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Immigration, Diaspora, Transnationalism, and the Native—The Many-Mouthed Bird of Asian/Pacific American Literature in the Early Twenty-First Century*

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Abstract

This is a “teacherly” paper, as it springs from my own experiences of teaching Asian/Pacific American literature since 1981. In this paper, I analyze Asian American literature in three distinct yet interrelated paradigms: the Asian American literature of immigration, the Asian American literature of diaspora, and the indigenous literature of Pacific America, namely of Hawai‘i. I argue that the diasporic model has not entirely displaced or replaced the immigration one in the United States and in Asian American literature in spite of compelling historical evidence that by now the earlier established paradigm should have shifted into a background. I also speak of the third paradigm, of Pacific Islander indigeneity in literature, and about how

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this category especially is impacted by the other two paradigms and by trends in transnationalism as well. I make references to various Asian/Pacific American literary works whenever appropriate not only to suggest the many faces of Asian/Pacific American literature as a corpus of creative and scholarly production but also to pinpoint the critical significances it continues to bear on us as we wade through the twenty-first century.

Key Words: Asian/Pacific American literature, immigration, diaspora, transnationalism, indigeneity

This is a “teacherly” paper. It springs from my experience of teaching Asian/Pacific literature since 1981. In this paper my students are often my sources. This paper I hope is also related to research in the field, in that it is informed by my research, to the best of my knowledge, and because teaching and the classroom have benefited from research and have in turn participated in the development of research.

For ten years now, when I teach an Asian/Pacific American literature course that sometimes goes by the name, “Paradigm Shifts in Asian American Literature,” I divide the syllabus into three paradigms: the Asian American literature of immigration, the Asian American literature of diaspora, and the indigenous literature of Pacific America, namely of Hawai‘i. Except for the third paradigm, the literature of Native Hawaiians, understandings of paradigm shifts from immigration to diaspora have of course become commonplace in the field. In part I would like to speak today about how the diasporic model has not entirely displaced or replaced the immigration one in the United States and in Asian American literature in spite of compelling historical evidence that by now the earlier established paradigm should have shifted into a background. I also speak today of the third paradigm, of Pacific Islander indigeneity in literature and about how this category especially is impacted by the other two paradigms and by trends in transnationalism as well.

As you know, the radical change in the US immigration law in 1965, which opened the way for unprecedented numbers of people from Asian countries to enter and reside in the United States, marks the beginning of America’s participation in a worldwide Asian “diaspora” of peoples scattering from their Asian homelands to far-flung destinations. Unlike the historical precedents for “diaspora,” the Babylonian Exile and other attempts to scatter and thus destroy the Jewish people two millennia ago, the current diaspora is not necessarily thought to be a bad occurrence, not an attempt at genocide. In Asian American history, a diaspora in the Biblical sense that was meant to eliminate a race was the so-called

“Relocation” of Japanese Americans during World War II, the attempted scattering of this people to the far corners of the land so that they would never regroup as a people. By contrast, the current diaspora often has characteristics of immigrants’ quest for an “American Dream,” where now people in diaspora leave their homelands to seek opportunities, if not entirely willingly or happily, then still more or less knowingly or perhaps intuitively following the currents of transnational flows of capital and labor. What then distinguishes this chasing of dreams from characteristics of immigration, specifically in Asian American literature?

Here I need to back up and state my understanding of the category I call the Asian American literature of immigration. My analysis parallels what the editors of *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* long ago, in 1974, called the “two traditions” of Chinese American literature (Chin, Chan, Inada, & Wong, 1974). As I see it, not only Chinese American literature but also Asian American literature at large generally falls into two camps. The dominant one is assimilationist.¹ In Asian American literature, assimilation is not merely signified by a character’s wanting to be as “American” (meaning as “white”) as possible. This dominant theory is often the basis too for characters who *oppose* conforming to “whiteness.” Assimilation involves the belief that a character is positioned along a spectrum, with being “Asian” on one end and being “American” on the other. It requires essentialistic definitions of culture. Assimilation is a belief that being “Asian” precludes a character or a person from being “fully American.” Assimilation is thus the basis for the expression, “a blend of the best of the East and the best of the West,” since the expression assumes and implies that “the East” is the opposite of “the West,” not that East and West are mutually constitutive of each other. Frank Chin puts assimilationist slogans like this into the mouth of the character Ma in Chin’s drama, *The Year of the*

¹ My longer commentary on “Assimilation” is found in *A Companion to American Thought* (1995).

