender similarity erases racial difference. Poems such as "Ms" focus on the conflicts that arise when liberal white feminists ignore their race, and often class, privilege. While white women may be subject to sexism, Mirikitani consistently pushes us to think about the intersections between systems of oppression, disallowing any easy answers or appeals to a vaguely defined sisterhood. In fact, because racism often works to undermine Asian American men, many of her poems ("Japs" and "American Geisha") demonstrate how they too are often the victims of sexism through being feminized by both white men and white women.

Although Asian Americans are often the focus in Mirikitani's work, poems like "Slaying Dragon Ladies" and "Who Is Singing This Song?" register a voice of social protest through the politics of advocacy and coalition through shared oppression and struggle. She explicitly links the experiences of different communities of color, the poor, and the working class into a collective body of resistance to the dominant culture of the privileged. Mirikitani's social and poetic vision encompasses those who are disenfranchised and socially stigmatized in a way that argues for equality, justice, and human dignity. Many of her edited anthologies, such as *Third World Women* (1973) and *I Have Something to Say about This Big Trouble: Children of the Tenderloin Speak Out* (1989), reflect this inclusive vision and Mirikitani's belief that giving voice to experience through writing and poetry is empowering in personal, social, and political terms.

From the 1990s onward, Mirikitani has begun to more explicitly deal with issues of sexual abuse, using her own experience as the basis both for her poems and for her social



activist work at Glide Memorial. Her edited volume *Watch Out! We're Talking: Speaking Out About Incest and Abuse* (1993) is a collection of pieces that bear witness to the prevalence of sexual violence within the family. As with issues relating to the internment, those relating to incest and sexual abuse have been similarly shrouded in silence and need to be spoken to be healed. Mirikitani's most recent volume, *Love Works* (2002) brings together some of her previously published poems with new ones that explicitly focus on issues of sexual abuse ("Moth in the Closet," "Iron Butterfly"). Though often characteristically blunt and declarative about the impact of abuse, poverty, homophobia, sexism, and racism, this collection and its title also pick up a less-mentioned thread in Mirikitani's work—that this poetic work comes out of love and hope. Despite the painful experiences her poems detail, love can work where silence cannot. **See also** Asian American Political Activism; Issei, Nisei, Sansei; Japanese American Internment; Racism and Asian America; Sexism and Asian America.

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TRAISE YAMAMOTO

◆ MISTRY, ROHINTON (1952–)

Rohinton Mistry is an Indian-born novelist and short story writer who has been a resident of Ontario, Canada, since 1975. One of the most celebrated Asian Canadian writers from the South Asian diaspora to date, Mistry grew up in his native Bombay (now Mumbai). He is particularly recognized for his literary treatment of the Parsi community, a minority group originally from ancient Persia. Parsis follow Zoroastrianism, a religion that does not allow converts, so Mistry is among those concerned with the future of the group.

Twentieth-century India has persistently proved to be his literary setting of choice. His adopted homeland has been featured, but usually in a peripheral manner. Aside from religion and the imperatives of survival, Mistry's work also considers the play of contradictions that comprise immigrant experiences. Mistry's trademarks include scrupulously detailed realism, a nuanced awareness of India's political and social

history, and a strong investment in fleshing out the complex lives of ordinary people. He presents relationships between individuals, especially family members, as worthy subjects because they illuminate overarching truths about life in times of struggle and uncertainty.

Writing as a vocation did not come immediately to Mistry. He studied mathematics and economics at the University of Bombay, earning a bachelor of science degree in 1973 before immigrating to Canada two years later. In Toronto, he worked in financial services at the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC). The movement from bank teller to storyteller was largely the result of boredom. Pursuing part-time studies, he attended Woodsworth College of the University of Toronto, eventually obtaining a bachelor's degree in English and philosophy in 1982. He entered the university's annual Hart House Literary Contest, an event that he won in 1983 and again the next year. He was the first person to do so. Both winning stories—"One Sunday" and "Auspicious Occasion"—appeared in his premier published collection *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987). With humor, irony, and pathos, the text details the memorable, intertwined lives of a group of Bombay apartment dwellers. The same text was published in 1989 for the American market with slight changes in form, including the title, *Swimming Lessons and Other Stories from Firozsha Baag*.

Mistry received the annual Contributors' Prize from *Canadian Fiction Magazine* in 1985, the first of a string of national and international awards that paved his literary ascent. He was also awarded a Canada Council Grant for his talents, which allowed him to take up writing full-time. His first novel, *Such a Long Journey*, was published in 1991, although the events it portrays occurred two decades earlier. The title of the work alludes to a line in "The Journey of the Magi," a poem by T.S. Eliot. The personal crises and triumphs of Gustad Noble, a Parsi bank clerk and devoted father implicated in government corruption, are set against the crucible of India's war with Pakistan. The text earned Mistry the Governor General of Canada's Literary Award for Fiction, the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best Book, the W.H. Smith/Books in Canada First Novel Award, and the book was short-listed for both the Booker Prize and the Trillium Book Award. Director Sturla Gunnarson made the work into a critically acclaimed film of the same name in 1998, well after the publication of Mistry's second novel, *A Fine Balance*.

*A Fine Balance* (1995), also set in 1970s Bombay, details the intertwined lives of four characters (a seamstress, two tailors, and a student) attempting to find personal stability in a world of political flux. The state of emergency declared during the Indira Gandhi administration offers a paradigmatic framework for the challenges faced by the protagonists in their everyday struggles to survive. The scope and size of the novel have earned it the status of an epic. It received a number of accolades, including the Giller Prize for Fiction, the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best Book, and the *Los*

*Angeles Times* Book Prize for Fiction. It was also short-listed for the Booker Prize. In 2001 the talk show host Oprah Winfrey selected the work for inclusion in her national book club. This public honor boosted sales for the text across the continent.

Mistry's third novel, *Family Matters* (2002), details the past and present life of a former professor of English, Nariman Vakeel. An aged widower, he suffers from the ravages of illness, memories of loss (and loss of memory), and the confusion of a family dynamic that simultaneously enlivens and isolates him. The novel unfolds in the bustling Mumbai of the 1990s. Like his previous texts, it deals primarily with Parsi characters. The history and future of the Parsi community, especially varying degrees of commitment to religious orthodoxy and their effect on individual lives, are strong preoccupations throughout. The work was short-listed for a number of honors, including the James Tait Black Memorial Prize, the Man Booker Prize, and the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. It was also the joint winner of the Kiriya Pacific Rim Book Prize in 2002.

Given the multiculturalism of Canada's literary milieu, Mistry is simultaneously a South Asian writer, an Indo Canadian writer, and a Parsi writer. Diverse aspects of the Parsi community, from small family rituals to general fears concerning cultural extinction, recur throughout his works. It is a tradition of inquiry centering upon the Parsis of Bombay rather than those of the Asian diaspora. Mistry's preoccupations with the Indian homeland and the people whom he left behind at age 23 have been construed as a form of nostalgia by a homesick exile. Yet his concerns about the welfare of the Parsi minority are pressing; the decline in numbers and the destabilization of cultural integrity (for instance, through intermarriage and low birth rates, as discussed in *Family Matters*) remain important predicaments for Parsis everywhere.

Mistry's public life has not been immune to tension or controversy. He engaged in a brief but heated exchange with Australian writer Germaine Greer over her dismissal of *Such a Long Journey* as disconnected from contemporary Indian life. More recently, during the American book tour for *Family Matters*, Mistry expressed anger over airport security procedures. He felt that the frequent "random" checks that he and his wife Freny endured at Customs checkpoints constituted a form of racial profiling. This stress was generated by the heightened suspicion of the American government (namely the Department of Homeland Security) about certain visible minority groups after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Disturbed and frustrated, Mistry subsequently cancelled the rest of his promotional tour.

Critical assessments of Mistry's works often consider his narrative precision and his commitment to verisimilitude over idealist visions or ideological manifestos. Also notable is his ability to evoke powerful forms of emotional identification by his readers. The texts reveal a dual commitment to surveying the aesthetically appealing and the gritty, even grotesque aspects of human experience. His frank descriptions of

bodily functions (often as signifiers of mortality) are one such example. Other themes include moral disorders (small and large, especially the temptations of corruption); the interplay of homesickness and nostalgia felt by the expatriate writer; the resonance between domestic and the political spheres; and the challenge of portraying an “authentic” national experience for any number of diverse individuals. **See also** Asian Canadian Studies; Asian Diasporas; Multiculturalism and Asian America.

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NANCY KANG

## ◆ MODEL MINORITY

*Model Minority* is a label mainly attached to Asian Americans in contemporary America. It refers to the successful achievements of Asian Americans in especially socioeconomic status and education, despite their history of hardship and racial discrimination since the early nineteenth century. The term was coined in 1966 by William Petersen, who praised Japanese American efforts for assimilation in his initial article “Success Story, Japanese American Style” in *New York Times Magazine* (January 9) and later expanded it into a book-length research, responding to the article’s unexpected success. In the same year with the publication of Petersen’s newspaper article, *U.S. News and World Report* published an article “Success Story of One Minority in the U.S.” (December 26) on Chinese Americans in San Francisco **Chinatown**, featuring the “model” story of “one minority” group’s successful achievement, which was illustrated as low crime rate, academic achievement, and the increasing family income. Understandably many people wondered how Asian Americans fared well, and the article answered by attributing their success to namely Asian values of family, work ethic, and self-reliance.

However, the seemingly benign and celebratory idea of Asian success has been criticized as “mythologizing” Asian Americans. While, as a model minority, Asian Americans are praised as industrious and hardworking, they are viewed as silent, docile, and politically indifferent. The so-called Asian value of a self-reliant work ethic is often quoted as an explanation to Asians’ reluctance to take governmental grant and support. Moreover, the image of hardworking Asians more often than not ends up with

demeaning remarks about Asian workaholics, who are claimed to lack emotions and social skills, as well as being politically inactive and nonparticipatory. The document of the Du Soon Ja verdict that Neil Gotanda provides illustrates very well how the myth of Asian American success negatively affects various sectors of American life. Du Soon Ja is a Korean American small-business owner who killed an African American teenage girl for a juice bottle out of tense anxiety and stress. In the verdict, the judge deployed a language and image of Asian American hard work and value to give Du probation, which aggravated African Americans in the community and later added more insult to the injury that African Americans suffered. This case clearly shows that Asian Americans are used as a model against other racial minorities and as a scapegoat for explosion of racial suppression.

Historical aspects are also crucial to understand the issues that the model minority raises. Although the success stories of Asian Americans marked a turn in the perception of Asian Americans, modeling specifically Asians as a minority group that "made it," this perception constituted a critique of African Americans when the political turmoil accrued by the civil rights movement in the late 1960s raised the bar of the nation's racial consciousness. The long history of racial segregation since the slavery system was officially abolished in the 1860s put African Americans at the bottom of society in economy, politics, and education. The outcry expressed by the movement pushed the government to search for protective measures. Detractors of the model minority argue that the timely forged myth of the Asian American model minority had one purpose: to suppress and control the increasing voices for equal treatment of African Americans. Against African Americans' seeking relief through federal support programs, the idea of success that the model minority conveyed implied that welfare programs were unnecessary. The combination of cultural values with self-reliant hard work made success, according to the 1966 newspaper articles. Moreover, the celebratory and complimentary tones of the articles sent a message that the United States is not a racist society, but rather a land of opportunities where whoever wants and works hard can be successful. One reviewer points out that the idea of success is too narrow, only defined in materialist terms and promotes assimilation without considering ethnic groups' clinging to their cultural values. However, it is one thing to hold onto ethnic cultural traditions and values to keep the ethnic group's identity and another to generalize "Asian value" as a major key to success. In fact, many claim that the Asian values that the articles praised for Asian American success are similar to the Puritan work ethic that the United States cherished for a long time.

In spite of two decades of harsh criticism, the image of Asian Americans as a model minority infiltrates the nook of our society. For example, several news magazines covered the Asian success in the early 1980s under titles such as "Drive to Excel" (*Newsweek*), "The New Whiz Kids" (*Time*), "A Formula for Success" (*Newsweek*),

and "The Triumph of Asian Americans" (*New Republic*). The focus of the articles was mainly on Koreans, Vietnamese, and other foreign-born Asians, unlike the 1960s when Chinese and Japanese Americans were in the limelight. Since the 1965 Immigration Act repealed the quota restriction on Asians, the rate of immigration from Asia increased rapidly. Koreans are one of the fastest-growing Asian groups. The 1975 fall of Saigon not only ended the American involvement in civil wars in Indochina but also drew nearly a million Southeast Asian refugees. Trailing after Chinese and Japanese Americans, these Asian groups after **World War II** overcame numerous obstacles to make it in the United States. Unlike the 1960s articles, however, the new reports recognized the critiques about the myth of the **Asian American** model minority and considered its complexities by illuminating the negative impacts against Asian Americans and pressures on Asians for a successful achievement. Some pointed out that contrary to stereotypes Asians have participated in a variety of activities, rather than merely in science and math. Some even mentioned that median family income was insufficient as an indicator of success.

While reflecting the demographic and political changes, the new articles demonstrate certain consistency about the idea of Asian American success. For example, the educational achievements of Asians remain a major indicator of their success. The majority of the articles dealt with the outstanding performance of Asian students in several prestigious competitions. In finding an explanation for Asian American success, they repeat the theory of Asian cultural value, with emphasis on strong family ties, highly valued achievements in education, and hard work and diligence. Once again, the United States is reaffirmed as a land of opportunity where anyone can achieve and be awarded for their hard work.

Despite the achievements that Asian Americans have made as the media claimed, numerous cases indicate that many Asian Americans have suffered from poverty and lack of opportunities. Moreover, contemporary Asian Americans have experienced strong racial hatred as an aftereffect of the model minority myth. Among many cases, the late 1980s' Jersey City-based "Dotbusters" specifically targeted Indian Americans based upon a falsely portrayed profile of rich Indian Americans. It is shocking that the participants of this hate crime include not only whites and other minorities but also other Asian American groups. It clearly demonstrates that the model minority myth not merely touches upon racial profiles but also controls class conflicts by way of generating racial hostility.

Even though it is indisputable that Asian Americans have succeeded and made huge strides in certain fields, it is far-fetched to label all Asian Americans as a single category without considering the diversity and differences existing within Asian American groups. When it comes to "successful" Asian Americans, it is important to specify which Asian group is referred to because there are various

ethnic groups within Asian American communities, and not all Asian groups have achieved the same level of success. Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Americans have achieved more than Southeast Asian refugees, such as Hmong and Mien people, have. Even within Chinese Americans, for instance, there are huge gaps of economic status, as a good number of new immigrants are forced to work in sweatshops and back alleys of Chinatown providing cheap menial work. The model minority at best reflects the way in which Asian Americans struggled to find a place in the society, but it does more harm than good because of its stereotyping intent. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Assimilation/Americanization; Civil Rights Movement and Asian America.

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SOOYOUNG KANG

#### ◆ MOHANRAJ, MARY ANNE (1971–)

A Sri Lankan American novelist, poet, editor, academic, and writer of erotic stories, Mary Anne Mohanraj was born on July 26, 1971, in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Her Tamil parents migrated to the United States when Mohanraj was two years old. Her childhood was spent in New Britain, Connecticut, and she studied in Miss Porter's School. In 1993 Mohanraj graduated with a degree in English literature from the University of Chicago. After five years, she finished her master of fine arts (MFA) in writing at Mills College in Oakland, California. Mohanraj had a teaching assignment in the summer of 1999 at Salt Lake Community College. The following year she taught writing at the University of Utah, from which she also earned her doctorate in

English literature in 2005. Presently she is engaged in teaching programs of Vermont College and Roosevelt University. She was editor in chief of an online erotic magazine, *Clean Sheets*, from 1998 to 2000. Mohanraj founded the Speculative Literature Foundation in 2004. She also set up *Desilit* in 2005, which gives assistance to South Asian writers. She is a sexuality activist. Her Internet Erotica Writers' Workshop is well-known.

Mohanraj stumbled upon erotica writing when she read about alternative sex groups on the Net. *American Airlines Cockpit* was her maiden venture, where she told the story of two ladies in the cockpit of an airplane. She has not looked back since and has produced more erotic literature. Holding nothing back, Mohanraj wrote about sex and intimacy between two persons, both male and female. *Torn Shapes of Desire: Internet Erotica* (1996), a collection of 40 short stories and poems, was her first book. She became famous as a writer of online erotica, focusing on human sexuality and relationship in the form of e-mails, poems, and stories. The portrayal of individuals seems to be real. Passion between a woman professor and her student is delineated with humor.

Mohanraj has edited two books, *Aqua Erotica* (2000) and *Wet: More Aqua Erotica* (2002), which are collections of stories of love, lust, ecstasy, sex, and passion. Water plays an important role in lovemaking. Her own story in *Wet: More Aqua Erotica*, dealing with a lesbian relationship among Janna, Carl, and Susan, is replete with four-letter words and detailed descriptions of lovemaking among members of the same sex. *Kathryn in the City* (2003), an erotic fantasy, is about Kathryn, who comes to San Francisco after breaking up with her fiancé in a town of Indiana. The sexual fantasy revolves around the relationship with a lesbian striptease dancer, roommate's boyfriend, and a senior research scholar. A young and dejected professor in New York rejected by his girlfriend falls prey to a senior female colleague in his department. This story is described in *The Classics Professor*. Transgressing from her usual genre, Mohanraj wrote a book entitled *Sri Lankan Cookbook, A Taste of Serendib* (2003) as a Christmas present for her mother. *Silence and the Word* (2004), Mohanraj's fiction and poetry work, is about Sri Lankan immigrants in the United States, along with erotica, essays, and love poems.

*Bodies in Motion* (2005) is a collection of 20 interrelated stories dealing with the lives of two Sri Lankan American immigrant families straddling three generations. A sequel, entitled *The Arrangement*, is scheduled to come out in 2007. Some of the stories like "A Gentle Man" (2003) and "Lakshmi's Diary" (2004) were previously published. The characters find dichotomy between their own indigenous culture and assimilation in the new environment. The two generations of the Vallipurams and Kandiahs move from places like Colombo and Jaffna in Sri Lanka to Massachusetts, Vermont, and other places in the United States. The first story, "Oceans Bright and



Wide," is set in the beginning of **World War II** in Colombo. Thani and Mala Chelliah discuss higher education abroad for their brilliant daughter Shanti. In "The Princess in the Forest," Shanti arrives in Chicago, and, after receiving her doctorate, she gets married. She is troubled that her professional career did not advance because of child rearing. The setting for the story "Seven Cups of Water" is 1948 and explores a mutual fatal attraction between two teenagers, lonely Mangai and her sister-in-law Sushila. The final story, "Monsoon Day," set in 2002, speaks about the life of Mangai, who has become somewhat mad. In letters written to her mother, Mangai describes her sexual feelings with her lover without any inhibition in a covert as well as overt manner. The dilemma of a Sri Lankan student in Chicago is beautifully portrayed; the dilemma is whether she should go back home for an arranged marriage or have a baby delivered due to an unplanned pregnancy. Mohanraj sensuously describes the intimate moments of characters. She admits that she has bunked classes for meeting a lover named Diego. The short stories in *Bodies in Motion* are a delight to read. Through a sensuous prose, the foreplay, passion, and lovemaking are described in detail in the stories. From this book one gets impressions of the lives of Sri Lankan Americans, their past, present, and future aspirations. The conflict between tradition and modernity is not confined to immigrants from Sri Lanka alone; it is as if Mohanraj had written about the life of immigrants from developing countries in the developed world.

Writers like D.H. Lawrence and Norman Mailer have also written about sex. But the difference between them and Mohanraj is that the former give a heavy dose of erotica, and consequently, issues and characterizations are neglected. Although Mohanraj's forte is sex, we find superb descriptions of the immigrant experience of South Asian families in the United States. Along with it, she has also narrated the life experiences of families in their home country. With consummate skills, Mohanraj writes about human emotions and passions. Her characters, both male and female, seem very real. She honestly describes their sexuality without any inhibition. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization.

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PATIT PABAN MISHRA

### ◆ MOOTOO, SHANI (1958–)

Primarily recognized for her literary contributions ranging from poetry and short story to novel and criticism, Shani Mootoo is also an acclaimed video and multimedia artist whose work has been exhibited at various film festivals and galleries across North America. Born in Ireland, raised in Trinidad, and currently residing in Canada, Mootoo's works (both literary and artistic) often address ideas of migration, (post)colonialism, and diaspora. After completing a fine arts degree at the University of Western Ontario in 1980, Mootoo began her career as a visual artist, working primarily with photo-based mediums in an effort to vocalize her previously silenced experience of childhood sexual abuse. Since 1993 Mootoo has gained recognition and praise from the literary community in which she continues to excel today. Recently, Mootoo worked as a contributing editor for the since-cancelled talk radio program *This Morning*, which aired on CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation). She continues to pursue creative literature with plans of expanding her bibliography of fictional works.

While critics such as Heather Smyth, June Unjoo Yang, and Vivian May have all addressed the concept of space and transnationalism within Mootoo's novels, her texts have also garnered attention from Asian American scholars and queer theorists. Mootoo's first work, *Out on Main Street* (1993), is a collection of short stories that depict race, ethnicity, sexuality, and nationality in diverse ways and is divided into three sections: "The Way You Bounce Off a Pane of Glass," "Or," and "The Quickened Diluvial Shore." In the story "Lemon Scent," Mootoo reveals an Indian woman's struggle as she precariously juggles a marriage with her nameless husband with an affair with her lesbian partner. The themes of verbal abuse, domestic violence, and queer bashing that become more prevalent in Mootoo's later writings, make a threatening appearance that provides a foreboding atmospheric tone in "The Lemon Scent." Mootoo's eponymous story in the book ("Out on Main Street") features a narrator who describes a trip to a downtown Indian-owned restaurant with her partner in which both her ethnic and sexual identity are challenged. These stories and many others from Mootoo's collection question the ideas of national, ethnic, and racial identities, especially in relation to cultural **hybridity** and (post)colonial influence. They provide a voice for the margins, be they sexual, racial, or national Others.

Mootoo's debut novel, *Cereus Blooms at Night* (1996), with its lyrical narrative beauty, is exalted by audiences and critics alike. Published in 14 countries, *Cereus Blooms at Night* was a finalist for numerous literary awards, including the Giller Prize, the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize, and the Chapters/Books in Canada First Novel Award. With a multiperspectival narrative that contains (speculatively) semiautobiographical elements, Mootoo's novel consists of an epistolary retrospective of the events leading up to an Indo Caribbean woman's emotional collapse. The novel begins from the perspective of Tyler, an employee at a nursing facility who is drawn to Mala Ramchandin, an extremely troubled patient whose past is clearly still haunting her present. As the novel unfolds, Tyler discovers that Mala's mother, Sarah, left her husband and two young daughters, moving away with her Caucasian lover, Lavinia. Shortly after their mother's departure, Mala and her younger sister, Asha, become the ongoing victims of their father, Chandin, as he sexually assaults them on a nightly basis. The novel follows Mala's endurance of incestuous rape, her sister's departure, a brief love affair with Ambrose Mohanty, and her eventual isolation and anxiety. The cereus blossom appears throughout the narrative, evoking pleasure and respect from Mala, but also suggesting the fragility and temporality of happiness and life. Set in the allegorical Caribbean country of Lantanacamara, *Cereus Blooms at Night* evokes questions about migration, (post)colonialism, the queer diaspora, and national identity.

Mootoo's first published collection of poetry, *The Predicament of Or* (2001), continues to examine the themes and motifs that are woven throughout her prose work, including sexuality, national and personal identity, and marginalia. Similar to each of her other works of fiction, Mootoo's poetry is enriched with diction, tone, and rhythm influenced by Indo Caribbean culture. Again, ideas of spatial identity, liminality, hybridity, trauma, and memory are addressed in this intricate collection of heteroglossic poetry. With luscious imagery, witty analogy, subtle allegory, and a mixture of humorous and despondent tones, Mootoo's poetry is simultaneously political and beautiful. Her collection is predicated on the intrinsic link between language and subjectivity, and ranges from the realistic to the fantastical. In the free verse poem "Mantra for Migrants," Mootoo's narrator describes the perpetual liminality of Others who are immigrants, having been otherwise rejected from any true national identity. In this collection Mootoo explores her interests in South Asian diasporic themes, along with homosexuality, migration, and spatial anxiety.

*He Drown She in the Sea* (2005) is Mootoo's second novel. Again featuring a twenty-first-century approach to postcoloniality, this novel highlights transnational movements between the fictional Caribbean nation of Guanagaspar in the World War II era and the contemporary Vancouver island. The majority of the narrative centers on Harry, an Indo Caribbean man who, in his early childhood, falls in love with Rose, the daughter of his mother's employer. Although the friendship between Rose and Harry is considered acceptable (and is even encouraged) by Rose's mother when they are children, as they age and as

Harry's romantic interest in her daughter becomes more obvious, Mrs. Sangha starts to prohibit the encounters between the two young people. Harry, who is without a father and whose mother works as a laundry lady, is an inappropriate match for the beautiful and wealthy Rose Sangha. Harry eventually leaves Guanagaspar for Vancouver, where he becomes a prosperous botanist, but he never forgets his unrequited love for Rose. Years later, Rose reappears in Harry's life when she visits Canada, and they enjoy an idyllic love affair that evokes a violent rage in Rose's husband. Rose returns to Guanagaspar to confront her husband, followed by Harry, who is concerned for her life. They never return.

*He Drown She in the Sea*, like Mootoo's earlier novel, highlights the theme of impossible love, though, in this case, from a predominately heterosexual perspective. Class consciousness and social status are brought to the forefront in this narrative, emphasizing the degrees of intra-race hierarchy that are addressed less emphatically in *Cereus Blooms at Night*. Additionally, with the constant black Caribbean presence in the novel—characters weave in and out of Harry's upbringing (including his adoptive paternal grandparents and the fellow passengers in the weekly cab rides that Harry and his mother rely on to get to Mrs. Sangha's house)—and Harry's white lover in Vancouver, *He Drown She in the Sea* highlights the complexities of multiracial communities in various (post)colonial environments. The seemingly oppositional elements of dialectical verisimilitude (suggesting authenticity or realism) and beautifully constructed lyrical prose combine to create another haunting narrative with the potential for a strong affective response. And, much like the conclusion of *Cereus Blooms at Night*, Mootoo's second novel leaves the reader discomforted yet inspired.

Mootoo also participates in the literary world through nonfiction and criticism, including contributions such as "Hybridity and Other Poems" that appeared in May Joseph and Jennifer Natalya Fink's published collection entitled *Performing Hybridity* (1999). See also Asian Diasporas; Colonialism and Postcolonialism.

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JENNY HEI JUN WILLS

### ◆ MORI, KYOKO (1957–)

A Japanese American poet, novelist, essayist, and associate professor of English and Creative Writing at George Mason University, Kyoko Mori was born in Kobe, Japan, and moved to the United States for study when she was 20 years old. She completed her bachelor's degree at Rockford College and her master's and doctoral degrees at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee.

Mori has published six books, ranging from young adult novels, poetry, and essay to memoir and adult books. All her books have been first published in the United States, and some have been translated into Japanese. They are read widely among American and Japanese readers. As the *New York Times Book Review* praises her *Shizuko's Daughter* as "a jewel of a book" (Rosenberg 1993, 19), her writing style is full of color and natural imagery that evokes Japan's four seasons, but at the same time her cultural analysis is poignant and critical. A penetrating theme of her books is the incident of her mother's suicide. Mori was 12 years old when her mother killed herself. She implies that the death was driven by her father's extramarital affair, and that leads her to harbor anger toward her father. Most of her books revolve around love for her mother and fury at her father, and how she has reconciled the loss and anger.

Mori's first semiautobiographical book, *Shizuko's Daughter* (1993) vividly delineates the psychological scar Yuri, the 12-year-old protagonist, has suffered after the suicide of her mother. Yuri is doubly hurt by the sudden remarriage of her father. He remarries just one year after his wife's death to the woman with whom he had an affair. Yuri's stepmother treats her coldly, and her father is indifferent to Yuri's loneliness. She grows hatred toward her father and her stepmother. Yet, through meeting people who love and support her, Yuri gradually recovers from the loss and sadness. This book can be read as her criticism of the Japanese family system in which women's subjectivity and desire are suppressed under the strict rule of patriarchy. An adolescent girl's loss of her mother and her spiritual salvation is also the theme of *One Bird*

(1995). Mori's latest book, *Stone Field, True Arrow* (2000), deals with the spiritual awakening of a middle-aged Japanese woman after her father's death. She confronts her past incidents and her family through writing these books.

In her memoir, *The Dream of Water* (1995), Mori writes about her return to Japan after living in the United States for 13 years. Her mother's death and the twisted feeling toward her father are recurrent themes in this memoir, but the transformation of her identity is more noticeable. She calls her homecoming not returning but a "visit." This visit makes her realize that Japan is not a place where she can belong. She writes that her mother enables her to change her life in another place through her death. The United States now becomes her new home. She distances herself from Japan and looks at the country with a foreigner's eyes.

Her feeling of being a foreigner vis-à-vis Japan becomes keener in her book *Polite Lies: On Being a Woman Caught between Cultures* (1997). From the beginning of the book, she claims that she is an American citizen and that Japanese language does not convey her thought any more. With this standpoint, she compares Japanese and American cultural differences focusing on the body, sexuality, marriage, and so on. Readers will however soon notice that Mori is not exclusively an American but rather, as the subtitle "On Being a Woman Caught between Cultures" suggests, her identity is oscillating between two cultures. This identity transformation would echo with the works of other diasporic Asian American writers, such as Ha Jin, Jessica Hagedorn, and so forth. These writers were born in Asian countries, moved to the United States, and have engaged in literary activities with the English language in the United States. Their works tend to have settings in the Asian countries in which they grew up, and do not necessarily refer to their experiences in the United States.

When the first Asian American literature anthology *Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian American Writers* (1974) was published, the editors defined Asian American writers as those who wrote their experience grounded in American soil. However, Mori does not fit into this definition. Her books rarely mention her experience in the United States as the immigrant Japanese writers, or the second- and third-generation Japanese American writers have done. She always looks toward Japan, despite her claim as an American. When she talks about American culture, she does so from a distant position. The ambivalence of her positionality is a characteristic of diasporic identity. As she mentions in *Polite Lies*, she feels as if she were a balloon floating, like someone who has no fixed points of identity; she has achieved an identity that does not belong either to Japan or to the United States, and this makes Mori a unique writer in the canon of **Japanese American literature**.

The increase of diasporic Asian American writers has gained attention in Asian American literary studies. For example, critics such as Shirley Geok-Lin Lim argue that the tendency of diasporic Asian American writers who speak for concerns outside the United States may destabilize the unity of Asian American literature, but Lim continues

that the problematization of the monolithic Asian American literature will enable a new discourse. Compared to the tradition of Japanese American literature, in which the issues of racism, internment, assimilation, and generation gaps are frequently dealt with by all generations of writers, Mori's works do not share these concerns. She persistently looks back at Japan and herself. Unlike Japanese American writers whose firsthand experiences are located in the United States and who are concerned more for their own community and history, Mori's work is more individualistic and is separate from the Japanese American community, even if she insists on her Americanness and refuses affiliation with Japan. Her works cannot leave her mother soil, Japan. On this account, she is a deviant of the Japanese American literary canon. Some may wonder if Mori should be included in the Japanese American literary canon, given her less involvement in the established Japanese American community and literary tradition.

Japanese American literature started with immigrants who arrived around the beginning of the twentieth century and who had inscribed their life history in the United States. The successive generations have developed their precursors' stories by adding their own experiences in American society. It is true that Mori does not necessarily fit in this Japanese American literary tradition, but, like the first Japanese immigrant writers, she also traces her psychological journey after moving to the United States. In this sense, Mori, a new Japanese immigrant, belongs in the Japanese American literary tradition as a writer who introduces a new way of looking at the United States and Japan with the diasporic positionality. In so doing, she has contributed to the enrichment and diversification of the voices of not only Japanese American literature but also Asian American literature. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization; Japanese American Internment; Japanese American Literature; Racism and Asian America.

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KAORI MORI

### ◆ MORI, TOSHIO (1910–1980)

A Japanese American fiction writer, Toshio Mori was born on March 3, 1910, in the Japanese immigrant community of Oakland, California. Today he is widely acknowledged as a major figure in Asian American literary history, but his achievements went largely unrecognized during most of his lifetime. When Mori began writing in the 1930s, he was determined to depict the lives of ordinary Japanese

Americans and get his stories published in the leading national magazines, despite the marginal position of Asian Americans within American society and the absence of role models for aspiring nisei writers. After several years of continuous rejections, Mori had his first two stories published in 1938, and in 1941 Caxton Printers accepted a book manuscript for publication the following year. The bombing of **Pearl Harbor** and the subsequent internment of Japanese Americans delayed the book's appearance until 1949, but *Yokohama, California* made history as the first short story collection written about and from a Japanese American community. However, although well received, it soon went out of print and was not rediscovered until the 1970s, when the Asian American movement inspired young artists to search for literary ancestors. In stark contrast to the fate of other pioneering writers such as John **Okada**, who did not live to see the rediscovery of his novel *No-No Boy*, Mori spent the last decade of his life as a celebrated Asian American author.

The third of four sons, Mori was born in the Oakland bathhouse that his parents ran before entering the florist and nursery business. The bathhouse was sold in 1913, and in 1915 the family moved to nearby San Leandro. Mori, however, commuted to school in Oakland from the second grade on and helped at his brother's flower shop there. By the 1930s he was working at the San Leandro nursery full-time and had constructed a particular regimen to achieve his writing goals: "[T]he writing habit that I scheduled for myself at the age of twenty-two in 1932 was for four hours daily including Sunday. My writing schedule was ten o'clock in the evening to two A.M. And I stuck with that schedule throughout my pre-war days. I believe I continued until the last evacuation day in 1942" (Leong 1980, 234).

From 1943 to 1945, Mori was interned at Topaz War Relocation Center in Utah, where he worked as a camp historian and helped create the literary journal *Trek*. Painter Mine Okubo, also interned at Topaz, mentions in her pictorial diary *Citizen 13660* that *Trek* was a 50-page arts and literary magazine formed by a small group who broke away from the official camp newspaper to start their own publication. In 1945 Mori's younger brother Kazuo was seriously wounded on the Italian front and discharged to a veterans' hospital in Auburn, California. The same year, the Moris returned to San Leandro to resume their nursery business and be near Kazuo. Toshio married Hisayo Yoshiwara in 1947, and their son Steven was born in 1951. After the nursery was closed in the 1960s, Mori worked as a wholesale florist salesman and delivery person. During this time he published regularly in the Japanese American newspapers *Pacific Citizen* and *Hokubei Mainichi*. In 1972 he suffered a stroke but recovered almost fully within a year. He then retired from the florist business and entered into the last phase of his life as a much sought-after reader and lecturer for Asian American cultural events. In 1978 the Isthmus Poetry Foundation published his first novel, *Woman from Hiroshima*, and in 1979 a second volume of stories, *The*



*Chauvinist and Other Stories*, was published by the Asian American Studies Center at UCLA. Mori died on April 12, 1980, in San Leandro. A third collection of fiction, *Unfinished Message: Selected Works of Toshio Mori*, appeared posthumously in 2000.

*Yokohama, California* consists of 22 stories that depict everyday life in a prewar Japanese American community in California. Except for the piece called “Lil’ Yokohama,” which is a group portrait of the entire community, each story examines one individual through the lens of their daily occupation or obsession. Most of Lil’ Yokohama’s residents lead contented lives and work hard within the scope of their visible talents and given stations in life, but some are like the main character of Akira Yano, who insists on becoming a writer despite a painfully obvious lack of talent. Pursuing his dream, Akira Yano squanders the college tuition his family has given him to earn a degree in engineering and is eventually estranged from his family and community when he moves to New York City, where he pays for his own book to be published and waits in vain for it to be reviewed. Stories like these that depict failure or social alienation foreground Mori’s distinctive narrative strategy of “indulgent listening” (Sato 2000, 129). The typical Mori narrator befriends the troubled individual who is the subject of his story. He offers a sympathetic ear while remaining fully aware of the failures and limitations of his subject.

The title of Mori’s first book acknowledges his debt to Sherwood Anderson’s *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), a short story cycle that portrays the life of a small midwestern American town at the end of the nineteenth century. Mori even depicts his aspiring writer, Akira Yano, holding a copy of *Winesburg, Ohio*. However, despite explicit parallels in theme and narrative structure between *Yokohama, California* and *Winesburg, Ohio*, Mori’s book ultimately takes a different stance toward the relationship between individual and community, particularly concerning the relationship of the artist to society. In Anderson’s stories, character flaws prove fatal, condemning the individual to psychic isolation. In Mori’s fictional world, character flaws are filtered through the narrator’s practice of indulgent listening, which in turn models a real-world practice of indulgence for the reader. That is, the narrator’s receptivity to each character’s existence—whether ordinary or extraordinary—models a listening practice that readers themselves might adopt, with the result that Mori’s Japanese American characters and community could become a vital, respected part of the reader’s vision of American society.

*Woman from Hiroshima*, like *Yokohama, California*, is dedicated to Mori’s mother, who died in August 1946. Although written as a novel, *Woman from Hiroshima* reveals the extensive autobiographical content of Mori’s fiction and in particular his mother’s strong influence on his development as a writer. Biographical information from Mori’s nonfiction essays in *The Chauvinist* and Hisaye Yamamoto’s introduction to this volume indicate that the story of Mrs. Toda, the first-person narrator of *Woman from*

*Hiroshima*, is based on the life of Yoshi Takaki Mori, from her marriage in Japan through her release from Topaz internment camp. Structurally, *Woman from Hiroshima* is a novel-length expansion of the story called "Tomorrow Is Coming, Children," which is one of the two that were added to the original manuscript of *Yokohama, California* and in addition became its new leadoff story. For his novel, Mori broke the story into several parts and inserted them at different points, while keeping the wording of each part virtually intact. Thus, for example, the story's opening paragraphs establish a narrative framework in which an issei grandmother relates and comments on her past for the benefit of two grandchildren, and these paragraphs are reused for the same purpose in *Woman from Hiroshima*. Likewise, the story's concluding paragraphs, in which the grandchildren are told to remember the war as something that taught them the value of the home they lost and the necessity of taking a stand during a crisis, reappear in chapter 22 of *Woman From Hiroshima*, where they mark the beginning of the novel's depiction of the camp years. In a similar way, every piece of "Tomorrow Is Coming, Children" is recycled in the novel, and parts of several other stories published before or after the novel have also been incorporated into it virtually intact, such as portions of "Three Japanese Mothers" from *Yokohama, California* and "Miss Butterfly" from *The Chauvinist*.

Portraits of issei matriarchs abound in **Japanese American literature**, but *Woman from Hiroshima* stands out for its elegiac intensity. The emotion that permeates *Woman from Hiroshima* evokes the tone of "The Woman Who Makes Swell Doughnuts," which was the original leadoff story for *Yokohama, California* and portrays a strong and beloved grandmother whose immense vitality embodies the collective aliveness of prewar Japanese America. Lawson Fusao Inada has defined "Swell Doughnuts" as a "tribute" and "anthem" to "the mother of Japanese America" (Mori 1985, xiii), and Sau-ling Wong interprets the doughnut maker as "an Asian American version of what Crevecoeur calls 'our great *Alma Mater*,' the American earth-goddess" (1993, 74). Mori's numerous allusions to Walt Whitman in *Woman from Hiroshima* bolster the novel's elegiac representation of Mrs. Toda as a woman who takes hardship in stride, viewing it as part of a larger cosmic rhythm of life and death.

*The Chauvinist and Other Stories* offers a selection of 22 stories not included in *Yokohama, California*, plus a brief "Hawaiian Note" about Mori's trip to Hawaii in 1978 to attend a multiethnic writers' conference. As the first edited collection of Mori's work, *The Chauvinist* provides a critical framework not only through Hisaye Yamamoto's introduction but by arranging the stories according to six themes: "Callings Near and Far," "The Daily Work," "Families," "Separate Lives," "Conversations Overheard," and "The War Years." While these categories indicate a continuation of Mori's earlier themes, some stories also point to a spatial and temporal

movement away from the prewar, Oakland/San Leandro hub of *Yokohama, California* and *Woman from Hiroshima*. "The Sweet Potato," for example, is about a chance encounter between two nisei youth and a Caucasian mother and son at the Golden Gate International Exposition that was held on Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay from 1939 to 1940. In this story, the eve of war provides an obvious but unarticulated backdrop for a conversation in which the mother and son relate the unforgettable kindness shown them by a Japanese family when they were living in Japan after the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1926. "The Sweet Potato" is one of several stories that provide glimpses of the national and global migrations of issei and nisei in the 1920s and 1930s, and the inverse situation of white Americans recounting memories of life in Japan for Japanese Americans who have never been to the "motherland." These stories point toward a late twentieth-century future in which American migration to Japan created households and communities that could be called "California, Yokohama."

*Unfinished Message* provides a single-volume introduction to Mori's lifetime achievement, while adding to the body of work already in print. All 15 of the stories included have been published previously in either *Yokohama, California* or *The Chauvinist*, but in addition there is much new material: a foreword by son Steven Y. Mori, an introduction by Lawson Inada, letters from Mori to writer and friend William Saroyan, the complete draft of a novella written in camp, 14 photographs of Mori at different stages of his life, and a brief biography and list of suggested reading. Russell Leong's 1979 interview for *Ameriasia Journal* has also been reprinted in full.

Perhaps the most important piece in *Unfinished Message* is "The Brothers Murata," a story set in camp that concerns two brothers who make opposite choices in response to the government's requirement that interned nisei men register for the draft. This chapter of internment history created intense controversy at all 10 camps, with responses running the gamut from bitter renunciation of U.S. citizenship to unswerving patriotism. "The Brothers Murata" predates Okada's *No-No Boy* and Edward Miyakawa's *Tule Lake* as a literary exploration of the psychic fallout from the binary definition of Japanese American identity that lay at the heart of internment. According to this binary, Japanese Americans are viewed as perpetual foreigners; they can never be trusted to be loyal Americans by virtue of race and therefore can be deprived of their constitutional rights as Americans. At the same time, however, these "foreigners" are told they must prove their loyalty to the United States through willingness to die for the country in the name of defending the very constitutional rights that have been denied them.

"Unfinished Message," the title story of this volume, is the only nonfiction piece selected for reprinting. It recounts Mrs. Mori's clairvoyant feeling of dread on the

night of May 5, 1946, while she was still interned, which turned out to be the day that her son Kazuo was wounded at the front. Her last months were filled with constant anxiety about his future life bound to a wheelchair, and she did not live to see him build a home, marry, and raise a family. In "Unfinished Message," Mori describes a gloomy evening in 1947 as he and Kazuo sat in the living room of the San Leandro home, hearing a mysterious tapping on the windowpane that had also occurred the day before. The tapping stops when Mori finally puts his hands on the glass, and he interprets the episode as follows: "I couldn't help but recall Mother's words, 'I can't stop worrying over you, my son.' The tapping stopped once and for all after that. We never heard it again after the message had reached us" (2000, 212).

The double meaning of Mrs. Mori's unfinished message captures the incompleteness that forever marks traumatic events such as Japanese American internment. One reading of "Unfinished Message" is that although Mori, like his mother, died before he could finish all the work he yearned to do, he can still speak to us after his death—especially through this new collection that brings to light an entire novella written in camp. However, just as Mrs. Mori's message was an expression of inextinguishable anxiety and sorrow, Mori's message to his readers also must remain unfinished in the sense that we can never know what messages were lost forever when Mori's writing career was interrupted by the internment. **See also** Issei, Nisei, Sansei; Japanese American Internment; Japanese American Literature.

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### ◆ MUKHERJEE, BHARATI (1940–)

Bharati Mukherjee is a prominent Indian American novelist, short story writer, essayist, autobiographer, and professor of English. Mukherjee was born on July 27, 1940, in Calcutta to Sudhir Lal Mukherjee, a scientist and businessman, and Bina Mukherjee, a homemaker. The Mukherjees were anglicized Bengali Brahmins: though the family retained many traditional values, they had also imbibed many Western attitudes. Sudhir Lal Mukherjee, who had earned a doctorate in chemistry from the University of London and had conducted postdoctoral research in Germany, made sure that his children receive the best education available in Calcutta. Bharati and her two sisters therefore attended an exclusive private school run by Protestant missionaries; the medium of instruction was English, and the children became fluently bilingual at an early age. In 1947 the family moved to England; three years later they briefly relocated in Basil, Switzerland, before returning to Calcutta in 1951. After graduating from Loreto Convent School, an elite Catholic institution run by Irish nuns, Bharati Mukherjee enrolled at the University of Calcutta where she received her undergraduate degree in English in 1959. Two years later she obtained her MA in English and ancient Indian culture from the University of Baroda in western India. In 1963 she received a scholarship to attend the prestigious writers' workshop at the University of Iowa where she earned a master's degree in creative writing and subsequently entered the doctoral program in comparative literature. The following year she married Clark Blaise, a fellow student and aspiring writer from Canada, and with him she moved to Montreal in 1966 and began her teaching career at McGill University. She taught there for 14 years. During that time she secured her doctorate—her dissertation was on the works of E.M. Forster and Herman Hesse—and published three major creative works: *The Tiger's Daughter*, a novel, in 1972; *Wife*, also a novel, in 1975; *Days and Nights in Calcutta*, a collaborative autobiography that she coauthored with her husband, in 1977.

By the late seventies Mukherjee began to find life in Canada intolerable. Canada's institutionalized racism had by then become dauntingly personal and in 1980 she moved with her family to New York; it is a move that she has characterized as an act of self-preservation in her 1981 "An Invisible Woman". In "An Invisible Woman," a blistering essay that she published in *Saturday Night*, Mukherjee catalogs some of her humiliating encounters with racism in Canada and vehemently blames the Canadian government's misguided policies that she believes discourage integration of the new immigrants of color and foster a racist mentality among white Canadians. During the 1980s she taught literature and creative writing at various colleges and universities in the New York metropolitan area and published four works that helped establish her as a significant American author: *Darkness*, a collection of short stories, in 1985; *The Sorrow and the Terror: The Haunting Legacy of the Air India Tragedy*, a nonfiction work

coauthored with her husband about a terrorist attack on an Air India passenger jet, in 1987; *The Middleman and Other Stories*, an award-winning collection of short fiction, in 1988; and *Jasmine*, a novel, in 1989. That year she became a distinguished professor of English at the University of California at Berkeley.

Since then Mukherjee has published four more novels: *The Holder of the World* (1993), *Leave It to Me* (1997), *Desirable Daughters* (2002), and *The Tree Bride* (2004). She has also granted over a dozen substantial interviews that have been published in easily accessible venues. Those interviews, along with three of her most compelling essays—“Immigrant Writing: Give Us Your Maximalists,” “A Four-Hundred-Year-Old Woman,” and “Oh, Isaac, Oh, Bernard, Oh, Mohan”—offer valuable insights into her poetics and collectively constitute a declaration of her evolving aesthetic credo.

When viewed chronologically, Mukherjee’s fiction offers a fascinating map of her shifting views on home and exile, migration and mutation, self-invention and predestination. Though all of her works of fiction explore aspects of the immigrant experience, her politics and perspectives have changed in complex ways over the last 30 years. Those changes profoundly shape the worldviews embodied in her narratives. Her early works published during the Canadian phase of her career, for example, focus on themes of displacement and alienation, immigrant nostalgia for homelands preserved in memory, and failed attempts to forge new homes and stable identities. Her protagonists lead fractured lives with a paralyzing sense of being permanently unhoused. However, the bulk of the work that Mukherjee published during the 1980s that marks the first stage of her writing career in the United States reveals a radical shift in her ideological self-positioning. She no longer sees herself as an expatriate caught between cultures but as an immigrant determined to conquer the United States; she categorically rejects “the aloofness of expatriation” and joyously embraces “the exuberance of immigration” (*Darkness* 1985, 3). Her unapologetic celebration of the United States—its limitless promise and its magical possibilities—reaches its apotheosis in *Jasmine*, a work that may be read as the author’s love song to the country of her adoption. The four novels that she has published since 1993, however, signal a new phase in her literary career in the United States. Her vision is increasingly global; she insists on not only the possibility but also the necessity of transnational connections and convergences. Her protagonists in works such as *Jasmine* were eager to jettison their pasts and reinvent themselves in the New World; however, her central characters in most recent novels, notably in *The Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride*, are equally focused on reclaiming their Old World histories to achieve liberating new understandings of their American selves. Mukherjee now appears to favor a judicious balance: her recent protagonists are neither simply aloof expatriates nor merely exuberant immigrants but global citizens with transnational, sometimes even multinational, roots and identities.

*The Tiger's Daughter*, Mukherjee's first novel, is a narrative of return: Tara Banerjee Cartwright, a young Indian woman who had gone abroad to study, returns to her home in Calcutta after a seven-year absence. While she was a student at Vassar College in New York, she longed for the home and the city that she had left behind; even her marriage to David Cartwright, an American, did not lessen her sense of being an expatriate. She often felt oddly alone and out of place. Her return to India, however, is hardly the comfortable homecoming that she had anticipated. The crowds, the poverty, and the political turbulence have a disorienting impact on her. The Calcutta that she returns to is not the gracious city that she remembers growing up in. Her upper-class relatives and friends impress her as superficial and inauthentic. The orderly life in the United States now seems far more appealing as Tara begins to realize the depth of her alienation from her homeland. The novel ends on an ominous note of violence: Tara is trapped in a car on a crowded street; angry and unruly rioters, who view themselves as left-wing revolutionaries, have surrounded the vehicle. Terrified Tara is unsure if she will survive. *The Tiger's Daughter* eloquently dramatizes its protagonist's sense of disconnection and cultural in-betweenness. Home, for her, is an elusive place. The novel not only reveals Mukherjee's early preoccupation with expatriation and its discontents but also her literary allegiances. The influences of E.M. Forster, Charles Dickens, and especially Jane Austen are so evident that *The Tiger's Daughter* reads almost like a British novel with an Indian setting. Even Mukherjee's diction and syntax carry a British lilt. Her next novel, *Wife*, is stylistically more American, but expatriation remains her central concern.

If *The Tiger's Daughter* is a narrative of return, *Wife* is a narrative of arrival: 20-year-old Dimple Basu marries an engineer chosen by her parents and arrives in New York City from Calcutta as an immigrant. In the beginning she finds her new home in the sprawling metropolis alluring. Incrementally, however, she begins to find her life stifling. Her life in the New World is defined by her husband's expectations; her friendships with a few fellow Indian immigrants lack emotional depth. The "real" America that she increasingly becomes familiar with is the one that she finds on television shows. Her adulterous encounter with Milt Glasser, an American acquaintance who has no intentions of forging any long-term relationship with her, leaves her even more alienated. She becomes increasingly paranoid: reports of violent crimes in the city frighten her; the very sight of blacks and Puerto Ricans, whom she has learned to associate with violence, intimidates her. As she begins to disintegrate psychologically, she entertains thoughts of murder and suicide. Dimple is ill equipped to deal with the stresses of urban American life. Emotionally she is too fragile to forge an autonomous life in a foreign country, and she is devoid of the resources necessary to rewrite the cultural script handed to her. At the end of the novel, her repressed rage, frustration, and fear push her to insanity: she murders her husband with a kitchen knife. Dimple's American Dream ends on a nightmarish note.

*The Tiger's Daughter* and *Wife*, novels published during the Canadian phase of Mukherjee's career, reflect her views on the unsettling effects of expatriation. Both works end on notes of hopelessness. However, many of the works that she published in the 1980s, after her relocation from Canada to the United States, reveal a fundamental shift in perspective. Her provocative preface to the short stories included in *Darkness* articulates her revisionary poetics. Here she offers a radical reconceptualization of her positionality: she no longer views herself as an Indian expatriate living in the United States but as an immigrant determined to carve out her place in the New World. She now views the United States as a stage for emancipatory transformation and self-fashioning. In various interviews that she granted during the late 1980s, Mukherjee also insisted that she did not want to be defined as a writer of the Indian diaspora or as a hyphenated Asian American author. She declared that she was quintessentially an American writer in the immigrant tradition. Mukherjee's pronouncements, while endearing her to culturally conservative American readers, provoked considerable controversy. Many Indian, Indian American, and left-leaning critics and readers accused her of valorizing white male myths of American possibilities; some chastised her for her stunning insouciance to the implications of race, gender, and class in American culture. Mukherjee's retorts were equally caustic. Rejecting her detractors' claims that she was ideologically a right-wing conservative and that her work gestures toward mindless assimilation into the American mainstream, she accused them of failing to read her works closely. The new immigrants, she argued, transform the United States by their sheer presence; they could, therefore, redefine what it means to be an American. The melting pot, Mukherjee insisted, should become a fusion vat; mixing and mongrelization (a term that Mukherjee favors) rather than exclusivity and purity should define the emerging new America that is increasingly being peopled by non-European immigrants like herself.

Much of this controversy was prompted by the publication of *Jasmine*, Mukherjee's third major work of fiction. Narrated from the first-person introspective point of view by the titular protagonist, *Jasmine* draws from a variety of narrative forms. It is a female *bildungsroman* that maps the trajectory of its protagonist's maturation. It has elements of the picaresque narrative: Jasmine's spectacular journey from an impoverished village in northern India to the golden coast of Northern California and the wide gallery of various characters whom she encounters along the way animates the novel from the beginning to its end. *Jasmine* is also a classic conversion narrative, a text that chronicles the incremental Americanization of its foreign-born central character. It is also a frontier narrative with a fundamental difference. As Jasmine moves westward from the East Coast of the United States to escape her past and to reinvent herself in new fields of opportunity, her odyssey becomes a microscopic reenactment of the old pioneers' westward expansion and their conquests of new frontiers. What distinguishes *Jasmine*



from its conventional counterparts, however, is its protagonist: a woman of color—not a white male—holds the center stage.

*Jasmine* tells the story of Jyoti, a child born to poor parents in Hasnapur in rural India, a child whose options in life are likely to be severely restricted by her gender and poverty. Yet Jyoti will grow up to defy the monumental odds against her; she, and not her fate, will determine her destiny. She marries Prakash, a modern young man with progressive ideas, who calls her Jasmine and takes her to the nearby town of Jullundhar. His dream is to study at an American university, but before he can realize his goal he is killed in a terrorist attack. Now a grieving young widow, Jasmine decides to commit sati, an ancient Hindu practice in which the widow ritualistically commits suicide by jumping into the funeral pyre of her husband. Oddly, however, Jasmine wants to carry out this ritual not in India but on the campus of the university in Florida that Prakash had intended to attend. She embarks on an improbable journey, with fake travel documents, that takes her halfway across the globe, and she lands illegally in Florida. On her very first night in the new Eden, she is brutally raped in a sleazy motel by Half-Face, an American involved in smuggling undocumented foreigners into the United States. This violence provokes an extraordinary transformation in Jasmine: the victimized widow becomes Kali, the fierce Hindu goddess of revenge. She stabs Half-Face to death. While she is fleeing from the scene of the murder, she meets Lillian Gordon, a Quaker woman who christens her Jazzy and helps her get to New York City. After a few months with an Indian family in an Indian immigrant section of Queens, Jasmine becomes an au pair for the child of Taylor and Wylie Hayes, an American couple in Manhattan, who name her Jase. When their marriage collapses, Jasmine predictably becomes Taylor's lover. Astonishingly, though she has only a middle school education, she is invited to teach a course in her native language at Columbia University. However, Jasmine's chance sighting of one of the killers of her husband at a park terrifies her; fearing for her own safety, Jasmine flees to Iowa, the American heartland, to start anew. Though she has limited education and little professional experience, she manages to find a job as a teller at a bank and the banker, felicitously, falls in love with her instantly. She becomes the banker's consort, and he prefers to call her Jane. While she seems destined to be a middle-class banker's wife, she receives a postcard from Taylor, who professes his love for her and urges her to go with him to California to start their new lives together there. Jasmine, though she is now pregnant with the banker's child, accepts the invitation and runs away with Taylor.

*Jasmine* is emblematic of much of the fiction that Mukherjee published during the 1980s. Here India is presented as an area of darkness in the Naipaulian sense, a fatalistic place that restricts personal achievement by imposing mostly insurmountable class, caste, and gender restrictions. The United States, despite its violence, provides Jasmine with limitless opportunities to rebirth herself. The various names that she

assumes—Jyoti, Jasmine, Jazzy, Jase, and Jane—signify the multiple way stations in her journey toward self-actualization. The novel delineates the making of a new American. What render it a problematic text for some readers are its sensational plot and the implausible number of coincidences. The novel, for example, gives the false impression to readers unfamiliar with contemporary India that sati is a common practice that is legally and socially sanctioned. Why Jasmine, with the full cooperation of her brothers, would want to commit sati in Florida rather than in India is never satisfactorily addressed. Equally odd is Jasmine's selective amnesia: after she is settled in the United States she seldom thinks about her family in India and never makes any efforts to contact them. That Jasmine could commit a bloody murder in a motel room in Florida and literally walk out of the place without any legal consequences seems improbable. That Columbia University would hire a young woman with a middle school education as an instructor borders on the bizarre. *Jasmine*, therefore, has to be read as a romance—a type of fiction that is exempt from the demands of realism and embodies the author's private truth—or as an immigrant fable. However, such a reading of the novel is rendered difficult by the deceptively realistic tone in which much of the novel is narrated. At least a part of the controversy that surrounds *Jasmine* stems from the text's own internal contradictions.

*The Holder of the World*, Mukherjee's fourth novel, is her most determined effort to situate herself solidly within the American literary tradition; yet, ironically, the vision she projects here is an uncompromisingly global one. In *The Holder of the World* Mukherjee ingeniously sets out to rewrite one of the foundational works of fiction in American literature: Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. Beigh Masters, the narrator, is a young and sophisticated Anglo American woman who hunts down rare antiques for her wealthy clients. Her lover is Venn Iyer, an Indian American computer scientist, working on a project that would allow time to travel. Masters's quest for the Emperor's Tear, a rare diamond, leads her to discover the extraordinary life and adventures of Hannah Easton, a seventeenth-century woman who lived in Puritan New England. The daughter of Rebecca Easton, who left her family for her Nipmuc Indian lover in defiance of her Puritan community's restrictions, Hannah marries an Irish sailor, moves with him to England, and accompanies him from there to southern India. When her husband leaves her in India to become a pirate, she falls in love with a Hindu king, has a child with him—a child named Pearl—and upon the death of her royal lover returns to New England. Beigh's fascination with Hannah's life is accentuated by her accidental discovery that Hannah in fact is a distant relative of hers. By reconstructing Hannah's unconventional life, Beigh begins to understand aspects of her own life, the choices she has made, and her interethnic relationship with Venn. More importantly, the novel presents migration across cultures and continents in a transhistorical framework and insists on the essential connectedness of all human beings.

Mongrelization—a result of cultural cross-pollination—is neither new nor uniquely American; it is a fundamental fact of human history.

This accent on cultural **hybridity** is even more pronounced in *Leave It to Me*, Mukherjee's fifth novel. It is grounded in *terra Americana* and bears kinship to American classics such as Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, but the perspective is decidedly international. The cross-country picaresque journey of its central character, Debby DiMartino, shapes the structure of the narrative; she travels from upstate New York to San Francisco in search of her birth mother. Her mother, an American hippie, had given birth to her in India, named her Baby Clear Water Iris-Daughter, and abandoned her in a dusty village. The baby was rescued by Catholic nuns and later adopted by the DiMartinos, an Italian American couple from Schenectady, New York, who rechristened her Debby. At the beginning of *Leave It to Me*, Debby is a restless young woman, 23 years old, preoccupied with the mystery of her past. Her exotic origins are inscribed in her body: her mother was an Anglo; her father, Romeo Hawk, was the son of a Pakistani father and a Eurasian mother from Vietnam. She sets out to discover that murky hybrid history lurking beneath her American self. Her bizarre odyssey from the beginning is a violent one; it ends in an apocalypse. Her violence-ridden journey does lead to her birth mother, Jess DuPree, who denies any connection to Debby. To complicate matters, it turns out that Debby and Jess, along with several other women, are in love with the same man: Hamilton Cohan. By this time, with the assistance of a private detective whom Debby hires, she learns sordid details of her parents' histories. Her father, for instance, was an international sex guru who was imprisoned in India for serially murdering 17 people, many of them Western women he had seduced during his wanderings. At the end of the novel, Romeo Hawk, who has escaped from the Indian prison, arrives in San Francisco after murdering a few more people along the way and kills Jess for having betrayed him many years ago in Asia. Then he kills Hamilton Cohen by slitting his throat for having consorted with his ex-girlfriend. Now Debby—who, in the course of her journey has renamed herself Devi, after a fierce Hindu goddess of wrath—takes her own revenge: she kills her father. Just as she calls the police to report the murders, a devastating earthquake hits San Francisco. In this sensational novel Mukherjee creates a brave new world where ethnic and geographical boundaries collapse and meld and a postnational space emerges. *Leave It to Me* stages a global drama in an American setting.

The desire to discover and claim one's past—a desire that propels Debby/Devi's desperate quest—also animates *Desirable Daughters*, Mukherjee's sixth novel. The daughters alluded to in the title are Padma, Parvati, and Tara, three sisters from a wealthy Bengali Brahmin family. Tara, the youngest, is the novel's narrator and its central character. The novel begins with Tara's recollection of the story of Tara Lata, her ancestor whom she is named after. Tara Lata was born in 1874 and was to marry a young man chosen by her father, but on the day of the wedding the groom dies of a

snake bite. The bride's father, in an attempt to rescue his daughter from the tragedy, marries her to a tree. Tara Lata, the tree bride, lives in her father's house, dedicates her life to help those less fortunate, and becomes involved in India's freedom struggle; in 1944 she is arrested by the colonial British police, and she dies under mysterious circumstances in custody. The novel ends with Tara's return to the very site where Tara Lata's wedding was to have taken place more than a century earlier. Thus the story of Tara's life is framed by her recollective biography of her ancestor.

Tara's arranged marriage to Bish, an immensely successful entrepreneur in the Silicon Valley, has failed after several years. She now lives in San Francisco with her 15-year-old son and her Hungarian American boyfriend. Her seemingly stable life is disrupted by the arrival of Chris Dey, who claims to be an illegitimate son of her oldest sister. His arrival prompts Tara to reexamine her personal and familial histories. Secrets begin to unravel, but the new revelations bring her closer to her son, sisters, and parents. Chris Dey turns out to be a dangerous imposter and in fact a member of the Bombay-based Indian mafia. As in *Leave It to Me*, the plot inexorably moves toward apocalyptic violence. Out of the violence, however, Tara emerges with a new understanding and outlook.

What makes *Desirable Daughters* noteworthy in Mukherjee's oeuvre is the degree to which it deviates from the ideological foundations of her representative 1980s text, *Jasmine*. Jasmine's journey is linear: from India she travels to the East Coast of the United States, then on to the Midwest and California. Tara's sojourn, in contrast, is circular: she leaves Calcutta for California, but the novel ends with her journey back "home" to Calcutta. The India that Jasmine abandons is a Naipaulian area of darkness; however, the India that Tara returns to is a vibrant new place that is being fundamentally transformed by the forces of globalization. Whereas Jasmine displays a curious form of amnesia—she hardly ever thinks of her family back in India while she is rapidly becoming an American—Tara reconnects with her past, and the reconnection proves redemptive. In *Jasmine*, the Indian immigrant communities in the United States are dismissed as stagnant and artificial miniature Indias that only impede the protagonist's personal development: Jasmine flees the Indian neighborhood to begin her Americanization. Tara in *Desirable Daughters*, however, is comfortably bicultural; in fact, her portrayals of the Indian immigrant sections of Queens and northern New Jersey reveal her affection for those communities and her own comfort and confidence in being Indian. While Jasmine is focused primarily on reinventing herself as a new American, Tara is engaged in claiming her Indian past and integrating it into her American present.

This reclamation of the protagonist's Indian past is at the heart of Mukherjee's *The Tree Bride*, her seventh and most recent novel, which is designed as a sequel to *Desirable Daughters*. Tara once again is the narrator. In the concluding pages of *Desirable Daughters*, Tara's San Francisco home was bombed by the Bombay-based Indian mafia; her ex-husband, Bish, had been seriously injured; and she had returned to

India in search of answers. *The Tree Bride* begins where its prequel ended. Tara is now doing research to write a novel about her great-great-aunt, Tara Lata, to memorialize her extraordinary life. Pregnant by Bish, she is in the process of reconciling with him. She gains accidental access to valuable documents about the circumstances of Tara Lata's final years from Victoria Treadwell Khanna, a Canadian-born and California-based medical doctor whose English grandfather, Vertie Treadwell, had been a colonial officer in Bengal and had kept meticulous record of his activities and observations. From those records and other sources, Tara reconstructs her ancestor's life, especially her participation in the Indian independence movement. Her death, Tara learns, was not a result of self-imposed fasting, as the British authorities had claimed: she was murdered by the colonial police. Tara's research leads to her rediscovery of India and a heightened consciousness of her heritage. At the end of the novel, prompted by Tara Lata's ghost, Tara and her family go to Kashi, a holy city on the banks of Ganges, where they perform the belated cremation rites for Tara Lata and send her spirit to the Abode of Ancestors. The ritualistic freeing of the ancestral spirit is symbolic of Tara's coming to terms with and liberation from her own history.

*The Tree Bride* signals the sharpest reversal of Mukherjee's 1980s views on migration and exuberant inventions of new American selves divorced from personal histories. As Michiko Kakutani aptly points out, Mukherjee now "suggests that the freedom to begin a new life, offered by America, will always be circumscribed by familial imperatives, by religious and cultural tropes and by more primeval, subterranean forces that her characters like to think of as fate" (2004, B8). In *Jasmine*, for example, the protagonist sets out to "reposition the stars" (1989, 223), change her fate, and mold herself as a new American. In contrast, Tara in *The Tree Bride* seeks in her past the self-understanding she needs to define her American self in a holistic manner.

Thus the seven novels of Bharati Mukherjee, published between 1972 and 2005, offer a map of her shifting and evolving views on the immigrant experience. Her early protagonists are paralyzed by their sense of exile, expatriation, and nonbelonging. Many of her characters from the middle phase of her career are eager to forget their pasts and to forge new American identities. However, most recent characters, though comfortable in their American skins, seek wider transnational and bicultural forms of self-definitions. By doing so, they subversively transform conventional definitions of who precisely is an American. **See also** Asian Diasporas; Assimilation/Americanization; Racism and Asian America.

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EMMANUEL S. NELSON

## ◆ MULTICULTURALISM AND ASIAN AMERICA

Multiculturalism is a liberal philosophy of democratic cultural pluralism. It is an ethos and theory that advocates all cultural groups should be socially represented and coexist harmoniously within one certain country and that racism should be reduced by the representation of positive images of ethnic diversity and knowledge of other cultures. In the 1960s, American society experienced a trend of multiculturalism, namely a change toward compatibility and democracy; the civil rights movement and Asian American movement were essential parts of it, which aroused African Americans' and Asian Americans' consciousness to participate in politics and social activities. It is in the overall background of multiculturalism that Asian America emerges, which in turn promotes the development of multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism was first put forward by Horace Kallen, a Judaic American philosophy professor, in 1924 as an argument against the widely spread Americanization, believing that people of different ethnicities cannot totally get rid of ethnic characteristics to become totally Americanized. A nation is not only a unity in field and administration but also a community of different national cultures.

The destination of multiculturalism includes cultural diversity, ethnic equality, and compensation of rights. Since the world itself is composed of various cultures and each of them has contributed to human civilization, so cultural diversity respects the differences between cultures and between ways of living. It emphasizes the importance of seeking mutual understanding and harmonious coexistence. Nation equality suggests that Western civilization is not surely superior to other civilizations, and it is unreasonable to assume that Western nations, which are nourished by Western cultures, are superior to other nations. All nations are equal to each other, both internationally and domestically. Rights compensation aims to solve the problem that the inferior position of the black and other ethnics cannot be improved only through legislation.

Multiculturalism has been supported by many college professors for good reasons. First, they believe that in the background of multiculturalism minorities can keep and develop their own cultures, and thus can better protect national cultures, especially those of the Third World countries. Second, multiculturalism can improve the competitiveness of the national culture because the coexistence of cultures provides a platform of study and communication and can accelerate cultural innovation. Third, multiculturalism is helpful in the formation of a tolerant, understanding social environment, which is beneficial for different cultures to get along with each other. Lastly, multiculturalism can alleviate complex religious confrontations.

On the other hand, there also exists a voice against multiculturalism. First, multiculturalism is thought to be the source of confrontation between peoples of different nationalities within a single country. Multiculturalism holds that each nation is born with specific features that are unchangeable and indelible. This legitimizes and fixes the estrangement between peoples. It is said that those who openly advocate the superiority of one nation to another are the pure racists, and multiculturalism is racism with a new appearance. Second, multiculturalism simplifies complex social problems by regarding them as merely cultural problems. According to multiculturalism, contradictions between different peoples are only the representation of different customs, which in fact is a competition for life. Third, multiculturalism totally negates the gradation between cultures, which provides protection to pseudoscience and antiscience. Fourth, the basis of multiculturalism is not sound; rather, it is cultural relativism, which in itself has some disadvantages and problems. While emphasizing the advantages of a culture, it neglects the weak points. Cultural relativism is somewhat afraid of cultural innovation and suppresses it.

In the United States, minorities have contributed a great deal to the politics, economy, society, and culture, but racial discrimination is witnessed in many aspects of social life, including education, employment, housing, welfare, and so on. In the 1960s, minority groups initiated various struggles to change the unreasonable constitutions of politics and economy. These movements include the Black Power movement, the Asian American movement, the Chicano movement, and the Red Power movement, which greatly challenged American mainstream culture and laid the political foundation for the advancement of multiculturalism.

In the United States, there are generally two kinds of multiculturalism: Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism. Eurocentrism is a kind of monoculturalism, emphasizing the oneness of the American nation and its culture. It compares the United States to a melting pot, melting the features of each national group and then producing something unprecedented. Eurocentrism acknowledges the coexistence of different ethnic groups, but it takes their cultural features as a part of the American culture, which means in the United States, there is only one culture, that is the American culture. American literature has long been influenced by Eurocentrism. The composition of the traditional American literary canon best reflects the effect of Eurocentrism. Even though the literary works of the blacks, American Indians, and Asian writers, who are not European descendents, are of excellent quality, they were not collected in the American literary canon until recent decades. In terms of literature, Eurocentrism is not only cultural conservatism but also cultural chauvinism in some sense. Afrocentrism is another trend of multiculturalism, with Molefi Asante and O.R. Dathorne as its representatives. It thrived as a kind of Black nationalism during the 1980s and 1990s. Different from Eurocentrism, Afrocentrism emphasizes the features of each ethnic group. It argues that in the United States, a country composed of people of different races, there is no American culture but many cultures of these races. As a way to struggle for human rights, Afrocentrism benefits the totality, dignity, and cultural activity of ethnic groups.

Asians are one of many ethnic races in the United States. Asian Americans refer to American citizens with Asian origins, and they are an important component of American society. Large groups of people from Asian countries started to arrive in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century, but it was not until the 1960s, with the hot Asian American movement and the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act, that the term *Asian American* came into use. At first, Asian Americans referred mostly to Americans of Chinese and Japanese origins. Later, with the increase of immigrants from other Asian countries, Asian American also started to designate immigrants from those countries. Most Asian Americans concentrate in West Coast areas and Hawaii, mainly Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, Filipino Americans, and Vietnamese Americans.



Before the 1960s, Asian Americans were called the invisible minority. It is well-known that the U.S. immigration policy had restricted and excluded Asian immigrants, which limited the growth of their population. Meanwhile, great differences between Asian countries and their cultures often caused splits among Asian immigrants. There was lack of unity and communication among the Asian groups. The number of Asian Americans was small, making them weak and invisible in the power hierarchy of American politics, which deprived them of their rights in many fields of social life. After **World War II**, the situation of Asian Americans was considerably improved, and racial discrimination was reduced. However, discrimination continued in employment, housing, welfare, and so forth.

With the development and spread of multiculturalism, Asian Americans realized that they should unite and struggle to improve their position in American society. So there came the Asian American movement. It started from the **Third World Students' Strike** at San Francisco State University in 1968, in which students of African, Latin American, and Asian origins joined up to call for the reformation of educational curriculum. From 1968 to 1969, Asian American students took part in the longest student movement in the history of the United States and argued that college education should consider the need of minority groups, and that the history of their ancestries be recognized and taught in the curriculum. They also called for recognitions of contributions made by people of color. The Asian American movement is both a political movement and an antiracism movement.

Even though Asian Americans have for decades fought racism and discrimination and have greatly improved their status in American society, problems still persist. As minorities, they exist between two worlds and are influenced by two cultures. Identity crisis, feeling of alienation, racial discrimination, and conflicts with the whites or other racial groups are all elements that affect their lives. But it should be pointed out that Asian America is only one component of the multiculturalism in the United States. Thanks to the achievements and leading roles of many Asian Americans in the struggle against racism, they have made great contributions to multiculturalism. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization; Civil Rights Movement and Asian America; Racism and Asian America.

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◆ MURA, DAVID (1952–)

A Japanese American poet, memoirist, essayist, and performance artist, David Mura earned his BA from Grinnell College and his MFA from Vermont College. He has taught at St. Olaf College and has served as visiting professor at the University of Oregon. Mura's body of prominent work consists of three poetry collections and three major prose pieces. Portions of Mura's work place him within the sphere of influence of the confessional school of poetry. Striding comfortably hand-in-hand with a confessional aesthetic sensibility, other parts of his writing display a postmodern awareness, informed by theory and criticism. These twin aspects of Mura's literary nature shape his writing, such that the reader is often treated to powerful gestures of literary self-exploration and startling ruminations on the complexities of identity. Despite Mura's confessional influence, this entry will refer to the speaker of Mura's poems as simply the speaker, and leave to the reader the determination of the extent to which "speaker" and Mura are coextensive.

Mura's major poetic works consist of *After We Lost Our Way* (1989), *The Colors of Desire* (1995), and *Angels for the Burning* (2004). The works explore identity, race, and desire in the context of the material conditions of history.

Mura's first poetic work, *After We Lost Our Way*, displays a poetic fluidity and facility that offers expression to a range of **Asian American** experiences. Part 1 of the work presents a dynamic consideration of **Japanese American internment**. Whether from the intimate details of elders in a romantic moment as offered in "Grandfather and Grandmother in Love" or from the viewpoint of atomic bomb survivors in "The Hibakusha's Letter," Mura's poetry shows an appreciation for the subtle gradations of meaning that are determined in part by perspective. "An Argument: On 1942" is especially poignant in its apprehension of point of view, a son bearing witness to his mother's frustrations about who determines the meaning of internment—those who were there or those who came after. "A Nisei Picnic: From an Album" continues these explorations with the speaker of the poem reflecting on the actions momentarily captured on photographic paper.

Expanding his consideration of perspective, Mura also considers the world from a Southeast Asian viewpoint in part 3 of the collection. "Huy Nguyen: Brothers, Drowning Cries" and "Lan Nguyen: The Uniform of Death" stand out in this regard. In "Huy Nguyen," the speaker reflects on what connections may exist between first-generation Japanese Americans and first-generation Southeast Asians. The viewpoint is observational but also internal and intimate as the speaker, an instructor receiving an English assignment from a Southeast Asian student, explores the student's memories. The mechanism, as the poem itself references, is that of comparing and contrasting: memories of the student's brother drowning in the Mekong Delta, the student fleeing home on a boat as a refugee, and reflections on the continued status of the student's family

as refugees living in political limbo are contrasted against the student's privileges of studying literature and waiting for the bus in front of an American department store. "Huy Nguyen" is written from the perspective of a participant in the **Vietnam War** and explores the limits of bodies and life.

Part 2 of *After We Lost Our Way*, and easily its center of gravity, not only continues Mura's exploration of perspective but also points to the future of Mura's poetic considerations. This section consists of an homage to writer/director Pier Paolo Pasolini. Some of the poems in part 2 are written in the voice of Pasolini and are so marked by italics. One might ask what a transgressive Italian auteur has to do with experiences like those of Japanese Americans after internment or Southeast Asians after the Vietnam War. To the casual reader the collection may appear to be disjointed in this regard. However, the thematics offered by the title of the collection itself, *After We Lost Our Way*, provides a bridging mechanism through the experiences of alienation rather than dislocation. The Pasolini of whom Mura writes has also in a sense lost his way, and the poetry's grappling with sexual desire and politics not only offers insight into Pasolini but also the thematics of desire and identity that form the focus of Mura's second collection of poetry. Such direction is hinted at in part 3 of *After We Lost Our Way* in the form of "The Bookstore," a first-person poem in which the speaker desperately and unsuccessfully searches for a pornographic outlet to facilitate the release and fulfillment of his sexual urgings while avoiding discovery by his wife. This leads the reader, arguably, to *The Colors of Desire*.

The passion and wrestling with desire that simmers beneath Mura's sequence of Pasolini poems and bubbles to the surface in "The Bookstore" find full focus and expression in Mura's second collection of poetry, *The Colors of Desire*. For example, the title sequence, "The Colors of Desire," begins by juxtaposing a photograph of a lynching with the speaker's experience of watching the interracial pornographic film *Behind the Green Door*. Sandwiched between the juxtaposition is a recounting of the experience of the speaker's father, who, while interned in Arkansas in 1942, finds himself caught navigating between African American calls for solidarity by sitting at the back of a bus and Caucasian calls for the seduction of privilege by sitting at the front of a bus. As the collection's title promises, the poetic sequence explores the entanglements of race and desire, juxtaposing a father's collection of pornographic magazines with the experience of Japanese American internment. The desire to fit into American whiteness and to assimilate, and perhaps even the self-hatred fomented by the internment experience, are layered against the desire for the white skin exposed nude for easy consumption in pornography. Arguably, the poetic sequence captures a complexity that is underdiscussed in mainstream conversations about race: what, if anything, lies between the politics of black and white, and how does it shape our innermost being, our private selves? Mura's response seems to be

that desire and history are to be found at the interstices of privilege, transgression, and punishment. Mura's explorations of desire take the reader into the most private and intimate core of a person's humanity. A large part of what places Mura's poetry within the sphere of influence of the confessional school of poetry is its willingness and its ambition to openly explore that core, which Mura then in turn ties to historical conditions of Japanese American internment.

Discussions of sex and desire are often muted, self-censored, or comedically veiled in American mainstream cultural productions, cordoned off for open consideration by the twin ropes of soft-core and hard-core pornography. In this context, Mura's writing could be considered in relation to works like David Wong *Louie's Pangs of Love* or Geraldine Kudaka's *On a Bed of Rice: An Asian American Erotic Feast*. Mura's *The Colors of Desire* is distinct, however, as it explores the overlay of transgression and privilege with Japanese Americans caught and punished in the middle and builds a lyrical connection between internment and the shaping of desire. A poem like "Chorus on the Origins of His Lust" leaves it to the reader to determine whether the value of this observation is literal, figurative, or somewhere in between. Here Mura's poem runs through various approaches that have been used to consider the nature of desire: religious sin, the psychology of taboo, the pull of the constellations. However, the poem lands on race, contrasting whiteness with yellowness and darkness, and concludes by referencing the experience of Japanese Americans under the watch of guard towers in the internment camps.

Given the way in which *The Colors of Desire* positions desire at the crux of transgression and privilege as informed by history, one could look at part 3 of the collection as presenting a dichotomous view of race relations. After all, readers are presented with the Japanese American man's version of an interracial relationship in "The Affair: I—His Version" and the Caucasian woman's version of the same relationship in "The Affair: II—Her Version." The male persona is angry and passionate; he beds his white lover with a fury and reflects upon Japanese Americans seeking an American Dream that has been historically inseparable from whiteness. The female persona is cosmopolitan and detached; she reflects on the aesthetic value of his poetry and dissects his anger. At the same time, however, the poetry compels one to consider whether the sequence's value lies in its apprehension as a figurative sequence rather than a literal representation. In this regard, the poems can be seen as a dissection of the competing consciousnesses of a single mind, like the Japanese American mind in a postinternment era. Such a reading is more consonant with Mura's confessional roots and postmodern sensibility. The concluding unifying image of the collection's final poem, "Listening," seems to offer validation for this reading: a father feeling for the kick from the synthesizing presence of his unborn child in his wife's belly. The poem is dedicated to Mura's own daughter.

Whereas *The Colors of Desire* explores the internal struggles of a postinternment consciousness, *Angels for the Burning*, Mura's third collection of poetry, follows through on the resolution offered in "Listening." Whereas *The Colors of Desire* is troubled and disturbed by the dislocations of history, *Angels for the Burning* resolves loss into a sense of place, belonging, and home. The work is not sanguine in its outlook, however. Thematically, it is about diaspora in a multitude of forms, whether in its questioning of the poet as a thief of history or in its considering being victimized by Jeffrey Dahmer as a part of the diasporic experience. Rather, despite the disturbing and alienating forces that shape the experience of diaspora, Mura's poetry suggests that there is solace to be found. For example, the first and last poems of *Angels for the Burning*, "Astronomy" and "A Winter's Tale," present a movement from being lost to being found, from being outside to being inside. "Years Later" expresses the epiphany of comfort in one's skin being found and no longer just desired. One could argue that some of the sense of belonging lies in the poetry's sense of being part of a larger literary continuum. In *The Colors of Desire*, the reader is presented with the disconnection between a Japanese American man and his Caucasian lover. By contrast, the poems in *Angels for the Burning* exist in conversations with the works of other Asian American poets. One cannot read "Words on My Tongue" without recognizing a connection with Li-Young Lee's "The Gift," and indeed at the end of the collection Mura dedicates "Words on My Tongue" to Li-Young Lee. "Internment Epistles" is dedicated to Garrett Hongo, but perhaps of greater significance both "Internment Epistles" and "The Angel of Phillips Park" form a coherent constellation with Hongo's "The Legend." Mura is not alone, and he lets the informed reader know that he is keenly aware of his connections with his literary peers.

Mura's major prose works consist of *Turning Japanese: Memoirs of a Sansei* (1991), *Where Body Meets Memory: An Odyssey of Race, Sexuality and Identity* (1996), and *Songs for Uncle Tom, Tonto, and Mr. Moto: Poetry and Identity* (2002). In prose form, they continue and expand upon the themes and explorations considered above in his poetry.

In his memoir, *Turning Japanese*, Mura recounts his experiences as a sansei visiting Japan. As Mura himself points out at the memoir's beginning, he did not have a clear reason or purpose for traveling to Japan under an exchange fellowship. After meeting an American couple also in Japan on an exchange and bearing witness to the great dissatisfaction they express about their experiences of being in the country, Mura expresses doubt and concern about what his experience will bring. What he discovers, however, is a new perspective, one that provides him with some degree of liberation from his national identity as he struggles to figure out the meaning of Japan in his life, arguably engaging with those parts of himself that he had shunned in his growing up to become an American in the context of white America. During his time in Japan, Mura ruminates on the postcolonial observations of V.S. Naipaul and studies under

Kazuo Ono to learn Butoh, a form of dance cofounded by Ono. Poignantly, the study of Butoh provides Mura with an opportunity of comfort in his own skin, a comfort often denied him because of the racial uniform that defines bodies in the United States. Significantly, Ono was a contemporary of Yuko Mishima, a Japanese writer with strong nationalist leanings who committed suicide after taking over a Japanese military post in 1970. Mura finds a connection with Mishima's sense of transgression, both politically and sexually, and reflects on the meaning of the relationship between Mishima and Ono. At the same time, Mura reflects on the links that Ono may provide him with his own grandparents. This moment of the memoir, Mura's study of Butoh, captures much of the complex layerings of identity explored in the memoir, as well as the intertwining of public and private histories.

The nature of Mura's journey becomes starkly apparent in *Turning Japanese*, when one day he visits an American club and confronts the sense of alienation that has haunted him through much of his life. This is eventually followed by his interrogation of the Japanese American internment experience and a comparison between Kafka and Mura's father, whose Japanese first name eventually disappeared and became transmuted to the American-sounding Tom. The memoir concludes with an image that will later be echoed in the concluding poem of *The Colors of Desire*: that of the poet feeling for the kicks of his soon-to-be-born daughter, a daughter he describes as pulling together perforce the undeniable facts of birth and biology the Japanese and the American parts of his own identity.

Mura divides his second prose piece, *Where the Body Meets Memory*, into eight parts: "Prologue: Silences," "A Nisei Daughter," "All-American Boy," "A Nisei Father," "The Descent," "Jinnosuke's Biwa," "Bittersweet," and "The Internment of Desire." In "Prologue: Silences," Mura focuses on his birth and his experiences growing up. He writes about internment and his relationship with his wife, as well as what racial implications history, the present, and the future will have for their children. He also discusses the relationship between history and his own writing. In "A Nisei Daughter," Mura begins by writing from the perspective of someone remembering life in the internment camps and then switches to a segment written largely in the second person, addressing his mother about internment. Switching out of second-person and into first-person narration, the remainder of the piece continues to explore the mother's life in relation to his own. In "All-American Boy," Mura writes of his experiences discovering the power of sexuality from grade school through high school. A reader will find echoes of *The Colors of Desire* here. Much of the piece captures the paradox of his experience of being so unaware of history but overdetermined by it as well. In "A Nisei Father," Mura writes from the experiences of his father and examines his father's relationship with family and internment. The piece jumps ahead to the father's fiftieth high school reunion, when Mura notes how the Japanese American internment has

taken on greater conscious significance for him than for his father. The piece also considers the father and son relationship, both through his relationship with his own father and through his relationship with his own son. "The Descent" considers Mura's relationship with his wife and what she means in the complex fabric of his identity. The triad of self, desire, and transgression plays a large role in Mura's reflections here. In "Jinnosuke's Biwa," Mura writes about his early relationship with race and writing in the form of a poem about his grandfather. Much of the piece explores Mura's understanding of his grandfather's life. "Bittersweet" explores themes of race and sexuality but also covers Mura's graduate school experiences teaching writing to Southeast Asian refugees. Here a reader can find Mura's reflections on the experiences that informed his writing of both "Huy Nguyen: Brothers, Drowning Cries" and "Lan Nguyen: The Uniform of Death" in *After We Lost Our Way*. In "The Internment of Desire," Mura looks into race, sexuality, and masculinity. He offers insight into his process as an author writing about sexuality and desire and the politics of making the private public. Mura provides the reader with detailed insights about his process and experience of writing *The Colors of Desire*.

*Songs for Uncle Tom, Tonto, and Mr. Moto: Poetry and Identity* is a collection of essays and interviews. In contrast with Mura's other major works, this collection could be considered more as a critical collection rather than a literary one. The eight essays and three interviews provide the reader with insight into the creative process but also continue Mura's examination of the intersections of race, identity, and writing. In "From Banana to Basho, or How One Japanese American Learned Not to Write like John O'Hara," Mura reflects upon his own experiences as a writer and the challenges confronting the Asian American writer when he or she is provided with few examples of what it means to be an Asian American writer. He argues that not seeing cultural productions by Asian Americans is damaging to one's ability to conceive fully what one can aspire to be as a writer. By contrast, "Difficulties of the Moment: Weil, Milosz, and Bakhtin" provides readers with insight into Mura's assessment of the current milieu in which writers find themselves, one which he sees as transitional in nature. The three interviews are with Daniel Kane, Lee Rossi, and William Walsh. In addition to his major works, Mura has written a treatise against pornography, *A Male Grief: Notes on Pornography and Addiction* (1987). **See also** Asian Diasporas; Issei, Nisei, Sansei; Japanese American Internment.

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RUSSELL H. SHITABATA

### ◆ MURAYAMA, MILTON (1923–)

Japanese American novelist Milton Murayama is primarily known for his three novels but has also written unpublished plays. A short story, "I'll Crack Your Head Kotsun," has been incorporated into the first of his novels as part 1 of *All I Asking for Is My Body*. Born in Hawaii, Murayama completed his BA at the University of Hawaii and obtained his MA from Columbia University. He currently resides in San Francisco, California.

Milton Murayama's three novels, *All I Asking for Is My Body* (1975), *Five Years on a Rock: A Novel* (1994), and *Plantation Boy: A Novel* (1998), form a triptych that captures not just the lives of first- and second-generation Japanese Americans in the form of the Oyama family, but also the arc of Hawaii's history from plantation colony to entry as the fiftieth American state. As much as the novels focus on the trials and tribulations of the Oyama family, so too do the novels provide insight into the changing material conditions experienced by Japanese Americans in Hawaii.

Murayama writes *All I Asking for Is My Body* from the second-generation perspective of Kiyoshi, middle son of the Oyama family. Much of the dialogue in the novel is written in a modified **Hawaiian Pidgin** English. The novel can be summarized as follows. In part 1, "I'll Crack Your Head Kotsun," Kiyoshi's parents discourage him from continuing his friendship with Makot, the son of a laborer in another camp. Kiyoshi fights against his parents and his older brother, Toshio, and continues the friendship. Toward the end, Kiyoshi comes to the uncomfortable realization that, in all likelihood, Makot's family really makes their income by prostituting Makot's mother to the single male laborers. Kiyoshi ends his friendship with Makot. In part 2, "The Substitute," Kiyoshi's mother lies near death because of her deferring her own health care for the well being of her husband and children. Kiyoshi seeks out his great-aunt, affectionately referred to within the family as Obaban. She is his mother's closest friend, and he brings her back to comfort his mother, whom he believes to be near death. Obaban, however, winds up dying instead in what Kiyoshi views as a substitute death and a



sacrifice by the great-aunt for his mother. Part 3, "All I Asking for Is My Body," forms the bulk of the novel. In this part, Kiyoshi learns early on about the politics of what kind of thinking is—and is not—permissible on the plantation. At the plantation schoolhouse, a young Marxist teacher promotes ideas about class and worker solidarity, only to be chastised and dismissed from employment. The family debt of \$6,000, much of which has been incurred not by the parents but by the grandfather, looms prominently in the narrative, as the sons are expected to take care of the debt. Toshio, the eldest son, asserts that his body is his own and that he is American rather than Japanese. He asks that his father revoke his and Kiyoshi's Japanese citizenship. Toshio tries to find his route to freedom through boxing, but despite some early success this ultimately proves to be a dead end. Kiyoshi tries to follow in his older brother's pugilist footsteps but lacks even Toshio's early success. Toshio displays anger at being saddled with his parents' debt, and his railings against his mother and father are often witnessed by Kiyoshi. The parents repeatedly assert that they will rely on Kiyoshi, the weight of which hangs over Kiyoshi for much of the novel. Kiyoshi watches as Toshio becomes a truck driver and then follows his brother's example by becoming a truck driver's helper. Toshio and Kiyoshi turn over most of their pay to their parents. When Japanese forces bomb **Pearl Harbor**, the father is questioned by federal officials but avoids being incarcerated. In the end, Kiyoshi joins the military to fight in the war and surprisingly wins enough money in a craps game to cover the family debt.

One could look at *All I Asking for Is My Body* as a struggle between first-generation, issei, and second-generation, nisei, values. Indeed, Kiyoshi feels the twin pull of a sense of duty to family obligations (represented by his parents) and a desire for an individualized fulfillment (often manifested and voiced by his older brother). The Oyama parents have inherited a \$6,000 debt from Kiyoshi's paternal grandfather, and in a Japanese sense they perceive the debt as a familial one, shared by parents and children alike. By contrast, eldest son Toshio vocalizes the book's title on more than one occasion, emphasizing to his younger brother Kiyoshi that what is at stake is their very bodies. Kiyoshi bears witness as Toshio tries fervently to set boundaries with Mother and Father Oyama, repeatedly informing his parents that he will work for them for no more than 10 years. The parents respond to Toshio by informing him that they will rely on Kiyoshi, whom they seem to view as a more loyal son in a traditional sense. Kiyoshi thus finds himself caught between wanting to fulfill the family's obligations and yearning to be free from them. Paying off the debt could thus be seen as a metaphor for obtaining freedom from the filial duties of being a good Japanese son. The parents view it as duty, Toshio looks at it as burden, and Kiyoshi struggles to figure out how he can be loyal to his parents but also to himself. Such generational conflicts easily find echoes in the works of such authors as John **Okada**, Jade Snow **Wong**, Maxine Hong **Kingston**, Amy **Tan**, and Chang-Rae **Lee**. The connection also

stretches beyond **Asian American** writers and can be considered as a recurring theme in the works of other authors who write about the experiences of the ethnic Others within the context of America's racial history. For instance, authors such as Lorraine Hansberry, Richard Rodriguez, August Wilson, and Louise Erdrich have also provided readers with intergenerational struggles in which the younger generation is caught between fulfilling the expectations of those who have come before them but also being true to themselves.

At the same time, a reader would be remiss to view the novel as being only about generational conflicts without also considering the larger context for those conflicts: the sugarcane plantation. Murayama makes apparent the role played by the plantation in the lives of its laborers. The plantation layout, after all, represents a colonizing claim on the land and the people: with the plantation homes built on a hill, feces and waste run down from the plantation owner's house, past the *lunas'* (field bosses) homes, and down along the rows of the field laborers' homes. The pigpens, which provide a source of food for the laborers, are also situated along the sewage ditch. Moreover, because of field labor, dirt and dust become inseparable from clothing, skin, breath, and the mucous in one's nostrils. The plantation structure and its labor are presented as one in which human life, human waste, and even the dirt itself are unhealthily and perversely enmeshed. Thus, the book's title and Toshio's words have larger implications than that of generational conflict: the desire for ownership of one's body is more than just about freedom from one's parents; it is a desire to be free from the plantation life and its degrading claims on the human bodies, not only as manifested by labor and debt but also excrement and abjection. Under these circumstances, Kiyoshi begins his journey to freedom by joining the military; it is not his family that he must leave, but the plantation itself. And his route is one that many sons took in exodus from Hawaii's plantation history. At the end of *All I Asking for Is My Body*, readers may breathe a sigh of relief for Kiyoshi when he wins enough money in a barracks craps game to pay off the family debt. The happy ending, however, contains its own disturbing implications: freedom from plantation life is gained more by luck than by hard work, and the freedom is funded by the losses of other young soldiers who may well be seeking to likewise escape.

