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.

Daniel Y. Kim is Associate Professor of English at Brown University, where he teaches classes in Asian American literature, American literature, and ethnic studies. He is the author of *Writing Manhood in Black and Yellow: Ralph Ellison, Frank Chin, and the Literary Politics of Identity*.

A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book.
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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

KANDICE CHUH is a professor of English and American studies at the City University of New York, Graduate Center. The author of *Imagine Otherwise: On Asian Americanist Critique* (Duke University Press, 2003) and coeditor, with Karen Shimakawa, of *Orientations: Mapping Studies in the Asian Diaspora* (Duke University Press, 2001), she researches and teaches in Asian American and American studies, critical theory and race, gender, and sexuality studies. Chuh’s current research brings together aesthetic theories and philosophies and minority discourse to consider the politics and practices of the humanities in the present moment.


HELENA GRICE is Reader in American literature at Aberystwyth University, Wales, United Kingdom. Her interests lie in ethnic American literatures, children’s narratives, and feminisms. She is author of *Negotiating Identities* (Manchester University Press, 2002), *Maxine Hong Kingston* (Manchester University Press, 2006), and *Asian American Fiction, History and Life Writing: International Encounters* (Routledge, 2009). She is currently working on the writer and political figure Anna Chan Chennault.

BETSY HUANG is an associate professor of English and Chief Officer of Diversity and Inclusion at Clark University. She is the author of *Contesting Genres in Contemporary Asian American Fiction* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), in which she examines the political implications of narrative form for Asian Americans who write highly conventionalized genre fiction – immigrant fiction, crime fiction, and
science fiction. She is also the coeditor, with David Roh and Greta Niu, of the essay collection Techno-Orientalism: Imagining Asia in Speculative Fiction, History, and Media (Rutgers University Press, 2015). Her work has appeared in Journal of Asian American Studies, MELUS, and The Asian American Literary Review.

**Joseph Keith** is Associate Professor of English at Binghamton University, SUNY, where he specializes in twentieth-century literatures of the United States, comparative race and ethnic studies, and postcolonial and Marxist theory. He is the author of Unbecoming Americans: Writing Race and Nation from the Shadows of Citizenship: 1945–1960 (Rutgers University Press, 2013), and his essays have appeared in Interventions, The Black Scholar, and Postmodern Culture.


**Christopher Lee** is Associate Professor of English at the University of British Columbia, where he is the director of the Asian Canadian and Asian Migration Studies Program. He is the author of The Semblance of Identity: Aesthetic Mediation in Asian American Literature (Stanford University Press, 2012) and a coeditor of Tracing the Lines: Reflections on Poetics and Cultural Politics in Honour of Roy Miki (Talonbooks, 2013). His current research focuses on trans-Pacific literary thought during the Cold War and the use of realism in Chinese Canadian writing.


**Viet Thanh Nguyen** is an associate professor of English and American Studies & Ethnicity at the University of Southern California. He is the author of Race and Resistance: Literature and Politics in Asian America (Oxford University Press, 2002) as well as a novel, The Sympathizer (Grove Press, 2015). He coedited Transpacific Studies: Framing an Emerging Field (University of Hawai’i Press, 2014) and is finishing a book titled War, Memory, Identity.
ERIN NINH is Associate Professor of Asian American Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and author of *Ingratitude: The Debt-Bound Daughter in Asian American Literature* (New York University, 2011).

CRYSTAL PARIKH is Associate Professor in the Department of English and the Department of Social and Cultural Analysis at New York University. In addition to numerous articles, she has published *An Ethics of Betrayal: The Politics of Otherness in Emergent U.S. Literature and Culture* (Fordham University Press, 2009). She is currently completing a book about human rights politics and contemporary U.S. writers of color.

HYUNGJI PARK is Professor of English and Dean of Underwood International College at Yonsei University in Seoul, Korea. She writes and teaches on issues of metropole, gender, and the East in Victorian literature, as well as on questions of locatedness and diaspora in Asian American literature.

