Poetry

CRITICISM

VOLUME

40

Poetry Criticism

Excerpts from Criticism of the Works of the Most Significant and Widely Studied Poets of World Literature

Volume 40

江苏工业学院图书馆
藏书章

David Galens
Project Editor

GALE®

THOMSON
GALE™

Detroit • New York • San Diego • San Francisco • Cleveland • New Haven, Conn. • Waterville, Maine • London • Munich

THOMSON
GALE

Poetry Criticism, Vol. 40

Project Editor
David Galens

Editorial
Jenny Cromie, Kathy D. Darrow, Lisa Gellert, Madeline S. Harris, Allison Marion, Ellen McGeagh, Ron Morelli

Permissions
Debra Freitas, Margaret Chamberlain

Imaging and Multimedia
Kelly A. Quin, Lezlie Light, Dan Newell

Product Design
Michael Logusz

Composition and Electronic Capture
Gary Leach

Manufacturing
Stacy L. Melson

© 2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc.

Gale and Design™ and Thomson Learning™ are trademarks used herein under license.

For more information, contact
The Gale Group, Inc.
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535
Or you can visit our internet site at
http://www.gale.com

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
No part of this work covered by the copyright herein may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means—graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution, or information storage retrieval systems—without the written permission of the publisher.

This publication is a creative work fully protected by all applicable copyright laws, as well as by misappropriation, trade secret, unfair competition, and other applicable laws. The authors and editors of this work have added value to the underlying factual material herein through one or more of the following: unique and original selection, coordination, expression, arrangement, and classification of the information.

For permission to use material from the product, submit your request via the Web at http://www.gale-edit.com/permissions, or you may download our Permissions Request form and submit your request by fax or mail to:

Permisssions Department
The Gale Group, Inc.
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535
Permissions Hotline:
248-699-8006 or 800-877-4253, etx. 8006
Fax 248-699-8074 or 800-762-4058

Since this page cannot legibly accommodate all copyright notices, the acknowledgments constitute an extension of the copyright notice.

While every effort has been made to secure permission to reprint material and to ensure the reliability of the information presented in this publication, the Gale Group neither guarantees the accuracy of the data contained herein nor assumes any responsibility for errors, omissions or discrepancies. Gale accepts no payment for listing; and inclusion in the publication of any organization, agency, institution, publication, service, or individual does not imply endorsement of the editors or publisher. Errors brought to the attention of the publisher and verified to the satisfaction of the publisher will be corrected in future editions.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER 76-46132

ISBN 0-7876-5966-5
ISSN 0091-3421

Printed in the United States of America
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Poetry
Criticism

Guide to Gale Literary Criticism Series

For criticism on	Consult these Gale series
Authors now living or who died after December 31, 1999	*CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM (CLC)*
Authors who died between 1900 and 1999	*TWENTIETH-CENTURY LITERARY CRITICISM (TCLC)*
Authors who died between 1800 and 1899	*NINETEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE CRITICISM (NCLC)*
Authors who died between 1400 and 1799	*LITERATURE CRITICISM FROM 1400 TO 1800 (LC)* *SHAKESPEAREAN CRITICISM (SC)*
Authors who died before 1400	*CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL LITERATURE CRITICISM (CMLC)*
Authors of books for children and young adults	*CHILDREN'S LITERATURE REVIEW (CLR)*
Dramatists	*DRAMA CRITICISM (DC)*
Poets	*POETRY CRITICISM (PC)*
Short story writers	*SHORT STORY CRITICISM (SSC)*
Black writers of the past two hundred years	*BLACK LITERATURE CRITICISM (BLC)* *BLACK LITERATURE CRITICISM SUPPLEMENT (BLCS)*
Hispanic writers of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries	*HISPANIC LITERATURE CRITICISM (HLC)* *HISPANIC LITERATURE CRITICISM SUPPLEMENT (HLCS)*
Native North American writers and orators of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries	*NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN LITERATURE (NNAL)*
Major authors from the Renaissance to the present	*WORLD LITERATURE CRITICISM, 1500 TO THE PRESENT (WLC)* *WORLD LITERATURE CRITICISM SUPPLEMENT (WLCS)*

此为试读,需要完整PDF请访问: www.ertongbook.com

Preface

Poetry Criticism (*PC*) presents significant criticism of the world's greatest poets and provides supplementary biographical and bibliographical material to guide the interested reader to a greater understanding of the genre and its creators. Although major poets and literary movements are covered in such Gale Literary Criticism series as *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (*CLC*), *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (*TCLC*), *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism* (*NCLC*), *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800* (*LC*), and *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism* (*CMLC*), *PC* offers more focused attention on poetry than is possible in the broader, survey-oriented entries on writers in these Gale series. Students, teachers, librarians, and researchers will find that the generous excerpts and supplementary material provided by *PC* supply them with the vital information needed to write a term paper on poetic technique, to examine a poet's most prominent themes, or to lead a poetry discussion group.

Scope of the Series

PC is designed to serve as an introduction to major poets of all eras and nationalities. Since these authors have inspired a great deal of relevant critical material, *PC* is necessarily selective, and the editors have chosen the most important published criticism to aid readers and students in their research. Each author entry presents a historical survey of the critical response to that author's work. The length of an entry is intended to reflect the amount of critical attention the author has received from critics writing in English and from foreign critics in translation. Every attempt has been made to identify and include the most significant essays on each author's work. In order to provide these important critical pieces, the editors sometimes reprint essays that have appeared elsewhere in Gale's Literary Criticism Series. Such duplication, however, never exceeds twenty percent of a *PC* volume.

Organization of the Book

Each *PC* entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author's actual name given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical introduction. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by the title of the work and its date of publication.

- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author and the critical debates surrounding his or her work.

- A **Portrait of the Author** is included when available.

- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The first section comprises poetry collections and book-length poems. The second section gives information on other major works by the author. For foreign authors, the editors have provided original foreign-language publication information and have selected what are considered the best and most complete English-language editions of their works.

- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. All individual titles of poems and poetry collections by the author featured in the entry are printed in boldface type. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it appeared. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included.

- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

Cumulative Indexes

A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by the Gale Group, including *PC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Nationality Index** lists all authors featured in *PC* by nationality, followed by the number of the *PC* volume in which their entry appears.

A **Cumulative Title Index** lists in alphabetical order all individual poems, book-length poems, and collection titles contained in the *PC* series. Titles of poetry collections and separately published poems are printed in italics, while titles of individual poems are printed in roman type with quotation marks. Each title is followed by the author's last name and corresponding volume and page numbers where commentary on the work is located. English-language translations of original foreign-language titles are cross-referenced to the foreign titles so that all references to discussion of a work are combined in one listing.

Citing *Poetry Criticism*

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume in the Literary Criticism Series may use the following general format to footnote reprinted criticism. The first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books.

Sylvia Kasey Marks, "A Brief Glance at George Eliot's *The Spanish Gypsy,*" *Victorian Poetry* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1983), 184-90; reprinted in *Poetry Criticism,* vol. 20, ed. Ellen McGeagh (Detroit: The Gale Group), 128-31.

Linden Peach, "Man, Nature and Wordsworth: American Versions," *British Influence on the Birth of American Literature,* (Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982), 29-57; reprinted in *Poetry Criticism,* vol. 20, ed. Ellen McGeagh (Detroit: The Gale Group), 37-40.

Suggestions are Welcome

Readers who wish to suggest new features, topics, or authors to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions or comments are cordially invited to call, write, or fax the Managing Editor:

Project Editor, Literary Criticism Series
The Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535
1-800-347-4253 (GALE)
Fax: 248-699-8054

Acknowledgments

The editors wish to thank the copyright holders of the excerpted criticism included in this volume and the permissions managers of many book and magazine publishing companies for assisting us in securing reproduction rights. We are also grateful to the staffs of the Detroit Public Library, the Library of Congress, the University of Detroit Mercy Library, Wayne State University Purdy/Kresge Library Complex, and the University of Michigan Libraries for making their resources available to us. Following is a list of the copyright holders who have granted us permission to reproduce material in this volume of *PC*. Every effort has been made to trace copyright, but if omissions have been made, please let us know.

COPYRIGHTED EXCERPTS IN *PC*, VOLUME 40, WERE REPRODUCED FROM THE FOLLOWING PERIODICALS:

Concerning Poetry, v. 11, Spring, 1978. Copyright © 1978, Western Washington University. Reproduced by permission.—***Contemporary Literature,*** v. 36, Spring, 1995. Copyright © 1995 The Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—***Durham University Journal,*** July, 1991. Reproduced by permission.—***Eighteenth-Century Life,*** v. 13, November, 1989. Copyright © The Johns Hopkins University Press. Reproduced by permission.—***ELH,*** v. 57, Winter, 1990. Copyright © The Johns Hopkins University Press. Reproduced by permission.—***Explicator,*** v. 54, Winter, 1996. Copyright © 1996 Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation. Reproduced with permission of the Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation, published by Heldref Publications, 1319 18th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036-1802.—***Hitting Critical Mass,*** v. 6, Spring, 2000. Reproduced by permission.—***Hudson Review,*** v. 52, Summer, 1999. Copyright © 1999 by The Hudson Review, Inc. Reproduced by permission.—***James Dickey Newsletter,*** v. 6, Fall, 1989. Copyright © 1989 James Dickey Newsletter/James Dickey Society. Reproduced by permission.—***Library Journal,*** v. 119, 15 February, 1994 for review of "The Phoenix Gone, The Terrace Empty," by Doris Lynch. Copyright © 1994 by Reed Elsevier, USA. Reproduced by permission of the publisher and the author.—***LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory,*** v. 12, April, 2001, for "Mocking My Own Ripeness: Authenticity, Heritage, and Self-Erasure in the Poetry of Marilyn Chin," by John Grey. Copyright © 2001 by OPA (Amsterdam) B.V. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of the publisher and the author.—***MELUS,*** v. 25, Fall-Winter, 2000. Copyright ©, MELUS: The Society for the Study of Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States, 2000. Reproduced by permission.—***Modern Poetry Studies,*** v. 2, 1972; v. 5, 1974. Copyright © 1972, 1974, by Media Study, Inc. Reproduced by permission.—***The New Republic,*** v. 204, 6 May, 1991. Reproduced by permission.— ***New Statesman & Society,*** v. 4, 15 March, 1991. Copyright © 1991 Statesman & Nation Publishing Company Limited. Reproduced by permission.—***New York Review of Books,***v. 46, 18 November, 1999. Copyright © 1999 Nyrev, Inc. Reproduced with permission from *The New York Review of Books.*—***Parnassus,*** v. 13, Spring-Summer, 1986, for "Toward the Abyss: James Dickey at Middle Age," by Paul Christensen. Copyright © 1986 Poetry in Review Foundation, NY. Reproduced by permission of the publisher and the author.—***Prairie Schooner,*** v. 52, Spring, 1978. Copyright © 1978 by University of Nebraska Press. Reproduced from *Prairie Schooner* by permission of the University of Nebraska Press.—***The Progressive,*** v. 58, May, 1994. Copyright © 1994 by The Progressive, Inc. Reproduced by permission of *The Progressive,* 409 East Main Street, Madison, WI 53703.— ***Publishers Weekly,*** v. 241, 28 February, 1994; v. 248, 22 October, 2001. Copyright © 1994, 2001 by Reed Publishing USA. Reproduced from *Publishers Weekly,* published by the Bowker Magazine Group of Cahners Publishing Co., a division of Reed Publishing USA., by permission.—***Sewanee Review,*** v. 71, Winter, 1963. Copyright © 1963, 1991 by The University of the South. Reproduced by permission of the editor.—***Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society,*** v. 15, Autumn, 1989 for "The Sapphic-Platonics of Katherine Philips, 1632-1664," by Harrietre Andreadis. Reproduced by permission of the publisher and the author.—***South Carolina Review,*** v. 26, Spring, 1994. Copyright © 1994 by Clemson University. Reproduced by permission.—***Southern Review,*** v. 21, Winter, 1985, for "James Dickey: From 'The Other' through The Early Motion," by Harold Bloom. / v. 21, Winter, 1985, for "Reflections on 'Puella'" by James Applewhite. / v. 28, Autumn, 1992, for "The Whole Motion," by Richard Tillinghast. Copyright © 1992, by the author. / v. 34, Winter, 1998, for "James Dickey's Dear God of the Wilderness of Poetry," by Russell Fraser. Reproduced by permission of the respective authors.—***Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture,*** v. 7, 1978. Copyright © The Johns Hopkins University Press. Reproduced by permission.—***Studies in English Literature 1500-1900,*** v. 27, Summer, 1987; v. 34, Summer, 1994; v. 35, Summer, 1995. Copyright © The Johns Hopkins University Press. Reproduced by permission.—***TriQuarterly,*** Winter, 1968 for a review of "Poems 1957-1967 " by Ralph J. Mills, Jr. Copyright © 1968 by TriQuarterly, Northwestern University. Reproduced by permission of the author.—***World Literature Today,*** v. 66, Winter, 1992. Reproduced by permission.—***The Yearbook of English Studies,*** v. 19, 1989. Copyright © Modern Humanities Research Association 1989. Reproduced by permission of the publisher.

