

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO



ASIAN  
AMERICAN  
LITERATURE

*Edited by Crystal Parikh  
and Daniel Y. Kim*

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EDITED BY

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32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

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[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107479142](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107479142)

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First published 2015

Printed in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

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

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

The Cambridge Companion to Asian American Literature / [edited by]  
Crystal Parikh, New York University; Daniel Y. Kim, Brown University.  
pages cm. – (Cambridge Companions to Literature)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-09517-5 (hardback) – ISBN 978-1-107-47914-2 (pbk.)

I. American literature – Asian American authors – History and criticism.

I. Parikh, Crystal, editor. II. Kim, Daniel Y., editor.

PS153.A84C35 2015

810.9'895–dc23 2015008284

ISBN 978-1-107-09517-5 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-107-47914-2 Paperback

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO  
ASIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

*The Cambridge Companion to Asian American Literature* offers an engaging survey of Asian American literature from the nineteenth century to the present day. Since the 1980s, Asian American literary studies has developed into a substantial and vibrant field within English and American studies. This *Companion* explores the variety of historical periods, literary genres, and cultural movements affecting the development of Asian American literature. Written by a host of leading scholars in the field, this book provides insight into the representative movements, regional settings, archival resources, and critical reception that define Asian American literature. Covering subjects from immigrant narratives and internment literature to contemporary race studies and the problem of translation, this *Companion* provides insight into the myriad traditions that have shaped the Asian American literary landscape.

Crystal Parikh is Associate Professor of English at New York University. She specializes in twentieth-century and contemporary American literature and culture, with a focus on comparative race and ethnic studies. She is the author of *An Ethics of Betrayal: The Politics of Otherness in Emergent U.S. Literature and Culture*, which won the Modern Language Association Prize in United States Latina and Latino and Chicana and Chicano Literary Studies.

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GREG ROBINSON is Professor of History at l'Université du Québec À Montréal, a French-language institution in Montreal, Canada. His books include *By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans* (Harvard University Press, 2001), which spent four months on *Academia* magazine's scholarly best-seller list; *A Tragedy of Democracy: Japanese Confinement in North America* (Columbia University Press, 2009), winner of the 2009 History book prize of the Association for Asian American Studies; and *After Camp: Portraits in Midcentury Japanese American Life and Politics* (University of California Press, 2012), winner of the Caroline Bancroft History Prize in Western U.S. History. He is also the editor of *Pacific Citizens: Larry and Guyo Tajiri and Japanese American Journalism in the World War II Era* (University of Illinois Press, 2012) and coeditor of *Miné Okubo: Following Her Own Road* (University of Washington Press, 2008), an anthology volume on a groundbreaking Nisei artist and writer. Professor Robinson also writes a regular column, "The Great Unknown and the Unknown Great," for the San Francisco *Nichi Bei Weekly*.

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CRYSTAL PARIKH

CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR WORKS AND EVENTS, 1763-2014

- 1763      Filipino seamen working on a Spanish galleon establish a village in the Louisiana bayous.
- 1784      The United States-China trade begins with the departure of the Empress of China from New York, which leads to the arrival of Chinese immigrants, along with Chinese goods, to the United States.
- 1849      The start of the California Gold Rush draws the first significant number of immigrants to the United States.
- 1854      The California Supreme Court decides in the case of *People v. Hall* that the Chinese should be classified as “Indian” and are therefore not eligible to provide witness against a white person.
- 1868      The signing of the Burlingame Treaty between the United States and China establishes formal friendly relations between the two nations and encourages immigration from China to the United States.
- 1875      Under the guise of preventing the transporting of prostitutes to the United States, the passage of the Page Act by Congress effectively prohibits the immigration of women from China to the United States.
- 1882      The Chinese Exclusion Act is the first law to significantly restrict immigration and eliminates most new Chinese immigration to the United States.
- 1898      With the signing of the Treaty of Paris at the conclusion of the Spanish-American War, the United States acquires the

island territories of the Philippines (and other territories in the Caribbean Sea and Pacific Ocean regions).