JOSEPHINE PARK is Associate Professor of English and Asian American Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. She is the author of *Apparitions of Asia: Modernist Form and Asian American Poetics* (Oxford University Press, 2008), and she is presently completing a book manuscript on Asian American representations of the American wars in Korea and Vietnam.


CATHY J. SCHLUND-VIALS is an associate professor of English and Asian/Asian American Studies at the University of Connecticut (Storrs). She is also the director of the Asian and Asian American Studies Institute (UConn). She is the author of two monographs: *Modeling Citizenship: Jewish and Asian American Writing* (Temple University Press, 2011) and *War, Genocide, and Justice: Cambodian American Memory Work* (University of Minnesota Press, 2012). Her publications...
have appeared in journals such as Amerasia Journal, positions, American Literary History, MELUS, and The Journal of Asian American Studies. Her coedited collections include Disability, Human Rights, and the Failures of Humanitarianism (with Michael Gill, Ashgate Press, 2014), Keywords for Asian American Studies (with Linda Trinh Vo and K. Scott Wong, New York University Press, 2015), and Asian America: A Primary Source Reader (with K. Scott Wong and Jason O. Chang, Yale University Press, forthcoming).


RAJINI SRIKANTH is Professor of English as well as an affiliated faculty member in the Asian American Studies Program at the University of Massachusetts Boston. She is the author of the monographs Constructing the Enemy: Empathy/Antipathy in US Literature and Law (Temple University Press, 2012) and the award-winning The World Next Door: South Asian American Literature and the Idea of America (Temple University Press, 2004). In addition, she has published several coedited collections, including Bold Words: A Century of Asian American Writing (Rutgers University Press, 2001) and A Part, Yet Apart: South Asians in Asian America (Temple University Press, 1996). Her essays have appeared in Frame: Journal of Literary Studies, Asian American Literary Review, the International Feminist Journal of Politics, Pedagogy, and MELUS, among other places.

ERIN SUZUKI is an assistant professor of English at the University of California, San Diego. She is currently developing a book project that addresses representations of migration and diaspora in the immigrant and indigenous literatures of the Pacific Islands. Her work has appeared in Modern Fiction Studies, MELUS, ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance, and Literature/Film Quarterly.
CYNTHIA WU is an associate professor of American studies in the Department of Transnational Studies at the University at Buffalo (State University of New York). She is the author of Chang and Eng Reconnected: The Original Siamese Twins in American Culture (Temple University Press, 2012). Her publications have appeared in journals such as Amerasia Journal, American Literature, Journal of Asian American Studies, LIT, MELUS, Meridians, and Signs.
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).


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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>U.S. and Philippine troops forced on brutal trek to prison camps in Bataan Province of the Philippines</td>
<td>Pardee Lowe, <em>Father and Glorious Descendant</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>U.S. forces drop atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. World War II ends.</td>
<td>Jade Snow Wong, <em>Fifth Chinese Daughter</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>The Philippines are granted independence from the United States.</td>
<td>Carlos Bulosan, <em>America Is in the Heart</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>The Communist Revolution in China brings Mao Zedong to power, who establishes the People's Republic of China.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1950–1953</td>
<td>The Korean War</td>
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<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>The passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act, also known as the McCarran-Walter Act, ends Asian exclusion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Representatives from twenty-nine countries meet in Bandung, Indonesia, for the Afro-Asian Conference.</td>
<td>Monica Sone, <em>Nisei Daughter</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>John Okada, <em>No-No Boy</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Hawai‘i is granted U.S. statehood.</td>
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<td>1960–1975</td>
<td>The Vietnam War</td>
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<td>1964</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Richard Kim, <em>The Martyred</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>The passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act eliminates the national origins quota system and extensively restructures immigration policy.</td>
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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 Chickencoop 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., *Aiiiiiiieee! 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.

Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, Eds., *This Bridge Called My Back*

Joy Kogawa, *Obasan*
### Chronology of Major Works and Events, 1763–2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event/Work</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, <em>Dictée</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 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* |
| 1994 | The United States closes its military bases in the Philippines.  
      | Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong, *The Big Aiiieee*! |
| 1995 | Sharon Lim-Hing, *The Very Inside* |
| 1996 | Chang-rae Lee, *Native Speaker*  
      | R. Zamora Linmark, *Rolling the Rs*  
      | 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* |
## Chronology of Major Works and Events, 1763–2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>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 <em>Angry Asian Man</em>. Playwright David Henry Hwang stages his “revisical” of <em>Flower Drum Song</em> on Broadway.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Ted Chiang, <em>Stories of Your Life and Others</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>United States invades Iraq.</td>
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<td>lê Thị Điểm Thúy, <em>The Gangster We Are All Looking For</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Monique Truong, <em>The Book of Salt</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Ha Jin, <em>War Trash</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Kip Fulbeck, <em>Part Asian 100% Hapa</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Mohsin Hamid, <em>The Reluctant Fundamentalist</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ed Lin, <em>This Is a Bust</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Mahvish Khan, <em>My Guantánamo Diary</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nam Le, <em>The Boat</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Linh Dinh, <em>Love Like Hate</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Rajiv Joseph, <em>Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Amy Chua, <em>Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Maxine Hong Kingston receives the National Medal of Arts. Ruth Ozeki, <em>A Tale for the Time Being</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Chang-rae Lee, <em>On Such a Full Sea</em></td>
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</table>
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
boundaries of a body of literature that always seems to be moving beyond any static notion of identity and culture. But it is this dynamism that makes Asian American literary studies such a compelling field of study, and this anthology is intended to provide students and scholars with the critical wherewithal to engage with its challenging and evolving complexities even as they gain a sense of its coherence.

In keeping with the field's historicist emphasis, this Companion works from the assumption that Asian American literature's formal and generic complexities can best be understood as a refraction of the historical currents that have shaped the Asian presence in America and the American presence in Asia. We identify several historical thematics – including immigration, empire, war, globalization, and law – that have informed and shaped the emergence of Asian American writing. We show how the shifting status of Asians within immigration law and the waging of several U.S. wars in Asia and the Pacific (including the “War on Terror”) as well as seismic transformation of the economic circuits linking East and West have all been dominant concerns of much Asian American writing, not just shaping its content but catalyzing the emergence of certain aesthetic innovations. As such, this companion addresses not only traditional categories of genre – such as poetry and drama – but also narrative traditions that are distinctive of Asian American literature: immigrant narratives, the internment memoirs, or diasporic narratives of return, to name a few examples.

This Companion also addresses what many have termed a “transnational turn” that has revolutionized American studies as a whole (as well as many other scholarly fields). For Asian American studies, this has meant acknowledging that immigration represents only one historical trajectory, however central, in the expressive cultures of Asians in America. As such, our anthology traces the diasporic impulses that find expression in many works as well as their concern with the intensifying globalization that has defined the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Moreover, our anthology reckons directly with the shifting ways in which Asian American writers and critics have tackled the question of identity. We trace the shift from the United States–centered articulations of identity that shaped the foundational notions of the Asian American literary tradition to the paradigms of cultural identity that grow out of diasporic and transnational perspectives. We explore as well how the particularities of Asian American mixed-race experiences give voice to a distinct tradition of writing racial hybridity. We also address how Asian American literary conceptions of identity have emerged in relationship to those from other minority traditions as well as in feminist and queer traditions.