COPYRIGHTED EXCERPTS IN *PC,* VOLUME 40, WERE REPRODUCED FROM THE FOLLOWING BOOKS:

Baughman, Ronald. From ***Understanding James Dickey.*** University of South Carolina Press, 1985. Copyright © 1985 by University of South Carolina Press. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—Calhoun, Richard J. and Robert W. Hill. From "Reaching Out to Others," in ***James Dickey.*** Twayne Publishers, 1983. Copyright © 1983 by Twayne Publishers. All rights reserved.—Feingold, Richard. From "William Cowper: State, Society, and Countryside," in ***Nature and Society: Later Eighteenth-Century Uses of the Pastoral and Georgic***. Rutgers University Press, 1978. Copyright © 1978 by Rutgers University Press. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of Rutgers, The State University.—Glassner, Tine Tupikina and Geoffrey Dutton. From "Translators' Note on Bratsk Station," in ***Bratsk Station and Other Poems.*** Anchor Books, 1967. Copyright © 1967 by Anchor Books. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—Hill, Robert W. From "James Dickey: Comic Poet," in ***James Dickey: The Expansive Imagination.*** Everett/Edwards, Inc., 1973. Copyright © 1973 by Everett/Edwards, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—Leiberman, Laurence. From "Notes on James Dickey's Style," in ***Unassigned Frequencies: American Poetry in Review.*** University of Illinois Press, 1977. Copyright © 1977 by Laurence Lieberman. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of the author.—Lieberman, Laurence. From "James Dickey: The Worldly Mystic" in ***Beyond the Muse of Memory: Essays on Contemporary American Poets.*** University of Missouri Press, 1995. Copyright © 1995 by the Curators of the University of Missouri Press. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of the University of Missouri Press.—MacLean, Kenneth. From "William Cowper," in ***The Age of Johnson: Essays Presented to Chauncey Brewster Tinker.*** Yale University Press, 1949. Copyright © 1949 by Yale University Press. Renewed March 7, 1977 by Mrs. Frederick W. Hilkes, widow. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—O'Brien, Karen. From "'Still at Home': Cowper's Domestic Empires," in ***Early Romantics: Perspectives in British Poetry from Pope to Wordsworth.*** Macmillan, 1998. Copyright © 1998 by Macmillan. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of Palgrave Macmillan.—Spacks, Patricia Meyer. From "William Cowper: The Heightened Perception," in ***The Poetry of Vision: Five Eighteenth-Century Poets.*** Harvard University Press, 1967. Copyright © 1967 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of the publisher.—Uba, George. From ***Reading the Literatures of Asian America.*** Temple University Press, 1992. Copyright © 1992 by Temple University Press. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—Van Ness, Gordon. From "The Children's Poetry," in ***Outbelieving Existence: The Measured Motion of James Dickey.*** Camden House, 1992. Copyright © 1992 by Camden House. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND ILLUSTRATIONS APPEARING IN *PC,* VOLUME 40, WERE RECEIVED FROM THE FOLLOWING SOURCES:

Chin, Marilyn, photograph by Niki Berg. Reproduced by permission of Marilyn Chin.—Cowper, William, photograph. Corbis. Reproduced with permission.—Dickey, James, photograph. AP/Wide World Photos. Reproduced by permission.—Philips, Katherine, photograph. Copyright © Michael Nicholson/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.—Yevtushenko, Yevgeni, photograph. AP/Wide World Photos. Reproduced by permission.