In contrast to the masculine narration of *All I Asking for Is My Body*, Murayama presents *Five Years on a Rock* from the first-generation perspective of Sawa Oyama, the mother of the Oyama clan. The novel, written as an overlapping prequel to Murayama's first novel, represents the issei experience. For example, whereas much of the dialogue of *All I Asking for Is My Body* is written in a modified Hawaiian Pidgin English, capturing the sounds of island oral culture, most of the dialogue of *Five Years on a Rock* is written in formal English. In this regard, the novel captures the reality of first-generation immigrants possessing clarity in their own thoughts and the articulation of

ideas among others of their own generation—a representation that runs contrary to how first-generation immigrants have been (and perhaps even continue to be) stereotyped. The novel's action can be summarized as follows. Sawa looks toward a prospective marriage that might better her economic standings in Japan. When it appears that the prospective spouse eschews her, a mistaken conclusion on her part, she enters into an arranged marriage with Isao. She travels to Isao in Hawaii, operating under the presumption that she and her new husband will work five years in Hawaii and return to Japan with their fortunes made. Her presumptions about the future, however, will prove mistaken. When she arrives, she becomes quickly aware that her new father-in-law favors his younger children and new wife over his eldest son, Isao. Sawa's new mother-in-law distrusts her and constantly accuses her of stealing, quite falsely. The only real friend that Sawa is able to make is with her new father-in-law's outcast sister, Setsuko (the woman who comes to be known as Obaban by the time of *All I Asking for Is My Body*). Sawa has five children, Toshio, Joji, Kiyoshi, Takako, and Miwa. During this time she watches her father-in-law and mother-in-law return to Japan with money to show off their success, but which is really founded on a debt with which Sawa and Isao hence find themselves saddled. She watches as her husband tries to find success and leave the plantation life behind, but only ever temporarily so. His largest venture is an attempt to become a fisherman, but this ultimately leads to greater debt. Sawa tries to supplement her family's income through sewing. She also neglects her own health as a sacrifice to ensure that her husband and her children have their needs met. At the end, the Oyama family must return to the plantation, and Sawa finds herself struggling with the difficulty of how to tell Toshio that he will have to drop out of school and labor in the cane fields.

*Five Years on a Rock* compels a rereading of the earlier novel and a continued consideration of the themes of plantation life and its colonization of not just place and bodies but mind and soul. Here, the reader bears witness not only to Sawa's journey from Japan to Hawaii as a picture bride, along with her harsh treatment by her in-laws, but also the route by which the Oyama family arrives at its debt. To lure workers to the cane fields, the plantation system has cultivated a narrative of success and achievement, a narrative in which both Takao Oyama (grandfather) and Isao Oyama (father) find themselves enmeshed. That narrative is captured by the book's title itself—the mistaken notion that after working five years on a sugar plantation in Hawaii a laborer can return to Japan a success. The elder Oyama incurs great debt to fulfill the colonial laborer's success story, and he passes that debt on to Isao. In turn, Isao incurs more debt on risky ventures to try to wipe out the initial debt and make his own fortune to prove his own success. Isao's desire to succeed and show evidence of success manifests itself in all three novels in the form of ostentatious displays and gestures, all of which incur further debt. In the other two novels, his children are unable to understand their

father's showy and reckless behavior, but readers of *Five Years on a Rock* see that the father is caught in a colonial net and that the mother suffers as she is dragged along. In this regard, Murayama can be considered in dialogue with a writer like V.S. Naipaul, whose *Miguel Street* is filled with postcolonial characters who have great human ambition but are afforded little in the way of actual opportunity to realize them.

Murayama's third novel, *Plantation Boy*, presents the second-generation life of Toshio, the oldest son of the Oyama family, and the arc of Hawaii's transition from colony to state. The novel captures, both in its narration and in its dialogue, a flavor of Hawaiian Pidgin English. The action of the novel can be summarized as follows. Japanese forces bomb Pearl Harbor, and Japanese Americans find themselves under a cloud of distrust. Eventually, despite interning all West Coast Japanese Americans, the government seeks out Japanese American enlistees. Many sons of the plantation volunteer for military duty. Toshio marries Fujie Nakama and begins taking correspondence classes. He receives censored and blacked-out letters from his friends fighting in the war. After the war, many Japanese Americans begin pursuing their education through the opportunities offered by military service. Toshio and Fujie build their own family with the births of Kenji, Marcia, Chrys, and Gerald; Toshio's parents also have two more children, Ann and Scott. Not only are the younger and newer children christened with Anglo-sounding names, but many nisei adopt such names as an assertion of their Americanness. For example, Toshio adopts the name Steven, Fujie takes the name Carol, and Kiyoshi has the name Morris. Toshio finishes correspondence school and eventually gains employment as a draftsman for a reputable and well connected architect named Charles Ames. Toshio works hard over the years to earn an income, support his family, take classes at the University of Hawaii, and take the necessary examinations to become an architect. During this time historical events sweep through the islands and across the nation: labor unions become a political force, and the sugar strike of 1946 unifies plantation laborers across ethnic lines; antiunion forces use the fear of communism to indict and harass union leadership; Democrats gain a political footing in Hawaii; Hawaii achieves statehood; and President Kennedy is assassinated. As Toshio continues to work, he finds that people look down at him for his correspondence school education, and he struggles for years to pass his exams. In the end he passes his exams, becomes an architect, and strikes out on his own as a professional.

This last novel in the triptych captures Toshio's attempt to live separately from plantation life, to separate his body and mind from the plantation as it were, and to attain his dream of becoming an architect. He struggles with the fact that he had to drop out of high school to work the cane fields for 10 years for his parents, whereas now the younger siblings of the Oyama family are able to not only finish high school but to view college as something of an entitlement. This situation was not uncommon in Hawaii's plantation days. Many older nisei worked their way through trade schools,

courageously pieced together an education piecemeal, or joined the military like Kiyoshi, only to watch their much younger siblings attend college with the hope and expectation of professional white-collar employment. While Toshio achieves his high school equivalence and cobbles together the scraps of a college education to pass his exams to become an architect, the novel concurrently takes readers through a sweep of history that includes Japanese Americans acquiring a place in Congress with the election of Daniel K. Inouye. More than just the events of history, however, Murayama pays close attention to a significant cultural arc that is central to Asian American experiences in Hawaii and that pulls all three novels together: whereas familial ties were viewed as the key to survival and success in *All I Asking for Is My Body* and in Sawa and Isao's generation, by the end of the triptych it is professional ties that determine one's fate in Hawaii. At the end of *Plantation Boy*, Toshio finally feels free of his parents and has achieved his dream of becoming an architect, but he also finds himself isolated and somewhat alone as he desperately tries to pull together a list of whom he knows to see if he has enough professional contacts to make it as an architect. In this regard, he has left the plantation, but he is not entirely free of it and its historical imprint.

In addition to his novels, Murayama has written two unpublished plays, *Yoshitsune* and *All I Asking for Is My Body*, the latter of which is based on his novel of the same title. Readers interested in Murayama's own reflections on rendering Hawaiian Pidgin English into written form could seek out "Problems of Writing in Dialect and Mixed Languages," printed in *MELUS* in the Spring of 1977. See also Issei, Nisei, Sansei.

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## N



### ◆ NAIR, MEERA (1963–)

Indian American short story writer and essayist Meera Nair received the Asian American Literary Award in 2003 for her widely acclaimed collection of short stories *Video* (2002), about Southeast Asians living both in India and the United States. Her work focuses on the cultural conflicts that arise across generations and within family relationships. A contributor to such periodicals and journals as the *New York Times Magazine*, *Threepenny Review*, and *Calyx*, Nair is currently working on a highly anticipated novel.

Born and raised in India, Meera Nair came to the United States at the age of 34 to study creative writing. She received an MA from Temple University and an MFA from New York University, where she was a *New York Times* fellow. Nair came to national prominence with the publication of her collection *Video*. It was named one of the best books of the year by the *Washington Post* and was a Kiriyaama Prize Notable Book.

The 10 stories of *Video* are set both in India and the United States, and most explore some aspect of the encounter between the two countries. With humor and warmth, Nair pays special attention to the influence of Western media upon Indian daily life; she depicts a world in which village children watch *Baywatch*, and a remote Indian community prepares for a visit from President Clinton. Without making judgments about the merits of adhering to either Eastern or Western ways, Nair focuses on how individuals resolve the conflicting demands that new customs and changing values present to them. The characters in these vibrant stories struggle to understand the often jarring encounter between Indian and Western lifestyles and beliefs. However,

despite the magnitude of such cultural differences, Nair seizes upon telling details and subtle descriptions to demonstrate the personal effects of such dissonant encounters.

The title short story focuses upon the relationship between a married Indian couple. After watching a pornographic film, the husband asks his wife to perform a sexual act seen on the video. She responds by hiding, first for hours and then for days, fearful of her husband's new and troubling desire. This domestic drama also has a profound impact on the neighborhood community, as traditional notions of marriage, intimacy, and desire are upended by a foreign video. Nair has stated that the inspiration for this story came from a newspaper article she read about the effect of Western pornography on Indian villagers. Unfortunately, this compelling story caused Nair some difficulties. In 2000 it won the PEN/Amazon.com Short Story Contest and was published online at Amazon.com, despite some complaints by readers due to the story's explicit sexual content. However, this award was retracted when the judges learned that Nair had published another story in the *Threepenny Review*. According to the guidelines of the award, Nair was considered ineligible because *Threepenny* has a circulation of over 5,000 readers. Although Nair had disclosed the publication of "Video" in *Threepenny* to Amazon, neither she nor the judges initially realized the large size of that journal's readership. Fortunately, Nair was able to keep the prize money, and her story was still available for readers at the Amazon Web site.

Some of the other notable stories in *Video* include "A Warm Welcome to the President, Insh'Allah!" which was written after a visit by President Bill Clinton to India. The story describes the efforts of a small village in Bangladesh to build a new toilet in case the visiting American president should need to use it. "Curry Leaf Tree" examines the tensions in an arranged marriage between Dilip, an employee of Motorola, and an Indian woman who quickly sheds traditional customs in the new, American life offered by Arizona. Other selections in *Video*, such as the mystical "Sculptor of Sands," in which a man finds artistic inspiration after discovering the body of a young woman buried on a beach, and "Summer," which describes a girl who has been sexually molested by her cousin boldly confront issues of sexuality in a manner unique to writers of South Asian descent. Similarly, Nair explores the consequences of strong emotions suddenly unleashed by tense circumstances and the dangers of confusing reality with personal fictions. In "The Lodger in Room 726," a boy who works in a rooming house indulges in the fantasy that one of the new tenants is a famous murderer. "My Grandfather Dreams of Fences" describes an elderly landlord who comes to believe that one of his workers is stealing his land. As he desperately erects new fences, the old man refuses to abandon the customs of an antiquated class system.

Critics have largely praised *Video*, noting similarities between Nair's work and that of such successful Indian authors as Arundhati Roy and Jhumpa Lahiri. Nair's careful

attention to dialogue and her ability to capture a range of often contradictory emotions impress critics who also admire how small details of daily life reveal profound differences in culture and traditions. Jeffery Paine of the *Washington Post Book World* identifies one of Nair's most distinctive qualities as her striking imagination. He notes that the sheer inventiveness of Nair's work makes the fiction of her peers seem like studies in sociology, and, moreover, that by conjuring magical images, Nair gives reality a sense of wonder. In her reach toward a type of magical realism that recalls the work of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Isabel Allende, Nair moves beyond the strictly realistic style of many contemporary writers of South Asian descent living in the United States. Her unique approach may herald the beginning of more stylistically innovative writing by Indian authors living and writing in the United States.

Currently, Nair resides in Brooklyn with her husband and their young daughter.

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STEPHANIE LI

♦ NAQVI, TAHIRA (1945–)

Tahira Naqvi is among the handful of writers, which include Sara **Suleri** and Bapsi **Sidhwa**, who portray the experience of Pakistanis in the United States. She is best known as the translator of Urdu stories into English—especially the controversial gendered fiction of Ismat Chughtai ("The Quilt") and the Partition stories of renowned Urdu writers including Saadat Hasan Manto and Khadija Mastur. Naqvi has also translated Ismat Chughtai's *My Friend, My Enemy: Essays, Reminiscences, Portraits*.

Born in Iran to Pakistani parents, Naqvi grew up in Lahore, Pakistan, where she was educated at the Convent of Jesus and Mary. She moved to the United States nearly four decades ago with her physician husband. She has taught English at Western Connecticut State University and at Westchester Community College, New York, and has taught Urdu at Columbia University and New York University.

Tahira Naqvi's first short fiction collection *Attar of Roses and Other Stories of Pakistan* (1997) includes 13 stories located in Pakistan, several based in Lahore. The evocative fiction represents Naqvi's emotions of loss, nostalgia, and attempts to reclaim memory: "Lahore is deeply etched in my mind and the city breeds stories for me in ways I can never fully fathom" (Devi 2000 interview). In her review,



Bapsi Sidhwa, the Pakistani American author of the novels *Cracking India* and *An American Brat*, praises Naqvi's "nuanced expression" in her first book that is a "refreshing and honest" depiction of middle-class life in Pakistan. Sidhwa claims, "In her quiet way Tahira Naqvi sustains a tension and suspense that make many of her stories compulsively readable" (242–243). Similarly, Fawzia Afzal-Khan's review of *Attar of Roses and Other Stories of Pakistan* praises this "gemlike collection" for being different from the "hybrid" texts by "diasporic" writers as it is "so rooted in her native Pakistan," and because Naqvi "uses English to convey an Urdu sensibility" (1999, 219–220).

As Naqvi explains in an interview with Gayatri Devi of *Monsoon* magazine, "My work is also very autobiographical and memory plays a very important role in everything I write" (Devi 2000 interview). At the same time, Naqvi often intertwines a character's personal journeys and insights with larger concerns regarding historical and political events and social dilemmas. Some examples include stories such as "Atonement," about the 1996 Cricket World Cup match between India and Pakistan; "Love in an Election Year," set against the backdrop of the election of Benazir Bhutto or Fatima Jinnah; and "History Lessons," about the military rule of General Zia. The last story in the collection, "Atonement (A Lahore Diary)" reads like the diary of a woman from the United States visiting her aging Pakistani mother, who is transfixed to the television screen as she watches the international cricket match. But the story weaves complex themes, including the quotidian demands of preparing meals in the traditional Islamic household, the historical and ongoing political rivalries between India and Pakistan acted out in the game (itself ironically a British colonial legacy), and the political tension and violence in everyday life on the streets of Lahore. As the narrator notes: "I've been browsing through today's newspaper and scattered reports about more killing in Karachi catch my eye. The headings inform casually, as if death in Karachi is an everyday occurrence, to be expected, banal. . . . There are other stories as well. About torture cells, about abductions, about police brutality, about the woman whom people refer to as BB [Benazir Bhutto], the woman who failed at leadership. There's news of cricket too" (1997, 138).

The cruel ironies of the political hostility enacted through the cricket match become apparent in the ending, when Pakistan, having lost to its rival, celebrates Sri Lanka's victory against India: "The papers are splashed with reports of India's humiliation. Our defeat forgotten, we revel in another's victory. Without passion we are nothing, I tell myself. Let Karachi bleed, I say, while we atone for our ungodliness" (1997, 141). Fawzia Afzal-Khan's review thus aptly describes this story as "the best crafted," "hilarious and depressing at the same time" (1999, 220).

In her story "A Peephole Romance," Naqvi claims that she tried to portray South Asian women's lives as different from those she had read about in her contemporary

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Arranged Marriage*—a short fiction collection focused largely on the negatives: “In much writing about South Asian women we see only pictures of misery and despair and you and I, and others like us, know there’s a lot of joy and fulfillment in our lives as well” (Devi 2000 interview).

Tahira Naqvi’s second collection, *Dying in a Strange Country* (2001), includes 11 linked autobiographical short stories about the Pakistani American housewife Zenab. The protagonist is married to a physician and raises her young sons in small-town Connecticut, while negotiating between her evolving Pakistani/Muslim and American/New England identities. Several stories revolve around Zenab’s (or the unnamed narrator’s) attempts to maintain her Islamic sense of self through various religious rituals and spiritual practices and traditions, while also subtly questioning Islamic scriptures and inherited traditions and her South Asian identity as she replays Urdu or Hindi songs from Indian films from the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s in her American home or car. Often the stories are set against a background where an older, more traditional Pakistani female relative visits the immigrant family in the United States, thus testing the Americanized characters’ definitions and practices of their evolving Islamic faith. These women include the protagonists’ aunts or mothers in “Thank God for the Jews,” “All Is Not Lost,” “Paths upon Water,” “Dying in a Strange Country,” and “Song of My Mother.”

The reviews of *Dying in a Strange Country* have been mixed. Unlike **Indian American short story** writers such as Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, and Jhumpa Lahiri, Tahira Naqvi’s work is not well-known in the United States. Neither **Asian American** nor many South Asian scholars have engaged with Tahira Naqvi’s finely nuanced and culturally specific stories about being an upper-middle class Muslim woman in the United States between the 1970s and 1990s. Norbert Schurer’s review commends the book for providing a “balanced mix of usually vivid dialogue and mostly exact description” (2002, 142), but criticizes the collection for having “too many cooking scenes and house interiors.” She harshly describes the stories as “individual snapshots with not enough significance,” and reveals her own bias as she criticizes the conversations for not “ring[ing] true” as they do not include so-called Pakistani English. In contrast, Mridula Nath Chakraborty’s review considers *Dying in a Strange Country* as a “poignant and moving commentary on what it means to be an immigrant in the U.S. of A.,” and praises Naqvi for her “wit and light touch of humour” (2003, 34).

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LAVINA DHINGRA SHANKAR

## ◆ NATIONAL ORIGINS ACT OF 1924

Immigration laws have far-reaching significance that is keenly evident not only in legal but also in political and socioeconomic arenas. They represent one of the most critical measures through which to determine the nature and character of a nation, declaring who is welcome and who is not. Functioning as the nation's gatekeeper, such laws are particularly important for the United States, a young and constantly evolving

nation that is populated primarily by the continuous arrival of immigrants from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.

The National Origins Act of 1924 is one of the most important immigration laws in American history. A decisive triumph of the anti-Asian and anti-immigration movements, it upheld institutionalized prejudice and racism in immigration legislative history. It extended the Asian exclusion policy to Japanese immigration. In addition, it established the notorious national origin-based quota system as a major immigration policy. Designed to curb immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe, the quota system put a limit on general immigration for the first time. The 1924 law, therefore, signaled the end of an era in American immigration history.

The 1924 law is the culmination of an extensive legislative campaign that the increasingly powerful restrictionists had launched late in the 1910s. The campaign had one old task and a new one. The old task was to complete the exclusion of Asian immigration that had started with the **Chinese Exclusion Act** of 1882. The new task was to curtail the immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe, which began to increase significantly late in the nineteenth century. Of the 25 million or so people who arrived in the United States between the 1890s and 1920s, many were Italians, Slavs, and Jews, who were often deemed “undesirable.” By the early twentieth century, Eastern and Southern Europe had become the main source of immigration. The 1917 immigration act was the first major victory the restrictionists achieved in their effort to restrict such undesirable immigrants. Passed by Congress over the veto by President Woodrow Wilson, the 1917 act created a literacy test. Required of immigrants before they could gain permanent residency, the literacy test was what the restrictionist movement had been persistently striving to achieve for almost two decades. The 1917 act also continued and expanded the Asian exclusion policy by establishing the Asiatic Barred Zone. That barred zone included South and East Asia, from which labor immigration was banned.

The 1924 immigration law reiterated and furthered the long tradition of Asian exclusion in American immigration policy. It did so concisely but effectively: section 13 (c) of the law states: no alien ineligible to citizenship shall be admitted to the United States. The main target of the anti-Asian clause was the Japanese. By making citizenship eligibility a requirement for immigration, it ended the Gentlemen’s Agreement that the United States and Japan had reached in 1908, in which the Japanese government agreed voluntarily to end Japanese labor immigration. But the agreement allowed the children and wives of Japanese immigrants already in the United States to continue to come to the United States. Known also as Japanese Exclusion Act, the 1924 act closed the door on Japanese immigration, formally and unilaterally. Like other Asian immigrants, the Japanese had always been ineligible to become naturalized citizens. The nation’s first Naturalization Law of 1790 stipulated that only free white men could become naturalized citizens. This 1790 principle was

modified concerning Africans and African Americans after the Civil War but was upheld numerous times in the court of law concerning Asians. A Supreme Court ruling in the 1922 case of *Ozawa v. United States* declared that people of “Japanese race and born in Japan” were not eligible for U.S. citizenship. It is evident that the 1924 law was only part of a comprehensive web of exclusion that the three branches of government had worked together to create from the beginning of the nation.

It is necessary to note that the 1924 law also had a negative impact on other Asian groups. During the 1930s, for example, fewer than 5,000 Chinese immigrated to the United States. After 1924 the Filipinos remained as the only group that was not yet placed under the exclusion policy. As U.S. nationals, they had the right to come to the United States until the passage of the 1934 Tydings-McDuffie Act, which gave the Philippines independence and thereby disallowed the Filipinos to come to the United States freely under the status of nationals.

The 1924 immigration act is perhaps best known for its role in establishing the quota system as a fundamental immigration policy, designed mainly to restrict immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe, a task that the 1917 immigration act failed to accomplish. Responding to the failure of the 1917 act and energized by growing xenophobia, the restrictionist forces introduced numerous restrictive measures in Congress from December 1918 to November 1919, and more than 10 of those bills entertained the idea of banning all immigration, either temporarily or permanently.

Eventually the quota system emerged as a more acceptable alternative to immigration suspension or prohibition. In 1921 Congress passed an immigration law and introduced the quota system for the first time. It stipulated that a country's annual quota was to be 3 percent of the size of the foreign-born population from that country based on the 1910 census. Intended as a temporary restrictive measure in the 1921 law, the quota system became a fundamental immigration policy under a new formula in 1924. A country's annual quota was now to be 2 percent of the foreign-born population from that nation residing in the United States in 1890.

The quota system marked a turning point in American immigration policy. Previously, immigration restriction had been achieved through the exclusion of groups based on race, class, and gender. The quota system represents a new way of restriction, that is, by setting a limit to immigration in general. The total annual quota was set about 162,000 in the 1924 act. Meanwhile, the quota system is also characterized by strong and open prejudice that targeted individual groups. Clearly favoring Northern and Western European groups, it gave large quotas to Western and Northern Europeans that would only use a small portion of the quota in a long time. At the same time, the quota system dramatically reduced immigration from countries like Italy.

The quota system did not control immigration from the Western Hemisphere. Nor did it cover close family members of U.S. citizens and numerous other classes, such as

students, professors, and ministers. Such exemptions allowed tens of thousands of individuals to arrive in the United States as nonquota immigrants each year in the post-1924 era.

Characterized by strong and obvious racial and ethnic prejudice, the 1924 immigration act had wide public support. Powerful special interest organizations lobbied rigorously for the bill. On Capitol Hill, it was passed easily with merely six senators and a few representatives in the House voting against it. In their arguments, promoters and supporters of the bill emphasized not only economic harm (greater competition and lower wages) that the “new immigrants” would bring to the United States but also their racial/ethnic and cultural inferiority as undesirable and inassimilable non-Anglos. **See also** Racism and Asian America.

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YONG CHEN

## ◆ NATIONALISM AND ASIAN AMERICA

Nationalism is a broad set of ideas that hold the nation-state to be the most important unit of social organization. Although Asian America is not a nation in the traditional sense, its history has been closely tied to various forms of nationalism. The development of the United States has often relied on the exploitation and exclusion of minorities. As a result, struggles for equality and inclusion, in effect the struggle to be recognized as American, has been a recurring theme in Asian American literature. As members of diasporic communities, Asian Americans are often involved in nationalisms located outside the United States. In addition, the emergence of Asian America as an identity in its own right has produced a sort of ethnicity-based nationalism.

By the time Asians migrated to the United States in significant numbers in the mid-nineteenth century, there had already been a long history of colonial contact

between Asia and the West, while Japan was becoming a colonial power in Korea and Taiwan. Although they differed widely, movements against colonial domination were often nationalist in nature. The United States was itself an imperial power (see **Colonialism and Postcolonialism**). After dominating its politics and economy for most of the nineteenth century, the United States annexed Hawaii in 1898, the same year it began to occupy the Philippines, taking over from the Spanish rulers who had been there since the mid-sixteenth century. The Philippines finally achieved independence in 1946 after the **World War II**, whereas Hawaii became a state in 1959.

Throughout Asia Pacific, anticolonial struggles continued throughout the twentieth century and were the subject of works by early twentieth-century writers such as H.T. Hsiang and Younghill **Kang**, both of whom also wrote about the experiences of immigrants. A myriad of legislation was passed to exclude Asians from entry into the United States based on racial categories (see **Chinese Exclusion Act**). Once in the United States, Asians were subjected to various laws that denied them civil rights; moreover, they were frequently caricatured, insulted in popular culture, and faced brutal exploitation and violent persecution (see **Racism and Asian America**).

Asian American literary texts from this period recorded the effects of anti-Asian racism and the ambiguous relationship between Asians and American society. Anonymous poems in Chinese were etched on the walls of the **Angel Island** immigration station near San Francisco to record the hardships experienced by immigrants trying to enter the United States. Writers such as Edith Maude **Eaton** (*Sui Sin Far*), Toshio **Mori**, Carlos **Bulosan**, and Bienvenido **Santos** depicted ways in which Asians were treated as perpetual foreigners. In *America Is in the Heart* (1946), Bulosan's semiautobiographical protagonist experiences the effects of American colonialism in the Philippines and racism in the United States. Throughout the text, Bulosan combines social critique with an idealistic attachment to an America whose democratic promise has yet to be fulfilled.

The internment of over 110,000 Japanese Americans during World War II was one of the most traumatic crises in Asian American history. After they had been incarcerated in concentration camps, internees were asked in 1944 whether they were willing to swear loyalty to the United States (and possibly serve in the Armed Forces) while disavowing all loyalties to Japan. These demands tore the community apart, as some Japanese Americans went on to serve in the military with great distinction while others, sometimes nicknamed "no-no boys," were incarcerated and ostracized. In his novel *No-No Boy* (1957), John **Okada** depicts the psychological pain of Ichiro, a no-no boy in postwar Seattle who faces violent rejection from other Japanese Americans, even while his mother maintains a delusional commitment to the Japanese imperial cause.

Even though the novel ends with Ichiro hoping for equality in the United States, he cannot reconcile this dream with the daily realities of racism.

Exclusionary immigration laws were gradually relaxed after World War II, but the anticommunist atmosphere of the cold war renewed demands for loyalty from Asian Americans. From the late 1940s to the 1960s, writers such as C.Y. Lee, Jade Snow Wong, Pardee Lowe, and Monica Sone produced novels and autobiographies that emphasized assimilation to American society, often by exoticizing Asian culture. After the publication of her memoir *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (1945), Wong was sent on a tour of Asia by the U.S. government to promote a more benign image of race relations in the United States.

In the late 1960s, a new generation of radical Asian American writers emerged as part of the wider Asian American movement. Because these writers embraced the newly coined term *Asian American* to advocate a panethnic identity that was neither Asian nor American, they are commonly referred to as cultural nationalists. Influenced by the civil rights movement, black nationalism, and the black arts movement, they favored the realistic depiction of Asian American communities and emphasized the pervasive effects of racism. In the landmark anthology *Aiiieeeee!* (1974), editors Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong outlined the main claims of cultural nationalism in their polemical introduction. Despite their vigilant rejection of assimilation, cultural nationalist writers also staked a strong claim to American identity. For example, both Chin and Wong wrote extensively about the **transcontinental railroad** to emphasize Chinese contributions to the building of the modern United States. In plays such as *The Chickencoop Chinaman* and *The Year of the Dragon*, Chin creates tortured protagonists who are steeped in American culture yet excluded from it.

Although cultural nationalism was an enormously influential movement, the limits of its aggressive masculinity, which often resulted in misogynist and homophobic attitudes, were soon evident. In her memoirs and novels, Maxine Hong Kingston significantly modifies cultural nationalist themes by creating strong female protagonists, imaginatively borrowing from Chinese cultural traditions, and advocating an ethics of pacifism (see *Feminism and Asia America*). Although some of her hero(ine)s are based on well-known Chinese patriots, Kingston also makes extensive use of American tropes such as the railroad to present an Asian version of American nationalism, what she calls the project of claiming America. During the 1980s and 1990s, Kingston's writings, along with those of Ruthanne Lum McCunn, Bharati Mukherjee, David Henry Hwang, Gish Jen, Chang-Rae Lee, Amy Tan, and many others were influential in shaping a multicultural understanding of American culture.

Changes to the immigration system in 1965 resulted in a more diverse and populous Asian America. A large number of Asian immigrants from a wide range of



class backgrounds came to the United States, and newer groups such as the Vietnamese and the Hmong came as refugees. While immigrant narratives that resolve cultural conflict through assimilation into American citizenship and identity continue to be published (by far the most successful example being Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*), many contemporary Asian American literary texts display different nationalist commitments.

During the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos (1965–1986), many Filipino/a Americans participated in dissident activities, and many critics of the regime were exiled to the United States. Jessica Hagedorn, who was born in the Philippines but has lived most of her life in the United States, depicts Manila under Marcos's rule in her novel *Dogeaters*. Other examples of nationalism in Asian America include anticomunist activists in the Vietnamese community, exiled Chinese dissidents, and diasporic supporters of Hindu nationalism.

In contrast to state or ethnic group-based nationalisms, the rise of a global economy since the 1960s has challenged the domination of nation-states. Transnational migration and multiple senses of national belonging are depicted by writers such as Hagedorn, Karen Tei Yamashita, Shirley Geok-lin Lim, and Monique Truong (as well as Asian Canadian authors such as Larissa Lai, Rita Wong, and Michael Ondaatje). As a cultural product, Asian American literature has been widely translated and read around the world, a development that has also broadened the ways in which writers relate to various national identities.

At the same time, recent events continue to demonstrate how Asian America still faces exclusion from American society. The campaign finance scandal of the mid-1990s revealed the extent to which Asian American participation in American politics is still regarded with suspicion. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Middle Eastern and South Asian Americans have become targets of government profiling and surveillance as part of the so-called War on Terror, and their commitment to the United States has been repeatedly called into question in the popular media. See also Asian Canadian Studies; Assimilation/Americanization; Civil Rights Movement and Asian America; Colonialism and Postcolonialism; Feminism and Asian America; Japanese American Internment; Multiculturalism and Asian America; Pan Asian Ethnicities; Racism and Asian America.

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CHRISTOPHER LEE

### ◆ NG, FAE MYENNE (1957–)

Fae Myenne Ng is a Chinese American novelist, short story writer, and creative writing teacher who is primarily known for having written the novel *Bone* (1993) and a few short stories. She is still working on her second novel. The positive impact of that novel was immediate, as the reviews were mostly favorable. Ng's great-grandfather came during the nineteenth-century California gold rush. Though he had planned to return to China, he did not. Instead, he stayed some 60 years, and he died never seeing his wife and children. Furthermore, he died never having his bones sent back to China. In an interview, Ng states that she was surrounded by Chinese bachelors and recalls attending many funerals of old men, some of whom committed suicide (Swaim 2007). They were not always of the highest character, but they were always kind to her. The novel is named after and dedicated to their lives and their bones.

Ng was born and grew up in **Chinatown** in San Francisco, where she went to Cumberland Presbyterian Chinese School. As her mother labored as a seamstress, her father worked a variety of odd jobs, including times as a merchant marine, which parallels the characters of Mah and Leon in the book. Ng, as a child, also helped to sew at home. Ng's mother was born in mainland China and then lived a year in Hong Kong before she moved to San Francisco, where she married and had two kids. Her parents only spoke Chinese at home, causing Ng not to learn English until she was four. She learned to read English because an old family friend would come by every day with the previous day's newspaper from a hotel he worked for as a janitor. Ng learned about the world as she learned to read in English from those papers.

In 1982 Ng moved to New York, attended Columbia University, and earned an MFA in 1984 by producing a thesis entitled *In Ching's Room: A Collection of Stories*. Ng married Mark Coovelis, who is also from the West Coast, Oakland. She started to publish a variety of stories in *Harper's*, *The American Voice*, *City Lights Review*, and the *Pushcart Prize Anthology*. Her stories would also be anthologized in a variety of books: *Asian American Literature: A Brief Introduction*; *Home to Stay: Asian American Women's Fiction*; *Charlie Chan Is Dead: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Fiction*; and *The Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology*.

Many of the tales became chapters in her novel *Bone*, which would take years to complete, while she worked in a multitude of jobs, such as teaching English composition. The short story "Backdaire" was published in *Harper's* in 1989 and would later become the concluding chapter of *Bone*. The relationship between men and women becomes the focus of the story. Leila, the narrator, compares and investigates the men in her mother's life and compares them to the love of her life, Mason. Leila was "born-there" in Chinatown while Mason was "born-here" outside of Chinatown. In the tale, Leon, the stepfather, a merchant sailor, travels to Melbourne, Australia, where he meets Leila's real father Lyman Foo, who has left the **Gold Mountain** of the United States for other treasures in another distant land. Lyman was a Ly(ing)man, for he promised to return but did not. Instead, he left Mah, his wife, who was pregnant in the United States. The fact that he never sent for his family reinforces the idea that the daughter was worthless because she was the wrong gender. In the end, Leila moves in with Mason. As she moves away from home, she sees the address #2-4-6 UPDAIRE, which has not been corrected and is misspelled for "up-there." She leaves behind her past, her history, her roots "Backdaire" (back-there). What is remarkable about the story is the density of information within a scarcity of words. Less is more. It would take 10 years to complete the novel.

After graduating from Columbia, Ng traveled to various countries like China and Italy and drove across the country, exploring and writing with her husband. In 1989 they returned to New York. Ng was awarded Honorable Mention in the 1989 PEN/Nelson Algren Fiction Award. Ng and Coovelis would later divorce. Interestingly, *Bone* is about the death of a sister, so is Coovelis's first novel *Gloria* (1995), a murder mystery. Mah, the mother, works in sweatshops and Leon, the father, works odd jobs that include times in the merchant marines. In one sense, the narration functions like a detective novel, opening up with the death of an individual with questions left open. The story is told in a nonchronological manner in 14 chapters. However, the novel is less about the death of one individual and more about the survival of the living members of the family trying to exist under the stressful, daily events. It is significant that Ona, the sister, died right before Chinese New Year, the most important Chinese holiday, representing a sort of rebirth and the desire for good luck. Unfortunately, the death of a family member is not a good sign. Ona was not murdered. Instead, she committed suicide.

The narrator Leila tries to uncover and piece together the reasons for her sister's suicide. In a Kafkaesque manner, we are no closer to the answer at the end of the book than we were in the first chapter. In a way Nina, the youngest daughter and the most outspoken, who seemed to have rejected the Chinese essence, would have been more likely to have her life end in such tragedy. Ona, the middle daughter, gave no clues to her road to self-destruction. The narrative is told through Leila, the oldest daughter's voice, who is the most supportive of her parents.

Ng states in an interview that one of the major characters of the novel is the setting of Chinatown, an overcrowded and overbearing city (Shaw 1993, 9). Ona jumped to her death and crushed her bones from the thirteenth floor. Ironically, she jumped toward Chinatown, from the building projects called the Peaceful Gardens at the edge of Chinatown. Her younger sister moved away to New York as a sort of exile. Ona's flight is her way of emigrating away from Chinatown as Ng explains in an interview with Angel Shaw (8).

As the story progresses it becomes more complex, especially for Leon. Leon Leong immigrated to the United States as a paper son. Leon had paid \$5,000 to gain citizenship. This parallels real life, for Ng's real father also came to the United States as a paper son for \$4,000 as she states in her essay "False Gold" (1993b, 12). An important part of being a paper son is remembering the facts of the paper father from a coaching book and being prepared to answer any questions upon arrival in the United States at **Angel Island**. In *Bone*, at one point the fake father dies, and Leon forgets a promise. Leon tries to find the gravestone of his paper father, because he was supposed to send the bones back to China as part of their deal.

Leon tries to stay home and away from the sea, so he creates a company with his friend Ong, which fails because Ong cheats Leon out of money. Leon insists that Ona quit dating Osvaldo, the son of Ong. This may be the main reason for her suicide, though we are never told this. The driving metaphors are symbolically represented by the matriarchal figure, Mah, who is a seamstress, and the patriarchal figure, Leon, who is a sailor. The mother sews the family together, and the father sails away, trying to keep his dreams afloat.

At first, we all wonder about who is guilty for causing Ona's suicide. However, by the end of the book, *Bone* becomes a tribute to the surviving pathos of its family members and an affirmation of the complexities of living. The readers are pushed into a level of symbolic depth that is rewarding. Even the word *bone* has more references than just the bones of the immigrant Chinese laborers. At one point, Leila recalls how the bones of the birds (doves) they raised as pets were sacrificed as tasteful dinners. The fabric that Mah sews contains a backing or bones in them. There is no happy ending, no epiphany, no clarity of life. The cause of Ona's suicide is not uncovered. The characters in general do not seem to grow, which may be perhaps due to the nonchronological order of the chapters. Though the narrative arrangement and style of *Bone* seem deceptively simple upon initial reading, the issues and textures weave a complexity and depth that scholars continue to examine for its richness. Readers can return to the book and pick through the bones to decipher the meanings of the tales about a family, fragmented and whole, lost and found, exiled and at home.

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WAYNE STEIN

### ◆ NG, MEI (1967–)

Mei Ng is a Chinese American novelist and a counselor for the New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project. She is best known for her novel *Eating Chinese Food Naked* (1998). Born and raised as the youngest of three children in the family in Queen's Village, New York, she now lives in Brooklyn. In 1988 Ng completed her women's studies coursework at Columbia University, and she was also a student in Brooklyn College's graduate program in fiction writing.

Ng's only novel to date, and set in the borough of Queens, New York, *Eating Chinese Food Naked* proved to be an overwhelming success. In this book, from her own unique Chinese American perspective, Ng tells a female protagonist's coming-of-age story and thus gives the audience a basic record of her own growing-up story as an ethnic minority in an American cultural community. Ng mainly focuses on the family life and relationships among the members, including the generation gap, ethnicity, sexuality, and the dynamics of Chinese American socialization into American society. The 22-year-old Ruby Lee, a young Chinese American woman who just graduated from Columbia University, goes back to stay with her parents (first-generation Chinese immigrants Franklin and Bell), her brother Van, and her sister Lily. During the stay of the summer

vacation, Ruby struggles in her relationship with her parents, with her lover, and finally with the outside world, in her efforts to negotiate her Chinese American identity and her sexuality. The Lees live in an apartment just behind the family's dark laundry. For Ruby, this is a place full of unpleasant memories. The marriage between Ruby's parents is loveless, and the couple lives in separate rooms; the cigar-smoking father prefers to stay at home and tells odd newspaper stories to her mother and the whole family. Behind the laundry, in the family's private quarters, there is no family tenderness, no communication between parents and children. In fact, as a child, Ruby was shocked to learn that American family members kiss each other. The conflict between immigrant parents and their American-born children is an inevitable thorny problem that appeared both in *Eating Chinese Food Naked* and in many other Chinese American literary pieces.

Ng's depiction of the mother-daughter relationship in her novel is unusual and somewhat distorted, though it is tense and problematic. Unlike the mother-daughter relationships found in the works of Maxine Hong Kingston or Amy Tan, the relationship between Ruby and her mother Bell is homoerotic. Compared with the poor relationship with her father, Ruby's emotion for her mother is both protective and tender. When she was six years old, she began to be in love with her mother. Unlike other girls who wanted to marry their fathers, Ruby's desire was to marry her mother and live happily together with each other. On the one hand is Ruby's strange homosexual feeling toward her mother and other women, and on the other is her heterosexual love with her boyfriend Nick. To Ruby, the act of eating Chinese food naked is always a final stage in her love-making. To some extent, Ruby's uneasiness and loneliness is soothed by her love-making with Nick. And only by means of loving and touching can Ruby calm down. Ng's novel deeply explores Ruby's sexuality. Through Ruby's two-way awakening of her sexuality, her gender identity is fully constructed.

Apart from the unambiguous concentration of the protagonist's gender identity is Ng's painstaking exploration into Ruby's ethnic identity. In fact, the construction of ethnic or cultural identity is one of the most important themes examined by Chinese American writers. Ng's construction of Ruby's new ethnic identity is the process of creating a "third space." This new identity is neither Chinese nor American but Chinese American. The Lee parents and their children represent the Chinese culture and American culture respectively. Actually, Ruby's painful negotiation with her parents can be viewed as a struggle to integrate the two cultures. Now living in her own family laundry, Ruby is no longer a regular American girl as she previously behaved on the university campus; in real life she is an ethnic minority. Ng centers her attention on Ruby's identity negotiation in relation to her family, as Ruby has been forced to deal with the problems that she tried to escape but failed. In the end, after several confrontations, Ruby is able to move out of her parents' house and accept the great influence from her Chinese family on her character and personality.

Besides exploring often-mentioned issues in **Chinese American literature** such as exploration of one's gender or ethnic identity and conflicts between generations, in *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, Ng demystifies the accepted Oriental image of Chinese Americans. Unlike the Chinese Americans who have appeared in other Chinese American literary works, for the Lees, the United States is not a promising land; they have experienced many hardships and frustrations just like other American families, and they are not the stereotyped **model minority**. Compared with Jade Snow Wong's family in *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, the Lee family is unfortunate and financially unstable. Besides, unlike Jade Snow the Fifth Chinese Daughter, Ruby and her siblings are not the most successful students. Chinese Americans in Ng's novel seem to have a long way to go to achieve the perceived status of model minority.

Ng is a keen-eyed observer and a truthful recorder of the experiences of Chinese immigrants and their American-born children. Her portrayal of various characters is highly realistic, and by means of this true-to-life characterization, Ng dissects the Chinese American family and makes it accessible to a large number of readers, including mainstream Americans.

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LI ZHANG

#### ◆ NIEH, HUALING (1925–)

Born in 1925 in Yingshan, Hubei Province, China, Nieh graduated in 1948 from the National Central University of Nanjing (present-day Nanjing University). In the early years of her life, she witnessed the Sino-Japanese War, Chinese civil wars, and the death of her father. In 1949 she moved to Taiwan with her family, where she first became a magazine editor and then taught creative writing at the National Taiwan University and Tung-hai University. She married in 1949, had two daughters, and then later divorced.

In 1963 Nieh met her future husband, the American poet Paul Engle, in Taipei. Invited by the latter, she went to work at the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa in 1964. In 1966 she proposed an international writing program to Paul Engle and the University of Iowa and was approved by the university. After some preparation, the International Writing Program (IWP) at the University of Iowa was set up in

1967, with Paul Engle as director and Nieh as deputy director. The Engles were married in 1971. In 1977 Nieh succeeded her husband as director of the IWP and was appointed professor of the Translators' Workshop at the University of Iowa in the same year. In 1979 she cochaired with Paul Engle the first "Chinese Weekend," inviting Chinese writers from different parts of the world to meet in Iowa City and discuss the future of Chinese literature. This was a breakthrough for writers from mainland China to meet colleagues from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and other countries or regions after 30 years since 1949 when the People's Republic of China was established. Nieh retired in 1988 but still serves on the IWP advisory board. During the 21 years from 1967 to 1988 when Nieh and her husband served as director, the IWP brought 30 to 40 foreign writers to Iowa City each year. All together, over 700 fiction writers, poets, playwrights, critics, and journalists from about 100 countries or regions attended the IWP; and over 80 came from mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, including the well-known Chinese poet Ai Qing, fiction writer Wang Meng, and the novelist Bai Xianyong (Pai Hsien-yung). Owing to her great contributions to the IWP, Nieh Hualing is praised as the "architect of world literature organization" ([www.xici.net/b606343/d40407382.htm](http://www.xici.net/b606343/d40407382.htm)), and was nominated together with her husband for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1976. In addition, she has received numerous other honorary titles and awards, including the Award for Distinguished Service to the Arts from the Governors of the Fifty States (1981), and awards from the Hungarian government (1989) and Poland's Ministry of Culture (1992).

Nieh Hualing began writing when she was still an undergraduate in college, and her first work "The Metamorphic Worm" was published in 1949 under the pseudonym of Yuansi. She started writing fiction in 1951. Her early works mainly describe the misfortunes and sufferings of Chinese caused by wars and are related to her personal life and experience or reflect the nostalgic feelings of the lower middle class in Taiwan that originally came from mainland China; her later works on the other hand attempt to represent the vicissitude and transformation of modern China with a profound sense of history or depict the life and emotions of Overseas Chinese. *Kudzu Vine*, her first novella, appeared in 1953 and describes the love stories of several depressed mainland Chinese characters who now live in Taiwan. In 1960 Nieh published her first novel, *Lost Golden Bell*, which established her as an important writer in Taiwan. With Nieh's hometown as the background, this work depicts the painful growth of a Chinese girl, Ling-zi, during the years of the Japanese invasion of China and exposes the wounds and trauma of war on humans and society. By describing the daily, trivial, but truthful details of women's private lives, Nieh not only expresses her deep concern for the difficult existence of Chinese women but also satirizes the then so-called grand narrative of national feelings and the male narrative of hometown experience, thus presenting a different voice from the mainstream literature in Taiwan at that time.



*Mulberry and Peach*, Nieh's masterpiece, was first published as a newspaper series in Taipei in 1976 but was later banned in Taiwan. Then its publication venue was changed to a magazine in Hong Kong. *Mulberry and Peach* describes the twisted and eventful life of a Chinese woman escaping from mainland China to Taiwan and then to the United States. Mulberry and Peach are, in fact, two names of the same person, Helen Mulberry Sang, the protagonist of the novel, and represent her two personalities and identities before and after she develops schizophrenia. As a partial result of the many stresses of living through distressful times, Mulberry, an innocent girl in the beginning, is unable to forget the terrors she has witnessed and to resolve the conflicts between her new life and her old. Consequently, she suffers from emotional and physical crises that lead to mental disorder and finally becomes the fearless, tough talking, and sexually uninhibited Peach. This schizophrenia helps to partly explain the psychological and identity problems of Mulberry as an immigrant in the United States who suffers from racial discrimination and cultural dislocation. However, the mental disorder may also be seen as an active resistance to assimilation and as a reaffirmation of her "Chineseness," and the split of her personality as the disintegration of the country.

The novel is thematically rich and structurally innovative. It deals with a wide variety of themes, from Chinese history and culture to immigrant experience, and from female existence to psychological identity. One of the important themes is that of escape. Like the author, the protagonist Mulberry also escapes from mainland China to Taiwan, and then from Taiwan to the United States. Thus the author's life and that of the protagonist seem to overlap to portray the experience of escape. Nieh Hualing once said, "I not only describe the split of the individual . . . but also the condition of humankind: different kinds of terror, different kinds of escape" (Qiu 2006). Dilemma and difficulties, past and present, mental stress, and the hardships and pains of real life constitute the main elements of her escape theme in this novel.

The organization of the novel is unique, as the story is presented in a special form of letters and diaries. The book consists of four separate but historically connected parts, each containing a letter by Peach to the U.S. Immigration Office and an excerpt from Mulberry's diary. All the letters to the Immigration Office are written in one year (1970), whereas the diary excerpts represent a distinctive period of Mulberry's life from 1945 to 1970: the years spanning the Japanese invasion of China, the communist-nationalist civil war, Taiwan's White Terror, and her immigration to the United States. The diary excerpts follow a chronological order, starting from the time when Mulberry is 16 and ending when she is 41 and has converted completely to the use of her second personality, Peach. By juxtaposing a recent letter and a distant diary, the author successfully shifts the story between past and present until the last part in which the letter and the diary excerpts unite, thus reaching the climax of the novel.

As the culmination of Nieh's literary career, *Mulberry and Peach* demonstrates two of her novelistic characteristics: strong autobiographical flair and female perspective. By adopting traditional Chinese narrative skills and modern Western techniques, this novel shows a strong sense of fable and reflects Nieh's delicate, lightly melancholic style. As a whole, the novel is an excellent source of information and entertainment for readers of different cultures. The characters, the historical and cultural themes, and the organization are all elements of the book's ability to keep the reader interested. In addition, history and present, adventure and romance, the real and the fictional are mixed to offer a rare women's perspective on the upheavals of modern China, as well as a compelling portrait of the cultural and psychological dislocation intrinsic to the immigrant experience.

Nieh Hualing is a prolific writer who has published more than 22 books and translations. Many of her works have been translated into English, Italian, Polish, and other languages. Her other works include *The Jadeite Cat*, a collection of short stories (1959); *A Small White Flower* (1963); *A Critical Biography of Shen Ts'ung-Wen* (1972); *After 30 Years: Sketches of a Returning Chinese* (1980); *Black, Black, the Most Beautiful Color* (essay collection, 1983); *Distant Mountains and Ever Flowing Water* (1985); and *Stories in the Deer Garden* (essay collection, 1996). She also coedited with Paul Engle 12 volumes of selections of world literature, including *Modern South Korean Poems*, *Modern Chinese Poems*, *Modern Russian Poems*, and *Japanese Poems after WWII*.

Nieh Hualing is still active in writing and in other literary and social activities. Her recent work *Three Lives, Three Worlds*, published in 2004, is a memoir that chronicles her eventful life and experiences in mainland China, Taiwan, and the United States. She compares the three periods of her life vividly to a tree, with its roots in mainland China, its trunk in Taiwan, and its leaves in the United States. **See also** *Assimilation/Americanization*.

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AIMIN CHENG

◆ NISEI. *See* Issei, Nisei, Sansei

◆ NISHIKAWA, LANE (1956–)

Sansei (third-generation) Japanese American playwright, producer, director, actor, and theater educator, Lane Nishikawa is primarily known for his one-man shows and solo performances, which earned him a Solo Performance Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and a National Japanese American Citizens League Ruby Yoshino Schaar Playwright Award. Born in Wahiawa, Hawaii and raised in San Diego, California, Nishikawa spent summers in Hawaii visiting his grandparents while growing up. He studied at San Francisco State University, where he met Sue Hayashi, a university counselor. She played an influential role in starting Nishikawa's career as a theater artist in the early 1970s. She introduced him to her sons, Marc and Eric, who were active in Asian American Theater Workshop, a group led by Frank **Chin**, a Chinese American playwright. This group provided and trained Asian American performers who historically lacked opportunities to land roles in traditional theater programs. The group developed plays that would advocate an accurate Asian American representation and nurtured Nishikawa and other young performers who were committed to fighting against damaging **Asian American stereotypes** and demeaning roles. In 1973 the group became Asian American Theater Company (AATC), the third professional Asian American performance company. In 1977 Nishikawa landed his first notable acting role when he performed in *Lady Is Dying*, a play coauthored by Amy Sanbo and Lonny **Kaneko** and directed by Frank Chin. Since then, he has performed in Steve Okazaki's *Tokyo Time* (1987) and *American Sons* (1998), as well as Wayne Wang's *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (1989).

Nishikawa formed a lifelong friendship with the Hayashi brothers, and the trio collaborated on many plays. Because Nishikawa could not find a meaningful role in a play early in his acting career, he started to write his own one-man play *Life in the Fast Lane* in 1980, about an audition interview. The following year, he directed and performed this play as part of AATC's New Playwright Series. In this play, Nishikawa addresses the audience as if it were a casting director who can neither pronounce nor spell Nishikawa's name. After answering imaginary questions about his backgrounds, Nishikawa performs a series of monologues and ends the play with a monologue, "I Was Born," a theatrical summary. Eventually, Eric Hayashi, the younger of the Hayashi

brothers and a lighting designer, produced the play through Sansei Productions and toured throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe, receiving enthusiastic reviews. Marc Hayashi, Eric Hayashi's older brother and an actor-director, coauthored *Once Is Never Enough* with Nishikawa and R.A. Shiomí and directed it while Nishikawa performed it at Asian American Theater Company in 1984. Nishikawa wrote another one-man show with biting wit and humor titled *I'm on a Mission from Buddha*. It is a sequel to *Life in the Fast Lane* and was directed by Eric Hayashi at San Francisco's Asian American Theater Company in 1990. In this play, Nishikawa acknowledges the audience as audience and shows how Asian American performers are barred from the movie industry, not because of their lack of talent but because of their Asian faces. *Life in the Fast Lane* and *I'm on a Mission from Buddha* make Nishikawa's trilogy of solo shows, along with *Mifune and Me* (1994). *Mifune and Me* was inspired by the Japanese actor Toshio Mifune, and Nishikawa, again, problematizes Asian American performers' professional dilemmas caused by racist casting. His plays in this trilogy consider issues facing the Asian American community, such as Asian American stereotypes, and attempt to set straight the historical records of **Japanese American internment** camps during **World War II**.

Working with Frank Chin, David Henry Hwang, Philip Kan Gotanda, Edward Sakamoto, and other influential Asian American theater artists in the 1980s and 1990s, Nishikawa helped nurture the next wave of Asian American writers, such as Cherylene Lee, Jeannie Barroga, Han Ong, Canyon Sam, and Charlie Chin. Nishikawa was an artistic director at the Asian American Theater Company from 1986 until 1994 and directed R.A. Shiomí's *Yellow Fever* (1982), David Henry Hwang's *Family Devotions* (1987), Philip Kan Gotanda's *Yankee Dawg You Die* (1990), and other plays.

Nishikawa is best known for *The Gates of Heaven* (1994), a play he coauthored with Victor Talmadge, whom he met while both were performing in the American Conservatory Theatre's *The Duchess of Malfi* in 1993. *The Gates of Heaven* portrays the 50-year relationship between a soldier in the all-nisei (second-generation Japanese American) 442nd Regimental Combat Team and a Jewish prisoner at the Dachau concentration camp in World War II. Kiyoshi "Sam" Yamamoto liberates the nearly dying prisoner Leon Ehrlich from the concentration camp, who, 10 years later, becomes a psychiatrist and American citizen. The play addresses the fact that, despite cultural misunderstanding, interracial discomfort, and ethnic mistrust, human commonalities persist between a Japanese American soldier and a Jewish Holocaust survivor. This is the only play by Nishikawa that is both staged and published, and it is anthologized in *Asian American Drama: 9 Plays from the Multiethnic Landscape*.

In the late 1990s, Nishikawa embarked on a film project to honor Japanese Americans' contributions during World War II, a project supported by a National Endowment for the Arts Millennium Grant and a Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation

Artists and Communities Grant. The result was a film trilogy, *When We Were One*, that deals with nisei soldiers of the 100th Battalion, 442nd Regiment, and Military Intelligence Service (MIS). He continued to honor Japanese immigrants in his plays such as *Gila River* (1998) and *Lone Wolves* (2000).

He has taught at San Francisco State University, the University of California at Santa Barbara, California State University at Monterey Bay, Stanford University, and the Asian American Theater Company (founded in 1973), where he served as a director from 1986 to 1994. In 1999, Nishikawa became the first artist-in-residence at the Maui Arts and Cultural Center. **See also** Issei, Nisei, Sansei.

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KYOKO AMANO

### ◆ NO-NO BOY (OKADA)

*No-No Boy* is a 1957 novel by John **Okada** about the psychological and social consequences of the **Japanese American internment** for the postwar community in Seattle and the Pacific Northwest. The novel was originally published by Charles E. Tuttle simultaneously in Rutland, Vermont, and Tokyo, Japan, but received little attention thanks mainly to the fact that neither the country of Japan, the Japanese American community, nor cold war America was yet ready to confront the painful, powerful, and nuanced messages Okada had to tell about the internment and racism in the United States. Although the first run of the novel had not sold out by the time of Okada's death, he and his family, according to his brother Frank, were proud of the work (Johns 1990). Not until after the redress movement had gotten underway and the attitudes of McCarthyism subsided was a wider audience ready to engage with the 1976 reprint edition of the novel, which was facilitated by the Combined Asian American Resources Project under the leadership of Lawson Fusao **Inada** and Frank **Chin**, who added, respectively, an introduction and an afterword to Okada's text. Since the University of Washington Press first took up reprinting the novel in 1979, *No-No Boy* has gone through several more reprints, enjoyed canonical status in Asian American literature, and is widely discussed in classrooms and critical journals.

*No-No Boy* is told from the perspective of Ichiro Yamada, a 25-year-old nisei, who was born and raised in Seattle, interned with his family during **World War II**, and imprisoned for two years for answering no to questions 27 and 28 of the so-called

loyalty questionnaire of 1943: "Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on 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 attack by foreign and domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese Emperor, or any other foreign government, power, or organization?" According to *The Asian-American Almanac*, of the approximately 21,000 nisei men who turned in the questionnaire, 4,600 answered no to these questions. Some answered negatively out of protest against a country that would imprison them without charge; some did so because question 28 seemed to entrap them by suggesting that they once harbored an allegiance to the Japanese emperor, which they now had to forswear. Others said no for more elusive reasons, which are explored in Okada's novel. Most of the "no-no boys," as they were called, were segregated from the rest of the internees and placed in the Tule Lake Relocation Center. Most of the drafted men who responded affirmatively to questions 27 and 28 served in the Armed Forces, either in units like the all-Japanese American 442nd Regimental Combat Team or the Military Intelligence Service, members of whom used their Japanese-language skills to intercept radio transmissions, interrogate prisoners, interpret, and work as undercover agents.

Remarkably, Okada—a veteran himself, having served in the Military Intelligence Service—empathically imagined the predicament of a no-no boy. Even without knowing Okada's biography, the tension between these two positions—veteran and no-no boy—is established immediately in the book's preface. While the title and plot of the novel indicate that the no-no boy Ichiro will serve as the central consciousness of the text, the preface features a conversation between two U.S. soldiers flying in a B-24 reconnaissance plane. A radar-detection specialist who is identified only as "a blond giant from Nebraska" begins a conversation with an unnamed Japanese American radio interceptor with the seemingly innocuous but almost always loaded question: "Where are you from?" (1981, x). The blond giant learns that the Japanese American's family is in an internment camp and reacts by saying that if his family were unfairly incarcerated by the U.S. government, he "wouldn't be sitting in the belly of a broken-down B-24. . . . They could kiss my ass" (xi). When asked why he is fighting, the Japanese American soldier repeats three times, "I got reasons" (xi). Hence, Okada begins by highlighting the ambiguous relationships between race, loyalty, identity, and individual motivation.

Okada's preface also introduces a technique that subsequent chapters will develop, namely, relatively brief, undeveloped snapshots of different characters who represent different reactions to and viewpoints on the war and its aftermath. The preface sketches several positions, including that of a college professor who feels guilty about the internment but lacks the conviction to protest; a drunkard who says that he always

distrusted “the sneaky Japs” (1981, vii), a prostitute who will miss her Japanese American clients; a Jewish American who empathizes with his Japanese American counterparts; a Japanese American man who decides to pass as Chinese American to escape persecution; and finally, two soldiers in the B-24. Likewise, in the course of the novel itself, we encounter Eto (a nisei who wears “army fatigue trousers” to outwardly perform his veteran identity [2]), Bull (a nisei who dates European American women and bullies no-no boys to demonstrate his “American” identity), Freddie (a no-no boy who behaves hedonistically and offers “no hope” to Ichiro [47]), Gary (a no-no boy who has gotten a job and decided to carry on quietly), and various other characters who are more like types than fully developed characters.

As the title makes clear, however, the novel focuses on the struggle of a particular no-no boy, Ichiro Yamada. His is the most realistic and nuanced character, and, for the most part, the secondary characters act as either foils or aids to his development. Okada’s protagonist returns to his erstwhile hometown only to discover that he feels out of place. African Americans now dominate parts of a neighborhood that was once the center of the Japanese American community. Almost all Japanese American veterans, including his brother, despise him for performing what in their eyes amounted to disloyalty and un-American behavior. And his parents offer him no comfort. His father, like many other issei men, was reduced in stature by the internment when the government ruined him financially and demoted him within the Japanese American community by giving power and preferential treatment to members of the nisei generation. His mother, like a few others, reacted to the internment by rejecting the United States and siding with Japan, an understandable if extreme decision given the circumstances. Issei men and women were ineligible to become naturalized citizens of the United States; most were not allowed to own land or intermarry with non-Japanese Americans; and the internment itself was an ultimate insult. The novel makes clear that everyone in the Japanese American community—no matter how they answered the loyalty questionnaire—had suffered from the internment and was searching for a way to navigate the postwar United States. Ichiro, however, is a particularly thoughtful character who interacts with all of the other characters, testing the merits and limitations of their solutions and for the most part finding that he must forge a separate path.

Many literary critics of *No-No Boy* have observed that Ichiro is on a quest. Dorothy Ritsuko McDonald argues that Ichiro, like the Japanese folktale hero Momotaro, undertakes a journey “to conquer . . . demons” not in the outside world but in his own soul (1999, 9). McDonald furthermore suggests that Ichiro is on a “search for completeness” (9), whereas Jinqi Ling describes Ichiro’s “search for answers” (1998, 369). Suzanne Arakawa describes “Ichiro’s physical and philosophical journey (1999, 845), and Fu-jen Chen traces “his journey to reestablish an identity out of fragments” (2000, 282). Floyd Cheung and Bill Peterson point out the literary allusions that

Okada uses to counterpoint Ichiro's quest. For instance, at the end of his journey when he discovers the truth about his own identity, Oedipus Rex gouges out his own eyes, but Ichiro at the very beginning of his quest reflects, "If it would have helped to gouge out his own eyes, he would have done so long ago" (1981, 3). Through this allusion, Okada indicates that Ichiro believes himself to be at the end of his journey, that Ichiro thinks that he already knows his identity: a no-no boy with no hope of fitting back into the United States and with no future.

Certainly, many secondary characters reinforce Ichiro's hopelessness and self-condemnation, but others offer alternative perspectives, if not outright opportunities to rekindle hope. Most importantly, Kenji, a nisei veteran who has lost a leg in the war, befriends Ichiro. Both travel in his Oldsmobile, while talking about the choices that they have made and the consequences that they now must endure. Emi, a nisei woman whose husband had abandoned her, offers Ichiro the opportunity for a fresh start on her "small farmhouse situated in the middle forty acres" (1981, 83). A European American engineering professor at the university where Ichiro was enrolled before the war and an engineer in Portland both offer Ichiro opportunities to take up his old ambitions and reinsert himself into a vision of normalcy, which he articulates at the beginning of chapter 3: "I will buy a home and love my family and I will walk down the street holding my son's hand and people will stop and talk with us about the weather and the ball games and the elections" (52). At every turn, however, Ichiro rejects these opportunities. At first he does so because he labors under the misapprehension that he—and not the country that had interned him—is at fault. In this regard, he functions as an unreliable narrator, as Stephen Sumida points out. Later, with the help of Kenji and Emi especially, Ichiro comes to a more complex understanding of his country's mistakes, his own choices, and his community's dynamics, but in the end his quest is not complete. The last sentence of the novel reads, "He walked along, thinking, searching, thinking and probing, and, in the darkness of the alley of the community that was a tiny bit of America, he chased that faint and elusive insinuation of promise as it continued to take shape in mind and in heart" (251).

The conclusion has been read by critics in a range of ways from transcendence (Yeh 1993, 127) to redemption (McDonald) and cautious optimism (Yogi 1996, 242) to failed return (Sato 1992, 257) and "a resolution that proves to be no resolution at all" (Ling 1998, 373). Following Ling's lead, Cheung and Peterson comment on both the paucity of identity positions for Japanese Americans in the postwar United States and the political atmosphere of the McCarthy era itself, which enforced its own binary distinction between loyal and disloyal as that between patriotic and communist. Indeed, while Okada's novel seems to offer many options for how Japanese Americans could navigate the postwar United States, and certainly



Ichiro makes a great deal of progress on his journey, the ending finds Ichiro still on his quest, “thinking, searching, thinking and probing.” The narrative continues past the last page and, in fact, is not yet written. Any solution is “faint,” “elusive,” and has yet to “take shape” (1981, 251).

However much critics disagree about the novel’s ending, the development of secondary characters, or the occasional use of nonstandard English grammar, one thing is certain: Okada’s protagonist articulates in his interior monologues some of the most poignant and prescient thoughts about racialized identity in the United States since W.E.B. Du Bois defined *double consciousness* in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) and before the Asian American movement of the 1970s. In his afterword to the novel, Frank Chin identified one of the most powerful of these interior monologues that appeared early on in the novel: “Then there came a time when I was only half Japanese because one is not born in America and raised in America and taught in America and one does not speak and swear and drink and smoke and play and fight and see and hear in America among Americans in American streets and houses without becoming American and loving it” (1981, 15–16). Okada’s narration forgoes punctuation to amplify the psychological realism of this passage. Ichiro’s series of verbs begins conventionally enough with *born* and *raised*, but then the rush of *speaking, swearing, drinking, smoking, playing, fighting, seeing, and hearing* attests to the momentum, materiality, and even inevitability involved in “becoming American.”

*No-No Boy* is in many ways a novel “ahead of its time” and its author “heralded the beginning of an authentic Japanese American Literature” (Hirabayashi 1999, 176). It treats the subject of the internment during a period when almost no one wanted to talk about it. It features the most marginalized figure of that era: the no-no boy, long before some no-no boys were recuperated as patriots after their own fashion (see Emiko Omori’s *Rabbit in the Moon*, 1999). It rejects the dominant solutions of the period, like Emi’s idea of forgiving and forgetting, Gary’s decision to work quietly and rebuild his life, and even Kenji’s suggestion that he marry outside of his race to dilute future generations’ ethnic specificity. And it describes in the 1950s much of what would be identified only after the 1970s as key aspects of Asian American identity. *No-No Boy* is, as David Palumbo-Liu has decreed, “an exemplary Asian American text” (1990, 2). See also Issei, Nisei, Sansei; Racism and Asian America.

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FLOYD CHEUNG

#### ◆ NUNEZ, SIGRID (1951–)

A Chinese Panamanian German American novelist, short story writer, essayist, and teacher, Sigrid Nunez is one of the ranks of a rising profile of writers who challenge the familiar composition of Asian American literature, pushing the boundaries of the West Coast master narrative of Asian American settlement. Born in New York City to a German mother and a Chinese Panamanian father, Nunez grew up in the Staten Island projects. She received her BA from Barnard College and her MFA from Columbia University. She has taught at Amherst College, Smith College, Columbia University, the New School, and was most recently a visiting writer at Washington University in 2006.

Nunez's works have enjoyed critical praise from the literary establishment, which has awarded her with several prestigious fellowships and awards, including, most recently in 2006, Fellow in Fiction at the New York Foundation for the Arts. Nunez's novels cover a diverse range of material from the autobiographical to the **Vietnam War**, from the documentation of a floundering modern marriage to the historical

world of the Bloomsbury Group in London. Other than her first novel, which includes exploration of her Chinese heritage, the nonethnic specific content of her remaining work challenges the norm associated with Asian American writing. For Nunez, race is but one lens through which to view the greater crisis of identity, where the protagonist has to negotiate the many personal relationships and historical circumstances to discover and construct a selfhood. A versatile writer, Nunez, whose work often obscures the divide between fact and fiction, simultaneously erases the boundaries that classify and limit her as a writer, allowing her to claim and participate in the field of a variety of literatures, including that of Asian American literature.

Nunez's debut novel, *A Feather on the Breath of God* (1995), won the **Association for Asian American Studies** Award for Best Novel of the Year. *A Feather on the Breath of God* includes many tropes identified with Asian American literature, including the emasculated male and the tale of the poverty-stricken immigrant struggling for upward mobility. However, the novel also raises the bar on the depicted experiences—the language barrier between first-generation parents and second-generation children is remade as a confusing, occluding silence ensues from both the Chinese father and the German mother who actively deny their children the inheritance of their private, cultural heritage. The first of four sections in *A Feather on the Breath of God*, “Chang” is Nunez's most widely anthologized short story and established her work as **Asian American**. Presented in *Growing Up Asian American* (as well as *Charlie Chan Is Dead*, 1993), Chang's multiracial biological makeup and his complicated journey from birth in the Americas to American citizenship explodes the typical immigrant's West Coast story, illuminating the need to further explore and evoke alternative, lesser known stories that form the reality behind Asian American history. This past is largely impenetrable to the children who have been denied access to their parents' history, which needs to be imagined for survival.

Nunez's *A Feather on the Breath of God* is a partial autobiography that blurs the line between memoir and fiction and challenges the validity of writing recollections as truth in traditional biographical accounts. Crediting Susan Sontag and Elizabeth Hardwick as influences in her experimentation in hybrid genres, Nunez has created in the book a fusion of fiction and nonfiction, of novel and short story. Here, Nunez employs the short story cycle to chronicle a search for love and a purposeful role in life. Together, this series of interconnected stories explore the complexities of reconciling ethnic and racial influences with the more general challenge of surviving the impact of a dysfunctional family.

Nunez's next work is the novel *Naked Sleeper* (1996), a stylistically traditional work of contemporary fiction that documents a woman's marital and life crisis. A teacher and writer in search of her estranged artist father's true story, Nona seemingly throws away a devoted husband for a chance exploration with a man she does not fully respect; a situation which echoes the self-destructive inner rebellion and eventual self-discovery

displayed by the narrator of *A Feather on the Breath of God*. Her following novel is an innovatively told account of the lives of Leonard and Virginia Woolf. In *Mitz: The Marmoset of Bloomsbury* (1998), Nunez taps into a variety of nonfiction sources, including diaries, memoirs, and letters, ably recreating the world of the Bloomsbury group. Nunez employs the device of Mitz, the Woolfs's pet monkey, through whose eyes and antics we see the fading of an era. *Mitz* won Nunez the Richard and Hinda Rosenthal Foundation Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

In her fourth novel, Nunez again explores the themes of truth, memory, silence, and history in the creation of a nation's story. *For Rouenna* (2001) is an atypical **Vietnam War** novel that helps fill in the gap of knowledge regarding the women's experience in the conflict. The novel opens with a newly published author rejecting a request from Rouenna Zycinski, a childhood friend from her housing project days, to collaborate to tell the latter's story as a combat nurse in Vietnam. It is only after Rouenna kills herself that the narrator seeks redemption in a self-illuminating search to reclaim Rouenna's life story. *Rouenna* is a reflection on the inability of some veterans to overcome the experience of war where life is lived so passionately and purposefully over a short time. The novel is a portrayal of a broken friendship and the subsequent redeeming act of narration that ironically indicts the author and reader of shameful neglect and speaks of both personal and national callousness in dealing with the unsung heroes of war and everyday life.

In her fifth novel, *The Last of Her Kind* (2006), Nunez proffers two women from seemingly opposite social spheres in life, faced with the complex ethos of the United States in the politically and socially volatile 1960s and 1970s. It is a retrospective telling of the breakdown of a friendship, its loss carefully agonized over by the narrator, Georgette George. The object of Georgette's obsession is the charismatic Ann Drayton, her college mate who disdains her wealth, whiteness, and privileged heritage and who is imprisoned for murdering a policeman. The friendship that momentarily bridges the gap between Georgette's working-class world and Ann's presumptuous plenty highlights how issues of selfhood are tied up with the greater political and social fabric of the changing nation: the heart of this retrospective dissection of the recent past remains entrenched in the human relationship.

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## O



### ◆ *OBASAN* (KOGAWA)

*Obasan* was written by Joy Kogawa and is an autobiographic novel that records a Japanese Canadian female's childhood, adolescence, and womanhood as a minority during and after the internment in **World War II**, which makes it the first novel to trace the internment and dispersal of 20,000 Japanese Canadians from the West Coast during World War II. It is a novel with meaningful content, rich themes, and skillful writing techniques.

Joy Kogawa is known as a second-generation Japanese Canadian poet, novelist, and social activist. She was born on June 6, 1935, to Gordon Gorchi Nakayama, an Anglican minister, and Lois, a kindergarten teacher. She lived with her parents and other family members in Marpole, Vancouver, until 1942, after the Japanese air force attacked **Pearl Harbor**, when tens of thousands of Japanese Canadians were ordered to move to Slocan, British Columbia. Kogawa attended elementary school in the internment camp in Slocan. In 1945 the Nakayama family was required to relocate to Coaldale, Alberta, where they worked as field laborers and Kogawa graduated high school. After graduation from the University of Alberta, she became a teacher in an elementary school in Coaldale. In 1955 she studied music at the Royal Conservatory of Music, Toronto; subsequently she studied at the Anglican Women's Training College and the University of Saskatchewan. Joy Kogawa moved to Vancouver in 1956 and married David Kogawa there in 1957, and they had two children. In 1968 the Kogawas divorced. She started to write poems in the 1960s. She published several collections of poetry, including *The Splintered Moon* in 1967, *A Choice of Dreams* in 1974, *Jericho Road* in 1977, *Women in the Woods* in 1985, and a book-length poem,

*A Song of Lilith*, in 2001. Her position as a novelist was established with the publishing of *Obasan* in 1981. Later, she published four more novels, namely *Ushinawareta*, the Japanese version of *Obasan* for children; *Naomi's Road*, the children's version of *Obasan*; *Itsuka*, the sequel to *Obasan*; and *The Rain Ascends*. Joy Kogawa is also a social activist. From 1983 to 1985 she worked for the National Association of Japanese Canadians, and later she campaigned for official apology and authorized redress to Japanese Canadians for unfair treatment during and after World War II, especially in the concentration camp. As an ethnic writer, Joy Kogawa reflects her life experiences in Canada.

*Obasan* is Kogawa's first and most important novel. The narrator, Naomi Nakane, is a 35-year-old schoolteacher. She receives news that her uncle has died in the hospital in Granton, so she goes back and tries to get information about her mother, who left Canada for Japan when she was five. Her *Obasan* gives her a parcel that includes Aunt Emily's journals and papers that recorded the experiences of Japanese Canadians in World War II. These documents arouse long-buried memories for Naomi. In her childhood, Naomi was shy and quiet, and she led a peaceful life in British Columbia under the protection of her mother. Her mother was the source of her sense of security and there was no secret between them. However, when Naomi was five, she encountered the sexual abuse of Old Man Gower, which she dared not to tell her mother. This broke the trust between mother and daughter, and young Naomi took it as a betrayal against her mother. Coincidentally, her mother accompanied her grandmother to Japan soon after this incident and never came back. Naomi believed that her betrayal deprived her of the love of her mother. After the Pearl Harbor bombing in 1942, Naomi's family, like most Japanese Canadian families, was sent to Slocan, where life was very difficult. The Japanese Canadians, influenced by the Oriental culture, bore the suffering in silence. Having experienced the departure of her mother and the separation of her family, Naomi became a silent child who seldom communicated with others. Japanese Canadians grew crops and vegetables, built ships, and sent children to school while maintaining the Japanese way of life. This lasted until the end of World War II, when the Canadian government claimed that Japanese Canadians could choose either to be relocated or to be sent back to Japan. In fact there was only one choice for them. Naomi's family was ordered to move to Alberta in the west of Canada, where conditions were even worse. It was only in 1949 that Japanese Canadians were allowed to go back to the Pacific Coast. However, Naomi, together with her *Obasan* and uncle, stayed at Granton, Alberta. During the years in the concentration camp, little was said about Naomi's mother, and Uncle, *Obasan*, and Aunt Emily mentioned nothing of her after she left Canada. The family did not receive news of her mother's death until 1954.

*Obasan* and Aunt Emily were two women of great importance to the growth of Naomi. But the two were quite different. *Obasan* is silent; she bears on her shoulders the

burdens of the family, just like most Japanese women. Aunt Emily was a word warrior who believed everything should be articulated, and only in this way could Japanese Canadians change their social position and lives. It was under the influence of the traditional Japanese culture, represented by Obasan, and the Western culture, embodied by Aunt Emily, that Naomi gradually grew up. Not until 1972, when Uncle died, did Naomi learn the truth about her mother's departure. Soon after her mother went to Japan, the United States took revenge on Japan for Pearl Harbor. She was seriously injured in the bombing and died later. To protect the feelings of the young girl, family members did not tell Naomi the truth. After she recalls the painful past and learns the truth, Naomi goes to the coulee near Granton to remember her mother, and finally summons the courage to write all that happened to Japanese Canadians during World War II.

*Obasan* is a critically acclaimed novel in Asian American literature. Since its publication in 1981, it has won many awards, including First Novel Award by Books in Canada, Book of the Year Award by Canadian Authors Association, Best Paperback Fiction Award by Periodical Distributors of Canada, and the American Book Award by the Before Columbus Foundation, among others. The success of *Obasan* has much to do with its themes, which cover silence and articulation, the dilemma of minorities, female identity issues, and the reiteration of history.

Since *Obasan* is based in both Japanese and Western culture, it is little wonder that it reflects the Eastern concept of silence and the Western value of articulation. A comprehensive interpretation of the silence is of great importance in understanding the novel. The silence in *Obasan* includes that which cannot speak and that which will not speak. The former means that under the white-dominated mainstream culture minorities like Japanese Canadians could only keep silent about racial discrimination and injustice, because there was no place to redress the injustice and to right the wrongs. Therefore, keeping the silence, turning it into an invisible power, and waiting for the right time to break it is a strategy for minorities to deal with such issues. The reason for keeping silence is that the past is so painful that one would rather bury it with silence than reveal the truth to the public. To the *issei*, silence is more powerful than speech; honor and dignity is expressed through silence, and silence sometimes can convey more of their intention than language. Thus, the silence in *Obasan* should not be regarded as completely negative. Japanese Canadian women like Obasan suffered from injustice and pain in silence, bore their life's burdens in silence, and protected their offspring in silence. For the *nisei* like Naomi, they not only bury the past in silence but, more importantly, they search and question in silence, and, at the same time, they are empowered in silence. At last, Naomi breaks out of silence, and the articulation is so powerful that it shakes the whole country, and even the world.

The dilemma of minorities between the two worlds is reflected in *Obasan*. Japanese Canadians, especially *nisei* and *sansei*, were born in Canada with citizenship and were



educated in Canada; they had accepted the Western culture and values and regarded themselves as Canadians. However, the white-dominant mainstream society did not accept their assimilation completely because of their race and color and continued to marginalize them. While Japanese Canadians have been influenced by their parents, they still are estranged from their Japanese cultural heritage, which has been devalued by the mainstream society, and they are therefore caught in a dilemma. However, the clash of the two cultures sometimes causes them to identify with the Japanese culture, which, like the traditional Japanese foods sushi and sticky rice balls, connects them in the most difficult times, and they finally integrate the two cultures.

Construction of female identity is also reflected in *Obasan*. The mother's departure without a word greatly affects Naomi, rendering her into total silence, causing her to blame herself for betraying her mother, and traumatizing her psychologically in the process of growing and in her efforts to construct her identity. Though after Naomi's mother leaves for Japan Obasan and Aunt Emily fulfill the role of a mother, Naomi still misses her mother and wonders why she does not return. Only after Naomi learns about the truth of her mother's disappearance can she feel peace and find the lost part of her life. During the years of her mother's absence, Obasan and Aunt Emily nurture her and, despite their different characters, the two aunts positively influence Naomi's formation of identity. Obasan's silence, partly reflecting the Japanese culture, teaches Naomi to think and act silently; Aunt Emily's articulation, symbolizing the Western culture, enables Naomi to speak out against the oppressed silence, right the wrongs, and fight for her rights. Naomi integrates the elements of two cultures and establishes her own unique identity as a Japanese Canadian female.

Gender issue is examined in the novel as well. Since childhood, Naomi's brother Stephen received more musical education and was encouraged to establish fame, whereas Naomi, who was equally loved by the family, spent more time at home, accompanying Grandma and Obasan. Even in the concentration camp, where life was miserable, the condition for men was better than that for women. However, the Japanese Canadian men and women joined their efforts to establish a new homeland, and they dealt with the problems between the two genders in silence.

*Obasan* is a historical story, reflecting the history of the Japanese Canadians' experiences during and after the Second World War through the events of one family. It should be noted that Kogawa adopted a plethora of narrative techniques to reproduce history in her novel. The book is viewed as a historiographic metafiction, that is, a fiction based on history but not confined to history. The narrative techniques are significant and several strategies are used, including flashback, interposed narration, stream of consciousness, quotations from documents, change of time, and so on, to provide coherence and structure to the novel. These techniques give the novel a sense of mystery: everything seems to be suspended and the development of events is not always

immediately clear, but there seems to be something ahead that leads the reader to go on searching. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization; Issei, Nisei, Sansei; Japanese American Internment.

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LI ZHANG

◆ OKADA, JOHN (1923–1971)

John Okada is a Japanese American novelist, Air Force sergeant, librarian, and technical writer. Okada is known as the author of *No-No Boy* (1957), a pioneering and emotionally powerful novel about the social and psychological consequences of the internment, not only for Japanese Americans but also for the broader community in Seattle and the Pacific Northwest. While Okada had served in the U.S. military, *No-No Boy* follows a protagonist who had answered no to the government's so-called loyalty questions 27 and 28, regarding his willingness to serve in the Armed Forces and his willingness to pledge exclusive allegiance to the United States. Besides imagining the psychological condition of one of the most unpopular Japanese American subjectivities of the postwar era, the novel dared to speak out about the internment during a period when most members of the Japanese American community chose to remain silent, practicing instead a kind of quiet dignity, or *gaman*. The Asian American movement and the redress movement, however, brought renewed attention to both Asian American identity and the internment. Consequently, although Okada's efforts were largely ignored during his lifetime, he and his novel were recovered and lauded as pioneers just after his death.

Born in 1923, John Okada was a second-generation Japanese American, or nisei, and the oldest biological son of his first-generation, or issei, parents, who had emigrated from Hiroshima around 1914 and who had leased and managed a boarding hotel in the Pioneer Square area of Seattle. Okada attended Bailey Gatzert Elementary School

and Broadway High School, and he started at the University of Washington in 1941. After the Japanese attack on **Pearl Harbor**, federal and military officials declared the West Coast of the United States a potential war zone and ordered the “evacuation” of Japanese Americans into the interior of the country. More than 120,000 Japanese Americans—two-thirds of whom were U.S. citizens—were subjected to this treatment. Okada’s father was picked up by the FBI and sent to a Justice Department detention center at Fort Missoula, Montana; the rest of his family was incarcerated at the Minidoka Relocation Center in Idaho. According to his brother Frank, Okada avoided internment because he was living and perhaps studying in Lincoln, Nebraska (i.e., outside of the Western Defense Command) when Executive Order 9066 was issued (Johns 1990).

Possessing both serviceable Japanese and fluent English language skills, Okada volunteered to work as an interpreter for the U.S. Air Force. During **World War II**, he flew over the Pacific theater, listening to and translating Japanese radio transmissions. In the immediate aftermath of the war, he served as an interpreter on the ground. When he was discharged, Okada returned to the University of Washington and paid for his education under the provisions of the G.I. Bill. In his first semester back, Okada took an introductory course in fiction, as well as courses in dramatic and narrative composition. Clearly combining a love for literature and a passion for writing, he completed four courses during the summer session of 1946: narrative writing, major English novels, Shakespeare, and late nineteenth-century English literature. In his senior year, Okada took more courses in classic and contemporary English and American literature, as well as two courses in advanced short story writing (Edwards 2000). After graduating with a BA in English and library science from the University of Washington in 1947, Okada went on to complete an MA in English at the Teachers’ College at Columbia University in 1949. He then served as a librarian in Seattle and Detroit before working as a technical writer in Detroit and Los Angeles.

Okada wrote most of *No-No Boy* in Detroit around 1953 and 1954. According to his brother Frank, Okada could not have written it while surrounded by the Japanese American community in Seattle, needing instead to isolate himself (Johns 1990). *No-No Boy* came out in 1957 and received a tepid response, but Okada and his immediate and extended families were proud of the publication. Okada apparently started to research and draft a second novel about the issei generation but never finished, focusing on his family and other work instead. After he died in 1971 of a heart attack, his wife, Dorothy, apparently offered his papers, including this partially completed second novel, to the UCLA Japanese American Research Project. Unfortunately, UCLA rejected the papers, whereupon Dorothy burned them. This flabbergasted Frank Chin, who had helped to have *No-No Boy* reprinted by the University of Washington Press and sought more work by Okada, but Chin does not note that, at the time, the UCLA

Japanese American Research Project only accepted materials in Japanese (Johns). In any case, Okada's reputation rests completely on his first novel.

*No-No Boy* was published by Charles E. Tuttle simultaneously in Rutland, Vermont, and Tokyo, Japan. M. Kuwata designed the parchment-colored cover, which featured the image of a black-haired young man with his face buried in his hands; stylized barbed wires, printed in red ink, crisscrossed this image. At the time of Okada's death, the first run of 1,500 copies had not sold out. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Japanese American community largely had tried to distance itself from memories of the internment. For instance, Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, coauthor of *Farewell to Manzanar* and a former internee, recalled that in her family such memories were "too painful to call out into the open" (1973, 187). The members of the Combined Asian American Resources Project, however, championed the novel, calling it both "beautiful and courageous" (Inada 1976, vi).

Frank Chin rightly noted, "Back in 1957 John said things Asian Americans are afraid to think, much less say today. Things that every yellow feels" (1976, 254). Chin also correctly identified one of the greatest strengths of Okada's novel: its interior monologues. While the novel's language, plot, and characterization have been found wanting by some critics, its interior monologues, which feature the protagonist's agonizing struggles with his identity, have compelled many readers. When the protagonist, Ichiro, reflects on the fact that, while his mother raised him to be Japanese, he inevitably had grown up to be American, a key interior monologue reads, "One is not born in America and raised in America and taught in America and one does not speak and swear and drink and smoke and play and fight and see and hear in America among Americans in American streets and houses without becoming American and loving it" (Okada 1976, 15–16). Okada's lack of punctuation may have struck some critics as nonstandard, but clearly these words run into each other without pause to reflect the sense that these thoughts run through Ichiro's mind one into the next without pause. The verbs *born* and *raised*—conventional enough—gain momentum and urgency from the rush of the more specific verbs that follow. Yet when faced with the unfair, binary questions posed by the U.S. government in its loyalty questionnaire, Ichiro did not have the option to answer that he was both Japanese and American. For whatever reason—perhaps out of a youthful, maternal affection—he wavered and answered in a way that the government found negative.

The novel opens with his return to Seattle after spending two years in internment camp and two years in prison. *No-No Boy* then follows Ichiro as he agonizes over his decision to say no-no and his highly qualified, if not failed, attempts to rejoin society. It is important to note that Ichiro had not consciously resisted the draft or answered no-no out of a conscientious objector's sense of principle. The novel makes it clear that Ichiro was young and had made a snap decision, which then haunted him.

Of course, in hindsight we can count draft resisters and some no-no boys as patriotic in their own way, having stood up to an unfair and contradictory government, one that would both incarcerate citizens without charge and call upon them to fight; but Ichiro did not necessarily act out of a sense of patriotism. The novel remains ambiguous about Ichiro's motive, as well as his future. In the relatively short time span of the novel, Ichiro returns to find Seattle a changed city, his father a nearly broken man, his mother a woman possessed of the notion that Japan had won the war and would send a ship for her any day, and his prewar friends a group divided by their postwar status as either veterans or no-no boys.

Interestingly, Okada also depicts non-Japanese Americans and their reactions to the internment. African Americans have taken over some parts of the former Japanese American-dominated sections of Seattle. Despite also being subjected to racism in the United States, these characters treat Ichiro as a foreigner, taunting him with statements like "Go back to Tokyo, boy" (Okada 1976, 5). Okada's narrator qualifies this encounter by calling this treatment "Persecution in the drawl of the persecuted" (5). In fact, both African Americans and Japanese Americans have been discriminated against in the United States, but at this point, neither group has figured out yet how to see past their superficial differences and build a meaningful alliance. Okada also depicts Ichiro's encounters with a European American professor, an engineer, and a man at a bar. All three offer Ichiro ways to rejoin dominant American society, but Ichiro declines. On the one hand, he is simply too depressed and counts himself unworthy of such seemingly generous treatment; in short, Ichiro has internalized the racism inherent in the internment. On the other hand, all of these European American characters offer Ichiro refuge partly out of their own guilt about having tacitly allowed the internment to occur in the first place. Ichiro cannot accept this kind of charity, and in the end, after enjoying rewarding interactions with a veteran, Kenji, and his friend, Emi, and witnessing violence between a fellow no-no boy, Freddie, and an initially less sympathetic veteran, Bull, Ichiro leaves town to forge a new, hopeful, but vaguely defined path.

Critics have struggled for years over the politics and ultimate message of *No-No Boy*. Responses have ranged from hopeful and inspiring to hopeless and depressing. Jinqi Ling is correct in pointing out the novel's ambiguity, and Floyd Cheung and Bill Peterson agree, focusing on the novel's openness at the end. In 1957 no nuanced, completely satisfying script for Japanese American identity existed. The cold war atmosphere of the period reinforced the same kind of binaries (democratic/communist and American/un-American) that falsely warranted the internment (loyal/disloyal and American/Japanese). No both/and construction of Japanese American had been fully imagined yet. Through his novel, Okada dramatized this reality, described some of its psychological consequences for Japanese Americans, and analyzed the stock responses of non-Japanese Americans of the time. John Okada died in Los Angeles more than

20 years before the racially charged riots that rocked that city following the Rodney King verdicts of 1992. Persecutions certainly were enacted by one abject group upon another. In spite of the Asian American movement, the redress movement, and the civil rights movement, as a nation we have yet to answer all of the questions that Okada raised. **See also** Civil Rights Movement and Asian America; Issei, Nisei, Sansei; Japanese American Internment; Racism and Asian America.

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FLOYD CHEUNG

#### ◆ OKITA, DWIGHT (1958–)

Japanese American poet, playwright, and writer of fiction, Dwight Holden Okita, born in Chicago to nisei parents, has drawn on the experience of his parents' generation for his best known work. He also uses his own personal experience in his work, writing comfortably and openly about being gay and **Asian American**.

Okita has published one collection of poems, *Crossing with the Light* (1992), which was nominated for Best Asian American Literature Book of 1993. The poems from that volume have been widely reprinted, especially "In Response to Executive Order 9066: All Americans of Japanese Descent Must Report to Relocation Centers" and "Notes for a Poem on Being Asian American."

Okita has written four successful stage plays. *Salad Bowl Dance* (1993), about Japanese Americans who came to Chicago after **World War II**, was commissioned and

produced by the Chicago Historical Society. Okita collaborated with Anne V. McGravie, Nicholas A. Patricca, and David Zak on *Radiance of a Thousand Suns: The Hiroshima Project, A Drama with Music*. It was produced by Bailiwick Repertory in the summer of 1995 and won the Joseph Jefferson Citation for Outstanding New Work in Chicago that year. *Richard Speck*, a play about the Chicago mass murderer, was commissioned and produced by the American Blues Theater (now American Theater Company) for its 1991 series *Monsters: Glimpses of Urban Lunacy*. It was published in *Yellow Light: The Flowering of Asian American Arts* (1999). *The Rainy Season* is about a romance between two men, one Japanese American, the other Brazilian. It was initially produced by Chicago Dramatists in 1993 and published in *Asian American Drama: 9 Plays from the Multiethnic Landscape* (2000).

Okita earned a bachelor's degree in creative writing from the University of Illinois at Chicago, where he studied with John Frederick Nims. He credits Nims with teaching him to pack a poem with images. Okita was awarded an Illinois Arts Council Fellowship for Poetry in 1988. In recent years Okita has moved into writing fiction, attending the Iowa Summer Writing Workshop in 2006. One of his short stories, "The Lulu Chronicles," was nominated by the Guild Complex for its 2006 Fiction Prize.

Okita has for many years dabbled in nontraditional presentations of his work. His 1988 poetry video *Crossing with the Light* received the Chicago Access Network Award. He maintains a Web site, [dwrightland.homestead.com](http://dwrightland.homestead.com), where he posts drafts of new work and information that students frequently want to know about his poems. Currently he is also posting micromovies on his Web site. In 1995 he read his poem "The Farewell Samba" on the first episode of National Public Radio's *This American Life*. For the series *Chicago Matters: Examining Health*, broadcast on public radio station WBEZ, Okita read a personal essay on his battle with depression. Two of his poems have found venues in public transportation. His poem "Letters I Never Wrote" was printed on Chicago Transit Authority bus and train cards in a citywide public art project. In San Francisco, his poem "Crossing with the Light" can be found engraved on a bronze plaque at a Folsom Street train platform along the Embarcadero.

Okita has had some rather unconventional life experiences. He was briefly a ballroom dance instructor for a nationally known dance studio. The experience provided the inspiration for "The Farewell Samba." A photo of Okita dressed as a chef appeared on thousands of Kellogg's Corn Flakes boxes. This happened during the time he was signed with a talent agency and went on casting calls for ethnic models. He came close to missing the cereal box job, though, because the person assigned to call him back never did. Instead, Okita called to find out who got the job, only to learn that he was the lucky one. He has worked for several years as the manager of a nonprofit agency that matches volunteers with organizations that need help.

Okita started writing poems in first grade, adding a poem at the end of his compositions because he did not think the compositions were very good. His teacher began grading the poems instead of the compositions, encouraging the young poet. Okita's creative writing teacher in high school, Mrs. Diane Korhonen, required him to keep a journal. He found the practice helpful and has kept a journal ever since.

Okita is best known for "In Response to Executive Order 9066: All Americans of Japanese Descent Must Report to Relocation Centers," a poem that has been reprinted countless times. It has appeared in numerous high school and college textbooks and poetry anthologies as well as *Celebrate America in Poetry and Art*, copublished by the Smithsonian Institution and Hyperion Paperbacks for Children (1994). Written in the voice of a Japanese American girl who must leave her school to go to an internment camp in 1942, the poem is frequently taught in high school history and English classes. Okita based the poem on the experience of his mother, Patsy Takeyo Okita, who at 14 was sent with her family to an internment camp in Jerome, Arkansas, where she remained for four years. Okita says his mother has never talked much about the camp or the treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II, but, when he asked questions while writing the poem, she answered with whatever she could remember. Okita's father, like other young Japanese American men in the mainland United States at the beginning of World War II, was allowed to avoid the internment camps by volunteering for combat. Okita says his father, Fred Yoshio Okita, never talked about his war experience, but Okita has learned that his father served in the 442nd Regimental Combat Battalion, the "Go for Broke" unit of Japanese Americans, and was wounded in combat. Okita says he wrote "9066" out of outrage for his parents, whose generation was essentially voiceless.

In another of Okita's well-known works, "Notes for a Poem on Being Asian American," an Asian American is confronted by a man who claims to have been on the plane that bombed Hiroshima. Sensing that the man wants to be forgiven, the poem's speaker says, "It must have been a very difficult decision to do what you did," but he believes that the man must forgive himself. Another incident in that poem has the speaker being asked by an Iranian cabdriver if it is possible to tell the difference between someone who is Japanese and someone who is Chinese.

