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1 Introduction

collect (kə-lĕkt′) *v.* **-lect•ed, lect•ing, lects.** —*tr.* **1.** To bring together in a group; gather; assemble. **2.** To accumulate as a hobby or for study: *collect stamps.* **3.** To call for and obtain payment of: *collect taxes.* **4.** To recover control of: *collect one's emotions.* —*intr.* **1.** To gather together; congregate; accumulate. **2.** To take in payments or donations: *collecting for charity.* —*adj.* With payment to be made by the receiver: *a collect phone call.* —*adv.* So that the receiver is charged: *send a telegram collect.* [ME *collecten* from Lat. *colligere: com-,* together + *legere,* to gather.] —**col•lect′i•ble, col•lect′a•ble** *adj.*

recollect (rĕk′ə-lĕkt′) *v.* **-lect•ed, lect•ing, -lects.** —*tr.* To recall to mind. —*intr.* To have a recollection. [Med. Lat. *recolligere,* recollect, from Lat., to gather up: *re-,* again + *colligere,* to collect. —see COLLECT.] —**rec′ol•lec′tive** *adj.* —**rec′ol•lec′tive•ly** *adv.*

—*American Heritage Dictionary,* 2d College Ed.

The deliberate slash in our title, *Re/collecting Early Asian America,* reminds us that the word "recollect" has two related but somewhat discrete meanings: to remember and to collect again. The derivation of "recollecting" carries the same kind of double meaning as words such as "represent" and "remember." In each of these cases, the prefix "re-" suggests a simple act of repetition, a return to a previous moment. However, in the case of Asian America, the "re" in "re/collecting" is particularly important. To recollect "early Asian America," for instance, implies a forestalling of forgetfulness and a prevention of collective amnesia: a bringing back into focus that which has deliberately or unconsciously been overlooked.

The many meanings of "collecting" also suggest active and self-conscious practices of gathering, accumulating, accounting, and recovering. Most importantly for us as editors of this volume, "collecting" has as one of its primary definitions "to bring together in a group." If many instances of recollecting are profoundly private—poring over objects acquired, conjuring up memories, pulling oneself together—others define themselves through their collaborations, relying on their active and present relationships with

others to exist and be viable. The essays included here join a growing body of scholarship that explores the manifold history and cultural practices of early Asian America. As our volume's title suggests, each essay concerns itself with a specific instance of collecting, remembering, interpreting, and writing the past; taken together, they become a cooperative exercise in recovery and discovery.

The sometimes-contested term "Asian American," used to describe the experiences, identities, and cultures of peoples of Asian descent in North America, suggests an act of correction. It replaces now-suspect terms such as "Oriental," "Asiatic," and "Mongolian." Any re/collecting of early Asian America, then, must be a revisionist project, addressing the conspicuous absence of Asian Americans in "official" histories and correcting stereotypes, myths, and false assumptions. This historical reconstruction necessarily carries with it political and social consequences that can substantively change the lives of individuals and communities.

Defining "Early Asian America"

Re/collecting early Asian America means not only uncovering, describing, and examining the cultures of the past, but also recognizing the political stakes of this undertaking. For our purposes in this anthology, "early Asian America" dates from the beginnings of Asian migration to the Americas in the 1800s to the eve of North American policy changes in the mid-1960s. We chose to consider many and diverse events and experiences under this rubric because they simultaneously establish and challenge what we have learned to articulate in the last four decades as Asian American.

The social, political, legal, and artistic changes set in motion in the 1960s redefined the experiences and identities of those of Asian descent in the United States and Canada. A key change in U.S. immigration law and policy occurred with the 1965 Hart-Cellar Act, although policy changes had begun with the 1943 repeal of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act, which allowed all immigrants to apply for citizenship. By abolishing the quota system, the Hart-Cellar Act accelerated immigration from Asia, which increased from 16,000 in 1965, to more than 100,000 by 1972, to more than a quarter million in 1989. According to recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau, in March 1999 the Asian and Pacific Islander population in the United States numbered 10.9 million, constituting 4 percent of the total population (Humes and McKinnon 2000, 1).