Literary Criticism Series Advisory Board

The members of the Gale Group Literary Criticism Series Advisory Board—reference librarians and subject specialists from public, academic, and school library systems—represent a cross-section of our customer base and offer a variety of informed perspectives on both the presentation and content of our literature criticism products. Advisory board members assess and define such quality issues as the relevance, currency, and usefulness of the author coverage, critical content, and literary topics included in our series; evaluate the layout, presentation, and general quality of our printed volumes; provide feedback on the criteria used for selecting authors and topics covered in our series; provide suggestions for potential enhancements to our series; identify any gaps in our coverage of authors or literary topics, recommending authors or topics for inclusion; analyze the appropriateness of our content and presentation for various user audiences, such as high school students, undergraduates, graduate students, librarians, and educators; and offer feedback on any proposed changes/ enhancements to our series. We wish to thank the following advisors for their advice throughout the year.

Dr. Toby Burrows
Principal Librarian
The Scholars' Centre
University of Western Australia Library

David M. Durant
Joyner Library
East Carolina University

Steven R. Harris
English Literature Librarian
University of Tennessee

Mary Jane Marden
Literature and General Reference Librarian
St. Petersburg Jr. College

Mark Schumacher
Jackson Library
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Gwen Scott-Miller
Assistant Director of Materials and Programming
Sno-Isle Regional Library System
Marysville, WA

Contents

Preface vii

Acknowledgments ix

Literary Criticism Series Advisory Board xi

Marilyn Chin 1955- 1
Chinese-born American poet

William Cowper 1731-1800- 37
English poet, hymn writer, satirist, letter writer, essayist, and translator

James Dickey 1923-1997- 146
American poet, novelist, critic, essayist, scriptwriter, and author of children's books

Katherine Philips 1632-1664- 265
English poet and translator

Yevgeny Yevtushenko 1933-- 335
Russian poet, novelist, essayist, dramatist, screenwriter, actor, and editor

Literary Criticism Series Cumulative Author Index 373

PC Cumulative Nationality Index 461

PC-40 Title Index 465

此为试读，需要完整PDF请访问：www.ertongbook.com

Marilyn Chin
1955-

(Full name Marilyn Mei Ling Chin) Chinese-born American poet.

INTRODUCTION

Chin is known for producing spare, often confrontational, poetry that explores her experience as a first-generation Chinese-American and a woman of color in the United States, as well as social and political injustices in her native China.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Chin was born in Hong Kong in 1955 to George and Rose Chin, who emigrated to the American Northwest shortly after her birth. In a well-known poem, "How I Got That Name: An Essay on Assimilation," Chin meditated on the fact that her father, a restaurant proprietor in Oregon, incongruously named her after the American film and cultural icon Marilyn Monroe—an occurrence that helped form Chin's thoughts on the experience of assimilation in America. Chin received her B.A. at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in 1977 and her M.F.A. at the University of Iowa in 1981. She worked as a translator and editor in the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa from 1978 to 1982. In 1988 Chin took a position as an assistant professor of creative writing at San Diego State University, becoming a full professor of English and Asian-American studies in 1996. Chin has won numerous fellowships and awards for her writing, including a National Endowment for the Arts grant in 1984-1985 and 1991; the Josephine Miles Award from PEN in 1994; and the Pushcart Prize in 1994, 1995, and 1997.

MAJOR WORKS

Chin's first collection of verse, *Dwarf Bamboo* (1987), which she dedicated to the Communist poet and revolutionary Ai Qing, contains many poems that focus on the immigrant experience in the United States. Chin continued this theme in her second collection, *The Phoenix Gone, The Terrace Empty* (1994). In this volume Chin began to more deeply explore the damaging effects of Western standards on women of color, notably in the autobiographical poem "How I Got That Name: An Essay on Assimilation," in which Chin bluntly describes her father's naming her after "some tragic white woman / swollen with gin and Nembutal." *The Phoenix Gone* also contains a section entitled "Beijing Spring," a group of poems dealing with the 1989 student uprising in China's Tiananmen Square. *Rhapsody in Plain Yellow* (2001), Chin's third volume of poetry, again examines the struggle between heritage and the new world, mostly in poems exploring her relationship with her parents and grandparents. In this collection Chin drew inspiration for the forms and rhythms of her poems from Chinese music as well as Persian ghazals and American blues music.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Critics have praised Chin's poetry for its unflinching examination of the contradictory feelings brought on by immigration in general and for Asian Americans specifically. Chin's openness about female sexuality and the social roles of women of color—in particular the image of

Asian women as exotic and doll-like—and her frequent references to the revolutionary movement in China have earned her a reputation as an important political feminist poet.

PRINCIPAL WORKS

Poetry

Dwarf Bamboo 1987
The Phoenix Gone, The Terrace Empty 1994
Rhapsody in Plain Yellow 2001

CRITICISM

George Uba (essay date 1992)

SOURCE: Uba, George. "Versions of Identity in Post-Activist Asian American Poetry." In *Reading the Literatures of Asian America,* edited by Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Amy Ling, pp. 33-48. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992.

[In the following essay, Uba includes Chin in a discussion of Asian-American poets writing after the 1960s and 1970s, noting that Chin, in her poetry, is skeptical of the very source of personal and ethnic identity to which she is drawn.]