On his official Web site Okita discusses the writing of this poem, pointing out that it deals not only with the long-lasting aftereffects of World War II but also with the propensity to separate rather than unite. As a Buddhist, Okita is, as he says in the poem, more interested in finding "the similarities between people than the differences." He concludes by telling the cabdriver, "I can barely tell the difference between you and me." Both of these encounters actually happened to Okita, and he says the poem is a fairly accurate account of them.



Okita's reaction to these incidents is indicative of the forthright, nonconfrontational self he has exhibited since childhood. One day, a younger white child in the neighborhood teased Okita about being Asian. Instead of running away or challenging the boy, the young Okita walked up to him and started a conversation about what school he went to and what teachers he had. This was to show the boy how much the two of them had in common, a tactic Okita later used in the incidents that found their way into a poem.

Brought up as a Christian, Okita joined the Soka Gakkai International sect of Buddhism as a young adult. He became interested in SGI after two chance encounters within a matter of days with strangers who separately talked to him about SGI Buddhism. With Buddhism, he says, religion finally makes sense to him. He particularly likes the Buddhist law of karma, which says that all actions have consequences. This makes each individual responsible for his or her own actions, he believes. Okita says that as a Buddhist, he cannot blame his ethnicity, his sexual orientation, or other people for what happens to him. He alone is responsible, and he likes that. Karma has brought him to where he is, he believes, and now he must discover how to create something valuable from that. In his work and in his life, Okita acknowledges the negative, but he always seeks some redeeming value. Along with a belief in karma, Okita holds a strong belief in reincarnation. Admitting that he cannot prove that reincarnation is a reality, he nonetheless accepts it. A central part of SGI Buddhist practice is the chanting of *Nam Myoho Renge Kyo*, which SGI Buddhists believe helps them to be attuned to the fundamental rhythm of life and the universe. Okita compares chanting to exercise, saying he knows it is good for him. When he is about to begin a new project, Okita chants for the wisdom to know what to write about and for the courage to act on that wisdom. **See also** Issei, Nisei, Sansei.

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### ◆ ONDAATJE, MICHAEL (1943–)

Born in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) on September 12, 1943, Philip Michael Ondaatje is known as a Sri Lankan Canadian poet, editor, documentary filmmaker, and novelist. He has been referred to as the “Ceylonese midnight’s child of 1943,” an allusion to the significant postcolonial novel *Midnight’s Children* (1981) by Salman Rushdie (MacIntyre 1985, 316). The connection between Sri Lanka and India rests in their positions as colonies of the British Empire until both countries were granted independence in 1948. A prolific writer of several collections of poetry and novels, Ondaatje is best known for his novel *The English Patient* (1992), which screenplay writer and director Anthony Minghella and producer Saul Zaentz adapted to the film screen in 1996.

Ondaatje’s genealogy traces to a Burgher family, the local descendents of the previous Dutch empire. More specifically, the Burghers stem from various colonial powers: the Dutch, the Tamils and Sinhalese, and the Portuguese (MacIntyre 1985, 315). Unlike the Indian midnight’s children, Ondaatje left colonial Ceylon, first moving to England with his divorced mother at age 11 in 1954 and relocating to Canada in 1962, where he became a Canadian citizen. He studied at Bishop’s College School and Bishop’s University in Quebec, and he later transferred to the University of Toronto, where he received his bachelor’s degree. He received his master’s degree from Queen’s University in Ontario. He has taught at the University of Western Ontario, York University, and Glendon College (Solecki 1985, 8).

Ondaatje began his 40-year literary career with *The Dainty Monsters*, his first volume of poems published in 1967. He published several poetry anthologies that include *The Man with Seven Toes* (1969), *Rat Jelly* (1973), *There’s a Trick with a Knife I’m Learning to Do* (1979), *Secular Love* (1984), and *Cinnamon Peeler* (1991). His three films include *Sons of Captain Poetry* (1970) on fellow poet bpNichol, *Carry on Crime and Punishment* (1972), a five-minute silent comedy modeled on the chase-film genre, and *The Clinton Special: A Film about the Farm Show* (1974) on a collaborative theater experience with Paul Thompson’s Theatre Passe Muraille (Testa 1994, 154). Almost 15 years later, he returned to film, writing but not directing or producing, with *Love Clinic* (1990), a 20-minute short feature with dialogue, a storyline, and a music sequence in the final credits (Finkle 1994, 167). Ondaatje’s *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* (1970) crosses genres, such as poetry, photography, and prose, though it has been categorized as fiction or literature. *Coming through Slaughter*, published in 1976, marks Ondaatje’s debut as a novelist, which he followed with his memoir, *Running in the Family* (1982) and *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987), often considered a prequel to *The English Patient* (1992) because of the appearance of two characters Hana and Caravaggio. Thus far, *Anil’s Ghost* (2000) and *Divisadero* (2007) round out Ondaatje’s novels. The visual quality of Ondaatje’s prose, as Solecki points out, resembles

“a person’s portraits taken at long intervals” (1985, 333). The overlapping timelines of Ondaatje’s oeuvre in the past 40 years—across poetry, film, and fiction—explain, in part, the blurring of styles and textures of each genre with one another.

Perhaps another element shaping Ondaatje’s aesthetics lies in his geographical migrations from Ceylon and London to Canada, and in his travels a diasporic imagination becomes manifest in his works. This diasporic imagination grounds itself in the particular colonial predicament of Ceylon, as the colonized, and London, as the colonizer. His relocation to North America strongly suggests a profound ambivalence of time and place in spite of his eventual Canadian citizenship. The indeterminacy of identity and geography as well as history and memory becomes reflected in the characters that Ondaatje creates and the situations that circumscribe them. As J.E. Chamberlin observes, “Canada offers Ondaatje a geography, but no inheritance; Sri Lanka offers him a family history, but no tradition, no way of passing things on; the English language offers him both an inheritance and a history, but no time and place” (1985, 41). In these regards, Ondaatje affirms the sense of irresolution that underscores the convergence between a postcolonial and a postmodern sensibility.

First known as a poet, Ondaatje has often been referred to as the literary descendent of British modernist poet W.B. Yeats and American poet Wallace Stevens because his early poems reflect both the poetic conceits of and aesthetic allegiances to the symbolism of British modernism. Eventually, Ondaatje’s aesthetic extends this sensibility, and his works exhibit the techniques and methods that predominantly belong to the Canadian avant-garde, an association initiated through his involvement, since the 1960s, with Coach House Press, as an editor. As an independent press located in the middle of Toronto’s university district, Coach House Press, as George Bowering observes, is “the Toronto arm of the West Coast movement” (1985, 61). The development of Canadian verse parallels the development of Ondaatje’s writing since Coach House Press has published and printed most of his works (61). Because of this correlation, he reflects the British aesthetic less than a burgeoning North American aesthetic, one invested in poetic possibilities, or as Douglas Barbour suggests, “the New American Poetry and Poetics” (1994, 107).

Embodying a postmodern aesthetic, Ondaatje’s language conveys layers of the visual and the poetic as well as the mythical and factual. In reference to Ondaatje’s poetry collection *The Man with Seven Toes*, Sam Solecki argues that Ondaatje also provides a foundation upon which these layers may reside: “Contrasts and comparisons are established between individual characters, events and settings otherwise related only on the basis of a tenuous narrative line. But the structure remains deliberately indefinite and avoids becoming a constricting grid” (1985, 139). However, this description also aptly and cumulatively reflects the oeuvre of his work. This malleability of structure allows Ondaatje to construct a postmodern pastiche

of different genres that, according to Dennis Lee, “Ondaatje seems to have invented” (1985, 166).

One of Ondaatje’s earlier works, *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* illustrates the blending and overlapping of narrative forms: the 68 sections of poetry and prose include “ballads, photographs, tall tales, an invented newspaper story, dialogue from a comic book, excerpts from authentic memoirs” (Lee 1985, 166). This nonlinear collage enables Ondaatje to engage with the cult of personality around the figure of Billy the Kid, to highlight the tension between documented history and communal memory, and to explore the relationships between the characters and writer as well as the relationship between the writer and the reader. These variegated facets of Billy the Kid inevitably allow the reader to construct an understanding of Billy the Kid from Ondaatje’s foundational structure, a “trick” as Sam Solecki affirms that ultimately places the responsibility to “supply the details, fill in the background, even, on occasion, choose the ending” on the reader (1985, 340).

Through his poetic figures and his fictional characters, Ondaatje himself uses his surrogates to meditate upon the writer as artist, particularly the lead insect of “Spider’s Blues,” from his first poetry collection, *Dainty Monsters*, Billy the Kid, and Buddy Bolden from *Coming through the Slaughter*. According to Sam Solecki, Ondaatje’s “Spider’s Blues” depicts “the spider practicing his ambiguous arts on the common fly” akin to the way Ondaatje, through the poetic form, creates a web of words and images “while raising large and disturbing questions about the nature of the creative act and the emotional consequences for the artist involved in it” (1985, 9). Like Billy the Kid, a composite of representations, Ondaatje, as Stephen Scobie suggests, is also a composite: “Billy the Kid, outlaw as artist, and Michael Ondaatje, artist as outlaw, meeting in one persona, which is part history, part legend, part aesthetic image, part creator of images” (1985, 193). In *Coming through the Slaughter*, the Buddy Bolden character (a jazz musician and one of New Orleans’ jazz legends) teaches Ondaatje “how to write *mystory*,” an experimental genre that condenses the modes of representation into one account: personal, popular, and expert (29). The expert mode—disciplines of knowledge—differentiates *Coming through the Slaughter* from *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* as a more metaconscious work that facilitates Ondaatje to engage with historiography and his own position in perpetuating and analyzing the process of historiography. This encounter also permits Ondaatje to contemplate the process of historiography’s close relative in discourse, myth making, and the ways in which historiography and myth making produce alienation in a human subject, whose drive to create inevitably generates a drive to destroy. This creative-destructive née violent impulse—or violence as an impetus or catalyst—becomes manifest throughout Ondaatje’s oeuvre.

The sense of postmodern pastiche and the function of violence (whether apparent or implicit) occupies most of the earlier literary criticism of Ondaatje's writings. Regarding these earlier writings, critics also account for the pathos embedded in his writings. Even Ondaatje himself confirms the necessary element of emotion to structure the content and the form of his writings: "So what we all suddenly desire is the blend of emotion and language and form. Heart and skills" (Bush 1994, 248). This blend of "sensory emotion" produces, according to Sam Solecki, a text of "bliss" wherein the sublime nature of bliss, in Ondaatje's writings, engenders ways "to challenge to our assumptions and disturb our tastes and values that our relation to language, too, is disturbed. When this disturbance is powerful enough to affect us, when our relation with and to language is shaken, there may be a simultaneous sense of freedom . . . and fear" (1985, 4). The encounter between the visual, poetic, and affective, and the fragmentary nature of his writings may, in part, explain Ondaatje's successful adaptation of *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* from book form to stage production. However, this success has not translated to Ondaatje's creations and productions of his own films or his other novels, even *In the Skin of a Lion*, a prequel of sorts to *The English Patient*, which tells the stories of people "who actually, physically built the city of Toronto" (1987, 246). Not until Anthony Minghella and Saul Zaentz read *The English Patient* has a written work by Ondaatje broken into mainstream popular culture in epic proportions, in large part because of his appeal to sensory emotion.

In his practice, Ondaatje raises the same concerns of representation and intertextuality, the violence of the creative process, and a confrontation with history through historiography. But *The English Patient*, as novel and film, decidedly moves Ondaatje from the realm of the postmodern to the postcolonial, certainly something implicit in his fiction memoir, *Running in the Family*. *The English Patient* may be considered a jazz riff that confronts Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* and its Anglophile message of patriarchal colonial benevolence. This confrontation with ownership and the politics of race, in *The English Patient*, finds its parallels along the politics of gender and sexuality through the converging stories of four people whose personal desires conflict with international politics. However, in the translation from fiction to film, the story of Kip, the Sufi bomb diffuser in the British Army, and his love story with Hana, the Canadian nurse, becomes somewhat displaced by the so-called English Patient (a misnomer for the complex character Count Lazlo Almásy, whose layers of identity become incarnated in the layers of his skin that peel away as the story moves in all directions) and Katherine Clifton, the English wife of a British spy. The love story between Almásy and Clifton depicts what may be perceived as a quite volatile, even violent, relationship in sharp contrast to the idyllic, albeit brief, relationship between Hana and Kip. The distinction between the love stories also finds their parallels in their locales, with Almásy and

Clifton's relationship in the harsh desert climate of Northern Africa and the European villa. The landscapes themselves, especially the desert imagery, betrays its shifting—indeed, diasporic—nature as everyone, as Ondaatje tells us, is an “international bastard” (Wachtel 1994, 260).

A return to *Running in the Family*, Ondaatje's fictional autobiography, and *Anil's Ghost*, his most recent fictional return to Sri Lanka, offer critics many opportunities to further explore the diasporic sensibility and postcolonial re-imagination of Ondaatje. While *The English Patient* ostensibly charts the trauma of colonialism, criticisms have been leveled at Ondaatje's earlier work, his memoir, for misrepresenting the Sri Lankan culture. However, in response to these criticisms, Ajay Heble argues, “Ondaatje is not so much trying to rediscover a lost past as perhaps attempting to provide us with a new direction for our reflection on the meaning of postcolonial belonging. What is prompted, in short, by Ondaatje's return visits to Sri Lanka is the recognition that he himself is the other” (1994, 189). With the state of postcolonial studies at a crossroads, Ondaatje's writings afford **Asian American studies** critics and Asian Canadian critics with ways to augment our historical and literary understandings of colonialism and postcolonialism, to track **Asian diasporas**, and to rejuvenate the field of postcolonial studies. **See also** Asian Canadian Studies; Colonialism and Postcolonialism.

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MARIE-THERESE C. SULIT

## ◆ ORIENTALISM AND ASIAN AMERICA

Orientalism is a theoretical notion thought out by Edward W. Said (1935–2003), a Palestinian American scholar who is a founding figure of postcolonial theory. In his groundbreaking book *Orientalism* (1978), which brought about significant influences over various fields of studies including literary theory, cultural studies, and history, Said describes the relation between Western culture and imperialism, revealing that the system of production of Western culture and knowledge is deeply entangled with the system of power and politics. Aesthetic value and knowledge are never separated from political affect because taste and value that establish canons are contaminated with politics. Theoretically indebted to Michel Foucault's notions of power and discourse and Antonio Gramsci's hegemony, Said explains that Orientalism is a corporate institution of Western style of dominating the Other of the West, the Orient. Orientalism is an enormous hegemonic system of discipline to produce cultural expressions about the Other. In the unsymmetrical system of representation, the West unilaterally produces and disseminates the representations of the Other. The Other, as the object of Western knowledge, is not allowed to represent itself and is always represented by the West. The Orient is studied in the academy, displayed in museums, and illustrated in various cultural expressions through the particular perspectives of the West. Orientalism is a useful method of colonial domination, producing the dogmatic belief that the Other is primitive, savage, childish, uncultured, and immoral. On the other hand, through the binary power imbalance between the West and its Other, the West owns power to represent itself as a civilized, modernized, and morally superior subject.

Orientalism operates for legitimating Western colonial domination as a mission of disciplining the Other by violently enforcing Western “civilized” systems of governance and education, and Christianity, to produce a docile body of the colonized. In *Orientalism*, Said’s geographical focus is the Middle East, and the focus of his discussion is the unilateral system of representation produced from the West. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), on the other hand, Said extends his geographical focus and includes the cultural mode of resistance in anticolonial movements, revising his discussion in *Orientalism* in which the Other is described as a passive and silenced object of the West. Though the theoretical limits—such as his reductive usage of Foucault’s theoretical notions and the problematic coming from his implication of his identity as a subaltern, neglecting his Anglophone education and his position as a great scholar in American academia—have been pointed out by both his opponents and supporters, Said’s notion of Orientalism has offered a great source of inspiration for the scholars of various fields, including the scholars of Asian America.

The definition of *Asian America* is ambiguous and is in the process of constantly becoming, reflecting the impossibility of imagining authentic and true Asian America. It is an imagined heterogeneous locale without any territory of sovereignty where incessant racial and cultural crossing and the negotiation of identities generate. It is a term to evoke a feeling of yearning for belonging, which has been denied to Asian Americans by hegemonic (white) America. Thus, Asian America was first imagined as an oppositional locale against hegemony. Revising Said’s notion of Orientalism, which does not discuss the issues of the Other positioning within the West, the mission of the intellectuals, such as scholars, artists, writers, and activists of Asian America, has been to argue how Asian Americans have been treated as the Other figure of the United States and to try to create alternative representations reversing the stereotypes of Asian Americans.

Various caricatures of Asians and Asian Americans have been enormously reproduced in American popular culture. Anglo American writers such as Bret Harte, Jack London, John Steinbeck, Frank Norris, Mark Twain, and Pearl Buck also used one-dimensional stereotypes. In American hegemonic culture, Asian and **Asian American stereotypes** reflect American political and economic relation with Asian countries. If American political relation with some Asian country changes and the political reality and social value transform, American social perception of Asians and Asian Americans follows the change. While Said claims that the Other or the Orient is represented as primitive figures for the sake of European colonial rule, the particular characteristic of the stereotypes of Asian Americans in American Orientalism is, as Colleen Lye points out, “the ambivalent presentation of the economic modernity of America’s Asia” (2005, 3). Lye claims that the ostensibly opposite representations of “**yellow peril** and **model minority**” are best understood as two aspects of the same . . . a form whose most



salient feature, whether it has been made the basis for exclusion or **assimilation**, is the trope of economic efficiency" (5).

Since the introduction of Chinese laborers for building the U.S. modern nation-state in the mid-nineteenth century, anti-Asian sentiment has been legitimated by the idea of the Yellow Peril. Japan's imperial expansion—such as Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War—also accelerated American anxiety about racial threat. The idea of the Yellow Peril was embodied by diabolic, cruel, and asexual Asian male characters such as Dr. **Fu Manchu** and a seductive and immoral Asian female character called Dragon Lady, depicted by Anglo American authors and produced in Hollywood cinemas. During **World War II**, Japanese were represented as Asian villains and Chinese, whose country was under attack by Japan and were allied with the United States, received sympathetic and humanistic representations as good peasants. However, Japan's quick recovery after World War II and the cold war world formation reversed the roles of Japanese and Chinese: Japanese suddenly became good Asians and Chinese became bad Asians. The image of the Yellow Peril, the aggressive Other figure, has been repeatedly produced switching the target: the **Vietnam War** and the cold war made communist countries in Asia inhumane villains. At the event of the 9/11 in 2001 and afterward, the Other image is associated with terrorists, which made Arab Americans and South Asian Americans the targets of violence—including violence by the state.

Oversexualized and subservient images of Asian women—Madame Butterfly, geisha girls, and Miss Saigon—are also popular images in American Orientalism following American military expansion in Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia. The feminized image of Asia in American colonial and neocolonial representations has influenced the perception of Asian Americans: oversexualized Asian American women and emasculated Asian American men.

While the Yellow Peril indicates American anxiety about Asians and Asian Americans, the stereotype of the silent model minority was a useful ideological tool to propagate the American liberalism that people of color enjoy democracy and social mobility. In *Orientalism: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (1999), Robert G. Lee explains that a model minority stereotype perfectly fulfills American necessity during the cold war. The image of Asian Americans who can self-sufficiently achieve economic and academic success nullifies the political claims from other minority groups, especially African Americans. Also, the American media's praise of the form of Confucian patriarchy in Asian and Asian American family operates to contain the threats of sexual freedom.

Though it was published before Said's *Orientalism*, a challenge by the editors, including Frank **Chin**, of the first Asian American literary anthology *Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian American Writers* (1974) is resonant with Said's project: the editors

declared war against persistent racist stereotypes prevailing in American hegemonic culture. *Aiiieeeee!* and *The Big Aiiieeeee!* (1991) editors' heteronormative masculinist agendas, the limitation of the coverage of ethnic groups, their rejection of diasporic ambiguous negotiation with identities, and their condemnation of the genre of autobiography—especially Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (1976)—has brought about controversies and debates about the complexity of the issues of representation for Asian America. These editors' claim for the "authentic" self-representation shows the ambition of creating the culture of counterhegemony. These editors' project epitomizes the radical cultural nationalism of Asian America inaugurated since the late 1960s.

The literary and other cultural forms of political expression to claim the importance of reversing the stereotypes through an oppositional strategy of Asian America encounter the limit of its strategy when considering the complex mechanism of the operation of representation, because such mechanism does not allow the creation of authentic monolithic independent representations for Asian America. Scholars of Asian American literary and cultural studies have attempted to problematize the strategic methods. In *The Deathly Embrace: Orientalism and Asian American Identity* (2000), recognizing both the desire for the "authentic" self-representation and its doomed failure, Sheng-Mei Ma points out that the representations from the Asian American side symbiotically exist with hegemonic cultural representations of Asian and Asian Americans as cultural reactions. In *Race and Resistance: Literature and Politics in Asian America* (2002), Viet Thanh Nguyen shows the limit of the oppositional strategy taken by Asian American intellectuals, which fails to "meaningfully recognize ideologically contradictory Asian Americans" (2002, 150). The oppositional strategy always reductively condemns that the cultural expressions taken by writers who seem to accommodate American Orientalism are "unauthentic" or "selling out," but does not offer any further analysis of the complex negotiations and strategies of survival taken by such writers. In the field of Asian American literary studies, American Orientalism and stereotype issues have been generally discussed in the formula of binary opposition between American (white) hegemonic culture and Asian American cultural expressions. However, the issues of stereotype provoke another issue when the internal chasm of Asian America is focused. Nguyen points out that the controversy over Lois-Ann Yamanaka's portrait of Filipino Americans in *Blu's Hanging* (1997) which divided Asian America, exposes the internal diversity of Asian America, and reveals the limit of the claim of monolithic Asian America created through oppositional politics. Also, the focus on the interracial relation between African Americans and Asian Americans casts new light on the issues of American Orientalism. As Bill V. Mullen shows in *Afro-Orientalism* (2004), the focus on the Orientalistic cultural expressions used by African Americans to imagine a form of

liberation brings about an alternative form of negotiation for the politics of representation, which was neglected in the oppositional political formula of Asian America. Said's *Orientalism* continues to hold significance for the politics of Asian America. Especially in the post 9/11 era, in which intellectuals in Asian America challenge geographical and academic demarcations created by Western colonialism to build a bridge with Arab American studies, Said's notion of Orientalism offers a useful critical tool for the scholars of Asian America. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Assimilation/Americanization; Colonialism and Postcolonialism; Nationalism and Asian America.

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YASUKO KASE

## P



### ◆ PAK, GARY (1952–)

Korean American short story writer, novelist, and playwright, Gary Pak's stories have been published in numerous anthologies and journals, and his awards include the **Association for Asian American Studies**, the Cades award for *Watcher of Waipuna*, and the prestigious Ludwig Vogelstein Foundation Award. His first novel, *A Ricepaper Airplane*, was published in 1998; his second novel, *Children of a Fireland*, was published in 2004 by the University of Hawaii Press; and his plays have appeared on the stages of Honolulu Theatre for Youth and Kumu Kahua. Known primarily for his work in fiction, he is working on a nonfiction text about Korea entitled *Chon-go Ma-bi/High Sky and Horse Fattening: Essays on Contemporary Korean Culture*; he also coedited *Yobo: Korean American Writing in Hawaii*. Born in Hawaii, Pak received a master's in fine arts from Boston College and a PhD from the University of Hawaii in 1997. Pak taught at Kapiolani Community College for many years before accepting a position at the University of Hawaii at Manoa where he is an associate professor and graduate advisor in creative writing.

Critics such as Stephen Sumida and Rob Wilson have noted Pak's ability to construct stories reflective of Hawaii's diverse culture without idyllic sentiment or one-dimensional portraiture. His writing, fiction and nonfiction, is informed by the author's personal beliefs; he is a social and political activist who supports and has participated in issues pertaining to land rights in Hawaii. In his popular collection of short stories, *Watcher of Waipuna*, Pak examines social activism, land dispossession, local and Native Hawaiian identity construction, and capitalism. Using dialectical narrative structure throughout this collection, Pak references Hawaii's pidgin or **Hawaiian Pidgin**

English—a language that embraces the talk-story methodology. Although the language is often noted for a childlike resonance, Pak's cadence for the language captures the moral goodness of the innocent and those struggling to retain moral standards. The metaphorical use of language throughout this award-winning volume emphasizes some of the sociopolitical and linguistic differences between Standard English and Hawaiian Creole English; Pak highlights how other languages can be pervasive, fluid, and dependent on the values instilled through one's sense of community and individual identity. At the same time, the issue of interdependence is examined along with self-definition. In the story "Watcher of Waipuna," Gilbert Sanchez is an unconventional hero because he appears insane to those in his community, but his sense of knowledge is more intricate than that of those around him. It is the *lolo* or crazy person who knows what is best for his community. Pak portrays how the "insane" can see and speak more unmistakably than greedy land developers or manipulative relatives. It is Gilbert's sense of knowing, his ability to use language with metaphorical twists, and his basic goodness that prevents one of his sisters from betraying him. In this story and throughout the collection, Pak presents a multicultural community through a diverse range of ethnic, class, and moralistic underpinnings.

Pak's most recent collection of short stories, *Language of the Geckos and Other Stories* explores themes of the immigrant's journey as he reconciles past and present, isolation and migration, land rights and transnationalism. Some themes include the languishing desire for the immigrant to return "home" but a resistance to romanticize these notions. The frame for what constitutes "home" is consistently negotiated through folklore and shamanism; in this sense, the immigrant is able to reimagine himself outside of assimilative practices. In particular is the duality of isolation and independence that function as interdependent positions in the story "An Angel for Guy Matsuzaki." The construction of hybrid identities in this collection resists simplistic categorizations because characters exist within several physical and metaphysical planes. The cyclical nature and continuity of birth, death, and rebirth are marked by one's past and present identity structure, and the construction of an organic community that struggles to coexist in a place deemed paradise or idyllic by others. Pak uses prose passages and poetry, the latter serving as a voice of hope, contrasting the isolation of the immigrant's journey with a languishing acceptance of the immigrant's current predicament.

Pak's first novel, *A Ricepaper Airplane*, explores diaspora through issues of transnationalism, imperialism, and capitalism. The story unfolds with the central character, Sung Wha, lying on his deathbed in Hawaii while he narrates his experiences of living in Korea, Japan, and Hawaii and how this geographical trisect has provided him a versatile education. A Korean nationalist who escaped political persecution from the Japanese Imperial Army, his virtue is demonstrated through how he interacts and

socializes with other immigrants and indigenous people of Hawaii. As a plantation worker, Sung Wha implores fellow laborers to question their exploitation, and, as a retired person living in a run-down hotel building, he leads fellow tenants to protest the demolition of their home. Their residence is the Kekaulike Hotel in Aala Park—a place where some indigents roam, but, for Sung Wha and his friends, it is a rest stop to gather and socialize. Bridging the capitalist machinery that oppressed workers on the plantation and corporations whose primary aim is to rebuild and develop, Pak comments on the social activism of the individual and the collective. As a result, he asserts that globalization affects everyone: the average person, the working class, the homeless, the local immigrant person, and the Native Hawaiian population.

As Sung Wha reflects on how he escaped political persecution, the tension between laborers of different ethnicities, and the mistreatment of plantation workers, he is not merely lecturing about his experiences; rather, Pak situates how someone without institutional knowledge actively engages his nephew about the significance of working-class history. Pak presents, through narrative, lyrical, and metaphorical form, the contributions and resistance of the development of Hawaii by local Koreans and other immigrants. The diasporic situation is presented as muddy and fluid, resilient and layered, and the central character's ethics are not influenced by notions of the American Dream but informed through his nationalist and activist identity. Koreans in Hawaii are presented as vocal activists who helped shape a community that attempts to define self-identity and autonomy. By the end of the novel, Sung Wha's nephew, Young Gil, realizes that his uncle is not delusional; instead, he recognizes that he is still fighting to correct injustices mired in colonialism and imperialism. Gil discovers that Sung Wha was not merely a rebel but a revolutionary, father, activist, and community organizer. Shifting from the past and present and back again, the nonlinear structure paradoxically illustrates how experiences in one country can serve as a basis for activism in another, and how an immigrant's marginalized place in mainstream society can allow individuals to define their own identity. Throughout the novel, the line between past and present is blurred, communism and capitalism are presented through similarities rather than differences, and diaspora is an ongoing process of transition and negotiation.

In his second novel, *Children of a Fireland*, Pak links the metaphysical and supernatural occurrences to social activism and unrest; interestingly, they are not directly linked to any specific racial group, and the portrayal of the local community focuses on idiosyncratic social interactions. He also offers the analogy that one's identity or roots are interrupted and consistently negotiated through the development of capital and globalization. The stage for the story is an old abandoned movie theater scheduled for demolition so that a new fast food chain may take its place. The first half of the novel is an introduction to a local community bewildered by inexplicable messages that

appear on the wall of the theater. Pak presents a humorous environment as people are literally and symbolically haunted by the deceased owner. His portrayals of diverse peoples are subtle and surprising, and they stumble to discover that they are haunted not only by Hiram Ching but by their own insecurities and indiscretions. Pak conveys the deeply entangled situation of moving forward as a community while attempting to reconcile the past. **See also** Asian American Political Activism; Asian Diasporas; Association for Asian American Studies; Colonialism and Postcolonialism.

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AMY NISHIMURA

## ◆ PAN-ASIAN ETHNICITIES

Pan-Asian ethnicities are the formation of a collective sense of identity by members of various Asian ethnic groups, as the result of demographic, social, and political shifts in the United States.

Yen Le Espiritu's *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities* (1992) outlines demographic and social factors that led to the development of pan-Asian Americanism, or pan-Asianism (used by Espiritu for the sake of brevity). Early Asian immigrants did not think of themselves as Asians. They regarded themselves as coming from distinct nations, even regions, with their own particular histories and cultural practices. Furthermore, because of national histories, many immigrants arrived to the United States with firm sentiments of animosity toward other Asian immigrants. Non-Asians did not make these distinctions. Consequently, some Asian immigrants made deliberate efforts to maintain their differences, to the point of denigrating Asians from other countries. In addition to prejudice-based justification for separation from other Asians, the greatest impediments were more practical: the lack of a common language and residential proximity.

The post-World War II period brought about considerable change in three areas: population, racism, and residential patterns. First, American-born Asians outnumbered

foreign-born Asians because of restrictions that limited new Asian immigration in addition to the population increase of second- and third-generation Asians. By 1960, approximately two-thirds of the Asian population of California was born in the United States. U.S.-born Asians were characterized by a limited knowledge of their ethnic languages, detachment from national rivalries, and sentiments of greater commonality with other American-born Asians than with foreign-born compatriots (usually of the older generation); thus, differences in language and culture were not as salient.

Second, race issues in the United States altered. After the war, notions of white supremacy were interrogated as people drew parallels from the racism of Nazism to racism in the United States. Also, the **civil rights movement** in the two decades after the war resulted in legislation that banned racial discrimination in housing and employment.

The modified racial terrain across the nation was accompanied by shifts in Asian American residential patterns. There were less Asian enclaves in the years after the war, which resulted in a decline in residential segregation. This generated an increase in intergroup contact and communication. Previously isolated Asian Americans became aware of common struggles and aspirations, which took precedence over historical interethnic and international hostilities.

The impact of these changes was greatest on college campuses throughout the 1960s. A critical mass of Asian Americans was part of the U.S. higher education system during the 1960s. By 1970, 107,366 Asian Americans were enrolled in colleges and universities, of which 83 percent were Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans. Some **Asian American** students were exposed to one another for the first time, while also sensing that they were different from the majority white student populations on their campuses. Thus, Asian American student activists gravitated toward pan-Asian unity.

In the midst of these demographic changes, the United States was encountering an era of political and social upheaval. Asian Americans were involved in movements such as the civil rights movement, Black Power movement, antiwar movement, and later, the Asian American movement.

The civil rights movement of the 1960s awakened Asian Americans to the reality and prevalence of racism in U.S. society. It exposed the discrepancy between the rhetoric of the United States as a nation of equality and opportunity and one of racism, particularly for African Americans. Individual Asian Americans were moved to join liberal European American efforts to "help" African Americans in their plight against racial oppression. In the midst of their sympathetic gestures toward African Americans, Asian Americans realized that they, too, were subject to racial discrimination. They found that they had more in common with African Americans than with European Americans. What began as disillusionment with U.S. society on behalf of



African Americans resulted in a consciousness of the need to mobilize for racial equality for themselves. Although there is a history of resistance by Filipino and Chinese laborers (among others), there were obstacles to pan-Asian ethnic organizing, as mentioned above.

The civil rights movement generated an awareness of and legislative action against racism in the United States; however, it was deemed ineffectual by some. The Black Power movement gained momentum, as a result. Instead of assimilation, the central features of the Black Power movement were cultural nationalism, which was expressed through racial pride and propagation of African American culture; and local control of the economic, political, social, and cultural institutions in African American communities. Black Power advocates also claimed solidarity with African colonies; as national movements were fighting for liberation in Africa, black, urban ghettos were “internal colonies” for which the Black Power movement was fighting. Whether in the United States or in Africa, Third World peoples were colonized and exploited for the benefit of capitalism. Asian Americans emulated the Black Power movement on two levels: Yellow Power and Third World solidarity.

Asian American student activists initiated the Yellow Power movement to resist racial oppression. Eventually, activists abandoned the term *Yellow* because it was not inclusive of all Asian Americans. Third World solidarity enabled activists to link their **Chinatown**, Little Tokyo, and Manilatown communities to colonies such as the Philippines. National liberation movements in Asia, particularly in Vietnam and China, were viewed as parallel to the Asian American movement.

The antiwar movement was the most significant political/social movement contributing toward pan-Asian ethnic identity and the Asian American movement. Individual Asian Americans participated in various factions of the antiwar movement; however, they formed “Asian contingents” once they achieved a critical mass within national coalitions and demonstrations. Asian Americans united to protest the sociomilitary phenomenon of “gookism.” According to some Asian American veterans, the U.S. military used the epithet “gook” to dehumanize Southeast Asians with the purpose of psychologically preparing soldiers for war. Some Asian American activists contended that the **Vietnam War** was genocide, the killing of an “inferior” race. Thus, the war was not only unjust, it was also racist.

Asian Americans also resisted their marginalized and tokenized status within the larger antiwar movement. When Asian American antiwar activists called attention to the racism of the war, they were criticized by non-Asian Americans for being divisive. Asian Americans rejected slogans like “Bring our boys home” and “Bring the GIs home” because they pronounced concern for American lives only, not Vietnamese. Instead, Asian American activists used “Stop killing our Asian brothers and sisters”

and "Asian lives are not cheap and Asians must say so now!" They understood Vietnamese lives as intimately connected to their own.

The antiwar movement provided the opportunity for public political protest by many Asian Americans. Activists from college campuses, the working class, and other community members realized that they needed to unite as Asian Americans. Thus, the antiwar movement united isolated pockets of resistance and activism into the national Asian American movement. **See also** Asian American Political Activism; Assimilation/Americanization; Civil Rights Movement and Asian America; Nationalism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America.

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JENNIFER CHUNG

◆ PARAMESWARAN, UMA (1941 –)

Indian Canadian poet, playwright, and short story writer, Parameswaran is currently professor of English at the University of Winnipeg. Born in Chennai (earlier known as Madras), she received a master of arts degree and diploma in journalism from Nagpur University. Then she acquired a master's degree in creative writing from Indiana University in 1964 and, two years later, she migrated to Winnipeg, Canada. She received a doctoral degree from Michigan State University in 1972. Parameswaran has devoted her attention to South Asian Canadian literature (SACLIT), English romantics, women's literature, and critical essays on postcolonial literature. Apart from teaching, she is preoccupied with activities pertaining to South Asian women, which also forms the dominant theme in her writing. Parameswaran is connected with various literary institutions, such as the Writers Union of Canada, Canadian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies, the Manitoba Writers' Guild, Margaret Laurence Chair of Women's Studies, Canadian Ethnic Studies Association, and Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba. As founder of the Performing Arts and Literature of India (PALI), she has a good deal of enthusiasm for Indian classical dances and literature. She is also general editor of the SACLIT series. For about 12 years, she had been producer of a weekly television show on India in the city of Winnipeg.

A widely acclaimed writer, Parameswaran wrote a play, *Sons Must Die*, in 1962, while she was still in India. The theme of the play was the trauma of partition, when

the Indian subcontinent was divided into India and Pakistan in 1947. The play was incorporated into her collection of plays published in 1998 as a part of the SACLIT series. Under the title *Sons Must Die and other Plays*, the collection contained works like *Meera* (1971), *Sita's Promise* (1981), *Dear Deedi, My Sister* (1989), and *Rootless but Green Are the Boulevard Trees* (1998). Revolving around partition and war between India and Pakistan, *Sons Must Die* is a poignant story of three women caught in the events. Human nature, with all its ramifications, is revealed through characters. In the play, the influence of Greek tragedies could be discerned with its chorus and language of verse. The Indian art heritage and classics like the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* formed the essence of her plays *Meera* and *Sita's Promise*. The latter work took the theme from the *Ramayana*, but the setting is modern Canada. There is a harmony in the delineation of an ancient tradition and the experience of immigrants in Canada. Through the letters of Sapna in Canada and her sister in India in *Dear Deedi, My Sister*, the turbulent life of an immigrant can be gleaned. The suffering of women was real in Canada as was in India. Her prose in the plays has a style of its own, simple and elegant. The life of the first generation of Indo Canadians is portrayed in *Rootless but Green Are the Boulevard Trees*.

Parameswaran's first book of fiction, *What Was Always Hers*, was the recipient of the New Muse Award (1999) and the Canadian Authors Association Jubilee Award (2000). It includes stories like "What Was Always Hers," "The Icicle, Maru and the M.M. Syndrome," "How We Won Olympic Gold," and "Darkest Before Dawn." The transformation of Veeru from a newly married woman to a confident wife and mother is portrayed in the title story, "What Was Always Hers." In the story entitled "Maru and the M.M. Syndrome," a middle-aged married woman Maru becomes careful when she suspects that her husband Siv is suffering from male menopause (M.M., hence the title of the story). Maru apprehends that he may fall for beautiful women. In the story, a water diviner visits the couple. The dichotomy between Western science and Eastern tradition is contrasted. Her portrayal of South Asian women in stories in *What Was Always Hers* is superb. She describes the life of women in different professions. The difference in outlook on life due to the generation gap between old and young women is woven into the stories. An immigrant woman from South Asia and a South Asian woman born in Canada have different problems and perceptions. The first novel of Parameswaran's, *Mangoes on the Maple Tree*, is about the life of two Indian Canadian families, the Bhaves and the Moghes. Set in the city of Winnipeg at the time of the flood in 1997, the author describes the events that take place in a span of 20 days. She narrates the crises, understanding, and the dilemma of the characters in a beautiful and simple way. The *Sweet Smell of Mother's Milk-Wet Bodice*, a short novel, narrates the story of a betrayed, abused, and divorced wife of an immigrant.

Parameswaran writes poetry with pathos and poignancy, as seen in *Trishanku and Other Writings* and *Sisters at the Well*. The former is composed of 80 poems describing the experience of Indian Canadians of the 1970s. The latter begins with poems about the crash of Air India Flight 182 in Kanishka in 1985. The feeling of the writer and the memory of the homeland and present-day reality are penned with much emotion coming straight from heart.

Parameswaran has also written many critical essays about South Asian Canadians in *SACLIT: An Introduction to South-Asian-Canadian Literature*. Her *Quilting a New Canon: Stitching Women's Words* is a collection of essays about South Asian women. In 2007 Parameswaran's *Salman Rushdie's Early Fiction* and *Writing the Diaspora: Essays on Culture and Identity* were published. Winner of many awards and honors, Parameswaran's multifaceted personality is reflected in her writings, communal activities, and her efforts to address the problems that face women in general and South Asian women in particular. She is always encouraging toward South Asian Canadian writers and artists. Writing from an Indian Canadian perspective, Parameswaran has addressed the issue of diaspora through the characters of her stories, plays, and novels with insight, understanding, and sympathy.

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PATIT PABAN MISHRA

#### ◆ PEARL HARBOR

Pearl Harbor is a harbor located on the island of Oahu west of Honolulu in Hawaii and is the location of a U.S. naval base. The attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese on December 7, 1941, brought the United States into World War II. Prior to this

attack, the United States had practiced isolationism from the wars in Europe and the Pacific, as many Americans were reluctant to get involved in another European war after World War I. When over 2,400 military personnel and 68 civilians were killed by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the majority of Americans realized that isolationism from World War II would not be possible, and the battle cry “Remember Pearl Harbor” led many American men and women to enlist in the Armed Forces. The attack on Pearl Harbor heightened anti-Japanese sentiment and led to **Japanese American internment**. This event, which brought the United States into World War II, also ended the Great Depression, as the United States switched to a war economy.

In the years leading up to the attack on Pearl Harbor, Americans had debated getting involved with the wars going on in Europe and the Pacific. Americans were aware of the threat that Adolf Hitler posed to Europe and had heard stories of the brutal Japanese attacks in Nanking and Shanghai, China. When Japan went on to invade Indochina, the U.S. government refused to continue to sell oil to Japan, and Japan badly needed oil to power its war. Angered by these sanctions, Japan made moves to get oil elsewhere and began plans to invade the oil- and mineral-rich East Indies and Southeast Asia. The diplomatic relationship between the United States and Japan became so strained that a Japanese attack seemed imminent. Government documents indicate that the U.S. military knew that a Japanese attack loomed, but it did not know where the attack might take place. Most military experts thought the attack would come in the Philippines or Malaya. Pearl Harbor seemed an unlikely site because it was well defended and difficult to attack because of its natural defenses. Tens of thousands of Navy sailors and officers were stationed at Pearl Harbor at the time of the attack. Moreover, there were more than 25,000 Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps soldiers stationed on Oahu to help protect the harbor. Pearl Harbor also had a narrow entrance and coral reefs, making naval attacks difficult and considered next to impossible.

But attacking Pearl Harbor was not impossible, and the Japanese military used midget submarines designed to be small enough to enter the harbor and cut the nets that protected it to allow larger submarines to enter. The Japanese attack also involved an air attack, which proved to be very damaging to the naval base. In all, the Japanese attack sank five battleships and badly damaged three others. Thousands of U.S. military personnel were killed, as were some civilians. The Japanese suffered little damage from the attack, losing only 55 airmen and 9 midget submarine officers and crewmen. The Japanese declared victory, and the next day, December 8, 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt asked Congress to declare war against Japan. Both the House of Representatives and the Senate approved the declaration with only one vote against the declaration. The time of isolationism was over for the United States.

After the attack, feelings of patriotism mixed with anger and fear circulated in the United States, and rumors circulated that Japan would try to invade Hawaii. Anyone

of Japanese descent was looked upon suspiciously, and anti-Japanese sentiment was strong. In 1942 President Roosevelt ordered 110,000 Japanese Americans to live in “detention centers” or “internment camps.” More than 70,000 of these people were American citizens. The Japanese American internment lasted nearly three years. Japanese Americans lost their jobs, homes, land, and freedom and were forced to live in fenced, prison-like camps. Food was limited, and there was almost no medical care. For example, in the Heart Mountain War Relocation Center in Wyoming, the camp was surrounded by barbed-wire fences and featured unpartitioned toilets, cots for beds, and no cooking areas for detainees. There were a few instances of detainees being shot by guards for not complying with orders, but, in general, the Japanese Americans who were forced into these camps complied to prove their loyalty to the United States. The phrase *shikata ga nai*, which translates loosely to “it cannot be helped,” was used to describe the feelings of resignation that many Japanese Americans felt about their internment. Ironically, in the place where fear and anger toward Japanese Americans were the strongest, internment did not occur. Because Hawaii was not a state at that time, only a U.S. territory, few Japanese Americans in Hawaii were detained.

The war in the Pacific with Japan continued from 1942 to 1945. Less than nine hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese bombed Clark Field in the Philippines and began an invasion that would attempt to end U.S. control of that country. The Japanese continued to defeat the United States in battle after battle, but on February 7, 1943, U.S. and Australian forces defeated Japan and forced Japanese forces to leave Guadalcanal in New Guinea. Difficult and costly battles for both sides would continue, but the United States began to see a turn and was able to retake the Philippines in 1944. Before the war ended but after tides had turned in favor of the United States, in December 1944, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that it was unconstitutional to detain loyal American citizens, therefore making Japanese American internment unconstitutional. On January 2, 1945, the United States rescinded the Japanese detainment orders, and Japanese Americans began to be released, though the camps would remain open for those who did not yet have a place to go. Freed Japanese Americans were given \$25 and a train ticket home. A new generation of Japanese Americans began a campaign to ask for apologies and reparations during the **civil rights movement** of the 1960s. After years of debate and controversies, detainees were finally awarded compensation in the amount of \$20,000 dollars for each living detainee in 1988.

Though internment was coming to an end in early 1945, the war that began with the attack on Pearl Harbor was not yet over. Though the United States was winning the war, each battle was proving costly. High numbers of casualties were common, and many feared that a full invasion of Japan to end the war would cost too many American lives. Additionally, on March 29, 1945, President Franklin Roosevelt,

the president who had seen Americans through the Great Depression and the attack on Pearl Harbor, died. He had been elected four times, more than any other president in U.S. history. This left Vice President Harry Truman with important decisions to make about how to end the war in the Pacific with Japan. When a series of bombing raids still did not bring Japan to surrender, discussions began about using the newly tested atomic bomb on Japan to end the war. Most people believed that the atomic bomb was too horrible to ever use on people, but the U.S. government felt it had no choice if it wanted to end the war.

On August 6, 1945, U.S. forces dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, and immediately destroyed most of the city. Death toll estimates range from 100,000 to 130,000 people who were killed instantly. More would die later from exposure to the radiation from the bomb. Two days later, on August 8, 1945, U.S. forces dropped a second atomic bomb on Nagasaki, Japan, causing 60,000 to 70,000 immediate deaths. On August 14, 1945, Japanese Emperor Hirohito signed a decree to end the war. Nearly four years after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the war had finally ended. Today, there are monuments commemorating those who died on December 7, 1941, in the Pearl Harbor attack. In 1960 the *USS Arizona* Memorial opened at Pearl Harbor. The memorial floats above the wreckage of the *USS Arizona* battleship, which still lies at the bottom of the harbor. **See also** Civil Rights Movement and Asian America; World War II.

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CRYSTAL McCAGE

◆ POSTCOLONIALISM. *See* Colonialism and Postcolonialism

## Q



### ◆ QUEER IDENTITY AND POLITICS

The rise of queer studies in academic institutions in the 1990s has brought critical attention to the presence of Asian American queer identities and politics. Theories of a queer Asian America cut across the various disciplines of **Asian American studies**, including Asian American literary studies. These theories help foreground the impact of gender and sexuality on Asian American history and culture, offer queer perspectives on Asian American literary and cultural texts, and legitimize the important literary and cultural work of queer and queer-identified Asian Americans. Asian American queer identities and politics, therefore, contribute to a more complex understanding of an Asian America characterized by the heterogeneity, **hybridity**, and multiplicity (to borrow Lisa Lowe's terminology) constituting Asian American differences.

Though often viewed as issues peripheral to the concerns of race, the questions of gender and sexuality play a central role in the history of Asian America and in the formation of Asian American identities. During the mid-nineteenth century, Chinese immigrants arriving in **Gold Mountain** were predominantly male. Though initially lured by the California gold rush, many turned to the building of the **transcontinental railroad**, a role that is now seen as a significant contribution to the building of the United States as a nation. But these early immigrants were subjected to various legislative and social discriminations that prevented them from entering into mainstream American society. The invocation of an all-white America and the racist notion of the **Yellow Peril** by anti-Chinese elements in the United States Congress ultimately pressured President Chester Arthur into signing the **Chinese Exclusion Act** (1882). This piece of legislation and a series of amendments had a gendering and sexualizing effect



on the community in **Chinatowns**: Chinese men were deprived of wives and, hence, families. Chinese men were then consequently viewed as sexually inept or as desexualized beings; or, rather contradictorily, as sexually repressed and deprived individuals, who frequently turned to prostitutes within their community.

These historical circumstances were critical in the production of certain **Asian American stereotypes**, including the feminized, asexual Asian male figure and the Asian female prostitute. The popularity of these early stereotypes served as the foundation for characters of screen and literature such as **Fu Manchu**, **Charlie Chan**, and **Suzie Wong**. It is these emasculating racist stereotypes that the editors of *Aiiiiiiiii!* sought to counter, by asserting a heterosexually virile notion of Asian masculinity as part of an Asian cultural materiality. The stories, plays, and novels of Frank **Chin** and Louis Hing **Chu's** *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, among many others, wrestle with this issue in their narratives. The famous debate between Maxine Hong **Kingston** and Frank Chin on the question of cultural authenticity is clearly framed by these intersecting concerns of feminism, gender, and sexuality in the articulation of an Asian American cultural identity. For the *Aiiiiiiiii!* editors, a heterosexual masculinity becomes a rallying point for cultural identification and authentication, something that a contemporary Asian American queer politics seeks to challenge and redress. This culturalist reading of Asian American heterosexual masculinity later became a major source of contention for both gay and feminist queer critics.

The **civil rights movement** has played a crucial role in mobilizing minority race and ethnic concerns in the United States. **Asian American political activism** can trace its roots of awareness building to the movement. But it is equally important to see that the fight for equal rights by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) activists runs parallel to the other minority movements emerging out of the 1960s and 1970s as, for instance, the political impact and legacy of the Stonewall Riots of June 1969 in New York City reveal. The Asian American LGBT community began to grapple with what it means to be queer and **Asian American** at the same time. According to David Eng and Alice Hom in their introduction to *Q & A: Queer in Asian America*, the emergence of a number of Asian American LGBT organizations in the 1980s has helped create the conditions for queer Asian American studies (1998, 2–3). These organizations brought together a greater sense of urgency for political identification and placement within the larger framework of Asian American identity and politics. In other words, the Asian American community has been compelled to consider queer Asian Americans not just as a minority subgroup under their larger political and cultural umbrella but also to realize that queer Asian American concerns are culturally and critically integral to the constitution of Asian America itself.

LGBT activism in general forms an important foundation for the rise of queer studies in U.S. academia. The theoretical writings of Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, Marjorie Garber, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Luce Irigaray, and many others find popular

deployment in queer studies courses and programs across the country, beginning in the 1990s. Asian American studies could not ignore the theoretical relevance of this development: for example, in the 1994 special issue of *Amerasia Journal*, editor Russell Leong brought together a collection of seminal essays on the topic “Dimensions of Desire.” These essays were later reconfigured and republished with other essays in an important book collection entitled *Asian American Sexualities: Dimensions of the Gay & Lesbian Experience*. Critical work on queer Asian American identity has proliferated since the mid-1990s, covering various issues and concerns. Queer theory’s formulation of *queer* as a fluid and permeable term of alternative sexualities not only questions the logic of a compulsory heterosexuality but also resists defining queerness simply in terms of gay and lesbian sexual identities. In fact, for some Asian American theorists and critics, queerness lends itself as a trope and, hence, critical tool to battle identity politics and cultural essentialism. Although theoretically useful, this move can also risk the shifting of attention away from the materiality and specificity of queer Asian American sexual identities and experiences.

When she writes about the “No Name Woman” in *The Woman Warrior*, Maxine Hong Kingston theorizes the notion of female sexual invisibility in Chinese culture. This invisibility, hence, constitutes a source of critical concern for lesbian Asian American activism, theory, and cultural work (Eng and Hom 1998, 12). Lesbian visibility resists Asian patriarchy’s privileging of male offspring and the consequential denial of the presence of lesbian experiences and identities. Therefore, the body, the closet, and the idea of coming out figure significantly in lesbian Asian American work. (It is important to note here that coming out for gay Asian American males offers a different nuance and significance in light of the Asian male’s “responsibility,” in certain Asian cultures, to perpetuate the family line, as depicted, for instance, in Ang Lee’s film *The Wedding Banquet*.) Lesbian activist, cultural, and theoretical works have served as the foundation for the production of a queer critical awareness in Asian America. Eng and Hom also credit the labor of Asian American lesbian authors from the 1970s and 1980s for priming the cultural and political climate for the emergence of queer Asian American studies in the 1990s (1998, 3).

The question of Asian American masculinity resurges in the context of gay male sexual identity and representation. In his much referenced essay “Looking for My Penis,” Richard Fung reveals in his analysis of Asian male imagery in gay video porn that Asian men are depicted as assuming the sexually passive role, thereby reifying the stereotypical notion of Asian men as effeminate, feminized, and subservient to the dominant white male. This role has its roots in the Orientalist depictions of Asian cultural passivity as generated in works like Giacomo Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*. David Henry Hwang’s *M. Butterfly* appropriates this conception of Asian culture to subvert the problematic power relational framework defining the perception of Asians in the

West. Theorists of Asian American queer studies continue to negotiate the complexities of queer desire by challenging the stereotype of rice and potato relationships (the gay Asian and white male relationship), while grappling with the cultural nationalist rhetoric of those advocating sexual relationships solely between gay Asian men.

Queer Asian American studies is moving beyond the narrow confines of gay and lesbian experiences to embrace a larger spectrum of sexual identities and a myriad of intersecting issues that are now redefining queer Asian American identity and politics. Transgenderism, transsexuality, transvestitism, bisexuality, U.S. immigration, gay marriages, **colonialism and postcolonialism**, queer diasporas, globalization, the pink dollar, the Internet, virtual sex, and cyber communities represent a small list of numerous important issues that are taking the work of queer Asian Americans in fresh directions.

For a sampling of literature that features queer or queer-related issues, see the work of Chay Yew, Alexander **Chee**, Justin Chin, Alison Kim, Willyce Kim, Russell Leong, Timothy Liu, Suniti Namjoshi, Sandip Roy, Shyam **Selvadurai**, Kitty **Tsui**, and Merle **Woo**. Gregg Araki, Evans Chan, Simon Chung, Richard Fung, Stanley Kwan, Ang Lee, Quentin Lee, Deepa Mehta, Todd Wilson, and Alice Wu, are among the numerous filmmakers whose cinematic work foregrounds queer issues related to Asian America. Important critical work can be seen in the writings of Karin Aguilar-San Juan, David L. Eng, Alice Y. Hom, Russell Leong, and Martin F. Manalansan IV. **See also** Asian American Political Activism; Asian American Stereotypes; Asian American Studies, Asian Diasporas; Civil Rights Movement and Asian America; Feminism and Asian America; Gay Male Literature; Lesbian Literature.

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KENNETH CHAN

## R



### ◆ RACHLIN, NAHID MEHRAMY (1947–)

Major Iranian American novelist, short story writer, and memoirist. Nahid Mehramy, 1 of 10 children, was born in the town of Abadan, Iran, in 1947. Her father was a lawyer and her mother a homemaker. While she was an infant, she was informally adopted by her mother's older sister, who was a childless widow; however, when she was 10 years old, her father forced her to return to her birth family. Young Nahid was deeply traumatized by this coerced dislocation, and her unhappiness was compounded by the fact that she never fully reconnected with her birth parents and several of her siblings. In 1964 she was awarded admission, along with a full scholarship, to Lindenwood College in Missouri. Initially her father opposed her plans to go to the United States, but eventually he relented and let her leave. At Lindenwood she received a degree in psychology and in 1968 moved to New York City to pursue graduate work at the New School for Social Research. There she met and married Howard Rachlin, a Jewish American fellow student; shortly after the marriage, she abandoned her graduate studies in psychology to pursue her lifelong passion: writing. She took creative writing courses and began to publish short stories in a variety of periodicals in the early seventies. Since then she has published four novels: *Foreigner* (1978), *Married to a Stranger* (1983), *The Heart's Desire* (1995), and *Jumping over Fire* (2006). She is also the author of *Veils* (1992), a collection of short stories, and a memoir: *Persian Girls* (2006). Currently she teaches at the New School University in New York City.

*Foreigner*, Rachlin's first novel, remains her most popular. A quasi-autobiographical work written in spare and pithy prose, it narrates the story of a young Iranian woman's quest for personal wholeness. Feri, the protagonist, leaves Iran at age 18 to attend

college in the United States. Her journey ostensibly is to receive higher education, but in reality it is a frantic attempt to escape her circumscribed existence in a middle-class, decidedly patriarchal home and to remove herself from uneasy relationships with her domineering father and her stepmother and stepbrother. After graduating from college Feri marries an American academic, Tony McIntosh, and works as a research biologist in Boston but increasingly feels a deep sense of dissatisfaction with her life. After 14 years in the United States, Feri—prompted by her faltering marriage, empty suburban life devoid of meaningful emotional connections, and troubling dreams about her childhood—decides to return to Iran for a visit. After a few days at her father's home in Tehran, however, she finds her homecoming increasingly unpleasant; she feels like an outsider both within her own family and in the larger Iranian culture. While she prepares to return to the United States, she discovers—during an angry altercation with her father—the real reason why her mother left the family more than two decades earlier. Her father reveals that her mother did not leave the family to serve God as she had been told, but that she had abandoned her husband and daughter by eloping with a man with whom she had fallen in love. Feri decides to locate her mother. She travels to Kashan, a small town a few hundred miles from Tehran, and reconnects with her mother, now an old, broken woman living alone. In Kashan she also meets Dr. Majid, a handsome Iranian physician who had also lived in the United States for years but has now returned to Iran for good. Now more than ever Feri realizes the stark loneliness of her life in the United States and the nature of her emotionally vacuous marriage to a cold, self-absorbed man. She begins to reconnect with Iranian culture and Islam and finds the process healing and liberating. At the end of the novel, she travels with her mother on a donkey to a remote religious shrine built to honor an ancient female saint. She experiences a powerful sense of renewal; she feels “serene” and “tranquil” (1978, 192). It appears that she has decided not to return to the United States and to her husband. While she has no clear plans for the future, she is entirely at peace living in the moment.

The plot of *Foreigner*, like the plots of many of Rachlin's works, pivots on the journey motif. Feri's physical journey symbolizes her psychological voyage; she emerges as a questing heroine whose self-discovery is actualized by her reconnection with her mother, motherland, and traditional Islam. On one level the novel seems to claim, in opposition to Thomas Wolfe's famous assertion, that one can indeed go home again. Yet, on another level, the novel ominously underscores the fragility of Feri's discovery. The conclusion of the novel remains exquisitely ambivalent: it is unclear if we are to view Feri's return as a defeat or as a triumph. V.S. Naipaul offers a fascinating reading of the novel's conclusion. He argues that *Foreigner* is a prescient text that reveals foreknowledge of the dramatic political developments that were to take place in Iran shortly after its publication. *Foreigner* was published in 1978; the Islamic Revolution

in Iran that overthrew the Shah and installed Ayatollah Khomeini as the ruling cleric took place in 1979. Naipaul argues that the novel on a miniature scale stages the impending revolution. Just as Feri, a highly educated medical biologist, finds the West deeply dissatisfying and seeks her salvation in a medieval brand of Islam, Iran itself will violently reject the Shah and his hasty attempts to modernize (and in that process also Westernize) the nation and embrace Islamic fundamentalism.

Many of the themes that Rachlin touches on in *Foreigner*—marriage and its discontents, quest for female autonomy in a patriarchal society, lure of religious fundamentalism, migration and mutation, politics of cross-cultural connections—resurface with varying shades of emphasis in her subsequent works. *Married to a Stranger*, Rachlin's second novel, is the story of Minou, a young Iranian woman who rebels against patriarchal prescriptions that limit her options and maim her life. Rather than acquiesce to an arranged marriage, she chooses her own groom: she falls in love with Javad Patrovi, a substitute teacher at her school, and marries him. But their marriage, though happy in the beginning, begins to collapse, largely because of Javad's persistent infidelity and his political activism that provokes violent retaliation from his reactionary opponents. Minou is deeply troubled by her failing marriage, but she is determined to shape her own destiny. She manages to leave for the United States on a student visa to study in Boston. She burns her wedding dress before departing Iran to start anew in the United States. While in Boston she learns from newspaper reports that Javad and his lover had been arrested and jailed for sedition. Years later, Minou returns to Iran for a visit. Iran is now a country devastated by a lengthy war with neighboring Iraq, and Minou is numbed by the destruction that she sees everywhere. The novel ends on an unresolved note: though Minou now leads her life with a considerable level of independence—something she had always wanted—she feels cheerless and empty: the ruins of bombed Iranian towns mirror her interior landscape.

Broken relationship is also at the center of *The Heart's Desire*, Rachlin's third novel. Here the relationship is a cross-cultural one: Karim Sahary, an Iranian-born professor teaching at a university in Ohio, is married to Jennifer, an American artist. They arrive in Iran with their six-year-old son, Darius, on vacation. The events that unfold both on the domestic and national fronts fundamentally alter their lives. Much of the novel's action takes place in 1979, a year of major upheavals in Iran: violent revolt against the Shah's regime, establishment of a theocratic government by the Ayatollah Khomeini, and detention of dozens of Americans as hostages in the U.S. embassy building in Tehran that precipitated an intractable international crisis. Karim, who had been subjected to anti-Iranian taunts in Ohio because of the hostage crisis, increasingly feels that he and his family belong in Iran. Jennifer, however, now faces a host of new challenges: as a non-Muslim American woman living in Iran, her very presence provokes suspicion and hostility. The couple drifts apart. Toward the end of the novel, Jennifer returns to Ohio with her son

Darius. She and Karim, who remains in Iran, continue to stay in touch, but it appears unlikely that they will reunite. In *The Heart's Desire*, as in her previous novel, Rachlin presents the young couple's relationship in the wider context of Iran's turbulent politics and explores how public events affect even the most intimate human relationships.

*Jumping over Fire*, Rachlin's fourth and most recent novel, centers on the Ellahi family. Cyrus Ellahi is an Iranian doctor married to Moira, an American nurse; they live in Iran with their adopted son, Jahan, and their biological daughter, Nora. Nora is the novel's narrative center; she tells the story in the first person and the various events are filtered through her consciousness. As a teenager in an Iranian oil town with a large expatriate population, Nora is tantalized by the personal and sexual freedom that American and European children her age have; at her home she feels severely constrained by her father's traditional values. Her exposure to Hollywood movies and American romantic novels further intensifies her desire for greater freedom. She begins to find her brother sexually attractive, and Jahan reciprocates her feelings. They begin a sexual relationship. Though they are troubled by feelings of guilt, they justify their relationship by reminding themselves that they are not related by blood. At this time the Ellahis, prompted by the increasing repressiveness of the Shah's regime, flee to the United States as refugees and begin to rebuild their lives on Long Island. Nora, who is fair-complexioned like her mother and speaks English with an American accent, adjusts with relative ease. Jahan, however, is dark-skinned like his father and looks unmistakably Middle Eastern; he is frequently the target of anti-Iranian racism. Wounded by racist encounters, Jahan increasingly drifts toward Islamic fundamentalism, which offers him a sense of purpose and feelings of community with fellow believers. When war breaks out between Iran and Iraq, Jahan decides to return home to fight for his country. A few years later, after having lost touch with him completely, Nora travels to Iran to find him. She does find him; wounded in the war, Jahan now walks with a limp, teaches art at a local school, and is engaged to be married. He reveals a startling secret that he is in fact her half-brother—that he was born to a woman their father had a brief affair with. At the end of the novel he assures Nora that he has at last found balance and happiness in his life, and he wishes that she would too. His wish sounds to her "like an order and a release" (2006, 258). Incest thus emerges as a major theme in the novel. In her interviews Rachlin asserts that incest in *Jumping over Fire* is symbolic of the sexual repressiveness that allows Nora few options to express herself sexually in a culture that rigorously polices the female body.

Because some of the themes of Rachlin's own life provide the foundation for her fiction, her memoir, *Persian Girls*, is an ideal starting point for readers of her oeuvre. A beautifully written text, *Persian Girls* is a candid account of her own life as well as a compelling view of Iran during the last 50 years of its tumultuous history. It is also a classic example of a *künstlerroman*, a sensitive portrayal of the artist as a young woman. See also Iranian American Literature; Racism and Asian America.

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EMMANUEL S. NELSON

## ◆ RACISM AND ASIAN AMERICA

Racism is a false belief and practice of hatred against racial others, grounded on two broad premises: first, that a person is predetermined by his or her innate biological characteristics, and second, that one race is superior or inferior to another. Asian Americans are seldom seen as victims of racism. It is very recent that Asian Americans are recognized as a racial minority, despite the long history of racial discrimination against them. The major reason is that the racial formation of American race is either black or white. Race relations in the United States have been largely seen as black versus white, and the racial problem has been only understood as black. In this either black or white, racial binary thinking, Asian Americans find themselves in an ambiguous position. On the one hand, they are invisible to political discussions of race and racism; on the other hand, they are highly vulnerable to racism and racial hatred because they are regarded as racially inferior. The ideology of racial inferiority of the Asian race was formulated by Orientalism, which was historically ingrained in the Western views of and attitudes toward Asian race.

Since entering the United States in the early nineteenth century, Asian Americans underwent harsh racist treatment and discrimination. When the Chinese immigrants came to seek gold, the state government of California imposed the Foreign Miner's Tax (1850), which was applied exclusively to Chinese. The early Chinese Americans suffered from a series of exclusion of entry and reentry throughout the nineteenth century, which culminated in the 1882 **Chinese Exclusion Act**. This was the first legal act that officially excluded one ethnic group because of its race. Until it was repealed in 1943, the act was repeatedly renewed almost every decade. But it was not only Chinese Americans who experienced racial discrimination. One of the early South Asian immigrant groups, the Sikhs were ridiculed as "tides of turbans" (Takaki 1989, 294). The 1917 Asiatic Barred Zone Act drew an imaginary line from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean, Aegean, and Black Seas, through the Caucasus Mountains and the Caspian Sea along the Ural River and through the Ural Mountains, to deny entry to South Asian immigrants. Other



early Asian Americans, such as Japanese and Koreans, also suffered discriminatory treatments. During **World War II**, right after the **Pearl Harbor** attack, the Japanese Americans on the West Coast were relocated to internment camps due to wartime hysteria, and throughout the 1980s and 1990s Korean American small business owners had to face severe boycotts from African American neighbors, which climaxed in the riots ignited by the Rodney King verdict in Los Angeles in 1992.

The legal history of American citizenship and naturalization also illustrates how racism against Asians was institutionalized. Since the 1790 Naturalization Act stipulated that only free white men could become naturalized citizens, people who were classified as nonwhites were denied citizenship and faced racial discrimination. When George Hall was accused of murder in 1854, Hall claimed that Chinese could not testify in court because of their being uncivilized. The court ruled that even though the law did specify only "Blacks and Indians (Native Americans)" could not testify, Asians could not testify in the court either since they belonged to "Indians" (Center for Educational Telecommunications, online). Whereas African Americans eventually earned rights to become citizens through constitutional amendments following the abolishment, Asians were still unrecognized as rightful citizens in this country. In 1922 a Japanese man Takao Ozawa appealed to the court for his naturalization based on the argument that he was actually white because he was totally assimilated, speaking English and being Christian and educated in America. But the court ruled against him, arguing that cultural assimilation does not determine whiteness. In 1923 a Sikh Bhagat Singh Thind sought citizenship based upon the scientific fact that Asian Indians are classified as Caucasians. But once again the court ruled against him, arguing this time that whether a person is white or nonwhite should be determined by what "the average man knows perfectly" (Okiihiro 2001, 21).

These three cases demonstrate that the legal definition of Asian racial identity was historically contingent. In these cases, to define a race meant mainly to prove who is white. While Asians in fact continued to be seen as nonwhites and as inferior to whites, the cases show that the race of Asian Americans remains questionable: are they white or nonwhite? The modern-day **Asian American stereotype** of the **model minority** aggravates this ambiguous situation. While in the past Asians were no doubt nonwhites, as a model minority in the contemporary society, Asian Americans are often termed "whiter than whites" or "honorary whites." However, the changing image of Asian Americans did not help them to avoid racial hatred. In 1982, Vincent **Chin**, a Chinese American, was clubbed to death by two white autoworkers in Detroit at the peak of anti-Japanese movement. The two murderers received three years' probation and \$3,780 in fines and court costs. A decade later, African Americans in southern Los Angeles started to loot Korean stores and liquor shops upon the proclamation of the Rodney King verdict on April 29, 1992. The three-day chaos left the Korean immigrant community nothing. The riot sends a hard lesson to Asian Americans

about the ambiguity of their racial identity. Neither black nor white, the Korean American community became the target of suppressed anger and frustration from African Americans, without any protection from the law and order, which allegedly was concerned with guarding the white neighborhood. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Asian Americans were defenselessly susceptible to hate crimes.

Asian Americans did not remain silent and started to engage with the racial reality of the country around the time of the civil rights movement. **Asian American political activism**, led by Asian American students, raised the political awareness of Asian American racial identity. Since two students Yuji Ichioka and Emma Gee coined *Asian American* as a replacement of *Oriental*, the stubborn racist title for Asians, Asian American identity as a panethnic and racial group began to emerge. But its wide acceptance still faced the harsh reality of racial conflicts and awaited pricy lessons. Upon facing the brutal murder of Vincent Chin, the Asian American community responded by forming a pan-Asian group, American Citizens for Justice (ACJ). This activity was the first grassroots, panethnic community advocacy effort that explicitly declared itself Asian American. If the murder of Vincent Chin provoked Asian Americans who kept a low profile when it came to race and racism into a stunned and sorrowful acknowledgment of their racial reality, the LA riot awakened them to a more complex condition of American race relations. When Korean immigrants became the target of African American suppressed anger and frustration about the American justice system, other Asian Americans kept silent or criticized Korean immigrants without questioning the stereotypes of the "emotionless, cold-blooded, money-seeking, unassimilated" Korean immigrants. Asian American communities nationwide witnessed not only the racial tension between Asians and blacks but also the internal conflicts and misunderstanding within themselves. The riot bears witness to the dilemma of the late 1960s' panethnic consciousness that has been challenged by the incoming Asian immigrants in the post-1965 United States. While Asian American racial identity was formed in reaction to the racist ideology of Orientalism against Asians, it also needs to be sensitive and comprehensive to the difference and diversity within Asian Americans.

Through confrontation with and resistance against racism, the Asian American experience encompasses the modern history of the United States, illuminating several points in terms of race, racism, and race relations in our country. First, the idea of race is a political construction, contingent upon historical circumstances. Second, Asian American as a racial category is also a historical construct and not a biologically given trait. The lessons that Asian Americans have learned are valuable to debunk the racist ideology and to seek wise solutions to eliminate racism.

As a racial group, Asian Americans presently confront new challenges, such as ethnic diversity and different racial configurations further complicated by, for example,

mixed races and transnational adoptions. As the contemporary society becomes more open, interracial marriages are on the rise. Mixed-race youth often confess their confusion about racial belonging. In addition, the adoptees who entered this country through adoption by mostly white middle-class families switch the issue of racial identity into a cultural dimension by challenging the die-hard assumption about Asian race that racism has proliferated. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Assimilation/Americanization; Civil Rights Movement and Asian America; Japanese American Internment; Orientalism and Asian America.

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SOOYOUNG KANG

### ◆ RAMA RAU, SANTHA (1923–)

Indian American travel writer, autobiographer, novelist, and playwright Santha Rama Rau was born in the southern Indian city of Chennai, formerly known as Madras, on January 24, 1923, to Benegal Rama Rau and Dhanvanthi Handoo. Her parents were members of the Indian elite, and her childhood was a privileged one. Her father, Sir Benegal, was educated in both India and England; a distinguished civil servant and diplomat, he served as India's ambassador to South Africa, Japan, and the

United States. Her mother, one of the first women in India to teach English literature at the college level, was an early pioneer in India's nascent women's rights movement and served for several years as the president of the International Planned Parenthood Federation. At age six Santha Rama Rau left for England with her family and returned to India 10 years later. After a short stay in India, she enrolled at Wellesley College in Massachusetts and in 1944 became the first Indian student to graduate from that school. In 1952 she married Faubion Bowers, an American writer whom she had met in Japan during the American occupation, and their only child was born the following year. In 1970, now divorced from Bowers, she married Gordon Wattles, an American lawyer. During the seventies she taught literature and creative writing at Sarah Lawrence College in New York. Though she was a prolific writer for almost four decades, she has published little since the mid-1980s. She currently lives in Amenia, New York.

Santha Rama Rau is an intrepid and inveterate traveler who has lived internationally since her childhood, and a refined, sophisticated, cosmopolitan sensibility informs her work. Yet India remains at the heart of her oeuvre. *Home to India* (1945), her first major published work, which she began writing while an undergraduate student, is a record of her rediscovery of India. When she returns to India at age 16 in 1939, after having already lived abroad for 10 years, India impresses her as a strange place. The initial culture shock, however, slowly dissipates, and Rama Rau connects with the land of her birth—its ancient traditions, spectacular diversity, and turbulent politics—both intellectually and emotionally. In that process she gains what she would later describe as the “confidence and pleasure in being Indian” (1961, 223). The autobiographical thrust of her first book resurfaces in the form of travel writing in her next work, *East of Home* (1950). It is a lively narrative of her journey through East Asia during the late 1940s: Japan, China, Indochina, Siam, and Indonesia. Her deep engagement with the cultures she encounters is evident throughout the narrative; in fact, her intellectual curiosity that prompts her to seek fuller understanding of the people and the places gives the book a distinct anthropological dimension and ethnographic depth. The most compelling discovery she makes during the journey, however, is about herself: she realizes that her Indian identity is fundamentally linked to the vast Asian continent and that she—a citizen of a newly independent India—has much in common with other colonized Asians. This formation of a postcolonial consciousness is at the core of her travel narrative.

Santha Rama Rau has published three other important travel narratives: *This Is India* (1954), *View to the Southeast* (1957), and *My Russian Journey* (1959). The first work is a concise commentary on her whirlwind tour of India; written with a Western audience in mind, it serves as a brief but useful introduction to the history, art, philosophy, and various cultural traditions of India. Rama Rau writes from the vantage point

of an Indian insider who has a confident understanding of Western tastes and sensibilities. The second narrative is a fascinating account of her travels in Southeast Asia; among the 10 countries she visits are the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, and Ceylon. The third book documents her journey through the Soviet Union. Here, as elsewhere, Rama Rau is curious and empathetic, but her distaste for communism is amply evident throughout the text.

Although Rama Rau is best known for her travel narratives, she has also published two novels, and both works of fiction exemplify her journalistic eye for detail and an uncanny ability to create characters with complex interior lives. *Remember the House* (1956), a female *bildungsroman*, explores the tension between tradition and modernity, between the East and the West, by focusing on the life of its protagonist Baba. An upper-class young Indian woman, Baba is tantalized by Western-style romance and attempts such a relationship with Krishnan, an earnest schoolteacher. She is disappointed when she discovers that Krishnan is already engaged but realizes in the meantime the superficial nature of romantic attachments based largely on physical attraction. Rather than seek love on her own, she ultimately opts for a traditional marriage arranged by her parents. *The Adventuress* (1970), a more ambitious novel, has an international setting. Its protagonist is an enigmatic, wily, and racially indeterminate young woman who goes by various names, such as Kay, Keiko-san, Catalina Garcia, and Kate Gomez. The novel maps her complex romantic relationships with Charles Beaver, an American military officer in occupied Japan; Jeremy Wilson, a British pilot in the Philippines; and David Marius, an American banker in Hong Kong. The men attempt to shape and control her life, but she subtly manipulates each relationship to her own advantage.

*Gifts of Passage*, published in 1961, is an intriguing text that eludes generic classification. It is a collection of quasi-autobiographical short stories, brief travel narratives, and self-exploratory essays previously published in various venues and arranged in chronological sequence. The multiple pieces, though seemingly disparate, nevertheless cohere into a logically integrated larger narrative. They eloquently achieve the author's stated goal: to offer the readers a series of "illuminating moments which have fixed the pattern" (Rama Rau 1961, xi) of her eventful life.

Also in 1961 Rama Rau published a play based on E.M. Forster's classic novel *A Passage to India* (1924). The play had successful runs in London and in New York City, was subsequently produced for television by the British Broadcasting Corporation, and then in 1984 became the basis for David Lean's critically acclaimed movie version of the novel. *A Princess Remembers*, a collaborative autobiography that Rama Rau coauthored with Gayatri Devi, was published in 1976. It is a record of the glamorous life of Gayatri Devi, a member of one of India's most colorful royal families. Rama Rau has also published cookbooks that highlight the various regional cuisines of India.

Though Rama Rau's work has been widely reviewed, it has so far elicited little critical interest or academic recognition. Scholars are yet to discover that Rama Rau was a multiculturalist long before such an appellation was invented. Her contribution to travel literature and autobiographical writing is substantial. She is as vital to the international school of postcolonial writing as she is to the Asian American tradition in literature.

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EMMANUEL S. NELSON

◆ RAO, RAJA (1908–2006)

An eminent Indian writer of English language, Raja Rao was born on November 8, 1908, in Hassan, Karnataka province of South India. He was educated in the *Madarsa-e-Aliya* and Nizam's College, both situated in the city of Hyderabad. Graduating in English and history from Madras University, Rao went to France on a scholarship in 1929. In the Universities of Montpellier and the Sorbonne, he studied theology, history, and French literature. Raja Rao's writing career began in the early 1930s. His mother tongue was Kannada, but he wrote mainly in English. Some of his stories were also published in French. He contributed articles written in his mother tongue for a journal entitled *Jaya Karnataka*. Rao returned to India in 1939 and resided in the ashram of Ramana Maharshi (1879–1950) at Tiruvannamalai for sometime. A widely traveled person in search of spiritualism, he was very much active at the time of the Quit India Movement, 1942, against the British colonial rule. The post-World War II period found him involved in cultural organizations that were propagating Indian values. He visited France and the United States. Rao later began his teaching career at the University of Texas, Austin, from 1966. His favorite topics were Indian philosophy, Buddhism, Gandhian thoughts, and Marxism. He retired as emeritus professor in 1983. Rao passed away on July 8, 2006, at Austin due to heart attack.

Raja Rao used to say, "Writing is my dharma" (Litweb) and his novels, short stories, biographies and essays amply prove this. He published his first novel, *Kanthapura*, in 1938. The novel is a fascinating account of Indian independence movement in the

backdrop of an isolated village in Karnataka, South India. Since then, it has become one of the best known Indian novels written in the English language. The *Kanthapura*, a contemporary Indian classic, is fictional, but the treatment meted out is realistic. Rao was involved in nationalist struggles against British imperialism, and the *Kanthapura* portrayed the influence of ideals like *ahimsa* (nonviolence) and *satyagraha* (true force, nonviolent protest) of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948). Through these doctrines, Gandhiji had led one of the largest mass movements in history. The novel reflects lives of peoples under British colonialism and their response to the ongoing freedom struggle in the heydays of the 1920s and 1930s.

The story is portrayed through the narration of an old woman. Departing from the traditional novel with a linear structure, it is in tune with the oral tradition of legendary history. Like the Indian *Puranas*, which are admixture of legend, history, philosophy, and religion, the *Kanthapura* as described by Rao is a *sthala purana* (legend of a place). The narrator delves into the past and juxtaposes it with the present. Kanthapura is like another Indian village with its stratified society along the caste lines. The residents in a particular locality belong to the same caste. But economic dependence, various festivals, and prayers before local deity Kenchamma bring the villagers together. The main characters and events are replete with indigenous materials, such as folklores and stories from epics. The central protagonist of the novel is urban-returned Moorthy, son of a Brahmin woman, Narasamma. An idealist and true Gandhian, he spreads the message of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* as the resistance against alien rule reaches the village of Kanthapura.

The *harikathas* (stories from fables and *puranas*) are Moorthy's means to awaken his fellow villagers. These stories become symbols for narrating the events of a freedom struggle. For the people of Kanthapura, he is their own Gandhi. The village witnesses a rare sense of unity by participating in breaking the colonial laws imposed by the British government. There is even a social agenda interlinked with the freedom struggle, such as picketing before country liquor shops and preaching against the rigid caste barriers. Although the majority of the villagers are on Moorthy's side, some conservative forces go against him. The priest, Swami, a symbol of orthodoxy, threatens the villagers with excommunication if Moorthy goes on mixing with low caste people. Naraamma, mother of Moorthy, dies after becoming terribly upset. But the message of Moorthy has an impact as temple doors are opened to untouchables in many places. On a political plane, the colonial government finds many collaborators. Swami is promised by the British with 1,200 acres of irrigated land. The Gandhian movement spreads, and the laborers of the Skeffington Coffee Estate are beaten ruthlessly. Gandhi's famous Dandi march of 1930 has its impact on the village, when people take recourse to nonviolent resistance. The villagers bear the brutality of colonial police. Another noteworthy feature of the novel is gender empowerment. There is a cultural

awakening and regeneration of women. They participate in the *satyagraha* and form women's volunteer groups. Rao's fictional treatment of the collective sacrifice of women adds to the value of the novel. Written in simple and elegant prose, *Kanthapura* has become a landmark novel in Indian fiction.

*The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), a semiautobiographical treatise, revolves round the relationship between an Indian Brahmin Ramaswamy and French college teacher, Madeleine. Brought up in different cultural moorings, both find their marriage disintegrated. Rao delineates Indian and Western cultural life through the different perceptions of Ramaswamy and Madeleine. The story moves in India, France, and Great Britain. The French lady, who later becomes a Buddhist, believes in objective reality outside one's self. Following the Vedantic tradition, the Indian Brahmin follows the dictum, "reality is my self." The constraints imposed by the Hindu family life result in the disintegration of the nuptial bond, and the wife leaves her husband. The serpent and the rope, the title of the novel, depict the illusion and reality of lives, respectively.

The French version of *Comrade Kirillov* was published in 1965. The main character, called Padmanabha Iyer, was a South Indian Brahmin. Moving away from theosophy, he learned German to read Marx and Engels. He even studied Russian to learn about Lenin's teachings. In 1928, he arrived in Liverpool and became Comrade Kirillov. In spite of being a communist, he had deep love for Indian culture on an emotional level. But on an intellectual plane, he was a bitter critic of India. It could be said that he had a split personality, as he abjured neither the deeply embedded Indian tradition nor the Soviet ideology. The novel criticized the doctrine of communism, which was alien to Indian ethos. In a didactic note, it mentioned that the Indians would not betray their motherland because it was much bigger than politics or philosophy. Even after returning to India, Kirillov was torn between his essential Indianness and communist ideology. He took refuge in Beijing at last, and his son Kamal offered some hope in the end of the novel.

*The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965), a metaphysical comedy, deals with the destiny of the individual. It addresses some of the philosophical problems explored in Rao's earlier writings. A cat symbolizes the karmic notion of Hinduism. Govindan Nair, the central character, solves the problem of daily life and its tribulations by correlating it with a kitten. The kitten is carried by the mother cat and is saved. The world is like a play, which is controlled by the Supreme Reality. This Vedantic philosophy is explained with sarcasm, and even the great Shakespeare is not spared. The neighbor and close friend of Nair, Ramakrishna Pai, is aghast at solutions offered by the former. Rao delineates the daily concerns of life in a simple, genteel, and humorous manner, excellently blending esoteric philosophy with mundane life.

Using the allegory of a chess game, Raja Rao delves into philosophy in *The Chessmaster and His Moves* (1988). The philosophical and psychological ideas in the book are similar to those of Russian American novelist and short story writer Vladimir



Vladimirovich Nabokov (1899–1977). People having different cultural backgrounds search for their true identities. The characters are Indian, European, African, and Jewish. The spatial dimension of the novel straddles India, France, Great Britain, and the human mind. In the novel, an Indian mathematician from Paris confesses his love affair to a rabbi. The dalliance between Sivarama Sastri and the French star Suzanne Chantereux ends in tragedy. Difference in attitude toward love between the Indian and the Western mind is portrayed with tenderness and sensitivity. Sastri searches for freedom from the mundane world, whereas his love clamors for happiness in the world. The metaphysical exploration of the novel is deeply rooted in Indian tradition. For Raja Rao, the ultimate reality is the maxim from the Upanishads, *tat twam asi*. He does not see India through a Western lens like many others. Rather he explores eternal India for the Western readers. Like a game of chess, Rao plays with different participants, but it is not to score victory. Happiness is the ultimate goal.

Raja Rao is a prolific writer with many short stories and nonfiction works to his credit. Some of his notable writings in this genre are *Changing India: An Anthology* (1939) and *Whither India?* (1948). Both of these books are edited with Iqbal Singh. In 1949, Rao edited the work of Jawaharlal Nehru, *Soviet Russia: Some Random Sketches and Impressions*. His collections of short stories are *The Policeman and the Rose* (1978) and *On the Ganga Ghat* (1988). In 1996 he published a compilation of essays entitled *The Meaning of India*, which is an excellent discourse on leadership, experience in independence movements, and interactions with famous personalities such as André Malraux and E.M. Forster. Raja Rao had resided in Gandhi's ashram in 1942 and was deeply influenced by his teachings. A great account of Gandhi was found in his *The Great Indian Way: A Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (1998). Some of Rao's important essays and articles are "The Premier of Sakuntala" (1943), "Books Which Have Influenced Me" (1962), "André Malraux Among the Gods of India" (1964), "The Gandhian Way" (1965), "Irish Interlude" (1966), and "Autobiography: Entering the Literary World" (1979), among others. He has also published a verse, *Expiation of a Heretic*, in 1932. His *Chessmaster and His Moves* was planned as the first of a trilogy, but he breathed his last while writing the sequel, *Daughter of the Mountain*, published on November 8, his birthday.

A professor of the University of Texas, Raja Rao was bestowed with many honors and rewards in his checkered career. The government of India conferred on him the Padma Bhushan in 1969. In 1972 he was made a fellow of the Woodrow Wilson International Center, Washington, the District of Columbia. Twelve years later, he was elected an honorary fellow of the Modern Language Association of America. Rao received the prestigious Neustadt International Prize for Literature in 1988 with a sum of \$25,000. The Sahitya Akademi Fellowship, India's highest literary award, was given to him in 1997. Rao received the Padma Vibhushan, India's second-highest

civilian award, in January 2007, posthumously. The Samvad India Foundation of New Delhi gives an award in his memory for excellence in literature of the South Asian diaspora. It is to a considerable extent because of Rao's writing that the West is looking toward the East. He has become a spiritual preceptor for the Indian civilization, spirituality, and culture. Rao has become a symbol of eternal India. The quintessential writer of the great Indian diaspora, he has carved a permanent niche in India and in Asian American literature. Yet, he is humble, which is best exemplified by his speech at the time of receiving the Neustadt Prize. He stated, "In fact, we are all sages, but we don't recognize it. That is what the Indian tradition says . . . It is to that root of writing I pay homage. The Neustadt Prize is thus not given to me, but to That which is far beyond me, yet in me—because I alone know I am incapable of writing what people say I have written" ("Philosophy of Raja Rao"). **See also** Asian Diasporas; Colonialism and Postcolonialism.

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PATIT PABAN MISHRA

### ◆ RAWI (THE RADIUS OF ARAB AMERICAN WRITERS, INCORPORATED [1992–])

RAWI is a professional organization of Arab and Arab American writers, dedicated to promoting Arab and **Arab American literature** and cultural life. The organization, one of the few in the United States to support creative writers of Arab origin, was founded by Barbara Nimri Aziz, a journalist, writer, and radio broadcaster living in New York. Aziz was and still is the host of the popular program *Tahrir: Voices of the Arab World*, broadcast on Pacifica–WBAI. While living in Damascus, Syria, in the early 1990s, during the time of the turbulent first Gulf War, Aziz learned of the existence of pan-Arab writers' organizations. Having been encouraged in the United States by African American writers and impressed by their level of comradeship and support, she wondered if an Arab American writers group could be established and sustained.

In 1992, at the annual convention of the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), one of the largest and most respected pro-Arab organizations in the United States, Aziz decided to try to meet other writers. She posted a note inviting Arab writers to join her in one of the meeting rooms, and a handful of interested people did. However, only one of them followed up with her after the convention's end, but together, Aziz and Leila Diab generated a list of active Arab American writers in the United States and contacted them in May of that year.

The following year, at the same convention, a more formal meeting of interested Arab American writers was held, attracting writers such as Lisa Suhair Majaj, Salma Khadra Jayyusi, David Williams, Nathalie Handal, and Marti Farah Ammar. This meeting in 1993 is considered the founding meeting of RAWI. In its early years, RAWI's activities were largely centered in New York City, where many of its

founding members lived. The group stayed active by publishing a newsletter and holding readings at local cafes, such as Kush and Cornelia Street Café.

The group's name, RAWI, is an acronym for Radius of Arab American Writers, Incorporated, but it also imparts another connotation. Created by writer and scholar Mohja Kahf, the name is also an Arabic word that aptly means "storyteller," and the group formally adopted it in 1994. By then, the group's membership had grown steadily from 15 members to 50. In 1996 RAWI was formally incorporated and solicited several prominent Arab and Arab American writers to serve on its board of directors. Lebanese American novelist and poet Etel Adnan was selected as the group's first president and Aziz as the executive director. Adnan stated that RAWI's main goal was to serve as "a gathering nucleus, a catalyst for creative energies, a starting point for more creativity" (Majaj).

Currently, the goals of RAWI include encouraging young Arab Americans to write, creating a professional network of Arab American writers, encouraging members to publish in mainstream venues, supporting writers living in the Middle East, fostering the careers of new writers and supporting established writers, and preparing a guide for Arab American writers. But RAWI also has a political component: its Web site states, "We seek to represent a progressive voice in the American community, and a voice for justice in the US and abroad. We seek to promote the building of coalitions, and collaborate with others around issues of social justice."

In keeping with its mission to support Arab American writers and to see their work in mainstream venues, RAWI published an anthology in 2000. Entitled *A Different Path: An Anthology of the Radius of Arab-American Writers*, the compilation was edited by D.H. Melhem and Leila Diab and published by the Ridgeway Press. A slim volume at 86 pages, *A Different Path* featured the work of many RAWI members, including established writers Lawrence Joseph, Etel Adnan, Naomi Shihab Nye, Issa Boullata, Salma Jayussi, and Aziz, as well as writers who were emerging on the literary scene at the time: Lisa Suhair Majaj, Mohja Kahf, Marti Farha Ammar, Ron David, and Micaela Raen.

RAWI also continued to actively publish its newsletter three times a year; newsletter editors Ron David and Jean Bond worked to maintain the newsletter as a way to keep members informed of publishing opportunities, of one another's publishing successes, and of general information related to writing. In 2001, RAWI returned to its roots, so to speak, and began organizing a writers' workshop at the annual ADC convention, which helped attract new members and highlight the importance of creative writing in Arab American life.

A year later, the organization began sponsoring its annual Creative Prose Competition, awarding prizes to members for submissions of short stories, creative non-fiction, novel excerpts, academic writing, and other prose. Organized by member

Alice Nashashibi, the awards feature Arab and Arab American established writers as judges each year.

In July 2005, RAWI held its first conference, another major step in its progress as a vibrant and growing organization. That conference also saw new elections, in which poet Khaled Mattawa became the new president and academic Steven Salaita the new executive director of the organization. Salaita assumed the lead in publishing the semiannual newsletter but moved ahead to a new Internet forum. RAWI commissioned a new Web site, designed by Joe Namy, for the organization. Rawi.org is currently not just a locus of information for members and other writers of Arab ethnicity, it also is an Internet publication featuring the work of writers on a regular basis. Its publications are also quite timely; during the 2006 Israeli attack on Lebanon, Rawi.org featured war diaries and blogs that were updated regularly by RAWI members, such as Rasha Salti, living in and reporting from Beirut during the conflict.

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SUSAN MUADDI DARRAJ

### ◆ RORIPAUGH, LEE ANN (1965–)

Lee Ann Roripaugh is a Japanese American poet and teacher. Born to Richard Roripaugh, Wyoming poet laureate, novelist, and University of Wyoming professor, and his Japanese wife Yoshiko, whom he met while serving in the occupation forces after **World War II**, Roripaugh grew up in Laramie, Wyoming. She received a BM in piano performance in 1987, an MM in musicology in 1989, and an MFA in creative writing (poetry) in 1996, all from Indiana University. She has published two volumes of poetry, *Beyond Heart Mountain* (1999) and *The Year of the Snake* (2004), and is currently an associate professor at the University of South Dakota, which she joined in 2000. Mining her mixed-race heritage, Roripaugh belongs to a group of contemporary younger writers that includes Kyoko Mori, Ruth Ozeki, and Gail Tsukiyama, whose more diverse backgrounds have expanded **Japanese American literature** beyond the generational framework that characterized its earlier production and study.

Hailing Roripaugh as “one of the brightest talents” writing poetry today (back cover), Ishmael Reed selected her first book of poetry, *Beyond Heart Mountain* (1998), for the National Poetry Series. Although the entire book mines her mixed Japanese and American heritage, it does so in three distinct ways. The first of the book’s three parts is the most autobiographical, dealing mainly with growing up with a Japanese mother and American father in the American West. Poems about hunting coyote and gutting an antelope with her father mix with poems about preparing squid, enduring the racial taunts of other children, and feeling embarrassed by her mother’s foreign clothes and ways. Ironically, it is also the mother who supports the Americanness of her daughter, scolding her husband for not teaching her about St. Patrick’s Day and sewing her a green dress. Formally, Roripaugh also experiments with prose poems and dramatic monologues in the first section. The two dramatic monologues stand out sharply as Roripaugh takes on the personae of Japanese women, including a Hiroshima maiden, who have experienced both American wartime destruction and postwar kindness. Roripaugh’s fascination with the dramatic monologue is central to the second section of the book. Unlike many nisei and sansei writers, Roripaugh did not have relatives who were interned during World War II; however, Wyoming was the site of one of the relocation camps, and, in a series of dramatic monologues, Roripaugh gives a human face and a voice to the internees in Wyoming’s camp at Heart Mountain. Although fictional, the poems are based on extensive research, including reading of the *Heart Mountain Sentinel*, the weekly newspaper written by the internees. The series of 10 poems allows Roripaugh to explore a range of issues and attitudes, but many of the poems deal with the hardships and indignities suffered by the internees and the ironies of their situation: a concert pianist’s hands ruined by frostbite; a fisherman who is thankful that his wife is “safe” at home in Nagasaki; or a man ashamed of his son becoming a no-no boy, although he did so out of outrage at his father having to sell his beloved Packard for \$20 to a racist white man who thought it was a “funny car for a Jap to have” anyway (46). Most of the poems in the third part are inspired by traditional Japanese myth and fairy tale, although many are also characterized by an acute observation of nature. Unlike the first section in which Roripaugh appropriates elements of the Momotaro (peach boy) story for a poem about her American life, in the third section, she takes on the voice of the weaver girl, the fish wife, the peony lover, and the woman who loved insects, retelling these myths.