Canada also launched major immigration policy changes in this period. Before 1961, only 1.9 percent of Canadians were of Asian ancestry (Badets and Chui 1994, 20), identified primarily as Chinese, Japanese, and South Asians. After 1962, "country of origin" was no longer a criterion for admission, and in 1967 a point system, free of racial considerations, was established as a means of regulating entry. Since the liberalization of these policies, the face of Asian Canada has changed dramatically. By 1996, Asian Canadians represented 7.25 percent of the total population; Census Canada identified Filipinos, Southeast Asians, and Koreans among the major Asian ethnicities, in addition to the early pioneer groups (CSC 1998, 8).

Thus 1965 ushered in a period of new diversity in Asian American communities in terms of origin, generation, socioeconomic background, education, and experience. Beyond demographic change, this period also marks "Asian America" as a political and cultural entity: the emergence of Asian American activism, the flourishing of Asian American arts and culture, and the establishment of Asian American studies as a viable academic field.

In the forward momentum that has accompanied these social and political changes, the events that preceded the 1960s have not been forgotten. Asian American history has come to occupy significant space in the more recent cultural and political imagination. As David Palumbo-Liu notes, "Asian American subjectivities are not simply the effects of the contemporary; . . . the contemporary holds in it the effects of the historical past" (1995, 60). History has always held a privileged place in both the activism of the Asian American movement and the academic field of Asian American studies. Those engaged in constructing this history have often faced considerable scholarly challenges, as well as institutional pressures; Asian American histories register the marginality and disenfranchisement of individuals and communities through both what is recorded and what is not. Records show the denial of the right to enter the country, to own land, to become a citizen, to vote, to receive an education, to intermarry; the lack of records points to how Asian Americans and other racial minorities were often considered subjects not worthy of recording. Groups of people were reduced to nothing more than numbers—on plantations, workers wore "bangos . . . small brass disks with their identification numbers stamped on them. In the old country, they had names and their names told them who they were, connecting them to family and community" (Takaki 1989, 136). Rarely did anything more than a brief note in a diary or journal document their presence. Such was the case when Captain John Meares and his crew, including seventy Chinese laborers, landed in 1788 on the west coast of Vancouver Island, the first instance of Chinese in western North America documented in the English language (Wright 1988, 2, 15).

History has a constitutive relation to the symbolic formation of Asian America, a panethnic racial category. As Lisa Lowe has suggested, Asian American culture "re-members" the past, not only embodying experiences of the past but also creating a present community of bodies (1996, 29). Despite great differences in the actual conditions of immigration and settlement, such a "racial" history strategically emphasizes the commonality of shared experience in patterns of legal and institutional exclusion and oppression, in acts of racism, and in stereotyping. The emphasis on a shared history, on common experiences, and on collective symbols countenances the necessary emphasis on political alliances and coalitions that extend beyond obvious divisions and differences of culture, generation, class, gender, and sexuality.

And yet there can be no single definition of "Asian American experience." Location, time, generation, citizenship, language, and relation necessarily change this designation. Scholars have rightly questioned the move to define "Asian America" in narrow ways. Sau-Ling Wong, for instance, has pointed out the problems inherent in authenticating the contemporary identities of Asian Americans as American by emphasizing a long-term presence in the United States, English as the language of expression, or the disavowal of

what is "Asian" in favor of what is "Asian American" (1995, 3–4). On the one hand, the long-term presence of those of Asian origin in the Americas is of great significance in any retelling of American history. Asian Americans were at the forefront of broadening the civil liberties for all Americans; when Wong Kim Ark petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court on his eligibility for citizenship, the 1898 decision provided the guarantee of citizenship to all who are born within the United States. As Gary Okihiro suggests, by seeking inclusion and equality, Asian Americans "helped to preserve and advance the very privileges that were denied to them" (1994, 151). On the other hand, scholars also must work to present a more varied picture of history, to avoid the valorization or idealization of only certain working-class, native-born, and English-speaking communities.