The raw energy of Asian-Pacific American "activist" poets of the late 1960s and early 1970s gave impetus to a literature in the process of self-discovery. By refereeing unexplored spaces of Asian American existence, these poets helped preside over an emerging ethnic consciousness and helped plot the sociopolitical vectors of the age. Seeking to "unmask" poetry by removing it from the elitist academy (which had sealed meanings in the esoteric and the arcane, renounced plainness of speech, and conferred shamanistic status on university professors), the activist writers sought to deliver poetry to the People, who, apprehending its "essentials," would renew it in the spirit of emerging political freedom. The activist spirit survives in the bristling warning contained in Janice Mirikitani's "We, the Dangerous":[1]

> We, the dangerous,
> Dwelling in the ocean.
> Akin to the jungle.
> Close to the earth.
>   Hiroshima
>   Vietnam
>   Tule Lake
> And yet we were not devoured.
> And yet we were not humbled.
> And yet we are not broken.
>
> (*Ayumi,* 211)

Not uncommonly, activist poems resorted to linguistic shock tactics as well, as in these lines from Merle Woo's "Yellow Woman Speaks":

> Yellow woman, a revolutionary speaks:
>
> "They have mutilated our genitals, but I will
>   restore them
>
> . . . . .
>
>   I will create armies of . . . descendants.
>
> And I will expose the lies and ridicule
> the impotence of those who have called us
>   chink
>   yellow-livered
>   slanted cunts
>   exotic
> in order to abuse and exploit us.
>   And I will destroy them."
>
> (*Bruchac,* 286)

Woo's poem eschews the conventional finesse of Euro-American poetry in an effort to confront directly the oppressors who have developed and perpetuated racist stereotypes. The revolutionary's vow is to multiply and to "destroy." Less confrontational, Mirikitani's approach is to assert the vitalizing power to endure. Nevertheless, she too warns that "we" are "dangerous." The impetus behind these poems is not only politics in the conventional sense but also the politics of poetry. Both poems align themselves self-consciously with an oral tradition. Woo's poem demands that it be spoken aloud ("a revolutionary speaks"); in the process it also contests standard Euro-American definitions of poetry by embracing polemic. Mirikitani's poem violates the contemporary "rules" of poetry by relying heavily on political slogans and the rhetoric of abstraction. Her poem aligns itself not with a theory of poetry as written inscription but with an oral tradition that blurs the distinction between poem and chant, and privileges performance over inscription. Moreover, the poem's paratactical linking of "Hiroshima / Vietnam / Tule Lake" reflects Russell Leong's notion of a "tribal" impulse common to poets of the late 1960s and early 1970s, an impulse that highlighted the "shared experience[s] of subjugation" among people of color and that actively sought to "unlock the . . . keys to memory and to provide a base for unity" (166).

This tribalism was a common way of negotiating identity, especially valuable as an ethnographic signifier of resistance to an oppressive, well-armed, and thoroughly entrenched dominant culture. It was a means of resisting the assimilationist ethic for so long spreading insidiously across the American ethnic landscape by focusing on and celebrating differences between whites and people of color, while acknowledging both similarities and differences among the latter as well.[2] To some degree, much of contemporary Asian American poetry presupposes this activist base.

The situation has altered, however, in the sense that many of today's poets express at once an affinity for and a sense of distance from the activist tradition. In the wake of the profound demographic changes affecting Asian America, changes which have resulted in a diversity unimaginable twenty years ago, the reification of the "tribal" has become increasingly problematic.[3] The dimensions of the effort to achieve a communal or "tribalistic" connection have multiplied, even as the results of such effort have grown less certain. Keenly aware of heterogeneity, as well as the absence of geographical centers, today's poets may yearn for a connection they can only ratify in a compromised form. They have been thrust back upon their sense of an individual self, an alteration implying the forfeiture of oral traditions. Joined with a loss of faith in the efficacy of language as an agent of social reform and as a reliable tool of representation, this individualizing tendency has redirected poets toward Euro-American poetics.

But with a difference. Today's poets tend to appropriate such poetics for their own ethnographic purposes. If, in acknowledging the provisional conduct of poetry, post-activist poets hold that identity, whether tribal or otherwise, is always in doubt, it is not that the issue of identity has ceased to demand their attention. Indeed, the post-activist poem tends to recognize problematics of language and event both as a way of approaching identity and of renouncing its stability. Although these recognitions extend to an increasing number of poets, recent works by Marilyn Chin and David Mura and the special case of John Yau reveal some of the distinct contours that Asian American poetry currently describes. For Chin and Mura—although in different ways—conceiving identity is only possible by foregrounding its partialities, while for Yau every version of identity is radically contestable because of the unstable nature of the tools used to conceptualize it.

. . . . .

In dedicating her book ***Dwarf Bamboo*** to the Communist poet and revolutionary Ai Qing, Marilyn Chin reveals an affinity with the collectivist politics of the activist poets. However, her skepticism toward unificatory gestures and her intense recognition of identity as process rather than as cultural preserve lead her to question the very impulses toward which she is otherwise drawn. The poem **"Segments of a Bamboo Screen,"** for example, conjoins the centrifugal tendencies of world politics with the inability to negotiate pictorial unity out of the "segments" of the bamboo screen. The speaker questions the bamboo screen artist's ability to "sit there on top of the world" and gain a perspective "that I cannot"(18)—a centrist position around which all others supposedly revolve. For this speaker, the partial replaces the whole: "The moon is gibbous. Just say / She shall no longer pay you her full attention" (17). Chin is also acutely aware of how historical contingencies intrude upon every version of identity. Rather than stabilizing a connection to her "Parent Node," Chin's frequent use of historicized personae reveals the provisional nature of all identity. The poems **"The Landlord's Wife"** and **"Untrimmed Mourning"** offer contrasting portraits of the widows of two Chinese men, one a wealthy landlord slain in the course of political ferment in 1919 and the other a poor man who had "only small pink babies / and one good hog" (14). Years later in post-revolutionary China, the landlord's wife, who still regrets her loss of status as "the wealthiest woman in Guang Dung," nevertheless repudiates her husband's memory and proclaims her allegiance to Chairman Mao. "'I never loved him, never. / The only man I love now, the only man I believe—/ The man from above, from Yenan'" (12). For the impoverished widow remaining in prerevolutionary China, however, who for ten years has "gulped down / this loneliness," the continuing pressures of survival have forced her to drag the hog to market where she will proclaim in broken dialect, "'Rich man, have you no / dollars to taste?'" (14). The "Chinese" identity of these two survivors is self-consciously multiple, deriving from no acknowledged center but negotiated among historical contingencies. In severing her allegiance to her landlord husband's estate, the rich widow responds to a far-reaching alteration in political circumstances, while the poor widow responds to an immediate change in her personal environment. At the same time, it is evident that each woman's sense of identity is subject to further internal shift, depending on forces beyond her control.