Roripaugh’s second book of poems, *The Year of the Snake* (2004), which won the 2006 Association for Asian American Studies Book Award in Poetry and Prose, is a more organic whole. Structurally, poems about snakes and poems concerning her parents anchor the book at beginning, middle, and end, while the collection also moves from poems about growing up through a section on darker adult experiences to two final poems on hope, renewal, and generational connection. Many of the themes and

motifs—being “half caste” (1) and “in-between” (2), a fascination with nature and Japanese myths and fairy tales—are familiar from her first collection but are worked in more complicated and often new ways. Transplantation and **Asian diasporas** are central to a poem imagining her mother’s immigration journey that begins a series of poems reflecting on nostalgia, but this collection is less focused on the painful political and cultural issues of being Japanese in America or even Japanese American. The mixed-race heritage that had led to conflict in the first collection is now imaged in poems about the making of her family’s specialty—antelope jerky made with a teriyaki sauce—and expressing a less ambivalent bond with the mother. Poems about growing up instead focus on the desire to cross boundaries of body and her parents’ protectiveness to experience all of life, to be transformed, to see with a “third, wide eye” (12), which helps explain the numerous images of snakes and insects that molt. Despite references to Vietnam and DDT, the darkness in this collection is also less political and more personal, with a number of poems dealing with depression, isolation, drift, and love. Still her Japanese heritage colors her verse, most obviously in the symbolism and the continued use of Japanese folk tales but also more subtly in the close observation of nature and the tight verse form, especially in the many poems written in tercets reminiscent of haiku. Although the poems that use Japanese myths focus on love, similar to the first collection, in this second collection, those tales are most often tales of love betrayed. The female protagonists, however, are strong and active agents, even betrayal causing the growth of “a new, tough tongue” (52) as the poems in this collection more explicitly explore female sexuality and empowerment.

Although she sees herself primarily as a poet, Roripaugh has also published some short stories that draw on her mixed-race heritage and her musical background and is currently at work on a novel in stories and a new collection of poetry. She has published interviews with Wyoming writers Linda Hasselstrom and Richard Roripaugh and has written a series of meditative nonfiction pieces on a variety of topics—insects and transformation, art, monarchs and migration, and interpretative centers—all for the *South Dakota Review*, for which she has also been an issue editor. Her scholarly work includes a discussion of representations of lesbians on television. Awards include the Randall Jarrell International Poetry Prize and the Academy of American Poets Prize. **See also** Association for Asian American Studies; Issei, Nisei, Sansei.

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### ◆ ROSCA, NINOTCHKA (1946–)

An essayist, political activist, and fictionist, Ninotchka Rosca has achieved canonical status on the basis of both short stories and novels, in spite of mixed reactions from critics and reviewers. Born Ma. Antonio Rosca in Manila, her authorial focus remains the Philippines, although she is now a U.S. permanent resident. All of her works, including her one journalistic book (*Endgame, The Fall of Marcos*, 1987), are set in the Philippines. Her second book of short stories, *The Monsoon Collection* (1983), takes the form of a *kundiman* (love song), and her first novel, *State of War* (1988), a *pasion* (recitation of the life and sufferings of Jesus Christ).

In the early to mid-1960s at the University of the Philippines, from which she received BA and MA degrees, she developed a reputation as a leftist firebrand, to such an extent that a fellow participant at a 1963 writers' workshop dubbed her Ninotchka, after a Russian radical depicted in a Greta Garbo movie. She adopted the name, and her activism continued. At her first job, on the *Graphic* magazine editorial staff, she wrote polemical columns and, despite being a member of management, organized a labor union, for which she was fired.

In 1973, under martial law, Rosca—who had made no attempt to go underground—was arrested and detained for six months. No charges were preferred, nor was she tried. In 1976 rearrest was imminent but was prevented when she accepted a fellowship to the famed University of Iowa International Writing Program. A year later she was en route back to Manila but was warned not to return, so she taught Tagalog at the University of Hawaii for three years. In 1981 she moved to New York and became an editorial assistant at a publishing house. Her commitment to social justice causes never wavered, as evidenced by her founding of the Survivors Committee delegation at the U.N. Conference on Human Rights, serving as the U.S. representative of GABRIELA (which tries to protect overseas Filipino workers from abuse) and serving on the speakers' bureau for Amnesty International.

Rosca's early literary efforts were apprentice level, as she produced one five-poem series, a ghost story, and in 1963–1964 impressionistic but largely incoherent short stories, published in *The Philippine Collegian*, the University of the Philippines campus newspaper. Later she did wooden, propagandistic stories before finding her *métier*. Her mature short fiction has earned her such honors as a first prize in the annual *Philippines Free Press* Short Story Contest (1967) and a third prize in the prestigious Palanca Awards (1970). A 1986 short story was named by Raymond Carver as one of the best 100 published in the United States. Her novels have brought her accolades that include the 1998 Manila Critics Circle Award and the 1993 American Book Award. Though readers have noticed parallels to other renowned authors, such as Linda Ty-Casper (whose *Awaiting Trespass* is also structured as a *pasion*), Gabriel Garcia Marquez (in terms of magical realism), Nick Joaquin, Gilda Cordero-Fernando,



Estrella Alfon-Rivera, or even (as Rosca has acknowledged) national hero Jose Rizal, none of these influences is so pervasive as to render Rosca's work derivative. In fact, critics have found quite diverse and unique merits even in her first short story collection, *Bitter Country* (1970). For instance, L.M. Grow feels that the stories have an ontological implication, a vision of the cosmos reverting to the primordial, watery chaos from which ancient creation myths suggest that it was originally formed (1990, 177). Conversely, Leonard Casper's stance is that not only does *Bitter Country* have interior focus (mindscape) but also that the external cosmos is not generally present and, predictably, dialogue is scarce in three stories and stylized in two others (1987, 92–94).

*The Monsoon Collection*, the first of Rosca's books to be associated with magical realism, has a symmetrical structure: nine short stories are interpolated with nine intercalary passages. The resultant counterpointing is accentuated by the italic type in which the intercalary pieces are set. Bleak as the stories themselves are, the recurrent motif in the intercalary portions, the horrors of the detention center in 1972 to 1974, exacerbates this tone with the implication that there is no escape, not even hope. At the end of any episode, we are back where we started—incarcerated. As the author's note indicates, the idea for the collection was conceived in Camp Crame Detention Center in 1973, even though the stories were written sporadically between 1975 and 1979. The unitary design makes *The Monsoon Collection* less like an amalgamation in the *Bitter Country* mode and more like individual spokes of the same wheel.

Rosca's two novels, however, remain the cornerstone of her literary reputation. *State of War*, after evolving through six manuscript revisions in 10 years, was finished in 1982 though not published until 1988. Set in the Marcos authoritarian rule era, it embraces the colonial history of the Philippines. The texture is surrealistic, imbuing the novel with an allegorical quality that is enhanced by its triangular parallel structure. The three books of the 382-page novel are *The Book of Acts*, *The Book of Numbers*, and *The Book of Revelations*. The tripartite structure dovetails geographically with the Philippines's three principal clusters of islands (Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao) and temporally with three sets of invaders (Spain, the United States, and Japan), who are symbolically represented by the novel's three main characters—Adrian Banyaga, Anna Villaverde, and Eliza Hansen. The symbolic import of the characters (e.g., *banyaga* means “foreigner” in Tagalog) militates against a common assumption that *State of War* is a roman a clef (a novel in which real people appear as characters with fictitious names). Because of its temporal inclusiveness, *State of War* is not, at least per se, a collective biography, in spite of real-life originals like Edward Lansdale (“Mad Uncle Ed”), in turn the mentor of Colonel Urbano Amor, who, contrary to his name, is a sadistic torturer, not an embodiment of urbane love.

The central episode is the Ati-Atihan (literally “primitive dance”) festival, a carnival involving disguises that bedrocks the appearance versus reality theme in the novel. The theme is historically grounded in the name of Anna Villaverde’s ancestor Maya, whose name in Hindu thought means “illusion,” specifically “unreality personified as a celestial maiden.” Ironically, Maya was raped by a Spanish friar (symbolic of Spain’s colonization of the Philippines); her reality becomes anything but celestial or maiden-like. Along the same lines, the transvestites at the festival represent misleading appearance and perhaps sardonically comment on the recurrent joke of the novel, about Ferdinand Magellan circumcising (rather than circumnavigating) the globe. The crude humor suggests colonial emasculation but may detract from the seriousness of the novel. Based on the 1971 Plaza Miranda bombing, the superficially celebratory account of the festival cloaks a momentous occurrence, a reason that *State of War* is generally considered the first serious political novel published by a Filipina in the United States. Its impact on the Philippines has also been noticeable: from 1989 to 1990 it sold a record 4,600 copies.

By the time *Twice Blessed* was finished in 1990, the question of Rosca’s seriousness of purpose had become more acute. A steady lightening of tone had been visible since *The Monsoon Collection*, but *Twice Blessed* was received in some quarters as a “comic parable” (Casper 2000, 420) with a “witty, colorful style” that made for a “light opera” (Casper 2000, 421) effect. The erosions of time had been suggested by the author herself, though not in this context, by concluding her author’s note to *The Monsoon Collection* with “Time passes” and using the same expression as the concluding sentence of *State of War*. In a 1991 interview, Rosca claimed that the most significant character in her works was time itself.

Lampoon is certainly pervasive in *Twice Blessed*. One of its targets is the self-aggrandizement of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos, represented respectively in the characters Hector and Katerina Basbas (whose married name is Gloriosa). On the stage they commission for the anticipated forthcoming presidential inauguration: he is positioned on the design of the sun (first blessed) and she on the design of the moon (second blessed). These important symbols from Philippine folklore indicate the cosmic aspirations of the Basbas twins, as do the twins’ names. Gloriosa is a name for the Blessed Virgin, and of course Hector was the valiant, noble Trojan hero immortalized in the *Iliad*, revered as a man who preferred death to slavery and as a gentle, sensitive man. Ferdinand Marcos’s fake combat medals exposed him as anything but the equivalent of Hector on the battlefield, and his imposition of martial law, with its attendant murders and mutilations of men and women alike, stand in ironic contrast to Homer’s hero. The surname Basbas is almost a label (literally meaning “bless” in Tagalog) and reduplicative in English. In the surname of Hector’s presidential running mate, Emmanuel Patpatin, the second three letters echo the first three, another reverberation of the twinning motif.

In places, the dialogue has a lampoon quality as well, as in chapter 4, when Katerina directs her husband Armand to order 400 single-strand Mikimoto pearl necklaces (typical of Marcosian extravagance). Armand's initial response is the Spanish "*Hijo de . . .*" before being cut off by Katerina ("Wash your mouth"). The reader knows that *puta* would have been the next word in the oath, equivalent to "son of a bitch" in English. He then blurts out the American colloquialism. These locutions, reminders of two of the three foreign oppressors in Philippine history, not so subtly suggest that the Basbas twins have adopted an oppressor mantra. These touches of lampoon are not meant to trivialize *Twice Blessed*; they are designed to create a sense of the existential absurd. Beneath the surface of even the patches of boffo runs the "undercurrent of lament" that Rosca claims is inherent in all her works (Alcantara, 7).

Following his defeat in the election, the incumbent president, Jose "Blackie" Dominguez y Garcia, files petitions with the elections commission, claiming fraud. This impels Katerina to do a barnstorming tour of the north, to shore up alliances and distribute favors, including assault rifles illegally smuggled into the country. Hector also sets out to firm up his power base, but an off-season typhoon downs his plane, which also carries six bodyguards/assassins (appropriately called Diablos). The accident is, on a symbolic level, a comeuppance for cosmic aspiration, a la Icarus and Daedalus. Hector, again in ironic contrast to his Homeric namesake, is annoyed by the moans of the only other crash survivor, the pilot, and does not try to help him. The typhoon also collapses the inauguration stage, realistically a reenactment of the tragic Manila Film Festival occurrence and symbolically an emblem of the shakiness of the Basbas base of support for the presidency. The sleazy tactics of bribery, kickbacks, and coercion, which are repeatedly exposed as the novel unfolds, are the narrative reminders that the novel's title is ringingly ironic. The country is twice cursed, not twice blessed. At the end, Blackie agrees to "retire" in return for half a million dollars and an honorable exit from political life. Thus Blackie and Hector are also in a sense twinned, another manifestation of the situation in a country "twice blessed." See also Asian American Political Activism.

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L. M. GROW

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## S



### ◆ SAIKI, PATSY SUMIE (1915–2005)

Born on March 12, 1915, Japanese American writer and educator Patsy S. Saiki was the seventh and the last child born to Japanese immigrants who initially came to the Hawaiian Islands to work the sugar industry at the turn of the twentieth century. She first attended Honoka'a School and then left the island of Hawaii to first go to McKinley High School in Honolulu and then the University of Hawaii at Manoa for her BA in education in 1954 and her master's in 1959. Following five years as a public school teacher in Honolulu, Saiki left Hawaii to attend a summer seminar at the University of Wisconsin, made possible by a Wall Street Journalism Fellowship. She later obtained her EdD from Teachers College at Columbia University and returned to the islands to serve first as an assistant professor at the University of Hawaii. She went on to undertake a stint as a program specialist with the Central District Office of the Hawaii Department of Education. She soon became administrator of general education with the DOE's Office of Instructional Services. She retired from Hawaii public service in 1975; however, her commitment to the Japanese and the Japanese American communities led her to Japan for a one-year position at Yokohama National University (1975–1976) and prompted her philanthropic work as research chairperson of the Japanese American Citizens' League (1979–1981) and member of the Japanese Women's Society. She was awarded the Order of the Precious Crown by the government of Japan in 1996. Three years later, she established an endowment to sponsor a creative writing contest at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, which awards a UH system student for a short story that reflect[s] Hawaii's history, culture, or traditions.

Ever cognizant of her Japanese heritage, Saiki spent much of her writing career detailing the experience of her people in the islands. Her early works include a number of short stories and plays, written during her college career: "The Unwilling Bride" (1951), "The Return" (1959), "The Second Choice" (1959), and "The Return of Sam Patch" (1966). Her upbringing in a small rural town called Āhualoa, located on the lower slopes of Mauna Kea between Honoka'a and Waimea, provided the backdrop for her most famous novel, *Sachie, A Daughter of Hawai'i* (1977), which follows the trials and tribulations of a Japanese girl caught between Japanese cultural values and American ideals. Saiki then went on to write a number of more historically based works, such as *Ganbare! An Example of Japanese Spirit* (1982), *Japanese Women in Hawaii: The First 100 Years* (1985), and *Early Japanese Immigrants in Hawai'i* (1993).

Saiki's work may have gone relatively unnoticed by the academy had it not been for the scholarship of Stephen H. Sumida, a noted specialist on Hawaii's local literary development. Sumida's *And the View from the Shore: Literary Traditions of Hawai'i* identifies Saiki's novel as an example of the childhood idyll that is ubiquitous among the texts of the islands. In the chapter "Hawaii's Pastoral," Sumida offers an interesting examination of Saiki's work vis-à-vis the trajectory of Asian American literary history, which Sumida argues reflects a local if not Hawaiian consciousness of both history and place (1991, 92–93). Sumida criticizes the novel for being "didactic in the author's teaching of culture" (93); he also cites Saiki's short stories as imparting a profound commentary on the pastoral as a genre with respect to issues of identity and culture (96).

An interesting intersection between Asia and the United States manifests itself in the short stories that make up the early part of Saiki's writing career. Her first, "The Unwilling Bride," was written for the University of Hawaii's literary magazine, *The Lit*, and would eventually be republished in *Talk Story Big Island Anthology*. The story tracks the swift passage of time for Namiko Tanaka, a woman who is persuaded to marry a man 15 years her senior and to join him in Hawaii, where he labors on the sugar plantations. In the span of less than four pages, Namiko's life swiftly runs the gamut of newlywed, mother, widow, and dying invalid. The story ends with the sense that fate, "reveling in cruelty" (1979, 63), would not allow this woman to know the simple pleasure of owning a formal kimono; Namiko dies before seeing the garment her children order for her. The tale also offers an interesting look at gender expectations in the Japanese community. Cultural expectations for women are clearly articulated in Namiko's dying words, though this dogma is somewhat offset by the jarring relationship shared between Namiko and her daughter, Takeko, who is told: "Thinking back . . . you were so cute. Such a pest, but so cute. Promise me you'll be sweet and kind and gentle; a woman must always be gentle" (1979, 62).

Saiki's exploration of Japan as a site of contradictory values and ideals continues in "The Return" and "The Return of Sam Patch," two stories that are set in Japan. The first takes place in the Hiroshima area and involves a Japanese imperial soldier who returns home to find the bride who he left behind has been horribly scarred in the atomic bombing of that city. Interestingly enough, the play is written in iambic meter:

TOMIO: He stood and would not let me pass,  
And hatred oozed from every pore  
And trembling touched his calloused hands.

MOTHER: The war is over . . . you should not  
Command the peasants as your men.  
(As if the idea has struck her)  
Was he a soldier too, perhaps?  
In far off China . . . Burma . . . or Saipan?  
(unpublished manuscript, 100)

Though the overall sentiment expressed by the soldier is one of having "lost face" for not dying overseas in the service of the emperor and country (105), the fact that his bride has literally lost hers to the American campaign to subdue Japan makes for a striking denunciation of rabid nationalism and war, regardless of ethnicity or nationality.

Such are the sentiments that carry "The Return of Sam Patch," a fisherman whose life is saved after a storm by Americans, the very people who bring him home but as part of Admiral Perry's convoy to force Japan to open herself up to foreign trade and traffic. The return of this lost fisherman facilitates an interesting meeting of cultural norms. Mr. Perkins, an officer with Commodore Perry's ship, represents the quintessential Anglo American: he's suspicious of the Japanese and finds their superstitions regarding the camera to be a little annoying. On the same token, the villagers and the family of Sam Patch (Sampachi) must learn to overcome their fear of "foreign devils," a fear that Saiki reveals was a part of the propaganda leveled by the Tokugawa government at a time when they were raising taxes and exhausting the resources of the countryside as talk of war between these two countries begins to escalate. (As a side note, these two plays as well as "The Second Choice" have never been published and are housed with similar student writing at the Hamilton Library of the University of Hawaii at Manoa.)

The meeting of the East and the West is never very easy. This is the underlying premise of *Sachie*, which can be read as a semiautobiographical account based on her childhood on the Big Island. As Saiki once stated in an interview, the underlying conflict between the different generations of the local Japanese often involved identity; for this particular community of immigrant heritage, the question of being Japanese as opposed to being



American involved consciousness of skin color, relations with other races, even ambitions for the future. The difference in cultural expectations is one that draws the main character Sachie into many debates with her parents; these debates enable the author to vocalize multiple perspectives on the experience of the Japanese in Hawaii. In one particularly poignant passage, Sachie accuses her father of being a coward for not having stood up to a particularly abusive white *luna* (plantation manager) back in the days when her father still worked the sugar plantation. She also complains that he too often expects them to be either complacent or inconspicuous, which is often interpreted as not defending one's rights (1977, 16). In response, her father acknowledges her claims but also defends the Japanese ability to quietly tolerate injustice for the sake of success (17).

Saiki's creative nonfiction work in *Ganbare! An Example of Japanese Spirit* represents a fruition of her attention to the Japanese ethic of noble forbearance. This large collection of accounts of the outbreak of **World War II** and the subsequent internment of roughly 1,500 Hawaiian Japanese is creative rendered to highlight the nature of the diaspora. The stories include the capture of a Japanese pilot on Niihau during the **Pearl Harbor** attack (an incident that has disastrous consequences for a Japanese family living on the island), the deaths of a number of innocent sampan fisherman following the attack, and the internment of a select number of Hawaiian residents (teachers, priests, newspaper reporters, and labor organizers) who go on to meet other Japanese populations forcibly relocated from such far-flung locales as California, Peru, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Panama. The unifying sentiment that links these various individuals is the shared understanding of *gambaru*—to persevere. **See also** Asian Diasporas; Japanese American Internment; Nationalism and Asian America.

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SERI I. LUANGPHINITH

#### ◆ SAKAMOTO, EDWARD (1940–)

Born and raised in the A'ala Park neighborhood in Honolulu, Hawaii, Japanese American playwright Edward Sakamoto received a BA in English from the University of Hawaii in 1962 and moved to Los Angeles, California, in 1966, to work for the *Los Angeles Times*. He also studied in a graduate program in journalism at the University of Southern California. He is a recipient of many grants and awards, such as a

National Endowment for the Arts Grant, a Rockefeller Foundation Grant, the Hollywood Dramalogue Critic's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Writing for *Chikamatsu's Forest* and *Stew Rice*, the Po'okela Award for Excellence in Original Script for *Aloha Las Vegas*, and the Hawaii Award for Literature in 1997.

As a ninth grader, Sakamoto became interested in writing when he rewrote Robert Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, and while in college he tried acting. However, as he points out in his essay "Anna May Wong and the Dragon-Lady Syndrome," he saw the practice of typecasting Asian American performers and faced a lack of meaningful and substantial roles in traditional stage productions and in the media. He was discouraged from continuing to act and turned his attention to writing plays. The first play he wrote as a college student, *In the Alley* (1961), was produced at the University of Hawaii and was later published in an anthology of plays titled *Kumu Kahua Plays* (1983), edited by Dennis Carroll.

Sakamoto moved to Los Angeles at the time when the post-World War II generation of Asian American actors were advocating accurate Asian American representations in the media. Sakamoto's second play, *Yellow Is My Favorite Color* (1972), was produced by the East West Players in Los Angeles, the first professional Asian American theater company (The Kumu Kahua Theatre, established in 1971, is the second professional Asian American theater company), with its artistic director Mako, and then, in 1980 and 1981, by the Pan Asian Repertory Theatre in New York City. Since then, many of Sakamoto's plays, including *That's the Way the Fortune Cookie Crumbles* (1976–1977), *Voices in the Shadows* (1978–1979), *Manoa Valley* (1979–1980), *The Life of the Land* (1980–1981), *Pilgrimage* (1981), *Chikamatsu's Forest* (1986–1987), and *The Taste of Kona Coffee* (1996–1997) were directed by Mako and staged by the East West Players.

Although Sakamoto's relocation to the mainland was a fruitful career move, he often questions his relocation decisions and the meaning of "home" through his characters' displacement, alienation, and dilemma in his plays, and many of his plays are set in Hawaii. *A'ala Park*, *Aloha Las Vegas*, *Dead of Night*, *In the Alley*, *Lava*, *The Life of the Land*, *Manoa Valley*, *Our Hearts Were Touched with Fire*, *Stew Rice*, and *The Taste of Kona Coffee* are the plays that are set in Hawaii and have at least one character who considers relocating to the mainland. The characters who relocate to the mainland, like Jiro in *The Taste of Kona Coffee* and Spencer in *The Life of the Land of Coffee*, feel alienated and become keenly aware of the family members' and friends' resentment when they return home to Hawaii.

Despite the fact that Sakamoto's characters from Hawaii feel isolated at home and discriminated against in the mainland and are aware of their losses such as family, friends, and community, these characters are still attracted to the mainland and its culture, finding Hawaii geographically restrictive. *The Life of the Land* was staged by the

East West Players from 1980 to 1981 and then by Pan Asian Repertory Theatre in 1987 while *The Taste of Kona* was produced by the East West Players in Los Angeles with Mako's directorship in 1996–1997. These two plays, along with *Manoa Valley*, are included in Sakamoto's trilogy titled *Hawai'i No Ka Oi: The Kamiya Family Trilogy* (1995), which was directed by Mako and staged by the East West Players in Los Angeles from 1979 to 1980 and then by Pan Asian Repertory Theater in New York City in 1984 to 1985.

Three plays are included in Sakamoto's *Aloha Las Vegas and Other Plays: A'ala Park*, a play directed by James A. Nakamoto at Kumu Kahua Theatre in Honolulu in 1997; *Stew Rice*, directed by Dana Lee with the East West Players in 1988; and *Aloha Las Vegas*, also directed by Nakamoto at the University of Hawaii in Honolulu in 1992 and then produced by the Pan Asian Repertory Theatre in 1997–1998. These three plays cover different periods in Honolulu, such as World War II, Hawaii's statehood in 1959, and the late 1970s, and the central concerns of these plays are hyphenated identity, leave-taking, and home. Sakamoto's ethnic Hawaiian characters face challenges assimilating to the mainland's predominantly white culture when they move away from their island home and often become aware of what they lost in return—culture, family, home, and community. In *A'ala Park* (1984), 50-year-old Manny recognizes his loss as he reminisces the days before he left Hawaii for the mainland. *Stew Rice* (1987) is set in Oahu in 1958 with three high school friends, Shima, Zippy, and Lee. As they graduate from high school, their lives are pulled apart, for Shima and Lee go to the mainland while Zippy remains in Hawaii. They meet again during their 20-year high school reunion (act 2), and, as they try to revive their friendship, they learn that they have grown apart. *Aloha Las Vegas* (1992) deals with the depressed Hawaiian economy. In these plays set in Hawaii, Sakamoto contrasts Hawaii to the mainland, as well as Japanese values to American values.

Sakamoto is known for his ability to create effective comedies. Critics praise his abilities to depict Asian Hawaiian experience and to re-create **Hawaiian Pidgin** English in dialogue. His use of Pidgin English helps portray characters' philosophies and psyche effectively while maintaining the humorous tone.

He also wrote the following plays, which remain unpublished: *Yellow Is My Favorite Color*, *That's the Way the Fortune Cookie Crumbles*, *Voices in the Shadows*, *Pilgrimage*, *Chikamatsu's Forest*, *Our Hearts Were Touched with Fire* (produced by the University of Hawaii in Honolulu in 1994), *Lava* (directed by Shizuko Hoshi, produced by East West Players in Los Angeles in 1998–1999), and *Dead of Night* (directed by James A. Nakamoto, produced by Kumu Kahua Theatre in Honolulu in 2000).

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KYOKO AMANO

### ◆ SAKAMOTO, KERRI (1959–)

Award-winning Japanese American author of *The Electrical Field* (1998) and *A Hundred Million Hearts* (2003), Sakamoto's novels depict the ways Japanese Canadians deal with the legacy of the Pacific War and internment. Born in Toronto, Sakamoto has a BA in English and French from the University of Toronto and an MA in creative writing from New York University. Apart from her novels, she has published essays on visual art and short stories such as "Walk-In Closet" in the anthology *Charlie Chan Is Dead* (1993) and in the journals *The Quarterly* and *West Coast Line*. She also cowrote the screenplay for *Strauberry Fields* (with Rea Tajiri 1997), a coming-of-age feature film set during the **Vietnam War** about a 16-year-old Japanese American girl who sets out to learn about her family's internment at Poston and of how this legacy continues to haunt her family.

*The Electrical Field*, recipient of the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best First Book in the Canada and Caribbean Region (1999) and short-listed for the Kiriyaama Pacific Rim Book Prize and the Governor General's Award for Fiction in 1998, is structured like a detective story. Narrated by Asako Saito, a middle-aged spinster whose scrupulously precise narrating voice implies a careful concealment of, rather than engagement with, the truth about herself and the past, the novel is set during two weeks in the summer of 1971 in a small suburb of Toronto, where several Japanese Canadian families settled after leaving the camps. The novel opens with the murder of Miss Saito's neighbor, Chisako Yano, together with her white Canadian lover. Immediately after this, Chisako's husband, Yano, the principal suspect, takes off with their twin children, Tamio and Kimi. The novel centers on the relationship between Miss Saito and Sachi, a sensitive adolescent who was Tamio's special friend. Most of the narrative action happens in Miss Saito's mind, as she grapples with her real or imagined role in Chisako's death, the truth behind her idealized memories of her beloved older brother, Eiji, the real motivations behind her attentiveness to Sachi and her criticism of the girl's parents, and her slow awareness that her life is not the way she performs it. Content to appear as a tranquil woman dedicated to caring for her bedridden father and younger brother, Stum, Miss Saito's constructed world begins to unravel as she comes face-to-face with her own possessiveness, jealousy, and repressed desires. Ultimately, her reticence and detachment conceal a woman desperate for emotional fulfillment and connection.

Memory and redress are central to the novel. The characters live in homes around a cluster of electrical towers, the “electrical field” of the title, themselves in the shadow of “Mackenzie Hill,” which evokes memories of William Lyon Mackenzie King, the Canadian prime minister who had authorized the internment. Yano’s single-minded obsession with redress for the internment contrasts with Miss Saito’s desire not to confront the past and live within a sanitized version of her family’s history. The central focus of her memory is Eiji, who, she finally admits, died of pneumonia after plunging into a river to rescue her from an infantile self-destructive fit of jealousy over his interest in girls. The experience of Japanese Canadian internment continues to mark the characters, even decades after leaving the camp. Miss Saito and her brother, for example, seem surprisingly unable to develop serious relationships with other people. Indeed, the quasi-incestuous passion with which Miss Saito describes and remembers her older brother and the overprotectiveness with which she treats Stum suggest that the wounds of internment include the incapacity to reach out beyond the family or community. Further, Miss Saito voyeuristically observes Sachi and Tam’s moments of playful intimacy, as though needing them to fulfill her own desires. The fight for redress, therefore, takes many forms in this novel—from an overtly political one to a secret, unacknowledged desire to recover lost innocence and possibilities.

Sakamoto’s second novel also engages the legacy of Japanese Canadians who fought for Japan during **World War II**, using more creative narrative strategies: shifts from first- to third-person narration, the use of old letters to reveal hidden motives and dreams and to evince psychological processes of personal and cultural discernment. Upon the death of Masao, her father, a Canadian of Japanese descent who had been sent to Japan for schooling and later joined the army, Miyo Mori—physically crippled and emotionally repressed—begins to uncover her father’s double life. She learns that his friend Setsuko was actually his wife, whom he had married after Miyo’s mother died in childbirth, and that she had a sister in Japan, an artist named Hana. Miyo and Setsuko travel to Japan to visit Hana. There, by meeting other Japanese who had fought in the war, Miyo uncovers the truth about her father’s life: that he had been a kamikaze pilot during the war but survived because another had died in his place.

Sakamoto engages the personal stories behind historical realities, such as the doubts and ambivalence of kamikaze pilots before their missions. The question of divided loyalties and shifting identities that her father had to deal with becomes part of Miyo’s legacy. Once again, Sakamoto highlights the way memory haunts people and the ways in which the past is memorialized. Specifically, Miyo learns about the subculture that surrounds Tokyo’s controversial Yasukuni Shrine, which commemorates Japan’s war dead, including war criminals and kamikaze pilots. Miyo’s experience of Japan is negative to the point that she notes her gratitude at not having been born Japanese; the trip she embarks upon, ostensibly a journey of reconnection, only heightens her sense of alienation from her family and

her past. Indeed, her physical disability may symbolize her unsolvable incompleteness and her emotional repression the result of her inability to find a place in the world.

Sakamoto's novels engage potent issues in Japanese Canadian studies yet transcend typical forms of narrating the past by her sophisticated use of narrative voice, her skillful shifts in time, and her presentation of conflicts in nuanced manners. Both novels leave many questions unanswered, highlighting the elusive nature of the past, even as its effects inevitably direct the characters' ways of functioning in the present. **See also** Japanese American Internment.

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ROCÍO G. DAVIS

◆ **SANSEI.** *See* Issei, Nisei, Sansei

◆ **SANTOS, BIENVENIDO NUQUI (1911–1996)**

Bienvenido Nuqui Santos was born on March 11, 1911, in Tondo, a slum district of Manila, the Philippines, which he renames Sulucan in his fiction. Early in his career, he likewise renamed himself, publishing under the pseudonyms Eugenio Lingad, Carlos Parrone, C.S. Kabling, Ursolo Dabu, and Tomas N. Mendoza because he felt that he was flooding the creative writing market. His prolific production extended from his first short story, "The Horseshoe," in 1930 to the release of his fifteenth and final book, *Letters: Book 1* in 1995. In the intervening 65 years, Santos published five books of short stories (*You Lovely People*, 1955; *Brother, My Brother*, 1960; *The Day the Dancers Came*, 1967; *Scent of Apples*, 1979; and *Dwell in the Wilderness*, 1985). He also published five novels (*Villa Magdalena*, 1965; *The Volcano*, 1965; *The Praying Man*, 1982; *The Man Who [Thought He] Looked Like Robert Taylor*, 1983; and *What the Hell for You Left Your Heart in San Francisco*, 1987). He released two volumes of poetry (*The Wounded Stag*, 1956, reissued 1992; and *Distances in Time*, 1983); two volumes of autobiography (*Memory's Fictions*, 1993; and *Postscript to a Saintly Life*, 1994); and two plays (*The Long*

*Way Home*, 1957; and *The Bishop's Pets*, 1966). In spite of a long and active academic career, however, Santos produced only a few essays.

After graduating from the University of the Philippines with a BSE degree in 1931, he married Beatriz Nidea in December 1933 and moved to her native Albay, in Bicol province, which for the rest of his life he considered to be home. He taught both elementary and secondary grades until 1941, when he was named a *pensionado* and went to study in the United States. Although he advanced his academic standing by earning an MA in English from the University of Illinois in 1942 and doing graduate work at both Columbia and Harvard, he was stranded in the United States for the duration of **World War II**, having to leave behind in the Japanese-occupied Philippines his wife and three daughters. After the war his son was born. Working for the Philippine government-in-exile, Santos traveled to 22 college campuses, lecturing on the Philippines. In so doing he gathered material for his fiction, especially for *You Lovely People*. Upon his return to the Philippines in 1946, he was appointed vice president of Legazpi College (now Aquinas University) and in 1958 became its president. Before the end of the year, on a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship, he returned to the United States to study at the prestigious Iowa Writers' Workshop. His continued residence in the United States was made possible by a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1960. The next year he was appointed dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Nueva Caceres in Naga City. He served on the textbook board of the president of the Philippines from 1962 to 1964 and then as chairman from 1964 to 1965. Back in the United States in 1965, Santos was Fulbright Professor of English at the University of Iowa until 1969. Resuming his administrative work at the University of Nueva Caceres in 1969, Santos was vice president of academic affairs for a year, and then he returned to the Writers' Workshop as a visiting professor. While he and his wife were on the way home from Iowa in 1972, President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in the Philippines. Apprised that the small amount of farmland they owned had been confiscated by Marcos cronies, they stayed in the United States, Santos taking a part-time teaching position at the City College of San Francisco and gathering material for *What the Hell for You Left Your Heart in San Francisco*. In 1973 Santos accepted a position as Distinguished Writer in Residence at Wichita State University, from which he retired in 1982, and became an American citizen in 1976. In November of 1981 Beatriz died, and Santos returned home briefly for her interment. In his later years, Santos alternated residence in the United States and the Philippines: visiting writer at Ohio State University, spring 1983; Iowa State University, summer 1984; the University of the Philippines and Ateneo de Manila University, summer 1985; Aspen (Colorado) Creative Writers' Workshop, July 1985; and De La Salle University, 1986. He died January 7, 1996, at his Albay home.

These writing fellowships and writer-in-residence positions are barometers of Santos's stature as a creative writer; another indicator is the demand for Santos selections for anthologies issued by major publishers, both in the Philippines and in the United States (e.g., *The Mentor Book of Modern Asian Literature*, 1969; *Speaking for Ourselves*, 1969 and 1975; *Asian American Authors*, 1972; *Asian Literature: Short Stories and Plays*, 1973; *Asian Pacific Short Stories*, 1974; *Counterpoint: Perspectives on Asian America*, 1976; *Letters in Exile: An Introductory Reader on the History of Filipinos in America*, 1976; *New Voices*, 1978; and *The United States in Literature*, 1979. Although he has not received as many awards as some of his contemporaries have, those that have been bestowed are impressive, capstoned by the Republic Cultural Heritage Award in 1965. He also won the 1981 American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation for *The Scent of Apples*; first prize in the 1952 annual *New York Herald Tribune* international short story contest for "The Naked Eye"; the 1977 New Letters Award for Fiction for "Immigration Blues"; the 1982 X Award for the Best Book of the Year; and the 1982 Manila Critics Circle National Book Award for Fiction, both for *The Praying Man*. In the Philippines between 1950 and 1970 he won three second prizes ("The Transfer," 1956; "The Day the Dancers Came," 1961; and "The Enchanted Plant," 1965), and one third prize ("Even Purple Hearts," 1952) in the annual Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards contest in the short story division and two first prizes in the annual *Philippines Free Press* short story contest ("Brother, My Brother," 1957, and "The Day the Dancers Came," 1960).

However, though often heralded as a fictionist, Santos would be a first-ranking Philippine literary figure had he confined his efforts to poetry and even had he published no more than *The Wounded Stag*. His second poetry collection, *Distances in Time*, culled from poems published from the late 1950s to the late 1970s, adds little to his reputation, though it has aesthetic appeal for some readers, like distinguished poet and scholar Ophelia Alcantara-Dimalanta. Of the 33 poems, 7 are arguably of *Wounded Stag* quality. The remainder suffer from prosiness and/or a lack of substance, in some cases to the point of preciousness. The volume is divided into three alliteratively labeled parts, "Intimidation," "Intimates," and "Intermediaries," but the poems in each section have no discernible connections to the division labels.

*The Wounded Stag*, however, is masterful. Its 54 poems are not arranged in sections, but the collection is exceptionally coherent, a perfect melding of manner and matter, granted that Santos's poetic worldview is of a universe of ultimate order and rationality. Although the predominant motif in Santos's poetry is alienation, he sees alienation as the mirror half of integration. He calls upon observations from the past, principally in the form of cultural allusions, predominantly with a Christian overlay (though he interweaves pagan elements as well) to suggest an overarching cosmic unity. Each poem has its place in the depiction of an orderly cosmos as Santos confronts the profane, the



sensuous, and the evil elements of existence. The allusions frequently evoke the image of the artist (cf., Maecenas) as creator or at least expounder of unitary cosmogony. Although some readers fault Santos's poetry (as they more emphatically do his prose fiction) for sentimentality, wit and irony counteract this quality, in his verse at least. Most discerning readers appreciate his original and striking imagery, which could extend to the ode or compress into the haiku. He skillfully employs objective correlative to transform abstractions into concrete entities, his best poems retaining an incantatory, melodic quality in the process.

As seminal as his poetry is, however, Santos's prose fiction is the genre by which his literary achievement will chiefly be measured. His early short stories are generally undistinguished and often formulaic. After World War II, however, his tone darkened, and his artistic vision soon became substantially more serious, centering around the "hurt men" (Santos's first idea for a title for *You Lovely People*) who, like Santos himself, were marooned in a country in which they were outsiders, devoid of the comforts of homes, families, and lovers. This empathetic focus is what has led some readers to categorize him as a love poet, and Santos has seemingly confirmed that classification in an interview. By love, however, Santos meant not merely romantic passion, though he decidedly did mean *eros*; he meant love in the forms of *philos* and *agape* as well. As a result, his is a poignant prose style of deceptive simplicity. His narratives are straightforward but in their exfoliation carry high voltages of emotion, low key and implicit though they usually are.

*You Lovely People* is a collection of 19 stories that most readers see as constituting something akin to a novel or possibly even a collective autobiography, however lacking in coherence a given story might be. The stories treat the sad lives of the "Old Timers," the men who had come to the United States alone, hoping to make enough money to return to the Philippines to marry their sweethearts and be reunited with their families, but after years, even decades, realizing that they would never be able to return. The depiction of their plight is, of course, a protest, though nonrancorous and unstated, of the racism that the "OTs," as they came to be called, were subjected to, demeaning them and rendering futile their efforts at self-betterment in the United States. Even the younger characters in the stories are OTs in the making. The stories are narrated in dual fashion, one narrator being Ambo Icarangal (whose surname means, ironically or otherwise, "worthy of pride and admiration")—a kindly, self-effacing older man based on a real-life Santos acquaintance—and the first person "I," generally thought to be Santos himself. This arrangement allows for counterpointed perspective, enriching the book's artistic vision, as the name "Ambo" (*ambos* meaning "both" in Spanish) suggests. Another narrative subtlety explains the impression readers often have that Ambo is nearly illiterate. Santos explained in an interview that Ambo speaks fluent Visayan to the other Filipino characters; what we read in the stories is translated Visayan, often

sounding awkward and limited in English but another means of highlighting the cultural disjunction that these characters experience.

*You Lovely People* and *Brother, My Brother* are bookends, the former involving Filipinos rootless and adrift far from home and the latter involving Filipinos at home. As critics have generally noticed, the cycle of flight and return, the most pervasive motif in Santos's fiction as a whole, is thus represented on the scale of two complete books taken together. The 23 stories in *Brother, My Brother* are not as much like chapters in a novel as the selections in *You Lovely People* are, but the volume does enjoy an internal coherence, enhanced by the bifurcation of settings: "Sulucan" (Tondo, the city) and Albay (the country). It might not be fanciful to see this division as a microcosm of the United States and the Philippines, the returnee to the second location in each pair being a *balikbayan* (homecomer), not a refugee. However, life at home is hard, even sordid, and frequently tragedy-laden. Yet even the nonidyllic settings constitute a moral crucible of sorts, crystallizing the humanity—even the humaneness—of the worthy among the characters.

Ironically, the weakest of Santos's first four short story collections, *The Day the Dancers Came*, features one of Santos's two most critically acclaimed pieces of short fiction. The volume not only lacks internal coherence; it is also an amalgamation consisting of six short stories, two unused dollops of *Villa Magdalena* material, an essay, and a play. The play (*The Long Way Home*) is solid enough, but the essay ("My Most Memorable Christmas in America") has value only as space filler, and the remaining material from Santos's early novel ("Look for Dancing in the Streets" and "The Enchanted Plant," published as short stories in 1959 and 1960 respectively) is of inferior quality. "The Day the Dancers Came," however, is excellent. The plot involves two OTs who share a dingy apartment in Chicago. Tony is a foil, mortally ill, symbolically representing the state of his flatmate's unrealistic dreams. Filemon Acayan hopes to entertain a visiting troupe of dancers, but he is rebuffed. He attends a performance, which he tape-records, but when, at home, Tony asks him to shut off the machine, he inadvertently erases the tape. In this tale, Santos does not fall prey to excessive sentimentality, and he uses symbolism subtly. The *tinikling* (bird dance) is a traditional folkway, depicting the need to be agile to survive, a quality Filemon obviously lacks. He is called "Fil," making him representative of the plight of the Filipino OTs in the United States, and his surname is clearly a derivation from the Tagalog *akayin*, "to lead by the hand." Ironically, he is not able to guide the dancers around the city or to his home, and the loss of his tape means the loss of his cultural heritage as well as his memories.

*Scent of Apples*, Santos's only book published in the United States, reprints 11 stories from *You Lovely People* and 4 stories from *The Day the Dancers Came*. The omission of selections from *Brother, My Brother* suggests that the book is intended for a U.S. audience, as does the one new entry: "Immigration Blues." *Dwell in the Wilderness*,

comprised of 18 short stories published between 1931 and 1941, is interesting from the standpoint of maturation of craft over a decade, but the literary value of these early pieces is minimal.

In mid-life, Santos turned to the novel. Though he claimed that *Villa Magdalena* was his first novel, *The Volcano* was conceived first, one indication being the incorporation of the rewritten story "The Naked Eye" from *Brother, My Brother*. They are, however, effectively simultaneous, both drafted between 1959 and 1961. *Villa Magdalena's* mixed reception is encapsulated in the title of a review: "A Sordid Splendor." The sexual escapades in the narrative have been off-putting to some critics, ranging from the relatively mild to the stinging rebuke. Other commentators, however, view the numerous illicit affairs of the characters as manifestations of a Santos worldview in striking contrast to that of his poetry. The cosmos of the novel is viewed as treacherously unstable, even irrational and chaotic, symbolized by the pervasiveness of death and decay, the stench that emanates from Don Magno's leather goods emblematic of the moral, physical, and spiritual decay of the villa's occupants.

*The Volcano* has been even more skeptically received, the foremost critic of Philippine literature, Leonard Casper, even characterizing it as a rare failure. Weaknesses include stick characterization, a contrived plot in which Filipinos and an American missionary couple mutually reject each other, and heavy-handed symbolism. Even the names of the characters border on the simplistically allegorical. Dr. Hunter (a seeker of souls) has a daughter who marries a member of the Barrios (*barrio* is a district or small town) family. As in *Villa Magdalena*, Santos depicts regression, not entelechy. A *cadang-cadang* (an infectious virus disease of the coconut palm) blight infects the local coconut plantations; a spiritual blight prevents Dr. Hunter, a physician, from ameliorating the physical or mental well-being of those around him. In fact, the avowed atheist, the wealthy Spaniard Don Vicente, proves to be far more efficacious and far more moral, in spite of his numerous affairs, than Dr. Hunter, who tries to obviate the very sacrament he has administered (the marriage of his daughter to a Filipino) and who during the occupation ignores a summons to render medical aid.

*The Praying Man* was drafted by the summer of 1967, which no doubt explains its similarities to *Villa Magdalena*. For instance, the adulterated drugs sold by the protagonist, Cristino Magat (whose surname may suggest *maggot*), are the counterparts of Don Magno's stench-drenched leather goods. Again, the depiction of instability in the social cosmos parallels that in *Villa Magdalena*. Contrapuntally, *The Praying Man* is Santos's most traditionally structured novel, with a largely linear plot and four clearly demarked parts, conducing to fluent reading of the sort an adventure tale offers. Serialized in *Solidarity* magazine between May 1971 and February 1972, the novel was disapproved for publication in the martial law years, not appearing in book form until 1982, because it was perceived as a veiled criticism of the Marcos administration. The

title is a pun on “pray” and “prey,” made more obvious in Santos’s original title, *’Tis the Praying Man*, in which “the praying man” represents good and “the preying mantis” stands for evil. The drawback to this bifurcation is, of course, that an insect, not being a morally responsible agent, cannot be the repository of evil; whereas a human’s goodness can be morally judged, so the terms cannot coalesce into zeugma.

Of his novels, *The Man Who (Thought He) Looked Like Robert Taylor* was Santos’s favorite, and it has been the favorite of literary critics as well. It is a return to Santos’s most successful milieu, the isolated and alienated Filipino in the United States. Inspired by Jerzey Kosinski’s *Steps*, it is a far more intricately constructed and thematically penetrating work than any of his previous pieces of prose fiction. It incorporates sonata-like intercalary chapters, flashbacks, montage, fluctuating narrative stances, multilingual connotation, contrapuntal temporal striation, and sets of foil characters (the sets themselves foil for one another) and delves more deeply than any other Santos work into the questions of appearance versus reality and discrete existential status. It is telling that no one except the protagonist Solomon King (King Solomon in reverse) ever notices the alleged similarity to Robert Taylor, though Sol, for short, has movie actor good looks and has affairs with women named Barbara and Ursula, also the names of Taylor’s wives. The novel’s pervasive motif is death, making it more disquieting than comedic, which is how some readers have thought of it. Structurally, it is free-flowing, a concatenation of episodes, counternarratives, and even apparent digressions, but these agminated materials reinforce Santos’s vision of a complex cosmos of disparate though conjoined elements. This novel is Santos’s piece de resistance.

*What the Hell for You Left Your Heart in San Francisco*, which germinated in 1975, has the familiar Santos trademark: a nonlinear, episodic plot that mirrors the Filipinos’ sense of displacement in the United States. Toward the end, however, Santos juxtaposes many of the discrete elements by having each character in turn iterate his/her principal statement, the symbolic value for which he/she stands, thus creating more reconciliation, if not cohesiveness, than the various elements that a Santos novel usually has. The book’s title, an allusion to the Tony Bennett song “I Left My Heart in San Francisco,” reveals its leitmotif: the value (or lack thereof) of human projects like David’s efforts to get a magazine started and his attempts to inculcate at least the rudiments of Philippine culture into his students. Significantly, the book title does not end with a quotation mark. “What the hell for” is as much a conclusion as it is an ontological challenge. Subtle artistic touches enrich the texture of the novel. At the beginning, for instance, the reader wonders about outdated locutions like “schoolgirl complexion” (derived from a 1950s soap commercial) and “Jesus freaks” (1960s Hippie slang) but realizes that these expressions typify second-wave Filipino immigrants, in many ways isolated from first-wave immigrants (the OTs) and from American society as a whole. For the reader of any generation, however, for whatever reason, the best work of

Bienvenido N. Santos will at least touch the heart, if not secure it for San Francisco.  
**See also** Racism and Asian America.

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L. M. GROW

◆ SELVADURAI, SHYAM (1965–)

Shyam Selvadurai is a South Asian Canadian novelist and one of the most politically engaged gay male writers of the South Asian diaspora. Selvadurai was born in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 1965 to David and Christine Selvadurai. His mother, a physician, is a Sinhalese; his father, a former professional tennis player, is a Tamil. Selvadurai grew up in comfortable surroundings in an affluent home with three siblings and an extended family made up of numerous aunts, uncles, and cousins. However, when the conflict between the minority Tamils and majority Sinhalese erupted in horrendous

violence in 1983, his family decided to immigrate to Canada. Soon after his arrival in Canada at age 19, Selvadurai enrolled at York University and received his BFA in theater studies in 1988. Six years later he published his first novel *Funny Boy* (1994); the reviews were enthusiastic, and the book won several awards including the Lambda Literary Award for Best Gay Men's Fiction. In 1998 he published his second novel, *Cinnamon Gardens*, to mostly favorable reviews. His most recently published creative work is a young adult novel titled *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* (2005). He is also the editor of *Story-Wallah: Short Fiction from South Asian Writers*, an important collection of short stories that includes the works of several distinguished authors such as Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Hanif Kureishi, Michael Ondaatje, and Monica Ali.

*Funny Boy* is a classic coming-of-age narrative. Divided into six interconnected novellas, this quasi-autobiographical work maps the initiatory journey of its young Tamil protagonist Arjun Chelvaratnam. Arjun, now a young man living in Canada, wistfully looks back at his childhood and adolescent years and recalls the circumstances that forced his departure from Sri Lanka. It is his narrative voice that melds the six semiautonomous novellas into a coherent story. The first unit, titled "Pigs Can't Fly," relates the safe and happy life of seven-year-old Arjun and the childish games he plays with his siblings and cousins. His favorite game is called "Bride-Bride," (Selvadurai 1994, 4) in which he dresses up like a bride in a colorful sari, which makes him feel like a glamorous star of Tamil movies. On one occasion, however, an aunt intrudes into the game and drags him before his parents and other adult relatives. Arjun's parents are embarrassed, while the others are amused. Later he realizes that his father is angry and overhears him tell Arjun's mother that their son might grow up to be "funny" (14). This event jolts Arjun into realizing his difference from other boys, his deviance from expected norms. The next three sections, which focus more on other members of his family, offer insights into Sri Lanka's deep, ethnic divisions and the escalating tensions between the Tamils and the Sinhalese. The fifth segment, titled "The Best School of All," centers on Arjun's emerging homosexual consciousness: Arjun, now 14, begins a sexual relationship with Shehan Soyza, a Sinhalese student at his school. The final unit, written in the form of a series of journal entries, provides an apocalyptic vision of the ethnic violence in Colombo. Homes and businesses of Tamils are destroyed, and Arjun's own grandparents are burnt to death by Sinhalese thugs. The final entry recounts Arjun's last act of lovemaking with Shehan and his thoughts on his impending loss of home, community, and nation as his family prepares to flee Sri Lanka for Canada. Thus, an intense personal drama is embedded in a much larger drama of a postcolonial nation in violent internal crisis. It is in love, the love between Arjun and Shehan that vaults across the ethnic chasm, that Selvadurai sees the antidote to Sri Lanka's national madness.

*Cinnamon Gardens* too frames the private struggles of its characters against the backdrop of a momentous national drama. A novel of manners with a sharp satiric edge, *Cinnamon Gardens* centers on two wealthy Tamil families in 1920s Sri Lanka, then called Ceylon—the Kandiahs and the Navaratnams—and particularly on two characters: Annalukshmi Kandiah and her uncle, Balendran Navaratnam. The nation's burgeoning anticolonial movement provides the novel its political dimension and historical character. Annalukshmi is a rebellious young woman who questions the patriarchal traditions and norms of her society. Her thwarted quest for freedom from gender-specific oppression assumes an ironic poignancy, especially because it is enacted against the backdrop of her nation's demand for liberation from colonial rule. Balendran, like Annalukshmi, is a rebel, although a more reluctant and less successful one. He is a gay man who, while studying in London, falls in love with Richard, an Englishman; yet because of his father's insistence he returns home alone and consents to an arranged marriage. Twenty years later Richard comes briefly to Ceylon as a representative of the British government. Though they realize that they are still in love with each other, Balendran decides that his duty to his wife and family is more sacred than his desire to be with Richard. By highlighting the repression of women and sexual minorities, Selvadurai not only critiques the tradition-bound Sri Lankan society but also the patriarchal and heterosexist underpinnings of most emancipatory anti-colonial projects, which often define liberation in astonishingly narrow terms.

Selvadurai's *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* is a young adult novel. The setting is Sri Lanka; the year is 1980. However, the nation's unstable politics and ethnic hostilities are entirely absent from the picture. Rather, Shakespeare's *Othello*, with its theme of murderous jealousy, provides the backdrop for the young protagonist's coming-of-age journey. Fourteen-year-old Amrith is an orphan: his beloved mother and his abusive and alcoholic father have died in a mysterious accident; his Auntie Bundle and Uncle Lucky have adopted him as their own, and their teenage daughters, Mala and Selvi, view him as their brother. Amrith's comfortable though dull life takes a dramatic turn when his maternal uncle from Canada comes for a visit with his teenage son Niresh. Amrith falls in love with Niresh, who is straight and unaware of his cousin's desire. When it appears that Niresh and Mala might be falling in love, Amrith, in a fit of murderous jealousy, nearly drowns Mala while they go swimming in the sea. He is shocked by his own action, but he now begins to understand his fierce love and unrequited sexual desire more fully and gradually learns to come to terms with his gayness. A poignant coming-out narrative, *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* is a beautifully written story of a young boy's discovery of love—its magic and its fury—which leads to his epiphanic self-understanding.

Selvadurai's three eminently readable novels have helped establish him as a singular voice in Canadian literature and as a major writer of the South Asian diaspora. He

evokes the ambience of middle-class Sri Lankan life without exoticizing it for his Western audience. He captures the magic of childhood with seemingly effortless clarity and disarming simplicity. His novels reveal his exilic longing for a lost homeland—a homeland that he powerfully reimagines in his works—yet his tone remains consistently unsentimental. And his candid explorations of queer sexualities make him a pioneer in the South Asian Canadian literary tradition. **See also** Asian Diasporas; Gay Male Literature.

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EMMANUEL S. NELSON

### ◆ SETH, VIKRAM (1952–)

Vikram Seth is an Indian American poet, novelist, translator, travel writer, and librettist whose writing oeuvre, the use of traditional forms such as the realist style roman-fleuve and the novel in verse, has been compared to the contemporary post-colonial writers Salman Rushdie and Amitav Gosh.

Seth was born in Calcutta. His father, Prem, worked his way from office worker to chairman of the Bata India Limited Shoe Company in Ambala, and his mother, Leila, was the first woman chief justice of a high court in India, the first woman judge of the Delhi High Court, and the first woman to top the bar examination in London. He has a sister, Aradhana, an art director, and a brother, Shantum, who studied as an economist but who is now a peace activist and Buddhist teacher. The Chatterjee family of Seth's most famous work, *A Suitable Boy*, contains many similarities between the characters of the novel and the Seth family, including Vikram Seth himself, cast as the cynical poet Amit Chatterjee, who is in the process of writing a 1,000-word novel. "There are bits and pieces [of me] . . . bits of people I know, and quite a lot of imagination . . . Obviously he is set up as a kind of alter ego" (Seth 1993, 152). There are also other characters such as Janet in *The Golden Gate*, a story told entirely in verse about San Francisco where Seth lived for several years, which can also be identified as Seth's alter ego.

The early years of Seth's life were spent in a number of cities, including Batanagar, near Calcutta, Patna, and London, and from the age of five he spent lengthy periods



as a boarder at the prestigious Doon School, known as “the Eton of India,” in Dehradun. Whilst at school, Seth encountered abuse and bullying from many of his fellow classmates, an experience that he later evokes by the character Tapan, the youngest of the Chatterjees, in *A Suitable Boy*.

After having completed his A levels at Tonbridge School in Kent, Seth won a scholarship to read philosophy, politics, and economics at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, graduating in 1975 with honors. Although he maintained a strong interest in economics, his passion remained in literature, and he began writing poetry as an undergraduate.

After graduating from Oxford, he was admitted to the doctoral program at Stanford University where he spent the next 11 years (1975–1986). From 1977 to 1978 Seth was awarded the Academy of American Poets Prize and the Wallace Stegner Fellowship in Creative Writing. He began his PhD work in economics, titled “Seven Chinese Villages: An Economic and Demographic Portrait,” which he never completed.

From 1980 to 1982, Seth was attached to Nanjing University in China, where he conducted extensive field work researching and gathering data for his doctoral dissertation on Chinese population planning. At the same time, he worked on establishing himself as a poet. His first book of poetry, *Mappings*, came out in 1980. Self-published, it was later republished by the Calcutta Writers Workshop in 1981. The poems are characterized by a consistent use of formal poetic structures and rhyme with a realistic style particular of Seth’s literature, which resurfaces later in both *The Golden Gate* and *A Suitable Boy*.

Although Vikram Seth is best known for his novels, he prefers identification as a poet and was known to choose a literary agent because of the agent’s interest and knowledge in his poetry and prose. His poetry collections contain a number of recurring themes, such as his family, the poet as a diasporic persona, and visual juxtapositions of India, California, and China. Though the diasporic and cross-cultural element of his life is never a theme in his novels, it constantly resurfaces in his poetry.

In 1981, Seth traveled from Beijing to Delhi through Tibet and Nepal. The account of his travels is found in *From Heaven Lake: Travels through Sinkiang and Tibet* (1983). The book became a popular success and won the Thomas Cook Travel Book Award for the Best Travel Narrative Published in the English Language in the same year. Throughout the book Seth plays the role of an *awara*, a wanderer, constructing an Indian diasporic persona for himself: “Increasingly of late, and particularly when I drink, I find my thoughts drawn into the past rather than impelled into the future. I recall drinking sherry in California and dreaming of my earlier student days in England, where I ate *dalmoth* and dreamed of Delhi. What is the purpose, I wonder, of all this restlessness? I sometimes seem to myself to wander around the world merely accumulating material for future nostalgias” (1987, 35).

After China, Seth returned to California determined to continue his doctoral studies, but his career plans changed after discovering a copy of Charles Johnston's 1977 translation of Pushkin's novel in verse, *Eugene Onegin*, in a Stanford second-hand book store. He was greatly influenced by Johnston's stanzaic form and proceeded to use it to write a story set in the California of the 1980s. Seth spent nine months writing *The Golden Gate: A Novel in Verse* (1986) of nearly 600 sonnets in iambic tetrameter, about the lives of a group of young professionals in San Francisco whose love stories are interwoven with events. The characters' main concerns surround the battle with loneliness in the search for a meaningful relationship. Although initially the novel struggled to find a publisher, it would later go on to achieve critical acclaim being described by Gore Vidal as "The great California novel" (Amazon.com). It was during this period that he wrote *The Humble Administrator's Garden* (1985), a collection of poetry that went on to win the 1985 Commonwealth Poetry Prize (Asia).

After the success of *The Golden Gate*, Seth published a collection of poems *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, in 1990. His studies in classical Chinese led him to translate and publish a selection of poems by renowned Chinese poets—Wang Wei, Li Bai, and Du Fu—in a work entitled *Three Chinese Poets* (1992). He has also written *Beastly Tales from Here and There* (1992), a collection of humorous animal fables in verse, which recall Kipling's *Just So Stories*, and the libretto *Arion and the Dolphin* (1994). Commissioned by the Bayliss Programme at the English National Opera, *Arion and the Dolphin* (1994) is a story of a young musician Arion at the court of Periander in Corinth who returns from a musical contest in Sicily and is thrown overboard and subsequently saved and befriended by a dolphin.

After *The Golden Gate*, Seth decided to write a short piece about India's early years but labored over *A Suitable Boy* (1993) for almost a decade. In his mother's autobiography, Leila Seth describes the family driver's reaction to Seth in his pre-*A Suitable Boy* days reading and writing and living off his parents (Seth 2003). After writing the first 500 pages, Seth lost his momentum, feeling that the novel was not detailed accurately, and conducted research in India for more than a year, spending time living in a village and with his family to find a way of weaving his intricate story together. Subsequently, *A Suitable Boy* garnered the highest advance by an Indian writer, with a reported \$375,000 advance from his British publisher Phoenix House and \$600,000 from HarperCollins in New York. Finally, after revising the work, Seth produced a 1,349-page epic and published the novel in 1993.

*A Suitable Boy* is set in India during the postindependence, postpartition decade of the 1950s. This story examines the relationships between the Kapoors, Mehra, Chatterjees (Hindus) and the Khans (Muslims). The two primary characters are Mrs. Rupa Mehra and Lata, her marriageable but rebellious youngest daughter. Rupa Mehra is a widow whose mission throughout the novel is to take care of her family and in

particular search for a husband of suitable Hindu character for Lata. However, at the same time, Lata is torn by her mother's wishes and her own love for a Muslim boy.

In the background rests the underlying Hindu/Muslim conflict, which followed the independence of both India and Pakistan and which still continues today. From this time on, Seth's epic story of life in India became a literary sensation and caused contention among critics when *A Suitable Boy* was not nominated for a Booker Prize in 1993. In 1994, Seth, now the subject of many interviews and literary articles, won the WH Smith Literary Award and the Commonwealth Writers Prize (Overall Winner, Best Book).

Seth credits his then-partner, French violinist Phillipe Honoré, as inspiring him for his third novel *An Equal Music* (1999) and devotes an acrostic sonnet as the novel's epigraph. *An Equal Music* is the story of a violinist haunted by the memory of a former lover and is a first-person narrative in the present tense of Michael Holme, a violinist who reunites Julia, the love of his life, in a chance sighting from a London double-decker bus. Set in contemporary Europe, the novel focuses on the lives of classical musicians and their music.

In 1994, as a suggestion from his mother, Seth decided to write about the life of his much-loved great-uncle Shanti Behari Seth, with whom he had stayed as a student in England along with Shanti's wife, Henny Caro (Henny), a German Jew who had survived **World War II**. *Two Lives* (2005) describes Caro and Shanti Behari Seth's meeting in the 1930s and their subsequent move from Germany to London in the late 1930s. At the onset of the war, Shanti enlisted and served as a dentist for the troops in the African campaign and later in Italy, after having lost an arm at Monte Cassino. Henny's life experiences are detailed lovingly, having lost her family at Auschwitz. Vikram Seth's long interviews with his great-uncle after Henny died and exposition of letters between Shanti and Caro to family in India and England once again helped produce Seth's themes of the exilic experience and the fractured, splintered lives of Seth's subjects. Within the text, Seth talks about his own genesis, the process of writing the book, and his concerns with form and truth. *Two Lives* is noted for being the novel of all Seth's novels that unabashedly shares biography and autobiography; the presence and exploration of the author's own experience.

Vikram Seth's remarkable literary dexterity and imagination, his prolific works and the terrain inspired by music and poetry have created a distinct authorial style. He was described in a review of *A Suitable Boy*, his most famous work to date and the work most known as the single, longest novel published in the English language, as a "A Tolstoy—on his first try" by the *Washington Post*. He retains an ability to perfect each genre—poetry, libretto, the conventional novel, fable, translations of ancient Chinese poets, travelogue and prose; yet he includes a concern for the reader and a postcolonial position to reviewers. His work remains largely out of the critic's range and yet remains firmly in the mind of the general reader.

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### ◆ SEXISM AND ASIAN AMERICA

Sexism in Asian America is fostered by gendered racial formations produced by imperialism, capitalism, and Orientalism and has therefore affected both men and women. Lisa Lowe argues that Asian immigration to the United States results in contradictions between the U.S. capitalist economy and the nation-state, whereas the need for cheap and exploitable labor conflicts with the desire for a homogenous white nation. The resulting Asian American racial formations reflect (hetero)sexist, racist, and classed ways of knowing within a white supremacist United States that seeks to resolve these tensions by recognizing the presence of Asian Americans as outside the norms of citizenship and its attendant social normativities.

Asian American racial formations are gendered and sexualized to uphold white citizenship and hegemonic heterosexist masculinity and femininity. The social, political, and economic processes that racialize people of Asian descent in the United States depend on Orientalist and colonial formations of the Other. While capitalism and imperialism historically have functioned as machines driving migration to the United States, these demands for labor have also been countered with national discourses and state policies that frame Asian Americans as undesirable, inscrutable, and perpetually foreign through particular gender and sexual relations. The discourses of the nation-state have historically rendered Asian Americans as deviant in terms of race, gender, and sexuality.

Orientalism, a way of producing knowledge about the "Orient," informs the racial formations of Asian Americans by producing discourses that emasculate and feminize **Asian American** men and hyperfeminize Asian American women. The underlying logic of Orientalism and these attendant formulations rely on sexism and the degradation of femininity and women. Moreover, Orientalism frames Asian Americans as deviant in terms of gender and sexual practices as naturally resulting from biological notions of race and essentialist constructions of culture across many ethnic groups. These formulations may differ from ethnic group to ethnic group, for example from Filipino men (as "little brown brothers" during colonialism) to Arab American women (as veiled victims or as terrorists since 9/11).

Exclusion laws structured and regulated not only citizenship but also racial formations. Immigration laws (of 1875, 1882, 1917, 1924, 1934, and 1965, for example) have been and are connected to capitalist, racist, and sexist agendas of the U.S. nation-state. They deploy sexist and heterosexist logics in policing the borders of the nation-state and simultaneously defining its citizens. One of the earliest immigration laws, the 1875 Page Act barred entry for contracted labor, felons, and prostitutes. Chinese women criminalized as a class and assumed to be prostitutes or second wives were, therefore, one of the first targets of exclusion. More importantly, the underlying sexist and racist basis for this law invoked moral claims in denying entry to Chinese

women who were framed as nonheteronormative (either practiced sex work or were polygamists). The fear that Chinese sex workers would bring venereal disease, spread opium addiction, and entice white young men was premised on Orientalist notions of Asian women as deviant, diseased, and dangerous. Furthermore, Kerry Abrams argues that the law not only sought to prevent prostitution but also polygamy and the formation of Chinese families in the United States. Polygamy challenged heteronormative understandings of marriage as it was thought to lead to despotism and be in opposition to democracy. In either case, the Page Law attempted to shore up white heteronormative marriage using sexist and racist logics that framed Chinese women as more oppressed than their white American counterparts.

This emasculation and hyperfeminization led to many representations of Asian American women as victimized and desirable sexual figures; stereotypes of the lotus blossom, for example, are predicated on a figure who is more subservient, oppressed, and diminutive than her white, Western counterpart. In contrast to representations that focus on Asian American women as threatening and deviant (e.g., as prostitutes or dragon ladies), this equally racist formulation sees Asian American women as more oppressed by Asian “cultural traditions.” Migration and racism may create unequal relations of power within Asian American communities so that women and queer people are more vulnerable. Yen Le Espiritu comments that “historical and contemporary oppression has (re)structured the balance of power between Asian American men and women,” and that this restructuring has shaped struggles to create and “maintain social institutions and systems of meaning” (1997, 1). Asian American cultural representations often attempt to engage and address these social configurations and imbalances of power.

Immigration and citizenship policies sought to frame Asian American men as temporary laborers who were unsuitable for settling in the United States. Nayan Shah demonstrates how the production of Chinese American deviance and white heterosexual norms in public health policy affected material and cultural discourses. Public health authorities depicted Chinese immigrants as filthy and diseased, as the carriers of incurable infections such as smallpox, syphilis, and bubonic plague. Men’s forced homosociality was then read as a marker of deviance in gender, race, and sexuality. Seen as cheap labor, Asian American men were also framed as a threatening presence who would undermine white American civilization, not only through their infringement upon white men’s entitlement to employment but also through contamination, infection, and degeneracy.

Asian American men were often feminized and stigmatized through their labor. Because of the scarcity of women in the American West, Asian American men were employed in what were traditionally feminized forms of labor—including laundries and domestic work. This labor emasculated men and framed them as effeminate. This

degradation relied on a racialized sexism and misogyny in which femininity was debased and degraded. Therefore, the feminization of Asian American men was also sexist. Asian American men were seen as occupying a gendered space that was in accordance with a location in a social hierarchy that was suitable for undesirable races. Asian American responses to this emasculation have varied and have included claims to heroic cultural nationalism.

Within Asian America, cultural nationalism often takes the form of celebratory claims to citizenship and assertions of belonging to the nation-state. Structured as a progress narrative, cultural nationalist accounts stress the ways in which Asian Americans have struggled to overcome the discrimination and racist practices of the U.S. state. Feminist criticism has played a critical role in challenging the ways in which cultural nationalism polices the contours of identity through norms of gender and sexuality. The debates that ensued over Frank Chin's fierce condemnation of Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* represent a critical moment in the struggle between feminism and ethnonationalism. Framing his position as antiracist and anti-assimilationist, Chin accused Kingston of compromising her ethnic loyalties in the desire to cater to a white audience. This construction of feminism as a Western import is one that has long worked to subordinate feminist concerns to those of the larger movement or collectivity. Chin's argument reifies Asian American identity as unified and homogenous, while dismissing feminist claims as "foreign" and divisive to the movement. While feminism is framed as outside of Asian America, sexism itself is seen as endemic to Asian American cultures. Whenever gender inequities are made visible, the explanation is always based on a static notion of culture. The contestations provoked by Kingston's novel evince the tensions at work within the formation "Asian American woman," as well as cultural nationalism's production of a normative (sexist and heterosexist) subject. Laura Hyun Yi Kang specifically traces the ways in which both sides of the Kingston/Chin debate rely upon a reading of the book as autobiography and establish a "sociological correspondence" between Asian American texts and "real" bodies. Her work exposes the ways in which Asian American women are fixed and "enfigured" through technologies of representation that shape and infuse their enunciations with particular meanings.

Asian American literature and criticism have been increasingly reformulated by queer and feminist writings. Challenging heterosexism and sexism, feminist and queer scholarship has taken to task accounts of Asian America that do not account for or prioritize gender and sexual difference. They have articulated the intersections of race, class, and nation with gender and sexuality forwarding that they cannot be considered in isolation from each other. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Colonialism and Postcolonialism; Feminism and Asian America; Nationalism and Asian America; Orientalism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America.

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JIGNA DESAI AND DIANE DETOURNAY

◆ SHAMSIE, KAMILA (1973–)

Kamila Shamsie is an important contemporary novelist to emerge from Pakistan. She has published four critically acclaimed novels even before reaching the age of 35. Shamsie's literary works help to put Pakistani diasporic identity on the literary map of English language writing from South Asia and the South Asian diaspora.

Born in 1973 in Karachi, Pakistan, Shamsie belongs to a family whose women have established a rich literary lineage. Shamsie's great-aunt Attia Hossain's novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column* is considered a classic novel about the Indian subcontinent's partition, written in the immediate aftermath of the traumatic events. Kamila Shamsie's mother Muneeza Shamsie has also distinguished herself as a writer and editor. Shamsie's extended family connections thus spanned both Pakistan and India. She was educated in Karachi, then attended Hamilton College, New York, and subsequently pursued a graduate degree in creative writing at Amherst College, Massachusetts. She divides her time between Karachi, London, and Hamilton College, New York, where she teaches creative writing.

Shamsie's fiction is more representative of cosmopolitan or diasporic South Asian sensibility than a strictly South Asian American one. This is because her principal characters are often nomadic, though in a highly privileged sense. They are not seen as rooted in a specific South Asian diasporic community, either North American or British. The only geographic location that is a centering presence in Shamsie's fiction is the powerful association of the city of Karachi with a sense of home and the space of childhood and memory. Like Salman Rushdie's Bombay or Amitav Ghosh's Calcutta, Shamsie's Karachi is the space of childhood and innocence and the space marking its fragile limits and ultimate loss. Like Ghosh, Rushdie, and her great-aunt Attia Hossain, Shamsie returns to an exploration of the violence and horror of the



partition of the Indian subcontinent in several of her novels. For her, the more immediate and horrific partition is not the one in 1947, which divided India into India and Pakistan, but the second partition of 1971, following the civil war in Pakistan and leading to the creation of Bangladesh. The history of this fratricidal war and the genocide perpetrated by the Pakistani army on the civilian population of its eastern half is a source of collective national guilt. In *Kartography*, the protagonists Raheen and Karim have to come to terms with the national guilt mirrored in the personal trajectories of the romantic lives of their fathers and their relationship with Maheen, a Bengali woman engaged at first to Raheen's father, Zafar, but rejected by him after the civil war and its social fragmentation. Although Maheen goes on to marry Ali and give birth to Karim, the marriage does not last. Karim has to resolve his animosity toward Zafar for rejecting his mother, and Raheen has to come to terms with the personal limitations of the father she had idolized to reconnect with the childhood friend and lifelong love, Karim.

Partition is also featured in *Salt and Saffron*. However, in this novel Shamsie's representation of the 1947 partition is rendered as family lore of the Dard-e Dil family and is emotionally distanced from the protagonist Aliya's generation. It is represented as an allegory of a family quarrel between three brothers, in a metafictional throwback to Rushdie's *Midnight Children* and Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*. The emotional burden of the experience is registered in the life of Abida's (Aliya's grandmother) separation from her lover Taimur, who becomes an exile. There is an attempt in the ending to reconnect members of the family severed by artificial national and political borders. Along with the representation of partition, the most compelling exploration in this novel is that of the hierarchies and rigid taboos of class that structures modern Pakistani society. Aliya, the protagonist, has to grapple with the family scandal of her cousin's elopement with the cook and the prejudices and narrow-mindedness of various relatives' reactions to the event. Shamsie strips away the layers of prejudice that even the elite educated in the liberal arts have internalized and continue to harbor against their "social inferiors." The city and the geography of its neighborhoods are implicitly structured by class.

In her most recent novel *Broken Verses*, Shamsie pays tribute to her bilingual heritage by scripting a metafictional narrative whose protagonist bears a close resemblance to Pakistan's most famous modern Urdu poet, Faiz Ahmad Faiz. There are many parallels between Shamsie's poet protagonist named Nazim and Faiz, particularly in their embrace of revolutionary politics, their fearless opposition to totalitarian military regimes, and their long periods of exile from Pakistan. While the real-life Faiz lived in exile in Beirut, Shamsie's protagonist is depicted as a victim of even greater state repression and murder. The novel evokes Nazim through the memories of Aasmani, a young woman whose mother was an ardent activist for women's rights and a lifelong companion of the poet Nazim. Aasmani tries to investigate the disappearance of her mother and the brutal death

of the poet once she starts receiving coded calligraphic messages from the poet many years after his assassination. Written in the form of a literary detective story, this novel too becomes an exploration of trauma, loss, and recovery. In this novel, Shamsie offers a trenchant critique of the brutality of the state censorship of public intellectuals in Pakistan. In her first novel, *In the City by the Sea*, she had also explored the precarious nature of democracy in the ongoing history of military regimes in her country.

The female protagonist in Shamsie's novels is cosmopolitan in her access to a diversity of geographic locations. The exposure of these women to life in Britain and the United States produces a keen awareness of the fissures in Pakistani society, produced by the competing claims of women's rights and Islam, democracy and military rule, socialism and landed wealth. Although they are alienated and deeply troubled by the tortured familial and national legacies, they do not relinquish the struggle to accept responsibility for the past and reshape the future. Shamsie's novels embrace a feminist consciousness that tries to renegotiate the contradictory claims of nationhood and women. **See also** Asian Diasporas.

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LOPAMUDRA BASU

#### ◆ SHIOMI, RICK A. (1947–)

Rick Shiomi is a Japanese Canadian/American playwright, director, cofounder and artistic director of Theater Mu in Minneapolis, and taiko drummer, founder, and leader of Mu Daiko, a taiko drum group, now combined under Mu Performing Arts. Born in Toronto, Shiomi earned a BA from the University of Toronto with a major in history in 1970 and a teaching certificate from Simon Fraser University in Vancouver in 1972. After two years traveling in Europe and Asia, he returned to Vancouver,

working in the Asian Canadian community and in the redress movement. Shiomi's best known play is his first, *Yellow Fever* (1982), but he has gone on to establish himself as an innovative playwright exploring a range of pan-Asian diaspora experiences and the guiding force of one of the most important Asian American theaters in the Midwest.

In contrast to the work of nisei Japanese American playwrights Wakako Yamauchi and Momoko Iko, most of the plays of sansei Shiomi depart from realistic family drama. *Yellow Fever* is a parody of the hard-boiled detective genre, in which Bogart-like Japanese Canadian private eye Sam Shikaze cracks the case of the missing cherry blossom queen. The snappy comedic dialogue, however, raises serious issues about racism, discrimination, tokenism, and assimilation and ambition versus connection and service to the ethnic community. Shiomi also analyzes the destruction of Vancouver's thriving Japanese community by the government's internment and dispersive resettlement policies during and after **World War II**. Shiomi followed *Yellow Fever's* success with a sequel *Once Is Not Enough* (written with Marc Hayashi and Lane Nishikawa, 1984) and a prequel *Rosie's Café* (1985) but took up political issues more directly in *Point of Order: Hirabayashi vs the United States* (1983). In *Play Ball* (1989) and *Uncle Tadao* (1990) Shiomi did turn to the family drama form to explore the discrimination and trauma of the war years and their lingering and destructive aftereffects on individuals and families.

Shiomi's 1992 move to Minneapolis started a new phase in his career and his playwriting when he cofounded Theater Mu with wife Martha Johnson, an authority on Japanese Noh theater; Kong-il Lee, a Korea-born University of Minnesota student and Korean mask dancer; Korean adoptee Diane Espaldon; and Korean American Andrew Kim. In Minnesota, unlike the West Coast cities in which he had been working, the Asian population was miniscule. To fulfill its mission to present both new and canonical Asian American plays, Mu first needed to develop a pool of theater artists, so it began holding workshops for people of Asian heritage. Minnesota has one of the highest per capita populations of Korean adoptees in the country. Touched by their stories, which emerged in the workshops, and committed to presenting the experience of people in the community, Shiomi wrote his first play for the fledgling company: *Mask Dance* (1993). *Mask Dance*, written with Lee and Joo Yeo No, explores the experiences of three Korean adoptees in small-town Minnesota—struggles with isolation and racism; questions of identity as Korean and American complicated by issues of adoption; issues surrounding whether to go to Korean camp, visit Korea, or search for one's birth family; and conflicts with well-meaning white parents who do not understand their adopted children's complex emotional needs. The play also exemplifies elements that have come to distinguish most of Shiomi's and indeed Mu's plays: collaboration, the use

of interviews and oral history as source material, the adaptation of Asian folktales, and the blending of Asian and Western music, dance, and theatrical forms.

Shiomi is also committed to exposing his largely non-Asian audience to a range of Asian and Asian American histories and cultures, expressed the following year in a triptych of one-acts under the title *River of Dreams* (1994), two written by Shiomi: *Land of a Million Elephants*, based on the life of Laotian dancer Pone Suryadhay, and *River of Life*, based on the defection of traditional Cambodian dancer Thonnara Hing, who collaborated with Shiomi on the script. *The Song of the Pipa* (2000), based on interviews with internationally renowned pipa player Gao Hong, depicts the destructiveness of the Cultural Revolution in China. These productions gained additional power from the participation of the subject artist and reflected the recent influx of Asian immigrants to the Midwest. The Twin Cities now host one of the largest concentrations of Southeast Asians, especially Hmong, Cambodians, and Laotians, in the country.

Shiomi has also developed a commitment to youth outreach. *The Walleye Kid* (1998), written with Sundraya Kase, marked a return to presenting the identity struggles of the Korean adoptee in Minnesota; however, instead of being a tense family drama, this play is a humorous, magical, and touching reworking of the Japanese folktale of Momotaro, the Peach Boy. Shiomi has also established a biennial collaboration with SteppingStone Theater for Youth Development. For their first project, Shiomi developed and directed *Tiger Tales* (2001), based on a collection of Hmong folktales. Subsequent productions include *The Magic Bus to Asian Folktales* (2003), *The Great Family Tree* (2005), which again used folktales and music to explore the search for the identity of three young Chinese, Laotian, and Korean adoptees, and *The Journey of the Drum* (2007), which centers on a young girl's quest to learn taiko drumming, defying custom.

*Drum*, like *The Tale of the Dancing Crane* (1999), draws on Shiomi's background in taiko. Having studied with a number of teachers since the 1970s, including Grandmaster Seiichi Tanaka of the San Francisco Taiko Dojo, Shiomi founded Mu Daiko in 1997. Recognized nationally and internationally, Mu Daiko plays both traditional and original compositions and is distinguished by its dramatic, athletic, and beautifully choreographed performances, influenced by Shiomi's theatrical flair and interest in Korean mask dance. Shiomi has taken both taiko performances and his theatrical productions to schools, colleges, and community organizations throughout the upper Midwest.

Shiomi has continually pushed Mu into new artistic territories and collaborations. In 2002 Shiomi shared directing duties with Stages Theatre Company's Steve Barerio in a production of *Romeo and Juliet* set in postwar Seattle with Japanese American Montagues and white Capulets. Perhaps inspired by the experience of coproducing Sondheim's *Pacific Overtures*, Shiomi, who as a young man was in a rock band for a short time with fellow

playwrights Philip Kan **Gotanda** and David Henry **Hwang**, recast *The Walleye Kid* as a musical with music and lyrics by Kurt Miyashiro. In 2006 Shiomi returned to Shakespeare, directing an Asian American version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, featuring taiko and Korean mask dance. In 2007 Shiomi collaborated with the Guthrie Theater to produce Marcus **Quiniones's** *Circle Around the Island*. Originally developed and premiered at Theater Mu in 1999, the play revolves around a young boy's struggle to cope with his father's death in a production that melds Western dramatic narrative storytelling with Hawaiian myth, song, and hula-influenced dance.

Shiomi has been especially concerned with developing young Asian American talent. Through working with emerging playwrights, directors, and actors and holding annual festivals that highlight their work, Shiomi is nurturing a new generation of Asian American theater professionals. He has been active in recent national conferences of Asian American theater companies.

Although *Yellow Fever* and *Mask Dance* remain the only works readily available, Shiomi has developed a body of work rich in scope and invention. His work has received some critical attention, especially from Josephine Lee and more recently from critics interested in the history of Asian American theater. **See also** Asian Diasporas; Assimilation/Americanization; Issei, Nisei, Sansei; Japanese American Internment; Racism and Asian America.

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FLORENCE AMAMOTO

#### ◆ **SIDHWA, BAPSI (1938–)**

Since relocating to the United States in the 1980s, Pakistani American author Bapsi Sidhwa has divided her time between Houston, Texas, and Lahore, Pakistan, in addition to teaching and fellowship positions in places such as Boston and New York. Her writing includes short stories, essays, and several novels: *The Crow Eaters* (1978), *The Bride* (1983), *Cracking India* (1988, originally titled *Ice-Candy-Man*), *An*

*American Brat* (1993), and a novelization of Deepa Mehta's 2005 *Water*, a Canadian film that was nominated for an Oscar Award. Although among her novels only *An American Brat* is set in the United States, all of Sidhwa's writing works together to examine the ways in which contemporary identities are constructed and continue to be relevant across multiple locations, often multiple nations. Although today Sidhwa seems to identify herself primarily with Pakistan and the United States, especially since her children are second-generation Americans, she has throughout her career been accessible to South Asian, American, and other audiences, in part because she has always published in English, which is available to readers around the world. Her novels tend to be realist, primarily linear narratives in which the emphasis is usually on character development and storytelling as they are affected by historical contingencies. In her writing, Sidhwa focuses especially on women's experiences when communities are negotiating dramatic cultural and political changes. Major themes include ethnic and religious difference, postcolonial and diasporic legacies, and imagined national and transnational affiliations. Sidhwa is particularly associated with bringing stories about the Parsi diaspora, discussed below, to international attention.

One of the first writers from Pakistan to gain acclaim, Sidhwa has received many awards for her writing, including a National Endowment for the Arts Grant in 1987; the *Sitara-I-Imtiaz*, the highest award in the arts in Pakistan in 1991; and the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Award in 1993. As a writer and gender activist, Sidhwa was one of the first to be inducted into the Hall of Fame for women of the Zoroastrian faith, which honors achievements in diverse fields. Her work has been translated into many languages, including Italian, French, and Russian. In terms of being acknowledged in the United States, Sidhwa reported to the *Houston Chronicle* in March 2000 that President Bill Clinton was presented with a copy of *Cracking India* as part of the briefing prior to his much-heralded trip to India.

Before the international success of *Cracking India*, which secured Sidhwa's reputation as a novelist, she wrote and published two other novels, one set before and one after independence and partition on the South Asian subcontinent in August 1947. The story in *The Crow Eaters* takes place at the beginning of the twentieth century and narrates the migration of a family from central India northward. Intent on upward social mobility, the characters in the novel imagine a journey to a new world, complete with a "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" attitude that may seem familiar to many American readers. In describing their often absurd exploits, Sidhwa narrates this story with a tendency to humor and irony that is present in most of her works. Meanwhile, Sidhwa's second novel, *The Bride*, highlights some of the social unrest and community conflicts that persisted in the aftermath of partition. Like *The Crow Eaters*, *The Bride* depicts conflicts between different ethnic groups and the impact of miscegenation on modern societies. There are parallel plot lines, one concerning a Punjabi woman who

marries a Kohistani tribesman and the other about an American working-class woman married to a Pakistani man. The similarity in these unhappy relationships suggests the sometimes intractable ways that cultural and ethnic dissimilarities intrude on relationships between individuals.

In her third and most famous novel, *Cracking India*, Sidhwa fills in the historical terrain between the first two, in one of the first texts about independence and partition published by a woman. *Cracking India* treats common motifs in her writing, especially by tracing the dynamics through which identity communities cohere or “crack.” It is by portraying the divided loyalties of ethnoreligious minorities like Parsis in a period of extreme Hindu-Muslim violence that Sidhwa comments on the physical and psychological violence that different groups inflict upon one another. Zoroastrian Parsis, who emigrated from Persia to South Asia over a thousand years and subsequently dispersed around the globe, number about 100,000 on the subcontinent today. This perspective from extreme marginalization (which nonetheless often accompanies socioeconomic privilege for Parsis) allows Sidhwa’s child narrator in *Cracking India*, Lenny, to both participate in and remain separate from the world-changing events around her. One of the techniques most often discussed in relation to the novel is Sidhwa’s strategy of exploiting the gaps in a child’s understanding of adult politics to represent inadvertent complicity and the elusiveness of meaning-making in certain situations.

In another female *bildungsroman*, or coming-of-age novel, *An American Brat*, Sidhwa touches upon themes that have historically been central to **Asian American studies**, including generational differences that are exacerbated by immigration, the paradoxes of the American Dream, and the feelings of foreignness that often plague newcomers. Assimilation to the United States is portrayed as a series of challenges faced by the young protagonist because she is female, brown, and foreign. This exposes some of the pervasive ideologies, which figure Asian Americans as atypical and imperfect national subjects. Set in the 1970s, the story concerns the migration of 16-year-old Feroza Ginwalla from Pakistan to the United States and her maturation through various familial, romantic, and friendly relationships. Experiencing East Coast and mid-western American communities, Feroza learns about the promise and inconsistencies of the “land of opportunity,” both prosperous and poverty-stricken. Her sojourn in the United States transforms by the end of the narrative into a relocation and a determination to be another immigrant who helps to shape a new American future.

Revisiting many of the themes of her other writing in this novel, which is explicitly about Asians in the United States, Bapsi Sidhwa connects stories of contemporary identity production from all over the world by imagining Parsis as they assimilate in a variety of cultural and historical moments to different nations. In the subplot of *An American Brat*, about Feroza’s engagement to David, who is Jewish American, Sidhwa emphasizes similarities between religious communities at the same time that Feroza

confronts potential excommunication. According to Parsi practice in the novel, Parsi women who marry “nons” are excluded from future participation. Taking a more questioning and resistant stance than she had earlier toward this tradition, Feroza emerges from her short-lived engagement with a tendency to reassess orthodoxies of her diasporic community. Just as her efforts to become American have led to a commitment to her new nation through appreciation and critique, so too her attitudes toward her ethnoreligious community have been transformed.

Although Sidhwa has been the subject of academic attention in South Asian and postcolonial literary contexts for some time, she has also recently gained more mainstream attention in the United States and abroad. Her artistic collaboration with the noted filmmaker Mehta, both with *Water: A Novel* and Mehta’s earlier adaptation of *Cracking India* as the film *Earth* (1988), represents some interesting possibilities for recreating a story in different media. The controversy surrounding *Water*, a story about a child widow in colonial India, has made it the subject of great public scrutiny that may also increase Sidhwa’s visibility even more over time. **See also** Asian Diasporas; Assimilation/Americanization; Colonialism and Postcolonialism.

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ANUPAMA JAIN

#### ◆ SONE, MONICA (1919–)

Monica Sone is a Japanese American writer who is primarily known for her only autobiography *Nisei Daughter*. The Japanese word *ni* means second, *sei* means generation, and thus Sone’s autobiography *Nisei Daughter* reflects the life experiences of a second-generation Japanese American girl and her years of growing up in Seattle, Washington, as an ethnic minority in American society, including details from her early childhood in Seattle and life in the internment camps of Idaho during **World War II**.

Monica Sone, also known as Monica Itoi Sone, was born and grew up in Seattle. In the early decades of the twentieth century, Japanese immigrants in Seattle were mainly



engaged in service occupations, especially running cheap hotels. Sone's father, who immigrated to the United States in 1904 with a dream to become a lawyer, initially worked as a farmhand and then as a cook on ships sailing between Seattle and Alaska. For a while he also ran a small hotel. The hotel was located in the skid row, which was close to the main Japanese business center. Sone's mother immigrated to the United States with her family at the age of 17 and married her father soon afterward. As the second of four children, Monica grew up speaking both English and Japanese, though she considered English her first language. After high school Monica went to a business school at the requirement of her father, who asked her to learn office skills for earning her independence in the future. To finish the two-year studies in one year, Monica devoted herself to study and her health declined; she had tuberculosis and had to stay in a sanitarium for nearly a year. After recovery she attended classes at the University of Washington. But her schooling was cut short because of the breakout of war between the United States and Japan. Sone's family, like other Japanese families on the West Coast, was forced to leave their home and business and sent to Camp Minidoka in Idaho. Two years later, the American government allowed young Japanese people to leave the camp to study or work in the Midwest or the East. After working in Chicago for some time, Sone enrolled in Hanover College, Hanover, Indiana. Then she attended Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, from which she received her MA in clinical psychology. Then she married Geary Sone, with whom she raised four children. With her husband's encouragement and support, she continued her career in counseling. She also remained active in demanding the recognition and redress of the injustice done to Japanese on the West Coast during World War II.

*Nisei Daughter* was published by Little Brown Company in 1953. It is the first female autobiography of a Japanese American internee and the first published account about Japanese Americans' internment experience. It was regarded as a reflection of the individual life of Japanese Americans, a protest against the hardships the Japanese Americans faced, and a narration of how they pulled themselves up through their own efforts in American society. It was not at all popular at that time and went out of print in two years. In 1979—26 years after its first publication—*Nisei Daughter* was republished by the University of Washington Press. At that time, some political movements such as the civil rights movement, anti-Vietnam War movement, the women's liberation movement, and the ethnic movement had happened. As a result the influence of multiculturalism grew, Americans witnessed some ideological change from the melting pot to multiplicity, and a greater interest in cultural and ethnic diversity emerged. The civil rights movement became a social focus, and people cared more about what happened to Japanese Americans and their families during the internment. Thus, with the rise of Asian American literature and its criticism, *Nisei Daughter* immediately became popular after the republication. It was critically acclaimed as an

archive of a lost American history. And now, with increased enthusiasm in **Asian American studies**, *Nisei Daughter* is widely recognized as a masterpiece of Asian American literature.

Sone's *Nisei Daughter* narrates the life of Kazuko Itoi, who was born into a Japanese American family in Seattle, from her infancy in the 1920s to her youth in the 1940s. Kazuko's parents managed an old hotel in Seattle and led a well-to-do life. The happiness of her childhood ended when she realized that she was a Japanese rather than an American. She was shocked and confused about her identity. Then, on December 7, 1941, Japanese naval air forces attacked **Pearl Harbor**, which triggered the full involvement of the United States in the War in the Pacific. The attack on Pearl Harbor changed the lives of many Japanese Americans. To prevent them from collaborating with or sending information to Japan, two months after the attack, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 to relocate all the Japanese Americans out of the West Coast, the Pacific military zone. Within weeks, Roosevelt's order sent 117,000 Japanese Americans to assembly centers near their homes and later to permanent relocation centers outside the restricted military zones, which were often in remote and desolate places. These included Tule Lake, California; Minidoka, Idaho; Manzanar, California; Topaz, Utah; Jerome, Arkansas; Heart Mountain, Wyoming; Poston, Arizona; Granada, Colorado; and Rohwer, Arkansas. Japanese Americans had to sell all their properties at very low prices, and those things that could not be sold were left behind. In the camp, Japanese Americans were deprived of freedom, and life was difficult and hard. Two years later, the American government allowed second-generation Japanese Americans to leave the camps to work and study, so Kazuko went to live with an American missionary couple who had once been in China. The couple helped her to apply to a college. But it was not until the end of World War II that the concentration camps were gradually closed and some of the internees returned to their hometowns while others found themselves new homes. In 1946 the 10 concentration camps that interned Japanese Americans were finally closed, and Kazuko's parents were released and went back to run their hotel in Seattle again.

In *Nisei Daughter*, Monica Sone provides the readers with detailed descriptions of Kazuko's life as a nisei in Seattle and the impact of the internment on her and her family. Through the experiences of a second-generation Japanese American daughter, the book reflects many important issues in the history of Asian America, including their search for self-identity, cultural conflict and integration, the generation gap, the effect of racial discrimination, and the relocation and incarceration of Japanese Americans.

