

*Asian American Literature: Discourses and Pedagogies*  
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## Introduction: A New Site

The cover of this volume of *Asian American Literature: Discourses & Pedagogies* is a photograph supplied by the poet-turned-visual-artist, Truong Tran, of his work *Faultlines*. His interview by Wei Ming Dariotis begins this volume. The title, “On-ramp to the Apocalypse,” is a reference to the beloved hometown of both interviewer and interviewee: San Francisco. Here in California, fault lines evoke not only the cracks in the Earth’s surface that produce the earthquakes that have shaped our landscape but the fissures and cracks within our communal and personal identities as well. The intersection between location and personal identity has been on my mind a lot in the past six months as I have been preparing to launch volume four and also to move the journal to a whole new website. As I write, Berkeley Electronic Press is designing the new site. We hope that the new design will provide easier, user-friendlier access for our readers, authors, and referees. It will certainly be more colorful than our original site.

In the past year I have also been working on entries on the histories of the Chinese American and Japanese American communities for a reference book on the literature of John Steinbeck. During this time I was reminded anew of how much Asian Americans have been part of the California experience, and in turn, how much California has been a part of the Asian American experience. Chinese immigrants made up twenty percent of the workforce of the new state in the 1850’s. Even after more than a century and half—sixty years of which was spent under official exclusion—the California landscape is still marked by the labor of early Chinese immigrants in the tracks of the Central Pacific railroad, in small mining towns in the Sierras, in farms and orchards created from drained swampland, and through the building of urban Chinatowns. After the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Japanese immigrants came to California. While they went into many of the same industries that the earlier Chinese immigrants had populated, such as farming and fishing, the Japanese Americans’ legal ability to start families in California allowed them to use the labor of whole families, coupled with a focus on innovation, to redefine agriculture in the state.

Time and again, California has served as the new site for Asians seeking a home in America. Los Angeles has become the single largest population of people of Korean descent outside of Korea. Readers of Carlos Bulosan’s *America is in the Heart* are aware of the deep history Filipino Americans have in California, where 43% of all Filipino Americans now reside. Since 1975 the two largest communities of Vietnamese Americans have been built in California: Orange County, where I grew up, and San Jose, where I now live. The area around San Jose is also known as Silicon Valley. Work in high tech firms has lured many South Asians to the area and California now has the highest population of peoples of Indian descent in the country. Relatively new but growing communities of Western Asian Americans such as Afghan and Iranian Americans also have their largest communities in California (Fremont and Los

Angeles respectively). Nearly a third of all Asian Americans counted in the 2010 census (17.3 million in U.S.) live in California (5.6 million).

With these histories and demographics in mind, I chose for the new color scheme of the journal the deep blues of the Pacific Ocean and the gold of the dry California hills. This color scheme also echoes the colors of San Jose State University, the institutional host of our journal and the oldest public university in the state, as well as the colors of the University of California campuses where I and several of my editorial board members received our educations. Coincidentally, these are also the colors of the academic regalia for one who has received a PhD in the Humanities. That coincidence struck me as a sign that I needed to use my education to give back to the state that gave me both my education and my identity.

In addition to the color scheme, we also needed a banner heading that would serve us well for many years as a kind of logo. But how can you represent the study and teaching of the literature of very diverse communities in one image? We needed something abstract enough to be able to encompass all that our future contributors might write about, but which also accurately represents our focus: the close and careful analysis of Asian American literature and culture and ideas on how to guide our students in achieving this as well. Our solution is a close up of the varied textures of actual books of Asian American literature. My students are often surprised by how varied Asian American literature actually is and I have to admit that until I began thinking about the banner, I had not realized how *physically* different the textures of published books can be.

This journal has been fortunate to receive submissions from authors in a large range of locales, including Canada, Egypt, Iran, Malaysia, as well as many parts of the United States. I have also heard from readers from around the globe. But while we can learn from people and ideas from all over the world, most of us live and teach in very specific locales. The first two submissions in this volume remind us how location both shapes our identities and our tasks as teachers.

Jane Hseu's "Teaching Race and Space Through Asian American and Latino Performance Poetry: I Was Born with Two Tongues' *Broken Speak* and Sonido Ink(quieto)'s *Chicano, Illnoize*" draws on her teaching of spoken word poetry to her Chicagoland students. Her essay examines how Chicago-based Latino and Asian American artists articulate resistance using hybrid cultural forms. In "Shattering the Binary: Teaching Critical Thinking Through John Okada's *No-No Boy*," Sarita Cannon discusses lessons learned while teaching Okada's novel of the aftermath of internment to students in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her essay also illustrates how different understandings of American history can be in classrooms across the United States and how widely varying our students' reactions to literary text are.

The final three essays all deal with gender in some way. Robin E. Field's "You No Real Man": Constructing Gender, Sexuality, and the Asian American Subject in Jana Monji's "Kim" focuses on a story in the often-taught anthology, *Bold Worlds: A Century of Asian American Writing*, to show how one can use the story to effectively teach the basics of gender theory, queer theory, and Asian American culture and history. In "Commodified Desire: Negotiating Asian

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American Heteronormativity,” Paul McCutcheon examines the gender politics of H.T. Tsiang’s *And China Has Hands*, noting the way that the logic of its Marxist analysis of capital accepts heteronormativity as an ideal even as it illustrates how heteronormativity is an “impossibility” for Asian American men in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century political and economic context. Danielle Crawford examines Maxine Hong King’s use of food and foodways in rethinking the masculinity of Chinese men in this same period in her essay “‘vinegar soup improved his womb’: Food, Appetite, and the Redefining of Asian American Masculinity in Kingston’s *China Men*.”

This volume closes with two reviews: Erin Lodeesen’s review of Cathy Schlund-Vials’ *War, Genocide, and Justice: Cambodian American Memory* and Margaret Rhee’s review of Juliana Chang’s *Inhuman Citizenship: Traumatic Enjoyment and Asian American Literature*. In future issues AALDP plans to branch out into reviewing literature (as well as critical books) with the specific focus of how these texts can be used in the classroom.

In moving to our new site we also want to renew our commitment to the open access of scholarly material. Last year one company that has virtually monopolized the distribution of scholarly material in the sciences made a 36% profit margin on revenues of \$3.2 billion. Scholarship is too important to be packaged and its access limited in the interests of profit margins. I want to thank the contributors, referees, and readers of this journal for their continued commitment to our project of making scholarship on the teaching and analysis of Asian American texts free to all. We hope this volume is of use to you in whatever site you may find yourself teaching or reading Asian American literature.

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