Dragon (Chin, 1981). When Pa claims that he is “Chinese” and that in his present family only he, Fred, and China Mama are “Chinese” because it is only they who were born in China, he is opposing himself against an “American” identity, but he is assuming the same assimilationist spectrum of Chinese American identity that Ma and Sis assume. Chin thus dramatizes and exposes for critique and analysis the “dual identity,” assimilation model he hates so much.

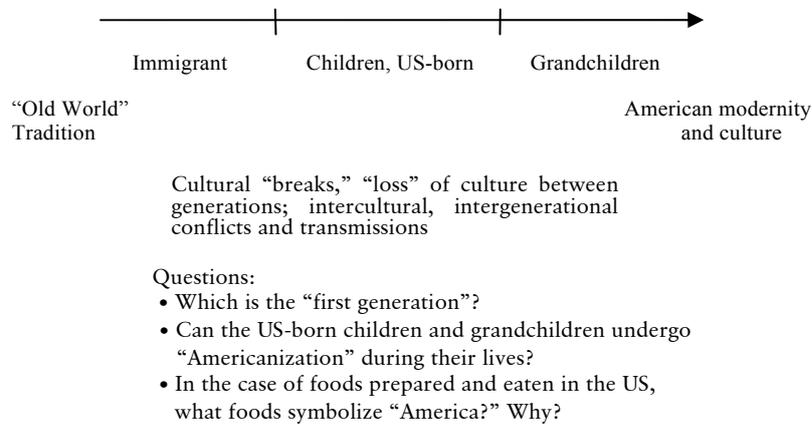


Figure 1 Assimilation

The first question is tricky. Especially in the American Eastern and Midwestern regions, the tendency is to reply that the US-born children are the “first generation,” meaning the first to be born in the US as US citizens. But what then has happened to their parents, the immigrant generation who left their homelands in order to settle in the US? Do they become the “zero generation” when their children are born as the “first”? In its basic outline, the assimilation model holds out a promise of “becoming American” but at a sometimes cruel price. In what sense can and must US-born children of immigrants undergo “Americanization,” when they are already born as full citizens? How can they be required to spend

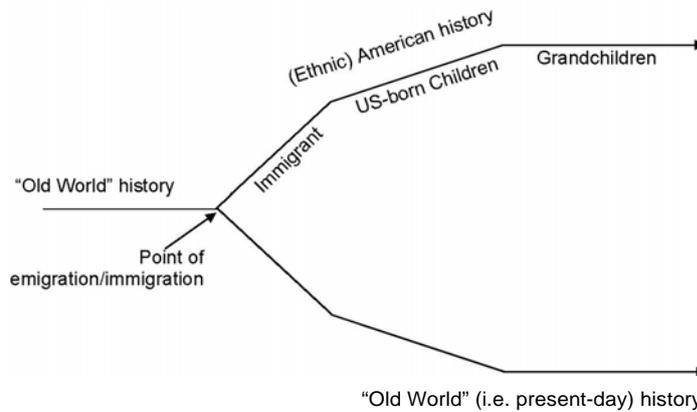
their lives trying to become more American than the Americans that they are? As for the third question I pose above (and many others may be extrapolated), how is it that foods named by their German origins—hamburgers and frankfurters—have become “naturalized,” representing America, while certain other foods, longer in America than hot dogs, are called “Chinese” and not “American”? The food paradigm seems to parallel the US naturalization laws that prohibited Asian immigrants from becoming US citizens, while Europeans could be naturalized.