*Nisei Daughter* expresses the inner conflicts of the identity of the minorities due to their double culture backgrounds. Kazuko viewed herself the same as European American children in her school before she was told by her parents that she was a Japanese when

they asked her to go to Japanese school to study Japanese. Since then she began to ask herself, "Who am I?" and "What is my place in this world?" With these questions in mind, she began to explore her identity. She received education in both American school and Japanese school and acted as two different people. In American school, she was active, spoke in a loud voice, and was even tomboyish. However, as soon as she stepped into her Japanese school, she became well-behaved, quiet, and passive. The competition of two different cultures caused many conflicts in Kazuko's life. One example is that when Kazuko was sent to the sanatorium because of tuberculosis, a young European American woman considered her rude and cold because she did not talk with them comfortably and fluently. On the other hand, when she went to help her brother in a fistfight, the Japanese boys were shocked by her action.

The blending of Japanese culture and American culture made her neither totally Japanese nor completely American. Her behavior and thinking were too open and wild for a Japanese girl and too conservative and shy as an American girl. When Mr. and Mrs. Itoi brought Kazuko and her brothers Henry and Kenji to visit relatives in Japan, their experiences there proved that the years of education in the Japanese school in the United States had not prepared Kazuko for living in Japan. She was more accustomed to the American way of life rather than the Japanese. Kazuko cannot rid herself of the influence of either one of the cultures, and, as such, how to balance the two cultures was of great importance to her. Early in her childhood, Kazuko realized that there were two sets of rules deployed before her, and she had to act more closely by one or the other according to the demand of the circumstances. She found that simply acting according to either culture would not result in proper behavior on her part, which confused and sometimes even annoyed her. It took years of efforts before Kazuko could achieve an understanding and appreciation of the two cultures within her after the realization that she had integrated both American and Japanese cultures. She also realized it would be unwise to deny this fact, even though the process of integration had brought much trouble and injustice to her.

*Nisei Daughter* attempts to make the point that minorities should directly face their dual cultural identities and synthesize them into a special one; only in this way can they achieve a wholesome personality. At the end of the book, it seems, Sone succeeded in constructing Kazuko's female Japanese American identity by combining the two cultures within her: "I was going back into its main stream, still with my Oriental eyes, but with an entirely different outlook, for now I felt more like a whole person instead of a sadly split personality. The Japanese and the American parts of me were now blended into one" (1979, 238).

Racial discrimination is another issue Sone exposes in her book. After returning to the United States from visiting Japan, the Itoi family found that they became the targets of much racial discrimination and the outcasts of American society. Kazuko's

younger sister, Sumiko, was ill and needed fresh air to recuperate. So Kazuko and her mother went to look for a rental house along the beach. However, their polite requests were turned down by all the property owners, just because they were Japanese descendants. Discrimination against Japanese Americans was obvious in many aspects of U.S. social life. In newspapers and magazines, there were cartoons of hideous-looking Japanese. Even in a shop, the assistant pretended not to see Kazuko and kept her waiting there until she went away. There also was a boycott on Japanese goods. The most serious of all discriminatory practices was of course the forced relocation of all Japanese Americans living on the West Coast to concentration camps after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, where the internees were living inside the wired fences, were deprived of their freedom and became prisoners, and suffered great loss of their properties. In the camps, Japanese Americans lived in poor conditions and with no privacy. They suffered both psychologically and materially. Sone's book reveals a period of American history unknown to many people. Sone once said: "I am very angry to find that the Americans at the West and the East do not know our experience in the concentration camp. Except those living on the west coast, other Americans have no idea that we were deprived of the franchise without any legal procedure. It is intolerable that in the present America, such unfairness is still not open to the public. Nobody discusses and writes about this affair. The strong desire to tell the truth to the public motivated and caused me to write this book" (Sone 1992).

*Nisei Daughter* is also an examination of the cultural conflict between generations, which are best represented by the different values, customs, and behaviors exhibited by the issei and nisei. *Issei* refers to the first-generation Japanese Americans who grew up in Japan and immigrated to the United States. They were mostly Japanese in terms of customs, values, lifestyle, and behavior. Nisei are those who were born and grew up in the United States. Nisei confronted two worlds: the world of the Japanese community and the world of the larger American society, and they were influenced by both of them. In their life, they were exposed more to American culture than to Japanese culture, though socially they were often isolated from the white American society, and they absorbed more of Japanese culture than they realized because of their necessarily close relations with their issei parents. But different cultural backgrounds and levels of education caused cultural conflict between the issei and nisei. When the issei and the nisei are together, despite the similarity in appearance, many differences arise. Henry's wedding ceremony is an example in point. In the Oriental culture, being passive and silent is being dignified and polite. So at the ceremony, where everyone was supposed to help oneself and feel at home, the issei were reluctant to get themselves refreshment and withdrew to the far end of the hall so that they could be as inconspicuous as possible. As the wedding ceremony concluded, Sone pointed out, "to try to force East to meet West had been a terrible mistake" (1979, 215).

Asian American critics have noted that Monica Sone does not profoundly criticize racial discrimination in *Nisei Daughter*. Elaine H. Kim argues that the book ends on a hopeful note that sounds didactic (1982). Sau-ling Cynthia Wang notes that Kazuko does not directly confront discrimination or fight social injustice but instead adopts the white norms (1993) to measure herself. Indeed her book expresses an advocacy for assimilation into American culture and is weak in protesting racial discrimination. However, this limitation is understandable because at the time Sone wrote the book, American mainstream culture was still predominantly white; the cultural multiplicity of the 1960s and the 1970s had not yet emerged. The significance of Sone's book lies in its description of the life of second-generation Japanese Americans in Seattle from a female perspective, the exploration of self-identity and cultural conflicts under the pressure of both Japanese traditional culture and racial discrimination. Furthermore, her depiction of the life experience in the internment camp is an act of "speaking the unspeakable." See also Assimilation/Americanization; Civil Rights Movement and Asian America; Issei, Nisei, Sansei; Japanese American Autobiography; Japanese American Internment; Multiculturalism and Asian America.

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LI ZHANG

#### ◆ SONG, CATHY (1955–)

Identified as a Hawaiian, a Korean American, or a Chinese American poet, Cathy Song was born in 1955 to a Korean American father and a Chinese American mother in Oahu, Hawaii, where she has spent most of her life and now lives with her husband and three children.

Song is the daughter of Andrew Song, an airline pilot, and Ella Song, a seamstress, whose marriage was a "picture bride" arrangement (through an exchange of photographs). She was raised in Wahiawa, a former plantation town in Oahu. When she was 7 years old, her family moved to the Waialae Kahala district of Honolulu. In the early

school-age years, she developed an interest in writing. At the age of 9, she chronicled all of the events that might affect her. At 11, Cathy Song first demonstrated her talent by writing a spy novel, short stories with blonde heroines, and imaginary interviews with movie stars. Though once inspired to be a songwriter, she began writing poetry at Kalani High School. After high school, she attended the University of Hawaii, studying with the noted poet and biographer John Unterecker. Two years later, she left for Wellesley College on the mainland, where she earned a degree in English literature in 1977. Then she entered the master's program in creative writing at Boston University, where she received an MFA in 1981. While living in Boston, Song married Douglas McHarg Davenport, a medical student. She attended the Advanced Poetry Workshop conducted by Kathleen Spivak, Pulitzer Prize nominee, who recognized her talents and encouraged her to find a mainstream publisher for her work.

Song's first book-length manuscript, *Picture Bride*, was selected by the poet Richard Hugo from among 625 manuscripts as the winner of the 1982 Yale Series of Younger Poets Award, one of the most prestigious literary awards for young poets. The manuscript was later published by Yale University Press in 1983 and was nominated for that year's National Book Critics Circle Award. At the time, nobody expected that an Asian American poet would receive such a prestigious honor. The success of her first book carried the young poet to national recognition, and other awards followed for her other successive books. Song has since published three more volumes of poetry: *Frameless Windows, Squares of Light* (1989), *School Figures* (1994), and *The Land of Bliss* (2001). She has won the Frederick Bock Prize from Poetry, the Shelly Memorial Award from the Poetry Society of America, the Hawaii Award for Literature, a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, and a Pushcart Prize.

Song has established herself as a significant canonical writer in Asian American literature and in the field of **Hawaiian literature**. Her poems, mostly from *Picture Bride*, have been widely anthologized in influential works including *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*, *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, *Growing Up Local: An Anthology of Prose and Poetry from Hawaii*, *The Open Boat: Poems from Asian America*, *The Best American Poetry 2000*, and *Unsettling America: An Anthology of Contemporary Multicultural Poetry*. Her poems have also appeared in *Hawaii Review*, *Greenfield Review*, *Tendrill*, *Dark Brand*, *Asian-Pacific Literature*, and *Bamboo Ridge: The Hawaii Writers' Quarterly*, and even on the buses of Atlanta, the subway cars of New York, and the Poetry Daily Web site. The visibility of her poems has been a major breakthrough for **Asian American** and **Hawaiian** poetry.

In 1987, along with her husband and their children, Song returned to live in Hawaii. Since then, she has taught creative writing at the University of Hawaii at Manoa while also working with other local writers for Bamboo Ridge Press, which is devoted to publishing literature by and about Hawaii's people.

Uniting Song's body of poetry is her deep, abiding attention to art, body image, family, land, childhood memories, and roles of women. Song's most often discussed work, *Picture Bride* generally deals with her personal experiences in the roles of sister, woman, wife, mother, and child in relation to animals, people, and land. Her poetry provides her physical understanding of selfhood, the relationship of body to body, her view of the bodily landscape, and body as the sensuous and the sensual. The body overtly and implicitly pervades her poetic narrative, appearing in images and symbols; in references to space, organs, and the five senses; in artifacts of paintings and clothing; and in the symbolic motion of running, sewing, and swimming. *Picture Bride* reveals Song's corporeal interaction with animals and people, including her grandmother, mother, sister, son, father, husband, and neighbors; and the book explicitly visualizes the body and its parts, such as hair, hands, eyes, and lips. It also presents the body symbolically through descriptions and images of such spaces as **Chinatown**, Hawaii, home, the sugarcane field, and even weather. Her inward exploration of selfhood through various roles and her perceptions of the exterior world are filtered by the lens of her body (adult and child).

A collection of 31 poems divided into five sections with subtitles named after Georgia O'Keeffe's floral paintings, *Picture Bride* begins by evoking an image of the body in its title poem, "Picture Bride." "Picture Bride" dramatizes her grandmother at the age of 23 when she leaves Korea to marry a man she had never seen before—a sugar-mill laborer in Waialua, Hawaii, who was 13 years older than she. Imaginatively picturing the scene of their first meeting in Hawaii, "Picture Bride" begins with the poet speaker's identification with her grandmother because of their shared appearance. Song recalls that when she wrote this poem, she was about the same age as her grandmother when she left for Hawaii. Her grandmother's journey is an entry to a new world. Her grandmother would die in this new world and never have a chance to see her family and the motherland again. Song compares the grandmother's departure for Hawaii to her own move to New England, where she faced a critical moment in her life; the time she left Hawaii for college in New England; the time she became pregnant; the time she attended the poetry workshop and desired to make her debut; and the time she reconsidered her roles as a daughter, a would-be mother, and an Asian American woman poet.

Immediately following the title poem, "The Youngest Daughter" focuses on the physical mother-daughter relationship. Picturing moments of physical intimacy between the poet speaker and her mother—the mother massages her face, and she in turn bathes her mother—"The Youngest Daughter" at first glance displays a state of harmony and a nostalgic stage of bodily union between the mother and the child. At this stage, because the child is emotionally and physically part of the mother's body, the erotic character of the mother-child symbiosis is expressed by the poet speaker's

nostalgic narrative of her response to the sensual and palpable maternal body. The poet speaker's depictions of her mother's "great breasts" in the milky water and "brown nipples" with whiskers around and a sour taste vividly and sensuously suggest an erotic and primitive relation between the mother and the child (1983, 5).

It is through the body that the child perceives the world around her as sometimes threatening and sometimes protective; the surroundings are even perceived as an extension of the body, reflecting sometimes the intactness or sometimes the fragmentation of self. On the one hand, Hawaii in the innocent eyes of the childlike speaker becomes an earthly paradise rather than a colony, an idyllic village rather than a plantation. On the other, the image of Hawaii as paradise is tainted with casual disclosures of Hawaii in a negative sense—full of imagery of darkness, water, and moisture. Darkness permeates many poems of *Picture Bride*: indeed, because most of the activities in Song's poems take place at night, the image of a sunny, pleasant, and bright tourist island is accordingly undermined.

Heard through the voice of an adult viewer of Kitagawa Utamaro's prints and the persona of Georgia O'Keeffe, the middle part of the book reveals the oppression of the patriarchal society by meticulously picturing female body images in the paintings and next records an artist's declaration of independence. There are six poems that particularly explore female body imagery in the visual arts. The first three pieces—"Beauty and Sadness," "Girl Powdering Her Neck," and "Ikebana"—re-present photographic images of the female body in the woodblock prints of Kitagawa Utamaro, a famous Japanese artist of the Edo period in the nineteenth century. Song reconstructs the idealized and molded female body perceived by the voyeuristic male gaze. The women in the portraits are observed and engraved by the male artist, Utamaro, for mainly male spectators: this male gaze invades the women's privacy. The visible women are constructed by the invisible seers, and their bodies depend on the eye of the voyeurs. These women's private domain is entirely exposed to the gaze of the male voyeurs: they are either bathing (in "Beauty and Sadness"), making up (in "Girl Powdering Her Neck"), or dressing up (in "Ikebana").

Three other poems—"Blue and White Lines after O'Keeffe," "Hotel Geneve," and "From the White Place"—are dedicated to the American woman painter Georgia O'Keeffe. Song shows how a female artist strives to exhibit her own body through floral paintings, but *not* in complicity with the gaze of the male spectators. An artistic exhibitionism in Song's imagined O'Keeffe indicates the female painter's desire to search for an independent and integrated body. In Song's poem, O'Keeffe's visual re-presentation of the world through her investment of a "new" color corresponds to Song's re-presentation of body through her articulation of a "new" corporeal femininity.

The book ends with an assertion of the body as the one that has always been ethnicized and gendered rather than a body natural and pure. In the central section of the



book, Song subverts the givenness and naturalness of the body by recreating the idealized female body in Utamaro's work and presenting O'Keeffe's perception of women's bodies. Song's intention in showing the ethnicizing and gendering of body is especially apparent in the last two sections. "Lost Sister" deals with an immigrant Chinese woman whose body is ethnicized by the ossification of her body as Chinese "jade." The ethnicizing of the body as a Chinese emblem is also the core of the poem "Space We Leave Empty." Further, in "Chinatown," the children's bodies are ethnicized with Chinese food. "Untouched Photograph of Passenger" pictures the only male body in the book; in it the body of the speaker's immigrant grandfather is detailed visually with emphasis on his ethnic features.

Song's second collection of poems, *Frameless Windows, Squares of Light*, published in 1988, consists of 26 poems and is divided in four parts ("The Window and the Field," "A Small Light," "Shadow Figures," and "Frameless Windows, Squares of Light"). Major themes in *Picture Bride* recur and are further developed in this volume, particularly individual experiences in various stages of women's lives. In "Humble Jar," Song uses a jar of buttons to represent a mother's values, which are marginalized. The buttons are undervalued, but they are useful. Song transforms the ordinary daily items into poetic and meaningful materials. In *School Figures*, Song's third collection published in 1994, the poet again focuses on women's roles, especially as mother and daughter, and their relationships. The mother tends to inscribe traditional feminine values upon the daughter's body. In "Sunworshippers," the poet speaker recalls how her mother despised the "sunworshippers" who freely expose their bodies; in contrast, the daughter is forced to conceal her body with hats and gloves. In "Grammar of Silk," Song further shows us a mother as a seamstress and why the mother insists that her daughter should learn sewing. At the beginning of the poem, Song describes how years later the daughter can describe such confinement as "pleasant" and even regards the place as a "sanctuary" (45). Indeed, it is a place where women can take a break from their daily housework and talk with each other freely, and, more importantly, a space where the power struggle between mother and daughter no longer exists. As the poem progresses, it becomes clear that Song inverts the mechanisms of discipline and turns such physical confinement to a mode of liberation, the act of sewing to artistry and self-articulation. In the process of discovering her poetic identity, Song is also aware that she cannot escape the artistic influence. For example, Susan Schultz has observed that "Humble Jar" is another version of John Keats's "Grecian Urn" or Wallace Stevens's "Anecdote of a Jar" (1993, 271).

Song's most recent collection of poems is *The Land of Bliss*. Taken by A. Michele Turner, the cover photograph of *The Land of Bliss* shows a sculpted head of a bodhisattva, broken and askew, on top of a delicately embroidered white tablecloth and next to a row of yellow roses. Song explains, "That picture seemed to be specific of the

workings of wisdom and compassion I was working through in my poetry at the time, where although our own lives are broken and askew, a great awareness came out as well" (qtd. in Chun). The volume is shrouded in a spiritual mystery of Jodo-Shinshu Buddhism, foregrounding issues of illness, death, and spiritual growth. In such poems as "Rust," "Riverbed," "Horizon," and "The Roses of Guadalajara," the poet speaker grieves for the loss of her mother, depicting the realities of aging, the debilitating nature of depression, and the development of dementia/cognitive decline. Song integrates the personal, the social, and the spiritual in her latest work.

Critics have observed the highly visual characteristics of Song's poems (Fujita-Sato 1980), its "organic" imagery (Lim 1983), its connection of "the sensuous and the sensual" (Hugo 1983), its female body images (Usui 1995, Chen 2004), its representations of a female body (Schultz 1993), and the connections with her Asian American heritage (Fujita-Sato, Wallace 1993). Yet, at present, critical discussion of Song's work focuses on her role as a poet. Some accuse her of being a conformist poet, writing poetry of accommodation instead of protest without challenging the dominant culture (Kim 1997; Schultz 1993). This accusation reveals a predicament that plagues many Asian American writers. In fact, Song's social and political concerns are internalized into the subjective experience, a strategy of social detachment that actually does not make her poems less political. Song highlights the representation of the Asian American body, images that have been misrepresented and stereotyped in the United States. In addition, in her poems, the body has been seen in the light of the gender-ethnicity nexus. The racial body reveals social and political significance outside history. For example, in "Easter Wahiawa, 1959," the grandfather's "disproportionately large" right arm observed by the child speaker suggests the plantation history in Wahiawa (Song 1983, 8). Again, in "The Seamstress" ethnicity is evidently and sufficiently revealed in bodily movement. The seamstress' immigrant father can apparently be identified as an imported plantation laborer merely through the descriptions of his bodily movements (*Picture Bride*). In Song's poems, the personal and the social are bridged in terms of portraits of a body that has always been ethnicized and gendered.

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FU-JEN CHEN

◆ SUI SIN FAR. *See* Eaton, Edith Maude

◆ SULERI, SARA (1953–)

Prominent Pakistani American memoirist, literary critic, and professor of English, Sara Suleri was born on June 12, 1953, in Karachi, the commercial capital of Pakistan, and grew up mostly in Lahore, a gracious city close to Pakistan’s border with India. Her father, Ziauddin Ahmed Suleri, was a well-known Pakistani journalist and author; her mother, Mair Jones, was a British national who met and married her husband in London and moved with him to Pakistan where she was a lecturer in English literature at Punjab University. A child of privilege, Suleri

received her early education in England, attended exclusive Catholic schools in Lahore run by European nuns, received her undergraduate degree from the prestigious Kinnaird College, also in Lahore, and her MA in English literature from Punjab University. In 1976 she entered the graduate program in English at the Indiana University campus at Bloomington and in 1983 she received her doctorate. Her doctoral dissertation was on British Romanticism, with particular emphasis on the poetry of William Wordsworth. She taught at Williams College in Massachusetts briefly before joining the English faculty at Yale University. An award-winning teacher, she cofounded and served for several years as a coeditor of the *Yale Journal of Criticism*, a highly regarded scholarly periodical. She is the author of three major works. In *Meatless Days* (1989), an intriguing and enigmatic text, Suleri combines personal and national histories to create an innovative form of postcolonial narrative. *The Rhetoric of English India*, published in 1992, is a pioneering piece of literary criticism. Her most recent work, *Boys Will Be Boys: A Daughter's Elegy* (2003), is largely a bittersweet recollection of the eventful life of her father, who died in 1999, and her own complicated relationship with him. *Boys Will Be Boys*, like *Meatless Days*, is an elegiac memoir that is provocatively unconventional in its form and structure. In 1993 Suleri married Austin Goodyear. A successful businessman and member of the wealthy Goodyear family, he was more than 30 years older than she was. He died in August of 2005 at age 85.

*Meatless Days* is a text that resists easy generic classification; divided into nine chapters and written in beguiling prose, it is a hybrid work that straddles a variety of narrative forms. Nonlinear and playfully postmodern, it is a collage of quirky vignettes, sketchy biographies of various members of the Suleri household in Pakistan during her early years, personal anecdotes and ruminations, parabolic tales, and political commentaries. Given the autobiographical foundations of the text, however, *Meatless Days* is widely read as a memoir, and it is promoted as one by its publisher. What sets it apart from more conventional self-representational works is the positioning of the narrator's self. The self does not occupy a commanding textual space and function as an autonomous, self-directed entity, as it does in most male-authored self-representational works. In fact, the biographical profiles of other members of Suleri's family—her mother, father, and siblings—have a larger and more entrenched presence. Yet, at the same time, the authorial self does not emerge as an appendage merely linked to the lives of other characters. As Ambreen Hai succinctly points out, "Suleri negotiates between the Scylla and Charybdis of autobiography: She adopts neither a stable, homogenous masculine self separate from community nor a self-abnegating feminine self defined only in relation to others. Instead, she crafts a more unsettling sense of subjectivity and identity as heterogeneous, mobile, uncategorizable, and subject to change" (2003, 273). Although *Meatless Days* is an autobiographical narrative, the

self remains consistently elusive and carefully decentered. Thus the text enacts the postmodern notion that identity is not a coherent, definable, and permanent unit but a shifting, contingent, and fragmented entity. *Meatless Days* playfully stages the constructed theatricality of identity.

At the core of *Meatless Days* is the theme of irretrievable loss, and the tone—despite occasional moments of humor and comedy—is elegiac. *Meatless Days* memorializes the lost home and family intimacy but more importantly the company of women. The opening line of the memoir reveals the aching sense of absence and exile: “Leaving Pakistan was, of course, tantamount to giving up the company of women” (1989, 1). The following chapters offer the reader glimpses of the remarkable women who defined her childhood and young adulthood. Among them are three whose absence the text mourns. Suleri’s mother died in a mysterious road accident in 1978; although her death was officially ruled an accident, the text insinuates that it might have been a murder orchestrated by her husband’s political opponents. Dadi, Suleri’s grandmother, passed away in 1979. The following year, Suleri’s beloved older sister, Ifat, was struck down by a speeding car while she was walking with her husband. Though Ifat’s death was widely believed to be a murder, the police were unable to trace the car, and the matter was never resolved. During those years of terrible personal loss, Suleri was a student in Indiana. It is that series of losses, and the wounds left by them, which the text thematizes.

To view *Meatless Days* only as a narrative of mourning, however, would be reductive. While it is on one level an intensely private book with large gaps and silences—*Meatless Days* conceals as much as it reveals—it is also a public document about the history of Pakistan. Suleri is engaged as much in an autobiographical act as she is in an elaborate historiographic enterprise. *Meatless Days* is an innovative counternarrative that is designed to destabilize the official versions of Pakistani history. It expertly and effortlessly blends the private histories of the various members of the Suleri household—including its cooks, gardeners, and servants—with the grand public narrative of Pakistan’s founding myths, its violent dismemberment in 1971, and its turbulent postcolonial history disfigured by military coups and dictatorships. Thus the story of Suleri’s family, with its assortment of colorful characters, is deftly intertwined with the story of her young nation. History, then, is not merely a scholarly and allegedly objective account of public events but a lived reality, a compendium of countless life stories that aggregate into an overarching narrative of the nation.

The book’s title hints at this melding of the public and the private. During the 1970s the Pakistani government declared Tuesdays and Wednesdays of each week as meatless days. Meat was not sold on the market during those days, and the government’s goal was to safeguard against the possible depletion of the cattle population. Wealthier Pakistanis with access to refrigeration, however, were able to circumvent the

ban by hoarding meat on Mondays. The title also alludes to a deep private injury. The narrator describes a startling dream that she has shortly after her mother's death. In the dream her father arrives in a refrigerated van and tells his daughter to help him place her mother's body in the coffin. When she reaches into the vehicle, she finds chunks of meat; her job is to carry those pieces to the coffin and assemble them as if they are "pieces in a jigsaw puzzle" (1989, 44). While completing this lurid chore, Suleri steals a small piece of the body, "a small bone like a knuckle" (44), and puts it in her mouth under the tongue. She concludes this eucharistic moment by stating, "I had eaten, that was all, and woken to a world of meatless days" (44). The book's title, therefore, can be viewed as "a reference to motherless days, a deliberately unsentimental title for a daughter's commemoration of her departed mother" (Ganapathy-Dore 2001, 37).

The critical reception granted *Meatless Days* was overwhelmingly favorable. It was widely reviewed in major newspapers and periodicals; it has become the subject of several substantial scholarly articles, and it is now considered a canonical postcolonial text that is widely taught on college and university campuses. Its experimental form, idiosyncratic but elegant and supple prose, and its low-keyed but radical intervention in the conventional Pakistani historiography continue to elicit extensive academic interest and critical response. Suleri's more recent memoir, however, has been greeted with considerably less enthusiasm. *Boys Will Be Boys* may be read as a sequel to *Meatless Days*. If *Meatless Days* mourned the passing of Suleri's mother and other women in her life, *Boys Will Be Boys* is an extended elegy to her father, Z.A. Suleri, who was a larger-than-life figure in his daughter's life and on the political landscape of the nation that he helped create.

*Boys Will Be Boys* is divided into 13 chapters; each begins with a calligraphic Urdu verse followed by the author's own English translation. The epigraphs hint at the content of each chapter. The author's goal is to create an oxymoronic art form: a comic elegy. The elegiac tone of the narrative, therefore, is punctured by comic moments and observations. Like *Meatless Days*, the memoir is a compendium of rambling reminiscences, memorable vignettes, political observations, and carefully managed self-revelations. Here, as in *Meatless Days*, Suleri recreates her early years in Pakistan and continues to grieve for the loss of her mother and older sister. Now she has two more deaths to mourn: the loss of her half-sister, Nuzhat, and her father. The death of her father primarily propels the elegy. Suleri remembers him sometimes with awe, sometimes with ironic humor, and occasionally even with exasperation, but always with affection that is rendered poignant by the daughter's knowledge of his irretrievable loss.

Born in 1913 in Delhi, the capital of undivided India, Z.A. Suleri became involved in the anticolonial struggle against the British rule. As a Muslim, however, he was also deeply suspicious of India's Hindu majority and believed that the Muslim

population might be vulnerable in postcolonial India. He aligned himself with a stream of the Indian independence movement that was led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who advocated the partitioning of India into two nations: a largely Hindu India and a predominantly Muslim Pakistan. Z.A. Suleri was committed to the idea of Muslim nationhood, though he himself was not a particularly devout Muslim until much later in his life, and became a spokesperson for that idea during the 1940s in India and in Britain through his books, newspaper columns, and public lectures. His dream became a reality in 1947: India was partitioned—the violence it spawned resulted in the deaths of well over a million Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs—and the new nation of Pakistan, which means the “land of the pure,” was born.

It is this idea of an Islamic Pakistan that defined the life of Z.A. Suleri. Though he was disenchanted by the incremental decline of Pakistan—the erosion of its democratic foundations; serial dictatorships; militarization of its political culture; a brand of Islamization that was fundamentally inconsistent with modernity; and dismemberment of the nation when the eastern wing of Pakistan, with India’s active intervention, became Bangladesh—he remained steadfastly wedded to the notion of Muslim nationhood. His loyalty to his nation did not dwindle even when Pakistan’s military rulers, who were inconvenienced by his political and journalistic activism, repeatedly incarcerated him. At home he was largely a benevolent figure, with a penchant for occasional displays of impatience, even rage. That he loved his children immensely was obvious. He was deeply protective: if a young man brushed past one of his daughters in a public space, he had to be restrained from physically assaulting the offender. Yet he could also be rudely invasive: he had no qualm about reading his children’s personal diaries and intruding into their private lives. In the late 1930s he married his cousin and fathered a child. Several years later he met a Welsh woman in London and married her after terminating his first relationship. Years after his second wife died, he brought into his family a young woman named Shahida, whom he introduced to everyone as a daughter he had “adopted.” Suleri, however, strongly hints that her father’s relationship with Shahida was a romantic one. Z.A. Suleri was a man of contradictions, a flawed man who also possessed shades of greatness. His daughter memorializes his life in her text.

The less than enthusiastic reception accorded *Boys Will Be Boys* may have a lot to do with the fact that it does not break any new ground, that it traverses the same territory that *Meatless Days* does—except that it focuses more on the father. Some Pakistani readers have also expressed discomfort with certain elements of the text. Suleri, for example, uses the term *Paki* twice: once to refer to herself as a “Paki professor” (2003, 43) and another time labels herself as a “resident Paki” (57) at Yale University’s English department. It is unclear why she would choose to use that racist epithet as a term of self-reference (especially since that term is used primarily in

Britain and is almost unheard of in the United States). Also, she frequently refers to Muslims as “Mozzies.” While it is possible that she uses the term as an endearment, it appears odd, especially in the current climate of widespread anti-Muslim sentiment, that Suleri—a secular, liberal intellectual—would opt to use such a term in her public discourse.

Although Suleri is not a prolific scholar, the critical work that she has published is widely considered to be exemplary. Her major work to date, in addition to a few important articles, is *The Rhetoric of English India*. A brilliant piece of postcolonial criticism, it examines the rhetorical construction of India in the works of a number of writers ranging from Edmund Burke to Salman Rushdie. In particular, she focuses on the use of language as an imperialist tool and the power of colonial storytelling to define, often in damaging and inimical ways, whole geographies, nations, and peoples. *The Rhetoric of English India*, though some readers might find its use of poststructuralist critical jargon incapacitating, remains an insightful and rewarding work.

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◆ SURI, MANIL (1959–)

Indian American novelist and mathematician Manil Suri's reputation as a novelist is based on the sole novel he has produced thus far: *The Death of Vishnu*, which was released in 2001. Suri has outlined a trilogy that he is developing, of which *The Death of Vishnu* is the first installment.

Born in Bombay, Suri spent most of his young adulthood preparing for a career in academia. He attended the University of Bombay, completing his bachelor's degree in 1979, before he enrolled at Carnegie Mellon University in the United States, where he finished a master's degree in 1980 and a PhD in mathematics in 1983. He was hired by the mathematics department of the University of Maryland–Baltimore County (UMBC) that same year, where he is currently a full professor.

It was not until 1985, when he was firmly entrenched in his academic career, that Suri attempted to write creatively. He drafted a short story, then tried several more. Realizing that he needed some guidance, he joined writers' groups and took courses in writing workshops and centers, though his academic career kept him busy. His inspiration to write came from his respect and admiration of other writers, such as V.S. Naipaul and Rabindranath Tagore, both Nobel Prize-winning authors, both Indian. He was influenced by Naipaul's use of dialogue: "I've just read one book of his, *A House for Mr. Biswas*, and the thing that stayed with me out of that novel was the way his characters speak. And they speak in English, but you can tell they are speaking an Indian language" (Suri and Cunningham, online).

Suri began writing a novel, which he abandoned after the first five chapters, realizing it was not headed in the right direction. Ten years after his initial attempt at creative writing, he received the good news that a short story of his, "The Tyranny of Vegetables," was accepted for publication. However, the joy of seeing his work in print was stolen from him, as the periodical was a Bulgarian-language publication and Suri was only able to recognize his work by the author photograph beside it.

That year, he returned to India for a visit, and, during his stay, an event occurred that triggered the birth of his novel. A man named Vishnu, who lived in the stairwell of the Bombay apartment building in which Suri had grown up, had fallen very ill, and he died that year, causing Suri to speculate about the man's life. He began writing *The Death of Vishnu*, initially planning it as a short story but realizing soon that it needed more space to develop and would have to be a longer work. He began to envision the book—and the process of Vishnu's dying—as an illustration of Hindu theology. Writing within a limited time frame (as a professor, he really only had summers in which to focus seriously on the manuscript), he had completed only three chapters within two years.

In 1997 Suri attended a writing workshop at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Massachusetts. The workshop was led by Michael Cunningham, author of *The Hours*, who told Suri plainly, "You must do whatever is necessary to finish this"

(Stakgol, online). He continued writing as often as he could, but the process was still slow. He finally completed a first draft in 1999, having received feedback and reviews from friends and colleagues, as well as his mother in India. Success finally smiled upon him when an excerpt of the novel, entitled "The Seven Circles," was accepted by *The New Yorker*.

In various interviews, Suri has been asked if parallels exist between his career in mathematics and his writing life. Suri has pointed out that being a mathematician helps him to envision the structure of his book and to organize the various strands of its plot. *The Death of Vishnu* has a vertical structure, in which the dying main character ascends the staircase, reaching new and different stages of life. As he dies, he remembers various events in and scenes of his life, such as an affair with his mistress. Outside of Vishnu's perspective, the residents of the apartment building are too entrenched in their own concerns and worries to pay attention to the human life wasting away outside their doors. The book is a philosophical exploration of the human experience, as well as a comment on modern Indian society.

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SUSAN MUADDI DARRAJ

### ◆ SUYEMOTO, TOYO (1915–2003)

Toyo Suyemoto is a Japanese American poet, memoirist, and librarian, who also published as Toyo Kawakami, Toyo S. Kawakami, and Toyo Suyemoto Kawakami. Though known almost exclusively for her poetry, the only book Suyemoto published in her lifetime was a reference work for librarians, *Acronyms in Education and the Behavioral Sciences* (1971). In 2007 a memoir was posthumously published by Rutgers University Press, edited by Susan Richardson from Suyemoto's manuscript and notes. Born in 1916 in Oroville, California, and raised along with 10 siblings in Sacramento, Suyemoto learned literary culture in childhood. Though most of her own poems are written in traditional English forms and much of her literary education was

steeped in English and American literature, still her mother taught her Japanese literature. Moreover, her mother taught her, and recited for her, Shakespeare in Japanese translation.

Suyemoto started writing early in life, placing poems in Japanese American community publications as a teenager and becoming a key figure in a nisei (second-generation) literary scene. Not surprisingly, when she went to college at the University of California, Berkeley, she majored in English. When war broke out and Japanese Americans were ordered to submit to mass incarceration, Suyemoto was a young mother with an infant son. Allowed to reside with her parents and siblings, she stayed first in Tanforan Assembly Center, a temporary detention camp, then more indefinitely at Topaz Relocation Center in the central Utah desert. At Topaz she worked as a librarian and a teacher of English and Latin, though she also served, alongside writer and artist Miné Okubo, on the staff of the camp literary magazine. When war and internment ended, she moved with most of her family to Cincinnati, Ohio. A defining event in her life was the death, in the 1950s, of her 16-year-old son Kay. Recalling his wishes for her, she eventually earned a master's degree in library science from the University of Michigan. In 1964 she took a position at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, becoming head of the social work library and assistant head of the education library. After retiring in 1985, she remained in Columbus for the rest of her life. In the early 1980s she testified before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, describing her experience of incarceration, and in her last two decades accepted frequent invitations to address high school, college, and community audiences on the incarceration. She also established friendships with other Asian American writers such as Frank **Chin** and Lawson Fusao **Inada**; granted interviews to writers, scholars, and journalists; and published articles on her life and writing. Her wartime poems appeared in the Topaz literary magazine, but a few appeared in such mainstream literary publications as *Common Ground* and *Yale Review*. Decades later they would be anthologized in collections such as *Quiet Fire: A Historical Anthology of Asian American Poetry 1892–1970* (1996). Wartime and postwar poems appeared in the collection *Ayumi: A Japanese American Anthology* (1980) and in such journals as *Many Mountains Moving* and *Amerasia Journal*. At the end of her life, a partial manuscript of her poems remained unpublished, waiting to be edited and published by literary heirs.

Suyemoto's wartime and postwar poems appear to violate the call by Chin for strident cultural nationalism in Asian American literature. Yet Chin praises them for their faithfulness to Japanese Americans' experience. Certainly in form they appear conventionally English, true to Suyemoto's early literary education. Most of them adhere to fixed meters and rhymes, and almost all of them are lyrical bursts of

description or feeling. Even late in life, aside from a few deviations into the traditional Japanese forms of haiku and tanka, Suyemoto wrote formal verse. She claimed that formal discipline liberated her language and her imagination, and she learned the forms from both Japanese and English conventions.

Recalling that in the camps Japanese Americans were forbidden to own cameras and that outgoing mail and internal writings were censored, critics have seen in Suyemoto's wartime poems a concealed critique of the incarceration. In many poems landscape substitutes for people, so that a seemingly innocent description of a harsh and barren desert scene stands in for internees' bereavement and isolation. Most internees housed at Topaz were uprooted from the San Francisco area, where many had gardened, and so descriptions of a seemingly lifeless desert identify a dismal contrast to the blossoms and greenery they had left at home. In fact, most of these poems concern landscapes, not people. The speaker occasionally expresses a hope for rain, or for buds and shoots that might promise growth and peace. This relationship to landscape and nature borrows from European constructions. Bleak landscapes reflect loneliness and sorrow, and buds reflect growth. The titles of some of these poems—"Transplanting" and "Growth," for example—announce such reflections.

In "Gain," one of Suyemoto's earliest poems from camp, the speaker recalls that she sought to seed the earth and create beauty where none existed, but now she wonders whether the long wait could possibly reward her. In "Transplanting," the speaker describes a hope withering in dust. But then she exhorts herself or her reader to guard her plant's exposed roots, dreaming that someday, transplanted to richer soil, they may still bear fruit. The 1944 poem "Topaz" offers only a dire prospect for roots and seeds attacked by dust and drought. The winter poem "In Topaz," from 1943, welcomes a warming sun that will melt snow and ice, but it ends on the knowledge that any grass that emerges, however briefly, will thrive only as long as it outwits a barren ground. And in "Growth," written in September 1945, just after the end of **World War II** and just before Suyemoto and her family left Topaz, the speaker notes that her life and her art have been reconciled, but she asks whether the cost was too much.

Many of Suyemoto's postwar poems revisit the wartime experience. In "Topaz, Utah," written after a visit, decades later, to the campsite, the speaker acknowledges that the desert is full of a life that she had not noticed when it seemed to serve no purpose other than imprisonment. In "Camp Memories," the dust that once smothered life now yields up shards of relics, and the sun shining on fragments of items left behind now illuminates memory. "Wilderness," the first of five poems published in 1996 in the journal *Many Mountains Moving*, reconciles a forbidding and desolate landscape with the mysteries of the self absorbing the fierce beauties of rocks and sun and the night sky. "Shield" is a strident repudiation of racism. But many of Suyemoto's postwar poems concern family, nature, history, and age. These include elegies to her

son, her mother, and even Anne Frank. "Rare Snow" recalls a childhood sighting of snow in Sacramento. "Before Descent" acknowledges nature's obstacles but ends with an assertion of hope and determination. "Aftertaste" is a self-consciously autumnal grasping of late summer light.

Because she published no collection of poems, the manuscripts archived in the Ohio State University Libraries house what is, unfortunately, the only comprehensive gathering of her work. **See also** Japanese American Internment; Nationalism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America.

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JOHN STREAMAS

### ◆ SUZIE WONG

The titular character in *The World of Suzie Wong* (dir. Richard Quine), a film based on Richard Mason's 1957 semiautobiographical novel and Paul Osborn's 1958 stage play, and centering on the experiences of draftsman Robert Lomax (William Holden), who leaves the United States for a year to establish himself as a painter in Hong Kong. Against this exoticized backdrop—the title's Asian world—an interracial romance develops between the struggling artist and his muse, the beautiful Chinese prostitute, Suzie Wong (Nancy Kwan).

Although the film was first released in 1960, Suzie Wong remains a notorious figure, largely because of her hypersexuality and the problematic terms in which the interracial love story unfolds. In their first meeting on the ferry to the island, Suzie introduces herself as Meeling, the virginal daughter of a wealthy businessman. However, Lomax discovers that she is a "Won-Chai girl" who works the bars, and he

initially resists Suzie's charms. He hires her instead to be his model, and she poses for paintings that at first do not sell well, despite their subject's beauty. His refusal of her advances, however, does not deter Suzie from boasting to her friends that she has attracted a loving—and jealous—new boyfriend. As proof of Lomax's devotion to her, Suzie shows them her bloodied lips, a wound caused by a sailor whose attention she had spurned. That Lomax should be credited for the wound is ironic, for he goes out of his way to rescue Suzie from the abusive sailor's blows. Indeed, Lomax plays the part of a chivalrous hero who, despite his condemnation of prostitution, treats Suzie and her friends respectfully, not only by defending such abuse but also by providing a friendly, if chaste, escort for them to the bars where they ply their trade (since laws prevent women from entering such places alone). His heroism is also displayed, of course, through his virtuous commitment to his art, which permits him to hire and, more importantly, to look at Suzie in a socially sanctioned way.

The role of virtuous savior is complicated, however, when the relationship shifts to a romantic one. In a pivotal sequence, Suzie visits Lomax's hotel room wearing a Western-style dress—the first time we see her in something other than a cheongsam. Rather than admiring her figure, as Suzie hopes, Lomax angrily accuses her of looking like a common streetwalker and violently strips the dress from her body. Although Suzie is already a prostitute, that Lomax should see her as such explicitly while wearing this Western outfit suggests a complex connection between sexuality and race. Whereas he is able to idealize her in her cheongsam, which the film depicts as a racializing (and, for him, alluring) costume, the dress in this sequence sexualizes her in a way that he is unable to accept. Yet Lomax attempts to redeem her sexuality in a paradoxical way: in undressing her, he exposes her sexuality. The romantic task of moral redemption, arguably the film's central theme, then requires not the Westernization of Suzie, through dress, or through comportment, in the pure manner of her English romantic rival Kay O'Neill. Rather, it requires that Lomax's love transform Suzie into the ideal Asian woman (which is why the Western dress is so offensive) by saving her from the vulgar excesses of her world. Significantly, in his painting this ideal image is portrayed wearing a traditional white Chinese gown. As significantly, when Suzie first models this costume, she kneels before him in deference to his love and the idealizing transformation it promises. Although she briefly leaves him when he rejects her attempt to support his struggles in the art world, she returns during a violent storm to plead for his help in saving her son. In the midst of the mudslide that kills her son and others, they are thus finally reunited.

Asian American critics have largely condemned the film's exoticization of Hong Kong in general and Suzie Wong in particular. Much of the negative response is focused on the submissive sexuality of Asian women and the all-consuming deference toward their white lovers, a powerful stereotype manifest in contemporary popular culture and traceable at least to Puccini's opera, *Madama Butterfly*. Indeed, the links

between Suzie Wong and her nineteenth-century prototype are obvious. The former, like the latter, submits before a lover who idealizes and rescues her. Through her suicide, *Madame Butterfly* sacrifices herself because her lover rejects her and her son, whereas Suzie's reunion with her lover is enabled through the symbolic sacrifice of her son. The stress on sacrifice as a primary condition of interracial love persists, then, even though the nature of the sacrifice differs.

Although Suzie Wong's exotic sexuality offends many critics, it is nonetheless hard to overlook the exuberant performance of Nancy Kwan, who plays the role with a spunky vulnerability. Indeed, she lends to the film her star persona: the very ideals of Chinese beauty, femininity, and sexuality attributed to Suzie Wong are evident in Kwan's own self-promotion as the figure of pure Asian beauty. That Kwan was herself biracial—her father was Chinese while her mother was British—hardly seemed to disqualify her from this claim to racial purity. As critic Anne Cheng points out, well into the 1990s, Kwan could be seen on late-night television infomercials as the spokesperson for Pearl Cream that was supposed to enhance Oriental beauty. Kwan herself refused to criticize the character or for that matter her part in the role. Decades later in the documentary *Slaying the Dragon* (1988), she muses that Suzie Wong would have been fascinating for audiences even had she been a nun instead of a prostitute with a heart of gold. In doing so, she disingenuously disregards the fact that audiences are fascinated precisely because Suzie is a prostitute.

It is a fascination with which Asian American critics have struggled to negotiate. Not surprisingly, this process has usually taken the form of repudiation. As Peter X. Feng observes, Suzie Wong is a figure whom we hate to love as much as we love to hate. This ambivalence is perhaps most powerfully expressed in Helen Lee's *Sally's Beauty Spot* (1990), a film that meditates on the relationship between race and beauty. In this experimental short film, the camera alternates between scenes of the compulsive washing, or cleansing, of the "spot," which is the visible stain of racial difference, and the obsessive watching of select sequences from *The World of Suzie Wong*. Sally, whose beauty spot is the film's focus, confesses that she grew up watching and liking Quine's movie. But when the narrator asks why she should like it, Sally has no satisfactory response. If Sally fails to provide verbal justification for her fascination, the manner in which Helen Lee's film responds to, indeed replays, the earlier film offers an intriguing answer. By breaking down the sequences frame-by-frame—in particular the pivotal scene of undress—and by playing back to the film, literally rewinding its frames to play it backward, *Sally's Beauty Spot* functions, Peter X. Feng points out, to "redress" Suzie Wong. In doing so, Lee's film suggests a way to recover the pleasure of Kwan's performance from the symbolic violence associated with Suzie Wong. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes.

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THY PHU



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## ◆ TABIOS, EILEEN (1960–)

Filipina American poet, editor, publisher, playwright, and performance artist, Eileen Tabios is known for her innovative poetry connected to investigating the colonial relationship between the United States and the Philippines. With over 14 poetry collections in print, Tabios has created new poetic forms like the hay(na)ku variation of the haiku, used multiple poetic techniques and various poetic forms, and has worked to recover the valorized figure of the Babaylan (the Bisayan word for the precolonial priestess-poet in the Philippines) as a model for contemporary Filipina women's literature. Tabios has been honored with several literary awards and grants including the Philippines National Book Award for Poetry in 1998 for Tabios's first poetry collection *Beyond Life Sentences*, and the PEN/Oakland Josephine Miles Literary Award for her editing of the selected writings of Filipino American poet José Garcia Villa. Tabios has quickly become an important poet in contemporary **Filipino American poetry**.

Born in the Philippines, Tabios immigrated to the United States as a young child; therefore her relationship with English as her primary language along with the broader colonial inheritance as a Filipino American informing her Asian American experience figures largely in her work. This autobiography is often complicated and questioned through her melding of genres and voices. Tabios's poetics trace Tagalog and other Philippine language etymologies to found epistemic concepts that are not only recovered as precolonial history but often challenge the definitions of poetry with feminist and experimental implications. English is not only the usage of a colonial language in Tabios's poetry, but it also becomes an embodied character performance in

the act of marriage documented in an essay and poems in *I Take Thee, English, For My Beloved*. Tabios reflects on the wedding reenactments she conducted throughout the San Francisco Bay Area in 2002, combining Tabios's multigenre involvement with poetry on the page and the stage with accompanying visual art installations and the participation of several Filipino American poets in the performances.

Tabios came to poetry after leaving a career in finance in New York in 1996. She participated in the Asian American Writers' Workshop in New York and became involved with the Filipino American writers community on the East Coast. Her early development within these writing communities expanded to relationships across the United States and is represented in her uniquely edited book *Black Lightning: Poetry-In-Progress*, which combines several drafts in sequence of poems by Asian American poets, interviews, and commentary by Tabios, exposing the multiple decisions the production of poems involves. Tabios documented the developmental editing process of poets like Arthur Sze, Mei-mei Berssenbrugge, Meena Alexander, Garrett Hongo, Li-Young Lee, Jessica Hagedorn, Marilyn Chin, John Yau, and others while also charting her own reading and engagement as a poet early in her career. Tabios continued her poetic practice by recovering the work of José Garcia Villa in her editing of *The Anchored Angel*.

The success of her first collection of poems *Beyond Life Sentences* reflects her early interest in drawing on this community of poets, which often provide initial epigrams from the poets to mark the dialogue of the short-length poems. The poems range from lyrics that use anaphoric repetition in the first-person voice to prose poem narratives musing on daily life, art, the death of Edilberto Tiempo, and the investigation of Filipino colonial history. Often juxtaposing radical shifts in perspective of the poem with multiple personas, the reader is enticed to enjoy the details rather than necessarily settle on any single coherence beyond the experience of the poem where sentence-like lines predominate. What is clear is Tabios's engagement with a wide range of practices that mark her links to other poets and thinkers she is in conversation with.

After this early success Tabios moved to San Francisco to participate in the large poetry community. Her work continues to explore the prose poem, short stories, and art criticism, while further pushing formal experimentation especially moving toward longer serial poem structures. In addition to list poems that pull lines from her work or from quoted material, Tabios emphasizes intertextual composition through poems of footnotes. These footnote poems reference the poet's reading of other works and register only one side of the interaction in the footnotes. The poems do not identify exactly what passage caused the reaction that Tabios places in the footnote at the bottom of the page, contrasting the large, blank space above. Therefore a recording of her reading practice conjoins with the creative practice at

the site of a new poem bound and unbound from the so-called originary text. The footnote poems in particular appear in *I Take Thee, English, for My Beloved* and in her recent poetic study *The Secret Lives of Punctuations*. The latter book concentrates in series of poems that focus on one form of punctuation. Like Villa's famous comma poems and their pioneering stance, Tabios is both claiming and simultaneously redefining the English grammar she must work with as inheritance and site of resistance through experimentation.

While Tabios is a constant formal innovator, this is often contextualized in a post-colonial project organized around her position as a Filipina American poet. For example, her use of *maganda*, the Tagalog word for beauty, is also the name of the female character in a Philippine creation myth. Tabios takes this figure of beauty as a model for her poetry practice to bring the poem into the world "fully actualized" rather than a model of sustained editing that her early poetics emphasized in *Black Lightning*. Through claiming *maganda*, Tabios clarifies her ability to use cross-cultural references as a poet and especially as a Filipino poet who can draw from a variety of cultures without constraint or apology while maintaining clear links to Filipino culture. The *maganda* poetic is a complex claim to the purposeful pedagogy of the poem "Filipinizing" and informing a wider public about the colonial history of the Philippines. Similarly, Tabios's recent book *The Light Sang As It Left Your Eyes* intermixes the event of her father's death and other points of Tabios's autobiography with reflections on the Marcos regime, often obscuring the boundaries between familial and historical inheritances in a poetics of loss.

Tabios's publication is not only prolific but also peripatetic, spanning publishers in the Philippines, the United States (New York and California), Finland, and crossing to online media and one CD recording. The Weblog (blog) presence of Tabios connects her various artistic positions across continents and communities, including her position as publisher and editor of Meritage Press in St. Helena, California, to her poetry blog the Blind Chatelaine's Poker Poetics.

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### ◆ TAKEI, GEORGE (1937–)

George Takei is a Japanese American actor, activist, and autobiographer best known for his role as Mr. Sulu in the television series *Star Trek*, which he played from 1966 to 1969. Throughout an acting career that has spanned four decades, Takei has appeared in numerous television programs, including *Playhouse 90*, *Perry Mason*, *Magnum PI*, *Miami Vice*, *Murder She Wrote*, *McGyver*, *Hawaii 5-O*, *My Three Sons*, and *Death Valley Days*. He has also appeared in films such as *Ice Palace*, *A Majority of One*, *Hell to Eternity*, *PT 109*, *Red Line 7000*, *An American Dream*, *Walk Don't Run*, and *The Green Berets*, apart from the *Star Trek* films, *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Kahn*, *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*, *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*, *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier*, and *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*. More recently, he has done voice work on *Johnny Quest*, Disney's *Mulan* (as First Ancestor Fa), *The Simpsons*, and the *Star Trek* cartoon series. He has written two books, his autobiography, *To the Stars: The Autobiography of George Takei, Star Trek's Mr. Sulu* (1994), and the science-fiction novel *Mirror Friend, Mirror Foe* (1979, with Robert Asprin).

Born in Los Angeles in 1937, Takei was named after King George, who was crowned that year. In 1942 he was relocated with his family, but they returned to Los Angeles after the war. Takei began studying architecture in 1956 to 1957 at the University of California at Berkeley, before receiving a BA and an MA in theater from the University of California–Los Angeles. He also attended the Shakespeare Institute at Stratford upon Avon in 1962 and Sophia University in Japan in 1970. In 1959, while still a student at UCLA, he made his first TV appearance in CBS's *Playhouse 90*, playing a Japanese soldier who returns to Japan and is accused of murdering his fiancée. In Hollywood during the 1960s, he studied acting at the Desilu Workshop and struggled to fulfill his ambition at a time when Asian actors were rare on television and in the movies.

Takei's autobiography describes his life from his childhood to his experiences as an actor and political activist. *To the Stars* opens with his first memory, the train journey with his family—his parents and younger siblings Henry and Nancy—to the Rohwer Relocation Center in Arkansas and his numbered identification tag: "No. 12832-C." For the four-year-old boy, the journey to Rohwer was an adventure, but the adult narrator is aware that his parents experienced this event differently, inspiring him to tell their stories of internment. His father, Takekuma Norman Takei, had immigrated to the United States as a boy; his mother had been born in Florin, California, but educated in Japan. As he narrates their adjustment to camp life, Takei contrasts his childhood perspective to his parents' position: as he and Henry were busy exploring and making new friends, their parents were experiencing a series of blows to their pride and dignity. There, George hears for the first time "*Shikata ga nai*," it can't be helped, the sigh of issei acceptance. When his parents answer no-no to questions number 27 ("Are

you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?"), and 28 ("Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power or organization?") of the infamous loyalty questionnaire, his mother is obliged to renounce her American citizenship, and the family is relocated to Tule Lake, the maximum-security camp set apart for delinquents and "disloyals." Takei explains his parents' reasons for their answers: his father did not feel he could go on combat duty for a country that would not give him citizenship while simultaneously asking him to reject Japan. For Takei's father, it was not a question of citizenship but of human dignity. For his mother, question 27 was preposterous, and question 28 obliged her to pit her country against her husband and family.

The family's return to Los Angeles after **World War II** frames the fundamental event in Takei's childhood. These two journeys may be read as parallel yet opposite movements: both imply an adventure ahead, but the second journey leads him back to a place that contains his family history and memory. Ironically, because Takei cannot remember a time before camp, he now has to learn how to live in a normal world. The family moves to a Mexican American neighborhood where the children become aware of their difference even as they enjoy their new lives. Takei's first introduction to political action comes when, as a teenager, he works in the summer picking strawberries and witnesses how Mexican workers are cheated. The chronicle of his adult life focuses on two issues: his acting career and his commitment to social causes. Takei writes in detail about his years as Hiraku Sulu on the *Star Trek* set, including numerous details about the series' production problems, the relationships between the actors, notably their differences with William Shatner, and the continuing *Star Trek* culture.

Takei believed in the multiethnic world exemplified by *Star Trek*, viewing the role of Sulu—the first "Asian" character on a major American series—as crucial to transforming stereotypical Hollywood representations of Asians as buffoons, menials, or menaces. Though he does mention his discontent at watching reruns of the movies where he played stereotypical Japanese characters, Takei's vision of his career is relatively positive. His awareness that this role gave him a privileged platform from which to address issues of Asian American representation in art and politics came with his willing acceptance of the responsibility involved. Takei's political activism began with his work in Adlai Stevenson's 1960 presidential campaign and his support of Tom Bradley's campaign to be the first African American mayor of a major U.S. city. In 1972 he was elected a California delegate to the National Democratic Convention. The following year, he ran for mayor of Los Angeles and finished second to Bradley. From 1973 to 1983, he served as Bradley's representative to the Southern California Rapid Transit District, where he helped initiate and plan the Los Angeles subway

system. He also testified before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians in 1981, eventually donating the \$20,000 he received in redress to the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles. In 1986 he received a star on Hollywood Boulevard's Walk of Fame, and he placed his signature and hand print in the forecourt of Grauman's Chinese Theater in Hollywood in 1991. He was appointed by President Clinton to the Board of the Japanese–United States Friendship Commission, serving two terms. In 1999 the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium presented him with the American Courage Award, and in 2004 Emperor Akihito awarded him the Order of the Rising Sun for his contributions to U.S.–Japanese relations. Takei remains politically active, particularly with issues on civil rights. **See also** Asian American Political Activism; Issei, Nisei, Sansei; Japanese American Internment.

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ROCÍO G. DAVIS

◆ TAN, AMY (1952–)

Born in Oakland, California, Amy Tan is a contemporary Chinese American writer whose achievements in her primary genre, the novel, have been complemented over the years by personal essays and juvenile fiction. Recurrent themes include the nature of immigrant struggle in twentieth-century America, generational conflicts, the particularities of women's life experiences, the effects of public history on private lives, and the dynamics of mother-daughter relationships. Tan has spent most of her life in the San Francisco Bay Area. The settings of her literary works reflect her commitment to articulating the lives of Californians; these individuals are usually—but not always—of Chinese descent. Her typical choice of setting, Northern California, may have some bearing on the charge of "California-centricity" prevalent in critiques of Asian American literature. Tan's aesthetic choices demonstrate a continuing awareness of the rich cultural history that defines her home state. Much of her prose integrates some form of historical awareness, whether from Asia, the United States, or the larger diasporic context. These references are usually part of a specific character's lived

experience as opposed to vast generalizations about historical change. With the infusion of myth and mysticism that later texts provide (for instance, *The Hundred Secret Senses* and *Saving Fish from Drowning*), readers also encounter a juxtaposition of the concrete and rational with the abstract and the imagined.

The material for Tan's fiction is often semiautobiographical, but the author does not use the roman à clef technique of placing her associates in the text. If anyone appears most frequently in veiled form, it is her late mother, Daisy Tan. Amy was the child of Chinese immigrants and heir to their stories of tragedy and uplift. Her father, John, was an electrical engineer and Baptist minister who succumbed to a brain tumor (like her oldest brother) in 1968. Daisy was a housewife whose harrowing personal experiences in wartime Shanghai formed the basis of her daughter's best-selling second novel *The Kitchen God's Wife*. After the double loss of father and brother, the remaining members of the Tan family relocated to Europe. After a journey through the Netherlands and Germany, they settled in Switzerland, where Daisy was able to find an American school for her children. It was decided that Amy would attend high school in Montreux. The family did not remain abroad, however. The friction between Tan and her mother gradually increased and did not abate; the difficulties stemmed largely from Amy's choice of romantic partners. The most problematic man in question was a drug dealer who had escaped from a mental facility. Unflustered by her mother's vocal and incessant disapproval, Tan decided to rebel and offer a stoic front instead of presenting herself as an obedient and filial child. Eventually, the family moved back to the United States and settled in the San Francisco Bay Area. Tan enrolled at Linfield College, a Baptist institution in Oregon picked out by her mother. An already erratic relationship between the two worsened when Amy accompanied her boyfriend at the time, Louis (Lou) DeMattei, to San Jose City College. Presently a practicing tax attorney, DeMattei eventually became Tan's husband in 1974.

Still going against her mother's expectations, Tan eschewed a career in the medical sciences and took up the study of English and linguistics instead. She graduated from San Jose State University with both a bachelor of arts and a master of arts degree. Communications issues—including translation and culturally inflected misunderstandings—play a continuing role in Tan's writing. Despite commencing a doctoral program in linguistics at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and the University of California, Berkeley, Tan ultimately left the program for nonacademic work. This pivotal decision she attributes to a number of factors. The writer has revealed that the murder of a close college friend and the eerie circumstances around the crime (ostensibly a precursor to the occult spirituality infusing *The Hundred Secret Senses*) certainly played a part in her life-altering choice. In retrospect, Tan reflects that leaving the program was not a decision that she regrets. Tan then took up a position at the Alameda County Association for Retarded Citizens. She played a leadership role in the training



and guidance of the developmentally disabled. Her job as a speech pathologist allowed her to integrate her knowledge of language with the satisfaction of helping to facilitate faulty avenues of communication between speakers.

Tan's career branched off in a slightly different direction when she helped establish a firm specializing in business communications. After falling out with her partner over management issues, she moved to freelance technical writing, a trade that allowed her to become more financially stable. Because of the rigors of the job and a highly ambitious nature, Tan became restless; she eventually turned to fiction to combat her self-described workaholic tendencies. She found that sessions with a psychologist were not profitable, so she opted for a more creative, exploratory approach to her problems. With "Endgame," her first published short story, she earned a place in the Squaw Valley Writers' Workshop, led by writer Molly Giles. The piece appeared in the literary magazine *FM* and later, the popular magazine for adolescents and young women, *Seventeen*. It would reappear in Tan's first novel *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) as the section entitled "Rules of the Game," which explores the rise and fall of a rebellious young chess prodigy (Waverly Jong) and her overly ambitious but well intentioned mother (Lindo). Tan's second short story, "Waiting Between the Trees," helped garner the attention of literary agent Sandra Dijkstra. Impressed by the creative potential of Tan's work and her marketability as an artist, the agent and the writer have collaborated ever since. It was through Dijkstra's encouragement, along with a formative trip to China with Daisy (a gift, as the older woman had just recovered from a major illness), that Tan fleshed out her vision and started a longer manuscript. This collection of intertwined vignettes eventually sold to G.P. Putnam's Sons. The advance was \$50,000, a figure that stunned Tan but spurred her to complete the manuscript, writing full-time, in four months. Readers will recognize the title of the second piece as a quotation from Ying-Ying St. Clair, one of the four protagonist-mothers of *The Joy Luck Club*, which was the eventual title of the piece.

*The Joy Luck Club* earned much critical praise for its emotional honesty and the freshness of its vision. The novel also proved to have the popular appeal required for best seller status. Vintage Books purchased the paperback reprinting rights for \$1.2 million in an auction that involved nine publishing houses. The text portrayed a heterogeneous array of Asian American maternal-filial relationships, helping to tackle stereotypes about Asian and Asian American women as submissive, weak, passive, inarticulate, and silent. It spent eight months on the *New York Times* best seller list and has been translated into at least 17 languages, including Chinese.

Structurally, *The Joy Luck Club* is comprised of interconnected vignettes that deal with the life stories of Chinese immigrant mothers and their American-born daughters. The mothers' stories (those of Suyuan Woo, Lindo Jong, An-mei Hsu, and Ying-Ying St. Clair) simultaneously engage, parallel, and contrast those of the daughters

(Jing-Mei Woo, Waverly Jong, Rose Hsu Jordan, and Lena St. Clair, respectively). The parallelism in narrative structure makes for a pattern of articulation and response not unlike a dialogue across planes of space, time, place, and age. This intermingling occurs between dissimilar but ultimately concordant voices. At the center of the text lies a frame story involving the struggle of Jing-Mei (June) Woo to reconcile the recent death of her mother with the news that the twin daughters Suyuan left behind in wartime China are actually alive. This saga of lost daughters is borrowed from Daisy Tan's own experience; Amy's three elder half-sisters, whom she met for the first time when she visited China, are the basis for the plot thread. It is through the intervention and guidance of the Joy Luck Club "aunties" (the aforementioned women friends of her mother) that June returns to her ancestral land to meet her lost kin. Her journey back affords her a new perspective on the immigrant experience, the sacrifices and hopes of her mother, and a semblance of inner peace. There appears to be a symbolic resonance between the act of traveling and the recuperation of lost or repressed identity; it is a route/roots motif shared not only between immigrants, but also with other groups within a diasporic North American context. The book received nominations for the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Award. It was awarded the Commonwealth Gold Award and the Bay Area Book Reviewers Award.

The popularity of the text led to a commercially successful Hollywood film version directed by Wayne Wang and released in 1993. Tan, who cowrote the screenplay with Ronald Bass, makes a fleeting appearance at the beginning of the film. Although considered overly sentimental by its critics, the movie highlighted a number of talented Asian American actresses from various age groups and ethnicities (among them, Rosalind Chao, Ming-na Wen, and Tamlyn Tomita). Like its film version, *The Joy Luck Club's* popularity hinged upon its ability to attract the attention of the general as well as the specialized reader. Although the writer illuminates a number of issues from a woman's point of view—among them, domestic abuse, infant death, suicide, interracial marriage, racism, familial pressures, generation gaps, and failed expectations—the treatment of them also allows for identification by men and women alike. The feminism that Tan's work conveys is less explicitly political or didactic than it is individual and psychologically oriented.

The author's best-selling sophomore effort, *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991), resurrects the earlier work's matrifocality—that is, its commitment to articulating the complexities of mothering and mothering roles. This text does so with a more concentrated historical focus, although the general period (namely the Sino-Japanese War of 1937–1945 and the Chinese Revolution of 1949) remains consistent with the era detailed in Tan's previous novel. This novel also has fewer protagonists; the mother-daughter pair in question consists of Pearl Louie Brandt and her mother, Winnie Louie. The point of view is shared between the two, although the bulk of the narration

occurs through the revelatory "I" of the mother as she recalls the early decades of the twentieth century in China. Her tumultuous personal life (especially her marriage with the abusive Wen Fu and her sisterly friendship with an officer's wife named Hulan) is set against a backdrop of military strife and national instability. Sickness plays a symbolic role in a number of the featured relationships from the start of the text to its conclusion. The secrets, silences, and unspoken issues between mother and daughter find a resolution through dialogue and honest communication. There is a slow-building momentum that arises throughout the novel and climaxes with Pearl's confession about her multiple sclerosis and Winnie's acknowledgment that Wen Fu plays a greater role in Pearl's life than would be expected or desired.

Winnie's story is actually a hybrid one, a mixture of fiction and fact. One of the ways in which Tan was able to make a tentative peace with her mother was to unearth the painful history that Daisy left behind when she came to the United States. The journey, popularized in Asian American writing as the search for *Gold Mountain* (*gum sun*), was only a small part of the drama that had already unfolded in Daisy's life. For instance, in *The Joy Luck Club*, Tan wove many of her mother's and grandmother's biographical elements into An-Mei Hsu's section entitled "Magpies." In the vignette, the young An-Mei witnesses her mother's suicide, just as Daisy did her own mother's. Tan's grandmother, we learn, was forced into concubinage by her rapist and felt that suicide was the best and only recourse. In the fictional character's case, the mother's death serves as a form of sacrifice that ultimately allows her daughter to assert herself as a legitimate and meaningful individual, not a slave or object for the pleasure of a powerful husband. *The Kitchen God's Wife* continues the literary and psychological recovery process. As Tan has explained in an interview with *Salon*, a legacy of shared experience connects the matrilineal side of her family; grandmother, mother, and daughter have all experienced firsthand the deaths of loved ones and felt the oppression of mental illness (namely clinical depression). In some ways, the fact that Daisy witnessed her own mother's suicide and conveyed the story to her daughter amplifies the idea of collective witnessing. Although publicly portraying the details of her grandmother's demise prompted criticism from one of her relatives, Tan explains that her mother felt that the only way such a story (and a life) could be validated would be through the written and published word.

Tan has continued to publish novels detailing the complexities and nuances of Asian American women's relationships. This remains the trend until the fourth novel, which has a more diverse cast of characters. Her third effort, *The Hundred Secret Senses* (1995), deals with siblings instead of the usual mother-daughter pairing. Half-sisters with different cultural and metaphysical orientations, Olivia Yee and Kwan Li are a study in contrasts: Olivia is an American, whereas Kwan is Chinese-born. The latter is also quite a bit older, a generation gap that allows readers to view her as a sort of

surrogate mother as well as older sister. Unlike the ostensibly rational worldview embodied by her American sister, Kwan's understanding of her surroundings is heightened by special abilities. Among them is the capacity to convene with "yin" people, or members of the spirit world. Her comfort with life on the more-than-human plane offers an apt metaphor for the way in which she remains incompletely assimilated to the dominant European American culture. Her visionary capabilities are a reflection of a liberating (as opposed to constraining) Otherness that confers legitimacy to the status of the outsider. Both sisters embark on a journey to China with Olivia's biracial husband Simon. Parallel narratives emerge during a hectic historical moment (the Taiping Rebellion), and Olivia's dissolving marriage finds some respite through the catalytic influence of her sister. Although Kwan disappears mysteriously as the novel progresses, she leaves what might be construed as a gift or a replacement for her own presence: a daughter, born to her sister and brother-in-law. The notion of "secret senses" encourages readers to understand that different ways of apprehending the world are accessible once the mind is more receptive to them.

The esoteric aspects of this text are a marked departure from the ostensibly "grounded" nature of the previous novels. In other words, they focus on historical facts and rational spheres of knowing, thinking, and perceiving the human and physical environment. Tan admits that discussions of ghosts and other forms of alternative spiritual awareness are often dismissed as outlandish or pure superstition for conventional readers, but in her life death has been such a ubiquitous presence that the idea of spirits inhabiting the same world as humans is not so difficult to accept or comprehend. Her fourth effort, *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001), also engages aspects of the spirit world and its attendant mysticism while returning to the mother-daughter motif. The author goes one step further thematically than the previous novels, offering a tri-generational perspective. Luling Young seeks to recuperate her memories of China, along with her mother's unknown name. Ruth is Luling's middle-aged daughter, whose fractured relationship to her mother is revived by the discovery of a handwritten stack of papers in Chinese. Readers learn about the secret history of Precious Auntie, Luling's own nursemaid but also her mother. Along with a host of mysterious characters, these women embark on a quest to reconvene with a past life and the revelatory potential of unacknowledged memories.

Tan's fifth novel, *Saving Fish from Drowning* (2005), began to materialize as soon as she completed *The Bonesetter's Daughter*. As she reveals in interviews, Tan had endured the death of her mother about half a year before the fourth novel's completion. Because her rocky relationship with Daisy had eased over the years, Tan felt it less pressing to address their relationship through the psychologically therapeutic act of writing. This left her free to experiment more freely with topics that disturbed her. Occasions for fiction often arise, she reflects, from problems or situations that writers

have difficulty understanding and resolving. Situating the novel in Burma was one such opportunity, given the nation's political instabilities under military rule. Although Tan does not consider *Saving Fish* an overtly political text, she acknowledges the inability to skirt politics entirely. It is an author's responsibility to offer readers the means of deciding for themselves their personal feelings and moral obligations, if any.

*Saving Fish* exemplifies Tan's desire to expand formally in a more experimental direction. Not only does it diverge from the mother-daughter thematic imprinted in readers' minds as Tan's characteristic discursive territory, but it also involves more non-Asian characters and more men. Generically, the text is a *mélange* of various situations and forms, including romance, picaresque, mystery, comedy, and morality tale. The text is steeped in Eastern spirituality, especially Buddhism, and is structured around the premise (as Tan explains in the "Note to the Reader") that the story comes from a ghost's dictation to a psychic medium. Set in the heavily Buddhist country of Myanmar, the novel introduces a group of 12 American tourists—all friends of the narrator—on an art expedition. Tan has explained that the group is reminiscent of Geoffrey Chaucer's motley group of pilgrims in the medieval frame story *The Canterbury Tales*. The main character, San Francisco socialite and antiques gallery owner Bibi Chen, meets a premature end early in the narrative but continues to assert her influence as a paradoxical, ghostly figure. Bibi is an absent presence, alive but dead. The evocative natural setting, the questions that arise from the travelers' disappearance, the preemptive loss of their charismatic friend, and the infusion of religious and moral philosophy into the plot of the text make for a surprisingly ethereal meditation on the nature of human intentions.

Some of the major themes that Tan hoped to examine in her novel were the ways in which truths and realities should be considered a function of various interpretative acts, not objective realities that exist merely to be found and explained accordingly. Politics, morality, and the media all play significant roles in shaping what realities emerge from sites of struggle and conflict. The fracturing of a unitary, hegemonic truth into multiple truths works to expand the borders of the world(s) people inhabit. Tan questions what motivates readers to change or not, depending on their moral and intellectual orientations as well as their investment in the issues at hand. Tan remains highly critical of the ways readers often accept circumstances, especially under the influence of popular representations and assumptions, without the requisite abilities to question, doubt, judge, and act accordingly. In her reflections on the genesis of *Saving Fish*, she concedes that realities exist for strategic reasons, be they universal and humanitarian, or selfish and purely personal. Her decision to make the novel funny, playful, and satirical lies in an authorial acknowledgment of readerly expectations. On a grand scale, difficult issues (among them, war, trauma, violence, corruption, and coercion) do not always facilitate coherent or productive discussions. Neither do they

attract readers primarily interested in fiction as a source of entertainment and diversion. Tan does not consider herself one to shy away from polemics; as her previous works attest, she broaches sensitive issues with a combination of respect, detachment, and critical alacrity. She points out, however, that the effort to sustain the popular reader's interest need not be compromised because a specific authorial agenda has moral precedence. Alienating readers while exposing them to uncomfortable issues are not necessarily twin processes, and humor plays a major role in facilitating the reverse scenario. Comic engagement, in other words, fulfills the Horatian imperative to teach and delight simultaneously.

Although her more recent novels have not superseded the critical and popular achievement of *The Joy Luck Club* or *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Tan remains among the most recognizable of contemporary ethnic American writers. *The Joy Luck Club* and such essays as "Mother Tongue" appear regularly in college and university literature courses. Their reach extends to the domains of ethnic studies, gender theory, immigrant experience, and American literature generally. Tan is often invited to give guest lectures at colleges and universities, and her work is widely disseminated in a number of anthologies. Her essays and short stories have been featured in such periodicals as *Ladies' Home Journal*, the *Short Story Review*, *San Francisco Focus*, the *New Yorker*, the *Atlantic*, the *Threepenny Review*, and *Harper's*. Excerpts have been included in *The Best American Essays* of 1991. Tan herself served as the editor of the *Best American Short Stories* of 1999.

In 2003 *The Opposite of Fate: A Book of Musings* offered a patchwork of nonfictional essays that underscored Tan's identity as a Chinese American, a daughter, and a person deeply invested in creative self-expression. The text is divided into seven sections; each details such topics as Tan's reflections on the creative process, the concept of "voice," the ways in which she navigated through a cross-cultural landscape, her strained but inexorable relationship with Daisy Tan, the growth of her artistic consciousness, and the intermittent highs and lows associated with being in the public eye. There is also a discussion of her childhood desire to be a writer and the metaphors that affected her at an early age. *The Opposite of Fate* is essentially an autobiographical foray in multiple guises, one that spans childhood to intellectual and spiritual maturity.

Although she has no children of her own, Tan's interest in juvenile fiction has resulted in two books. *The Moon Lady* (1992) and *Sagwa, The Chinese Siamese Cat* (1994) were written in collaboration with illustrator Gretchen Schields. The latter text was adapted for an animated children's series entitled *Sagwa, The Chinese Siamese Cat*. The Moon Lady episode appeared earlier in Tan's oeuvre in *The Joy Luck Club*; readers will recognize the story from the childhood section of Ying Ying St. Clair. The children's version is understandably stripped of irony and pathos, but the plot structures are similar. Grandmother Nai-nai regales her granddaughters with the story of

her encounter with the Moon Lady during the Moon Festival. There are capers and antics (she falls off the family boat, for instance), but the Moon Lady ultimately grants the child a secret wish. *Sagwa* also involves storytelling by an elder figure; here, the feline narrator Ming Miao tells her kittens about the adventures of one of their ancestors, the namesake of the book. In what is essentially an etiological fable, or story of origins, the tale explains why Siamese cats have their particular markings and how a foolish and intractable magistrate benefited from the mischief of a mere kitten. The ability of one to affect many and the ironies of naming both play a role in the text. *Sagwa* was actually the name of Tan's pet cat until 1997 when it passed away.

Apart from her contributions as a writer in these various genres, Tan's participation in public service has also been varied and longstanding. While intensely focused as a writer (she has mentioned the exhaustive number of rewrites she undertook for her first novel), Tan remains in the public eye. Residing in the Presidio district of San Francisco with her husband and two dogs, she also collaborates with horror writer Stephen King and comedian Dave Barry in a garage rock band named Rock Bottom Remainers. She has been involved with such charitable organizations as the PEN Writers Fund, the National Kidney Foundation (Northern California branch), and America Scores (a literacy program for inner-city children).

In 1999 Tan contracted Lyme disease, an inflammatory neurological disorder caused by a bacteria carried in ticks. She has detailed her condition (officially, late stage neuroborreliosis) to the media, and there is a detailed section informing the public about her experiences with the disease on her personal Web site ([www.amytan.net](http://www.amytan.net)). A vocal advocate for Lyme awareness, especially in the medical community, she helped to establish LymeAid4Kids in conjunction with the Lyme Disease Association. This program would help to fund medical exams for young patients who may have contracted the disease. Although Lyme disease has appeared nationwide, the condition is often incorrectly diagnosed. Tan reflects in her personal essay that she was likely bitten while hiking on the East Coast, where she also owns a home. After having suffered numerous physiological discomforts (memory lapses, hallucinations, erratic behavior, and brain lesions), Tan is quick to encourage widespread Lyme literacy. She stresses the importance of prevention and treatment given the enigmatic nature of many of the aforementioned symptoms.

Tan explains that she self-diagnosed her condition with the help of the Internet prior to seeking specifically Lyme-related medical advice. Online research is a tool that prompts some ambivalence on her part. Because of her presence in the public eye, Tan acknowledges that her personal life is under perpetual scrutiny. Because media exposure is directly proportional to popularity, she has found that the proliferation of information about her life and work has resulted in a rash of errors that continue to multiply. In the essay "Personal Errata," featured in *The Opposite of Fate*, she

methodically goes through a number of points that have continued to disturb as well as tickle her with their degrees of error. Among these are the awards she has won (Tan cheekily asserts that she has never won either the Pulitzer or the Nobel Prize), the types of jobs she has held (Tan has never taught poetry at the college level, let alone in West Virginia, as one source has suggested), and the coloration of her teeth (Tan scoffs at the allegation that her teeth are discolored due to smoking, as one interview alleges; smoking was a habit that she quit back in 1995).

While undoubtedly a public figure, Tan has voiced some reservations about the “ethnic role model” idea, which, at its core, is a representational ideal that places undue pressures on individuals to embody group expectations. These images are the stuff of fantasy, not unlike the **model minority** stereotype that has long haunted contemporary Asian American identity. In her *Salon* interview, the writer admits her discomfort at being identified as an authoritative expert on Asian immigrant experience and mother-daughter relationships. Her texts, after all, follow in the footsteps of such authors as Maxine Hong Kingston, whose creative autobiography *The Woman Warrior* (1976) mastered the technique of infusing fiction into lived experience and lived experience into fiction. Tan’s discomfort with the cultural representative role is one that other writers—not just **Asian American**, by any means—have articulated and found problematic. Tan considers her writing as a way of negotiating her specific relationship with her mother, not a typical and all-encompassing rendition of ethnic mother-daughter relationships. Her ambivalence finds an echo again when she is asked about her status as role model for young people; while she acknowledges that a public persona is necessarily constrained by expectations, she has voiced uneasiness with the burden of presenting a face much different from her own more private self.

Along the same lines, Tan remarks that Chinese American culture should not be viewed as merely a derivative form of Chinese culture, nor does it aim to be a replica or exegete of a more “authentic” model. Tan’s work as an artist is not to produce meta-narratives or keys to interpreting one version or the other. Each story that she presents is a specific thread of discourse located in personal and/or national history, not a universal, trans-historical study of human behavior. Her fiction’s ultimate aim may be to reconstitute and reconfigure, in some small way, Western culture’s affinity for absolutes and starkly dichotomous thinking. Whatever her status may be as literary celebrity, Tan does not consider herself as having any transcendental capacity to capture *the* Chinese American experience in writing. It is doubtful whether such a feat could ever be accomplished in this age of literary pluralism and its belief in a complementary multiplicity of perspectives. Hers is one of a number of deeply probing and imaginatively vibrant approaches to the realities of twenty-first century ethnic American literature. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Feminism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America.



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NANCY KANG

### ◆ THAROOR, SHASHI (1956–)

Shashi Tharoor is an Indian American novelist, short fiction writer, diplomat, historian, and essayist. Born in London in 1956, Shashi Tharoor was a precocious child and excellent student. As a child, he suffered from asthma and was often ill. Nevertheless, he spent much of his youth reading, often perusing, as he claims, several newspapers on a daily basis and keeping himself updated on world events and politics. He earned his PhD from Tufts University at the age of 22 from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Soon after, he began his career at the United Nations, where he continues to work today in various capacities.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Tharoor served under the UN high commissioner for refugees; in 1989 he was transferred to the UN headquarters in New York to work on issues such as peacekeeping missions in the former Yugoslavia. After serving as Kofi Annan's executive assistant, Tharoor was appointed director of communications and special projects under the secretary general, affording him a close view of the inner workings of that administrative position. In 2001 he was named by Annan as interim head of the Department of Public Information, and in 2002 he became the

under-secretary general for communications and public information. In 2006, when Annan's term as secretary general expired, many speculated that Tharoor was uniquely positioned to assume the role, given his nearly 30 years of experience. However, he was passed over, and Ban Ki-moon of the Republic of Korea was named to the post.

Tharoor's busy career as a UN diplomat has not hindered him from advancing a prolific writing career. A lifelong lover of literature, he has published historical, biographical, and analytical works, such as *India: From Midnight to the Millenium* (1997) and *Bookless in Baghdad: And Other Writings About Reading* (2005), as well as literary works. He has been lauded by many reviewers and contemporary critics for his deft skill to write well in any genre, whether it be the novel, the short story, the essay, or the political commentary.

*The Great Indian Novel* (1989) marked his debut as a novelist. The satire on the political life of the subcontinent was hailed widely as a brilliant entrance on the literary stage. Structured as an epic, *The Great Indian Novel* features a sole narrator who declares, "In my epic I shall tell of past, present and future, of existence and passing, of efflorescence and decay, of death and rebirth; of what is and of what was, of what should have been" (18). The novel imitates the great Indian classic text, the *Mahabharata*, recasting it in a modern voice to discuss and explore the problems of modern India. Political leaders are depicted as characters: Jawaharlal Nehru becomes Dhritarashtra, whose daughter Priya Duryadhoni clearly represents Indira Gandhi, Nehru's own daughter and political heir.

*Show Business* (1992) is another satire, that of the over-the-top Indian movie industry, referred to commonly as Bollywood. Indeed, *Show Business* was made into a film entitled *Bollywood*. The novel reads much like the unfolding of a traditional Bollywood film, complete with dramatic monologues, twists of fate, and theatrical song and dance interludes. The star of the novel, Ashok Banjara, is an actor who plays heroes on screen but whose real life is quite the opposite. The various sections of the book are narrated by various characters, in different modes: first-person narratives by Banjara, monologues by his costars (including his distressed wife and self-absorbed mistress), as well as synopses of his films, which parallel his real-life experiences. Throughout the novel, Banjara's shallowness and the overall falseness of Bollywood are contrasted with India's everyday social, economic, and political crises. Banjara's father, a well intentioned politician who is tuned into the real problems of his country, is often the vehicle Tharoor uses to draw these contrasts.

Tharoor's third novel, *Riot* (2001), maintains his signature playfulness with plot structure and a linear narrative. Lakshman, the main character, is much like Tharoor—a bureaucrat by day and a writer by night, and he yearns to write "A novel that doesn't read like a novel. Why can't I write a novel that reads like—like an encyclopedia? . . . Down with the omniscient narrator!" (135–136). Indeed, *Riot* is an

encyclopedia book, a compendium of newspaper clippings, diary entries, personal letters, and transcripts of interviews that collectively—without being arranged in any particular order—recount the murder of American Priscilla Hart. A 24-year-old American student, she is killed during a clash between Hindus and Muslims in a small village, where she had been working to educate women on birth control options. When the riot is over, her stabbed body is discovered, and the mystery ensues. The novel's subtitle, "A Love Story," refers to her affair with Lakshman, who is frustrated with his life and deeply in love with Hart. Their cross-cultural romance is rendered tragically and poignantly, though the book is ultimately a mystery.

Tharoor's nonfiction also demonstrates his creativity and insight. *India: From Midnight to the Millennium* is a compelling history of the nation's life after colonialism to the present, while Tharoor's biography of India's first president, *Nehru*, combines the fact of his subject's life with the legend that he created and which, in the author's eyes, still serves as a model of intellect and secularism—the path India should follow. **See also** Colonialism and Postcolonialism.

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SUSAN MUADDI DARRAJ

#### ◆ THIEN, MADELEINE (1974–)

A Canadian fiction writer of Malaysian Chinese descent, Madeleine Thien is the author of one collection of short stories (*Small Recipes*, 2001) and one novel (*Certainty*, 2006). She has also published the children's book *The Chinese Violin* (2001), based on Joe Chang's animated film of the same title. *Small Recipes* won the 2001 City of Vancouver Book Award as well as the 2002 Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize. It was named a notable book by the 2001 Kiriya Pacific Rim Book Prize and was nominated for other prestigious awards, such as the 2001 Commonwealth Writers Prize (Best First Book).

Born and raised in Vancouver, Thien's first career choice was dance, but in her second year at Simon Fraser University she switched to the University of British Columbia's

MFA program in creative writing, which she completed in 2000. While a student, her manuscript for the collection *Small Recipes* brought her the 1998 Emerging Writer Award from the Asian Canadian Writers' Workshop, the first of the distinctions mentioned above.

The seven stories collected in *Small Recipes* deal with the heartbreaking but often left unspoken incidents within home and family. The most poignant ones are told from the perspective of a female child, like the one in the title story, watching in desolation how her immigrant father disciplines her older brother for refusing to speak their native tongue and realizing that her love for her father has become tainted with the knowledge of his violence. In "House," 10-year-old Lorraine tells how she and her 14-year-old sister Kathleen, now in foster care, spend one whole day outside the house where they used to live, hoping against hope that their alcoholic mother, who abandoned them months earlier, may return on her birthday. In "Alchemy," an adolescent Miriam experiences the pleasant discovery of her body and her sexuality while her best friend Paula suffers every night her father's abuse, eventually leaving her home at 16. Loss, grief, and separation are recurrent themes in the collection. Families break apart, like the one in "Four Days from Oregon," when Irene takes her three young daughters away from their father as she embarks on a new relationship. In "Bullet Train," separation may be the result of love rather than indifference, as Josephine feels that she must give her mother space to enjoy her new and fulfilling relationship with Harold. Two stories with complex narrative points of view, "Dispatch" and "A Map of the City" pursue the intricacies of married love. In the former, a woman finds out that her husband is in love with a childhood friend who has rejected him and is aware of his grief over that woman's sudden death in a car crash. In the latter, the narrator is the child of estranged parents who experiences marriage difficulties herself. In this story the intricate landscape of the city of Vancouver becomes a map for the narrator's psyche.

*Certainty* is an ambitious novel that shuttles among locations and generations. It starts in Vancouver with a young doctor grieving over his wife Gail's sudden death from pneumonia six months earlier. Gail was a producer of radio documentaries, and her last project involved decoding the **World War II** diary a POW kept during the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong. This unwittingly led Gail in the last few weeks of her life to the staggering discovery that she had a half-brother, since her father Matthew had a child with his first love Ani in postwar Indonesia. However, Ansel and Gail merely constitute the narrative link that allows the novel to recuperate the voices and lives of the characters of the parent generation, particularly those of Matthew and Ani, who lived through the Japanese occupation of British North Borneo when they were young children. Although they both survived, the traumatic loss of their loved ones (Ani's entire family and Matthew's father) to the Japanese left its imprint on the young couple. Separated in the postwar confusion and briefly reunited as adolescents, they

are again brought apart permanently. Despite a tenuous link that was never severed, Ani moved on to build a family with the Dutch photo journalist Sipke Vermeulen in Frisia, while Matthew married Hong-Kong-born Clara and immigrated to Canada. The nine chapters that make up the bulk of this novel shuffle the characters' diverse memories in a handful of settings (Vancouver, Indonesia, and the Netherlands). However, they manage to come together in the construction of an intricate web of people and places that ultimately finds its origin in the turmoil of World War II in Southeast Asia. Thien's topics and motifs have much in common with those she has explored in *Small Recipes*. Death, loss, and grief may bring people together but also set them apart. Language often fails to transmit one's deepest feelings, as in the war diary that everyone strove so long to decode only to find its contents disappointingly mundane.

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PILAR CUDER-DOMÍNGUEZ

### ◆ THIRD WORLD STUDENTS' STRIKES

Third World students' strikes were instrumental in the creation of the first ethnic studies programs in higher education. The strikes involved not only students, but also Third World community members, union members, and faculty. The most noted strikes occurred at San Francisco State College and the University of California–Berkeley.

**Asian American** students, like other American students during the 1960s, began to take part in campus political organizations. They were often invited by friends and participated individually, not as an Asian American contingent. However, while Asian American student activists attempted to integrate and assimilate into the social movements, they also felt isolated and powerless. As racial pride increased during the late 1960s, Asian American students began to form organizations at their colleges and universities, including San Francisco State College.

San Francisco State was the site of the first Third World strike, led by the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) on November 6, 1968. However, before aligning

with the TWLF, Asian American students participated in ethnic-specific organizations: Intercollegiate Chinese for Social Action (ICSA) and Philippine-American Collegiate Endeavor (PACE). One pan-Asian American group emerged, Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA).

The Asian American student groups, along with other Third World organizations, were gathering force and forming a critical mass in the midst of significant changes in California's higher education policy. The 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education in California established three tiers for higher education: the University of California, California State College, and junior college systems. It was formulated to restructure education toward industry priorities while meeting the needs of the growing student population in California. Higher education enrollment projections for California estimated more than one million students by 1975, nearly three times the enrollment of 1958. Instead of expanding higher education to accommodate the students, the three tiers were designed to divert students to junior colleges. At the same time, the University of California and California State College systems developed new admission requirements in the fall of 1962 to improve the "quality" of their students. In response to the growing technical and defense industries (notably, during the cold war), higher education needed to produce workers with technical skills and managerial abilities.

Each tier of higher education had target student populations, specialized functions within the California social/economic system, and centralized governing boards. The University of California system was to train professionals and was the only system that could grant doctor's degrees; it was reserved for high school students who graduated within the top 12.5 percent of their class. The state college system provided liberal arts education, professional and applied field instruction, and teacher education and was for the top 33 percent. Before the master plan, it was open to 70 percent of graduates. The junior college system was at the bottom tier and was for vocational training, general liberal arts education, and a "stepping stone" for transfer into the four-year institutions.

The board of trustees was comprised of 21 business and political figures who had complete authority over decisions regarding academic programs, funding, and key personnel. The result of the master plan was a decline in minority enrollments. At State, African American enrollment dropped from 11 percent in 1960 to 3.6 percent in 1968. The master plan did not affect only African American students. In the fall of 1968, Third World students comprised 16 percent of San Francisco State's student body, while they were 70 percent of California public schools. The reality of the master plan's effects on all Third World students collided with existing radical student movements.

In spring 1968 the Third World Liberation Front was formed. It was comprised of PACE, ICSA, AAPA, the Mexican American Students Confederation, and the Black Student Union. Students united around the TWLF's themes of freedom and self-determination: "The TWLF . . . has its purpose to aid in further developing politically,

economically, and culturally the revolutionary Third World consciousness of racist oppressed peoples both on and off campus. As Third World students, as Third World people, as so-called minorities, we are being exploited to the fullest extent in this racist white America, and we are therefore preparing ourselves and our people for a prolonged struggle for freedom from this yoke of oppression" (Umemoto 2000, 62).

The "racist white America" they sought to overthrow within their individual groups and communities was localized to their campus; thus, they united against the institutionalization of racism at San Francisco State.

Asian American students' collaboration with other Third World students made common struggles more evident. The nature and implicit obligations of the TWLF coalition set a basis for unity throughout the strike. To be sure, the strike was not a spontaneous, reactionary event. It was the outcome of students' engagement with numerous "proper channels" for voicing grievances. Their requests were met with repeated demonstrations of indifference from administrators.

Fall 1966 marked the beginning of these efforts. Black and other Third World students at San Francisco State presented a proposal to the administration for admission of more Third World and other economically and culturally disadvantaged students and a black-controlled Black Studies Department. In early June 1967, students approached the Council of Academic Deans and requested a special task force for the establishment of black studies. Up to 11 months after this second request, there were no results. Third World students and the Students for a Democratic Society responded in May 1968 with a sit-in at President John Summerskill's office. As a result of the sit-in, three of their demands were met: the granting of 412 slots for Third World students over the next two semesters; the creation of at least 10 faculty positions for Third World professors with student voice in the appointments; and the rehiring of a faculty mentor. The only denied demand was for the expulsion of ROTC from campus.

Police suppression during the May sit-in was the first major act of violence against student protestors. What seemed a victory for the students led to increased tension after President Summerskill resigned a few months afterward without following through with promises made in a signed agreement with students. The experiences of police violence and the administration's staunch resistance fueled students' frustration over the traditional modes of protest. More students began to consider militant tactics and began to understand how threatening their demands were to the system.

By fall 1968, the administration had yet to address the students' concerns about their education. Furthermore, the administration announced that black studies would receive only 1.2 teaching positions out of 47 full-time open teaching positions at San Francisco State, while claiming that they were doing everything possible to implement the demands of the Black Students Union and other Third World organizations. At that time, the board of trustees took action toward the firing of George Murray.

Murray was a BSU central committee member, minister of education of the Black Panther party, and instructor in the English Department. The administration was divided over the issue; however, his statement at a rally at a board meeting, "We maintain that political power comes through the barrel of a gun," was interpreted by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as advocating "guns on campus" (Umemoto 2000, 68). This generated stronger opposition from the board of trustees, and they suspended him on November 1, 1968. Student activists had already moved to action: the BSU called a rally on October 28 and announced the strike and their demands. The following week, the BSU and TWLF held a meeting and set the strike date of November 6, 1968.

Students held a rally, marched around campus and closed classes, and marched to the new president's office. Class attendance was below 50 percent in most departments by the third day of the strike. The San Francisco Police Tactical Squad occupied campus but was forced off by about 200 students on November 13, after the police began chasing and clubbing students in front of the BSU. President Smith was forced to close campus after about 200 students forced the armed squad off campus. Throughout the rest of the month, students met in discussion groups. There were periods of tension between faculty, who wanted to resume classes, and students, who required that their demands first be met. On November 26, President Smith resigned as a result of not being able to bring stability and closure to the issues on campus; within 30 minutes, a new president was appointed: S.I. Hayakawa. President Hayakawa instituted a stance that supported police violence toward strikers.