As history destabilizes identity, so can ideology. The poem **"After My Last Paycheck from the Factory . . ."** takes as its epigraph, "For the Chinese Cultural Revolution and all that was wrong with my life" (21)—a satirical thrust at the notion that Mao's Cultural Revolution conferred a stable identity upon everyone of Chinese descent. And, indeed, in the poem a youthful Chinese American expatriate working in a Communist factory experiences a profound revulsion when she invites an elderly Chinese man for an afternoon meal. The sight of old Liu eating dog and smacking "his greasy lips" is enough to make the woman yearn for "home" and her "lover's gentle kisses" (21). Although the sight of two girls wearing uniforms, bandanas, and armbands and "shouting slogans and Maoish songs" momentarily reminds her of why she has come to China in the first place, "the realist Liu" disrupts this "mirage" by revealing that the raw conditions of life have not changed for him, for as he declares, "'It's the dog I ordered and am eating still!'" (21). The dog has spots, "rampant colonies of scabies and fleas," and a forehead that "bled with worms" (21-22). The woman says, "I rubbed my eyes, readjusted the world" (22). But through Chin's lenses, the world must be read justed yet again. For a neighboring patron, a "stout provincial governor" who dines for free on fine "Chinese pug, twenty-five yuan a leg" and who afterwards flaunts his wealth, is destined, according to Liu, to pay a drastic penalty for his reactionary ways: "'and he as dead as the four-legged he ate / two short kilometers before home'" (22).

By setting itself skeptically on the shifting borders of ideological rectitude, the poem complicates the leftist political identification that constitutes the radical base of an "authentic" Asian American identity. Obviously, though, it also prohibits the retreat into bourgeois complacency. At the end of the poem, the woman is given no firm ideological hold on her own identity. Whatever she thought it was is now called into question; whatever it may become remains in a state of flux.

If history and ideology move toward the destabilization of identity, their "absence" exacts a similar price. Originally from Hong Kong, Chin has spent most of her life in America. In the poem **"Repulse Bay,"** the "dead and swimming creatures of the sea" are images of the speaker herself, struggling to remain culturally afloat in a defamiliarized locale, a part of "the country I have lost" (64). In the poem **"A Chinaman's Chance,"** Chin acknowledges the special difficulties faced by the American-born Chinese attempting to recover the Chinese American past when only its fragments remain. The inability to pattern oneself after Chinese ancestors in America is stated succinctly in the lines "The railroad killed your great-grandfather / His arms here, his legs there. . . . / *How can we remake ourselves in his image?*" (29). That is, how can a connection be forged with an image that has been rent, scattered, and left unpreserved? With an ancestor who can only be recalled—both physically and otherwise—in pieces? Such a dilemma can be exacerbated by alienation from traditional systems of belief, an alienation manifested in the sardonic question posed at the poem's start:

> 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."
>
> (29)

The repudiation of traditional beliefs further problematizes the effort to recover a "lost" identity.

Yet, despite their instabilities, it is wrong to assume that Chin's views of identity inevitably testify to loss. In the poem **"I confess . . ."** the speaker expresses a dialogic relationship between cultures by reading alternately Bachelard's "The Poetics of Space" and chapters from "The Compassionate Buddha." She pens ironic "letters of progress":

> one day I am filial
> monkey, practicing reading
> and writing. Next day
> I wear ink
> eyeliner, open up
> Mandarin frock for the boys.
>
> (53-54)

The speaker's mischievous "confession" regarding her obsessive movement between cultures is partly an acknowledgment of the intellectual tradition of the West, which she willingly inherits. But more to the point, it is simultaneously a defense of an identity kept vital by its own instability. For Chin, the question of identity is engaging precisely because it is never still. The alternative—to snatch "a quick decision—/ to marry Chinese, / to succeed in business, / to buy that slow boat" (54)—is to avoid the vexations and rewards of self-examination by impulsive marriage to convention. Attending only to "business" means boarding a "slow boat" bound for a cultural nowhere.

Like Marilyn Chin, David Mura, author of the book *After We Lost Our Way,* acknowledges how activist poets serve as his literary ancestors, even as he insists upon his necessary differences from them. As a third-generation Japanese American, Mura feels a particular connection with the activists of twenty years ago of whom so many were also at least third-generation Asian Americans. The anger, outrage, and alienation they shared are especially manifest in Mura's poems dealing with racism, internment camps, and assimilation. Like Chin, Mura operates from outside the earlier oral tradition, even though he remains attracted to the aural (as is evidenced by several poems bearing the words "suite," "song," and "argument" in their titles). But whereas Chin remains skeptical of the communalistic impulse as a basis for identity, even as she yearns for its retrieval, Mura campaigns at once to recover and expand the impulse by embracing other marginalized lives—the oppressed, wretched, and suffering in all stations and cultures, including (in a singularly bold stroke) the homosexual Italian film director and writer Pasolini. By embracing even a white male European, Mura testifies to the impossibility of containing identity along purely racial and ethnic lines. Identity may also be conceived in the presence of lives outwardly removed from one's own.