Reading John Okada’s novel *No-No Boy* (1957), like Chin’s *The Year of the Dragon* (which is informed by Chin’s avid reading of *No-No Boy*), shows some of the contradictory tendencies of assimilation. In *No-No Boy*, it would appear that the title character is reacting totally against any thoughts and actions that supposedly identify him as a “Japanese.” He wants nothing more than to be like “anyone else,” an “American,” with a house fronted by a white picket fence and inhabited by a nice ordinary family of his “American” own. He considers his mother not just a “Japanese,” but a “Jap,” an immigrant unchanged by America though she has lived in the US for more than thirty-five years. Ichiro Yamada, the No-No Boy, is an assimilationist, at least at the novel’s beginning. But consider the one he considers his antagonist, his mother. She does identify herself entirely with being Japanese. She is an enemy to America and now, in 1946, believes that Japan won the war. Japan and America, Japanese culture and American culture, are at odds to her. Japan and America are polar opposites, exactly as the assimilation model dictates—and exactly as her son, dying to be “American” also believes. Both the mother and the son identify and judge other characters accordingly. The younger son, Taro, opposes their mother too and runs away from home to join the Army to prove how American he is. He hates his brother for being a “Jap,” and this underscores how Taro and Ichiro are alike, assimilationists. Effectively, the author John Okada is examining, interpreting, and presenting the outcome of the US government’s incarceration of Japanese Americans by race in World War II,

when the policies and actions were based relentlessly on achieving the assimilation—the cultural genocide—of Nikkei, Japanese Americans.

To drive home the point about the contradictions and distortions that occur when assimilation is applied to Asian American subjects, I think of how this question played out seven years ago in Japan when I assigned *No-No Boy* to the fifty students in the American Novel course of Tsuda College, in Tokyo. After five weeks of studying the novel in our once-weekly class meetings, a student offered her opinion that Mrs. Yamada was just like a Japanese mother. The student agreed with the protagonist Ichiro that his mother Mrs. Yamada was an untransformed and unreformed Japanese despite her 35 years in Seattle. I asked what a “Japanese mother” is like. The class complied by listing certain characteristics: a Japanese mother is stingy, unaffectionate, bossy, mean, demanding, and even ugly. I asked if they had in mind a much nicer mother with whom they were comparing the “Japanese mother.” “American mother,” they said. A student elaborated that American mothers are the opposite of Japanese: an American mother is sweet, generous, loving, kind, and beautiful. How did the students know this? A few had been exchange students who had had “home stays” in the US for two weeks, when in high school. I asked if the American mothers were “beautiful” and kind to their children always. Or did they perform their loveliness because they were in the presence of the visitor? Did the Japanese daughters know how the American mother acted and spoke once the two weeks were over and she was alone with her children again? Then the reaction struck. One of the first students to have spoken burst into tears. She was looking at the two lists, of ugly Japanese mother contrasting beautiful American mother, that they had dictated to me. She said, Wait. Wait. That’s not my mother. Why did we say that the Japanese mother is ugly? I was dumbfounded. Even in Japan, the perceptions about the relative power of the US in comparison with other countries in the world influenced these Japanese students to think and speak in Orientalist ways about the

“Japanese mother,” overpowered by dominant, perhaps globalist and transnationalist, comparisons, also inherent in assimilationism, about the superiority of the West and therefore the US and of the superior beauty of the “American mother.” The result was their unfair comparison between every bad motherly trait on the one hand and every good one on the other. When we then returned to the novel, these students could begin to consider how Mrs. Yamada lives and dies to be a good mother to her sons.



In this paradigm, culture and identity=history, narrative, story, and memory; history aspires to being “a continuous record of change.”

Questions:

- Which is the “first generation”?
- Would a Chinese immigrant be a “Chinese,” or a “Chinese American”?
- “Pluralism” implies that when all US peoples are considered ethnically, there is no ethnic majority. (German Americans are the largest group, at about 20% of the population.) But are all peoples of the US of “immigrant” origin? Whom does this model exclude?