From December 2, 1968, to January 3, 1969, police arrested 600 strikers and bystanders. According to doctors of those arrested, 56 had head injuries, and other injuries from police clubbing included ruptured spleens; fractured ribs; broken hands, arms, and legs; and burns to stomach and groin areas. However, as the violence toward strikers increased, more community members and faculty became supportive of the TWLF. The mass arrests fueled students to fight against their injustices.

The Third World Liberation Front went on strike with three demands. First, they demanded open admissions on the basis that all Third World students had the right to an education. They regarded standardized tests for admissions as expressions of institutionalized racism. They also called for an expanded special admissions program for disadvantaged students. Second, they demanded a School of Ethnic Area Studies for the provision of relevant education. According to the stated purpose of the school, it would be confront racism, poverty, and misrepresentation of minorities in California. This was a direct challenge to the master plan, as education was based on community rather than industry priorities. Lastly, the TWLF demanded the right to have ethnic studies classes taught and run by Third World peoples. This reflected the significance of "self-determination," where each nationality had the right to create its own curriculum and hire its own faculty.



The demands were partially met. The nonnegotiable demands became grounds for negotiation because of the fragile bonds within the coalition and severe police and state repression. The mass arrests affected leadership and spokespersons, and legal efforts expended strike participants' time, energy, money, and morale. President Hayakawa was also under pressure to reopen the campus. Thus, a select committee of faculty entered into negotiations with the TWLF, with the expectation that they had Hayakawa's full authority and support. Although Hayakawa never signed the settlement, the TWLF and faculty moved forward with the negotiated resolution.

The Third World Liberation Front at San Francisco State was successful in establishing the first School of Ethnic Studies. Students were involved in formalizing the final plan, and more than 22 new faculty positions were created. In addition, the administration promised to fill unused special admissions slots in the spring of 1969. Although not all demands were met, the strike inspired students and communities at other campuses to organize for relevant education. At some schools, such as the University of California—Los Angeles, the administration initiated conciliatory measures to prevent student activism and protest. **See also** Asian American Political Activism; Racism and Asian America.

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JENNIFER CHUNG

## ◆ TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD

The transcontinental railroad is a railroad that brought together the East and West coasts of the United States. The transcontinental railroad was completed on May 10, 1869, in Promontory, Utah, and stretched more than 2,000 miles from Council Bluffs,

Iowa, to Sacramento, California. Built by the Union Pacific and Central Pacific companies, the railroad employed many immigrant workers to complete the massive project, including Native Americans, Irish, German, and Chinese immigrants. By the time the transcontinental railroad was completed, Central Pacific employed almost 12,000 Chinese immigrants, all of whom were paid much less than their white counterparts.

The transcontinental railroad is regarded as one of the greatest accomplishments of the nineteenth century. It crossed deserts and mountains and made the trip across the United States, which once would have taken months and have been dangerous, take about a week and be much safer. Many Americans believed in the idea of “manifest destiny”—the belief that it was the United States’ destiny to expand from the Atlantic to the Pacific. As such, Americans headed west to settle and to search for gold during the California gold rush that began in 1849. But the trip was extremely dangerous. Traveling from Missouri to San Francisco took about six months, and many travelers died from disease, hunger, thirst, exposure, and even Indian attacks. Another option was also dangerous—to take a boat to Panama then canoe across Panama’s rivers or walk and ride through the insect-infested land. Then travelers would have to take another boat to San Francisco. Many died from yellow fever and malaria, and some who survived were taken advantage of. It was not uncommon for travelers to pay for the whole passage on the East Coast only to pay more once they were stuck in Panama. The least dangerous option took much money and time. Wealthy travelers who wanted to get from the East Coast to the West Coast could take a ship from the eastern sea board around Cape Horn, the southern tip of South America, and then on to the West Coast. This 18,000-mile journey took six months and was safer and more luxurious, but it generally cost about a thousand dollars, an amount that only the wealthy could afford. Even with this passage, there were dangers, as the seas around Cape Horn were notoriously difficult.

The risks people were willing to take indicate the importance of an easier and safer connection between the East and West coasts of the United States. On July 1, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed into law the Pacific Railroad Bill, a bill that would provide plans and funding for the transcontinental railroad. Two railroad corporations, the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific, would build the railroad. The Union Pacific would build west from Iowa while the Central Pacific would build east from Sacramento. On January 8, 1863, groundbreaking ceremonies for the eastward tracks were held in Sacramento, California, and it was almost a year later that groundbreaking ceremonies for the westward tracks were held in Omaha, Nebraska, just two miles south of Council Bluffs, Iowa, on December 2, 1863. There had been disagreement about where to begin the transcontinental railroad in the east, but Grenville Dodge, an engineer and general in the Union Army during the Civil War, advised President Lincoln that Council Bluffs, Iowa, would be a good location because it would be easy to connect to existing railroads in Chicago, Illinois.

Even before the track laying began, the transcontinental railroad was plagued with problems. Investors in the railroad worried about their profits and often resorted to illegal activity to keep their profits from the railroad high. Because of this illegal activity, the head engineer for the Union Pacific quit, and the head engineer of the Central Pacific died from yellow fever on a trip to get other investors to buy out the dishonest investors. Grenville Dodge was hired as the head engineer of the Union Pacific, and under his direction progress was made. Additionally, the land in the east where the Union Pacific was working was flat, so workers could lay track rather quickly. The Union Pacific workers were able to lay a mile or more of track each day. But working for the Union Pacific was hard, and workers would often lay track from sunrise to sunset. The Union Pacific often hired Irish immigrants, Native Americans, and African Americans to lay track.

Working on the Central Pacific proved even more difficult, as the company's first major job was to get through the Sierra Mountains in California. Workers had to blast and dig tunnels before they could lay track, which proved quite difficult, because the mountains were full of granite. The blasting was extremely dangerous, and, unlike the Union Pacific workers who were making progress of a mile or more every day, the Central Pacific workers were able to clear about 6 to 12 inches of rock every day. Once the Central Pacific workers made it past the mountains, they were also able to make about a mile of progress each day, but it was not until November 20, 1867, that the Central Pacific made it through the Sierra Mountains, almost four years after the groundbreaking ceremonies in Sacramento.

The Central Pacific struggled to keep workers. Men did not want to risk their lives, and the lure of gold in California was strong for many. Some suggested that the Central Pacific hire some of the Chinese immigrants who had been arriving in California to seek gold in the gold rush, but many others refused to hire Chinese immigrants, arguing that they were too weak to perform such a difficult job. However, when the Central Pacific continued to struggle to keep white workers, the company had no choice and hired Chinese workers. They needed about 4,000 workers to continue progress but had only 800 workers in early 1865. The Chinese workers were paid less than the white workers and, unlike the white workers, had to buy their own food. But as the Chinese workers proved themselves to the Central Pacific foremen, more of them were hired. They worked notoriously hard and were known for not complaining. The Chinese railroad workers did so well that the Central Pacific sent scouts and recruiters into California to look for more Chinese workers, and the company even advertised their job openings in China.

The hard work of the Chinese created a competitive atmosphere among the railroad workers. The white workers did not like being out-worked by their Chinese counterparts. The Chinese were also different culturally. They ate different foods and did not drink alcohol, choosing to drink tea instead from boiled water. Their eating, drinking, and

bathing habits were healthier than most railroad workers, so they did not suffer from many of the health problems, such as dysentery, that plagued the railroad workers' camps. The Chinese workers realized their importance to the project and organized a peaceful strike in the summer of 1867. When word spread about the skill and determination of the Chinese workers, more companies began to recruit them as laborers, making it more difficult for the Central Pacific railroad to keep them, especially when they were being paid well below the white workers. In efforts to keep the Chinese workers, Central Pacific raised their wages to \$35.00 per month, the amount equivalent to the white workers' wages. However, this did not achieve the results the company was hoping for. In June of 1867, Chinese railroad workers walked away from the tracks and went back to their camps, refusing to work until they were paid \$40.00 per month. They also demanded shorter work days; instead of working from dawn until dusk, they demanded 10-hour days. The Central Pacific manager, Charles Crocker, did not even consider that the workers' grievances were to be taken seriously. Crocker simply cut off supplies to the workers' camps and began looking for replacement workers, specifically recruiting African American labor from the east. A week after Crocker cut off supplies to the camps, he returned to negotiate with the Chinese workers. They were hungry, and many of them agreed to go back to work. There were still workers who refused to go back to the tracks, however, and they were angry with their fellow workers who would not resist. When it seemed that some of these workers might get out of his control, Crocker called in a posse of armed white men, and the rest of the Chinese workers went back to work on the tracks.

When the transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869, there was a celebration and a photograph taken to commemorate the event. That now famous photograph is featured in books and articles about the transcontinental railroad. Though Chinese immigrant workers were of paramount importance in the construction of the railroad, no Chinese appeared in the picture.

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### ◆ TRENKA, JANE JEONG (1972–)

Korean American writer and literary activist, Jane Jeong Trenka is known primarily as one of the first Korean American adoptees to give literary voice to the emotional and psychological consequences of transnational and transracial adoption. Born in Seoul, Korea, and named Jeong Kyong-Ah, at six months old Trenka and her four-year-old sister were flown to the United States to be adopted by a childless couple from a small town in rural northern Minnesota. Renamed Jane Brauer, Trenka was raised in an isolated, homogeneous, conservative community. She graduated from Augsburg College in Minneapolis in 1995 with baccalaureate degrees in English literature and piano performance. In 1995 she was also reunited with her birth mother and sisters in Korea. Currently, Trenka lives in Seoul, continuing her work as a writer and advocate for adoptees, birth families, and adoptive families worldwide.

Trenka's name, Jane Jeong Trenka, is itself emblematic of the crisis of identity and the need for reconciliation that is the subject of her first book, *The Language of Blood: A Memoir* (2003). This name juxtaposes and combines all her identities: American adoptee, Korean birth child, and wife. The juxtaposition of fragments into a beautiful yet irregular whole is the central metaphor and method of *The Language of Blood*, which Trenka likens to a quilt formed from memory and imagination. The metaphor of the crazy quilt extends to the dazzling formalism of the memoir. Trenka pieces together her memories in jarring and sometimes outrageous arrangements of genres: real and imagined letters, narrated memories, quotations from both Eastern and Western religious traditions, transcripts of thwarted phone calls with adoption agencies, excerpts from child welfare manuals, a fairy tale, a one-act play, a film script, recipes, a script for a musical comedy, and a racist stand-up comedy routine. Even the traditional memoir narrative is fragmented into vignettes. Such fragmentation both emphasizes the constructed and selective nature of memory and represents the dislocation Trenka felt as she wrestled with her racial difference, her longing to be loved, her loss of her birth mother, her difficulty relating to others, her terrifying experience of being prey to a murderous racist stalker, and most crucially the emotional distance of her adoptive parents, who refused to acknowledge their daughters' birth culture or the Korean woman who had given them life.

Trenka's memoir is also an act of mourning for the birth mother she lost, regained, and lost again to cancer shortly after their reunion. Her uncompromising account of her adoptive parents' failures and the deep, bodily bond she felt with her dying birth mother marks this book's departure from the usually happy image of adoption in works written for the most part from the point of view of adoptive parents or adoption professionals. However, Trenka ends by emphasizing her ambivalence toward the circumstances of her life. Acknowledging the dire conditions of family breakdown and violence that led to her adoption, Trenka admits what she has gained from adoption

linguistically, educationally, and culturally. But she asks poignantly how many educational opportunities will justify the loss of her birth mother. This insistence on the losses felt by adoptees situates *The Language of Blood* as a new departure in published accounts of transnational adoption. Since its publication, *The Language of Blood* has received numerous literary awards, has been translated into Korean, and has been taught in college classes across the United States. Trenka has been working on a second memoir titled *Fugitive Visions: A Memoir of Whiteness*.

*Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption* (2006), Trenka's anthology of adoptee-centered writing, coedited with fellow transracial adoptees Julia Chinyere Oparah and Sun Yung Shin, continues the effort to give voice to adoptees. The editors of this volume point out that although there is a booming industry of adoption literature, it is overwhelmingly written by members of the adoption industry itself and by the people who do the adopting; that is, by those constituencies most invested in presenting a positive image of transnational adoption. By contrast, *Outsiders Within* offers essays on the tolls of transnational and transracial adoption from sociological, psychological, postcolonial, historical, and literary perspectives. It also includes some samples of creative writing and art on the topic. These diverse essays and entries share a commitment to examining the global conditions that are implicated in the forced migration of hundreds of thousands of children annually from birth families and countries to other lands, and other people who will parent them. The goal of the collection is not only to provide further understanding of transnational and transracial adoption but also to examine the racial, political, and economic determinants and effects of this growing practice. The global relevance of the topic of transnational adoption and the need to hear the voices of adoptees in the discourse of adoption practice marks *Outsiders Within* as an important new text in adoption literature and in the history of family structure. **See also** Korean American Adoptee Literature.

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### ◆ TRUONG, MONIQUE (1968–)

A lawyer-turned novelist, Monique Truong's skill as a writer ranges in genre and style. She is an insightful essayist as well as a critical thinker and scholar. However, the talent that made her famous is in her fictional narratives, both through short story and novel forms.

Born in 1968 in Saigon, Vietnam (currently known as Ho Chi Minh City), Truong left South Vietnam with her mother seven years later in 1975 on a U.S. Army cargo plane. Her father would join them later as one of the thousands of "boat people" who immigrated to the United States as a political refugee right after the United States lost the American War in Vietnam. According to Truong in her June 18, 2006, *New York Times*' editorial "My Father's Vietnam Syndrome," she and her family relocated first to North Carolina, then to Kettering, Ohio, and finally to Houston, Texas. Truong, who received her BA from Yale University and her law degree from Columbia University School of Law, specialized in intellectual property. Although many (Internet and written) sources indicate that Truong currently lives with her partner/husband in Brooklyn, New York, she has frequently traveled to many locations to write.

Although well-known for her critically acclaimed first novel *The Book of Salt*, published in 2003 by Houghton Mifflin Company, Truong's chapter contribution, "Vietnamese American Literature" in King-Kok Cheung's 1997 edited anthology *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature* provided one of a very few pieces of literary criticism that addressed a growing body of **Vietnamese American literature** starting from 1975 and ending in 1990. As Truong pointed out in this piece, "Emerging out of a social and historical moment of military conflict, Vietnamese American literature speaks of death and other irreconcilable losses, and longs always for peace—peace of mind" (219). In this essay, Truong analyzed works that were transmitted and transcribed orally, such as *Shallow Graves* by Wendy Wilder Larsen and Tran Thi Nga. What the body of work that Truong interrogated had in common was that these texts were mostly autobiographical and relayed a first-generation experience of being a refugee in the United States after having conveyed the subject's personal history while still living in Vietnam. As it turns out, due to the trauma of war that haunts many of these first-generation refugee authors and storytellers, Truong astutely observes that ultimately, these people seek peace for themselves, for their family members, and for those around them. To do this, many feel compelled to articulate their experiences to others, typically in a first-person autobiographical narrative that is transmitted orally and later transcribed or ghostwritten with someone else.

To build upon this nascent literature examined in "Vietnamese American Literature," Truong added to the field by not only coediting with Barbara Tran and Luu Truong Khoi but also contributing a short story to the anthology *Watermark: Vietnamese American Poetry & Prose*. This collection, published by the New York City-based Asian

American Writers' Workshop in 1998, was the first to present works by and about 1.5 and second-generation writers of Vietnamese descent. Truong's short story "Seeds" would become the basis for her novel *The Book of Salt*. It is in "Seeds" that the reader is first introduced to the narrator, Binh Nguyen, whose life is fleshed out and painstakingly enumerated five years later in *The Book of Salt*. This story is about Binh Nguyen, a gay Vietnamese cook living in Paris, France, who answers an ad that states: "*Two American ladies wish to retain a cook—27 rue de Fleurus. See caretaker's office, first floor*" (2003, 19). These two American ladies just happen to be renowned feminist writer Gertrude Stein and her partner Alice Toklas, who are residing in France during the 1920s and 1930s in their self-imposed exile. Both the short story and the novel convey issues of exile and displacement. Yet many of the characters who possess a sense of isolation and loneliness also exhibit a contradictory desire to belong and find a home that may never exist. These complex and competing emotions are threaded throughout the works.

Truong has received many awards for *The Book of Salt*. They include the 2004 annual Bard Fiction Prize, the New York Public Library's 2004 Young Lions Fiction Award, and the 2004 Asian American Literary Award. *The Book of Salt* has also been listed as a finalist for the 2003 Lambda Literary Awards for Gay Men's Fiction.

Since writing *The Book of Salt*, Truong has continued to contribute and publish essays and commentaries; most notable is her 2003 *Time* magazine essay "Into Thin Air." This piece is a rumination about her history and her past, especially as it connects with the current American war that is taking place in Iraq. Her essay was also a commemoration of the 28th year since the end of the American war in Vietnam. It provides a personal perspective of what it means for her to be Vietnamese American living in the United States—someone, who, unlike so many of her peers, has not revisited the land of her birth. According to a 2004 interview published online, Truong's second novel is based in North Carolina. It is a "reimagining of the Southern gothic novel." **See also** Vietnam War; Vietnamese American Literature.

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NINA HA

### ◆ TSIANG, H.T. (1899–1971)

H.T. Tsiang (Jiang Xizeng) was a Chinese American poet, playwright, novelist, and actor. During his middle and later years, H.T. Tsiang was known primarily as a bit actor in Hollywood films and television, but today he is better known as the most prolific—and perhaps one of the only—Chinese American proletarian writers of his era. While Carlos Bulosan wrote of the plight of Filipino and Filipino American workers, Tsiang concentrated on representing the plight of Chinese and Chinese American laborers. Both Bulosan and Tsiang came from humble circumstances, immigrated to the United States, involved themselves in workers' movements of the 1920s and 1930s, and used literature to effect social change. Born in Qi'an, a village in the district of Nantong, Jiangsu Province in China, Tsiang grew up in poverty but, thanks to scholarships, attended Tongzhou Teachers' School in Jiangsu and Southeastern University in Nanjing, where he received a baccalaureate degree in 1925. After college, Tsiang worked for the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party), but when the political climate of the party changed, he felt threatened. Tsiang escaped to the United States in 1926 and matriculated at Stanford University to qualify for a student exemption to the **Chinese exclusion acts**. While a student, he founded and wrote for the bilingual periodical *Chinese Guide in America* to educate American readers about Chinese politics and persuade them to support a Chinese workers' revolution. The pro-Kuomintang Chinese American community in California, however, did not appreciate Tsiang's efforts, so he moved to New York in 1927, enrolling at Columbia University. In spite of U.S. government attempts to deport him as an undesirable alien, Tsiang continued his activism by speaking at venues such as the Thomas Paine Society, writing editorials for the *New York Daily News*, and delivering commentary on the radio.

Ultimately, Tsiang found his calling in literature. Inspired by the poetry and plays of William Shakespeare and encouraged by his Shakespeare professor at Columbia, Ashley H. Thorndike, Tsiang wrote poems about Chinese politics and Chinese American workers, publishing some of them in the communist periodicals *Daily Worker* and *New Masses*. In 1929, he published his own volume, *Poems of the Chinese Revolution*, which

made the case that the Chinese revolution was part of a broader world revolution. To this end, he wrote about how Chinese American laundry workers ought to be treated not as labor competition but rather as fellow sufferers under the capitalist system. In another poem, he addressed the famous persecution of the Italian American activist-workers Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. Ruth Crawford-Seeger set these two poems “Chinaman, Laundryman” and “Sacco, Vanzetti” to music, and both were performed in 1933. Tsiang wrote other poems, including a collection entitled “The Pear,” but these were never published. Taking his example from Mike Gold and others, Tsiang turned next to writing novels. *China Red* (1931), a partly autobiographical and epistolary novel, centers on the plight of two lovers: Chi Ku-Niang, who remains in China, and Sheng Chin-Yeu, who comes to a new political consciousness while studying at Stanford. *Hanging on Union Square* (1935) follows allegorically named characters, including Mr. Nut, Miss Digger, Miss Stubborn, Mr. Wise-guy, and Mr. Ratsky, as they struggle to navigate New York during the Depression, either through begging, trying to work, exploiting others, or joining a revolutionary movement. *And China Has Hands* (1937), Tsiang’s most written-about novel, features a failed affair turned workers’ alliance between Wong Wan-Lee, an immigrant Chinese laundry worker, and Pearl Chang, a half-black, half-Chinese aspiring actress from the U.S. South. Next, perhaps taking a cue from Josephine Herbst and Mary Heaton Vorse’s play *Strike Marches On* (1937), Tsiang experimented with the dramatic form, writing and acting in *China Marches On* (1938). In this work, Tsiang drew upon the Chinese legend of Hua Mulan—the woman warrior who disguised herself as a man—by imagining her as a modern-day Chinese soldier defending Shanghai from a Japanese invasion. After the Depression, Tsiang’s avant-garde style fell out of favor, as did his left-leaning politics, after China became a communist state in 1949. He made his living as an actor and continued to write but never published anything else. Tsiang died in Los Angeles in 1971.

Some contemporary reviewers of Tsiang’s work appreciated his unique perspective and choice to write about China, but most were confused by his use of nonstandard English, experimental forms, and quirky characterizations. Few understood Tsiang’s sense of humor, use of irony, and borrowings from multiple literary traditions. In fact, Tsiang followed the principle of *nalai zhuyi* (grabbism), or strategic appropriation from other writers, creating a new, hybridized literature by reworking formal and thematic elements from classical and contemporary Chinese literature, the proletarian works of 1920s and 1930s America, and Western classics like the plays of William Shakespeare. More recent critics have begun to explain the complexity of his writing, the nuances and contradictions of his politics, and his unique place in the canons of early twentieth-century Chinese literature, proletarian American literature, and Asian American literature.

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FLOYD CHEUNG

◆ TSUI, KITTY (1952–)

Chinese American lesbian writer, actor, bodybuilder, professional freelancer, and oral historian for a Chinese theater history project, Kitty Tsui is primarily known for her poetry, especially her lesbian writings. Born in 1953, in the city of Nine Dragons, Hong Kong, in the year of the dragon, Tsui grew up there and later in England before immigrating to the United States in 1969. Tsui was one of the pioneers in setting up the organization called Unbound Feet. Her writing from the early 1980s influenced a whole group of Asian American lesbian and gay writers. She is the author of *The Words of a Woman Who Breathes Fire* (1983); *Nightvision* (1984); *Breathless: Erotica*

(1996), which won the 1999 Firecracker Alternative Book (FAB) Award in the sex category; *Bak Sze, White Snake* (1995); and *Sparks Fly* (1997).

At the beginning of the 1980s, Tsui emerged as one of a few published Asian American writers and role models and one of the few publicly "out" writers to claim her Asian American lesbian identity and fight against homophobia, racism, and sexism. She has been considered as a spokeswoman for Asian American lesbian writers because she is courageous enough to declare herself a lesbian. Tsui's literary endeavor has helped her establish her racial and sexual identity, and her writings have served as a call in uniting the Asian American lesbian community.

As a racial minority and a nonstraight woman, Tsui resorts to writing as the weapon in fighting against the dominating mainstream culture and homophobia. In her poem "The Words of a Woman Who Breathes Fire," included in her masterpiece *Words of a Woman Who Breathes Fire: Poetry and Prose*, Tsui reflects on her harsh experience and bitter memory as a marginalized Asian American lesbian. Adopting a third-person voice, Tsui claims her lesbian identity and lesbianism. Owing to the multiple identities, first as a lesbian and then as a minority Asian, the speaker points out that she has been doubly oppressed. By means of composing vehement poems, Tsui breaks the deadly silence in the Asian American lesbian community. For Tsui, a lesbian should not be despised; she should always be a fighter. The passionate declaration calls upon all other women, as well as men, to fight oppression by the heterosexual, patriarchal society. In Tsui's opinion, a minority lesbian must fight as a woman warrior because there are three monsters they must battle: racism, sexism, and homophobia. As race, gender, and homosexuality have always been interwoven issues in Asian American lesbian communities, and Asian Americans' invisibility and silence have been perpetrated by racism and cultural marginalization, Asian American lesbians should therefore exercise strong determination to eliminate the rooted issues when dealing with either sexual or racial inequality.

It is also noteworthy that as a lesbian, Tsui believes she must be a feminist at the same time. So, the struggle against patriarchy and sexism is central. For example, in "Sunday Afternoon Kill," a feminist statement, Tsui exposes the sexual oppression and gender inequality between man and woman; instead of keeping silent and suffering from patriarchal oppression, Tsui articulates her protest and positions herself as a madwoman. The manifestation declares that she is no longer muted and timid, that the power is in her possession, and that she will fight violently. Another poem, "A Celebration of Who I Am," is a hymn to the poet's assertion of identity. In this poem, Tsui deals with the problem of racial prejudice. She bitterly criticizes the **Chinese Exclusion Act** of 1882 that banned the entry of Chinese laborers and immigrants to the United States for a long period. Tsui cherishes and celebrates her Chinese heritage and praises its ancient wisdom, which should be always remembered by Chinese

immigrants. She also popularizes the thought that being an ethnic minority lesbian is a natural thing and should be praised as an integral part of the majority society. In "A Chinese Banquet," the narrator openly speaks out who she truly loves is a woman. For both the narrator and Tsui, they are not willing to accept the norm of patriarchal culture and oppression from the heterosexual society, and they both show courage to fight homophobia and heterosexual oppression.

In another collection, *Breathless: Erotica*, Tsui candidly depicts the love between two women as a natural human behavior. It is obvious that Tsui's stories all deal with erotic subject matter. Her description of eroticism and masochism creates a strong reverberation in the lesbian community. Besides this book, Tsui coauthored another work called *Sparks Fly* with Eric Norton, in which she again probes her most familiar theme—homosexuality, but this time it is gay sensibility. The story revolves around two gay men, Castro and Eighteenth, and their wretched, free lifestyle. The book shows Tsui's writing transgress from the lesbian to the gay theme and her concern for another discriminated "minority" of society.

Apart from lesbian poems, Tsui also writes other genres of literary works, such as prose and short stories. In "Call Me Goong," included in *The Words of a Woman Who Breathes Fire*, Tsui gives her audiences a realistic account of a dialogue between an old dying man and a girl. The old man is a first-generation Chinese immigrant, and, in his opinion, the girl who comes to visit him, a second generation, does not possess any Chinese heritage.

In the poem "Poa Poa Is Living Breathing Light," Tsui remembers her beloved grandmother. The story told in *Bak Sze, White Snake* centers again on the life of her grandmother, White Snake, a lesbian opera singer. She immigrated to the United States and became a famous actress; she pursued her true love with another actress and divorced her husband, a fellow actor, who had manipulated her into marriage. Tsui inherits her grandmother's warrior spirit and takes her as a source of inspiration. This is the spiritual heritage White Snake passes on to her granddaughter, enabling Tsui to live as an independent female, a dragon, and a lesbian warrior in the United States. **See also** Gay Male Literature; Lesbian Literature; Racism and Asian America; Sexism and Asian America.

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## ◆ TY-CASPER, LINDA (1931–)

Born in Manila on September 17, 1931, Linda Velasquez Ty was valedictorian of her University of the Philippines law school class of 1955. After marrying Leonard Casper, the foremost critic of Philippine literature, in 1956, she took an LLM degree in international law from Harvard. Rather than practice law, however, Ty-Casper has devoted her working life to literature. Her success was immediate; by 1957 she had begun her first novel, *The Peninsulars* (1964) and had written “The Longer Ritual,” a short story first published in *Antioch Review*’s Summer 1958 issue and included in her first short story collection, *The Transparent Sun and Other Stories* (1963). She has continued to produce short fiction on a larger scale than her subsequent, decades-apart collections (*The Secret Runner and Other Stories*, 1974 and *Common Continent*, 1991) might suggest, and the uniformity of her prose style permits the latter volume to include items composed between 1958 and 1990 with no dissonance. In fact, the short story is the foundation of Ty-Casper’s work; of her novels, she has said, “[...] the chapters tend to be short stories [...] because that’s the way I work” (Montero, 159). Although of uniformly high quality, Ty-Casper’s fiction has garnered comparatively few awards. One notable exception is “Tides and Near Occasions of Love,” in *Common Continent* and a year later reprinted in the *Michigan Quarterly Review*, which was awarded a Philippine PEN and a UNESCO prize in 1993 and resulted in Ty-Casper representing the Philippines at the Southeast Asia Writers Awards in Bangkok.

At the awards ceremony, Ty-Casper reaffirmed her dictum that “If history is our biography as a people, literature is our autobiography” (Ty-Casper 1990, 141), which underpins all of her literary work. Ty-Casper sees literature as safeguarding history from revisionism, a viewpoint impressed upon her when, at the sub-basement Oceania section of Harvard’s Widener Library, she found misleading statements in books about the Philippines. She adopted prose fiction as an “inviolable social, historical, and emotional record” and has committed herself “to continue to write because now I know it is another way of serving the country” (“Interview of Linda Ty-Casper,” unpublished). She has retained her Philippine citizenship. Unsurprisingly, therefore, her predominant genre is the historical novel, of which she is one of the two foremost Filipino practitioners, the other being F. Sionil Jose. In turn, her historical novels can be divided into two categories, those with settings in the relatively distant past and those with near-contemporary or contemporary settings. *The Peninsulars* (1964), *The Three-Cornered Sun* (1979), *Ten Thousand Seeds* (1987), and *The Stranded Whale* (2002) constitute a tetralogy spanning the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The accuracy of detail in these works comes from painstaking research. *The Three-Cornered Sun*, for instance, was created over an 11-year period (1963–1974) and drew not only from sources in Harvard’s collections but from sources in Malabon, Philippines, and Madrid, Barcelona, and Montserrat, Spain, as well. But Ty-Casper also listened carefully

to the oral narratives of her maternal grandmother about the revolt against Spain and the war against the United States. The latter facilitates the injection of a particularly human element into the stories; as Ty-Casper has directly put it, "The people in my stories once lived" (Ibid). And in her narratives they do, especially because she contextualizes them in "the musty, not to say dusty streets, angelus time at dusk, Manila with its concerts, and its friars in nights of revelry," as one critic has it (Foronda, 20). Ty-Casper herself avers that "The odor of grass, the color of fields, the taste of rain, the grains of the soil are part of the 'root system' that holds literature in place" (Ty-Casper 1980, 67).

The second category of Ty-Casper's fiction involves the Marcos years: *Dread Empire* (1980); *The Hazards of Distance* (novella, 1981); *Awaiting Trespass* (*A Pasion*, 1985); *Fortress in the Plaza* (novella, 1985); *Wings of Stone* (1986); *A Small Party in a Garden* (novella, 1988); and *DreamEden* (1996). With one striking exception—*Awaiting Trespass*, which won the 1985 Filipino-American Women's Network (FAWN) Award for Writing—these works will not be the cornerstones of her literary reputation except insofar as they qualify her as the most prolific serious Filipina fictionist. *Kulayson: Uninterrupted Vigils* (1995), consisting of one chapter from each of 10 historical novels/novellas, is a sampler. Its principal value lies in its juxtapositions, by which readers can get a sense of constancies and variations in Ty-Casper's prose style and fictional approach to history over her career.

This opportunity may counterbalance the effort required to navigate the Ty-Casper canon. One challenge is Casper's use of multiple selective omniscient perspectives, which of course precludes unitary, linear plot progressions but enriches a narrative's texture. To avoid disorientation, a reader must also track the interactions of a formidable number of characters, according to Ty-Casper, "[...] distinct though representatives of all the complexities possible, to present a genealogy of the Philippines" (1990, 139). And because she believes that "Literature is about the interior life, which too readily dissolves into silence" (1990, 149), the characters are ruminative and to a lesser extent ratiocinative. The result is a very slowly developing story. For instance, in *Ten Thousand Seeds*, the plot, exfoliated in 191 pages, spans only seven months, from September 1898 to March 1899. Numerous foil combinations enhance the breadth of meaning in the characterization in the novels and novellas, and in a given case a special device may be employed. In *The Peninsulars*, characters are labeled rather than named (e.g., "Royal Fiscal," "Archbishop"), which of course universalizes them; yet, they remain unique individuals. In *Awaiting Trespass* a sister of the victim around whom the story revolves is Maria ("Mary" in Spanish) Fe ("Faith" in Spanish); ironically, perhaps, she is already dead when the story opens. The three living sisters, arguably ironic depictions of the three Marys at Christ's crucifixion, are named Maria Paz ("Peace" in Spanish), Maria Caridad

("Charity" in Spanish), and Maria Esperanza ("Hope" in Spanish). Although these three characters are not exemplars of their respective Christian virtues, their names help to suggest a spiritual dimension to the story as a whole, in keeping with the suggestion of the subtitle (a *pasion* being a ritual of both mourning and celebration of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ). In turn, the centrality of ritual to the novella is reinforced by its setting in 1981, the year martial law was formally but not really rescinded, and by its publication on September 21, the day in 1972 when martial law was declared.

One of the few questions that has elicited divided reactions on the part of reviewers and critics is whether Ty-Casper's novels/novellas attempt to do too much. The wide respect for her work is manifested in honors, such as being the first Filipina to receive a Radcliffe Institute Grant (1974–1975), being a Massachusetts Artists Foundation Grantee (1988), and working at the Djerassi Foundation in California (1984). She is also respected for her quiet, often understated efforts to improve the quality of human life. Early in her residence in the Boston area, she did volunteer work in prison ministry and food pantries. Later, she taught at Iskwelehang Pilipino, an organization devoted to instilling Philippine values into young people growing up in the United States. In the 1980s she became an officer of Boston Authors and joined Birthright and in 2002 became an officer of Restoring Sight International (Philippines). But her most significant and enduring voice resonates in her prose fiction. The works set in the Constitutional authoritarianism era of Marcos could have degenerated into shrill, political diatribes. That they did not sacrifice art for propaganda, that they eschewed the polemical, is what makes them milestones, if not masterpieces, in Philippine and **Filippino American literature**.

It is quite possible to lose the subtlety of Ty-Casper's artistry in the exploration of the thematic issues that she introduces. The most conspicuous case in point is the titles of her works, such as "Gently Unbending," on the surface an oxymoron but on closer inspection an articulation of the stance of people who may be, as Ty-Casper thinks, "stubborn and fixed in their lives" (Bresnahan 1990, 167), but for good reason unflinching advocates of moral precepts, gently, not cantankerously, firm in their stances. *A Small Party in a Garden* obviously alludes to Christ's agony in Gethsemane, but in this garden there are no disciples—just Judge Arvisu and his daughter, a small party. Their lunch beforehand is, symbolically, the last supper; the name of the farm, Santa Cruz (the conjunction of *Santa*, literally "female saint" in Spanish and *Cruz*, "cross" in Spanish) foreshadows the deaths to come. This symbolic nexus is reinforced in *DreamEden*, another garden far from paradisaical. Again, in *Wings of Stone* Ty-Casper simply identifies a way to convey the idea of futile flight. But the connotation is of the mausoleums the reader is so often reminded of in Ty-Casper's fiction. An image featured in a number of titles is also peppered throughout Ty-Casper's texts: the sun.



Although it appears in many contexts, its underlying significance is as a constituent of the flag. *The Three-Cornered Sun*, for instance, identifies on the flag the triangular design in which the sun is positioned. We realize that, whether situations are promising or dire, they are rendered in a Philippine context.

In such ways as these, Ty-Casper's fiction can be seen as a tapestry, with apparently disparate elements interwoven. The reader thereby can conclude that in spite of disharmony, violence, and other upheavals in human life, ultimately order prevails. History is thereby melded with culture. The Christian overlay achieves for Ty-Casper's work what Graham Greene's Christian overlay does for his. More artistically inconspicuous features of her work include the employment of synesthesia to produce, in the reader, esthesia and kinesthesia, as distinguished writer Franz Arcellana notes (Foreword 1991, n.p.). Although a character like Johnny Manolo (the protagonist of *Wings of Stone*) may seem to have no more coherent worldview or vision of self-coherence than the random contents of his pockets, we as readers can orient and contextualize. One telltale sign of the cogency of even the inner life is the absence of stream-of-consciousness in Ty-Casper's works. When we are privy to characters' musings, they are mediated through narration, not transferred to us in raw data form. A title like "The Wine of Beeswings" may seem indecipherable; the Browningsque quality of petty, unpalatable characters is not. **See also** Filipino American Novel; Filipino American Short Story.

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L. M. GROW

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## U



### ◆ UCHIDA, YOSHIKO (1921–1992)

A nisei (second-generation) Japanese American author, Yoshiko Uchida wrote over 30 books, establishing her as a highly respected writer of children's books, young adult fiction, and autobiography. Born in Alameda, California, to Japanese immigrant parents, Uchida began writing stories when she was 10 years old. In 1942, just two weeks before her graduation ceremonies at the University of California, Berkeley, Uchida and her family were sent to Tanforan Assembly Center. From there, the family was sent to the more permanent Topaz internment camp. In 1943 Uchida was released to attend graduate school at Smith College in Massachusetts, where she obtained a master's in education. After the war, she taught elementary school for a time, as she had at Topaz. Because she wanted to pursue writing full-time, Uchida worked as a secretary in New York so that she could write at night. In 1952 she was awarded a Ford Foundation Grant to go to Japan. For two years, she studied Japanese culture, folktales, arts, and crafts. This experience, she says in her memoir *The Invisible Thread*, made her proud of her Japanese heritage. She decided to dedicate herself to writing books for the **sansei** generation that would pass on the history and culture of Japanese-Americans. Uchida died in 1992 in Berkeley, California.

Uchida's first two published works, *The Dancing Tea Kettle and Other Japanese Folk Tales* (1949) and *New Friends for Susan* (1952), characterize the two main streams in Uchida's work: stories based in Japanese folklore and folktales and narratives that describe the situation of Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans in the United States. Books in the latter group share the charm found in the folktale books, but they also register the difficulties and conflicts faced by Japanese Americans in a white-dominant society. After her

mother's death in 1966, Uchida began to write directly about the **internment** as a way to honor what her parents' generation had undergone and accomplished. *Journey to Topaz*, a book for young adults, appeared in 1971. From that point, Uchida authored several picture books and novels that explored aspects of the evacuation and internment in terms that children and young adults could understand. The narratives tend to balance straightforward accounts of the facts of internment and the resultant difficulties with a light-hearted, often humorous tone that attests to the main characters' optimism and resilience.

Though primarily a writer for children and young adults, Uchida published a memoir and a novel for adults. *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese American Family* (1982) recounts her family's internment experience, and *Picture Bride* (1987) depicts a situation shared by many Japanese women immigrants to the United States in the early part of the twentieth century. **See also** Issei, Nisei, Sansei; Japanese American Internment.

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TRAISE YAMAMOTO

## V



### ◆ VAZIRANI, REETIKA (1962–2003)

Award-winning Indian American poet Reetika Vazirani's poems give voice to the insecurity, alienation, and displacement experienced by most immigrants. Vazirani's personal life is inextricably intertwined with her creative works. Her parents met in the United States where both had received their higher education. After marriage, the couple returned to India in 1958. In 1968, when Vazirani was six, the family immigrated to suburban Maryland. Just before her twelfth birthday, her father, an oral surgeon and assistant dean at the School of Dentistry at Howard University, committed suicide in 1974.

Second of five children in the family, Vazirani had a close relationship with her father. In "The Art of Breathing," she recalls memories of their sitting on the floor for morning prayers. She often wondered how outsiders would view their Hindu rituals. She felt her father made her "different from white people," a difference that created "a point of tension" in her (2000, 126). Yet he was the sole link between her past and the present. Hence when she and her siblings were kept in the dark about the father's suicide, his sudden, unexplained "disappearance" left a void in Vazirani's life.

Vazirani studied at Wellesley College, majoring in economics. It was not until she heard the Nobel Prize winner, Derek Walcott, mesmerize his audience by his poems that she considered the possibility of becoming a writer. After graduating from Wellesley in 1984, a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship Award enabled her to spend a year traveling to India, Thailand, Japan, and China. By the early 1990s, her poems had been published in many well respected journals, and she had won several awards, most notable among them the 1995 Barnard New Women Poets Prize, the Pushcart Prize, the Prairie Schooner Award, and Poets and Writers Award. After obtaining an MFA in

1997 from the University of Virginia, she taught creative writing and was a writer-in-residence at Sweet Briar College in Virginia (1998–2000) and at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg (2002–2003). She was to join the faculty at Emory University in fall 2003, a plan cut short when she took her own and her two-year-old son's life in July 2003.

The publication of *White Elephants* (1996) in the Barnard New Women Poets Series brought Vazirani national exposure. The narrative, more like a collage, in her words, is arranged in three parts: the volume begins with "Thinking about Citizenship" followed by eight monologues of Mrs. Biswas, a thinly disguised portrait of her maternal grandmother. Mrs. Biswas, convent-educated, widely traveled with her diplomat husband, and finally settled in the nation's capital, is not a stereotypical, reticent Indian woman. As she reminisces about her family in India, the opinionated matriarch is clearly at home in the adopted country. Her monologues seem to be addressing the granddaughter's fears of relinquishing allegiance to one's homeland.

Part II, "The Rajdhani Express," contains narratives of places and people encountered in her trip to India. In Part III, a sonnet sequence is dedicated to her father. The portrait of her father that emerges from memories and accounts of his relations is of a man ill at ease in his adopted country. In "Housekeeping in the New World," the speaker mentions the mother's swift adaptation to the new environment—cutting hair and dressing in "slacks, not saris." He, on the other hand, "craved" Indian meals, not considering "her sloppy joes as food." Sonnet 19 captures his growing alienation from his family: "He and I sat across the round table/like east and west" (1996, 51–52). The poems reveal, as Marilyn Hacker says, Vazirani's "linguistic compression" and a "verbal equivalent of cinema" (xiii).

*World Hotel* (2002), the second collection of Vazirani's poems, deals with the themes of love, displacement, and alienation. As she matured and struggled with the vicissitudes of life, became a mother herself (she had a son with the Pulitzer Prize winner poet Yusef Komunyakaa in 2000), Vazirani could empathize with her mother with whom she had a troubled relationship. "Hollywood and Hydroquinone," the first poem, begins with "She lightened her skin," an oft-repeated reference to her mother's complex about her darker skin. In a few terse phrases, the speaker provides a picture of the mother's travels across the seas, her husband's suicide, and the family living "with a hush on our lips." The poem ends with the mother's directive, "*I am your mother Invent me*" (2002, 3). The next section, "Inventing Maya," is the daughter's response. Mixing facts with imagination, the speaker paints the life of Maya, her mother's alter ego, educated in British-run Indian schools, then in a college in the United States, and a misfit in India during her stay after her marriage. There are poems of Maya's fleeting crushes as a college student, her loneliness, and later even an extramarital affair, and always a nagging self-consciousness of being "dark-skinned." In "Seeta," the speaker

captures the woman's lost dreams. "Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta," the final poem in the section, brings a note of wistful optimism. Despite a life of loss, the mother feels that together with her children they will create a new world.

The poems in the second part of *World Hotel*, "It's Me, I'm Not at Home," are heavily autobiographical, depicting yearning, despair, rootlessness, loss of loves, even self-loathing in lyrical and often enigmatic, cryptic verses. Poetry for Vazirani was akin to yoga, for both "aim to heighten the awareness of breathing," she says in "The Art of Breathing," "so that there is space on the page, as between vertebrae, space for the heart and mind to explore and find poise in the unsaid" (2000, 134). Explorations of heart and mind are captured in poems like "It's me, I'm Not at Home," a moving picture of a broken relationship. "It's a Young Country" speaks of the perennial quest of an immigrant for acceptance: "We say *America you are/magnificent* and we mean/we are heartbroken," and alludes to her own nomadic existence, "pack lightly we move so fast" (2002, 116–117).

The outpouring of grief and fond memories shared by her fellow poets at Vazirani's memorial service was a fitting testimonial to her accomplishments in a short life. In the words of Rita Dove, she will be remembered for her "exquisite" poems—"acutely perceptive and intricately wrought, keen in their attention to language yet always accepting, the quirks and wrinkles of being human" (2004, 368).

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LEELA KAPAI

#### ◆ VERGHESE, ABRAHAM (1955–)

Indian American memoirist Abraham Verghese was born in Ethiopia to Indian immigrant parents. He began his medical education in Ethiopia but completed it at the Madras Medical College in India and moved to the United States in 1980 with his wife Rajani. After working briefly at a large urban hospital in Boston, he and his wife settled in Johnson City in eastern Tennessee, where he subsequently became the only



physician to care for AIDS patients. In 1990, he and his family, which now included two young sons, moved to Iowa, where he received his MFA in creative writing from the University of Iowa. Shortly afterward he became a professor of medicine and chief of infectious diseases at the Texas Tech University Medical School in El Paso. In 2002 he was appointed Marvin Forland Distinguished Professor of Medical Ethics and director of the Center for Medical Humanities and Ethics at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Verghese is the author of two highly acclaimed memoirs. The first one, *My Own Country*, was published in 1994. Named by *Time* magazine as one of the best five non-fiction works of that year, *My Own Country* is a compelling story of the author's experience as a physician in a small Southern town reluctant to confront what was then widely regarded as an urban, gay disease alien to the rural South. In the years prior to the advent of AIDS, many young gay men had left their homes in conservative east Tennessee for large cities in search of greater sexual freedom and anonymity. By the mid-1980s, dozens of them began to return home with AIDS-related illnesses to face their impending deaths. Woven into Verghese's autobiographical work are the poignant life stories of these men who, while coping with devastating illnesses, are also forced to face the prejudices of their families and communities. Verghese tells their stories with compassion, candor, and even affection, but his tone remains resolutely unsentimental.

While AIDS and its terrifying impact are at the core of the text, *My Own Country* has other significant narrative strands. As the title suggests, the work is a meditation on the author's own search for home, a place he can call his own. A brown-skinned, foreign-born doctor practicing medicine in a small Southern town, Verghese—through the deep, personal, and professional connections he forges with his patients—begins to claim his adopted home as his own. Yet, ironically, at the same time his marriage starts to falter: his wife, Rajani, is unable to understand her husband's obsessive commitment to his work; his professional preoccupation with AIDS patients makes her uneasy; and the extent of her alienation and suspicion becomes evident when she asks him bluntly, "Are you sexually attracted to gay men?" (Verghese 1994, 116). This private domestic drama within an immigrant home is presented as part of a larger narrative of Johnson City's Indian immigrant community. It is an economically privileged community, mostly made up of doctors and their families. When the Vergheses first arrive, they are part of a small group of close-knit Indian immigrants. As more Indians arrive, the community becomes incrementally fragmented along religious, regional, and linguistic lines. The split within the Vergheses's marriage mirrors the fissures within their social group. The home that he claims as his own in the title of the book then is not the privatized space of his nuclear family or the community of fellow immigrants from India or even the small east Tennessee town where he lives but his *work* as a doctor who takes care of terminally ill AIDS patients.

*The Tennis Partner*, Verghese's second memoir, was published in 1998. A gracefully written and deeply moving narrative, it is an elegiac remembrance of the author's friendship with David Smith, a young medical intern from Australia, with whom he works in El Paso. They become friends because they share a passion for tennis, but soon their friendship assumes a deeper level of intimacy as they share details of their private lives. Verghese confides about his failing marriage and the pain it causes him. Smith, in return, reveals a startling secret: his recovery from addiction to cocaine. The memoir begins with a powerful description of Smith's relapse and his rehabilitation at a facility in Atlanta specifically designed for medical doctors recovering from drug addiction. When he returns to El Paso a few months later, he confidently claims that he has regained control over his life. But his recovery, sadly, proves tenuous, and he relapses again. Within days Smith dies of a self-inflicted gunshot wound in a motel room while the police attempt to arrest him.

Verghese frames the story of his friendship with Smith in the larger context of their profession. As doctors they are trained to repress their emotions and maintain a posture of clinical distance. Such training, Verghese suggests, is at least partly responsible for what appears to be an alarming incidence of drug abuse among health-care providers. His memoir is a plea for radical rethinking of medical education and training.

An intriguing aspect of *The Tennis Partner* that most reviewers of the book have glossed over is its faint but palpable homoerotic subtext. Shortly before his death Smith tells Verghese that the root of his drug abuse is his sexual addiction and adds that he has compulsively had anonymous sex with many "people" (Verghese 1998, 295). Smith's use of the gender-neutral term *people* makes Verghese wonder if Smith, who has had girlfriends, is bisexual. After Smith's suicide, Verghese states: "My friendship with David, during its inception, and during the heady period when our lives revolved so much around each other, had held out the promise of leading somewhere, to something extraordinary, some vital epiphany—what, precisely, I couldn't be sure of. Still, that was how it *felt*—magical, special" (278–279). The lyricism with which Verghese describes his friendship with Smith here and elsewhere borders on the romantic.

In addition to these two memoirs, Verghese has published a few short stories and several notable articles on medical humanities. He is currently at work on a novel tentatively titled *Cutting for Stone*. **See also** Gay Male Literature.

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EMMANUEL S. NELSON

### ◆ VIETNAM WAR (1959–1975)

The Vietnam War is also referred to as the Vietnam Conflict, the Second Indochina War, and the American War in Vietnam. The history of French occupation of Vietnam fostered some of the problems leading to the war. Before 1954, France held Vietnam under colonial rule for almost 50 years. France first entered into Vietnam in 1847 with the intent to support French missionaries in the country. By 1900 Vietnam was claimed as a French colony, and a series of rebellions against French rule took place. Several rebellious factions grew in strength, finally uniting under the name of the Vietminh. The United States became involved in this portion of the conflict through its support of the Vietminh. The Vietminh actively fought against a growing Japanese presence, supported by the French, in Vietnam. The United States gave military aid and weaponry to the Vietminh to combat the Japanese forces. One leader within the party, Ho Chi Minh, used this support to gain political and military power. Many years later, the man whom the U.S. military funded, Ho Chi Minh, would become the leader of the Communist Party, called the Vietcong. Ho Chi Minh would fight an ongoing battle against the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces.

Under Ho Chi Minh, the French were driven to the southern portions of Vietnam. At this point, France decided to relinquish its hold on all other parts of Vietnam as a colonial property. With the close of the Geneva Conference (1954), Vietnam was recognized as an independent sovereign nation. Divided along the 17th parallel of latitude, the Geneva agreement stated that France would evacuate all troops north of the line, while the Vietminh would leave the South. The intent was to provide for the reunification of Vietnam through elections set for 1966. Those elections never came. The Vietminh remained in the South and, under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, became the party called the Vietcong.

In 1960 the Communist Party formed the National Liberation Front (NLF) in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam). In response, U.S. President John F. Kennedy began supplying military equipment and advisors to the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam). Although national support for U.S. involvement was low, large numbers of troops (16,000) were deployed to South Vietnam and U.S. advisers

began to train the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. By 1963, under the Presidency of Lyndon Johnson, the U.S. military presence was further increased.

### THE GULF OF TONKIN RESOLUTION

Matters escalated when North Vietnam launched an attack against the *C. Turner Joy* and the *USS Maddox*, two American ships on call in the Gulf of Tonkin on August 2, 1964. The U.S. Congress then passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. This allowed for expanded U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War effort. Despite hopes for a limited, controlled war, the conflict would drag itself out for another decade.

The events leading up to the attack on the *Maddox* were as follows: In early 1964, American leaders decided to put military pressure on Ho Chi Minh's North Vietnamese government in Hanoi. Washington ordered the Navy destroyer the *USS Maddox* on a reconnaissance mission off the coast of North Vietnam in the Gulf of Tonkin. In response, Hanoi directed its navy to attack the American destroyer. On August 2, three torpedo boats attacked the *Maddox*; however, their torpedoes missed. Only one round from enemy guns hit the destroyer. However, the *Maddox* did hit the North Vietnamese ships. Additionally, jets dispatched from the *USS Ticonderoga*, an aircraft carrier stationed in the region, attacked and hit the North Vietnamese boats. On August 4, two days after this incident, the *Maddox* and a different aircraft carrier, the *USS Turner Joy*, reported being attacked. The North Vietnamese naval forces were accused of the attack, and President Johnson called for massive strikes against North Vietnam. The *USS Ticonderoga* and *USS Constellation* were deployed for action.

An air strike was launched by the *USS Ticonderoga* and the *USS Constellation*. The primary target was a petroleum storage facility; however, approximately 30 naval vessels were also destroyed. These events lead to the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which was passed on August 7, 1964. The U.S. Congress empowered President Johnson to use whatever military force he deemed appropriate to combat North Vietnam. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution also authorized military action for the defense of U.S. allies in Southeast Asia. Both President Johnson and President Richard M. Nixon used the resolution to justify later military action in Southeast Asia. Ultimately, the measure was repealed by Congress in 1970.

### MY LAI MASSACRE

One of the most horrific events of the Vietnam War was the My Lai Massacre. This event took place on March 16, 1968. On that day, the U.S. military slaughtered hundreds of civilian men, women, and children who lived in the villages of central Vietnam.

There is a large discrepancy in the number of civilians reported to have been killed at the My Lai Massacre. The military report, which first refers to the events, was proven to be part of a large-scale cover-up of the incident. In this original report, the death

toll was reported to be 128. Later, during an informal review, investigators reported that 28 civilians had died that day. The real story was brought to light by the work of one soldier, Ron Ridenhour, who had heard about the incident from several soldiers who were at My Lai that day. He disclosed that on March 16, 1968, the men of Charlie Company, 11th Brigade, entered into the village and began an unprovoked killing spree.

Under the command of Lt. William Calley, who claimed to be following the orders of his commander Captain Ernest Medina, Charlie Company entered the village prepared for combat. Not only had the troops been repeatedly attacked by the Vietcong, losing numerous soldiers, but reports indicated that the Vietcong was heavily present in the area. Calley ordered his men to open fire as they entered the area. Despite the fact that there was no responding enemy activity, the troops continued to fire into the village, killing the civilians who fled from them. Calley was accused of personally shooting several villagers, whom he made stand in a ditch prior to killing. Along with 25 other soldiers, Calley became the focus of military legal proceedings. However, only a few of these men went to trial, and only Calley was found guilty of war crimes. He was found guilty of having broken the rules of the Geneva Convention and sentenced to life imprisonment. However, after only one week in prison, President Richard Nixon converted the terms to house arrest. And in 1974 Calley was granted a pardon for his actions in My Lai Massacre.

The results of the military proceedings were problematic, and the My Lai Massacre created large-scale repercussions in political arenas. Most importantly, public opinion over the war became increasingly negative when an article written by Seymour Hersh came out. In this piece, Ron Ridenhour retold the events of My Lai, explaining the reactions of the soldiers who had been there. Ridenhour also discussed his repeated requests to the Congress, the White House, and the Pentagon to investigate the matter. The My Lai Massacre, the Hersh article, and the military trial contributed to the ongoing public dissatisfaction with the U.S. military involvement in Vietnam.

## TET OFFENSIVE IN VIETNAM

On January 30, 1968, the Tet Offensive began. The North Vietnamese called it the General Offensive or General Uprising, which accurately represents the conditions that relate to it. The attacks on the U.S.-backed South Vietnamese military and U.S. troops were unprecedented. Although military intelligence had indicated there was tremendous activity among the North Vietnamese, the South was caught off guard when the attacks came.

During a 36-hour truce, due to the celebration of the lunar new year (Tet), South Vietnam's military was at about 50 percent of its typical strength. This left the cities it guarded extremely vulnerable. When the attacks did come, 5 major cities were targeted,

as were 36 provincial capitals. Additionally, district capitals and hamlets suffered attack, totaling close to 100 isolated attacks. Estimates suggest that close to 80,000 North Vietnamese troops were active in the beginning of the offensive. Although most of the attacks were quickly beaten back, the city of Hue, once the imperial capital, was embattled for close to a month. The U.S.-protected capital of Saigon, the presidential palace, the city radio station, and the U.S. embassy recovered quickly. However, the U.S. military base at Khe Sanh remained embroiled in conflict for several months. In total, the North Vietnamese lost over half their troops, totaling approximately 45,000 men, during the Tet offensive.

Like the horror of the My Lai Massacre, the Tet Offensive influenced American public opinion about the war. The grim realities of war led the public to question the White House's ability to win the war. President Johnson came under increasingly heavy scrutiny for U.S. involvement in the war. The North Vietnamese had been unsuccessful in overtaking the country: yet the Tet Offensive proved to have a demoralizing effect on South Vietnamese and U.S. forces.

## CLOSE

The end of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War came in January 1973. Due to lack of public support and various large-scale public protests, the government, now under the leadership of President Richard Nixon, was forced to withdraw from Vietnam. Hostilities between the United States and North Vietnam officially ended with the Paris Peace Agreement (January 17, 1973). The agreement outlined the withdrawal of American troops from all areas of Vietnam in exchange for the return of all prisoners of war. However, the last U.S. military personnel did not leave Vietnam until April 1975. This period is referred to as the fall of Saigon, when a massive U.S. evacuation took place.

At that time, the last remaining runway at Tan Son Nhut Air Base had been destroyed by bombs from a defecting South Vietnamese soldier. The U.S. military determined that the air base was unsalvageable. Instead, helicopters were used to facilitate the evacuation of the remaining U.S. military personnel, journalists, and business people, and the South Vietnamese personnel that supported them. The evacuation of Saigon was the largest-scale helicopter evacuation in history. Operation Frequent Wind, as the evacuation plan was called, was put into operation through an order from National Security Advisor Henry A. Kissinger. Individuals were notified about the evacuation through the airways: the song *White Christmas* was the signal that alerted those scheduled for evacuation to begin moving to various departure points. Even though the overall evacuation plan did help to move over 50,000 individuals out of Vietnam, the final days and the fall of Saigon were chaotic. Many people scheduled to depart never heard the alert and were left behind when the North Vietnamese took

over the city. The helicopter airlift, however, did provide for the evacuation of 7,806 U.S. citizens and foreign nationals by the U.S. Air Force and Marine Corps. In addition to the 72 helicopter flights, called sorties, from the U.S. embassy, 122 sorties flew out from the U.S. Defense Attaché compound. In the first day alone, 395 Americans and more than 4,000 Vietnamese were airlifted to U.S. ships waiting at sea. At the end of that day, under orders from U.S. President Gerald Ford, only American citizens were evacuated from the embassy by helicopter. Many Vietnamese were stranded in the embassy, and even more were caught outside the embassy gates.

When the North Vietnam forces arrived in Saigon, they allowed the airlift to continue. Additionally, the aircraft carriers in the Pacific Ocean were allowed to remain for several days while various people, now called refugees, made their way to the ships. Once North Vietnam took over Saigon, it was renamed Ho Chi Minh City, after the first president of the independent republic of North Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh had already died in his home in Hanoi, at the age of 79. The victory of the North Vietnamese brought about a reunification of Vietnam under the rule of the Communist Party.

## REPERCUSSIONS

The Vietnam War was the longest military conflict in U.S. history. It caused a deep rift in the American public. The population's view of war and the role of its administration came under intense scrutiny. In Southeast Asia, the hostilities had spread from Vietnam to Laos and Cambodia, claiming more than 58,000 American lives and wounding approximately 304,000 soldiers. The combined number of Vietnamese killed from both the North and the South totaled between 3 and 4 million. Another staggering statistic is the estimated death of 1.5 to 2 million people from Cambodia and Laos.

In addition to the direct human suffering caused by the violence, the Vietnam War had a dramatic influence on the lives of the Vietnamese people. One of the most notorious aspects was the use of chemical defoliants. The intended use was to destroy the lush growth that the North Vietnamese used for coverage. Many civilians, however, were affected by the defoliants as well.

Following the communist victory, despite official reunification, Vietnam remained divided. On July 2, 1976, when the Socialist Republic of Vietnam was officially proclaimed, the capital of the now reunified Vietnam became Hanoi. Recovery from the effects of the war was long and arduous. One out of seven people had died during the conflict. The destruction of the cities, towns, and farms was extensive. Additionally, many of the southern members of the country resisted the new government. The economic zones created by the new government were ignored by the southern business people, particularly in Ho Chi Minh City. Additionally, ethnic diversity in the cities

caused conflict. These problems were compounded by environmental factors such as a series of floods. Ultimately, the governmental plans to enforce the socialization of industry and agriculture in the South inspired thousands of people to flee the nation.

The influx of immigrants into the United States increased dramatically due to a change in immigrations policies combined with the desire for many Vietnamese citizens to recreate their lives. Before 1965, the U.S. rigidly disallowed emigration from Asian nations: this policy was monitored by a quota system. However, by the time that the Vietnam War had ended, this quota system was altered. Additionally, the dire circumstances faced by the Vietnamese refugees, called “boat people,” created a strong sentiment within the U.S. government that encouraged immigration under the Indochina Migration and Refugee Act (1975). This refugee status propelled the Vietnamese immigrants into a very high percentage of naturalized citizenship despite their relatively late entrance into American society. It is estimated that well over half a million Vietnamese moved to the United States as refugees. Despite this seemingly easy entrance to the United States, Vietnamese Americans have faced discrimination and harassment similar to the situations met by other new groups. Additionally, the cultural bifurcation felt by first- and second-generation Vietnamese American writers can be perceived in the body of literature they generate. Full-length works that portray the Vietnam War include Le Ly Hayslip’s *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* and *Child of War, Woman of Peace*, and *Shallow Graves* by Wendy Larsen and Tran Thi Nga, among numerous others. In much of the writing in **Vietnamese American literature**, the tensions of intergenerational struggles within immigrant communities are presented, as are ruptures caused by assimilation into modern American culture. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization.

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### ◆ VIETNAMESE AMERICAN LITERATURE

The term *Vietnamese American*, like any other socially constructed phrase, has endured countless change over an extended period. What has been included as being a part of Vietnamese American literature, therefore, has evolved depending upon those contributing to the discourse and laying the foundation of what is considered Vietnamese American literature.

Although not widely known, Vietnamese American historian Vu Pham documents in his essay “Antedating and Anchoring Vietnamese America: Toward a Vietnamese American Historiography” that Vietnamese Americans actually resided in the United States prior to the 1975 mass exodus of many Vietnamese and Southeast Asian migration into the diaspora. His work “examines the experiences of Vietnamese American students, and to some extent professionals,” starting from 1945, extending into the cold war periods, up to the fall of the South Vietnamese government in 1975 (2003, 137). Since most of the writings in English by and about Vietnamese Americans appear post-1975, it is interesting to consider how the voices predating the explosion of both the Vietnamese American population and its literature have or had any effect upon the work of those who immigrated to the United States later.

Taking up the task of exposing Vietnamese American literature pre-1975, Michele Janette’s article “Vietnamese American Literature in English, 1963–1994” illuminates and underscores the need to recover lost voices and works by Vietnamese American authors who either studied, visited, or permanently settled in the United States at least a decade before the mass resettlement of Vietnamese refugees in the United States. Janette, like some of her peers in Vietnamese and Vietnamese American literary criticism, such as Monique **Truong** and Mariam Beevi, establishes certain parameters of whose work is acknowledged as being Vietnamese American and what constitutes Vietnamese American literature. As Janette clearly delineates in the following: “In defining Vietnamese American literature, I have taken as parameters two guidelines, one regarding the ethnicity of the authors, the other regarding the genre or form of the writing. By using the term ‘Vietnamese American,’ I refer to a shared ethnic heritage. These authors relate to Viet Nam as the land from which they or their parents came to the U.S. In relying on this commonality, I acknowledge the influential geo-political and cultural position from which this writing springs. I discuss poetry and novels, as well as memoirs, historical narratives, and essays. I have also included criticism and history that is written by Vietnamese American authors and that deals directly with Viet Nam or the relationship between Viet Nam and America” (2003, 267–268).

In this regard, Janette builds upon the work established by Monique Truong in her 1997 essay “Vietnamese American Literature.” In this critique, Truong defines the chronological boundaries of Vietnamese American literature—from 1975 to

1990—and its literary genres. Truong prioritizes that, “the working definition of Vietnamese American literature . . . includes transcribed oral her/histories, folklore, song lyrics, and any other orally communicated narratives, as the more traditionally acceptable forms of literature such as autobiographies, poetry, epistles, essays, and other forms of nonfiction and fiction” (220–221). Furthermore, Vietnamese American literature should also incorporate “transcription of orally communicated narratives and written texts in any and all languages to be deemed applicable and creatively relevant by the storyteller(s) and not by monolingual critics or theorists” (221).

Truong’s urge to be expansive in determining what counts as Vietnamese American literature is considered in Mariam Beevi’s essay “The Passing of Literary Traditions: The Figure of the Woman from Vietnamese Nationalism to Vietnamese American Transnationalism.” Beevi acknowledges that literary works in the Vietnamese language (that may be translated) and from Vietnam greatly influence writings by Vietnamese Americans and vice versa. Despite the separation of time and geography, Beevi argues, “Contemporary Vietnamese American writers do not simply shed off prior nationalistic values and traditions in their works but rather challenge and question their communal identities. These writers realign themselves with the transnational Vietnamese community, creating national values and traditions to satisfy a new international agenda” (2006, 27).

The boundaries and parameters of who is Vietnamese American and what is Vietnamese American literature is further complicated by issues relating to national boundaries, sexual orientation, racial mixing, and so on. Further, the Internet has also complicated notions of racial identity and literary genres. With the rise of the blog and the awareness of hypertext in literature and technology studies, there are now, more than ever, new and exciting, as well as confusing and anxious, moments of determining what Vietnamese American literature actually means.

Nevertheless, recent works in all areas of literary theory and genres have explored new categories and understandings of what Vietnamese American literature is and what its possibilities might hold. One of the most significant and influential anthologies introducing new and emerging writers of Vietnamese descent is *Watermark: Vietnamese American Poetry and Prose*, published by the Asian American Writers’ Workshop in New York City. Edited by Barbara Tran, whose works include a book of poetry *In the Mynah Bird’s Own Words*; Monique Truong, whose novel *The Book of Salt* has won national acclaim; and Luu Truong Khoi, *Watermark* features some noteworthy authors who have gone on to publish stand-alone texts of short stories, essays, poetry, and novels. Some of these writers include Andrew Lam (*Perfume Dreams*), Dao Strom (*Grass Roof, Tin Roof*), Lê thi diem thúy (*The Gangster We Are All Looking For*), Linh Dinh (*Fake House Stories*), Mong Lan (*Song of the Cicadas*), Christian Langworthy (*The Geography of War*, a chapbook of poetry), and many others.

*Watermark* is not the only publication that has featured Vietnamese American writers and their talent. The year 2005 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the fall of Saigon, thus there were notable publications leading up to and commemorating the American War in Vietnam, 25 to 30 years later. These works included special issues in certain journals like *Amerasia Journal*, "Vietnamese Americans: Diaspora & Dimensions," Volume 29, Number 1 (2003), and "30 Years After WAR: Vietnamese Americans & U.S. Empire," Volume 31, Number 2 (2005), as well as *Michigan Quarterly Review* that dedicated two volumes (Fall 2004 and Winter 2005) to "Viet Nam: Beyond the Frame." Indeed, with the rise in academic interest in research about Vietnam and the Vietnamese diaspora, a new journal was created to address the ongoing concerns relating to Vietnam. As the editors, Mariam Beevi Lam and Peter Zinoman, of the *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* (JVS), articulate that the JVS was created to promote and publish in the English language "original research about Vietnamese history, politics, culture, and society. It also seeks to publish research on important Vietnam-related topics that have traditionally been segregated from area studies scholarship, such as overseas Vietnamese diaspora and the political, cultural, and social history of the **Vietnam War**" (2006, 1). The editors go on to elaborate that they seek and welcome new areas of research that have been underrepresented in Vietnamese studies. Thus, this journal is another venue in which to address the continual (re)construction of Vietnamese American and Vietnamese diasporic identities that necessarily highlights concerns and configurations of Vietnamese American literature.

Two interesting areas of consideration regarding Vietnamese American literature have been the study of translation and the incorporation of English-language writings by Vietnamese living in Vietnam and the diaspora. For example, given the "normalization" of foreign relations between the governments of Vietnam and the United States, there is now, more than ever, cross communication and dialogue that has produced a number of translated Vietnamese writings by Vietnamese studies scholars and Vietnamese American writers and translators, especially the numerous texts that have been translated by prolific scholar Huynh Sanh Thong (*An Anthology of Vietnamese Poems, The Tale of Kieu*). The popularity of Duong Thu Huong's novel *Paradise of the Blind*, translated by Phan Huy Duong and Nina McPherson, recognizes the continued cross-influence of translated literature from Vietnamese to English and vice versa. Translation of works not only includes those of Vietnamese to English but also of Francophone writing to English. Due to French colonization of Vietnam and throughout many parts of Southeast Asia, there has been a long history of Vietnamese-French connections that has been taken into consideration within Vietnamese American literature. The French to English translated work *Slander*, by Linda Lê, a prolific Francophone, Vietnamese French author, suggests that there will be a growing interest

of exploring Vietnamese diasporic identity in multiple languages and geographical spaces.

Comparative studies of Vietnamese identity in different locations is another trend that is arising in Vietnamese American studies and its literature. This includes doing research in places like Australia, which has been encouraging the study of Vietnamese communities in that region by having Australian universities provide fellowships for scholars to go to Australia. In fact, *Cau Noi ~ The Bridge: Anthology of Vietnamese-Australian Writing*, edited by Ngoc-Tuan Hoang, attests to the growing popularity of comparatively studying Vietnamese American literature with literature written by authors of Vietnamese descent in other geographical locations. Vietnamese American literature, therefore, is heavily influenced and will be continually transformed because of the diasporic condition of its Viet Kieu (Overseas Vietnamese) community. An example of this diasporic influence is Andrew X. Pham's memoir, *Catfish and Mandala*, a travelogue about a Viet Kieu's experiences journeying through Vietnam after having left as a refugee and relocating to the United States. These transnational and global influences will only enhance and build upon the works that have already been published in this area of literary studies and research. **See also** Asian Diasporas.

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NINA HA

### ◆ VIETNAMESE AMERICAN NOVEL

In Huynh Sanh Thong's essay "Live by water, die for water," he writes, "Nuoc . . . remains the word with the most pervasive denotations and connotations in the Vietnamese vocabulary. It encompasses multifarious meanings, and it is resonant with subtle undertones capable of arousing the strongest emotions. In different contexts, it has to be translated by scores of different English words" (1998, vi). Thong elaborates upon the multiple meanings for this word as qualified through context and reveals how powerful it is to the Vietnamese language, especially in understanding the Vietnamese refugee experience of "losing one's country" or "mat nuoc" (vii). The imagery of *nuoc* is so influential that in the epigraph to *lê thi diem thúy's* novel, *The Gangster We Are All Looking For*, she notes, "In Vietnamese, the word for *water* and the word for *a nation, a country, and a homeland* are one and the same: *nuoc*" (2004, 125). The writing about one's country, especially for a refugee, is fraught with overdetermined signification. Thus, in his essay, "Speak of the Dead, Speak of Viet Nam," Viet Thanh Nguyen emphasizes that, "The new and defiant refrain among some young Vietnamese Americans is that Viet Nam is the name of a country, not a war" (2002, 13). This reclamation of the word *Vietnam* as *nuoc* is something that is expressed within much of the current literature by and about Vietnamese Americans, particularly works expressed in the form of the novel.

As suggested in the entries for **Vietnamese American literature** and **Vietnamese American short story**, defining what constitutes a Vietnamese American novel may require an expansive and generous interpretation. The reason for this complexity is that in some instances stories told in the form of memoirs may be (mis)categorized as being either "autobiographical" or nonfiction or could be considered as a fictional memoir, implying that some of the stories or experiences expressed in the text may not have actually been enacted by or upon the protagonist or supporting cast of characters

of that story. Given the possible (mis)reading of a novel as memoir or vice versa, it is easier, and ultimately wiser, to provide an inclusive understanding of the genre of the novel that encapsulates both fictional and auto/biographical elements. Or, a closer definition of this type of writing would be what Norma Elia Cantu denotes in the introduction of her collection of stories, *Canicula*, as “fictional autobioethnography” (1995, xi).

By expanding the criteria of a novel to incorporate both fiction and nonfiction elements, current works, such as Andrew X. Pham’s *Catfish and Mandala*, Kien Nguyen’s *The Unwanted*, and Quang X. Pham’s *A Sense of Duty: My Father, My American Journey*—all *bildungsromans* about young Vietnamese American men reflecting upon their relationships with their families, their communities, and their own identities—are able to fit into this rubric. Unlike earlier works such as Le Ly Hayslip’s *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* (written with Jay Wurts) and *Child of War, Woman of Peace* (written with James Hayslip), and *Shallow Graves* by Wendy Larsen and Tran Thi Nga, the memoirs by more contemporary male Viet Kieu (Overseas Vietnamese) authors signal a change—one of gender and the other of content (see Monique Truong’s “Vietnamese American Literature” and Viet Thanh Nguyen’s chapter “Representing Reconciliation” in *Race and Resistance* for a deeper analysis of these texts). Rather than cowriting or having someone orally transcribe one’s life experiences, something that is seen in narratives produced by first-generation Vietnamese immigrants living in the United States, the second generation of writers of Vietnamese descent place greater emphasis in their narratives about claiming the United States as their adopted home, even if some of them have returned to Vietnam or never left it. The newer works express issues about trying to belong in the United States—culturally and socially, not to mention legally. For example, Kien Nguyen’s *The Unwanted* details his life as a biracial (his father is white American and his mother is Vietnamese) child growing up in Vietnam after the American military occupation retreated. Although born and raised in Vietnam, Kien Nguyen, according to his mother’s family and most of the Vietnamese community in which he lived, he was considered American (or *my lai*, meaning “half-breed”) and thus a traitor to the communist Vietnamese government. Concerns about masculinity, bicultural identity, sexuality, cultural and racial authenticity, and class are critically examined and explored in each of the works.

The incorporation of Vietnamese masculinity into the content of Vietnamese American novels is also addressed in Monique Truong’s *The Book of Salt*, le thi diem thúy’s *The Gangster We Are All Looking For*, Bích Minh Nguyen’s *Stealing Buddha’s Dinner*, and Kien Nguyen’s second work *The Tapestries*. Bích Minh Nguyen’s work, a memoir of a young girl, defies certain expectations; it is a story about the protagonist who, along with her sister, is raised by their father and grandmother while living in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Typically, stories about the Vietnamese refugee experience

are set on the West Coast of the United States, mainly California. Moreover, the protagonists' family is multiracial; her stepmother and stepsister are Latinas. And, unlike Lan Cao's *Monkey Bridge*, a mother/daughter tale, it is not until near the end of the work that the protagonist reveals what had happened to her "long-lost" mother. Rather, the protagonist's relationship with her father and her grandmother are emphasized.

Like *The Book of Salt*, *The Tapestries* explores a period of Vietnamese history before the American War in Vietnam. This novel reimagines life in the early 1900s, when Vietnam still had its imperial court. Written through the eyes of Dan, a tapestry weaver, and his wife Ven, *The Tapestries* conveys Vietnam as *nuoc*, one that although influenced by French colonization, had yet to experience American military imperialism.

Although more recent Vietnamese American novels highlight the masculine experience or the relationship between fathers and daughters as well as fathers and sons, Dao Strom's *Grass Roof*, *Tin Roof*, Lan Cao's *Monkey Bridge*, and Duong Thu Huong's English translated work, *Paradise of the Blind*, continue the tradition of conveying stories about women's lives and their relationships with their female relatives, underscoring the cost of survival that is symbolically represented through women's work and women's bodies. These works also reveal the legacy that young daughters inherit from their mothers, especially in the form of familial secrets that are finally disclosed. Moreover, these daughters had to negotiate tensions of being the arbiters or bearers of their history (see Trinh T. Minh-ha's *Woman, Native, Other*) and acculturating to a new country with different customs and traditions.

A more recent work by Lucy Nguyen-Hong-Nhiem, entitled *A Dragon Child: Reflections of a Daughter of Annam in America*, most accurately bridges the generational gaps perceived between older Vietnamese American novels (especially those that had been cowritten or ghostwritten) and the more recent works by 1.5- and second-generation Viet Kieu authors. *A Dragon Child*, a memoir, documents the life of Dr. or Professor Lucy Nguyen as she journeys from her idyllic life as a young Catholic school girl living in a nuns' boarding school (2004, 3) to her resettlement in the United States and earning her doctorate, focusing on Vietnamese Francophone literature at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Unlike the histories of the older group of Vietnamese American storytellers who were part of the peasant or farming class while in Vietnam, Lucy Nguyen depicts a life of privilege—she was educated in French language and literature at Catholic boarding schools. Her privileged educational history was then encouraged and reinforced when she relocated to the United States and found herself in western Massachusetts. Only a year after leaving Vietnam in 1975, Lucy Nguyen sought a teaching job and began taking graduate courses at the University of Massachusetts to eventually earn her doctoral degree. Within her narrative, though, are her recollections of life in Vietnam as well as hers and her family's story (she has five daughters) of acculturation and survival in the United States. Moreover,

hers is a moving tale, filled with descriptions of life articulated in Vietnamese, French, and English, of her experiences as a professional academic and the strong relationships forged through a search for community—one that was not only Vietnamese-centered but a polycultural experience, acknowledging friendships based on people of different races, nationalities, and interests.

The Vietnamese American novels reveal the multiplicity of histories and cultures, exploring interpersonal ties that address the meaning of being Vietnamese American or Viet Kieu with amazing complexity and depth. Although most, if not all, of the authors mentioned contend with the legacy of the American War in Vietnam in their works, this one period does not define the richness, artistic merit, and unique cultural experiences expressed through their novels. **See also** Vietnam War.

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NINA HA

### ◆ VIETNAMESE AMERICAN SHORT STORY

It has only been since the late 1990s that short stories by and about Vietnamese Americans have received wide circulation through publications in literary and scholarly journals and edited anthologies. Some of these anthologies include the following: *Watermark: Vietnamese American Poetry & Prose*, *Charlie Chan Is Dead*, *Tilting the Continent*:



*Southeast Asian American Writing*, *The Other Side of Heaven: Postwar Fiction by Vietnamese American Writers*, *Bold Words: A Century of Asian American Writing*, and *Night Again: Contemporary Stories from Viet Nam*. Moreover, *Amerasia Journal* has been one of the most receptive publishers of Vietnamese American writing and promoters of works by and about this community. From these published stories, certain writers were introduced to an audience receptive to reading more narratives by the specific writers that were or had been compiled into collections of short stories and essays, as well as novels and personal memoirs. Some of these authors include Linh Dinh, Andrew Lam, Bich Minh Nguyen, and Aimee Phan.

As indicated in the entry for **Vietnamese American literature**, defining who constitutes a Vietnamese American and what types of literature can be included as Vietnamese American short stories, both in style and content, will most likely change over time. For the moment, aside from works published in traditional venues (as mentioned above), writings in chapbooks, Weblogs, magazines (like *Nha Magazine*), newspapers, and other Internet forms should be considered as contributing to the expanding library of Vietnamese American short stories.

Although some of the content in these stories describes the experiences of people of Vietnamese descent either living in Vietnam (before, during, and after the American War in Vietnam) or in the United States as refugees, there are new themes being explored by the first-, 1.5-, and second-generation writers of Vietnamese descent. For example, many authors have explored the issue of the return of Viet Kieu ("Overseas Vietnamese") to Vietnam. From Quang Bao's *New York Times* essay "Memories Are Priceless," which documents his and his father's return to Vietnam after almost three decades away, to Minh-Mai Hoang's short story "The Pilgrimage," which describes a Viet Kieu lawyer whose practice "advises foreign investors in Vietnam" (2000, 27) and sends him and his white American wife to Hanoi to possibly set up an office branch in that region. Aside from the topic of return, there are also stories like Linh Dinh's "Fritz Glatman," in which the protagonist is white and there are no allusions to being Vietnamese and no references concerning being Vietnamese American. Rather, this story underscores the inherent need of all writers, no matter their racial background, to tell a story. Moreover, it is important to recognize that writers, whether or not they are racialized or gendered, can still represent stories from different perspectives—one's cast of characters or protagonists do not always have to be limited to that particular author's ethnic background.

With a widening of subjects that they can explore, Vietnamese American writers are not limited to the range of issues that they can convey. For example, Anh Quynh Bui's "Colloquial Love" articulates the range of emotions between two lovers. The reader does not know the protagonists' names or anything about them, except that they desire one another and understand the significance of sexual arousal, whether

it is through a touch or with words. Whereas Bui's work focuses upon sexual love, Christian Langworthy's "Sestina" depicts a moment when a family—a mother, a father, and their child—is preparing for a Fourth of July picnic. The protagonist, the child, is awaiting the return of his siblings, and while doing so observes the interactions between his aging parents. There is a sweetness about the setting and the scene, in particular the exchanges made between the parents and the child. Though there are no details about the family's racial background, the story conveys a tenderness that does not require knowledge about race. Rather, this story reveals a love that encompasses a family, especially during significant moments of anticipated celebrations.

Despite the desire of some Vietnamese American authors to refuse to articulate the refugee or Vietnamese American experience, many other writers find it necessary to share their histories and express their emotions. As Viet Thanh Nguyen states, "Much of the writing, art, and politics of Vietnamese refugees is about the problem of mourning the dead, remembering the missing, and considering the place of the survivors in the movement of history. This problem is endemic to refugees, for whom separation from family and homeland is a universal experience" (2006, 8). Nguyen continues in his essay "Speak of the Dead, Speak of Viet Nam" that for many refugees it may be beneficial or even cathartic to express these feelings through the written word. However, he cautions, "Ethics forces us to consider how the speaker or storyteller must take responsibility for speech and not merely claim poetic or aesthetic license" (9). Writers like Aimee Phan in her collection of short stories *We Should Never Meet* takes into account all the aspects that Nguyen explains that Vietnamese American writers have done (i.e., mourn the dead or missing and present a portrait of the survivors in various states of living) and should also reflect upon within their works. Thus, it is befitting in "Miss Lien," the first story in the collection that the protagonist Miss Lien is in the process of delivering her baby. The first passage signifies a birth of a new but also familiar type of narrative. By the end of this story, the reader learns that Lien cannot take care of the baby she has carried and thus leaves her child at the doorstep of an orphanage, "Blessed Haven for the Children of God" (22). The reader will notice the cycle of birth or renewal within the stories about many of the characters. Along with the chance of rebirth is the sense of betrayal and the haunting by those who leave or were left behind by others.

Given the plethora of Vietnamese American short stories, there are many models from which emerging writers of Vietnamese descent may choose to emulate. Indeed, there are even stories translated into English by writers from Vietnam or other parts of the diaspora from which readers can learn and better understand the similarities and differences of experiences among their community. **See also** Asian Diasporas; Vietnam War.

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NINA HA

◆ VILLA, JOSE GARCIA (1908–1997)

Filipino American poet, short story writer, essayist, anthologist, and editor José Garcia Villa garnered considerable acclaim from the U.S. literary establishment for the experimental poetry he published in the United States during the 1940s and 1950s. Born in Manila in 1908, Villa attended the University of the Philippines during the late 1920s. He migrated to the United States in 1930, spent one year at the University of New Mexico, where he earned a bachelor of arts degree, then moved to New York, where he continued to reside, with intermittent visits to the Philippines, until his death in 1997. Despite the fact that he lived the majority of his life and published his most important work in the United States, Villa is a more prominent and influential figure in the Philippines than in the United States. Unlike his compatriot Carlos Bulosan, Villa did not seek to provide collective representations of Filipino immigration and work life. Rather, his poetics focused more on issues of interiority, erotics, and formal experimentalism. His significance lies in the ways that his writings both presage some of the artistic, political, and sexual concerns being engaged with in contemporary **Filipino American literature** and provoke new conceptions and imaginings of Asian American literature more generally.

Villa gained a name for himself in Manila's emerging Anglophone literary scene well before he moved to the United States. As an undergraduate, he refused his father's wishes to become a doctor or a lawyer and devoted himself to art. He published numerous short stories in Manila magazines and newspapers, soon becoming one of the most important voices among the first generation of English-language writers in the Philippines. Two things helped to solidify his place within this literary culture. In 1928 he began his annual appraisals of what he deemed "the best" short stories (and, at times, poems) produced by Anglophone Philippine writers. This practice of assessment was based on Edward O'Brien's *Best American Short Stories* series, which began in 1914. Since collected by Jonathan Chua into *The Critical Villa* (2002), these early essays span from 1928 to 1941 and not only document Villa's highest-rated choices but also provide crucial statements of his own aesthetic ideas. Drawing on O'Brien's dual criteria of substance and form in making his valuations, Villa elaborated and promulgated his own theory of literature, an artistic position that emphasized the spiritual and internal over the material and external aspects of existence. This view entailed that literary forms, in turn, should be flexible enough to illuminate the individual's experiential transformations.

A year after he started evaluating Philippine literature in English and rendering those judgments publicly in print, Villa's literary reputation acquired further renown. In 1929, under the pseudonym "O. Sevilla," he published a series of prose poems called "Man-Songs," for which he was reprimanded and fined by a Manila civic court and suspended from the University of the Philippines for one year. The poems were considered obscene due to their explicit sexual content and depictions of nude bodies. This accusation led Villa to write a letter of defense to Dean Bocobo of the College of Law. In it, he justified his use of eroticized images by appealing to the aestheticist tenet that distinguishes the artistic production of beauty from the strictures of bourgeois morality. Later that year, Villa's story "Mir-i-nisa" was selected as the winner of the *Philippines Free Press* Short Story Contest. With the grand prize earnings of 1,000 pesos, Villa left the Philippines for the United States.

During his brief sojourn at the University of New Mexico, Villa edited a small magazine called *Clay: A Literary Notebook* (1931–1932). Along with several of his own works, he published stories by Sanora Babb, Whit Burnett, Erskine Caldwell, and William Carlos Williams, as well as poems by Bunichi Kagawa and William Saroyan, among others.

In 1933 Villa published the first book of short stories by a Filipino in the United States, *Footnote to Youth: Tales of the Philippines and Others*. Gathering pieces that were printed in both Philippine and U.S. venues in addition to previously unpublished works, the collection is formally and stylistically diverse. Critics have remarked on the book's seemingly incoherent organization, and the stories certainly range across an

array of settings and adopt various subgeneric forms. For example, "Malakas" and "Kamya" are cast as pre-Spanish legends, while four of the stories reflect on the aftermath of the heroization of José Rizal, the Philippine intellectual, physician, novelist, and poet. Other stories, such as "Footnote to Youth," "The Fence," and "Given Woman," are set in contemporary Philippines and appropriate Sherwood Anderson's notion of the grotesque to portray characters whose desires and ambitions have been thwarted by the limited circumstances of their social conditions. Despite these differences, however, the stories are thematically linked insofar as they portray characters performing unusual and unexpected acts, often for the sake of love or forgiveness. Those moments of surprise or epiphany illustrate Villa's project of disclosing the spiritual struggles of his uncommon, and often socially marginalized, characters.

*Footnote to Youth* also contains a group of autobiographical stories. "Wings and Blue Flame: A Trilogy" (which was initially published in *Clay* and includes "Untitled Story," "White Interlude," and "Walk at Midnight: A Farewell") and "Song I Did Not Hear" deploy an innovative form of numbered paragraphs to narrate the unnamed protagonist's migration to the United States and his experiences as an undergraduate at the University of New Mexico. Far from the conventional immigration narrative, the series of stories represents the narrator's departure from the homeland because of his father's decision to separate the son from his beloved, Vi. The ensuing narrative traces the narrator's attempts to find erotic substitutes for this loss. These relationships, however, turn out to be fleeting or unreciprocated. In "Young Writer in a New Country," Villa continues the immigration narrative as it takes him from Albuquerque to New York and reflects on the writing of the trilogy, claiming that the production of those stories has enabled him to reintegrate his self, in effect, by becoming a literary artist.

Although Edward O'Brien, in the introduction to *Footnote to Youth*, had surmised that Villa "might well give us a new reading of the American scene in novels of contemporary life" (1933, 5), Villa turned his literary efforts away from fiction and toward poetry following the publication of his first book. His next two books, *Many Voices* (1939) and *Poems by Doveglion* (1941), were published in Manila during the Philippine commonwealth period and constitute the initial products of this pursuit. *Many Voices* is largely a collection of love poems—poems that both thematize love and ascribe to love the impulse to produce poetry in the first place. The connection between eros and art, which Villa had broached in his earlier fiction, is most evident in the four "Definitions of Poetry" series. The 225 poetical descriptions are frequently cryptic and recur to Villa's favored images of music, birds, flowers, Christ, and God. In keeping with his interest in spiritual reality, many of these definitions endow poetry with religious significance by improvising on Christian mythology.

*Many Voices* also features some of the early fruits of Villa's experiments with syntactical play and innovation. For instance, the poem that heads the book, "Poems for

an Unhumble One," was originally published in Manila in 1933 with an explanation and extended Villa's reputation as a modernist writer. The poem manipulates and deforms both syntax and sense, refusing to abide by rational logic as it seeks to evoke certain emotional effects and visions by indirect, rather than prosaic, means. It is in *Many Voices* that Villa first adopts the name of Doveglion (a contraction of dove, eagle, lion). Book 2 of the volume is subtitled "The History of Doveglion" and contains the title poem "Many Voices," which presents the poet, in revised Whitmanian fashion, as a conveyor of a multitude of voices. This section also includes the poem "The Country That Is My Country," which expresses Villa's literary renunciation of national or regional affiliations, a repudiation for which he would be taken to task most vigorously during the 1960s and 1970s, when the Philippines experienced a resurgence of nationalist sentiment.

Villa's second book of poetry, *Poems by Doveglion*, received an honorable mention in the Philippine Commonwealth Literary Contest held in 1940. While the volume includes a selection of poems from *Many Voices*, it also moves away from the heavy emphasis on love poetry and the deliberately ornate language used in the earlier book. Many of the poems in the subsections "Philosophica," "Sonnets," and "Lyrics" implicitly respond to those detractors who charged that Villa's willful transgressions of conventional poetic forms were merely showy attempts to mask his inability to master traditional forms. Though hardly straightforward ballads or sonnets, many of these poems do use identifiable meters and rhyme schemes. Thematically, they also highlight Villa's predilection for logical paradoxes and contradictions, his enduring reflections on the relation between the human and the divine, and his sustained engagement with lyrical self-invention.

Villa would carry forward into his later works the formal experimentalism and thematic issues heralded in his first two poetry collections. *Have Come, Am Here*, published in New York in 1942, constituted Villa's "breakthrough" book as far as U.S. readers were concerned. As with all of Villa's U.S.-published books, *Have Come, Am Here* features a literary invention. In the Author's Note Concerning Versification, Villa introduces what he terms "reversed consonance," a technique that modifies the traditional end-rhyme method in English verse. As he explains it, "The last sounded consonants of the last syllable, or the last principal consonants of a word, are reversed for the corresponding rhyme. Thus, a rhyme for *near* would be *run*; or *rain*, *green*, *reign*. For *light*—*tell*, *tall*, *tale*, *steal*, etc." (1942, 151). Despite the fact that only seven of the 127 lyrics in the collection embody this form, Villa's explanation is noteworthy for the way that it strives to put his individual mark on English-language poetry.

Highly stylized and finely crafted, the poems in *Have Come, Am Here* take up some of the themes mentioned earlier: statements of Villa's poetics, the connection between love and poetic voice, the embattled relation between God and man, and self-dramatizations of

the lyric persona. Whereas successful poetry for Villa emanates forth intimations of the divine, the relation between the poet and God is less benign. Seeking to humanize God while simultaneously divinizing the human, poems like lyric "60" stage the poet's relationship to God in terms of conflict and struggle. The poem concludes with the poet addressing God as "Brother," thereby displaying how the poet and God are interlocked entities. The poet's aspiration to disclose himself as equal to but still dependent on the divine emerges in lyric "16," a poem that enacts the technique of reversed consonance.

The critical reception of *Have Come, Am Here* on the part of U.S. reviewers was largely favorable. Critics and poets such as David Daiches, Babette Deutsch, Peter Munro Jack, Alfred Kreymborg, Marianne Moore, and Louis Untermeyer praised what they saw as Villa's religious and ecstatic poetic sensibility, even if they occasionally felt that the scope of his themes remained narrow. Reviewers regularly listed Anglo American poets whom they believed to be Villa's influences, including John Donne, William Blake, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Emily Dickinson, Wallace Stevens, and e.e. cummings (whose work Villa himself credited as inducing him to the serious pursuit of poetry).

Readers in the United States were rather less impressed by Villa's second book of poetry published in the United States, *Volume Two* (1949). The volume continues to explore the poet's relationship with God, often mediated through the intervening figure of Christ, and constructs poems through the paradoxical logics of inverting life and death, self and other. The collection also reveals Villa's sense of humor and wit in the two sections of "Aphorisms" and in such "Caprices" as "Sonnet in Polka Dots," which is comprised of capital O's arranged in a pattern; the "Centipede Sonnet," which consists of rows of commas; and "The Emperor's New Sonnet," which is composed of a blank page.

The most obvious difference that *Volume Two* exhibits from Villa's earlier works is the innovative use of commas in the majority of the poems. In "A Note on the Commas," Villa anticipates the reader's doubts and perplexity, explaining that the technique of putting a comma after each word serves a poetic function that is unrelated to the comma's conventional prose usages. Comparing his deployment of commas to the painter George Seurat's pointillism, Villa states that "the commas are an integral and essential part of the medium: regulating the poem's verbal density and time movement: enabling each word to attain a fuller tonal value, and the line movement to become more measured" (1949, 5). Few readers found Villa's justification convincing, and the technique was frequently and easily parodied. Nonetheless, this innovation demonstrates another means by which Villa aimed to put his personal stamp on Anglophone poetic history, and it is consistent with his previous experiments with syntax, punctuation, and word usage.