As Patricia Limerick notes, the history of the American West is for many synonymous with European settlers' westward movement from the East Coast (1995, 89). However, it is insufficient to revise such a model with alternative paradigms that reimagine immigration and settlement simply by replacing Europe with Asia or westward expansion with eastward movement. The early history of Asian immigration was indeed tied to other points of emigration, many of them in the Pacific Islands, as well as other points along the North American continent. For example, as early as 1763, Filipino "Manilamen" settled in Louisiana; the names of their communities (Leon Rojas, Bayou Cholas, Bassa Bassa) resonate with the images of their former homeland. These men were members of the Spanish galleon trade between Manila and Acapulco. Their descendants occupy an "Asian American" space that is greatly different from, say, the Chinatowns of the West Coast (Okihiro 1994, 38).

Thus many concerns arise in trying to realize "early Asian America" anew. For instance, a continued emphasis on Chinese American and Japanese American history and a paucity of other ethnic histories—which unfortunately characterizes this as well as other volumes of research—becomes even more problematic given our contemporary awareness that new patterns of immigration, such as the increasing numbers of arrivals from Southeast Asia, will change the nature of Asian American communities. Representing a truly panethnic Asian American history is but one of many challenges for today's scholars. As the multitudinous and varied histories of Asian Americans confirm, such a past cannot be imagined only in terms of one kind of emblematic immigrant journey from "Asia" to "America" and the subsequent generations thus engendered; the path to Asian America was neither unilinear nor unidirectional.

Those who write Asian American histories are still inspired by the common ground of fighting Eurocentrism and drawing attention to racism. But many are also aware of the pressures that such charges place upon the method and manner of collecting and writing history. Many Asian American studies scholars have long been aware of the larger patterns of narrative action—and their accompanying political uses—that underlie the writing of history, through both the "constructive imagination" of the historian and the different modes of "emplotment" used in both "official" and unofficial histories (Collingwood 1946; White 1987). To understand something of the varied racial, ethnic, national, gender, and cultural identities and experiences of Asian Americans demands an ever more flexible framework. In *Asian Americans: An Interpretive His-*

tory, Sucheng Chan suggests that "no work of synthesis on the history of Asian Americans can be definitive" (1991, 188); her disclaimer presents both a warning and an opportunity to reflect upon the continuing challenge of resurrecting "Asian America" in its myriad incarnations.

Reading Cultural Histories

The essays in this book bear this heterogeneity in mind. All take part in the ongoing reassessment of how the past events of North American history might be exhumed, resurrected, and redressed in light of present formations of "Asian American" identity, politics, and scholarship. But that these essays work collaboratively here does not mean that they are uniform in argument, topic, or method. This volume draws upon a number of different disciplines, scholarly perspectives, approaches, and methodologies—from academic fields as different as history, anthropology, archaeology, sociology, geography, literary studies, women's studies, theater arts, film and visual studies, and ethnic studies. Its essays range from models of primary research to extended considerations of larger theoretical paradigms; they incorporate a diverse selection of written and printed documents, material objects, photographs, oral histories, films, and play scripts. While each displays a different way of unearthing, analyzing, and reframing past events, experiences, and artifacts, these essays all focus on particular aspects of early Asian America and reveal particular strategies for writing its cultural history. In bringing them together, we hope to provide both a range of perspectives and an opportunity for comparing and querying modes of analysis. We present these essays not as comprehensive overviews or as models of scholarship but rather as different templates or case studies that might be of interest not only to scholars of Asian American studies but also to other readers.

In selecting essays, we have tried to emphasize how one might rethink the "why" and "how" as well as the "what" of writing Asian American cultural histories. Many of our essays reference tropes that have already been used to conceptualize Asian American histories. These encompass the imagined, physical, and political formation of communities (both as "ethnic enclaves" and as places where American legal, juridical, and economic institutions and cultural roles are constantly in negotiation); narratives of movement (immigration, settlement, and/or relationship between North America and Asia); and the identification of both what is "Asian in America" (including stereotypical representations) and what is "Asian American" (including artistic expression). With these tropes in mind, our volume does not group its essays by chronology, ethnic group, or subject matter. Rather, it uses four headings: "Locations and Relocations," "Crossings," "Objects," and "Recollections."