This Companion is divided into four sections.
INTRODUCTION

Part I engages with the three powerful historical formations that have shaped the experiences of Asians in America since their arrival in the nineteenth century and outlines the literary traditions and critical paradigms that are useful for illuminating them. Despite the fact Asian Americans have had a long history in the United States, their status as Americans has been vexed, as they have been deemed, at various times, “aliens ineligible for citizenship,” “U.S. nationals,” and incorporated citizens. This section provides an overview of how the legal strictures governing citizenship and immigration as well as the exigencies of U.S. empire have shaped Asian American social conditions. It identifies how 1965 marked a watershed moment in Asian American history as it brought to an end a century-long era of restrictive immigration policies, tracing how this transformation was registered in law and literature. Moreover, it considers how the territorial acquisitions in the Asia Pacific that defined the overtly imperialist endeavors of the United States in the early twentieth century created distinctive categories of Asian Americans – from the Philippines and Hawai‘i, for instance – whose itineraries were different from those of the immigrants who arrived through Ellis or Angel Island. The chapters in this section consider how literary works reflect, contest, and reimagine these trajectories of immigration and empire that have been so foundational to the construction of Asian America.

The essays in Part II contemplate the ways in which war has functioned as a defining context for much Asian American writing. The perceptions of Asian enemies and allies that emerged out of the multiple U.S. wars fought in Asia during the past century formed a canon of racial images that many writers have sought to negotiate and challenge in their writings. A significant number of works also attend to the traumatic effects of these wars on survivors and their children, a literary concern that opens a window not only into the racist dimensions of U.S. wars in Asia but also into the fratricidal violence of the civil conflicts that emerged in many Asian nations in the era of decolonization. The chapters here address the literary traditions that arose from the internment of Japanese Americans during the Second World War and the antiwar movement that took shape during the Vietnam War: wars that have assumed a central place in critical understandings of the Asian American literary tradition. They also address how the Korean War and the War on Terror – conflicts whose significance scholars have increasingly come to recognize – have become a prominent concern of Asian American writings.

While the realist novel and the autobiography have been the dominant genres of Asian American literature, the chapters in Part III demonstrate that the richest and most vibrant understandings of form and convention can advance from an exploration of genres that can seem more extravagant to the tradition. In addition to the self-evident and often neglected categories
Daniel Y. Kim and Crystal Parikh

of drama and poetry, the essays here examine genres distinctive to the Asian American context. These include literary works that both affirm and destabilize the dominant conception of Asian Americans as a model minority, often by speaking to a timeless sense of Asian family values; and writings that bespeak a transnational or diasporic link to Asian homelands, often by making central use of the trope and practice of translation. Indeed, as this section also addresses, the globalization of capitalism and culture has rendered literature of and about diaspora a generic form of marked significance in Asian America. Finally, we also examine how popular genres like the romance novel, science fiction, and crime fiction have become increasingly vital sites of Asian American literary production, as have the new media that result from the rise of the Internet and digital culture. While the essays in this section take questions of form and genre as their point of departure, they do so in order to demonstrate how our appreciation and understanding of the wide range of aesthetic strategies adopted by Asian American authors is only deepened by an awareness of the historical trajectories that their writings respond to and are shaped by.

Part IV consists of essays that engage with the fact that the very term “Asian American” refers to a recently constructed and explicitly political identity category. It honors the foundational work of early proponents of the Asian American tradition, which was shaped by a cultural nationalism that sought to establish a coherent and distinctive minority tradition in America. But its focus is on the work that has appeared in the past two decades or so that has sought to highlight the “hybridity, multiplicity, and heterogeneity” (to paraphrase Lisa Lowe) of all social formations, including that of Asian America. The essays here trace the multiplicity of identity categories that have come to shape Asian American writing and criticism, delineating the significant critical paradigms that emerge from them. This section traces how United States–focused notions of cultural identity, which were marred by masculinism and homophobia, have given way to ones that are more closely attuned with feminism and queer theory. It also identifies a growing and significant body of literary works and critical methods that are attentive to the experience of multiracial, adoptee, and disabled subjects as well as ones that explore the linkages between Asian Americans and other racialized groups. Overall, the chapters in this final section encourage readers to think creatively about the emergent affiliations and aspirations of the myriad forms of Asian American identity that are now taking shape – to see how comparative race, mixed race, and disability studies approaches move the study of Asian American literature well beyond a narrow identity politics toward a critical humanism that is diverse and often global in its ambitions.

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