*Selected Poems and New*, Villa's final book containing original work, was published in 1958 with an appreciative preface by Edith Sitwell. Villa's own Author's Note makes clear that he included selected (and occasionally revised) poems from *Have*

*Come, Am Here* and *Volume Two*, as well as a section of early poems. In this volume, Villa initiated yet another poetic invention, what he termed “Adaptations.” In “A Note on the Adaptations,” Villa expounds upon his method: “They are experiments in the conversion of prose, through technical manipulation, into poems with line movement, focus and shape, as against loose verse” (1958, 160). Drawn from a myriad of sources—such as Rainer Maria Rilke’s letters, Simone Weil’s notebooks, André Gide’s journals, Franz Kafka’s notebooks, Jean Cocteau’s journals, Stephane Mallarmé’s writings, and pieces in *Life* and *Time* magazines—Villa’s adaptations exemplify his sharp distinction between prose and poetry as well as his steadfast interest in the formalization of the poem. In addition to the adaptations, Villa produced a number of new works, perhaps the best known of which is “The Anchored Angel,” a remarkable comma poem whose daring and dense combination of distressed images, renovated lexicon, and reworked Christian mythology results in a complex demonstration of Villa’s poetic powers. Following the publication of *Selected Poems and New*, Villa apparently abandoned the practice of poetry writing and devoted himself to writing a treatise on poetics (which has not been published).

Villa remained active, however, as an editor, both before and after he ceased writing poetry. With respect to Anglo American literature, he edited special journal issues on e.e. cummings (*Harvard Wake* 5, 1946) and on Marianne Moore (*Quarterly Review of Literature* 4.2, 1948), and also edited a New Directions book titled *A Celebration for Edith Sitwell* (1948). In terms of Anglophone Filipino literature, he assembled four editions of *A Doveglion Book of Philippine Poetry* (1962; with slightly varying titles and increasing in size and scope, 1965, 1975, 1993). Finally, Villa edited the short-lived, small magazine *Bravo*, in which he printed the work of both Filipino poets (i.e., Cirilo Bautista, Nick Joaquin) and U.S. poets (e.g., John Cowen, Gloria Potter).

Since *Selected Poems and New*, many anthologies of Villa’s work have appeared. In Manila, Alberto S. Florentino published numerous collections of Villa’s poems and stories throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Other anthologies published in the Philippines include Jonathan Chua’s edited *The Critical Villa: Essays in Literary Criticism by José Garcia Villa* (2002) and John Cowen’s edited *The Parlement of Giraffes: Poems for Children, Eight to Eighty* (1999). Anthologies published in the United States include *Appassionata: Poems in Praise of Love* (1979) and Eileen Tabios’s edited *The Anchored Angel: Selected Writings by José Garcia Villa* (1999). These recent anthologies constitute important signs of revived interest in Villa, given that his work had for so long remained out of print.

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MARTIN JOSEPH PONCE

### ◆ VISWANATHAN, KAAVYA (1987–)

Kaavya Viswanathan is a disgraced South Asian writer whose debut novel, *How Opal Mehta Got Kissed, Got Wild, and Got a Life* (2006), was withdrawn by the publisher after multiple allegations of plagiarism. Kaavya Viswanathan—her first name means "poetry" in Tamil—was born in Chennai, India, to Mary Jayanthi Sundaram and Viswanathan Rajaraman on January 16, 1987. Both parents are medical doctors: her mother is an obstetrician and her father a neurosurgeon. When Kaavya was two years old, her parents migrated to Scotland; 10 years later the family moved to the United States and eventually settled in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey. The only child of

affluent parents, she attended the Bergen County Academy for the Advancement of Science and Technology and graduated with distinction in 2004 before entering Harvard University later that year. At the age of 17, while a freshman at Harvard, she was awarded a book contract by Little, Brown and Company—along with an exorbitant advance on anticipated royalties—for a novel that she had begun writing in high school. The novel was published in early April of 2006. The 19-year-old author then sold the movie rights to DreamWorks, the production company cofounded by Steven Spielberg. Kaavya Viswanathan's astonishing success made her a literary phenomenon.

*How Opal Mehta Got Kissed, Got Wild, and Got a Life* focuses on an ambitious and overachieving Indian American high school senior. A child of privilege—her parents Amal and Meena are doctors—Opal is a brilliant student, and her parents' single-minded goal is to ensure her admission to Harvard University. Opal has all the necessary qualifications to enter Harvard; however, when she appears for a personal interview, the dean of admissions, who is impressed by her outstanding record, asks her what she does for fun. The question unsettles Opal. Because of her relentless focus on academic achievement, she has hardly had a social life. The dean advises her to become a well rounded person before returning for another interview a few months later. Opal, along with her disappointed but determined parents, decides on an elaborate project that they call HOWGAL (How Opal Will Get a Life). With her parents' active encouragement, Opal begins to wear stylish clothes and makeup, becomes friends with a group of girls who call themselves Haute Bitchez, hosts a wild party, and gets kissed for the first time. She becomes popular but feels inauthentic; her elaborate social game inevitably leads to a crisis, and Opal decides to discard her concocted identity and learns to be herself. She does eventually get into Harvard and even finds a boyfriend, but happiness comes from self-acceptance.

Viswanathan's novel belongs to a body of recent writing that is popularly referred to as chick-lit. Like most chick-lit novels, its plot is rather flimsy and formulaic, but there is a crucial distinction: the protagonist is an Indian American teenager. By placing an Indian American teenager from an immigrant household at the center of the novel, Viswanathan moves beyond some of the limitations of chick-lit. Hers is also a narrative of migration and the promise of the United States; it is a story about incremental **assimilation** and a compelling portrait of an immigrant teenager's attempts to claim and ultimately conquer the new land.

Because of the author's youth and the reported \$500,000 that she received as advance, *How Opal Mehta Got Kissed, Got Wild, and Got a Life* received considerable attention when it was published. The initial reviews were enthusiastic. Soon, however, *Harvard Crimson* published an article that accused Viswanathan of plagiarism. The student journalist who wrote the piece identified 24 passages in Viswanathan's novel that were startlingly similar to passages in Megan McCafferty's *Sloppy Firsts* (2001) and

*Second Helpings* (2003). Other readers were able to identify even more resemblances between the works of the two authors. Viswanathan, who had never mentioned McCafferty as an influence, now acknowledged that she had read her novels and that, because of her photographic memory, she might have internalized some parts of McCafferty's works. In other words, Viswanathan, while tacitly admitting to plagiarizing, insisted that the mistake was entirely inadvertent.

The charges of plagiarism, especially the extent of it, provoked a firestorm of criticism. The novel's publisher responded that Viswanathan would eliminate the offending passages and rewrite parts of the novel for a new edition. However, the scandal, which was now being called "Opalgate," began to assume ominous new proportions. Newspaper reports and Internet postings pointed to more signs of plagiarism. Readers spotted sentences in Viswanathan's novel that were derived from Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990), Meg Cabot's *The Princess Diaries* (2000), Tanuja Desai's *Born Confused* (2003), and Sophie Kinsella's *Can You Keep a Secret?* (2004). In the light of all these well substantiated allegations, Viswanathan's claims of innocence began to sound incredible and disingenuous. On May 4, 2006, the publisher recalled all unsold copies of the novel and DreamWorks' plan to make a movie based on the novel was abandoned.

Most commentators on the scandal are highly critical of Viswanathan and find her explanations unconvincing. Some blame her and her overzealous parents, who might have pushed their brilliant daughter to overachieve. Others blame the publishing industry. Only a few have expressed sympathy; the most vocal among them is Bill Poser, who forcefully defends Viswanathan. He insists that the alleged plagiarism is nothing more than a form of unconscious intertextuality and condemns Viswanathan's critics for their "lynch mob" mentality. He adds provocatively that her critics have ulterior motives: "They don't like chick-lit; they think the book isn't original; they think [Kaavya Viswanathan] is a spoilt rich girl; they resent the disproportionate academic and business success of Indians and are eager to take one down" (2006).

Now that the book has been withdrawn, the scandal has begun to wane. However, the story of Viswanathan's spectacular rise and fall is likely to remain an interesting footnote in the literary history of Asian America.

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## W



### WAH, FRED (1939–)

A celebrated Asian Canadian poet, editor, critic, and professor of English, Fred Wah is primarily known for his poetry. He has published more than 20 books of poetry since 1965, and he has also written a prize-winning book of short fiction, a highly acclaimed book of criticism, and numerous reviews and journal articles. Born in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, in 1939 to a father of both Chinese and English ancestry and a mother from a Swedish immigrant family, Wah grew up in the West Kootenay region of British Columbia. Both places would find their way into his poetry later. He completed a BA in music and English at the University of British Columbia in 1962, where he was one of the founding editors of the poetry newsletter *TISH*. At UBC, he studied with Warren Tallman, Robert Creeley, and, for a summer, Charles Olson. Wah later moved on to study at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque for graduate work in literature and linguistics and edited the influential journal *Sum* there. He studied afterward at the State University of New York in Buffalo, where he attended Olson's poetry seminars and coedited *Niagara Frontier Review* and the *Magazine for Further Studies*. He started to publish his poems around this time, and Olson's projective verse that combines intense personal dynamism with experimental, open forms has been a continuing influence for his writing ever since. After graduating from Buffalo with a master's degree in 1967, Wah returned to the Kootenays, where he taught at Selkirk College and founded the writing program at the David Thompson University Centre. From 1989 until his retirement in 2003, he taught creative writing and English literature at the University of Calgary. Wah has been a contributing editor for several Canadian literary magazines and journals, including *Open Letter*

since its beginning in 1964, *West Coast Line*, and *Swift Current*, the first online literary magazine in the world. He currently resides in Vancouver with his wife Pauline Butling, still active in writing and performing public poetry reading.

Wah began his lifelong exploration of an open, experimental, and disjunctive poetics in his early poetry. His early collections *Lardeau* (1965), *Mountain* (1967), *Among* (1972), *Tree* (1972), *Earth* (1974), and *Pictograms from the Interior of B.C.* (1975) all focus on Kootenay geography and history. In these books, Wah does not merely describe nature but creates images in a way that energizes or gives breath to the world and thus enables a merging of the interior and the exterior. His exploration of questions about home, origin, and identity begins at this time—consider how the very word *among* implies **hybridity**—though not as consciously as in his later works. Writing in unsophisticated language, he tries different poetic forms from free verse with regular stanzas to highly innovative structures with rhythms of jazz improvisation. Experimenting with the music of poetry, Wah also emphasizes the visual aspect of his writing. His early lines are very often unevenly indented to create a certain visual effect on the page. In his collection *Pictograms from the Interior of B.C.*, poems are even juxtaposed to copies of pictograms from Indian rock paintings found in the Kootenays region. He would continue to pursue this interest in visual art later on in his career. In 1980 the publication of *Loki Is Buried at Smoky Creek: Selected Poems* represents the culmination of Wah's early achievement, a poetics that integrates innovative forms and contemplation about the meaning of origin and human positionality in relation to nature.

The 1980s saw Wah's poetry turn more social, and the themes of family relationship and racial identity appear more explicitly in his major works of this period. With *Breathin' My Name with a Sigh* (1981) and *Waiting for Saskatchewan* (1985), winner of the Governor General's Award for Poetry in 1985, Wah emerged as an important author in the exploration of racialized poetics and multiculturalism in Canada. *Waiting for Saskatchewan*, which includes some poems from *Breathin' My Name with a Sigh*, is a book about his own family. In four parts, the book traces the poet-speaker's genealogy, particularly the racial and cultural identities of his parents—his father is a Canadian-born Chinese-Scots-Irishman raised in China, and his mother, a Swedish-born Canadian. Often using the second person "you" to address his parents, the speaker unfolds memories and reveals in epistles and imaginary conversations the challenges his parents had to confront as immigrants. The predicament of identity experienced by the biracial father is the central focus of many poems here. Locating the influence of genealogy, the poet-speaker nevertheless makes clear that the journey looking for his parents' origins is at the same time a journey exploring his own hybrid ethnicity as a son of the biracial family. Blending poetry and prose, Wah engages with a range of forms, all interweaving narrative with improvisatory, disjunctive lyricism. There are untitled

lyric poems characterized by mostly unpunctuated, unevenly margined lines, sometimes sprawling, other times extremely terse. There are also pieces called *utaniki*, a poetic diary that explores the tenuous division between prose and poem. Still more interesting is a series of haibun, short poetic prose ending with an informal haiku line. For most pieces in the book, the pages often contain as much blank space as printings, as if the silence represented by the space carries equal significance as the writing voice itself.

Wah's subsequent collections continue to expand into experiment with language and form, unfolding the disjunctive rhythm and improvisatory potential within language. *Music at the Heart of Thinking*, published in 1987, has been the most adventurous in terms of language. Composed of a series of apparently disconnected notes in run-on word flows or lineated forms, the book challenges the usual sense of coherence in every aspect. Wah got the inspiration for his writing here from a drunken Shaolin monk's imbalanced, unpredictable, yet powerful movement in a Chinese film, and the pieces are intentionally difficult, with language written as a genuine practice of the flowing thought. In an unconventional speaking voice that seems at once omnipresent and elusive, the fragmented, improvisatory pieces subvert formal meaning and create endless linguistic surprises. Most of the pieces record Wah's response to modern and contemporary texts and ideas, revealing his thinking on the ways in which literary criticism can invite reconsideration of the very act of making sense. His next major book *So Far* (1991), winner of Alberta's Stephanson Award for Poetry, is much more accessible in language. Here, Wah returns to intimate and inventive writing about landscapes and family, though his playing with the form now exhibits more masterly control. Lyric poems written for his wife and daughters and for his friends constitute a considerable part of the book. Rich in natural imagery, subtle yet deep in emotion, these poems are remarkable with quiet but dazzling moments. In the section "Limestone Lake Utaniki," Wah again travels between prose and poem through a poetic diary kept on hiking trips into the back country. The mountain landscape is interwoven with contemplation about social and political issues—for example, the tragic happening to dissidents in China's Tiananmen Square in 1989—with a characteristic touch of jazz.

Published immediately after *So Far*, *Alley Alley Home Free* (1992) carries some poems from *So Far*, and it also includes a sequel to *Music at the Heart of Thinking* and a section of poems collected as "Artknots," which records Wah's continuing response to contemporary texts, including works of visual art. In this collection, Wah further experiments with words, syntax, and grammar while exploring familiar themes. Inventive phrasings about home and identity form an unpredictable jazz-like discourse, echoing the thematic concerns of his earlier works. The apparently unreadable yet highly suggestive text is often not as much about the meaning of certain words as

about new ways to perceive language. They make clear the poet's attempt to construct home in language and at the same time to subvert formal meaning and to unsettle composition. Following the practice of *Music at the Heart of Thinking*, language here again is exposed as unstable, fraught with division, and forever in motion.

The publication of *Diamond Grill* in 1996 led readers to find Wah an engaging prose writer as well. Winner of Howard O'Hagan Award for Short Fiction from Writers Guild of Alberta in 1997, the book is a "biotext," or an autobiographical account, about Diamond Grill, in 1951 the most modern Chinese café in Nelson, British Columbia, run by Wah's father. In a series of mini-stories centering around the café, Wah unfolds in great detail the history and memories of his extended family, which his earlier works such as *Waiting for Saskatchewan* have touched upon. Against the simplistic, essentialist identity politics, the narrator speaks about the diasporic sensibility of his family and those working in the café and the process of their self-location in a white-dominated society. The small and bustling café not only witnesses the success and struggle of Wah senior but also reflects how the young Fred Wah, the future poet who is white enough to "pass," grew up and learned to deal with his own hybrid ethnicity. The background for the stories, the café also manifests itself as an emblem for a world marked by racial and cultural division: the Chinese-speaking kitchen in the back makes an interesting parallel to the English-speaking, white-Canadian counter area and booths in the front, with a swinging door in between linking and separating the two spaces, just like a hyphen between two words. Wah carries the graceful lyricism from his poetry to the prose here. Without a clear-cut beginning-middle-end structure, the anecdotal series in its simple, colloquial, yet poetically rhythmic language unravels complicated negotiations—comic in some cases but poignant in others—for a hybridized existence.

Not merely active in creative writing, Wah is also a prolific critic of poetry and poetics. His book of criticism, *Faking It: Poetics and Hybridity, Critical Writing 1984–1999* (2000), won the Gabrielle Roy Prize for Literary Criticism in English. The last part of the twentieth century saw dramatic fluctuation in cultural politics, and the book includes many of Wah's essays, talks, interviews, reviews, journals, and notes on contemporary poetry and poetics written during this time of major shifts in critical thinking and cultural production. Readers of Wah's poetry would feel familiar here: most of the pieces disrupt genre classification, challenging the usual academic definition of *literary criticism*. Just like his poetry volumes, which always present a mixture of forms, this book with its hybrid style reflects perfectly the changing time and Wah's central concern with the issue of hybridity and multiculturalism. Pieces like "Half-Bred Poetics" and "Strang(l)ed Poetics" best demonstrate a consciously political exploration of poetic language, and this exploration even takes on a transnational perspective, extending its subject from contemporary Canadian poetics to Chinese avant-garde poetry.

Over the past few years, Wah's exploration in poetry and poetics has gone even further: he completed several collaborative projects with visual artists, including exhibitions with Bev Tosh, a staged performance with Karuko Okano titled *High(brid)Tea* (1999), and a Spatial Poetics event that incorporates a live reading with the presentation of video work with Henry Tsang (2005). See also Asian Canadian Studies; Multiculturalism and Asian America.

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XIWEN MAI

### ◆ WANG, PING (1957–)

Ping Wang is a foreign-born Chinese American woman poet, writer, and associate professor of English, mostly known for *American Visa* (1994), her first book about a Chinese woman crossing geopolitical borders, particularly after the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) in China. Her works have received reviews from different readers, magazines, and journals.

Ping Wang was born in Shanghai in 1957 and spent three years in a village during the Cultural Revolution. She attended Beijing University from 1980 to 1984 and completed a BA in English literature. She left China for the United States as a graduate student at Long Island University in 1985 in search of a second life and earned an MA in English literature from Long Island in 1987 and an MA and a PhD in comparative literature from New York University in 1994 and 1999, respectively. Her dissertation, "Aching for Beauty: Footbinding as Cultural Fetish and Discourse of Body and Language" (1999), is about foot binding, eroticism and pain, torture and fetishism, life and death, and sexual identities in Chinese history and cultural



practices. She is currently an associate professor of English at Macalester College in Minnesota and teaches creative writing courses. Her areas of study, to use her own words, include creative writing, Chinese American immigrant experience, women in China and Chinese culture, and environmental issues.

While at Long Island University, Ping Wang took some creative writing courses with Lewis Warsh, who liked her writing and led her to the Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church in New York. Wang served as a translator for a poetry festival in New York in 1988 and was able to meet with many famous Chinese poets. She has kept in touch with many Chinese poets in China, the United States, and elsewhere. She started to write her own poetry after that festival.

Ping Wang is a productive writer and has published short stories, poetry, and novels in English. She feels more comfortable writing in English because she has missed the essence and the life of the Chinese language since 1985, as she said at one of the interviews. She has won one book award and received a few grants. Her major works include two collections of short stories, two poetry collections, one anthology of Chinese poetry, and a cultural study of Chinese foot binding.

*American Visa*, Ping Wang's first book, is a collection of 11 linked stories. Seaweed is the main narrative voice. Wang follows the trajectory of a Chinese woman growing up during the Cultural Revolution, exploring meanings of womanhood in China at the time, and moving to the United States with high hopes and dreams. Unfortunately, the harsh reality for a new immigrant like Seaweed is not very promising. Some critics suggest that the book makes a nice parallel of China and the United States. In "Subway Rhapsody," for example, Wang humorously satirizes both worlds and demystifies American dreams and success (Xu 2000, 216). *The Last Communist Virgin* (2007) is another collection of short stories, which picks up some threads in *American Visa* and further interweaves the homeland and immigrant life. In this book, Ping Wang starts to distance herself from the narratives of the Cultural Revolution and gives more weight to the meaning of being foreign-born Chinese immigrants and the pulling power of the homeland. It juxtaposes modern China with Chinese American experiences.

*Foreign Devil* (1996) is Ping Wang's first autobiographical fiction and uses first-person narrative like *American Visa* and *The Last Communist Virgin*. The main character, Ni Bing, tells of her struggles to pursue advanced education in China and the United States. Hers is not only a journey into her dreams but also one out of the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution to find a new identity in the post-Cultural Revolution China and the adopted country of the United States.

Ping Wang also edited and cotranslated the anthology *New Generation: Poetry from China Today* (1999), in which she includes 24 Chinese poets and their poems. It is considered a significant anthology for presenting the poets and their analytical expressions of social reality after the 1989 student movement in Tiananmen Square.

*Aching for Beauty: Footbinding in China* (2002) reflects Ping Wang's cultural study of foot binding as a way of creating beauty through violence. The book draws heavily from her dissertation on a similar focus. It won the Eugene Kayden Award for the Best Book in Humanities in 2000. Its paperback was published in 2002.

Ping Wang has also published two poetry collections, *Of Flesh and Spirit* (1998) and *The Magic Whip* (2003). The former is filled with anger and bitterness, in which Wang imagines and visualizes how her female ancestors might have experienced and felt about bound feet. By using the main thread of foot binding, she relentlessly comments on the repressive nature of Chinese ideology and patriarchy that seek eroticism in women's bound feet. *The Magic Whip* voices, among other things, the ordeals Chinese women's bodies have historically gone through. Themes in this collection range from foot binding to immigrant life in New York. The book received the Gustavus Myers Center for the Study of Bigotry and Human Rights Outstanding Book Award Honorable Mention in 2004.

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DONG LI

#### ◆ WATADA, TERRY (1951–)

Toronto-born Japanese Canadian playwright, musician, and composer, Terry Watada has published poetry, fiction, and drama. He also writes a monthly column for the Toronto journal the *Nikkei Voice*. His dedication to antiracism was recognized by the city of Toronto in 1991 with the William P. Hubbard Award for Race Relations.

Watada had three plays produced in the 1990s. *Dear Wes/Love Muriel* was based on the figure of nisei journalist Muriel Kitagawa, who recorded her wartime experiences of dislocation and internment in her letters to her brother Wes Fujiwara in the 1940s. *Vincent* and *The Tale of a Mask* were first commissioned by Toronto's Workman Theatre Project and deal with mental illness. In the play of the same title, Vincent suffers schizophrenia and his family feels helpless to deal with his mood changes and his

occasionally violent behavior. Watada traces the family's troubles and their struggle as they seek outside help. *The Tale of a Mask*, inspired by the unhappy case of an immigrant woman who killed her husband and child in Vancouver in 1990, was published in the collection *Canadian Mosaic* edited by Aviva Ravel in 1995 and is scheduled for a new production in the 2008–2009 season by the Toronto-based Asian Canadian company Fu-Gen.

The 21 scenes in *The Tale of a Mask* portray Aiko Shinde's slow descent into madness. In the first few scenes she is a working wife and mother in Tokyo, listening in disbelief to her husband's plans to immigrate to Canada. Although dreaming of staying at home to better look after her eight-year-old son Kentaro and perhaps have another baby, they cannot afford to live on just one salary. It comes as a shock when a determined Masato Shinde quits his job and sells their home. He thinks Canada is a promised land where all his dreams will come true, and once he finally succeeds in getting the family there, he pursues those dreams without thinking twice about the profoundly upsetting effect of immigration on his wife and son. Aiko is cut off from friends and family and, without any command of English, is unable to strike new relationships. Her isolation increases by the day, as her son copes with his own estrangement and loneliness at school by fighting against those children who mock and bully newcomers. Aiko increasingly lives in fear of burglars breaking into her home at night while her husband is at work in a restaurant. She has long imaginary talks with her Tokyo neighbor Sumiko, to whom she explains that she is becoming obsessed with a remembered folktale about a woman who, abandoned by her husband, turned into a devil, an *onibaba*. A figure wearing a devil's mask walks the stage occasionally as a symbol of Aiko's growing mental confusion, and in the final scene Aiko herself dons the mask as she stabs her husband, strangles her son, and then commits suicide. Linking the 21 scenes is the character of the detective investigating the suspicious deaths, a westerner who, by interviewing Masato's boss, Ken's teacher, and other secondary figures in this tragedy, manages to put together the pieces of Aiko's anguish and despair.

In the collection of short stories *Daruma Days* (1997), Terry Watada, himself the son of parents who suffered **World War II** internment, has reconstructed the experiences of the issei and nisei during that troubled period of Canada's history. The subtitle "A Collection of Fictionalised Biography" discloses the testimonial value of the stories, based on the remembrances of their protagonists and carefully collected by Watada with an eye to setting and ambience. However, the collection can be read as pure fiction, and, like *The Tale of a Mask*, it weaves together Japanese myth and folklore with realistic incidents set in wartime Canada. In the title piece, an elderly woman hangs herself with her grandchild's skipping rope. First she has broken the *daruma* figure that she has had from 1940. It was supposed to bring her home good luck, but it

has brought her none. She has toiled for many years, she has lost her husband and one son, and she survived the terrible ordeal of the internment only to have now become an embarrassment for her other son, who keeps her out of sight in the basement. Threatened with the indignity of a nursing home, she prefers to take her own life. "Night with Her Great Gift of Sleep" recounts the experience of 10-year-old Asao, whose father is taken away from the camp where they have been placed because he has been in a car crash and whose mother is taken to Vancouver for surgery. Left on his own, the other interns worry about the need to look after another child in those troubled times, but Asao disappears one night without leaving any trace. In the final story, "Message in a Bottle," the narrator Terry Watada tries to cope with the grief over his father's death by getting to know more about the man whom the language barrier had always kept very much a stranger. From keepsakes and photos as well as the testimonies of friends and families, Watada reconstructs the image of the 14-year-old boy who had arrived in Canada in 1920 and who, despite incarceration and exile, had managed to make it into his home. This final story explains much of the motivation behind the collection, as Watada strives to reach out into a past whose protagonists, a whole generation of Japanese Canadians, are now disappearing. **See also** Issei, Nisei, Sansei; Japanese American Internment.

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PILAR CUDER-DOMÍNGUEZ

◆ WATANABE, SYLVIA A. (1953–)

Japanese American short story fiction writer, essayist, memoirist, editor, and professor of English, Sylvia A. Watanabe is regarded as one of the best Asian American fiction writers from Hawaii, and her creative writing has been widely anthologized. In her scholarly publications, including interviews and editorial work, she has been an influential promoter of the literary ambitions of reputable and promising **Asian American** women writers. Born in Wailuku, Maui, Watanabe is a sansei (third-generation) Japanese American. She was raised in Kailua and has since lived in the San Francisco Bay Area, Ann Arbor (Michigan), Binghamton (New York), Grand Rapids (Michigan),

and Oberlin (Ohio). An art history major at the University of Hawaii, she later took her master's in English and creative writing at SUNY–Binghamton. She has taught creative writing at Oberlin College since 1995, and she continues to spend part of the year in Honolulu and Grand Rapids where her husband, William Osborn, works.

Critical praise for Watanabe's writing has centered on her gentle humor and her uncluttered, poetic style of narration. Also much lauded is her innovative use of the short story cycle in *Talking to the Dead and Other Stories* (1992), with its interconnected tales structurally echoing the closely intertwined village lives it depicts. The inclusiveness of island life in the multiethnic Hawaiian community where everyone knows of everyone else, makes more marked the exclusion Watanabe and her Japanese American characters face in the WASP framework of the United States. Also, by centering her narratives in her Hawaiian homeland, Watanabe successfully destabilizes and problematizes the representative nature of the traditional California–West Coast master narrative of **Asian American studies**.

Watanabe is primarily known for her debut collection of short fiction, *Talking to the Dead*, which was a finalist for the 1993 PEN/Faulkner Award and won the PEN Oakland Josephine Miles Award. The compilation of 10 stories paints a composite of a land whose traditions are slowly being challenged and changed as ceremonies evolve and rituals are abandoned in the face of the pervasive influence of the mainland and the unrelenting assault of modernity. By adapting the short story cycle to write her village, Watanabe is simply validating her heritage by reinventing her homeland with the fictional town of Luhi. Her work has been compared to Toshio Mori's in its recording of a community specific in its ethnic culture yet possessing a common human spirit that transcends race and geography. Watanabe's delicate vignettes profile the remembering of duty after loss and rebellion, and the subsequent triumph of essential values persisting quietly in spite of change.

The stories in *Talking to the Dead* adopt the narrative perspective of several different female protagonists within the village whose lives are linked inextricably in content, context, and form by the intricate, interrelated nature of the short story cycle. The intrusiveness of the world beyond into the self-contained world of the village is chronicled in the lives of generations of women in their cycle of lost ambitions and unfulfilled dreams. In a balanced mix of levity and seriousness, the reader encounters a spruced up funeral home, the siren call of cash from investment firms in their perpetual hunt for properties to redevelop, the call to national duty for the young men in the **Vietnam War**, and the consequences of such a war on the close-knit communities. As the story cycle develops, Watanabe often revisits a key character of one story who would reappear as a brief mention in another tale. For instance, Lulu, the lover of Jimmy from "The Caves of Okinawa" has her story advanced in "A Spell of Kona Weather," which deals with the aftermath of Jimmy's death in battle after his father's

aborted attempt to save him from Vietnam is ruined by his mother's petty jealousy. Watanabe's nuanced descriptions, the gentle restraint with which she treats her subjects' emotions, her echo of the melancholic call of the land's ghosts that haunt the living community wherever they may be, together create an underlying sense of pervasive loss. The sadness and fear accompanying the passing of a way of life is mitigated only by the knowledge that with deep roots like those of the *uhaloa*, there is Auntie Talking to the Dead's reassurance of a secured sense of belonging, a place from which to stand strong against the tide of erasure.

In *Talking to the Dead*, the acts of forgetting and remembering are both integral to life. In "Anchorage," the first story, Little Grandma's quilt commemorating the neighbors in her community is patiently assembled from laundry stolen with the help of Hana's increasingly forgetful father. Watanabe has several stories dealing with the difficult task of nursing the elderly or infirm of the family and how it is both a heavy emotional burden as well as a privilege, fueled with the possibility of changing lives, extending traditions, and preserving the familial bonds that hold fast in spite of all problems. In "Anchorage," Watanabe demonstrates how Little Grandma takes fate into her own hands and transforms the burden of her son's illness into a thing of opportunity and beauty. Hana finally recognizes that her grandmother's careful and creative management of her father's illness and its consequences will provide him with the best care he needs. Ultimately it is the comforting image of the quilt and what it represents that allows Hana to leave for new opportunities in Anchorage. With *Talking to the Dead*, Watanabe succeeds in memorializing the past while highlighting the possibilities of adapting and maintaining traditions relevant to the future of Hawaii, and perhaps an increasingly changing world.

Watanabe does not call for Hawaii to be preserved as a time capsule. For idyllic as the image may be of her established homeland with its simpler life and everyday drama, she recognizes that the infringing influences that disturb the village are in and of themselves a force necessary for the community's continual survival in a rapidly shrinking world, where transnational influences that helped form the multiracial community (the Filipino, Japanese, and Chinese immigrants now turned native) are becoming more evident. One thing Watanabe does question is the simplistic assumption that the subscription to pursue an alternative lifestyle necessarily entails the denial of one's heritage and traditions. In "The Ghost of Fred Astaire," the return of a long lost tap-dancing native highlights the cultural exchange that channels new energy into the ongoing subtler reconceptualization of the villagers' sense of what it means to be Hawaiian. When comic-laden, these changes are often the catalyst for gossip and enthusiastic excitement within the community. When tinged with tragedy, breaches soon become a part of the village's lore—to be mourned, confronted, and healed in retellings such as Watanabe's own work.

In 1995, "Where People Know Me," an essay documenting her mother's influence and death in *Passing the Word: Writers on Their Mentors* (1994), was chosen as a Distinguished Story for *Best American Stories*. Another award-winning autobiographical essay, "Knowing Your Place" (1996), chronicling Watanabe and Osborn's own relocation from California to Grand Rapids in search of tenured positions, was first published in the *Michigan Quarterly Review*. Seeking a place to settle in the mainland, Watanabe concludes that her position is not so far removed from the ostracism suffered by her missionary grandfather's. The racial heckling she endures is an everyday manifestation of the prejudice and ignorance that led to her grandfather's internment in a relocation camp during **World War II** despite his loyalty to his adopted country. In her observations, Watanabe's wry irony accompanies a note of deeper grieving as she acknowledges the state of her outsider status and the complication of race as a factor in any quest to belong.

In addition to her creative writing, Watanabe has coedited two anthologies with Carol Bruchac, namely *Home to Stay: Asian Americans Women's Fiction* (1990) and *Into the Fire: Asian American Prose* (1996). As an academic, she has made significant contributions to the advancement of studies in Asian American writers, including the older generation of Japanese American women writers such as Hisaye **Yamamoto** and Wakako **Yamauchi**, whom she interviewed with her husband William Osborn. Always interested in furthering the development of new writers, she currently also contributes as an online writing mentor to the Split Rock Arts Program. Additionally, she is on the editorial board of the inaugural issue of the Vespertine Press anthology, featuring emerging and established Asian writers from around the globe.

In her personal essay, "A Book of Names" (2000), Watanabe relates how her father had impressed upon her as a young child the importance of naming: of knowing and appreciating the world about her. Her stories mostly grow from her parents' and grandparents' narratives of their struggles and search for their place in the world. Watanabe presently has two manuscripts in progress: a volume of essays and her debut novel. "Trees," a chapter from her forthcoming novel *Things That Fall from the Sky*, has been published in 2001 in the *American Literary Review*. To be published by Graywolf Press, the novel revolves around the challenges of a biracial family in Ohio and Hawaii. **See also** Issei, Nisei, Sansei; Japanese American Internment.

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POH CHENG KHOO

◆ ONOTO WATANNA. *See* Eaton, Winnifred

### ◆ THE WOMAN WARRIOR (KINGSTON)

Written by Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (1976) is, above all, label-proof. The book becomes a challenge to the reader and to the critic, not so much because it is cryptic or obscure, but because it is consciously ambiguous and polysemic. To start with, *The Woman Warrior* has been read both as autobiography and as fiction, both as a book of memoirs and as a composite novel. This generic indeterminacy has not only opened up the multiplicity of ways readers approach the text, but it has significantly increased the critical interest in the book. One reason why *The Woman Warrior* can be read as a composite autobiography or even as a short story cycle is the way the book is structured: five sections that can be read independently but clearly share many connecting threads, both at the thematic level and at the level of characterization. Although the book bears the subtitle of *Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, it does not start, as readers would expect, with the chronological telling of the narrator's early childhood, but intersperses different stories and legends that punctuated and conditioned her growing up.

The book opens with "No Name Woman," which tells the story of Maxine's "adulterous aunt" who, driven by the contempt and ostracism suffered at the hands of the villagers and her own family, kills her own baby and commits suicide. After her death, the aunt remains nameless and forgotten. The life of this no-name ancestor is recounted by Maxine's mother, Brave Orchid, and is intended as a cautionary tale, handed down to her daughter precisely at the moment when she has started to menstruate and what happened to her aunt could happen to her too. However, the narrator soon becomes aware of her own connivance in this collective punishment of oblivion and challenges it by speaking for her silenced aunt, while remaining alert to the dangers implicit in the very act of telling. Maxine is aware that her dead aunt not always "means her well" (1976, 22), and her ghost continues to haunt her with her silent reproach.

The second chapter, "White Tigers," introduces the traditional Chinese legend of the woman warrior, Fa Mu Lan. The narrator describes how young Mu Lan cross-dresses as



a man and becomes a famous warrior who fights the tyranny exerted by the greedy barons and the indifferent emperor. To become a leader, the young girl has to go through a painful training, guided by a wise old couple who wrap her childhood and adolescent years in magic. Maxine retells the legend by imaginatively identifying with the heroine and, more realistically and disappointingly, trying to emulate Fa Mu Lan in her American life.

"Shaman" follows the narrator's mother, Brave Orchid, as she studies medicine in Canton, becomes a respected doctor, and finally leaves China to join her husband in the **Gold Mountain**. In the following chapter, "At the Western Palace," we learn of Brave Orchid's sister, Moon Orchid, her coming to the States as an adult, and her ill-fated trip to Los Angeles in search of her bigamous husband.

*The Woman Warrior* ends with "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe," a section where Maxine glides through her own childhood memories, focusing on her enormous difficulties at finding a voice of her own, both literally and metaphorically. Little Maxine can barely speak at (American) school, and she must muster all her strength to speak up. At the end of her high-school years, Maxine finally confronts Brave Orchid and everything she represents. The book ends on a final note of reconciliation between mother and her now adult daughter and, by extension, between the American-born generation and the immigrant "villagers."

The question of genre is key to a correct understanding of the initial reception of the book. As most readers approached *The Woman Warrior* as nonfiction, their first response was to assess the book in terms of "authenticity," that is, to gauge whether it constituted a faithful representation of Chinese America from a cultural insider's perspective. Maxine Hong Kingston soon became aware of this burden of "cultural representativeness" and urged readers not to approach *The Woman Warrior* as an ethnographic text or sociological document from which simply to extract objective information about a certain community but as a work of art. However, this caveat did not dissuade some critics—foremost among them being Frank **Chin**, another Chinese American writer—from denouncing Kingston's book as "fake" or "inauthentic" (Chin, Chan, Inada, and Wong 1992). With the perspective that time tends to bestow on critical readings, we can now argue that both the contents and the tantalizing generic ambiguity flaunted by Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* induced a necessary step forward in the development of Asian American literature, inasmuch as it raised central questions such as those of authenticity, essentialism, and Orientalism, which crystallized in the Asian American controversy between feminism and cultural nationalism (see Cheung 1990 and Wong 1992).

*The Woman Warrior* has finally been regarded not as a Chinese book but as Chinese American. The legends and stories of Fa Mu Lan or Ts'ai Yen, among others, are consciously altered and reworked to fit Maxine's American life. Kingston is very much

aware that her unorthodox use of myths and legends in *The Woman Warrior* is at the root of much of the harsh criticism written by graphocentrists (Simal 1999). And yet, she defends her artistic freedom when modifying and combining myths and legends, convinced that “myths have to change, be useful or be forgotten. Like the people who carry them across oceans, the myths become American” (Kingston 1991, 24).

Kingston’s seminal book lends itself to multiple critical approaches, such as a feminist or gender-focused reading (Hunt 1985; Rabine 1987; Schueller 1989; Simal 2000; Smith 1987), a postcolonial or ethnocritical approach (Hunt 1985; Schueller 1989; Simal 2000), a sociohistorical analysis (Kim 1982; Meißenburg 1986), as well as thematic approaches that focus on silence (Cheung 1993), or on the pervasive dialectics of necessity versus extravagance (Wong 1993).

In its consciously derivative, pastiche nature, *The Woman Warrior* proves to be a deeply postmodern text. Second, the book impeccably illustrates the postmodern distrust of, and play with, generic boundaries. Third, *The Woman Warrior* fittingly questions what is reality and what is fiction from the very beginning (Kingston 1976, 13). Furthermore, the book often proffers multiple voices and different versions of a same story. And last, but not least, *The Woman Warrior* brilliantly points at the constructedness of culture and identity (13; see also Yalom 1991).

At the same time, Kingston’s book is socially and politically committed. Two major grievances subtend *The Woman Warrior*: sexism and racism. Gender and ethnic issues pervade the book, since they prove to be central concerns to the narrator’s process of personal growth. Young Maxine not only resents and resists antifemale prejudice, most explicit among—but not exclusive of—Chinese immigrants, but it also, more obliquely, tackles the construction of gender, and, more specifically, femininity. Young Maxine is particularly sensitive to the sexist sayings that abound in her community, and even fears she or her sisters will be sold as slave girls in China, noting that this practice was still in force when her mother worked as a doctor in China. She is also afraid her parents will marry her off to a “retarded boy” who persistently haunts their laundry or to some unattractive FOB.

Another recurrent leitmotif that endows *The Woman Warrior* with coherence and cohesion is the presence of multivalent “ghosts” (Jenkins 1994; Sato 1991). The ghosts in the title embrace the memories from the pasts, the unappeased spirits, such as her nameless aunt’s, the demons or devils that Brave Orchid confronts and defeats in “Shaman,” the “white devils” or “barbarians” who inhabit the new land America, and yet they may even become a term of endearment.

Also present throughout the book, appearing in different guises and modulations, is the theme of silence (Cheung 1993). Oblivion is linked with silence in “No Name Woman.” Insanity is related to silence in the fourth and fifth sections. Silence and secretism pervade Maxine’s childhood memories, where the young girl realizes that “the

silence had to do with being a Chinese girl" (1976, 150) and the immigrant Chinese do not trust their own children, the second generation: "They would not tell us children, because we had been born among ghosts, were taught by ghosts, and were ourselves ghost-like. They called us a kind of ghost" (165).

As suggested above, *The Woman Warrior* can be read as a *bildungsroman*, or even a *künstlerroman* (Madsen 2001, 36), composed of a series of interconnected stories dealing with the influence of different female roles, negative, positive, and ambivalent, on young Maxine. This connecting thread is further confirmed by the far-from-coincidental figurative sisterhood between Brave Orchid, Moon Orchid, and Fa Mu Lan, whose name in Chinese means Sylvan Orchid.

Maxine's mother is the most powerful figure and is portrayed ambivalently throughout the text. She is often perceived as an agent of patriarchy, transmitting its sexist injunctions in "No Name Woman" and conniving with the father to find a husband for her "useless" daughter. At the same time, she provides the role of the strong, independent woman, full of courage and stamina, adept at exorcisms and storytelling, a woman warrior indeed. Brave Orchid is described both as sexist (Kingston 1976, 13) and "backward" (152–154), but also as a great power (25), resourceful and independent. The narrator's relationship with her mother also proves highly ambiguous and shifting: from awe and respect (in "Shaman") to disgust and rebellion (cf. last chapter).

Maxine's two aunts provide the most conspicuously negative examples of women ancestors. Both Moon Orchid and No Name Aunt function as cautionary female role models: "If you are or become like them, you will go mad and die, as they did," would be the corollary to these stories. And that is exactly how Maxine first approaches these women: as models she must avoid at all costs.

The story that opens *The Woman Warrior*, "No Name Woman" is first told in a straightforward way, with Brave Orchid providing all the necessary details, "once and for all" (Kingston 1976, 13). However, the mother's rather conventional and realistic account becomes, in the hands of the daughter, an occasion for play and speculation. To her mother's sparse narrative, Maxine adds her own interpretations as she explores the multiple possible motivations behind her aunt's actions. In looking for the why of her aunt's behavior, Maxine indulges and relishes in the what-ifs. In a deeply postmodern move, the narrator proffers multiple possible explanations. Different versions of the aunt's story proliferate (14–21). First the No Name Aunt is powered by necessity and communality; next she appears to be seduced by extravagance and individualism. Similarly, the villagers' reaction can be read both as a way to punish a breach of the patriarchal and patrilineal law (Madsen 2001, 29), or as part of the dialectics necessity versus extravagance (Wong 1993): in times of hardships and famine, the villagers cannot afford adultery, understood here as extravagance and imbalance, so they try to restore harmony, wholeness, and roundness with punitive actions.

However much she fears her aunt's fate, Maxine seems to be fascinated with her. Her feelings toward her nameless aunt are a combination of attraction, pity, and fear (Kingston 1976, 22), the simultaneous attraction and terror of vertigo. The narrator consciously reaches out to this nameless aunt in search of ancestral help (16), which implies her aunt's choices in life are not to be easily dismissed as utterly negative. It remains doubtful whether Brave Orchid's only motivation in telling the story is to warn her daughter of the perils of individual extravagance. It could be argued that the mother's injunction not to behave like the proscribed aunt is only a tongue-in-cheek alibi that actually seeks the opposite effect: to instill in her daughter the need to claim the silenced history of the banished woman.

The next clearly negative role model is that of Moon Orchid, whose story is told in the fourth chapter, "At the Western Palace." The way we learn about Moon Orchid is apparently "normal." However, in the following chapter we find out this story was never witnessed by the narrator but was actually elaborated from a meager, secondhand account told by her sibling. What this narrative strategy illustrates, once more, is the epistemological and existential doubts implicit in postmodernism. There are as many truths as versions, ultimately implying that there is no final truth at all.

Ineffectual, bland, and passive, Moon Orchid has been prefigured in the frail women described in "White Tigers" (Kingston 1976, 41, 46) and will reappear in the "quiet girl" that Maxine tortures in "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe" (156–163) as an undesirable mirror of her own frailty, as her "racial shadow" (Wong 1993, 77–92). In addition to facilitating a healthy exercise in cultural inversion, Moon Orchid's episode provides an insightful commentary about the dangers and pitfalls of immigration and assimilation. Not everybody can adapt to a new language and a new way of life. If Brave Orchid's experience is an example of the possibility, albeit with painful consequences, of adapting to the new land, Moon Orchid shows the other, darker side: her lack of belonging and her feeling of displacement trigger off her gradual disintegration and fall into madness.

In Moon Orchid, Maxine sees the real possibility of her own psychological deterioration. Also caught between two cultures, the narrator fears she will be the mad woman in her family (Kingston 1976, 170). To avoid such a fate, she tries to escape the silence that she links with insanity, and she looks for another female role model that can offer her a viable alternative as a Chinese American woman. She will find that in different warrior women: Fa Mu Lan, Ts'ai Yen, and in her own mother, Brave Orchid.

As if questioning the possibility of ever getting to know her parents' real history, while emphasizing the typically postmodern "epistemological uncertainty," Maxine Hong Kingston chooses to open the third chapter, "Shaman," with a detailed description of the extant "documentary evidence"—scrolls and photographs (Kingston 1976, 57, 58)—that provide clues about her mother's and father's past. In contrast with a highly articulate mother, Maxine's father is portrayed as silent,

laid-back, and resigned (cf. *China Men*). As to Maxine's appraisal of her mother, as aforementioned, it fluctuates from her imagining her as a "warrior" (74) or a great storyteller—indeed, her inspiration in becoming a writer herself—versus the image of her mother as an agent of patriarchy, as we have previously seen.

In the second section, "White Tigers," we encounter a seemingly positive model, that of the legendary woman warrior Fa Mu Lan. Here, the narrative strategy is more akin to magical realism than to the realistic approach of traditional memoirs and autobiographies. In an almost imperceptible transition, fiction and reality merge: "Night after night my mother would talk-story until we fell asleep. I couldn't tell where the stories left and the dreams began, her voice the voice of the heroines in my sleep" (Kingston 1976, 19). Ontological boundaries start to crumble: writing and life become connected in ideographs, the frontiers between beings are transgressed (32), nonscientific conceptions of distance and time occur (27), and, finally, Maxine/Mu Lan manages "to make [her] mind large, as the universe is large, so that there is room for paradoxes" (34).

Although Maxine feels she cannot live up to those expectations (Kingston 1976, 47), she is ultimately inspired by the heroine's literal and figurative strength and power, as well as her ability to redress injustices. As mentioned above, some myths are consciously altered and mixed with other myths; in this case the grievances tattooed on her back do not feature in the original legend but are borrowed by another, thereby emphasizing the potential for resistance involved in writing (38–39, 47).

The power of language emerges once more in the last section, "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe." This chapter also serves to confirm that *The Woman Warrior* can be read as a *künstlerroman*, since most of the stories in the chapter—most forcefully that of poet Ts'ai Yen—take up the leitmotif of art and the artist: we encounter the love and need of poetry, music, drama, and storytelling, or "talk-story." The closing story tells us how Ts'ai Yen, a woman from a distinguished Han family, is kidnapped by a neighboring tribe whom the (Han) Chinese consider barbarians. Ts'ai Yen ends up sharing her life with the leader of those barbarians, fighting side by side with him and bearing him children. And yet, Ts'ai Yen lives an uprooted existence: no one, not even her own children, seems to understand her. She manages to write poems and songs that help her overcome her feeling of displacement. Although she sings in Chinese, which nobody understands, she does so to the barbarians' reed pipe music. Eventually the barbarians themselves, among them the poet's own children, manage to capture the sad meaning of her ballads, and connect with her thanks to her art.

Ts'ai Yen's story clearly echoes that of Maxine and her mother. Living in a country and a language that she finds absolutely alien, among people who look like ghosts and barbarians, Brave Orchid resorts to her art of talk-story to communicate with her daughter. Maxine seems bewildered by the profusion of myths, dreams, and fantasy that populate her mother's stories, as she complains in her long tirade of a confession (Kingston 1976,

177–182). However, she implicitly admits that she has become a writer thanks to her mother's example. What becomes even more telling is that Ts'ai Yen's story, which significantly closes the book, is for the first time acknowledged as the result of the collaborative work of mother and daughter: "The beginning is hers, the ending, mine" (184).

At the end of the book the narrator still endeavors to answer her initial questions: "Chinese-Americans, when you try to understand what things in you are Chinese, how do you separate what is peculiar to childhood, to poverty, insanities, one family, your mother who marked your growing with stories, from what is Chinese? What is Chinese tradition and what is the movies?" (Kingston 1976, 13). Throughout the book Maxine struggles "to figure out how the invisible world the emigrants built around our childhoods fits in solid America" (5), to decipher fact from fiction and to finally construct a viable Chinese American identity. The final story, part hers part her mother's, seems to hopefully suggest that communication across generations and across cultures is possible. After all, Ts'ai Yen's song, as Maxine reminds her, "translated well" (186). **See also** Assimilation/Americanization; Chinese American Autobiography; Chinese American Novel; Feminism and Asian America; Nationalism and Asian America; Orientalism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America; Sexism and Asian America.

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BEGOÑA SIMAL GONZÁLEZ

#### ◆ WONG, ELIZABETH (1958–)

Chinese American playwright, director, screenwriter, and lecturer, Elisabeth Wong studied at the Yale School of Drama in New Haven, Connecticut, and at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University, where she graduated with an MFA in dramatic writing. She has worked as a producer and journalist and has been a staff writer for the ABC television comedy *All-American Girl*, which evolved out of the comedy act

of the Korean American stand-up comedienne Margaret Cho in 1994. The recipient of several artist residency grants, among others, Wong was a fellow at the Yaddo Colony in Saratoga Springs, Florida, in 1991, at the Ucross Foundation in Clearmont, Wyoming, in 1992, and the 2005 artist-in-residence at the L'Ecole Cantonale d'Art du Valais in Sierre, Switzerland. She has also been teaching as an adjunct visiting professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and at the University of Southern California. Wong's critical essays include "Tarot Cards a la Fornes: A Tribute," "On Writing: Inside A Red Envelope," and "Rising From the Rubble: The American Spirit." She has also been a regular contributor to the editorial section of *The Los Angeles Times*.

Wong's decision to become a playwright was not least fostered by her familiarity with Wakako Yamauchi's and David Henry Hwang's work. Her dramatic oeuvre ranges from full-length plays such as *Letters to a Student Revolutionary*, *Kimchee and Chitlins*, *The Concubine Spy*, and *China Doll* to shorter plays and plays for young audiences including *Freedom to Bare Arms (and Asses)*, *Bu and Bun*, *Punk Girls*, *Amazing Adventures of the Marvelous Monkey King*, *The Happy Prince*, and *Ibong Adarna*. Her first play, *Letters to a Student Revolutionary*, which premiered at Pan Asian Repertory Theatre in New York in 1991 and has since been staged throughout the United States and abroad, is exemplary of Wong's dramatic treatment of the entanglement of Asian and Asian American personal and public histories within a broader global framework. Moreover, Wong's work is not only marked by its focus on gendered and racialized identities, but it also pays particular attention to the more class-inflected voices in Asian American drama. Inspired by a meeting with a family acquaintance during a trip to China in the 1980s, Wong charts the pen pal friendship between Bibi, a Chinese American journalist, and Karen, a Chinese accountant, between 1979 and 1989. Wong's choice of form, the dialogic epistolary play, endows the women's correspondence with a slice-of-life feel that allows Wong a wider exploration of the differences concerning Bibi and Karen's conditions, dreams, and ambitions. Although they can often relate to each other concerning their personal lives, inevitably, their notions of female identity, free speech, gender relations, and consumerism reflect the very different social, economic, and ideological systems of their respective countries. At the same time, their partly allegorical views of the United States and China challenge any essentialist concepts of democracy, communism, and the so-called free market and planned economies. Eventually, their personal exchange is dramatically overshadowed by the Tiananmen Square protests in Beijing in the spring of 1989, and, while both characters have clearly matured throughout the course of their correspondence, particularly concerning their national identities, the play also painfully demonstrates the limits of any assumed transnational ties.

With *Kimchee and Chitlins* Wong moves beyond the binaries of Chinese and Chinese American identities toward an exploration of interethnic American conflicts. In *Kimchee*



and *Chitlins*, first performed at the Victory Gardens Theatre in Chicago in 1993, Wong examines the media representation and distortion of a conflict between Korean Americans and African Americans in New York City in the early 1990s in a Brechtian manner and focuses on the way the media are instrumentalized by both groups. Although based on a specific incidence of intercommunal violence, Wong departs from a purely realist mode and uses various theatrical devices to dramatize her own disillusion with any concepts of objectivity. To this end she employs a black and Korean chorus, and her production notes stress the symbolic character of the play and the need to abandon all props. The plot is centered on a Korean storeowner in Flatbush, whose African American customers accuse him of treating them disrespectfully and of allegedly attacking a Haitian woman, Matilda Duvet, in his store. The ensuing boycott of Grocer Mak's store by the area's black community is set in various locations (newsroom, court, store, streets), which are all significant in terms of shaping public opinion. The play's other central figure, Suzie Seeto, an ambitious, thirty-something Chinese American television reporter, sets out on a quest for the truth behind the conflict. Similar to Bibi and Karen's maturation, Suzie is exposed to an evermore confusing array of different versions of events but eventually experiences a similar transformation, when she changes from a naïve young reporter to an informed anchorwoman. Nonetheless, her path to greater historical, cultural, and spiritual knowledge is full of obstacles. Wong addresses the entangled issues of racial and national identity politics in the format of a play-within-television news, complete with satirized commercial breaks and televised warnings from the black and the Korean chorus.

The character of the African American activist Reverend Lonnie Olson Carter, who embodies a mixture of such well-known black New York activists as Reverend Al Sharpton and Sonny Carson and who is an experienced actor in the world of New York City race relations, also represents one of Wong's major literary influences, African American literature and its elements of protest and rebellion. Wong's staging of the African American protagonists as the dominant and politically active characters of the play not only reflects vital periods of African American history but also locates them as essential parts of American history. The relative marginality and inexperience in the arena of communal politics of the Korean American characters, on the other hand, mirror their later arrival and entry into pan-Asian political activism. As in *Asian American* and other plays, it is a member of the younger generation, here Grocer Mak's niece, Soomi Mak, who points toward change and the potential of protest.

Nonetheless, at the end of the play, the visionary title of the play remains a chimera. While the combination of a culinary staple of black soul food, chitlins (pig intestines), with the Korean cabbage dish kimchee proves a winning recipe for some characters, it is no panacea for solving communal conflicts. Wong not only reveals overall racial prejudices, she also emphasizes their strategic use in public

discourses. To counter the biased media representations, throughout the play Suzie provides the audience with contextual information concerning the potential causes of the economic differences between Korean and African Americans and about their respective and often traumatic histories. Yet Wong shows that this kind of complex information cannot be accommodated in short media sound bites. The play's ending is appropriate in view of its overall reliance on epic theater devices. By offering two alternative endings, it can be read as an intertextual reference to Luis Valdez's classic agitprop play, *Zoot Suit* (1978) and the audience's responsibility to consider different versions of a story and, ultimately, the truth.

For her play *China Doll (The Imagined Life of an American Actress)*, which premiered at the Pan Asian Repertory Theatre in New York in 2005 in honor of Anna May Wong's hundredth birthday, Wong drew on the life of one of her earliest role models, the Chinese American actress Anna May Wong (1905–1961). Like the playwright, Anna May grew up in Los Angeles' **Chinatown** and was eager to escape its confines. Starting with her first major role in *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924) by Douglas Fairbanks, Anna May became popular through a number of roles, including *Daughter of the Dragon* (1931), adapted from one of Sax Rohmer's Orientalist **Fu Manchu** stories, *Shanghai Express* (1932) with Marlene Dietrich and directed by Josef von Sternberg, and *Dangerous to Know* (1938), in which she starred with Charles Laughton and Anthony Quinn. In *Kimchee and Chitlins* Wong addresses racist attitudes in the news and print media; in *China Doll* she is more concerned with stereotypical representations of Asian Americans in American theater and film and racist tendencies in both industries. *China Doll* provides Wong with a showcase for a number of issues. In its depiction of Anna May's success, first in silent, then in sound movies, *China Doll* shows Elizabeth Wong's professed interest in the history of Hollywood cinema. At the same time, and taking into account Wong's penchant for docudrama, the play deals with the exoticization of non-European American actresses and actors in a time when color-blind casting had hardly been heard of. In this respect, *China Doll* may also be seen as a response to the highly publicized controversy that resulted from producer Cameron Mackintosh's decision to cast a white British actor, Jonathan Price, as the male Asian lead in the musical *Miss Saigon* in 1990. Although Anna May acted in over 50 movies, the range of her roles was mostly limited to stereotypical supporting roles, and Caucasian actresses continued to be cast as Asian female leads. Nonetheless, Wong also portrays Anna May's own ambiguous infatuation with the limelight, which she explores in a series of flashbacks.

*Dating & Mating in Modern Times* (2003) expresses Wong's provocative and panoramic view of womanhood and relationships in the new millennium, represented through monologues by a variety of women, in the tradition of Eve Ensler's play *The Vagina Monologues* (1996) and the American television series *Sex and the City*

(1998–2004), based on Candace Bushnell's newspaper column. In her more recent work, however, Wong departs from the docudrama and television formats of her earlier plays. Thus in *Love Life of a Chinese Eunuch* (2004), she explores the fate of an 18-year-old Chinese boy and his 16-year-old love Mei Mei, a concubine to the Chinese emperor, by experimenting with dramatic devices from different theatrical traditions, such as Elizabethan theater and Chinese opera. Variations of Wong's thematic concerns also appear in her plays for younger audiences, often including music, such as *The Happy Prince* (1997) and *Ibong Adarna: Fabulous Filipino Folktale* (2006). Adapted from a short story by Oscar Wilde, *The Happy Prince* centers around the friendship between a swallow and a selfish prince. *Ibong Adarna* tells the story of another bird, the magical Ibong Adarna, who is sought after to cure King Fernando's insomnia. Again, both plays are marked by Wong's theatrical double mission to entertain and to enlighten. **See also** Asian American Political Activism; Chinese American Drama.

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CHRISTIANE SCHLOTE

#### ◆ WONG, JADE SNOW (1922–2006)

Chinese American novelist and ceramicist Jade Snow Wong is primarily known for her first autobiography *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, which was first published in 1950. The book has been regarded as an early classic of Asian American literature and has never been out of print. Her story about growing up as one of nine children in a traditional Chinese immigrant family in San Francisco's **Chinatown** and her struggle to

succeed both as an American woman and as the daughter of an immigrant family continues on college reading lists. It chronicles her early life growing up in her family's small clothing factory, her time and experiences at Mills College, and her pursuing college education without financial support from her family. Her second volume of autobiography *No Chinese Stranger* was published in 1975.

Born on the day of a rare snowfall in 1922 in San Francisco, California, Jade Snow Wong, also known as Constance Ong, grew up in a Chinese immigrant family with six girls and three boys in Chinatown, which called for proper behaviors required of women in Chinese culture. Her parents were first-generation Chinese immigrants and owned a garment manufactory, by which they earned a living and which was also the world that Jade Snow grew up in. She was the fifth among six daughters in her family, which, at the time, was living in a basement of "ghetto environment," where the family was forced to share space with her father's sewing machines and workers of the garment factory. Through her childhood and teenage years, she struggled to define herself as an individual against the authority of her parents, as well as against Chinese patriarchal culture. When she graduated from high school as one of the top students, she could not get her parents' financial support to enter the university because her parents would not support a girl for college education as they had limited money. However, a determined Jade Snow attended San Francisco Junior College, supporting herself by working part-time jobs as a cook and housekeeper. She graduated with the highest honors from the college. After that, Jade Snow enrolled in Mills College with a scholarship and again graduated at the top of her class in 1942. Then she worked as a secretary with the War Production Board for three years. After **World War II** ended, having worked in American corporate offices, Wong realized that a young, Chinese female could never rise to the top in white male-dominated fields. Since she had learned to make pottery, she decided to make a living of it. So she resigned her job and went into ceramics, which she truly loved. Jade Snow asked the owner of the Chinatown Bazaar shop to use his front window space to demonstrate her pottery making. Her creative efforts attracted the attention of many people. However, her own mother was not understanding and would not even look at her work. In Chinatown, many first-generation immigrants laughed in her face, for no Chinese immigrants had done that kind of work before the notice of so many people, especially no woman. Her action was free of Chinese culture's relentless subjugation of women and violated the norm of a female's professional choices in Chinese culture. However, the demand for her pottery grew in the marketplace from white consumers. As a skillful and gifted ceramist, Jade Snow's pottery and enamelware were showcased throughout the country and around the world. In 1947 her enamel work was included in 100 Objects of Fine Design, an exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In 1950 Wong married a fellow Chinatown native and artist, Woodrow Ong, and they began to collaborate on

their work. They moved into a studio in the vibrant artists' community of Jackson Square in New Orleans and were soon invited to produce a show at the Art Institute of Chicago. In 1952 she had a one-woman show at the Chicago Art Institute. The International Ceramic Museum in Faenza, Italy, the Detroit Institute of the Arts, the New Orleans Museum of Art, and the Oakland Museum of California are some of the museums that keep her work in their permanent collections. As she matured, her recognition in the art world grew. Her pottery work was later put on display in many art museums nation-wide. When Wong and her husband began a travel business on Polk Street in San Francisco, they closed their wholesale pottery business. In 2002, a retrospective exhibit at the Chinese Historical Society of America Museum and Learning Center celebrated her more than 50 years of craftsmanship. Jade Snow Wong died on March 16, 2006.

But it is Jade Snow Wong's memoir of her early years that most people will remember her by. In 1950 she published the first of her two autobiographies, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*. As soon as it appeared, it caused a sensation in the United States. It was a Book of the Month Club selection in 1950 and was translated into a number of languages by the U.S. State Department, which in 1953 sent her on a four-month speaking tour in Asia, and she spoke to more than 200 groups from Tokyo to Karachi, about the successful life of the Chinese people in the United States. The book was made into a half hour PBS special in 1976.

Wong's *Fifth Chinese Daughter* is one of the early autobiographies by an Asian American woman writer and thus occupies a special and important place in the history of Asian American literature. The book describes the growing process of the fifth daughter born in a Chinese immigrant family, who cast off the yoke of her father, her family, and her traditional Chinese culture. The father had received some education in China but held his family to the strong Chinese feudal belief that man is superior to woman. He was against girls receiving advanced education. Jade Snow, with an independent and individualistic consciousness, clashed severely with her father's old-world views. She finished her college education by supporting herself through work and gained a successful career as a writer and ceramicist.

Jade Snow Wong told her story in *Fifth Chinese Daughter* in the third-person singular, in a concise language and a mild tone. The purpose of her writing was to create better understanding of the Chinese culture on the part of Americans. Indeed, her writing was meant to correct the distorted images of Chinese and Chinese Americans and created the new image of Chinese as a **model minority**. For a long time American literature and popular culture have presented demeaning and inaccurate "Oriental" stereotypes of Asians, including Chinese. Mainstream films, books, magazines, and cartoons depicted Chinese as evil and brute villains, prostitutes, and good and loyal servants. The cunning, sinister, and cold-blooded villain Dr. Fu Manchu,

created by the British author Sax Rhomer, was popularized in Hollywood films from the early 1920s through the 1940s. In the Eurocentric American mainstream discourses and imaginations, Chinese males were depicted as inscrutable, mysterious, exotic, unreasonable, wise but unattractive, effeminate, obedient domestics—"natural" houseboys, cooks, gardeners, dishwashers, and laundry workers. Asian women, on the other hand, were frequently portrayed as docile, obedient, erotic-exotic, and submissive to men. These pervasive images constructed and recreated by racists and sexists have helped to make the experiences and histories of Chinese Americans (especially Chinese American women) invisible, inferior, and marginalized, reinforcing the stereotypes and even working toward their erasure. Jade Snow Wong depicts a Chinese American female who, born to a poor immigrant family, finished her college education through her own efforts and succeeded both as a writer and ceramist who subverted the negative stereotypes of Chinese American women by setting a good example of a model minority. Wong shows American readers a Chinese woman who made it in the United States and gained recognition by the American mainstream almost single-handedly, and she thus portrayed a positive image of Chinese American women.

However, Wong fell into a trap of the mystique of the model minority. As Elaine H. Kim argues, the "model minority" Asian, by never challenging white society, at once vindicates that society from the charge of racism and points up the folly of those less obliging minorities who are ill-advised enough to protest against inequality or take themselves 'too seriously.' As a permanent inferior, the 'good' Asian can be assimilated into American life. All that is required from him is that he accept his assigned status cheerfully and reject whatever aspects of his racial and cultural background prove offensive to the dominant society, and of course he must never speak for himself" (1982, 18–19).

In Wong's book, she did not reject her Chinese heritage; on the contrary, she cherished it as a value to mark her difference from mainstream writers and to engage the reader with materials unfamiliar to them. She acquired knowledge of China and Chinese culture through her family, especially from her father, who had been a teacher in a private school in China. For herself, she maximized the integration of the two often conflicting cultures. In her work, Wong showed a good way for the American mainstream society to understand Chinese Americans like her own family. However, she also depicted the cultural clashes between first-generation immigrants and American-borns throughout the autobiography. American culture values equality and the freedom to make choices, especially giving females the dignity and same rights as to men. Because traditional Chinese culture maintains the ideology of male superiority over females, requiring the fulfillment of the "three obediences and four virtues," children must practice **filial piety** by respecting their parents and by taking their orders

unconditionally. When traditional Chinese culture encounters American culture, conflict of generational differences and clashes of values occur between generations. The American-born Jade Snow, even when she was very young, felt uncomfortable with her father's old values. When her mother gave birth to a second son, her father was so thrilled that Jade Snow felt displaced and unequally treated. As young as she was, she had an instinctive aversion to sexism. For Jade Snow's father, the idea that women were inferior to men and that the son was more important than the daughter under all circumstances was rooted in his mind. Such views biased him against supporting his daughter for a college education after her graduation from high school, which he thought was enough for a girl to be a qualified mother. For example, when Jade Snow asked him for financial support for college, he replied:

You are quite familiar by now with the fact that it is the sons who perpetuate our ancestral heritage by permanently bearing the Wong family name and transmitting it through their blood line, and therefore the sons must have priority over the daughters when parental provision for advantages must be limited by economic necessity. Generations of sons, bearing our Wong name, are those who make pilgrimages to ancestral burial grounds and preserve them forever. Our daughters leave home at marriage to give sons to their husbands' families to carry on the heritage for their names . . . You have been given an above-average Chinese education for an American-born Chinese girl. You now have an average education for an American girl. I must still provide with all my power for your Older Brother's advanced medical training . . . If you have the talent, you can provide for your own college education. (Wong 1989, 109)

Her father's completely different attitude toward the education of his son and his daughter went against what Jade Snow believed about equality and about being an independent woman, and of course it caused conflict between the father and the daughter. A formerly obedient and filial daughter now fought her father and rebelled openly and furiously against him by resolving to earn tuition by herself to go to college and receive a higher education. At the end of the book, Jade Snow gained intellectual maturity, rid herself of much of her familial oppression, developed her own talent, and discovered her personal strength and identity. She finished college by working part-time jobs, found a position in a company during the war, and finally opened her own pottery business in Chinatown. She bought the first car in Chinatown, realized her American Dream, and finally reconciled with her father. As Amy Ling observes, "For Jade Snow Wong, silence was an externally imposed condition. When she broke free of her father's control, she broke into words, reporting the conditions she had overcome to arrive where she had" (1990, 127).

In *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, through the father-daughter story, Wong delineated her process of constructing a female identity. She wrote with a female consciousness: a sense

of self-independence, subjectivity, and equality with males. This consciousness comes from the American culture that is different in its views of women from those rooted in traditional Chinese culture. Confucianism believes that “women without talent is a virtue,” and that women should not receive an education because they are expected to fulfill their gender roles at home—to be a good wife and a good mother. In her book, Wong described the many conflicts she had with her patriarchal father. Raised and educated in China, her father was deeply influenced by its traditional culture, but he was also different from many other Chinese men, and as such he was more open-minded. He believed that girls should also have some education, but no more than what is required for raising and educating their children. This view sharply countered Jade Snow’s belief that prompted her to claim, “I can’t help being born a girl. Perhaps, even being a girl, I don’t want to marry, *just* to raise sons! Perhaps I have a right to want more than sons! I am a person, besides being a female!” (1989, 110). Jade Snow’s declaration expressed her desire for equality between the two sexes; females should not be oppressed by elements of traditional Chinese culture that devalues women; females should not be a mere tool of reproduction for her husband’s family; they should not be inferior and subordinate to men; they should not merely serve their husbands and raise children as traditional women historically did. Jade Snow refused to accept the traditional gender roles and to be the inferior Other. The consciousness of female individuality expressed here embodies the significance of her book. “I am a person, besides being a female!” These words are her declaration of independence.

Wong’s autobiography has since been disparaged by a number of Asian American critics. Elaine H. Kim criticizes Wong for not confronting racial discrimination but rather providing most exotic, interesting things to the white society, and for asserting Chinese identity being restricted to identification with whatever is acceptable to that society; the Chinese identity that Wong defined involves whatever is her reference point. Frank **Chin** faults her for giving away her heritage culture to cater to the whites. Sau-ling Cynthia Wong argues that Jade Snow Wong’s aim is to please the mainstream not to threaten it, and that her work is nothing but a harmless vehicle for recreation and amusement, which has no political intention. It should be pointed out that compared with the works published after the 1970s, Jade Snow Wong’s is not as profound in its exploration of issues raised in her book; the structure is simple, and the narration is linear. Besides, she has deeply internalized American culture and its social values, and for the most part seems indifferent, if not blind, to the racial discrimination then rampant in the United States. Furthermore, to portray the image of model minority, Wong pretifies the United States and caters to mainstream readers. All of these issues have affected the way critics and readers approach her book. However, considering the historical and social environment of the time of its production, Wong’s autobiography is of literary and political significance and stands in a unique place in the cannon of Asian



American women's writing: *Fifth Chinese Daughter* is the first autobiography that features an Asian American woman protagonist, a woman who rebels against the Chinese patriarchal culture and her family and achieves an individual's success in American society. Her autobiography breaks the long silence held by Asian American women and it thus blazes the path for what was to follow. The book influenced Maxine Hong Kingston considerably, as Amy Ling notes, "Kingston herself considers Jade Snow Wong a literary mentor, describing her as 'the Mother of Chinese American literature' and the only Chinese American author she read before writing her own book. 'I found Jade Snow Wong's book myself in the library, and was flabbergasted, helped, inspired, affirmed, made possible as a writer—for the first time I saw a person who looked like me as a heroine of a book, as a maker of a book'" (Ling 1990, 120).

*No Chinese Stranger*, published in 1979, can be viewed as a sequel to *Fifth Chinese Daughter*. The book offers a look at a second-generation Chinese American family as they move through the 1950s through the 1970s. It takes up the life of Jade Snow Wong where *Fifth Chinese Daughter* left off. The book deals with Jade Snow's effort to establish her ceramic shop; her love with Woodrow Ong and their marriage; her efforts to raise her four children; her tours and lectures throughout Southeast Asia with her husband in the early 1950s at the behest and sponsorship of the U.S. State Department, and her visit to China with her husband shortly after the historic visit by President Richard Nixon there. The major difference is that when she wrote the first book, she used the third person singular, and in the second book she changed to the first-person voice. *No Chinese Stranger* did not garner the kind of attention *Fifth Chinese Daughter* did. The lack of diversity of expression and a unity of the theme and the loose structure are probably among some of the reasons for its less than enthusiastic reception. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Assimilation/Americanization; Chinese American Autobiography; Racism and Asian America; Sexism and Asian America.

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### ◆ WONG, SHAWN HSU (1949–)

Chinese American novelist, anthologist, editor, literary critic, and professor of English, Shawn Hsu Wong was born Shawn Hsu on August 11, 1949, in Oakland, California, as the only child to Peter Hsu, a graduate student in civil engineering at the University of California, Berkeley, and Maria Huang Hsu, a student at the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland. He was mainly raised in Berkeley, California. Like the protagonist in his first novel *Homebase*, Shawn was bereaved of his parents when he was very young. His father died in 1957, at the age of 40; three years later, his mother married Henry Wong, and Shawn took his stepfather's last name. His mother died in 1965 at 39.

Two years after his mother's death, Shawn Wong was admitted into San Francisco State University and in 1969 he transferred to the University of California at Berkeley, where he received his bachelor's degree in English in 1971. He received a master's degree in creative writing at San Francisco State University in 1974. While working on his degree, Wong taught as a part-time lecturer at Mills College in Oakland in 1972. He also taught part-time at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and at San Francisco State University. Since 1984, Wong has been working at the University of Washington, Seattle, as an assistant professor in the Department of American Ethnic Studies (1984–1995), as director of the Creative Writing Program (1995–1997), and then as chair of the Department of English (1997–2002). Currently he is a professor of English and director of the University Honors Program at the University of Washington, Seattle.

Shawn Hsu Wong is primarily known as a novelist. In 1979 he published *Homebase: A Novel*, which was based on his MA thesis. This novel won him the 1980 Pacific Northwest Bookseller's Award and the 15th Annual Governor's Writers Day Award of Washington. In 1981 Wong received a National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowship. In 1995 readers saw the publication of his second novel *American Knees*, which was adapted into a film titled *Americanese*, of which Shawn Wong served as associate producer.

As a *bildungsroman*, *Homebase* tells of the growth of Rainsford Chan, the fourth-generation Chinese American protagonist, from babyhood to manhood and his search for a homestead in the familiar but hostile land of the United States. Orphaned when he was very young, Rainsford knows from experience the suffering and struggles of the "motherless and wifeless" (1991, 52) Chinese American male pioneers and understands well the "tradition of orphaned men in this country" (1991, 7). This book is thus devoted to that male community and narrates the constant struggles of the male ancestors of the Chan family for a home base in American soil. As the narrative freely shuttles back and forth between reality and fantasy, or between Rainsford's life story and memories of his ancestors, the author gradually unravels how Rainsford's efforts

of searching for a homestead are inseparable from the geographical setting of the United States, and how the process of recording the Chinese American experience is also a process of drawing a Chinese American map. Places that serve as landmarks of the Chinese American history play an important role in the novel. In the end, Rainsford, who is named for the northern California town where his family settled three generations earlier, claims the United States by renaming places on the American land. His renaming of these places indicates that the footprints of Chinese Americans are part of the general American map that constructs American history. The novel also subverts the popular negative stereotypes of effeminate, passive, and uncompetitive Chinese American men by casting male members of the Chan family as master sportsmen and "heroes of locomotion" (S.C. Wong 1993, 145).

The novel has won favorable comments from critics such as Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, Elaine Kim, and Xiao-huang Yin, among others. For example, S.E. Solberg points out in the afterword of the novel that "the search for a homebase led to memory, history, [and] led into a search for the roots that bound the Chinese American to America" (100). Sau-ling Cynthia Wong on the other hand links the novel to a prominent aspect of American culture—sports, which is one of the master motifs in American society (1993). In another context Sau-ling Cynthia Wong points out that *Homebase* "interweaves personal history and collective trauma to achieve cultural healing" and that it is a "lyrical invocation of Chinese ancestry, American land, and the Chinese American history" (1997, 49).

In 1994 Shawn Wong was awarded the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Residency in Italy, and he was able to find time to write his second novel, *American Knees*. Compared with *Homebase*, *American Knees* depicts a different generation of Asian Americans and the relationship between contemporary Asian American men and Asian American women. The former work is poetic, and the latter is humorous. The two respective protagonists—Rainsford Chan and Raymond Ding—search for their identity through different ways. While Rainsford Chan seeks to secure his identity by tracing the footprints of his ancestors and by renaming places on the American map, Raymond Ding tries to define his identity through his relationship with different Asian American women. *Homebase* is a manifestation of Shawn Wong's sense of history, and *American Knees* his sense of humor.

*American Knees*, as Monica Chiu observes, "is fraught with real ethnic tension in its narratives about ethnic others and the ethnic self" (1997, 132). The title of this novel comes from a schoolyard taunt encountered while Raymond Ding was a child: "What are you—Chinese, Japanese, or American knees?" (1995, 12). All his life, Raymond has been overreacting to this jeer, especially so in his love affair. As a dutiful only son, he first marries Darleen, a Chinese American woman whose family owns two upscale Chinese restaurants and whose father favors him by offering him a job as the night

manager at one of the restaurants. Their marriage ends in divorce, however. While reading Darleen's proposed divorce settlement, his lawyer warns: "You won't even be Chinese after your wife's attorney gets through with you" (1995, 11). Trying to retain his ethnic identity, Raymond goes through love affairs with two other Asian American women. He first falls in love with the beautiful Aurora Crane, who is half-Japanese and half-Irish. Realizing Aurora is not Asian enough and being an assistant minority affairs director at Jack London College in Oakland, California, Raymond engages Aurora in a college ethnic studies class by constant debates on issues of race, culture, and ethnic identities, sometimes even when they are making love. Because he lets his intellectual ideas get in the way of his relationship with Aurora, their love affair stumbles and finally ends in separation. Then he dates Betty, a one hundred percent Asian girl, who is a first-generation Vietnamese American divorcee. Ironically for Betty, Raymond is not Asian enough. Finally, she leaves him when she realizes that Raymond is still in love with Aurora.

*American Knees* not only reflects Shawn Wong's experience as a lecturer of Asian American literature and ethnic studies at various universities but also expresses his protest against stereotyping of Asian Americans. In 1993 Wong wrote in an article "Beyond Bruce Lee" that on television and in movies Asian American males usually are seen as "gardeners, houseboys, ruthless foreign businessmen, [and] cooks," and they seldom appear as "husbands, fathers, or lovers" (Simal, online). *American Knees* is his response to that stereotype prevailing in the American media. Critics have also recognized the emphasis of gender and sexuality in the novel. As characters frequently "unbuttoned, unhooked, unsnapped, [and] unzipped" their clothes (1995, 50), Julie Shiroishi thus remarks in *San Francisco Bay Guardian* that in *American Knees*, "Shawn Wong adds a funny, sexy chapter to Asian American Literature" (1995, back cover). Monica Chiu also comments that in Wong's book, "Politics meets sexuality" (1997, online).

Besides his novels, Wong has contributed greatly to Asian American literature as the coeditor and editor of five **Asian American** and one multicultural literary anthologies. Collaborating with Frank **Chin**, Jeffery Paul **Chan**, and Lawson Fusao **Inada**, Shawn Wong and his team initiated CARP—the Combined Asian American Resources Project, and were dedicated to recovering the long ignored and suppressed Asian American voices. The team published two groundbreaking anthologies, *Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian American Writers* (1974) and *The Big Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature* (1991). Despite criticisms of *Aiiieeeee!*'s "preoccupation with reasserting Asian American manhood" (Cheung 1997, 10) and *The Big Aiiieeeee!*'s sweeping distinction between "the real" and "the fake," these two anthologies helped establish a canon of Asian American literature that had been long ignored, to subvert the emasculating, stereotypical depictions of Asian American males, to educate

readers about Asian American history and identity, and to advance the Asian American literary movement.

Shawn Wong is also coeditor of *Before Columbus Foundation Fiction/Poetry Anthology: Selections from the American Book Awards, 1980–1990* (1992), *Literary Mosaic: Asian American Literature* (1995), and *Asian Diasporas: Cultures, Identities, Representations* (2004). In 1996 Wong published his singly edited anthology *Asian American Literature: A Brief Introduction and Anthology*. See also Asian American Stereotypes; Asian Diasporas.

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KUILAN LIU

#### ◆ WOO, MERLE (1941–)

Merle Woo is a Chinese/Korean American activist, writer, poet, and author, and was lecturer of **Asian American studies**, gender and women's studies, education, and English at San Francisco State University and at the University of California, Berkeley, from 1969 to 1997. Woo was one of the first Asian American authors to write explicitly **lesbian literature**.

Born to a Korean mother and Chinese father, Woo spent most of her life in the San Francisco Bay Area and attended Catholic schools. Her parents figured it would provide her with the best education, although they were neither Catholic nor affluent. She grew up in San Francisco **Chinatown** with parents Helene, a clerical worker, and Richard, a butcher. Woo received her baccalaureate degree in English, and four years later completed her master of arts, also in English, both at San Francisco State University. In 1971 she entered the doctoral program in English at the University of California, Berkeley, but left the program soon afterward because she felt it was too elitist and not relevant to her life and work at SFSU. While an undergraduate, Woo married and had two children, Emily and Paul. In this respect, her life is similar to other lesbian feminist writers of the time, such as Audre Lorde and Adrienne Rich, who married and had children before coming out.

Woo became more politicized through firsthand exposure to radical activism during the **Third World students' strikes** for ethnic studies and affirmative action

programs on the SFSU campus in 1968–1969. She attributes her first job as an English instructor for the Educational Opportunity Program to the Third World Strike and various social movements that were prominent in the late 1960s and early 1970s. She has been active in **Asian American**, feminist, and LGBT liberation movements and has fought for immigrants' and workers' rights. Woo has advocated for coalition-building to fight against different forms of oppression. She was also an active member of Radical Women and the Freedom Socialist Party, both multi-issue political organizations that have been supportive of multilingual education, immigrant rights, and the Asian American movement. Woo and her colleagues' activism and oppositional consciousness came to be known as U.S. Third World feminism.

In 1977, Woo left her position at SFSU to work as a lecturer in the Asian American studies program at the University of California, Berkeley. Four years later in June of 1982, she was fired. Woo charged that the UC Regents violated her constitutional rights to free speech, several counts of wrongful discharge, breach in contract, and discrimination based on sex, race, sexual orientation, and political ideology. In 1986 she filed complaints with the American Federation of Teachers and won two court decisions, both before the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) and the California Superior Court. PERB found that Woo and other lecturers were unfairly terminated when their maximum teaching time was reduced from eight to four years.

Woo had been hired under the Security Employment Track, which allowed for an eight-year probationary period. However, the UC–Berkeley administration terminated her contract under the “four-year rule.” This rule was instituted two years after Woo was hired. The PERB ruling stated that the “four-year rule” was used to censor Woo because of her criticisms of the program, ideology, and sexual orientation. With the support of some students and colleagues, she was reinstated in 1984. She received back pay for the two years in litigation but transferred from Asian American studies to the Graduate School of Education. In the midst of legal battles in 1991 on the Berkeley campus, she was diagnosed with breast cancer and decided to drop her claims to focus on her health. Woo returned to SFSU to teach in the Women's Studies Department. However, she resigned from the department in 1997 due to subsequent disagreements over curriculum issues.

As a poet, Woo unabashedly breaks silences around the questions of lesbianism and sex in Asian American communities. Woo's “Untitled” was published in *The Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology*, an edited volume by Shirley Geok-lin Lim (1989). Perhaps Woo's most well-known work is *Yellow Woman Speaks*, published in 1986. It is a collection of thought-provoking poems examining her life and political activism through autobiographical writings. Along with this volume, her poetry and prose writings have appeared in numerous anthologies. Woo challenged sexist and racist images of Asian American women as demure, passive,

invisible, and subordinated objects. Possibly her most famous prose writing is "Letter to Ma," which first appeared in 1981 in *This Bridge Called My Back*, a groundbreaking volume edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua on radical writings from women of color.

In "Letter to Ma," Woo discussed how and where Asian American women were positioned in U.S. society. She described the ways in which racism and sexism permeate inter- and intraethnic relationships and her own family. This letter made an attempt to reconcile her complicated relationship with her mother. In the letter Woo wrote, "I desperately want you to understand me and my work. Ma, to know what I am doing! When you distort what I say, like thinking I am against all 'Caucasians' or that I am ashamed of Dad, then I feel anger and more frustration and want to slash out, not at you, but at those external forces which keep us apart" (1983, 141). Woo also responded to Frank Chin et al. (1974) in *Äiiiiieee!: An Anthology of Asian American Writers* when they claimed Asian American women were selling out to the dominant, mainstream society by hating their culture and Asian American men; marrying white men; and getting baptized. Woo discussed the tensions between Asian American men and women writers and stated that the men have not always been supportive of Asian American women writers.

In the same piece Woo also wrote about the "tragic truth" of men of color who "with a clear vision, fight the racism in white society, but have bought into the white male definition of masculinity" (1983, 145). She believed in the importance of Asian American men supporting Third World women writers and fighting sexism because, "to be a Chinese (Asian) man in America is to be a victim of both racism and sexism. He was made to feel soft and weak, whose only job is to serve white" (Moraga and Anzaldua 1983, 145). In her more recent work, "Three Decades of Class Struggle on Campus," an edited volume by Fred Ho et al. (2000), Woo reflected on her role as a lecturer in academia as one long class struggle. She emphasized the conflicting sides of labor and struggle. She described administrators and tenured faculty members who were "opportunists and careerists trying to maintain the status quo of capitalist education and hierarchical power structure" (159) on one side, and progressive lecturers, some tenured faculty, staff, students, and community activists on the other.

Woo's writing and politics are undoubtedly in the traditions of the radical left. Some of her contemporaries include cultural theorists Jacques Derrida, Hayden White, and Michel Foucault; decolonial theorist Franz Fanon; and other U.S. Third World feminists such as Aida Hurtado, Cherrie Moraga, Gloria Anzaldua, Audre Lorde, Paula Gunn Allen, Patricia Hill Collins, Adrienne Rich, Barbara Christian, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, and Gayatri Spivak. Woo and other U.S. Third World feminists, in their writings, discuss why it was necessary for them to break away from the dominant, white, middle-class feminist movement. **See also** Asian



American Political Activism; Feminism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America; Sexism and Asian America.

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KEVIN D. LAM

## ◆ WORLD WAR II (1939–1945)

World War II is an extremely important event in Asian American history. By showing how events taking place outside the United States significantly affected Asian Americans, it magnified the significance of transnationalism in their lives. For most Asian Americans, including Chinese, Filipinos, and Koreans, World War II was a "good war," in which their mother countries became America's ally in the struggle against Japanese imperialism. The wartime atmosphere also provided the opportunity to fight anti-Asian racism. The repeal of the **Chinese exclusion acts** marked the beginning of the collapse of the United States' longstanding Asian exclusion policy. It also gave an Asian group the right to become naturalized citizens for the first time in American history. Meanwhile, however, the internment of over 100,000 Japanese Americans during World War II demonstrates the double-edgedness of Asian American transnationalism.

To defend and rescue their country of origin from Japanese occupation, many Filipino Americans joined the U.S. Armed Forces, along with tens of thousands of their fellow compatriots in the Philippines. In so doing, many Filipino immigrants became naturalized citizens. A sizeable number of Chinese Americans also enlisted. The massive campaign that Chinese Americans conducted to aid China during World War II exemplifies the successful efforts by Asian Americans to fight anti-Asian racism in a transnational theater. Chinese Americans, who had long believed that their fate was tied with that of China, made tremendous efforts and sacrifices during the eight years of the Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945), in which they donated 25,000,000 U.S. dollars directly to China. Meanwhile, they successfully linked the Chinese Pacific War to their struggle against anti-Chinese racism in the United States. Capitalizing on the United States' growing sympathy for China, they raised millions of dollars in highly visible events, like the "Bowl of Rice," effectively helped reduce America's anti-Chinese sentiments, and eventually launched a direct assault on the exclusion policy. After **Pearl Harbor**, it became increasingly difficult for the United States to defend that policy, not only morally but also militarily. The repeal of Chinese exclusion won widespread support, even from traditionally anti-Chinese groups, such as organized labor. But the limitations of repeal are also obvious and serious: after 1943 only 105 Chinese—up to 75 percent of them from China and 25 percent from elsewhere—would be allowed to come to the United States. Equally important, however, we must adequately recognize its historic significance. The repeal marked the beginning of the collapse of Asian exclusion in U.S. immigration and naturalization policies, which the anti-Asian and anti-immigration forces had strived to build for more than 60 years. It also marked the first time in American history that Asian immigrants could become naturalized citizens, signaling an end to the principle established by the 1790 Naturalization Act, that stated only free white men could be naturalized. It was a principle that was modified regarding African Americans and Africans after the Civil War but was repeatedly reaffirmed concerning Asians.

A landmark development in Asian American history, the repeal of 1943 also triggered a series of legislation that gave Asian people a quota and the right to become naturalized citizens. Part of the motivation was the concern that oppressed people all over the world would look up to the United States as a model of justice and equality. In 1946 the Indian Bill was passed, and, through an amendment, the bill also included Filipinos, giving them a quota of 100. The McCarran-Walter Act of 1952, an otherwise conservative law that reinforced the immigration restrictions implemented in the 1920s and continued to ban immigration of Asians from the Western Hemisphere, allowed limited immigration from East and South Asian countries through the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Triangle. The 1952 act also allowed Japanese immigrants to be naturalized and gave Japan a quota of 185.

The experience that Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans, and others found so liberating and empowering during World War II was not shared by Japanese Americans. In early 1942, shortly after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on December 7, 1941, over 100,000 Japanese Americans were removed from their communities in the western states of Oregon, Washington, and California and placed in internment camps under Executive Order 9066 signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Ample evidence suggests that the internment of Japanese Americans was largely motivated by racism. General John L. DeWitt, commander of the Western Defense Command in charge of the removal and internment of Japanese Americans, considered the Japanese an enemy race, a view that echoed the increasing anti-Japanese sentiments in society. Moreover, there was no military justification for the action. In fact, there is no evidence that any members of Japanese American communities committed any activities of espionage or sabotage. And the Hawaii Japanese community, which was closer to both military action and Japan, was not evacuated, further proving the fallacy of the military necessity argument.

At this dark moment in American history, Japanese Americans had the burden of having to prove their loyalty to the United States. Young *nisei* (second-generation Japanese Americans) did so with daring bravery by risking their own lives, as more than 30,000 of them joined the U.S. military. One of the *nisei* units, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, became the most decorated unit of its size within the U.S. Armed Forces during the war. They paid a price for their honor and commitment: of the 18,000 *nisei* who served in this unit, there were 9,500 casualties.

Many non-Japanese Asians supported the internment of the Japanese, showing how geopolitical developments on the other side of the Pacific can create deep divisions within Asian America. It also illustrates the notion that “Asian America” was for the most part an artificial external designation that was by no means based on lasting inherent cultural and historical coherence among different individual groups.

As Japanese Americans lived in the confines of the camps behind barbed wires, wartime shortage of labor and manpower also created economic opportunities for non-Japanese Asian Americans. While many young men enlisted, others, including a growing number of women, found employment opportunities. Such opportunities were in the more lucrative mainstream industries, giving many Asian Americans a chance to step outside the boundaries of their communities. Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese veterans took advantage of the G.I. Bill to gain education and thereby joined the ranks of the middle class.

World War II also created various opportunities for several Asian American communities to grow. The War Bride Acts of 1945 and 1947 allowed the wives of veterans to come to the United States, for example. As a result, many Chinese women arrived, following their husbands returning from the war. Their arrival significantly

improved the longstanding imbalanced sex ratio in Chinese America. Also coming to the United States were significant numbers of Japanese, Filipino, and Korean women, many of whom married white GIs. **See also** Issei, Nisei, Sansei; Japanese American Internment; Racism and Asian America.

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YONG CHEN

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## Y



### ◆ YAMAMOTO, HISAYE (1921–)

Japanese American short story writer, essayist, and journalist Hisaye Yamamoto, a *nisei*, was born August 23, 1921, in Redondo Beach, California. During the **Japanese American internment**, she was confined with her family at a camp in Poston, Arizona, from 1942 until 1945. Yamamoto's awards include the John Hay Whitney Foundation Opportunity Fellowship (1950–1951), an American Book Award for Lifetime Achievement (1986) from the Before Columbus Foundation, and the **Association for Asian American Studies** Award for Literature (1988). Several of her short stories have been widely anthologized.

Yamamoto is a nationally acclaimed writer of short stories. "Yoneko's Earthquake," published originally in the Winter 1951 issue of *Furioso*, was selected for inclusion in *The Best American Short Stories of 1952*. Numerous others have been listed as stories of distinction for the years they were published. Her best known stories are collected in *Seventeen Syllables and Other Stories*, originally published in 1988 and revised and expanded in 2001 to include four more selections. A similar collection of Yamamoto's stories was published in Japan in 1985. A one-hour movie, *Hot Summer Winds*, made for the PBS-TV series *American Playhouse* and broadcast on May 22, 1991, is loosely based on two of Yamamoto's short stories, "Seventeen Syllables" and "Yoneko's Earthquake." Despite her success, Yamamoto remains modest. In an essay on writing published in 1976, she said that when she fills out a questionnaire, she feels she must list her occupation as "housewife." Asked in 1987 to name her favorite of the many stories she has written, Yamamoto replied that none of them was any good. In recent years, Yamamoto has become a popular guest speaker at colleges and universities. Preferring not to fly, she frequently travels by train.

Yamamoto, her parents, and her three brothers lived on a succession of farms that they leased in California, first in the Redondo Beach area and later in Downey, Artesia, Norwalk, Hynes (now known as Paramount), and then Oceanside. At that time, the Alien Land Law of 1913 prohibited all aliens who were ineligible for citizenship (including the Japanese) from owning land in California. The law further declared that these aliens were not allowed to lease land for more than three years. When Yamamoto was eight, at the beginning of the Depression, her family worked a farm in the oil fields, where they grew strawberries. She ordinarily did not work the fields, but her brothers did. Yamamoto says she usually was inside with her nose in a book. Her recollections of this period are in the essay "Life Among the Oil Fields: A Memoir."

Like most Japanese American children of the time, Yamamoto attended both public school and Japanese language school. A voracious reader, she enjoyed school very much but says she was inconsistent in her school work. However, she managed to be named valedictorian of her grammar school class. Upon graduation from high school, Yamamoto was named a lifetime member of the California Scholarship Federation, an honor based on scholarship and service. Yamamoto's mother encouraged her to seek higher education, and at 16, Yamamoto enrolled at Compton Junior College. She graduated from Compton as salutatorian. In high school and junior college, she studied French, Spanish, German, and Latin.

Yamamoto has said that her mother encouraged her to write and that both her mother and her maternal grandfather were interested in literature and writing. One of the main characters in "Seventeen Syllables" is an issei housewife whose poems are published in a Japanese American newspaper. The husband in the story disapproves of his wife's writing and destroys a Hiroshige print she wins for her haiku. At the end, her writing aspirations dashed, the woman makes her daughter promise never to marry. Yamamoto has called "Seventeen Syllables" her mother's story, even though the details are not true of her mother's life. She explains that, like most women and certainly Rosie's mother, her mother did not fulfill her potential. She channeled her artistic ambitions through activities with the Japanese school mothers' club and cooking.