The United States annexes the Kingdom of Hawai'i. Queen Lili'uokalani, *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen*

- 1899 Onoto Watanna (aka Winnifred Eaton), *Miss Nume of Japan*
- 1901–1905 In a series of Supreme Court cases known as the Insular Cases, concerning the status of the former Spanish colonies acquired by the United States, the Court designates these territories, including the Philippines, as “foreign in a domestic sense.” Residents of these territories are granted the status of “American nationals” rather than U.S. citizens.
- 1907 The signing of the Gentlemen's Agreement, a treaty between the United States and Japan, drastically reduces the number of Japanese immigrants to the United States; it also cedes control of the Korean peninsula to Japan, marking the beginning of decades of brutal colonial rule.
- 1912 Sui Sin Far (aka Edith Maude Eaton), *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*
- 1917 The 1917 Immigration Act restricts immigration from the “Asiatic Barred Zone.”
- 1922 The ruling in the Supreme Court case of *Ozawa v. U.S.* rejects Takao Ozawa's petition for U.S. citizenship on the basis that the Japanese do not qualify as white.
- 1923 The decision in the Supreme Court case of *U.S. v. Bhagat Singh Thind* finds that Asian Indians are not eligible for U.S. citizenship because they are not white.
- 1924 The passage of the Johnson-Reed Act effectively ends almost all immigration from Asian countries (as well as from Southern and Eastern Europe).
- 1925 Shōson Nagahara, *Lament in the Night* (in Japanese)
- 1941 The Imperial Japanese Navy launches a surprise attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawai'i. As a result, the United States enters World War II.
- 1942 President Franklin D. Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066 on February 19, authorizing the creation of military zones and the relocation of Japanese Americans from areas considered

- vital for military security; most are eventually resettled in internment camps for the duration of World War II.
- U.S. and Philippine troops are forced on a brutal trek to prison camps in the Bataan Province of the Philippines in what comes to be known the Bataan Death March.
- 1943 Pardee Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*
- 1945 U.S. forces drop atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. World War II ends.  
Jade Snow Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*
- 1946 The Philippines are granted independence from the United States.  
Carlos Bulosan, *America Is in the Heart*
- 1949 The Communist Revolution in China brings Mao Zedong to power, who establishes the People's Republic of China.
- 1950-1953 The Korean War
- 1952 The passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act, also known as the McCarran-Walter Act, ends Asian exclusion.
- 1953 Monica Sone, *Nisei Daughter*
- 1955 Representatives from twenty-nine countries meet in Bandung, Indonesia, for the Afro-Asian Conference.
- 1957 John Okada, *No-No Boy*
- 1958 The musical production of *Flower Drum Song*, based on the 1957 novel by C. Y. Lee, opens on Broadway.
- 1959 Hawai'i is granted U.S. statehood.
- 1960-1975 The Vietnam War
- 1964 Richard Kim, *The Martyred*  
The clash between U.S. and North Vietnamese naval forces in the Gulf of Tonkin leads to the passage of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution by Congress and increased U.S. military deployment in Vietnam.
- 1965 The passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act eliminates the national origins quota system and extensively restructures immigration policy.

- The theater company East West Players is founded in Los Angeles, California.
- 1967 The Supreme Court decision in the case of *Loving v. Virginia* strikes down bans on interracial marriage.  
Daniel K. Inouye, *Journey to Washington*
- 1970 Poetry carved into the walls of the then-shuttered Angel Island Immigration Station in San Francisco Bay by Chinese migrants who had been detained there between 1910 and 1940 is discovered.
- 1972 *The Chicken Coop Chinaman* by Frank Chin is first produced in New York.
- 1974 The Supreme Court decision in the case of *Lau v. Nichols* finds that schools need to provide special services for students who are unable to speak English.  
Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chang, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong, Eds., *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers*  
Frank Chin, *The Year of the Dragon*
- 1975-1994 The United States imposes an embargo on Vietnam.
- 1975 Milton Murayama, *All I Asking For Is My Body*
- 1976 Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*
- 1977 Maxine Hong Kingston, *China Men*
- 1978 Eric Chock and Darrell Lum found the Bamboo Ridge Press in Hawai'i.
- 1980 The passage of the Refugee Act provides for the systematic admission, resettlement, and economic assistance of refugees in the United States.
- 1981 The English translation of Nieh Hualing's *Mulberry and Peach* (originally published serially in Chinese in the 1970s) is published.  
Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, Eds., *This Bridge Called My Back*  
Joy Kogawa, *Obasan*