Figure 2 Dialogical Pluralism

In the late 1980s I proposed an alternative to the assimilation paradigm for analyzing the Asian American literature of

immigration. The question raised by a graduate student was, How can critics such as Frank Chin question or condemn Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (1976) for being assimilationist when the work was clearly "multicultural," explicitly including "Chinese" cultural elements? My first thought and response was that the assimilation model itself is expressly multicultural, but its aim is to eliminate whatever is "alien" to the US in an immigrant culture, group, and individual. I had not decided for myself that Kingston's first book is assimilationist. I thought therefore of a different paradigm that my students went on to call "dialogical pluralism" (and, further, "dialogical, diachronic pluralism," in contrast to the "synchronic," a-historical assimilationist model of a "traditional" culture as unchanging in time). In this model, when an immigrant enters the US, he or she embarks upon making and living a new history, let's say a "Chinese American history," what The One Named Xu from Xiangshan calls "this chapter" (Lai, Lim, & Yung, 1991: 66) of his life, in a poem he wrote on the walls of Angel Island (*Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940*). This Chinese American chapter, story, history, and memory are not experienced by those who remained behind in China or who went to other lands. The characters in this Chinese American chapter of history call themselves *gimshunhock*, to spell the Cantonese word as Louis Chu does in *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (1961). The *gimshunhock* realize well enough that they are no longer in China. For the One Named Xu on Angel Island, his poetic sources shift from Confucian classics (with the reference to "laws harsh as tigers," [Lai, Lim, & Yung, 1991: 42]) to the "over a hundred" (62) and "tens of thousands" (66) of poems on the walls of Island. He has a new point of reference, and it is situated in, of, and about America and his fellow travelers. The implicit prospect is this: the *gimshunhock*'s manner of dress, food, cultural baggage, even the words in his own language can and will change, but he is still writing and living "this chapter" in Chinese American history and culture. In other words, in this model we in my classes call "dialogical, diachronic pluralism," culture and identity consist

not in things, artifacts, and traits but in history, narrative, and memory. Culture is history, and history aspires to being a continuous record of change. In this formulation, “continuity” of culture does not mean the repetition and preservation of customs and traits, but *continuity means change*. How is this possible? In this model, “continuous change” is analogous to the tag at the end of an episode on a television drama series, that says, “to be continued.” We neither expect nor want the next episode to be a repetition, a preservation, of what we have just seen. We expect the story to continue in narrative development and change.

In her drama, *Gold Watch* (1970), Momoko Iko expresses this idea of Asian American culture as a history, a continuous record of change, when her play’s protagonist Masu Murakami tells his son, “We were born, Tadao, to different times, so our lives are different, must be different, if we are to survive” (1993: 136). Masu is an Issei, an immigrant, the term meaning “first generation,” not the “zero generation” implied in assimilation. Tadao his son is a Nisei, second generation, born in the US. Yet Masu does not say by way of assimilationist discourse that they are of “different cultures,” one Japanese and the other American, to explain their differences. Masu tries to teach the son that they are of two different generations, “times,” histories, and so they are different, importantly so. Both of them are Nikkei, Japanese Americans.

Almost all of the Asian American literature of immigration that has been passed on to us as the best works, now the classic works of the last quarter of the twentieth century but going at least as far back as Sui Sin Far’s *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* in 1912, are based upon insights into a definition of American ethnic culture not as deterministically but as socially and historically constructed, and such works are critiques of the dominant assimilationist paradigm. At what may seem the tail end of the Asian American literature of immigration and its exponents, Shawn Wong’s *American Knees* (1995) not only assumes the historical constructedness of culture but openly lectures about it, as if entire passages were delivered in an Asian American studies course in the

US.

A difference between the implicit cultural determinism of the assimilation paradigm and the historical constructivism of the dialogical, diachronic model and others that overlap it is that historical constructivism assumes that people make culture and do so continually. Thus, elements of culture that are now considered unwanted—say, racism—have been made by people, society, in the first place and theoretically can therefore be un-made, deconstructed, by society. Under the constructivist paradigm, the pursuit therefore of social justice is valued and beliefs in and expressions of how social wrongs result from unchangeable “human nature” are resisted. Again as the character Masu puts it in Momoko Iko’s drama, *Gold Watch*, storms at sea and stubborn land, the forces of nature “cannot be helped”: “That I understand. To that I can say, *shikataganai* [it cannot be helped]. But men, not men. They don’t impress me the same way. *How can I stand in awe of men who will die just like me?*” (1993: 146, the final sentence, in italics, occurred in a script used in a 1977 performance). Masu is responding in rage to the *men* who have ordered the Japanese Americans of the West Coast to report to their own incarceration, while others in this community bow their heads and say that “it can’t be helped.”