Yamamoto first became aware of Japanese writing when she began reading the old Japanese American newspapers that her parents bought to be used in their nursery. They folded the newspapers into caps and set them over young seedlings to protect them from the cold. Yamamoto remembers reading nisei poets and an advice column in these newspapers. Several years later, at age 14, Yamamoto began contributing items in English to *Kashu Maimichi*, a Japanese American newspaper. She also contributed to other publications, and she was so dispirited to find her first rejection slip in the mailbox that she tore the rejected story into tiny bits and scattered the pieces along the road all the way home.

Yamamoto's mother died in September 1939, years before "Seventeen Syllables" was written. By 1942 Yamamoto was keeping house for herself, her father, and her three brothers while writing and, as she says, collecting rejection slips. In addition to short stories, she wrote a weekly column for *Kashu Mainichi*. The family was living on a farm in Oceanside when they, along with more than 110,000 other Japanese and Japanese Americans, were ordered to leave their possessions and enter internment camps. Yamamoto remembers working with her father and brothers to pick the strawberry crop just before being evacuated. Yamamoto and her family were sent to a camp at Poston, Arizona, not far from the California state line. Later, the Oceanside farm they had worked became Camp Pendleton, a U.S. Marine Corps training base.

The camp at Poston was so large that it was divided into three camps: I, II, and III. At its peak, Poston held nearly 18,000 in the three sections. Yamamoto speaks fondly of the camp experience. It was not until she watched a television documentary about the Japanese American internment narrated by Walter Cronkite that Yamamoto realized how profoundly it had affected her. She was surprised to find herself weeping as she watched the documentary because her internment camp experience was largely positive. It was there that she met Wakako Nakamura **Yamauchi**, another young nisei woman, who became a lifelong friend, and whom she introduced to literature. Yamamoto enjoyed writing for the camp newspaper, the *Poston Chronicle*. One of her assignments, from editor Sus Matsumoto, was to write a serialized murder mystery, which she called "Death Rides the Rails to Poston." In a note to the story, Yamamoto thanks the Pharmacy Department of the Poston Hospital for making the murder possible, no doubt referring to technical advice regarding the morphine pills that are central to the story. Working on the *Chronicle*, Yamamoto met several nisei poets who were regular contributors to the Japanese American newspapers she had been reading. She also met several nisei newspaper reporters, including Franklin Sugiyama.

By 1944, the U.S. government was allowing some internees to relocate outside the camps, and it had already allowed young nisei men to join the Army by volunteering for combat in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Yamamoto and two of her brothers had gone to jobs in Springfield, Massachusetts. Yamamoto worked as a cook. They were there about a month when they received word that their other brother, who had joined the Army, had been killed in combat in Italy. Their grief-stricken father begged them to return to the camp to be with him, and they did, even though officials at the War Relocation Authority tried to talk them out of it.

After the war, Yamamoto got a job working for the *Los Angeles Tribune*, an African American newspaper. There, she says, she learned that the racial prejudice she had encountered as a Japanese American was nothing compared to what African Americans had faced for several hundred years. In her 1985 essay "A Fire in Fontana," Yamamoto tells about working at the newspaper and how she came to understand the



anger of African Americans. Originally published in the December 21, 1985, issue of *Rafu Shimpo*, a daily newspaper for Japanese Americans, "A Fire in Fontana" can be found in the expanded edition of *Seventeen Syllables and Other Stories*. A focal point of the essay is the African American man who came to the newspaper seeking help because his family had been threatened after moving to the city of Fontana. He wanted publicity from the three African American newspapers in town, hoping that would prevent the threats from being carried out. Yamamoto wrote what she calls "a calm, impartial story," and a few days later, the man's house was burned, killing him, his wife, and their two children. She chides herself for being objective instead of taking the man's side. In recalling this event, which happened right after **World War II**, and the Watts riots of 1965 in the same 1985 essay, Yamamoto clearly links the two. Critic Grace Kyungwon Hong explains why Yamamoto would write about these two events so many years later in 1985. Hong points out that Yamamoto's essay was written when Japanese Americans were pushing for reparations and redress for the World War II internment, a disruptive event which, some say, nothing can fully mend. The internment of Japanese Americans, the burning of the house in Fontana, and the Watts riots all have their roots in this country's racially biased attitudes regarding private property. Hong argues that Yamamoto's essay "reminds us of the unresolvable contradiction in demanding equal rights for people of color from a system created to protect white property rights" (1999, 307). In other words, Hong believes that Yamamoto faults the flawed and unjust system for the Japanese American internment, the fire in Fontana, and the Watts riots. Hong ends by suggesting that Yamamoto's 1985 essay can be the basis of cross-racial solidarity in the future.

Yamamoto again explores the theme of a failure to speak up when faced with racial prejudice in the story "Wilshire Bus," first published in the December 23, 1950, issue of *Pacific Citizen*, a publication established in 1929 by the Japanese American Citizens League. In this story, Esther Kuroiwa goes twice a week to visit her husband, who is spending three months in the hospital at the soldiers' home for treatment of a war injury to his back. On Wednesdays, she takes the Wilshire bus. This particular day, a Chinese woman sits next to her, the woman's husband sitting across the aisle. A drunken white man sitting behind Esther and the Chinese woman begins talking loudly, and the Chinese woman turns around to give him a look. He then begins a racist tirade against the Chinese couple, urging them to go back to China. Esther feels sympathy for the couple, but at the same time she finds herself glad that the white man has singled out the Chinese, and not herself, as his target. Catching herself in this moral lapse, she tries to signal support to the Chinese woman. However, the woman appears not to understand, and Esther gives up, feeling detached. After the drunken white man leaves the bus, another passenger clumsily apologizes to the couple, assuring them that not everyone feels the way the drunken white man does. Critic Maire

Mullins points out that this apology is not only too late but also an affirmation that some people “are like that man” and a reminder that the community allows such racist words and actions (1998, 82). As Esther walks from the bus to the hospital, she reflects on a saying she remembers: People say we should disregard what people do when they are drunk, but perhaps that is the only time we should pay attention. By the time she reaches her husband’s hospital bed, she is in tears over her helplessness. Her husband misunderstands, believing that she is crying because she misses him so much. She does not contradict him, leaving him to believe his misinterpretation. And instead of revealing the deep moral quandary that troubles her, she asks him aren’t women silly. In reality, of course, she is crying because she has committed “a grave sin of omission,” failing to speak up.

When her first story, “The High-Heeled Shoes,” was published in 1948 in *Partisan Review*, Yamamoto left the *Tribune*, hoping to write full-time. Her brother Jemo helped support her, and she also used some of the life insurance money from her brother Johnny who was killed in Italy. That same year, Yamamoto adopted a five-month-old child, Paul. She has said little publicly about the circumstances of adopting him in a time when single-parent adoptions were rare, except to say that the child “suddenly” came to live with her. When her brother Jemo decided to get married and would no longer be able to support her, Yamamoto applied for and received one of the first Opportunity Fellowships offered by the John Hay Whitney Foundation. This support allowed her to send Paul to a babysitter for most of the day so that she could write. Fearing that she would not be productive enough with just the stories she wrote, Yamamoto also translated the novel *L’Enfant a la Balustrade* by Rene Boylesve from French into English while on the fellowship. She had read the novel in school, in French, and believed it should be available in English. After the Whitney Fellowship, she was offered a Stanford Writing Fellowship, which Yvor Winters encouraged her to take, but she declined the offer.

While at the *Los Angeles Tribune*, one of Yamamoto’s jobs was to read other newspapers that were sent to the *Tribune* in an exchange agreement. She summarized stories from those papers and published them in the *Tribune*. Each week she counted the number of lynchings reported in the papers and wrote a story about them. Of all the papers that came in to the *Tribune*, including the *Chicago Defender* and the *New Amsterdam News*, the one Yamamoto enjoyed most was the *Catholic Worker*, the newspaper published by the Catholic Worker Movement, which was founded in 1933 by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. Yamamoto took the *Catholic Worker* newspapers home to keep and read again. After she left the *Tribune*, she subscribed at the rate of 25 cents a year. Yamamoto admired the movement’s philosophy of simple living and nonviolence. The more she read, the more she wanted to be part of the movement. In 1953 Yamamoto and her son Paul went to live on the Catholic Worker’s Peter Maurin Farm on Staten

Island in a communal living arrangement. There, she fed the chickens and rabbits, did some cleaning, wrote for the *Catholic Worker*, and occasionally cooked. Paul played with Dorothy Day's grandchildren and visited the community's hermit. They left in 1955, when Yamamoto married Anthony DeSoto, and they all moved to Los Angeles. DeSoto and Yamamoto had four more children, and they now have several grandchildren as well.

During the period when Yamamoto was keeping house and rearing five children in Los Angeles, she experienced some family deaths and illnesses that edged her into a nervous breakdown and resulted in her one-month stay at a psychiatric hospital. In the essay "Writing," published in the expanded edition of *Seventeen Syllables and Other Stories*, Yamamoto says she still feels gratitude every time she passes the hospital.

Yamamoto, like some of her characters, has had difficulty fitting her writing into the rest of her life. By her own modest account, she is more housewife than writer. It is not unusual for her to comment to an interviewer that she really ought to be vacuuming instead of answering questions. Her short stories and essays, however, have been published in top journals and magazines, including *Arizona Quarterly*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Kenyon Review*, and *Partisan Review*. They have attracted critical notice, especially in recent years, when academics have become eager to analyze ethnic literature.

"Seventeen Syllables," Yamamoto's best known and most widely anthologized short story, has been praised for its use of the naïve narrator. Rosie, the nisei daughter of the housewife who writes haiku, cannot fully comprehend her mother's haiku or her life. The story has also been praised for its double plot that simultaneously tracks Rosie's upward movement toward sensual awakening and the downward spiral of her mother's thwarted artistic efforts. Similar comments have been made about "Yoneko's Earthquake." In this story, too, the narrator is a nisei daughter who is unable to comprehend her mother's life, and again the issei mother is presented as breaking out of her narrow cultural role. The wife in each story breaks a sexual taboo. Rosie's mother reveals that she gave birth to a stillborn child out of wedlock. Yoneko's mother, pregnant by the Filipino hired hand, undergoes an abortion. In both stories, the issei husband is portrayed as one who destroys the spirit of his wife. Both husbands are capable of, and commit, brutal acts. Critic Charles L. Crow suggests that in several stories Yamamoto tries to exorcise the issei father who fails. The failure of Rosie's father is manifested in his destruction of the Hiroshige print, symbolic of his wife's artistic success, and it comes about because of the man's pride and his inability to appreciate his wife's talent. The failure of Yoneko's father is more problematic because it comes about through no fault of his. He is nearly electrocuted during the earthquake, and afterward he suffers both a physical and mental breakdown. When his wife and the hired hand take over his duties, they apparently begin an affair, an event that goes undetected by Yoneko, through whose eyes the story is told. The father recovers well enough, however, to drive his wife to the

hospital for an abortion, and on the way he hits and kills a beautiful collie. He neither slows nor stops after hitting the dog. This act of unrepentant cruelty negates any sympathy the reader might have had for the issei father whose wife has been unfaithful. Crow argues that it is only after Yamamoto presents the issei father in another story as toothless, broken, and finally dead that she is able to forgive him. Yamamoto offers up this ultimate failed issei father in "Las Vegas Charley." At the end of the story when Charley has become a victim of gambling, poverty, and bad teeth, his sole remaining son reflects on the older man's life with a measure of compassion. He recognizes that, contrary to what Charley's doctor has just said, his father did not enjoy his life. It is significant, however, that this compassion comes from a son, not a daughter.

On the question of whether she should be labeled as a Japanese American writer, Yamamoto says she does not care about labels. Any label is fine with her, and so is no label. She has said that she usually just says she is Japanese, as a statement of fact. She agrees that most writers just want to be accepted as writers, without any thought of ethnic background, but she believes it is the public, not the writer, who decides how a writer will be accepted. She is glad to see that so many **Asian American** writers are being published and read these days. In reply to a question about whether Asian American males are being discriminated against by publishers, she noted that David **Mura**, Garrett **Hongo**, Frank **Chin**, and others are being published. While they have not achieved the acclaim of Amy **Tan** and Maxine Hong **Kingston**, she believes that they will some day because they all write well. Further, she has no interest in discussing the pros and cons of developing an Asian American readership. She writes without any audience in mind. She writes only to express herself, she says, because she never knows if anyone else will ever read it. **See also** Issei, Nisei, Sansei; Japanese American Short Story; Racism and Asian America; Sexism and Asian America.

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CLAUDIA MILSTEAD

### ◆ YAMANAKA, LOIS-ANN (1961–)

A Japanese American poet and novelist in Hawaii, Lois-Ann Yamanaka was born September 7, 1961, in Ho'olehua on the island of Molokai, Hawaii. She is the oldest of four daughters of her father Harry, a taxidermist, who once worked as a school administrator, and her mother Jean, a schoolteacher. Her young days were spent in Ho'olehua, in Hilo, Ka'u, Kona, and later in Pahala on the Big Island. She received both her bachelor's in education (1983) and master's (1987) in education at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. After receiving her degrees, she worked as an English teacher and a language arts resource teacher in Honolulu. While working as a teacher, she enrolled in a writing class at the University of Hawaii at Manoa to be a poet but eventually dropped it when she found that she was pregnant. In 1990 she was married to John Infrerrera, a schoolteacher. They have a son John Jr. (JohnJohn), who is autistic. With her codirector Melvin Spencer, she currently operates Na'au: A Place for Learning and Healing, a creative writing school in Honolulu.

Since starting her writing at age 27, weaving the themes from her life experience in rural Hawaii into her writings, Yamanaka has created stories of the characters' tormented changing process from self-disdain to a redemptive embracement of their identities of race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender, and sexuality. Most of her writings have a young female protagonist who is struggling to cope with her shame and embarrassment that result from her inability to accept who she really is. Describing the transformation of the protagonist, the liberation from her inferior feelings of her identity, and her eventual acceptance of herself and her family, Yamanaka's writings suggest a way to deal with racial, cultural, ethnic, and other differences not as a social stigma but an enrichment in which an alternative form of beauty is born to be recognized. Claiming such alternative aesthetic is typically seen in her unique employment of pidgin, the **Hawaiian Pidgin** English of the rural working class to create vivid, strong voices of her characters. In her interview with Sarah Anne Johnson, Yamanaka says that once she desired to be "more mainstream," but her mentor Morgan Blair at the University of Hawaii at Manoa suggested that pidgin should be Yamanaka's "authentic voice" (2004, 214). Yamanaka says to Johnson that because of education teaching that "pidgin was bad," she hated herself and did not feel that she was good

enough (215). Her discovery that pidgin is “the language of her heart” marked a crucial transforming moment for her to attain her distinctive style of writing.

Though her writings have been highly praised and have received numerous awards, Yamanaka found herself in the middle of controversial turmoil since the publication of her first book, *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre* (1993). Published through the **Bamboo Ridge** Press in Honolulu, this poetry book collected four novellas composed with a series of narrative poems. The narrators are working-class teenagers who speak pidgin. Their narratives vividly convey their coming-of-age anxieties: body appearance, friendship and betrayal, and sexuality, which provokes fear, curiosity, and desire. Though well received and awarded the Pushcart Prize 18 in 1993, this poetry collection provoked several arguments. Criticism by educators in Hawaii toward Yamanaka’s usage of pidgin is one of them. The educators also complained about her bold and downright descriptions on issues of sexuality. Because of the objection from them, Yamanaka’s work was banned from classrooms. Another argument about her work concerns her portrayal of Filipino American men as sex predators. In the opening poem of *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre*, “Kala Gave Me Anykind Advice Especially About Filipinos When I Moved to Pahala,” a teenage girl Kala gives “I” a list of various warnings against the things that would bring ominous results. On the top of the list is a warning against Filipino men who could abduct and sexually assault “I.” While the Filipino American Studies Caucus staged an active protest against the negative stereotype from which Filipino Americans had suffered for so long, the **Association for Asian American Studies (AAAS)** bestowed the literary award on Yamanaka for this book in 1994. In 2004, the controversial “Kala” section in *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre* was adapted into a short film *Silent Years* directed by James Sereno.

In 1994, Yamanaka won the Pushcart Prize 19 for “Yarn Wig,” a short poem about a girl whose mother makes yarn wigs for her and her sisters to cover their short hair. The same year, she also received a Carnegie Foundation Grant and a National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowship. With such support for her writing, she left her job at the Department of Education and started to concentrate on her next book project. Her second book, *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers* (1996) is composed of a series of short stories narrated by Lovey Nariyoshi, a Japanese American adolescent girl in Hilo in the 1970s. It is the first book of Yamanaka’s *Hilo Trilogy* and her first work published through a major publishing firm in New York City, Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Lovey’s animated narrative reveals her secret shame that she cannot even tell her best friend Jerome: her Japanese American working-class family whose life style—food, language, and culture—seems to her deviant from that of the American middle class. Lovey desires to be *haole*, or white, dressing, behaving, speaking, and living like them.

This text reveals Yamanaka's criticism toward the violence of social idealization of whiteness as beauty and social mechanism to enforce the normalized standard to produce people's desire for it. At school, Lovey and her classmates are humiliated and tormented by their teacher, who declares that they should give up pidgin and only speak Standard English. The challenging issues of sexuality and gender role, which continuously appear in the trilogy, are described through the character of Jerome, who performs like a girl. Lovey's low self-esteem and longing for being *haole* are transformed into her acceptance of who she is by the end of the book. In the last story, she encounters a tragic incidence in which her father loses his sight. Lovey travels to her father's hometown to obtain a handful of soil of the land for him, who desires to be at home. By offering her father a feeling of being at home, Lovey also learns to be at home with her body and her own racial, cultural, and class background. Rocío G. Davis praises the generic style of this book, explaining that by the discrete stories of Lovey, "Yamanaka incorporates the thematic paradigms of the *bildungsroman* into a new generic configuration" (2005, 232). In 1996 Yamanaka received a Rona Jaffe Award for Women Writers for this book, which was also nominated for the Literary Award of the AAAS. However, the Filipino American Studies Caucus and others objected to the nomination based on the concern about Yamanaka's depictions of Filipino men in *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre* and her newly released book, *Blu's Hanging*. The AAAS board then decided to rescind the award and not to give any literary award that year. In 2005 film director Kayo Hatta made a film *Fishbowl* adopting three chapters—"Obituary," "A Fishbowl and Some Dimes," and "Blah, Blah, Blah"—from *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers*.

*Blu's Hanging* (1997), the second of the *Hilo Trilogy* and the most controversial book in Yamanaka's works, describes an impoverished Japanese American Ogata family in Molokai. The family tries to overcome both emotional and material difficulty caused by the death of the mother. The story is narrated by Ivah, the eldest daughter of 13, who desperately tries to offer maternal care to her family. Her younger brother Blu begins to gain weight by overeating, as if compensating for the loss of his mother with such easy comfort. Maisie, Ivah's younger sister who stops talking after the death of her mother, is tormented and humiliated by her teacher at school. Ivah's father soaks himself in melancholic feelings and later starts forgetting himself with drugs. The crisis of the vulnerable family culminates when Blu is raped by a Filipino American man called Uncle Paulo, who tortures animals and sleeps with his nieces. While in 1998 a Lannan Literary Award was bestowed on Yamanaka for this book, the controversy over her portrayal of Filipino Americans flared up. Members of the Filipino American community, some Asian American professors, and graduate students protested Yamanaka's depiction of Filipino Americans as perpetuating the long held, persistent racist stereotype. While letters of protests by Filipino Americans and their supporters

were sent to the board of AAAS, the Fiction Award Committee presented the award to Yamanaka at the national conference in Honolulu in 1998. Three of Yamanaka's former students—all Filipino Americans—accepted the award on her behalf in the midst of the protest: many protesters wore black armbands, rose, and turned their backs to the podium. Later that day, the Filipino American Studies Caucus presented a resolution to rescind the award. After discussion, the membership voted to rescind the award and most of the board members resigned. Against the decision of the board of AAAS, to defend Yamanaka, Asian American poets David Mura and Wing Tek Lum organized a campaign and collected letters from numerous Asian American writers such as Amy Tan, Jessica Hagedorn, and Maxine Hong Kingston. These Asian American writers claimed that the decision of the board of AAAS imposed censorship over Asian American writers and such censorship would hamper their literary freedom. The controversy over *Blu's Hanging* attracted national attention and fueled discussions about the internal chasm within Asian America in terms of the existence of internal ethnic hierarchy, the social and academic impacts of writings by Asian American writers, and the relation between the community and the role of Asian American writers.

*Heads by Harry* (1997), the concluding book of the trilogy, is a story set in a taxidermy shop owned by Harry O. Yagyu. In 1999 Yamanaka won an American Book Award for this book. Harry's middle child Toni, the narrator of the book, wants to follow her father's path to be a taxidermist but only encounters his objection to her desire. Harry expects his son Sheldon, or Shelly, to inherit his skills and shop, denying the fact that his son is gay and has no desire for making Harry's dream come true. While Toni experiences several failures to reach a right path for her life, doubting her intelligence and potential, Sheldon and Toni's younger sister Bernice, or Bunny, smartly achieve their success. Believing she is not suitable to Billy Harper, a half white, half South Asian boy, Toni exacerbates her friendship with Billy. By confusing her relation with her Portuguese neighbor's sons Wyatt and Maverick Santos, Toni becomes pregnant with a child whose father is unknowable. Around that time, Harry O. decides to retire and divide his shop into two shops: hair salon "Heads by Bunny" run by Sheldon and Bunny, and a new "Heads by Harry" by Toni, Wyatt, and Maverick, who have learned the business from Harry. After breaking up with Billy, who decides to leave Hilo, without marrying either Wyatt or Maverick but making both men fathers of her child, Toni raises her child, Harper Santos Yagu, whose name shows her mixed heritage—as Monica Chiu points out, Toni's child is called "Hapa" by Wyatt in pidgin, "reflect[ing] the Hawaiian term *hapa* used to indicate a person of mixed race" (2004, 119)—and Toni's love for Billy. The book ends when Toni reencounters Billy, who comes back to Hilo.

Comparing *Heads by Harry* with *Blu's Hanging*, Mindy Pennybacker comments, "To some extent, Yamanaka has replaced racism with sexism and homophobia, 'safer'



topics" (1999, 29). Jamie James points out a problem of another stereotype in this book. "If the ethnic-studies people were unhappy with Uncle Paulo, some gay scholars will find much to complain about in the character of Toni's brother" (1999, 94). James mentions that Sheldon evokes many stereotypes of gay men and yet "there is an essential truthfulness in Yamanaka's portrait of Sheldon," pointing out that "[i]n a provincial outpost like Hilo in the 1980s . . . an effeminate homosexual had little choice but to adhere to stereotype" (94). Concerning Yamanaka's omission of the characters of Native Hawaiians, Pennybacker writes, "Though Hawaiian myths, artifacts, place names and ghosts fill the threatened landscape, there aren't any living Native Hawaiians among Yamanaka's main characters" (29–30).

*Name Me Nobody* (1999) is Yamanaka's first young adult novel. Sara Gogol writes that "although *Name Me Nobody* is her first novel for young adults, she is clearly someone able to write skillfully about her chosen subject" (2000, 25). The protagonist and narrator Emi-Lou is suffering from self-hate: her overweight makes her believe that she is unbeautiful and just "nobody." Her sense of "namelessness" comes from her family background: Emi-Lou's mother left her to her grandmother for California, and her biological father is unknown. At school her name changes every day: "Emi-lump," "Emi-fat," "Emi-loser," and "Emi-lez" because of her strong bond with her best friend Yvonne or Von Vierra. By losing weight by taking diet pills and starving herself, Emi-Lou temporally succeeds in transforming herself into an image of a popular Japanese American girl and getting a boyfriend. As she is unable to accept her own body and identity, Emi-Lou also cannot accept the fact that Von is lesbian. Both Emi-Lou and Von join a softball team in which Von finds a romantic partner Babes, another teammate. Emi-Lou tries to keep Von away from Babes, which only makes Emi-Lou lose Von's trust and friendship. Searching for a way to reconcile with Von, Emi-Lou learns to accept Von's identity and begins to accept who she really is without being trapped in negative self-perception.

In 2001, Yamanaka published a novel *Father of the Four Passages*, which reveals her new writing style without using pidgin. In a phone interview, Yamanaka said to Marika Brussel, "I tell my students now that we're all made of different parts, and the slices are all equal. . . . Part of my writing this book in standard English is an acknowledgement of that. It's part of the whole of me, too" (2001, 5). Jeff Waggoner writes that in this book "Yamanaka shows why she is one of the most controversial voices in Asian-American fiction—a writer who is not afraid to describe, often with brutal honesty, the lives of disaffected and disconnected" characters in Hawaii (2001, 16). Though Sonia Kurisu in this novel shares several characteristics with protagonists in Yamanaka's former books—lack of self worth, inclination to repetitious misbehaviors—the whole structure of this novel reveals a rich complexity that her former novels do not have, and the tone is more mythic.

The story opens with a shocking confession by Sonia: her three abortions, before having “Sonny Boy,” whom she is raising as a single mother. Sonia’s tormented narrative does not simply develop in a chronological order as most of Yamanaka’s former novels do. Rather, creating layers of traumatic memories, Sonia’s narrative incessantly goes back to the past and comes back to the present mixed with letters to her aborted babies, letters to her friend Mark, and the letters from her father. For Sonia, father figures—her own father, the fathers of her aborted babies, the father of Sonny Boy, and God—are always unavailable. Little by little, the novel reveals Sonia’s nightmarish life: her childhood experience of abandonment by her father who left to be free from his family, abandonment by her undependable and unstable mother, torment by her self-righteous sister Celeste, failed relationships with her manipulative lovers, and her addiction to drugs and alcohol. After living with Granny Alma, who has taken care of her and Celeste since their mother’s abandonment, Sonia leaves Hawaii for Las Vegas and struggles to finish college, raising Sonny Boy and working as a lounge singer. However, Sonia’s life in Las Vegas turns out disastrous: Sonny Boy is diagnosed as autistic when he is two, as if it were a punishment for all of Sonia’s misbehaviors. Sonia’s life is haunted by the ghosts of her aborted babies and her guilt. After almost killing herself by overdosing on drugs, Sonia returns to Hawaii with Sonny Boy and begins finding ways to reconcile with her family, healing the wounds from her past, and releasing her haunting guilt of abortions. Through this process, Sonia learns that Sonny Boy is born not to punish her but to heal the wounds of her and her family.

*The Heart’s Language*, published in 2005, is Yamanaka’s first picture book for little children. With illustrations by Aaron Jasinski, the book unfolds a story of a unique child in Hawaii who can communicate with trees, the ocean, birds, and animals but cannot talk with people around him. It saddens both his parents, who love the boy, and the boy himself, who longs to talk to and to be understood by them. When he almost gives up all his hope, a magical blue bird appears to encourage him to speak with the language of his heart to say “I love you” to his parents. Kathleen Kelly MacMillan writes that “[t]hrough the youngster’s disability is never specified in the text, the author’s foreword describing her experiences with her autistic son makes her perspective clear” (2005, 105). By not identifying the disability, MacMillan claims that “the story’s message is made more universal” (105). Quinby Frank similarly comments that “the boy in the story could be any child with special needs who feels isolated and alone” (2005, 72).

Unlike her former novels, which have a contemporary setting, the time period of *Behold the Many* (2006) is situated at the turn-of-the-century. Yamanaka again tries a new writing style without using a dominant voice of a narrator, which has been a prominent characteristic of her writings. The story mainly adopts a third-person narrative in which letters and voices of various characters are inserted to create cacophonous effects. A part of this novel appeared as “Kalihi Valley” in a journal called

*Conjunctions* in 2003. Three sisters—Anah, Aki, and Leah—are stigmatized and outcast from their family to St. Joseph's orphanage when tuberculosis prevails in their village in the Kalihi Valley. First, Leah the youngest is infected by the disease and sent to St. Joseph's. Next, Aki, the rebellious second daughter, is sent. Their cruel drunken Portuguese father does not want to keep them at home, though their affectionate but powerless Japanese mother tries to hide their illness. When finally the eldest Anah is infected and is sent to the orphanage, she tries to console her sisters by promising a reunion with their family, which never comes true. The nuns at St. Joseph's are torturous, except Sister Mary Deborah, who instructs Anah about beekeeping business. First Leah and then Aki die, resenting their abandonment by their family, yearning for going back home, and accusing Anah of making a false promise. The ghosts of Leah, Aki, and Seth, a dairyman's son who died from falling from a tree, haunt Anah. Anah leaves the orphanage when she turns 18 and happily marries Ezroh, Seth's brother. However, the curses of the ghosts extend to Anah's children, who are challenged or disabled. Only years later can Anah finally appease the ghosts to let them find their way home.

Throughout her writings and the use of familiar themes of abandonment, shame, guilt, and eventual forgiveness by returning home, Yamanaka has created various genres and has kept using new writing styles, though undoubtedly her prominent literary contribution has been the creation of a new aesthetic writing style in pidgin that she has introduced to mainstream readers. Literary scholars' critical works have mainly focused on Yamanaka's earlier works, *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre* and the Hilo Trilogy, especially *Blu's Hanging*, which has generated rich discussions on the issues of the subject formation of Asian America and the issues of loss, mourning, and melancholia. However, Yamanaka's recent works, such as *Father of the Four Passages* and *Behold the Many*, which reveal her new writing styles, indicate her unceasing creative process of becoming a writer, which should gain more scholarly attention. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Hawaiian Literature; Racism and Asian America; Sexism and Asian America.

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YASUKO KASE

#### ◆ YAMASHITA, KAREN TEI (1951–)

Japanese American fiction writer, playwright, essayist, and teacher Karen Tei Yamashita, a sansei, was born in Oakland, California, on January 8, 1951, and grew up in Los Angeles, where her parents settled after **World War II**. At Carleton College in Minnesota (1970–1974), she discovered a strong interest in migration and anthropology that has continued to inform all of her writing. She studied at Waseda University (1971–1972) and traveled around Japan and Asia through the college's Year Abroad Program and wrote of her experiences as an independent study with cultural anthropologist Paul Riesman. In 1974 she received a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship to research the history and anthropology of Japanese immigration to Brazil, where she met and married Ronaldo Lopes de Oliveira, an artist and architect, and had two children. After spending nearly a decade in Brazil, Yamashita returned to Los Angeles with her family. Since 1996 she has lived in Santa Cruz, where she is

associate professor of literature and creative writing at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Yamashita's writing career began in 1975 with the publication of two prize-winning short stories; since then she has written three highly acclaimed novels—*Through the Arc of the Rainforest* (1990), *Brazil-Marú* (1992), and *Tropic of Orange* (1997)—and a multigenre text, *Circle K Cycles* (2001), which was researched through a 1997 Japan Foundation Artist Fellowship. Excerpts from *I Hotel*, a novel-in-progress, have been published in *Amerasia Journal* (volume 32.3). Among the many grants and awards she has garnered over the years, in 1998 Yamashita received an Alumni Award for Distinguished Achievement from Carleton College and in 2001 an Excellence in Teaching Award from UCSC.

Fantastic metaphors and plots; multiple narrators; diverse historical and cultural frameworks; a satirical yet profoundly generous view of humanity; political engagement; and a transnational imagination grounded in personal migrations within and between the United States, Japan, and Brazil are the hallmarks of Yamashita's writing. These elements can be seen in her earliest publications, "The Bath" and "Tucano" (which won first place in the 1975 *Amerasia Journal* and *Rafu Shimpo* short story contests, respectively), and in her lesser known performance pieces, such as *Hiroshima Tropical* (1984), *Hannah Kusoh: An American Butoh* (1989), and *GiLA wrecks*, also known as *Godzilla Comes to Little Tokyo* (1992). In her novels, however, Yamashita's capacious imagination has been able to manifest itself fully. The narratives typically unfold as a series of local events that are intimately connected through global networks of human labor. Critics and reviewers consistently cite Yamashita's global vision—referred to variously as her diasporic, transnational, border-crossing, hybrid, or hemispheric imagination—as the outstanding feature of her work.

*Brazil-Marú* was written and unstitched several times before Yamashita finally abandoned the idea of structuring the whole within one narrative consciousness, employing instead five narrators who each tell a different part of the novel's story. Chosen by *Village Voice* magazine as one of the best 25 books of 1992, *Brazil-Marú* relates the history of Esperanca, a self-sufficient farming commune founded by a group of idealistic Christian Japanese. Beginning with the group's arrival in 1925 and ending with the death of its charismatic but corrupt leader in 1976, the fictional history of Esperanca is based on Yamashita's interviews with hundreds of actual Japanese immigrants to Brazil and reflects modern Brazilian history as it developed through three periods: the 1920s and 1930s, in which Brazilian nationalism embraced **hybridity** and welcomed Japanese immigrants, followed by a turn toward anti-Japanese sentiment with the outbreak of World War II and Brazil's alignment with the Allied Forces, and ending with the last quarter of the twentieth century, which witnessed a reverse immigration of Japanese Brazilians to Japan, driven by a search for better economic opportunities. The chronicle of Esperanca within this larger trajectory is

narrated by five characters with very different memories of the commune—Kantaro, the leader who inspires and eventually betrays the community; Ichiro, who immigrates as a young boy and becomes a symbol of Esperanca's ideals; Haru, Kantaro's formidable wife who nonetheless wields power only over other women and is excluded, like them, from the commune's patriarchal government; Genji, Kantaro's mentally retarded nephew who exposes Kantaro's misdeeds; and Guilherme, a journalist who is the son of Kantaro's Japanese city friend and married to the daughter of the Brazilian benefactor swindled by Kantaro. None of these five narrators is completely trustworthy, and each must be read against the others to derive a reasonably accurate overview of Esperanca's rise and fall.

While struggling to find the right narrative structure for *Brazil-Marú*, Yamashita wrote and published *Through the Arc of the Rainforest*, which won the Before Columbus Foundation American Book Award in 1991 and the Janet Heidinger Kafka Award in 1992. Stylistically, the two novels are quite different. Whereas *Brazil-Marú* is written in a deceptively straightforward and simple realistic mode, *Through the Arc of the Rainforest* is overtly bizarre in the tradition of magic realism, using a blend of satire, romantic comedy, and fantasy to present a story about global capitalism's ecological fallout. Structurally, however, *Through the Arc of the Rainforest* initiated the use of multiple, interlocking narratives that would become a staple of all subsequent novels. Some of the book's unique characters are the result of artistic collaboration between Yamashita and her husband, including J.B. Tweep, an American entrepreneurial genius with three arms, and Kazumasa Ishimaru, a Japanese man who is attached to a small metal sphere whirling on an invisible axis near his forehead. This ball is also the novel's narrator, and its magnetic properties enabled Kazumasa to make a fortune in Japan as a human detector of flaws in railroad tracks. Eventually the ball leads Kazumasa to the Matacao, the novel's primary setting, which is a mysterious layer of impenetrable plastic material covering the Earth's surface in a part of the Amazon Basin. The lives of all main characters eventually converge on the Matacao, which is mined for profit until everything collapses in violent death when the strange plastic and humans alike are devoured by virulent bacteria. Although Kazumasa and a few others survive to begin a new life chastened by their miraculous escape, this happy ending is undercut by the final revelation that the ball-narrator has returned to Earth in a different time and place, and that the story just concluded is a memory of an event that happened long ago. Such unsettling, open-ended conclusions are as much a hallmark of Yamashita's fictions as their multiple narratives.

*Tropic of Orange*, which was a finalist for the 1998 Paterson Fiction Prize, pushes beyond the achievement of the first two novels toward a more ambitious fictional and historical project. Yamashita worked as a secretary after relocating to Los Angeles in 1984, and her experience with spreadsheet software inspired her to write a novel

through the same organizational principle. Thus, *Tropic of Orange* is organized by “columns” and “rows” in the manner of a Lotus or Excel file; there are 7 days and 7 narrators, each of whom narrates a chapter per day of the weeklong plot. The novel is prefaced with two tables of contents, a normal one listing the chapters from 1 through 49, and a second table called a “HyperContexts” that rearranges the 49 chapters in a grid of 7 columns (days) and 7 rows (characters).

If *Through the Arc of the Rainforest* and *Brazil-Marú* reflect the profound influence of Yamashita’s relocation from the United States to Brazil, *Tropic of Orange* embodies the comparable effect of her return, which she has described as follows: “In 1984, we moved as a family from Brazil to Los Angeles. Through the experiences of my husband and children, I found myself immigrating back to my own country and into that great urban cosmopolitan cauldron of tremendous energy and ferment that is Los Angeles. We were part of this change: immigrants, migrants, exiles, tourists, dekasegi, refugees, visitors, aliens, strangers, travelers all in search of work, education, new opportunities” (1997, 13). *Tropic of Orange* gives voice to this welter of perspectives by dividing the narration among seven main characters who are supported by a cast of thousands and by placing these voices within the past, present, and future history of relationships between South and North America. The central metaphor is the northward migration of the Tropic of Cancer, which gets entangled in an orange that is carried north across the U.S.-Mexico border into the heart of Los Angeles.

The seven narrators represent the city’s iconic racial and cultural diversity. Arcangel, a 500-year-old performance artist, is South American. Rafaela is a Mexican immigrant who helps her husband in their janitorial business but leaves him because he does not share her commitment to political activism. Gabriel is a Chicano journalist. Manzanar Murakami, a homeless ex-surgeon who conducts symphonies on freeway overpasses, and his granddaughter Emi, a television news director, are Japanese American. Bobby, a self-employed janitor and Rafaela’s estranged husband, is a pan-Asian immigrant—an ethnic Chinese from Singapore who entered the United States in the guise of a Vietnamese refugee, picked up Chicano street language, and lives in Koreatown. The seventh narrator is African American Buzzworm, a veteran of the **Vietnam War** who runs a one-man welfare service for the homeless and poor. As in previous novels, the lives of these principal characters eventually converge on the same ground. In this case it is a section of the Harbor Freeway in Los Angeles, where hundreds of cars have been abandoned owing to a massive traffic accident caused by a cocaine-spiked orange gone astray in a drug-smuggling scheme. When fires from the accident leap the freeway onto the neighboring hillsides and destroy homeless encampments, hundreds of homeless escape to the freeway and begin occupying the abandoned cars, creating an enterprising and cooperative community until they are massacred by the state on the seventh and final day of the story. Meanwhile, Arcangel has carried the

Tropic of Cancer into Los Angeles and into the wrestling ring where, transformed into El Gran Mojado (Spanish for “the great wetback”), he challenges his North American opponent SUPERNAFTA in a battle to the death. After the fight, Bobby cuts the Tropic of Cancer to be reunited with Rafaela and their son Sol.

*Circle K Cycles*, a blend of fiction, memoir, and cultural criticism, was the result of a 1997 Japan Foundation Artist Fellowship to study Japanese Brazilian *dekasegi* (migrant laborers in Japan). Like the metaphorical thread in *Tropic of Orange* that gathers and pulls everything with it when it travels northward, *Circle K Cycles* gathers up and carries forward all of Yamashita’s previous writings and ruminations on twentieth-century migrations linking Japan and Brazil. A genre-defying work, *Circle K Cycles* is perhaps best understood in terms of the Japanese convenience store, Circle K, which furnishes the book’s title. Both the book and the convenience store are crammed with Japanese goods; they display the material and cultural economies of contemporary Japan. *CKC* is laced with inserts of advertisements, product brochures, maps, train schedules, manga (Japanese comics), statistical charts, and numerous photographs from the author’s personal collection. The verbal text has a similar rich and playful texture. One section has white type on black pages, a whole chapter is devoted to a collage of quirky, often hilarious examples of Japanese English gleaned from menus, vending machines, signboards, and so on, some chapters or sections are also written in Portuguese or translated into Japanese and scattered throughout the book are Japanese words in three different writing systems: kanji, katakana, and hiragana. These hypervisual and hypervocal elements of the book explore and dispel the myth of Japanese cultural homogeneity.

Yamashita continues to travel frequently between the United States, Japan, and Brazil, widening her triangulation of these places to include other geographies. “Amami 2006,” for example, which can be read at Ryuta Imafuku’s Web site CaféCreole, describes Yamashita’s travels through Korea, Taiwan, Okinawa, and Tokyo in the fall of 2006. Imafuku, a cultural anthropologist, is Yamashita’s longtime friend and colleague; their relationship dates back to her research in Brazil. *Circle K Cycles* began as a series of essays for CaféCreole, and “Amami 2006” is a narrative meditation on the annual cultural workshop that Imafuku stages on the island of Amami Oshima located at the northern end of the Ryukyu Archipelago. For the past few years, this event has brought artists, artisans, scholars, and students to Amami to mingle with and learn from their locally based counterparts. Yamashita’s “Amami 2006” weaves together several mini-travelogues that are distinguished by simply yet vividly rendered local scenes and remarkable stories about the interconnectedness of individual lives across national borders and histories.

Yamashita’s work-in-progress, *I Hotel*, consists of 10 novellas about the Asian American movement. Like *Brazil-Marú*, this novel will be the result of years of



fieldwork and research. In her preface to the excerpts published in *Amerasia Journal*, Yamashita writes: "I have spent countless hours in the various Asian American archives, spent time wandering around the old sites, read books, viewed films, listened to music, speeches and rallies, and had long and short conversations with over a hundred folks from the time" (2006, 24). Betty Kano, one of the hundred-plus who were interviewed, features prominently in "Amami 2006." Her Japanese father and American **nisei** mother met during the chaos of wartime Japan when both were en route to Sendai from fire-bombed Tokyo. Toshio Kano left a wife and children in Amami when he married Betty's mother and relocated to the United States after the war. Yamashita recalls Kano mentioning Amami during the interview but did not follow up on it immediately as she was primarily concerned with Kano's participation in the **Third World students' strike** and her lifelong commitment to **Asian American political activism**. However, the significance of Amami to these very topics reemerged once Yamashita had become involved in Imafuku's annual event. In 2006, at her suggestion, Betty Kano, her daughter, and her step-brother Shigeki made a joint pilgrimage to Amami. Yamashita's moving description of this reunion presents a transnational perspective on the Asia Pacific War that is framed globally but routed and rooted in local events and individual histories. **See also** Asian Diasporas; Issei, Nisei, Sansei; Nationalism and Asian America.

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GAYLE K. SATO

#### ◆ YAMAUCHI, WAKAKO (1924–)

Wakako Yamauchi is a Japanese American writer mostly known as a playwright. She was born in California to two *issei* (first-generation Japanese American) parents from Shizuoka, Japan. Her family had to move from town to town in California's Imperial Valley because of the Alien Land Law, which prohibited Japanese immigrants from owning land. When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1942 during World War II, Japanese Americans were regarded as "enemy aliens," and the American government ordered to evacuate approximately 120,000 Japanese Americans living on the West Coast. Yamauchi's family was among those Japanese Americans who were interned, and they were camped in Poston Relocation Center in Arizona. In the camp, she worked as a layout artist for the camp newspaper, the *Poston Chronicles*, and she met a *nisei* writer, Hisaye Yamamoto. Yamauchi was strongly influenced by Yamamoto's writings that dealt with the lives of Japanese Americans. Inspired by Yamamoto, she started writing. In 1944 Yamauchi signed the loyalty oath, which forced Japanese American internees to claim their exclusive allegiance to the United States and the abandonment of affiliation with Japan, and she was released from the camp. She worked at a candy factory in Chicago and then moved to Los Angeles where she met Chester Yamauchi, and they got married in 1948. After marriage and the subsequent birth of their daughter Joy, she devoted her time to family. It was around 1958 that she had restarted writing. She had written short stories for the *Los Angeles Rafu Shimpō*, a bilingual Japanese American newspaper. Her short story, "And the Soul Shall Dance" was found by the *Aiiieeeee!* editors and was published in the first Asian American literature anthology. Since that time on, Yamauchi has been contributing short stories, essays, memoir, and plays in many journals and books. She is a recipient of the 1994 Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Writer's Award, American Theater Critics Regional Award for Outstanding Play (1977), and many other awards and honors.

Yamauchi had attended the Writer's Guild of America's Open Door Project to study screenwriting and short story writing briefly, but her writing ability was developed more from her everyday life. She states that her love of language was cultivated by the stories her mother told her, plays she saw in Chicago after release from the internment, and writers such as Truman Capote, James Baldwin, and Tennessee Williams, among others. Above all, her meeting with Hisaye Yamamoto in the camp

would have quite an impact on her writing. In an interview, Yamauchi commented that from Yamamoto she learned that she did not have to be afraid of writing about Japanese American lives as a Japanese. Given the social atmosphere in which anti-Japanese sentiment had surrounded Japanese Americans in the 1940s, it was difficult for many Japanese Americans at that time to articulate their voice in the United States. Yet, Yamauchi has bravely written about Japanese American experiences in the hardest time. The poet and critic Garrett Hongo therefore lauds, "her writing is a cultural treasure" for Asian American literature (16).

Reflecting her life experience, Yamauchi's works deal with Japanese American farmers' dreary lives in the 1930s in the Imperial Valley of California, the **Japanese American internment** in the 1940s, and their postwar assimilation into American society. The characteristics of Yamauchi's works are that she writes these issues from a woman's perspective. She writes about the oppressed women's status and sexuality in the rural Japanese American community, and women's resilience in the face of hardships such as wartime relocation while men lost their virility. Her works are also quite conscious of the fragility of freedom and human rights. Many Japanese American internees did not talk about their internment experience because they felt it as a shame, but Yamauchi explores the past events that no one wanted to mention and brings them to the present.

Yamauchi's best known work, *And the Soul Shall Dance* clearly delineates the oppression of women in the Japanese American rural community. This work, first written as a short story and later rewritten into a play, depicts the lives of two Japanese American families, the Okas and the Muratas in the 1930s. They were both poor farmers in the Imperial Valley, California. The story is centered on Emiko Oka, who had been forced to marry Mr. Oka, but she could not forget her ex-lover and ex-life in Japan. Masako, an 11-year-old nisei daughter of the Muratas, is fascinated with yet at the same time intimidated by Emiko's eccentric behaviors such as smoking, singing and dancing along with records, and fighting with her husband, all of which are unusual for Japanese women at the time. Masako's mother, Hana, understands Emiko's resistance to the patriarchal Japanese American social structure in which women have to obey men and her attempt at liberating her desire by singing or smoking, but she sees Emiko's behavior as self-destructive. Hana tells her daughter that it is necessary for women's survival to obey the patriarchal rule even if it represses women's desires, dreams, and freedom. Masako witnesses Emiko's failure to resist the oppressive Japanese American rural community's mores. Emiko is harshly beaten by her husband and forced to leave the house. Having nowhere to go and no one to depend on, Emiko goes mad. Masako is thus torn between the conflicting women's life paths that her mother and Emiko represent. As long as a woman obeys men, she can survive, but it means she has to sacrifice her desire. Yamauchi relentlessly writes about the danger of the issei

and nisei women's having a dream for freedom, but at the same time she implies that there will be a different future for the nisei daughter, who is more acculturated into the mainstream American society. Similar themes of the dreary lives of the issei and nisei generations in rural Japanese American communities and the oppression of women's desire are also found in works such as *The Music Lesson*, *Songs My Mother Taught Me*, *The Boatmen to Tonah River*, and *That Was All*.

Japanese Americans had long undergone racism in the United States, ranging from the restrictions of immigration and citizenship, prohibition from marrying white Americans, and a ban on owning land since they came to the United States in the late nineteenth century through the late 1960s. Anti-Japanese sentiment culminated as **Japanese American internment** in 1942. Many Japanese nisei internees regarded internment experience as shameful and have refused to tell their experience. Yamauchi explains the nisei silence in an interview. The nisei were caught between American racism and the issei's *enryo* (self-restraint) syndrome, so they became reticent. Nevertheless, Yamauchi dares to break the silence. In the play, *12-1-A*, Yamauchi writes on the hardships of the Tanaka family in a relocation camp in Poston, Arizona, from 1942 to 1943. The Tanaka family was composed of Mrs. Tanaka, her 20-year-old son, Michio, and her 17-year-old daughter, Koko. Being uprooted from California, they were forced to live in the stormy Arizona barrack. "12-1-A" refers to their barrack number in the camp. The family was devastated by the fact that their inalienable civil rights as American citizens were violently deprived in a country of freedom. Yet they tried to survive the unbearable and unforeseeable situation with the hope of someday returning to a normal life with other internees. The family had a chance to get out of the camp if they pledged loyalty to the United States and if they resigned their loyalty to Japan in a questionnaire. The family decision was to say no-no to the two questions: Question 27: "Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?" and Question 28: "Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power or organization?" The family chose to be together rather than living separately. Michio insisted that Mrs. Ichioka and Koko should vow allegiance to the United States and get out of the camp, but the women did not listen to him. Rather, they chose to be with Michio. To survive the hardest situation in which Japanese Americans had no one to believe in other than themselves, holding family ties would be a survival strategy for them. As a result, they were sent to a camp in Tule Lake, California, which was a relocation center for "troublemakers," such as dissidents, incorrigibles, and so on. The play ends with their departure to Tule Lake. Readers can imagine the difficult time that the family would undergo together again in a different camp. While women's strength is

shown to be remarkable in the play, Yamauchi deploys an invalid issei man and a retarded nisei man in it as well. The loss of virility of Japanese American men, especially issei men, in internment is contrasted with women's strength. In internment, the government offered internees jobs, but the issei men who had difficulty with English could not get jobs that required English ability. In Japanese American patriarchal family structure, it was mainly older men who earned the most and were therefore most respected. However, the internment destroyed that structure. Issei men had to depend on their children, and this dependence impaired their patriarchal authority and destroyed the Japanese American family and community tradition in which older men were highly respected. The decline of the older men's authority because of the war is also seen in other Yamauchi works, such as *Otoko* and *Old Times, Old Stories*.

When the war was over, Japanese American internees were released from the camp. Since their property was confiscated by the government at the time of the internment, they had to start life again from scratch. Yamauchi describes the difficulty of readjusting to American society for the interned Japanese Americans, especially Japanese American issei men in *The Sensei*. Mr. Kondo or Kondo Sensei (*sensei* means master or teacher in Japanese) was an ex-Buddhist priest who was a charismatic figure in Tule Lake camp. He had worshipers in the camp and intimidated other internees. A nisei man, Jim, was also in the same camp, and he knew Kondo Sensei. When Jim and his wife Utako went to Las Vegas to gamble, they saw Kondo Sensei begging for money. Kondo Sensei symbolizes issei men who had failed to assimilate into American society after the internment. Since they immigrated to the United States, issei had struggled to survive in a hostile American society, but their efforts were shattered by the war in an instant. Unlike nisei who were relatively younger at the time of the release, who assimilated into the mainstream society more easily than issei, and who had some vitality to restart a life, most issei were in their fifties or sixties. With their old age and battered pride, many issei men found it desperate to restart the drudgery life. Because of the loss of patriarchal superior position in family and community and the difficulty of assimilating into American society, some issei men ended up like Kondo Sensei after the war. Yamauchi writes how issei masculinity and superiority were destroyed both during and after the war, with sympathy and bitterness.

Yamauchi has mainly written about her experience in the Imperial Valley, the internment, and the postwar assimilation as a nisei Japanese American woman. *The Chairman's Wife*, however, gives readers and viewers a unique work. This is a play on the wife of Mao Zedong, Chiang Ching. The time setting of the play is in 1989, when Chiang Ching was already in jail in Beijing, for she had been arrested by the government due to her involvement with the Cultural Revolution. Chiang Ching recalls how she met Mao Zedong and devoted her career as an actress to the Communist Party, and how she went across the country to promote the Communist cause. She insists that she

has engaged in politics for the party and for the people, but she also confides that politics is like fashion. She understands that power is unpredictable and unreliable. Yamauchi sees the commonality between Japanese Americans and Chinese here because both people's lives are at the mercy of the power, which no one can control. In the turbulence of uncontrollable political power, people are helpless, yet Yamauchi does not see the people in political irrationality as victims. Rather, she writes in the play that they are also to blame because they obey irrational politics like sheep. In short, she finds that Japanese American internees and the victims of the Cultural Revolution are complicit with the evil political deeds they had suffered from because they did not resist it. Maybe Yamauchi was indirectly criticizing the wrong of issei and nisei silence on the internment.

Yamauchi has also written short stories and essays, but she is well-known as a playwright. Her works have been repeatedly performed in theaters. For example, *And the Soul Shall Dance* was staged in 1974, 1979, 1980, 1985, and 1990 throughout the United States. It was also broadcasted on TV in 1977, 1978–1979, and 1987. Her other works have also been produced in many American theaters. In these plays, Yamauchi establishes herself as a Japanese American woman playwright. Velina Hasu Houston praises Yamauchi's success as a playwright because the latter started writing at a time when Japanese Americans faced the harshest discrimination in the United States. It was very difficult for Japanese Americans to be successful in the publishing business then. Houston therefore calls Yamauchi a pioneer of Asian American women playwrights. Yamauchi said in an interview with Houston that she preferred playwrighting because that gave her opportunities to see how the audiences responded to her works. She commented that a theater offered a space in which a writer, actors, and audiences make human connections. In a theater, Yamauchi offers her experience to audiences and actors, who in turn experience the history of Japanese American issei and nisei. All the people in a theater create a human tie in their interactions. Playwriting gives people a chance to virtually live through the lives of Japanese Americans in the first half of the twentieth century and to connect the present life to the past. Yamauchi's works thus pass down the unforgettable Japanese American cultural memory to the following generations. In doing so, she has become one of the unforgettable figures in the Asian American literary canon. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization; Issei, Nisei, Sansei; Japanese American Internment; Racism and Asian America.

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KAORI MORI

### ◆ YANG, RAE (1950–)

Rae Yang is a foreign-born Chinese American woman writer and an associate professor of Chinese language and literature at Dickinson College in Pennsylvania. She is widely known for her memoir *Spider Eaters* (1997). She attended a graduate program in journalism at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 1981 and left China for the University of Massachusetts shortly after that on an exchange visa. She completed a master's degree in comparative literature in 1985 and eventually earned her doctoral degree in 1991. She has been teaching at Dickinson College since 1990, with fields of specialization in premodern and modern Chinese fiction emphasizing psychoanalytic criticism. Her research and teaching interests include Chinese language teaching, Chinese folklore, comparative literature, and autobiographical writing. She has a son in his early twenties.

Rae Yang was born in Beijing on December 1, 1950, and grew up in a privileged family in China. Her parents were loyal and committed Communist Party members. In the early 1950s, her father was a diplomat in Switzerland, and Yang moved with her parents and spent a few years there. It was during her years following her father that she was able to travel to big cities such as Bern and Geneva, a privilege many of her peers did not have. In 1956 her family returned to Beijing and lived with Yang's paternal grandmother, who made Yang's childhood the happiest time. After the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) started, Yang immediately became a Red Guard like many of her peers—a young militant wearing a red armband—and traveled all over the country to spread revolutionary ideas. She also volunteered to leave Beijing and move to the Great Northern Wilderness for reeducation, together with many other youths, in 1968. She managed to make her way back to Beijing in 1978. She took the college entrance exam the same year and did well, but she did not intend to go to college. In the following year, however, she decided to pursue advanced education and enrolled in the

graduate program at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. She left for the University of Massachusetts to pursue a graduate degree in comparative literature in 1981, with only 50 dollars in her pocket.

Although Rae Yang initially meant to forget the dreams she and her peers in China used to share, she soon realized that it was impossible to leave her past behind. Therefore, joining many Overseas Chinese who left China after the Cultural Revolution, she started to reflect on her past experiences after moving to the United States. She engaged herself in a book project that found an audience in the United States and elsewhere. *Spider Eaters*, her first and only memoir, was published in 1997. It has been translated into Chinese and published by Nanfang Ribao Press in China. *Spider Eaters* joins other Chinese American autobiographies and memoirs by women in its recounting of Chinese people's experiences during the Cultural Revolution but in a different language. Rae Yang tells stories that span approximately three decades, from the 1950s to the 1980s. Instead of writing about victimization and sufferings, she reveals a journey into feelings, emotions, enthusiasm, love, disillusionment, and confusions in growing up during the Cultural Revolution. In her memoir, Yang portrays a young woman who was first passionate about Mao Zedong's vision of a new China and tried to spread his ideas to educate Chinese people in cities and villages alike. Nonetheless, she gradually became aware of her disillusionment, particularly after she toiled in the Great Northern Wilderness, where she observed the harsh realities farmers there lived through. She also witnessed the sufferings the Cultural Revolution had inflicted on so many Chinese and their families in the name of revolution. For her, the memory of the Cultural Revolution will be with her as long as she lives, and it will remind her to "cherish freedom and value human dignity" (Yang 1997, 285). See also Chinese American Autobiography.

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DONG LI

### ◆ YAU, JOHN (1950–)

John Yau is a Chinese American poet, art critic, novelist, and independent curator. Born in Lynn, Massachusetts, John was the first child of Arthur Yau and Jane Chang Yau. Both parents had left Shanghai before the founding of the People's Republic of China. Yau is partly of English descent, as his paternal grandfather had lived in England and married an English woman, and his mother came from a prestigious family in Shanghai. He studied at Boston University from 1967 to 1969 and later transferred to Bard College where he studied with the poet Robert Kelly and received his BA in 1972. He moved to New York City in 1975 and attended Brooklyn College, where he received his MFA degree under the poet John Ashbery in 1977. Under Ashbery's influence, both art and poetry became Yau's lifelong pursuits. He taught at many universities, including Brown University in the spring of 1992 and the University of California at Berkley in the spring of 1994 and 1995 respectively. He was a visiting scholar at Getty Center in 1993 and an Ahmanson Curatorial Fellow at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, in 1993 to 1996. He has received fellowships and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ingram-Merrill Foundation, and the New York Foundation for the Arts. He has been awarded a General Electric Foundation Award, a Lavan Award (Academy of American Poets), the Brendan Gill Award, the Jerome Shestack Prize (*American Poetry Review*), and a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship.

John Yau is a prolific writer, having published more than 50 books of poetry, artists' books, fiction, and art criticism, and is considered a major Chinese American poet. In his poetic writings, he is very much concerned with the sense of displacement. As a descendant of immigrants, Yau feels alienated from his Chinese heritage, as his parents never speak Chinese to him because they themselves feel disoriented in the United States. He feels dislocated from American mainstream culture, and he is regarded as an Other. The complexity and originality of his poetic style, together with his bold exploration of identity politics, racial stereotypes, and ethnicity, have been much praised by the critics and are considered a new direction for Chinese American poetry. Some critics have lauded his efforts in exploring the relationship between language and subjectivity as well as representation and identity construction, as seen in his use of parody and his experimentation with cinematic techniques such as film noir. Others have taken issue with his representation of Chinese American culture and have

questioned his racial authenticity. It is disputable as to what category his poetry should fall into, as in his poems critics see traces of modernist, postmodernist, multiculturalist, and language poetry, as well as the New York School. The influence of Ezra Pound's translations of Chinese poems in *Cathay* has also been a frequent topic of critical discussion. Because of his transgressive approach to Asian American poetic traditions, Yau is regarded as a distinctive voice in contemporary American poetry.

In Yau's poetical works, his obsession with racial and cultural identification is often considered the central theme of his poetry, and readers will find abundant expressions of his concern with issues of cultural dislocation, assimilation, racial stereotype, exile, and discrimination. The poems teem with elements of Chinese history, mythology, cultural and literary traditions, and with parodies of Hollywood's misrepresentation of Chinese. In his first poetry collection *Crossing Canal Street* (1976), for example, one finds his early split between two identities. Canal Street in lower Manhattan, New York City, is the borderline between **Chinatown** and SoHo. SoHo to the north of Manhattan was becoming the heart of New York art gallery, and Canal Street therefore represents Yau's dilemma with the choice of direction and identity.

The publication of *The Sleepless Night of Eugene Delacroix* in 1980 marks a new phase of Yau's literary career. In this collection Yau tries his hand at long prose poems rather than short, haiku-like pieces. He meditates on his identity as Chinese, Chinese American, or American. In the prose poem *Corpse and Mirror* (1983), which was inspired by abstract Expressionist paintings, Yau further touches upon his thoughts of uncertainty in one's identity and the acceptance of the book by the mainstream publishers marks his visibility in American poetry.

With the publication of *Radiant Silhouette: New and Selected Work, 1974–1988* (1989), Yau began his long poetical sequence of “Genghis Chan: Private Eye,” which all together consists of 28 poems. Poems I to VII appear in *Radiant Silhouette*, VIII to XX in *Edificio Sayonara* (1992), and XXI to XXVIII are included in *Forbidden Entries* (1996). The sequence shows Yau's search for the possibilities of expressing the multiplicity of a self. The title of the poem is a parody that combines Genghis Khan—the thirteenth-century Mongol conqueror who has been associated with **Fu Manchu**, a fictional character created by the English novelist Sax Rohmer, considered an incarnate of the **Yellow Peril**—and **Charlie Chan**—the fictional Chinese American detective created by the American novelist Earl Derr Biggers when he was on holidays in Hawaii. Both figures were adapted into movies, and Charlie Chan was played in the movies by white actors Warner Oland, Sidney Toler, and Roland Winters, and on television by the white actor J. Carrol Naish. The hybridizing of these two names debunks the racial stereotype in Hollywood representation of Chinese Americans and his resistance to be pigeonholed into any fixed identities. The play on word in the subtitle “private eye” (as detective) and “Private I” alludes to the poet's oscillation

between the public and private, the fictional and the real identities. The poetic series, through linguistic coinage and code-switching, subverts the conventional racial markers that are normally used to decode the racial identity.

Some critics, such as Marjorie Perloff and Juliana Chang, maintain that it is difficult to equate Yau's work with Chinese American writing or being representative of ethnic experience, mainly because they think Yau's work does not deal with racialized identity directly and straightforwardly, but Yau's parody of the cinematic representation of Charlie Chan and Fu Manchu in the poetic series and his exploration of different identities align him with other Asian American poets, although somewhat differently. In his interview with Edward Foster, Yau acknowledges that Pound has opened a window of China for him because, like Pound, he cannot directly read Chinese poems. He repeatedly read Pound's translations (or "mistranslation and re-creation" as Guiyou Huang terms them [1993, 99]) of Chinese poems in *Cathay* that produced a fundamental influence on his literary creations. Later in his famous essay "Neither Us Not Them," published in *American Poetry Review* (1994), Yau takes issue with Eliot Weinberger over the criteria of selecting poems for his poetry anthology entitled *American Poetry since 1950: Innovators and Outsiders* (1993), because Yau thinks that Weinberger takes too readily the aesthetic of Ezra Pound, which in Yau's opinion, "promotes assimilation and imperialism" (45), and which indicates the presence of a lingering Orientalism in U.S. culture. To fight such imperialism and counter the stereotype, Yau resorts to transgressive devices including parody, pidginization of languages, switch of code, and reappropriation of cultural material.

Yau's work is indeed not easy to categorize, as he himself has stated that he is "the poet who is too postmodern for the modernists and too modern for the postmodernists" (1994, 40). But his poetical experimentation has paved the way for his entry into the mainstream literary canon, as is evidenced by the 2002 publication of his *Borrowed Love Poems* by Penguin. In this poetry collection, Yau has us meet different figures, such as artists (Hiroshige and Eva Hesse), poets (Marina Tsvetayeva and Georg Trakl), actors (Boris Karloff and Peter Lorre), and Genghis Chan. Each of these figures haunts the polymorphic body, which shows the poet's exploration of multiple layers of identity. It is unclear to the readers as to who is real, who is fictional, what is fact, and what is autobiographical. Many lines of poems in the book are unsettling because the poet cannot ascertain his real belonging.

In his 1996 book *Forbidden Entries*, Yau further employs Mr. Moto, also an Asian detective like Charlie Chan and played by Peter Lorre in Hollywood movies, to direct readers' attention to the politics of identity, which is oriented by issues of race and gender. In these poems, his interest in Mr. Moto and Anna May Wong, the first Asian American actress iconized in American popular culture, indicates that Yau is similar to other Asian American writers as these stereotypical, specter-like Asian American

figures have always haunted his mind. Here again we see the characteristics of the poet as he engages the use of movies, mercurial identity, and riddles, among others. The poems also show the poet's interactions with visual artists. As in the visual arts where artists resort to realism and abstraction to express themselves, the poet here addresses issues of poetic narration and pure language, and articulates his belief that identity is not fixed but fluid.

After an interval of about three years in which the poet was dedicated to other things, Yau takes up poetry again with *Ing Grish* (2005), which includes the artwork of Thomas Nozkowski. In this collection Yau once again explores the relationship between things but also questions the so-called criterion of the purity of English and its identification with any particular group of people. Yau's latest poetical effort, *Paradiso Diaspora* (2007), published by Penguin, consists of 46 poems that continue Yau's probe into themes of displacements, his interest in visual arts, and his usual meditations in the voice of his daughter. The fragmentary lyrics and deconstructive devices lead the poems to no easy conclusions. The use of anagram in the title creates multiple combinations that prompt unpredictable associations. The book marks Yau's diaspora into the paradise of America to realize his American Dream, which turned out to be only an irony.

Yau has also written short stories. In 1994 he published a collection entitled *Hawaiian Cowboys*, which describes how the male protagonists strive for social recognition and for a successful career. The collection also shows Yau's direct treatment of racial stereotypes of Chinese Americans. Yau's 1998 collection *My Symptoms* consists of 6 sections and 34 very short stories. A *Publishers Weekly* reviewer, while acknowledging Yau's talent and insight, comments that the stories are awkward in metaphors and there is a lack of narration. But in *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, the commentator praises the poetic paragraphs in Yau's stories.

In the field of art, Yau has shown talent as well. He coauthored many books with visual artists and contributes regularly to *American Poetry Review* on contemporary visual artists. Pieces such as "The Poet as Art Critic," "Time Halted: The Photographs of Hiroshi Sugimoto," and "Jasper Johns' Preoccupation" reveal his penchant for the visual arts, a favorite theme often seen in his poems. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes; Asian Diasporas; Assimilation/Americanization; Orientalism and Asian America.

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GUANGLIN WANG

#### ◆ YEE, PAUL (1956–)

Award-winning Chinese Canadian author, children's literature writer, archivist, and immigration analyst, Paul Yee is best known for his historically based, culturally sensitive children's books documenting the Overseas Chinese experience, particularly within Canadian **Chinatowns**. He has also written several nonfiction history books and works actively to promote Chinese Canadian heritage and to improve conditions for recent Chinese immigrants.

Born on October 1, 1956, in Spalding, Saskatchewan, Paul Richard Yee was orphaned at a young age and lived for a short while in foster care before being adopted in 1958 by an aunt and uncle. At that time he moved to their home in Vancouver's Chinatown, where the couple was already raising Yee's older brother. Yee attended nearby Vancouver public schools as well as Cantonese-language Chinese school. He completed a baccalaureate degree at the University of British Columbia in 1978 and a master of arts in 1983, both in Canadian history. Yee also studied Mandarin Chinese while at university. Yee's first book, *Teach me to Fly, Skyfighter! and Other Stories*, was published in 1983. He went on to write more than a dozen works, both historical fiction and contemporary immigration narratives, aimed at children and young adults. In 1988 Yee published his first work of historical nonfiction, the best-selling *Saltwater City: An Illustrated History of the Chinese in Vancouver*, which was awarded that year's Vancouver Book Award. His most recent publication, 2006's *What Happened This Summer*, documents the lives of Chinese Canadian teenagers and their negotiation of cultural expectations and urban youth culture. *Shu-Li and Tamara*, an illustrated (by Shaoli Wang) book for middle readers, was published in the United States in March 2008 by Tradewind Books.

Widely considered Canada's leading chronicler of the Chinese immigrant experience, Yee's writings examine issues of social justice and cultural negotiation. Most of his fictional work focuses on Chinese who came to North America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Several of his historical children's stories, including *The Curses of Third Uncle* (1986), Ruth Schwartz Children's Literature Award-winner *Roses Sing on New Snow* (1991), and *Flyaway* (2001), feature female protagonists and investigate gendered cultural and family conflict within historical Chinese Canadian communities. Others, such as *Breakaway* (1994) and *A Song for Ba* (2004), deal with negotiating racism and difference within broader Canadian culture.

Yee, a third-generation Chinese Canadian (both his father and grandfather emigrated from China), credits his aunt Lillian with grounding him in Chinese culture. She not only insisted that only Chinese language be spoken at home, she also sent him to Chinese school and to see Hong Kong films on the weekends, both of which exposed him to traditional Chinese folk tales and myths. His first book-length work, *The Curses of Third Uncle*, features a protagonist named Lillian, and Yee has said that people from his family and community inspired many of his stories and characters. Not having a television as a child prompted Yee to become an avid reader and created a life-long affinity for literature. The incongruity of the rich Chinese Canadian history he heard from family and friends and the dearth of historical texts on the subject prompted Yee to take a strong interest in historical research.

Following his university training in history, Yee took a job as an archivist with the city of Vancouver in 1979. Yee has described becoming estranged from the Chinatown culture and community when he moved out of Chinatown as a young adult. He credits the realization of this separation with prompting him to reconnect with Chinatown. Yee began volunteering at the Vancouver Chinese Cultural Center, as well as organizing community cultural and historical events. At the same time, local publisher James Lorimer sought to publish a book from the perspective of Vancouver Chinatown for their *Adventures in Canada* series. Partially because of the visibility gained through his community work, Lorimer approached Yee about contributing, and Yee's first book, *Teach Me To Fly, Skyfighter!* (1983), was the result. Given Yee's appreciation of literature and his commitment to share the untold history of Chinese people in Canada with younger generations, writing historically based children's literature became a logical fit.

Both Yee's fiction and nonfiction works typically contain a strong visual component. A number of his children's books contain notable painted illustrations, including the 1997 winner of the Governor General's Award for Children's Literature, *Ghost Train* (1996) and *Dead Man's Gold and Other Stories* (2002), with oil-paintings by Harvey Chan; *A Song for Ba* (2004) illustrated by Jan Peng Wang; *Tales from Gold Mountain: Stories of the Chinese in the New World* (1990), illustrated by Simon Ng; and

*Bamboo* (2005) with folk art-style painting by Shaoli Wang. *Saltwater City* weaves oral history with hundreds of black-and-white photographs of Vancouver Chinatown. *Chinatown* (2005) presents an illustrated history of Calgary, Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria, and Winnipeg. The prominent role of images in his books contributes to the appeal of Yee's work to audiences of all ages.

Yee moved to Toronto in 1988 to work as multicultural coordinator for the Archives of Ontario. From 1991 to 1997 he served at the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship in the area of immigration policy. Throughout his career as an archivist, Yee continued to write, producing eight books between 1983 and 1997, including his first nonfiction history book, *Saltwater City*, in 1988. Yee left the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship in 1997 and has produced 12 books in the subsequent decade. He continues to work and live in Toronto, Ontario. **See also** Asian American Children's Literature; Multiculturalism and Asian America; Racism and Asian America.

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ROBIN A. LI

◆ YELLOW PERIL

The *yellow peril* is a phrase marking the threat that Asians were believed to pose to those of European descent; the yellow peril functioned, from the period of the gold rush until well into the twentieth century, to define immigrants of Asian descent as unassimilably Other. The threat was triple-pronged, for such immigrants were considered a source of economic, sexual, and cultural competition. As laborers, Asian bodies were cheap but believed to be preternaturally productive, outmatching the endurance, if not the skill, of their Caucasian counterparts, while requiring little sustenance. Next to this inexpensive efficiency, it was thought that working-class whites could not compete. Although the economic dimensions of competition played out in dramatically nationalistic terms—occasioning union uprising, violent backlash, and demands for restrictions to immigration—the yellow peril was manifest on a geopolitical level as well. It was not simply immigrants from East Asia in particular that threatened, in an apparently unfair way, the livelihoods of other laborers in the United

States. It was also significant that Japan and China themselves, the two nations of chief concern in this period, threatened to overwhelm their European and American counterparts with, among various exploitative practices, an abundance of cheap labor, devalued currency, and unfair trade practices. It was thought, for example, that Japanese students in the United States needed to be particularly watched, for they would bring the skills they learned while abroad back home to industrialize even more rapidly. Moreover, the sheer numbers of this indistinguishable horde marked a potential military threat in addition to the economic competition they represented. Equally troubling was the concern that the extensive and highly coveted markets associated with these countries were unfairly protected.

A related worry extends the concern of the productiveness of East Asian laboring bodies to the sexual realm of competition. Not only were these bodies believed to produce abundantly, they also were thought to reproduce prolifically, and, in this manner, overwhelm and undermine Caucasian purity and, by extension, superiority. At a time when imperial aspirations abroad were disappointed, European American domination seemed increasingly precarious: for, as contemporary maps dramatically illustrated, if Caucasians controlled much of the world, people of color nonetheless populated most of it. Furthermore, such people dominated the very temperate climes (which coastal locales in the United States most resembled) thought to threaten Caucasian superiority. Because an increase in numbers could tip the balance, a particular focus of yellow peril concern was on regulating, however informally, the sexual life of these immigrants. For example, public disapproval of the Japanese practice of picture bride marriages and severe restrictions on the entry of Chinese women proved effective in limiting the population of these groups, which were often concentrated in ethnic enclaves that became bachelor communities. It is within this context of sexual threat that the moral mission of Christian reformers must also be viewed. Focusing on the rescue of Chinese prostitutes and their redemption (through conversion of spirituality and work, from sexual labor to more acceptably domestic labor), the moral mission aimed to check the designs of such communities to increase. As importantly, laws against miscegenation were designed to ensure that the ever unstable purity of the white race—a purity with which women were specially burdened—remain uncontaminated. Far from improving the stock of mankind, racial mixing, it was widely believed, would lead to moral and physical degeneration. Left unchecked, so the dire warnings went, it would also assure the subordination of a diluted and impure white identity.

Given the related fears of the productiveness and fecundity of Asian immigrant bodies, it should come as no surprise that the yellow peril had a cultural dimension as well. For it was not only the efficiency of work and increase that was cause for concern. It was also the unnatural terms with which they were believed to work, and the similarly unnatural manner with which they increased, that fuelled the moral panic



focused on these bodies. Such bodies were thought to be unclean—for, otherwise how could they live in such self-denying squalor, yet be so fertile?—and, it almost goes without saying, lascivious in addition to being unhealthy. **Chinatowns** continue to be notorious for their tight confines and unhygienic conditions. Likewise the internal world of its denizens was the subject of moral hand-wringing. Paradoxically, however, though they were a target for Christian proselytizing, they were also considered irredeemably immoral. At stake here was an insistence on the profound and irreconcilable differences between the immigrant of Asian descent and the nationalist and naturalizable Caucasian. The contest played out on a cultural level, constituting as it were a clash of civilizations in which the latter battled the corrupt, degenerate, and inhuman barbarism of the former. As importantly, these differences served as the foundation for the contention that Asian immigrants were unassimilable and therefore undesirable.

Accordingly, the yellow peril's triple threat was perhaps most powerfully expressed in popular culture. As Elaine Kim has observed, cast not as type but as intractable stereotype, the "Oriental" was by turns asexual (the bachelor husband) and hypersexual (the dragon lady), inscrutable yet preternaturally intelligent, cunning and inevitably deceitful: in short, consummate betrayers. In pulp novels and in feature films, a succession of characters from **Fu Manchu** to **Suzie Wong**, dramatized the economic dimensions of the yellow peril, the erotic charge it carried, and the cultural terms in which attendant fears played out and were, symbolically at least, mollified. As Gina Marchetti has comprehensively detailed, Hollywood filmmakers were especially fascinated with melodrama as the genre and romance as the trope through which yellow peril fantasies would be enacted.

If the yellow peril found powerful expression in cultural forms, it was effectively managed through legal channels. Indeed, without formal regulation, it was believed that the sexual, economic, and cultural threats posed by the Asian body would be insurmountable. Accordingly, the fears associated with the yellow peril can be seen not only to give rise to but also to justify the succession of exclusion laws that strictly regulated the numbers of Chinese and Japanese immigration and ensured that the population of East Asians in the United States stayed low until the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act (1952) eliminated race as a barrier to immigration and 1965 when national quotas ended. Through such exclusion laws, the economic, sexual, and cultural dimensions of the threat posed by the yellow peril were addressed: if sheer numbers were the problem, a simple solution would be to keep them down by restricting entry first to laborers, then to prevent the possibility of regeneration by preventing wives from joining any who managed to bypass the first restriction. The sexual and cultural threats were handled in similarly direct ways: laws prohibiting miscegenation were designed to protect the purity of white women, and, if actors of Asian descent were not always formally prevented from playing Asian roles on-stage and screen, the practice

of “yellowface” (in which white actors “passed” as Asians) ensured that such portrayals affirmed rather than contested stereotypes of degeneracy, immorality, and inhumanity.

This stereotype has not gone unchallenged. In the late 1960s, the phrase *yellow peril* was appropriated by cultural nationalists who drew inspiration in part from the Black Power movement. Whereas its dominant usage had marked the terms of exclusion and oppression, antiracist activism insisted on resignification as a means of opposition. More recently, a group of politicized artists on Canada’s west coast have reclaimed the phrase as a focus of their consciousness-raising exhibition, entitled *Yellow Peril: Reconsidered*.

The fear of Asian invasion—a way of understanding the yellow peril in perhaps the simplest terms—has precedents in the medieval period, when the ascendance of Genghis Khan gave rise to the threat of the conquest of Europe by a Mongol “horde,” but can be traced as far back as the Greco-Persian wars. Although the precise origins of the term are unclear (no one person can be credited with the phrase at a specific time) there is no doubt that its impact on relations between European Americans and Asians in the late nineteenth century and extending into the twentieth was considerable and significant. The historical links, however tenuous, are extensive and as such suggest both the endurance of the yellow peril and its persistence despite the end to exclusion laws more than four decades ago and a popular emphasis on multicultural tolerance. If the figure of the **model minority** has greater resonance today, it is because the myth is the seemingly more benign recasting (as assimilation)—rather than progressive replacement—of the yellow peril’s logic (manifest as exclusion). As Colleen Lye argues, the model minority myth and the yellow peril constitute inextricable aspects of the same racial form. Additionally, the continuity between the yellow peril and the model minority connects the experiences of those of East Asian descent, associated with the yellow peril most obviously, and those with ties to other Asian nations, who immigrated in increasing numbers after the end of exclusion. In other words, the racial form that connects the logic underwriting the yellow peril and model minority myth is broadly Asiatic (rather than narrowly East Asian) in its cast. **See also** Asian American Political Activism; Asian American Stereotypes; Assimilation/Americanization; Chinese Exclusion Act.

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THY PHU

### ◆ YEP, LAURENCE MICHAEL (1948–)

Laurence Yep is a Chinese American writer, the author of over 60 volumes (ranging from narratives, picture books, short stories, an anthology, science fiction, and a biography) for young adults and children. His writings fill a dangerous gap in **Asian American children's literature** and have been adopted in several American schools to adjust the existing curricula to offer a more realistic portrayal of Chinese Americans, thus meeting the requirements of a multicultural society, beyond biases and stereotypes.

Yep was born in San Francisco, the son of Yep Gim Lew (who was born in China in 1914 and had joined his father in the United States when he was 10), and second-generation Chinese American Franche Lee, born in 1915 in Lima, Ohio, and brought up in West Virginia, where her family managed a laundry. Yep's name was chosen by his elder brother Thomas.

Raised in a mainly Hispanic and African American neighborhood of San Francisco, Yep used to live above the grocery shop that his family owned. His first contact with school was at St. Mary's Grammar School, a Catholic institute that had, as one of its goals, the conversion of Chinese Americans. He soon started grappling with the uneasiness of isolation, feeling that his identity was almost scattered in an alienating environment, as it is faithfully recorded in his 1991 autobiography entitled *The Lost Garden*. On the one hand, due to his limited proficiency in Chinese (at home his family only spoke in English), he was often teased by his schoolmates, because he found it difficult to understand the jokes his friends used to tell in Chinese, so that the nuns would not understand them. On the other hand, his looks betrayed his foreign origin, and, therefore, he was usually turned into the "all-purpose Asian"—this is the way he describes himself in his biography—that could act as a *Jap* or a Korean (always a *negative* character), depending on what war the children were staging on the playground. Moreover, even the oldtimers living in **Chinatown** were upset with him, due to his broken Chinese, signifying his lack of awareness of his cultural heritage. Only his grandmother, as time passed by, succeeded in helping him to piece together his identity by transmitting her knowledge of Chinese culture to her grandson. As a child, therefore, Yep was not at all comfortable with his multiple roots and definitely not proud of his ancestry, thus trying to be as Americanized as possible. Only later on, by means of writing, did he manage to recompose the puzzle of his identity.

Yep got in touch with white American culture when he was a student at St. Ignatius, the institute that he left in 1966. There he met Reverend John Becker, his teacher of English, who recognized his student's talent and, when he was 18, prompted him to write his first story, a science-fiction piece that he soon sold to a specialized magazine. Science fiction was chosen by Yep because it best portrayed his own sense of alienation and estrangement. Yep acknowledged his debt toward Reverend Becker by dedicating *The Lost Garden* to him.

In 1966 Yep entered Marquette University in Milwaukee to study journalism for two years. There he befriended Joanne Ryder who, later on, would become his wife and would share with him the passion for writing children's literature. In 1970 he obtained his BA from the University of California at Santa Cruz; in the same year he started teaching at the State University of New York (SUNY), Buffalo, where he earned his PhD in 1975, writing a dissertation entitled "Self-Communion: The Early Novels of William Faulkner."

Besides receiving the National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, Yep has won a large number of awards in his career: just to mention a few, the Wilder Award, the Boston Globe Horn Book Award, the Newbery Honor Award, the Georgia Children's Book Award, and the Lewis Carroll Shelf Award. Yep has been a professor of literature and creative writing in several universities, including the University of California at Santa Barbara and at Berkeley, San Jose City College in San Jose, California, and the Mountain View campus of Foothill College.

Yep has published so many books that only the most widely known will be analyzed here. His first volume, *Sweetwater* (1973), is a science-fiction story that features as the main character a young boy, Tyree, divided between his love for music and his duty to his family, against the background of a world peopled by horrible sea creatures, where food supplies are depleting, and the impending tragedy of a rising tide threatens to wipe out all the inhabitants.

His second novel, *Dragonwings* (1975), was written after six years of research. The volume was inspired by the outstanding life of Fung Joe Guey, a prominent Chinese American aviator and inventor. *Dragonwings* tells the story of Moon Shadow, a Chinese boy of eight, who, at the turn of the past century, joins his father Windrider in San Francisco Chinatown and helps him fulfill his dream of building a flying machine. In this book, Yep offers an interesting insight into the life (often hard and not at all pleasant) of Chinese American immigrants during the early 1900s. The intercultural relationship between the mainstream and the ethnic society is explored, showing a wider number of similarities beyond the obvious differences.

*Child of the Owl* (1977) is probably the most widely acknowledged and appraised book by Yep, which focused once more on the themes of alienation, loneliness, and the identity-formation process of a young Chinese American. The main character is Casey

Young, a little girl of 12 who never met her mother and lives with her father, Barney, a gambler who ends up in hospital after a fight at the beginning of the book. After a short period spent at her Americanized uncle's house, Casey is sent to her grandmother Paw-Paw's house in Chinatown, where the girl is faced with something she had always ignored up to that moment: her ancestry. Casey finds it difficult to come to terms with her ethnic background since she has always thought of herself as thoroughly American, and she finds it even harder to live in that strange place where everybody speaks a language she totally ignores. Paw-Paw (in whose character Yep mirrored his own grandmother) decides to help her granddaughter by telling her the story of the magic jade charm she always wears, an owl-shaped charm that contains the "Owl Spirit." The story within the main story is centered on Jasmine, an owl who, to protect her family, is induced to turn into a woman and get married. Jasmine learns how to be a good wife and mother, and she tenderly loves her new family; however, with a gesture of deep love, her husband sets her free, thus allowing her to go back to the owl community she originally belonged to. By listening to Paw-Paw's story, Casey has the chance to think of herself and her feeling of uneasiness and being trapped. She then decides to search for her past, thus learning from her grandmother that her real Chinese name, Cheun Meih, actually means "Taste of Spring," a taste of her newly discovered life as a Chinese American. After some mishaps is a happy ending: the various members of the family strengthen their bond, and Barney joins Gamblers Anonymous.

*The Rainbow People* is a 1989 collection of old folk-tales, originally told by Chinese immigrants in the 1930s in Oakland's Chinatown, as a part of a WPA project. Yep retells the stories after writing a detailed introduction in which he unfolds in front of his young readers' eyes the hard life of the Chinese immigrant workers who, after the toils of the day, used to tell each other stories before going to sleep.

*Dragon Gate* (1993) is set in the 1860s and is centered on the life of Otter, a young Chinese worker who decides to move to the United States to help his adoptive father and his worshipped uncle in the construction on the **transcontinental railroad**. The harsh life of the railroad workers in Sierra Nevada is faithfully portrayed by the writer.

In 1995 Yep published a poignant book on the dropping of the first nuclear bomb and its aftermath: *Hiroshima, a Novella*. In the same year, Yep published *American Dragons*, an anthology in which 25 Asian American authors approach the subject of being **Asian American**. In 1997 *Dragon Prince, a Chinese Beauty and the Beast Tale* came out. This is a picture book, illustrated by Kam Mak, in which the traditional *Beauty and the Beast* story (the prince being turned into a beast due to a wicked spell) is altered to prompt the readers' reflection on the stereotypes connected with the physical appearance of a person. In Yep's story, in fact, the prince deliberately decides to turn himself into a dragon, so that he will be able to find a suitable partner, capable of judging beyond the surface.

*The Imp That Ate My Homework* (1998) deals once more with the dilemma between neglecting and proudly asserting one's cultural heritage. Jim, the main character, recovers his troublesome relationship with his Chinese grandfather when he discovers that he is actually the reincarnation of Chung Kuei, a demon chaser who lived during the T'ang dynasty. "Grandpop" helps the little boy to get rid of a green imp that, besides making his life miserable, every day eats his homework. A note on the historical figure of Chung Kuei is placed at the end of the volume.

In 1999 Yep published *The Amah*, dealing with a girl who has to face increasing responsibilities when her mother starts to work as an *amah*, a nanny. In 2000 *Dream Soul* came out, and it explores the clash between Western and Chinese festivities in 1927 West Virginia. In 2002 *Spring Pearl, the Last Flower*, a story set during the Opium War, was released.

Other interesting titles are: *Dragon of the Lost Sea* (1982), *The Mark Twain Murders* (1982), *Dragon Steel* (1985), *The Star Fisher* (1991), and *Ribbons* (1996). *The Case of the Goblin Pearls* (1998), *The Case of the Lion Dance* (1999), and *The Case of the Firecrackers* (1999) compose Yep's Chinatown Mysteries Series. **See also** Asian American Stereotypes.

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ELISABETTA MARINO

### ◆ YUNG, WING (RONG HONG) (1828–1912)

Chinese American autobiographer, reformer, educational administrator, and diplomat, Yung Wing (Rong Hong) is known as the first person of Chinese descent to earn a baccalaureate degree from a U.S. institution, the founder of the Chinese Educational Mission, and the author of an autobiography, *My Life in China and America* (1909). His autobiography begins by recounting his rags-to-riches journey from a poor village in China to a successful undergraduate career at Yale College and proceeds to shed the best possible light on his attempts to reform China and improve life for

Chinese immigrants in the United States and other countries, including Peru. Born in the village of Nanping, Guangdong Province in China, Yung grew up in meager circumstances but eventually seized the opportunity to better his lot through an English-language education, enrolling at Mrs. Gutzlaff's School in Macao and, later, the Morrison Educational Society School in Hong Kong. Two years before the discovery of gold in California, which inspired many Chinese to seek their fortune at **Gold Mountain**, Yung and his parents made the bold decision for him to travel to the United States to continue his education. He started at the Monson Academy in Massachusetts in 1847 and then went on to Yale College, from which he graduated in 1854.

In 1855 Yung returned to China, his Chinese now a little rusty, but he relearned his native tongue and found work as an interpreter and businessman. He dreamed, however, of making a Western education accessible to other Chinese. In 1863 Yung convinced Governor-General Zeng Guo-fan to sponsor the U.S. schooling of more than one hundred Chinese boys. The plan was for these students to study at grammar and high schools in the Hartford, Connecticut, area; board with host families in Hartford and nearby towns; maintain their Chinese language and cultural ties through summer school; and eventually return to China, bringing their Western learning back with them. The first detachment of students sailed for the United States in 1872. At first, the Chinese Educational Mission thrived. While administering the mission, Yung also served as assistant minister of the Chinese Legation to the United States, Peru, and Spain. From this post, Yung lobbied for better treatment of Chinese laborers in the western United States and Peru. His autobiography reports particular pride in his firsthand investigation of working conditions in Peru, which he found unacceptable. As it turned out, he was able to make some changes in Peru, but he faced much more opposition in the United States. Yung could not stem the rising anti-Chinese sentiment of the late 1870s, which was punctuated by anti-Chinese riots and capped by the passage of the **Chinese Exclusion Act** in 1882 (this act also had the effect of nullifying Yung's naturalized U.S. citizenship, which he had earned in 1852). At the same time in China, politicians grew distrustful of Yung's methods and feared that Western education was corrupting the youths in his charge. In 1881 conservative officials in China cancelled the Chinese Educational Mission and recalled all of its students. During his later years, Yung moved between China and the United States, trying to revive the mission, expand China's railroad system, increase his wealth through various business ventures, raise his two sons (by his wife, Mary Louise Kellogg, whom he married in 1883), and eventually overthrow the Chinese government in an underground movement. When this movement failed, he escaped to the United States and sat down to write his autobiography at the age of 74.

*My Life in China and America* looks back on a career with many disappointments, failures, and qualified successes and tries to explain, defend, and celebrate them. Taking as his models the autobiographies of Benjamin Franklin, Frederick Douglass, and Booker T. Washington—all of which were popular during this time—Yung tells his own story of success. From Franklin, Yung borrowed the notion that individual economic success is the necessary ground for political effectiveness. From Douglass and Washington, Yung learned how a man of color can represent himself as authoritative in the eyes of a largely white American readership. In addition, Yung adapted the language of his contemporary Theodore Roosevelt to contest Roosevelt's own anti-Chinese sentiments. Roosevelt argued in 1899 that Chinese people could not live what he called the "strenuous life." In a direct response, Yung states in his text, "in a strenuous life one needs to be a dreamer to accomplish possibilities" (1909, 65). Throughout *My Life in China and America*, Yung lifts himself up as an exemplar of a Chinese man able to live a strenuous life in his business ventures, political responsibilities, and physical encounters with nature and other men.

Published in 1909, *My Life in China and America* received mixed reviews during the scant three years before Yung's death in 1912, but his contemporary reviewers respected his pioneering efforts and unique point of view. Modern-day Chinese reviewers have recuperated Yung as an early adopter of Western education and technological innovation. Most modern-day Asian American literary critics, however, have criticized Yung's work as assimilationist and inauthentic. Frank Chin, for example, calls Yung a "mission-schoolboy-makes-good Gunga Din licking up white fantasy" (1991, 11). According to Chin, Yung's adoption of Standard American English and the dominant American narrative of success provides evidence not only of his assimilation but also of his self-contempt. Amy Ling critiques Yung's autobiography for being too "expansive and detailed" regarding his public life and not expressive enough about his private life, especially in terms of his encounters with racism (1994, 75). According to Ling, Yung's work is "inauthentic" when compared to autobiographical works by Asian American women writers of the time, like Edith Maude Eaton (Sui Sin Far). Scholars such as K. Scott Wong and Floyd Cheung, however, have argued that Yung worked within the constraints of his historical moment. Whereas Wong recuperates Yung as an important cultural broker, Cheung has underscored Yung's subtle but insistent message of resistance. Other critics have been correct to identify most of *My Life in China and America* as self-centered, but this is to be expected in a work of this genre and period.

What critics have been slower to acknowledge is the autobiography's more communally minded message. For instance, Yung argues that making a Western education broadly accessible in China would have a beneficial effect for the entire nation: "The time will soon come . . . when the people of China will be so educated and enlightened



as to know what their rights are, public and private, and to have the moral courage to assert and defend them whenever they are invaded" (1909, 73). Other evidence of Yung's communal and politically resistant spirit is not found on the pages of the autobiography at all. In this regard, Yung was not unlike Booker T. Washington. Whereas Washington presented one version of himself in *Up from Slavery* for the purpose of advancing his educational cause, the Tuskegee Institute, he also worked behind the scenes in more radical ways. Similarly, Yung presented one version of himself in *My Life in China and America*, while working covertly with others to overthrow the Qing dynasty. "This is the time to strike," he wrote to coconspirator Charles Boothe on January 4, 1909, "when the whole world is against the Manchu Regime" (the Charles Boothe Papers).

Yung Wing remains a controversial figure, celebrated by some and reviled by others. Even his defenders are not entirely satisfied with his autobiography, in terms of either its literary quality or the insights that it provides on what it was like to be a late-nineteenth-century Chinese American man caught between two worlds. When still at Yale, Yung wrote an unpublished poem in Chinese: "A great man never forgets the / heart he had when a child." To what degree Yung was great and to what extent he may have been forgotten are two questions about which scholars have yet to find agreement. **See also** Assimilation/Americanization; Chinese Exclusion Act; Racism and Asian America.

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FLOYD CHEUNG

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- Amerasia Journal*
- American Theatre*
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- Bamboo Ridge: Hawaii Writers' Quarterly*
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- Critical Arts: A Journal for Cultural Studies*
- Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*
- Disorient: An Asian Pacific American Literary Arts Journalzine*
- The Drama Review*
- Hitting Critical Mass: A Journal of Asian American Cultural Criticism*
- Journal of Asian American Studies*
- Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*
- Journal of Ethnic Studies*
- Manoa: A Pacific Journal of International Writing*

*MELUS: Journal of the Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*

*Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*

*Multicultural Review*

*Race, Gender and Class: An Interdisciplinary Journal*

*SPAN: Journal of the South Pacific Association for Literature and Languages Studies*

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Among her honors, Lim has received the UCSB Faculty Research Lecture Award (2002) and the Chair Professorship of English at the University of Hong Kong (1999 to 2001), as well as the University of Western Australia Distinguished Lecturer award, Fulbright Distinguished Lecturer award, and the J. T. Stewart Hedgebrook award. She has served as chair of Women's Studies and is currently professor of English at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

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