These headings are intended not to limit or "package" the essays, but rather to suggest conceptual affinities and dissonances among their various areas of concern. These four rubrics might of course be read as exemplifying a well-known trajectory: the pattern of immigration, settlement, objectification, and self-expression that is frequently evoked in models of "minority" or "immigrant" culture in the Americas. However, as

our essays illustrate, there is a danger in assuming that Asian American experience always follows this tidy model. Asian American experiences both diverge and converge around these terms. Each of the essays presents a unique instance of current scholarship in recollecting Asian American cultural history; collectively, they testify that there is no unifying vision of "early Asian America," that this is as dynamic, fluid, and highly contested a terrain as the Asian America of the present.

Locations and Relocations

James Clifford urges scholars to think in terms of locations rather than fixed places; according to Clifford, the term "locations" is more apt because it does not assume an inherently natural set of fixed geographies. After all, "everyone's on the move and has been for centuries" (1997, 2). His distinction suggests that "locations" are geographical, psychological, and political markers that indicate a tentative ongoing inquiry pertaining to a particular spot. Once such markers become more stable and significant, they lose their status as "locations" and become "sites" or "places." Because of its ephemeral nature, a location needs to be acknowledged and named before such a transformation can be effected; this naming is essential to how a location acquires the legitimacy of an identity and a readable history.

David Palumbo-Liu reminds us that "the history of Asian America is indeed legible in a history of spatialization and respatialization, of different deterritorializations and reterritorializations, disenfranchisements, reclamations, and (re)constructions" (1999, 7). Locating early Asian America is indeed a challenging task, one that involves not only unearthing evidence and drawing increasingly accurate maps, but also considering how such details are made legible and meaningful. In this spirit, each of the essays not only describes certain historic locations and relocations, but also discusses the particular challenges of recovering artifacts and narratives, draws attention to the often problematic nature of sources, and/or looks at the stakes of historical reconstruction.

This section of the book opens with "Pacific Entry, Pacific Century: Chinatowns and Chinese Canadian History," in which Imogene L. Lim describes her role during the summer of 1996 in the first archaeological investigation of Vancouver's Chinatown. Lim's essay conveys the immediacy and excitement of participating in a hands-on reconstruction involving archaeological excavation and oral history as well as written sources. It also makes a direct appeal for continuing to collect different forms of data from the past in order to counter myths, misunderstandings, and racist stereotypes. A concern with what is still missing in accounts of Asian American history—places as well as people who have been overlooked—carries over into Randall Rohe's "Chinese Camps and Chinatowns: Chinese Mining Settlements in the North American West," which focuses on mid-1800s Chinese camps and Chinatowns built during the boom of the mining frontier. These essays by Lim and Rohe demonstrate the immense importance of different modes of discovery, documentation, interpretation, and preservation of material objects, printed texts, and oral histories in providing a legible account of the past. Emma J. Teng's "Artifacts of a Lost City: Arnold Genthe's *Pictures of Old Chinatown* and Its Inter-

texts" comments on the more suspect modes of recording space, both written and visual. Using Arnold Genthe's photographs, an accompanying text by Will Irwin entitled "Old Chinatown," and Frank Norris's story "The Third Circle," Teng explores the imagining of San Francisco's Old Chinatown as a mysterious "architectural uncanny," the hellish subterranean, and an aestheticized, romanticized slum. While Rohe and Lim map out the details of what might be thought of as "real," albeit forgotten, communities and sites, Teng is more concerned with how ideology and fantasy dictate the terms of spatial perception.