To shift now to the diasporic paradigm, let me point out that in the literature of immigration there is often a marked break in communications, of some sort, between the narratives or histories of Asian American subjects on the one hand and, on the other hand, the concurrently continuing histories of the people in the Asian countries that the immigrants left behind, usually never to return. In Okada’s *No-No Boy*, Mother refuses to believe the letters from her sister, begging for help when the family in Japan is starving following the war. As only a bitter Japanese American can, Mother claims with deep devotion that she is Japanese, but no Japanese believes that Japan won the war. In Chu’s *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, letters take weeks to sail between New York City and New Peace Village in Kwandong, and when Ben Loy the groom revisits his

home village and Mei Oi the bride arrives in New York, it is clear that the lives and cultures of the two, America and China, have diverged wonderfully during the two decades they have lived in widely separated lands. Pa's tragically flawed act of bringing China Mama to San Francisco Chinatown in 1976, in Chin's drama, *The Year of the Dragon*, also shows how far Chinese American life and culture—including Pa's—have diverged from China's. In Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, the mother writes and mails letters to relatives in China during the 1950s and '60s, but the family in California has no idea whether the letters actually arrive on the other end. And in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* (1981), even when there has been correspondence between Japan and Canada, the letters are hidden from the daughter Naomi, whose life has been affected for thirty years by what she has not been told about her mother's death from the atomic holocaust in Nagasaki.

In the Asian American literature of diaspora the potential exists for these divergences, gaps, and various breakdowns in communication between America and a respective Asian country to be eliminated, a thing of the past. The change in the US immigration laws in 1965 coincided with the establishment of worldwide jet travel. Since that time, Asian Americans have been able to fly back and forth between the US and Asia, not only because of jet travel but also because the middle-class status some achieved. In some cities in India, South Asian American young people taking their summer vacations in their or their parents' homeland are a conspicuous and somewhat amusing sight to their Indian kin, even though these vacationers may feel that they are blending in. Technology since 1965 has brought long-distance telephoning and emailing that eliminate the uncertainties about whether the mail is actually delivered; and CDs and DVDs that make it possible for, say, a Korean American student in New York to be current with the latest pop culture of South Korea and in that sense be quite bicultural as Asian immigrants and their families could not be in earlier times but also as Mexican Americans have been bicultural on the southwestern borderlands of the US. Under

the paradigm of diaspora, we speak thus of “border crossings” and can speak of the development of a cultural “hybridity”—two or more cultures occurring in real time in a single person’s experience.

As you know, this model too deserves to be questioned. As Sau-ling Cynthia Wong first cautioned in 1989, the diasporic model (and, I would add, “hybridity”) reinscribes a troublesome duality, a “dual identity” endemic to the theory and divisive practice of assimilationism, for example of a subject’s being both “Bengali” and “American” at the same time.² Can this be a problem if the US were to become involved in hostilities with India? Once when I asked whether it was plausible for a Korean American person to consider himself or herself “both Korean and American,” a male student quickly replied. He said that he was in a predicament. He had to choose a nationality and could not have both. If he, a Korean American, were to decide upon a Korean nationality, then he would be drafted into the South Korean army. If he were to declare himself an American, then he would lose his South Korean inheritance of his father’s prosperous company, which made eyeglass frames using expensive metals. In another class, just two years ago, I asked this same question, and this time a male Korean American student told the class that he was planning to go to Korea for the New Year’s holiday and was not worried because he had taken care of any problems he might have involving South Korean mandatory military service for young males. In the following January, this student emailed me from Korea to explain

² Sau-ling Cynthia Wong cautioned that the nationalism of the nation-state has not ended no matter that studies and theories about diaspora announce the end of nationalism, in a talk she gave at the conference of the American Studies Association in Toronto, 1989. An expanded version of this talk was later published as “Denationalization Reconsidered: Asian American Cultural Criticism at a Theoretical Crossroads,” *Amerasia Journal*, 21, 1 & 2 (1995b): 1-27. I reiterated Wong’s caution in a talk, “The More Things Change: Paradigm Shifts in Asian American Studies,” for the international conference on “Asia and America at Century’s End,” National University of Singapore, May 1999, an earlier iteration of the present paper (Sumida, 2000).

that he had been arrested at the airport upon his arrival. He was to be handed over for army duty. When he protested that he has lived and acted as an American in America for many years, the officers told him that his frequent travels back to Korea showed that he is a Korean. He was eventually released, but so much for border crossings and this new dual identity in the age of diaspora.