Pasolini, as Mura explains in a series of eleven poems strategically placed at the center of his book, frequented the brutal Italian demimonde of "punks, pickpockets, whores," even as he directed brilliant, controversial films—nearly all of them censored, denounced, or involved in lawsuits—that assure his place in film history. From the peasant son of a father devoted to Mussolini to the adult "crazy about Marx and *terza rima*" (25) and from his compassion for slum dwellers to his autocratic desire "to subjugate, to block / his [lover's] ego's light with the shadow of mine" (30), Pasolini was a figure steeped in contradictions. Refusing to abjure "the ambiguous life" (25), Pasolini was persecuted in the popular press and prosecuted in a series of demeaning public trials.

In the majority of these poems Mura assumes a mask, usually that of Pasolini himself—Pasolini describing his seduction at the hands of his young lover Ninetto, Pasolini describing his ambivalence toward Roland Barthes or writing a letter from Nepal to Alberto Moravia, Pasolini transcribing a stunning apologia for his promiscuous, risk-filled life—while interspersing these subjective accounts with neutral ones of his brutal murder by a teenager, a "two-bit thief" (44). Although Pasolini seems as remote from conventional Japanese American experience as humanly imaginable, Mura identifies him as a sort of presiding spirit, joined to the author by his powerful sense of alienation from bourgeois culture, by his artistry, and by his human frailty. Despite the apparent modesty of the title, the centrally placed poem "Intermission: Postcard from Rome" elucidates the nature and depth of the connection between the two artists. In a cemetery in Casarsa the American wife, a descendant of the Mayflower Pilgrims, discovers Pasolini's simple stone marker. It lies "next to the stone of Susanna," his mother; coincidentally, the American wife's name is "Susie" (37). Here, at the grave, the Japanese American poet stares at the stone of the Italian filmmaker and begins to weep, apologizing once because "it seems so predictable." Later, the speaker acknowledges that "in my country, // it's customary to ask why, why Pasolini?" (38). That is, why should a Japanese American poet be drawn so powerfully to Pasolini? The speaker answers, "We are young. We believe in the unconscious, an emotional life" (38). A stream of connection, unconscious and emotional, underlies and proceeds from the two lives despite surface discontinuities. The speaker affirms, "It's no good to say my genes are Japanese" (38), as though that simple biological accident somehow accounts for an entire identity. The speaker acknowledges, "We will never be intimate. Will always be the same" (38). They will always be the same in their lack of intimacy; their distance will never be completely bridged. Their identities are acknowledged as conjunctural, not identical. But at the same time the speaker reaffirms at the end the initiating connection: "Dear ghost, do not go to another house" (38). Only in this one poem is the issue of the speaker's Japanese American identity directly raised. But the affirmation of the connection to Pasolini suggests the plural possibilities of identity within the framework of opposition, rage, and outrage.

Elsewhere, Mura offers a gallery of portraits of the infirm and dying, the lost and the as-good-as lost. The range itself is remarkable—an architect's five-year old son dying, a Cambodian refugee bound for France, a Viet Cong recalling the men he has slain, a man in a pornographic bookstore, another turned informer in South Africa, a brutally beaten woman lying in a hospital emergency room. The nearly unbearable cry of pain, so heterogeneous in its sources yet so alarmingly unified in its despair, contributes to Mura's idea of identity expanded beyond its customary limits.

Ostensibly, then, Mura merely expands what the activist tradition had all along pointed in the direction of—a synthetical identity of the oppressed that resolves all the competing elements of experience. But the difference between him and the activist writers is pronounced, starting with the fact that he acknowledges linguistic limitations, admitting that language can result in "dangling rantings" (71) and averring that even at its best, its value in a world marked by profound suffering remains problematic. Like Marilyn Chin, Mura also acknowledges that all ideas about identity are in some way inadequate, partial, and contradictory, even as he asserts that it is these very properties that help us to install identity at any moment in history. So imperfect, partial, and inherently contradictory is any expressed notion of identity that it cannot be known through any concrete instance; yet these same partialities and contradictions necessarily point in the direction of identity. As Fredric Jameson so succinctly puts it in describing Adorno's *Negative Dialektik* (Adorno is one of Mura's intellectual affiliations), "a negative dialectic has no choice but to affirm the notion and value of an ultimate synthesis, while negating its possibility and reality in every concrete case that comes before it" (56).

It is in this light that Mura's continual yearning for reconciliation, wholeness, and the unification of identity must be understood. The opening lines of his book's first poem, "Grandfather and Grandmother in Love," elucidate the poet's charge: "Now I will ask for one true word beyond / betrayal" (3). This word should be as true, as authentic, as the speaker takes the sex act between his grandparents in love to have been. Taking this "one true word," the speaker will "crack it, like a seed / between the teeth, spit it out in the world" (3), where, it is hoped, it may take root. The effort seemingly reflects what Adorno describes as "neo-romantic" poetry's endeavor "to recover some of the substantiality of language" (*Aesthetic Theory,* 23). For Mura, to substantialize language would be to resubstantialize his grandparents' pasts, to negotiate identity with an instrument made reliable and whole once again.

But Mura's poetry does not actually suggest either that language can be resubstantialized or identity stabilized in this way. In investigating identities within a given group, Mura repeatedly uncovers contradictions. In "A *Nisei* Picnic: From an Album" he describes an uncle, a veteran of the war, who eventually "ballooned like Buddha, / over three hundred pounds"; an aunt who tried vainly to raise minks instead of children; and the speaker's father who "worked . . . hard to be white" (14). The use of the family photograph to inscribe these disparate selves in a version of unity serves as reminder of how such family presentations constitute a lie collectively assented to, functioning to conceal rather than reveal differences. The speaker, still a young boy in the old photo, sees through the imposture in a burst of helpless sympathy: "Who are these grown-ups? / Why are they laughing? How can I tear / the bewilderment from their eyes?" (14).