Genthe's, Irwin's, and Norris's versions of Chinatown may seem ludicrously exaggerated today; however, as Teng's essay suggests, the documentation of a "location" is always mediated by particular desires, relationships, and conditions that make its presentation seem natural. Contemporary reclamations of Asian American history, despite their important differences in perspective, also bring specific agendas and assumptions to bear upon their views of the past. The next two essays, while still preoccupied with the historical reconstruction of events and communities, focus as well on how such "locations" are made meaningful in the present. Rajini Srikanth's "The Komagata Maru: Memory and Mobilization among the South Asian Diaspora in North America" focuses on the symbolic significance of the 1914 *Komagata Maru* incident, in which British subjects of Indian origin were denied entry to Canada (Vancouver, British Columbia). Srikanth places this event in the context of not only past discriminatory immigration regulations adopted by the Canadian government to stop the immigration of Indians, but also current political mobilization by South Asian Americans and South Asian Canadians. In "Community Destroyed? Assessing the Impact of the Loss of Community on Japanese Americans during World War II," Lane Ryo Hirabayashi presents case studies of urban and rural Japanese American communities, narrating how such scholarship was first undertaken to construct a compelling legal case for reparations for the destruction of Japanese American communities by internment and relocation. Indian exclusion and Japanese American internment serve as symbolic moments that fuel the fires of collective action; the recollecting of Asian American history urges public commemoration, social reform, and legal redress. Hirabayashi's survey of multiple communities, urban and rural, contrasts with Srikanth's focus on a specific historical incident; but both essays emphasize the modes of resurrecting the past in the present and the intense investments that accompany these processes—the highly personal and yet always public nature of relocating Asian America.

Crossings

The essays in "Locations and Relocations" complicate as well as represent Asian American locales, places, and sites of inquiry. "Crossings," the second section of the book, illustrates how different Asian American crossings—the passage and circulation of bodies, ideas, and racial identities across space and over time—are equally complex in nature. One type of crossing commonly pictured imagines the Asian American as an immigrant who voyages from the old world (Asia) to the new (North America).

Such a depiction assumes an originary point and a final destination, a linear and unidirectional trajectory, and a set of experiences defined by clear temporal and national boundaries. These essays complicate as well as expand upon this paradigm through chronicling multiple dimensions of immigration as well as crossings, exchanges, and returns.

In "From Colonial Subject to Undesirable Alien: Filipino Migration, Exclusion, and Repatriation, 1920–1940," Mae M. Ngai points out that the history of Filipino workers in the early twentieth century blurs the boundaries between the American colonial subject and the Asian immigrant. The experiences of these Filipinos in the United States demonstrated the contradictions between U.S. policies of manifest destiny and "benevolent assimilation" in the Pacific and anti-Asian exclusion at home.

If Ngai problematizes the paradigm of the Asian American as "immigrant" through her consideration of U.S. colonialism and Filipino repatriation, Adam McKeown's "The Sojourner as Astronaut: Paul Siu in Global Perspective" also complicates unidirectional paradigms of immigration. Focusing on the work of Chinese American sociologist Paul Siu, McKeown's essay considers another aspect of crossing through reconsidering the sojourner, the figure who travels between cultures who can be dismissed or expelled as a temporary presence. Asian American cultural nationalism has had a vested interest in establishing Asian Americans as a long-term but continually repressed presence throughout the history of the United States and Canada. This insistence strategically emphasizes the historical erasure of Asians as American and the systematic racism that has affected law and policy, both domestic and international. Yet it also discounts the sojourner as a temporary (and therefore less valid) Asian American identity. McKeown's important analysis of the sojourner suggests that scholars of Asian American culture must reexamine different kinds of crossing, from North America to Asia as well as the reverse.

Asian American concerns are too often defined only as they are manifested by and affect political practice, artistic production, and identity within the borders of North America. In "Between Fact and Fiction: Literary Portraits of Chinese Americans in the 1905 Anti-American Boycott," Guanhua Wang refutes the notion that Asian American history begins and ends in the United States, or that only immigrants felt the impact of exclusion laws and racism. By examining several novels written about the Chinese boycott of U.S. products in the summer of 1905, Wang suggests the actively political, tangible, and strategic (rather than simply nostalgic) ties of Chinese American immigrants to China. Wang highlights a different kind of crossing, in which emotional affinity, cultural identification, information, and activism are shared across national boundaries.