- 1982 Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictée*
- 1983 Dennis Carroll, *Kumu Kuhua Plays*  
Cathy Song, *Picture Bride*
- 1988 Congress passes the Civil Liberties Act, which issues an official apology and provides for reparations for surviving Japanese internees.  
David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly*
- 1989 Asian Women United of California, *Making Waves*  
Jeannie Barroga, *Walls*  
Le Ly Hayslip, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*  
Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*
- 1990 Jessica Hagedorn, *Dogeaters*  
Karen Tei Yamashita, *Through the Arc of the Rain Forest*
- 1991 The United States closes its military bases in the Philippines.  
Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong, *The Big Aiiieeeee!*
- 1994 Sharon Lim-Hing, *The Very Inside*
- 1995 Chang-rae Lee, *Native Speaker*  
R. Zamora Linmark, *Rolling the Rs*
- 1996 Dale Furutani, *Death in Little Tokyo*  
Shirley Geok-lin Lim, *Among the White Moon Faces*  
Helie Lee, *Still Life with Rice*
- 1997 Nora Okja Keller, *Comfort Woman*
- 1998 The Association for Asian American Studies awards its prize in literature to Lois-Ann Yamanaka for her novel *Blu's Hanging* (1997) but rescinds it soon after, sparking much heated controversy.  
Susan Choi, *The Foreign Student*  
Ruth Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*
- 1999 Andrew X. Pham, *Catfish and Mandala*

- 2001 Terrorists from al-Qaeda launch a series of coordinated attacks in New York City and the Washington, DC, metropolitan area, resulting in the deaths of more than 3,000 people.  
President George W. Bush declares “war on terror”; the war in Afghanistan begins.  
Congress passes the USA PATRIOT Act.  
Phil Yu launches the blog *Angry Asian Man*.  
Playwright David Henry Hwang stages his “revisical” of *Flower Drum Song* on Broadway.
- 2002 Ted Chiang, *Stories of Your Life and Others*
- 2003 United States invades Iraq.  
lê thị diễm thúy, *The Gangster We Are All Looking For*  
Monique Truong, *The Book of Salt*
- 2004 Ha Jin, *War Trash*
- 2005 The English translation of *The Guest* (2001) by Korean writer Hwang Sok-Yong is published.  
Gish Jen, *The Love Wife*
- 2006 Kip Fulbeck, *Part Asian 100% Hapa*
- 2007 Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*  
Ed Lin, *This Is a Bust*
- 2008 Mahvish Khan, *My Guantánamo Diary*  
Nam Le, *The Boat*  
Linh Dinh, *Love Like Hate*
- 2009 Rajiv Joseph, *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*
- 2011 Amy Chua, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*
- 2013 Maxine Hong Kingston receives the National Medal of Arts.  
Ruth Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being*
- 2014 Chang-rae Lee, *On Such a Full Sea*



DANIEL Y. KIM AND CRYSTAL PARIKH

## INTRODUCTION

Although writers of Asian descent have been producing literature since the late nineteenth century, it was not until a century later that these works were taken up for study by scholars and critics. Since the 1980s, Asian American literary studies has developed into a substantial and vibrant field within English and American studies departments in the U.S. academy. Moreover, there are now roughly fifty departments or programs in Asian American Studies in American universities and colleges, and a growing number of literary scholars abroad – particularly in East Asia and Europe – have taken an avid interest in the field. Critics and literary historians have brought a range of current theoretical and methodological paradigms to their examination of Asian American literature, and their insights have helped reshape American literary studies, expanding its conception of national culture and its literary canons. *The Cambridge Companion to Asian American Literature* offers an introduction to the historical contexts, theoretical concepts, generic distinctions, and constructions of cultural and political identity that writers and critics have relied upon in crafting their visions of the Asian American literary tradition.

“Asia” itself refers to a vast continent composed of diverse and heterogeneous peoples and cultures, as well as complex and shifting social and political histories. The rubric “Asian American” signals the infusion of this complexity into the United States and even beyond – into all of the Americas. Thus, from its inception, Asian American studies has grappled with questions of social difference, the possibility of coherent identity, the terms of political affiliation and unity, and the conditions of belonging and exclusion. “Asian American” has functioned quite self-consciously as a pan-ethnic category that brings together – if at times tenuously – members of various diasporas across different historical moments. It pertains to all who identify as “Asian” as well as to those who *have been identified by others* as Asian or “Oriental.” A central challenge for researchers and teachers of Asian American literature, then, has been to conceive of the continuity and