

**Writing Nation from (Un)Homes—
Japanese American Families in Cynthia
Kadohata's *The Floating World*
and Lydia Minatoya's *Talking to
High Monks in the Snow****

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Abstract

This paper attempts to understand “Asian America” not as one nation, but as constituted by multiple families in a shifting web of space, time, genealogy, and identification. Analyzing the Japanese American families in Cynthia Kadohata's *The Floating World* (1989) and Lydia Minatoya's *Talking to High Monks in the Snow: An Asian American Odyssey* (1992), I restore Asian American studies to its familial dimensions, seeking in individual households the radical spaces from which a re-signification of “Asian America” is made possible. First, probing into the

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complicated implications of “unhome,” I demonstrate Kadohata’s attempt to re-read the seeming Japanese American “homelessness” in the post-World War II era into a position of socio-historical intervention. Then, I study the domestic complexities as presented by both texts, exploring how the makeshift nature and transnational origins of individual Japanese American families challenge the genetic continuity and domestic enclosure of a national family model. Asian American families as such must be known not simply as tools of genetic integration or cultural assimilation, but as spaces of national, ethnic, cultural transgressions and gender, generational, transnational negotiations. The change and development of Japanese American communities are, in one way or another, embedded in the establishment, extension, movement, and/or disintegration of individual families.

Key Words: Asian American Literature, Japanese American family, nation-family, Cynthia Kadohata, Lydia Minatoya