Catherine Ceniza Choy's "From Exchange Visitor to Permanent Resident: Reconsidering Filipino Nurse Migration as a Post-1965 Phenomenon" also suggests ways in which "Asia imagines America," by documenting how early-twentieth-century U.S. colonial education in the Philippines and mid-twentieth-century exchange programs influenced the migration of Filipino nurses to the United States. Like McKeown, Choy provides an important perspective on another kind of sojourning. Her examination of

Filipino nurse migration not only counters the gender and class emphasis in many existing studies of Filipino American history, but also reveals a pattern of transnational migration by exchange students and temporary workers that continues to the present day.

This section ends with a personal account by fourth-generation Chinese Peruvian Fabiana Chiu-Rinaldi. "China Latina" pieces together family history through journals, letters, documents, and photograph albums. Chiu-Rinaldi's stories of Chino Latinos and Asian/Latino/Americans testify to the transnational and multidirectional history of Asian American crossings and demonstrate firsthand the intricacy of those movements that define Asian America.

Objects

Any historical recollection of early Asian America must address the prevalence of the racial stereotype in public representation. From the mid–nineteenth century onward, caricatures of "Orientals" as inferior, alien, deviant, subservient, and threatening have dominated popular representations of Asians in American culture.

The exotic Orientals, queued and rat-eating Chinamen, Fu Manchus, emasculated Asian men, and hyperfeminine Asian women described by these essays seem all too familiar in the present. Unfortunately, stereotypes—many of them variations on those generated more than a century ago—have tremendous force and significance still. Thus it is even more crucial that contemporary analyses make clear how they are produced, reproduced, disseminated, and read within the confines of specific racial discourses and tangible social conditions. The docile and submissive geisha girl or lotus blossom; the dangerous dragon lady; the mysterious, demonic Fu Manchu; the plump, Buddha-like Charlie Chan who spouts fortune cookie aphorisms, the bespectacled nerd who speaks in broken English, all have become embedded in the public imagination through very particular means. Although seemingly ubiquitous, inevitable, and at times even "natural," they are nonetheless products of time and place.

With this in mind, the essays in "Objects," the third section of the book, use the word "objects" in two ways. First, they comment on how stereotyping reduces Asians and Asian Americans to objects of curiosity and desire or hatred, fear, and abuse. Second, these essays object to this method of representation by exposing stereotypes as the constructed (rather than natural or self-evident) products of specific social ideologies and discourses, techniques of production and manufacturing, modes of dissemination, and terms of reception.

In "Exotic Explorations: Travels to Asia and the Pacific in Early Cinema," Jeanette Roan investigates the use of film images in the travel lectures of John L. Stoddard and E. Burton Holmes, and the way incorporation of these early cinema practices makes possible the American consumption of visions of Asia as a foreign locale. Roan's essay stresses the ever-present racial and national fantasy of the "Orient," a typology acknowledged by many of these essays. However, as Yuko Matsukawa's "Representing the Oriental in Nineteenth-Century Trade Cards" indicates, this exoticization exists in concert with another view of the "Oriental." Matsukawa's essay analyzes how images from

nineteenth-century advertisements for food, soap, starch, clothing, and other household products reflect both the craze for the mysterious spectacle of the East and the violently anti-Chinese sentiments of late-nineteenth-century America. Matsukawa moves toward a discussion of what problems are engendered when the "foreign"—the object of fascination, curiosity, and desire—becomes the "alien," the imagined contaminant of the U.S. body politic (Lee 1999, 3).

While Roan and Matsukawa highlight how instances of both "foreign" and "alien" stereotypes are generated, reproduced, and disseminated by nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century technologies such as film and chromolithography, essays by Tina Chen, Meredith Wood, and Helena Grice focus more on how the stereotypical bodies exhibited by popular culture also have the potential for ambiguity, instability, and contradiction. Each of their essays finds a different source of tension within stereotypes that at first seems quite definitively marked by race, gender, and sexuality. Chen's "Dissecting the 'Devil Doctor': Stereotype and Sensationalism in Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu" analyzes how Fu Manchu might be read as a racial hybrid, able to move between binary categories of East and West and therefore embodying the threat of new transnational coalitions. Wood's "Footprints from the Past: Passing Racial Stereotypes in the Hardy Boys" calls to our attention scenes of cross-gender and cross-racial passing that appear in one of the early Hardy Boys series books, *Footprints under the Window;* these moments complicate readings of the racialized, gendered, and sexualized stereotype of the effeminate Asian male. Finally, Grice's "Face-ing/De-Face-ing Racism: Physiognomy as Ethnic Marker in Eurasian/Amerasian Women's Texts" illustrates how literary texts by biracial women might be read in the context of long-standing anxieties about visible racial identity and difference, anti-miscegenation, and the pseudoscience of physiognomy. Each essay reveals some fundamental anxiety inherent in stereotypical representation and makes evident the fault lines in the seemingly impervious face of the "Oriental."

