

Asian American Literature: Discourses and Pedagogies
9 (2018) i-ii.

Introduction to Volume Nine: Homecoming

Although this volume of *AALDP* is not a themed special issue, the pieces that make up this issue of the journal seem to have serendipitously clustered around the idea of home. Next year, 2019, will be the 45th anniversary of the *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*, so it is particularly fitting that we start off this issue with an interview of Lawson Fusao Inada, one of the editors of that anthology, and thus one of the founders of Asian American literature as we think of it today. He has been a poet and scholar of Asian American literature for more than half a century, having begun his teaching career at what is now Southern Oregon University in 1966. His longtime colleague at Southern Oregon, Dr. Alma Rosa Alvarez, and her son, University of Chicago undergraduate John Rafael Almaguer, who has known Inada his whole lifetime, conducted an interview with him in their hometown of Ashland, Oregon. In the interview, Inada discusses both his work as a writer in the early years of his career, and his work more recently as the poet laureate of Oregon. In the latter role, Inada has encouraged people to think about how to foster poetry in their own homes. As he asserts, scholars

need to move beyond doing scholarship. Sometimes, as academics of color, we lose touch with where we came from. Maybe we can work together to give something back to our own communities. If our people don't show up, then, we need to go to them, we need to bring poetry to them. (*AALDP* 6)

The second interview between Viet Thanh Nguyen and Andrew Lam was conducted in front of a live audience in the city of San José, a place that both authors called home for a number of years. It was amazing to feel the energy between the two artists, who have known each other for decades, as well as between the speakers and the hometown crowd. As the authors articulated their struggles over the hard issues of representation, especially of the Vietnamese diaspora, the hometown audience was clearly engaged and asked a lot of interesting questions after the initial interview. We've included that interaction in our transcription as well. In the large Hammer Theatre of more than 500 seats, no microphones were available for audience questions, so Viet Nguyen listened carefully to each audience member and then summarized and restated their questions and comments for the benefit of the rest of the audience. It was

inspiring to see him turn a room that size into an intimate conversation. He is clearly not only a great writer but a skilled teacher as well.

The essay which follows the transcription of Nguyen and Lam's conversation takes their discussion of representing the Vietnamese Diaspora in a new direction. In "Mobilizing the Vietnamese Body: Dance Theory, Critical Refugee Studies, and the Aftermaths of War in Andrew X. Pham's *Catfish and Mandala*," Quynh Nhu Le and Ying Zhu combine their disciplinary knowledges in literature and dance to analyze how Pham corporeally represents his identity. Le and Zhu explore the choreography of the "body-as-text" in Pham's memoir. Their application of dance theory to literature surprises the reader both with the freshness of the approach and the wonder that this very useful application has not been done more often.

The second essay in this volume, Yana Ya-chu Chang's "Making (Non)Sense: On Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being*," explores the marketing and reception of Ozeki's third novel. Chang examines how reviewers and people involved in packaging and marketing the book have been invested in reading the transpacific text as a North American understanding of an exotic Asian other rather than a more layered interpretive process rooted in multiple subjectivities and homelands.

The Center for Literary Arts at San Jose State made the conversation between Andrew Lam and Viet Nguyen possible. The CLA and the Martha Heasley Cox Center for Steinbeck Studies will be bringing more Asian American authors to the SJSU campus on March 7, 2019, reuniting three former Steinbeck Fellows: R.O. Kwon, Vanessa Hua, and Kirstin Chen. In anticipation of that event, we have included brief reviews of their most recent novels in this volume, gearing the reviews towards the texts' pedagogical uses—our primary mission.

In 2019, Dr. Wei Ming Dariotis of San Francisco State University and Dr. Tara Fickle of the University of Oregon will be the guest editors of an issue of *AALDP* devoted to the *Aiiiiiiii! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* and its 45 years of reception and impact. They will be seeking responses to that ground-breaking but controversial anthology from a range of both creative writers and scholars.

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AALDP|Volume Nine

I would like to thank San José State Masters student Sung Yu for his generous gift of designing this year's *AALDP* cover. His work is inspired by both a photo taken of Viet Thanh Nguyen by Martin Bureau at a 2017 photo session in Paris and Shepard Fairey's images of Obama and, more recently, women of color in his "We the People" series. The image reminds me of the mysterious nature of the protagonist from *The Sympathizer* as well as the inevitably political nature of representation as is made so clear not only in Lam and Nguyen's conversation, but Lawson Inada's interview as well. Finally, I want to thank my assistant managing editors, Jessie Fussell and Olivia Lee for their dedication and professionalism. Without their help, this volume of *Asian American Literature: Discourses & Pedagogies* would not have been possible.

----Noelle Brada-Williams,
December 18, 2018
San José State University