Such self-awareness joins with vituperation in "Song for Uncle Tom, Tonto, and Mr. Moto," where Mura savages the unitary mask that racial stereotyping assumes by proclaiming a declaration of war to be waged by the obsequious yes-men of popular culture. These oppressed—African American, American Indian, Hispanic, Asian American—who have been forced to "live in the monstrous sarcophagi" of a "white cultivated heart" (15), have forged an alliance of the oppressed out of their hurt and rage. Here Mura self-consciously aligns himself with the tribal impulse and comes closest to connecting with an oral tradition of song. The creature orchestrating this rage is "Kitsune, the fox," a trickster figure with a "sneaky inscrutable body" (15) who reveals not only the inadequacy of racial stereotypes but also the yearning for an authentic identity. But himself a polymorphous figure, Kitsune cannot help but represent the uncertain nature of the identity aspired to. Linked by a shared outrage over oppression, the identities behind the mask of Kitsune nevertheless are never wholly revealed. By use of Kitsune, the poem necessarily acknowledges its own partialness.

Mura offers no enduring consolation in the form of language or event, no "true word beyond / betrayal" (the poem "The One Who Tells, The One Who Burns" describes a black South African watching the brutal murder of the black man he has informed on). Indeed, the poem "Hope Without Hope" contests the value of writing at all: "Words on the page, prayers, even shouts of rage, / What do they count against tanks, missiles, guns?" (61). Alternating lines of the poem rhyme, often conventionally ("rage"/ "wage"; "guns"/"one"), as if to point up the futility of poetry against the unrhymed brutalities of existence. One's "poems are like roses," we are told, "Washed in the gutter by a dozen hoses" (61). Throughout there persists the feeling that language, no matter how powerfully expressed, changes nothing. And even though the despair is sometimes countered by "moments of release" (76) and affirmation, it is always with the sense of the temporal, with the acute knowledge that every brief burst of "clarity" contains as well the threat of its own extinction.

Only in the poem "The Natives" is an image of perfect unification offered. It is here where "time disappeared" (22), here where soldiers are absorbed into a mysterious, pacifistic "native" culture and gradually transformed into peaceful beings, "like soft-eyed virgins" (22). Gradually, the speaker of the poem says, "our names / fell from our mouths, never heard again" (21). But this note of reconciliation and transcendence recognizes at the same time its own unreality. Indeed, the markedly "unreal" conditions are what allow such a note to sound at all. Thus, the unificatory identity is negated as an actuality even as it is affirmed as an ideal.

Unlike both Chin and Mura, John Yau poses the special instance of the writer who not only eschews communalistic connections and oral traditions of poetry but affiliates with decidedly Western traditions of modern art (he doubles as an art critic). Author of *Corpse and Mirror,* along with at least six other volumes of poetry, Yau utilizes many of the elements associated with experimental writing, including discontinuous narrative, suspended logic, blurred distinctions between animate and inanimate objects, and a network of private symbols. His effort primarily is to disconnect rather than connect, to project a world cut off from certitude—a world in which human beings exist in perpetual exile, their lives an amalgam of absurdity, banality, and insufficiency, and in which politics are the ephemerae of a provisional reality. By contesting myths and other structuring devices as coherent stewards of meaning, as well as language as a reliable epistemological tool, Yau posits a world of disorder in which the unstable traces of identity threaten to dissolve as quickly as they appear.

Evidence of such instability can be found in the prose poem "Two Kinds of Story-Telling," which describes an immigrant woman for whom the China of her childhood is recalled as a fairy tale, "a kind of Eden she could never return to" (72). Yet in the second telling of her story, she focuses on "how the present is better, and how the future will be better still." Behind this second version, the narrator asserts, lies the indigenous narrative of "the passage of the *Mayflower* to the New World," even though the names *Mayflower, Pilgrim,* and *Plymouth Rock* are associated in the woman's mind only with a moving van and insurance ads (72). The point is that the woman's sensibility has been incidentally conditioned by things she has come into contact with in America, and in the process she has become more thoroughly imbued with an American myth than even she is aware. The line of demarcation between the exile longing for her Chinese home and the immigrant at home in America becomes hopelessly blurred by such subconscious activity, as does the identity such demarcations are intended to reveal.

Behind the problematics of identity lies Yau's skepticism regarding the organizing properties of myth and other forms of narrative. Consistently foregrounding how writer and readers together create meaning, his poems acknowledge "the human urge to make order while pointing out that the orders we create are just that: human constructs, not natural or given entities" (Hutcheon 41-42). "Missing Pages," which describes an unidentified resort island whose featured attraction is a pair of "jeweled towers" rising out of a bay—"symbols of the miraculous"—parodies one type of mythmaking (33). The creation legend surrounding these towers begins "in daylight and desire" (33), which means that "anyone can add whatever they like to the story, or take some chunk of it away" (34). The precise details are later settled upon by vote of the city council at the beginning of the tourist season, and the story is passed on to the inhabitants' children as the "basis for the entire [school] curriculum" (34).

Yau also challenges language as a reliable epistemological tool. The poem "Persons in the Presence of a Metamorphosis," whose title pays homage to Mirò, demonstrates his method. It begins thus:

> The porcelain bayonet of noon scrapes the face
> of a man who has forgotten why he started
> to spit. A uniformed girl,
>
> tiny and tireless, memorizes words
> she believes make accurate mirrors.
> A nun felt damp and gray. . . .
>
> (19)

Just as Mirò attempts simultaneously to quicken and release a flux of energies through his biomorphs, Yau disturbs and liberates the individual word from its "inert"

此为试读，需要完整PDF请访问：www.ertongbook.com