Recollections

Literature, theater, and other forms of artistic expression hold a place of privilege in Asian American culture. Invested in these forms is the recognition, preservation, and validation of hitherto marginalized experiences and identities, and the hope of individual and communal empowerment. Much of the critical analysis of this work begins, therefore, with celebration. Because works by pre-1960s Asian American artists often lacked adequate recognition in their own time, present "recollections" of such works strive both to restore them to their proper historical contexts and to create more appreciative audiences for them in the present.

Celebrations of early Asian American artists, however, must be tempered by an awareness of how our political and personal investments influence the process of recollection and reevaluation. Retrieving early Asian American artistic production raises vexed and complicated questions about what counts as art and what constitutes certain work as Asian American. Each essay in the fourth section of the book, "Recollections," wres-

tles with a different aspect of these issues: how we discover old works anew, how we enshrine them in literary and other artistic canons, and how we invest in them our longing for origin, authority, and voice.

The first two essays examine writers whose works reveal valuable insights into the diverse professional and personal situations of Asians living and writing in America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Both combine scholarly research and critical interpretation to emphasize not only the continued importance of looking for early Asian American authors, but also the complications of claiming them as Asian American. In "Yan Phou Lee on the Asian American Frontier," Amy Ling examines the life and literary work of Yan Phou Lee, author of the 1887 book *When I Was a Boy in China.* In "'A Different Mode of Speech': Yone Noguchi in Meiji America," Edward Marx looks at the poetry and prose of Yone Noguchi, written during his stay in the United States from 1893 to 1903. Ling makes a case for why Lee deserves a "place of distinction" as a "founding father" of Asian American literature. Marx's investigation of the "American" work of Noguchi, a writer already distinguished in Japan, takes on the somewhat more daunting question of how the term "Asian American" might be usefully applied to writers who are already claimed as "Asian."

Worries over the parameters of early Asian American literature and the question of who qualifies as Asian American also begin Josephine Lee's "Asian Americans in Progress: *College Plays 1937–1955.*" Lee's essay highlights a selection of plays by student writers that are substantively different from the later mainland drama that usually defines Asian American theater. Lee's concern with how these works from pre-statehood Hawai'i might broaden the category of "Asian American theater" and her specific readings of the tensions of cultural identity, assimilation, and mobility in these plays link her essay to Robert Cooperman's "The Americanization of Americans: The Phenomenon of Nisei Internment Camp Theater." Cooperman examines the theatrical performances of "Western classics," light comedies, and traditional kabuki plays that took place within the confines of the camps. Although he stresses the history of productions rather than interpretations of plays, Cooperman also reads theatrical practice as a complex response to the competing pressures of accommodation, forbearance, and resistance felt by internees.

The heterogeneity of "Asian America" makes the interpretation of literary and theatrical work from early Asian America a challenging task. The constant reevaluation of critical and aesthetic terms, judgments, and values includes an ongoing reassessment of known writers. Guy Beauregard's "Reclaiming Sui Sin Far" brings us back around to the present moment, laying out the terms by which contemporary critics have "reclaimed" the writings of Sui Sin Far and assigned her status as a major figure in nineteenth-century Asian American women's writing. Beauregard's essay reminds us of the continued political engagement and vigilance demanded of scholars who engage in the work of textual and cultural interpretation. Motivated both by the pressures of contemporary claims on writers and the need to understand the past through its literary figures, those who would try to "recollect" the works of Asian American authors, dramatists, and other artists find that the stakes remain high.

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