I question the diaspora model for another reason. When Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker* was published in 1995, it could have been a prime example of Asian American diasporic literature. It could have marked the coming of age of a post-1965 generation of mature writers who might be fluent in two cultures as is the hallmark of the literature of diaspora. But *Native Speaker* instead is framed more within the immigration paradigm: from its start, there is an anxiety about a broken marriage and family; an anxiety too about language, about passing for a native speaker of American, while speaking Korean is eschewed; concerns and interests, both underlying and overt, about full citizenship in the US. A diasporic sensibility did appear, however, also in 1995, in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Arranged Marriage*. Not only in how the short stories in this collection alternate between Indian and American settings but also in moments when Divakaruni narrates how "at home" some of her characters can feel in either country and in both at the same time, *Arranged Marriage* is bicultural in a diasporic sense. The same might also be said of Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), again a collection of stories by a South Asian American writer with Bengali and British roots and an American life. Lahiri won a Pulitzer Prize for this book. In May of 2008 a scholar in Tokyo asked me if Lahiri can be considered a "mainstream" American writer, with the possibility that she somehow writes beyond ethnic boundaries or also that the mainstream in America has changed to become more inclusive, more diverse. My response is that Lahiri is today's mainstream. Her audience grew when she wrote the novel *The Namesake* (2004) and scripted (and appeared briefly in) the film based on it. *The Namesake* is the story of an Indian couple who immigrate (from Calcutta) and settle in America,

where they raise a son, all narrated in the sturdy tradition of the intergenerational novel of immigration.³

Another example of the persistence of the immigration paradigm in contemporary American culture, in spite of a supposed prevalence of diasporic experience nowadays, is the film *Crash*, which in 2006 won the Academy Award for Best Motion Picture, beating Ang Lee's brilliant *Brokeback Mountain*. Whereas Lee's film deliberately went against the grain of heterosexist cowboy conventions, *Crash* is deliberately, conventionally multiracial in its makeup of characters and, as such, is based on the immigration model. My teaching partner in a course in Comparative American Ethnic Literature, the writer and filmmaker Sherman Alexie brought *Crash* to our lecture class in early 2006 at the time when the Oscars were to be announced. After seeing it for the first time, I remarked to Alexie that the writer and director, Paul Haggis, represented all racial and ethnic groups on screen—except one. There is no Native American character in *Crash*. Alexie, the famous Native American author whose writings include social criticism and commentary, was surprised that he had not noticed this absence of Native Americans in this film set in Los Angeles, the site of the largest urban concentration of Native Americans in the

³ Still another question about a diaspora paradigm, in this case about its perpetuation of a prevalent issue in an earlier Asian American literature of immigration, is raised again by Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, in "Chinese/Asian American Men in the 1990s" (1995a). Although the post-1965 diaspora of Asians entering the US brought much-improved gender balance and the mass (rather than exceptional) establishment of Asian American families, Asian American literature of the 1990s and early twenty-first century still deploys (usually heteronormative) tropes and conflicts that express anxieties about the reproductive, romantic, sexual continuity of Asian American families. Joining Wong's discussion, I would add that sometimes the reproductive (sexual) anxieties narrated in diasporic works such as Divakaruni's *Arranged Marriage* make Louis Chu's *Eat a Bowl of Tea* and the urgent possibility in it of having a child born in America for the first time in the Wang family's history look entirely playful by comparison. Yet again, the continuing use of sex, sexuality, and love in central conflicts of narratives and dramas is nothing new, and Asian American literature of diaspora may mirror artistic heteronormative conventions, not actual life.

US. I proposed that the reason for the absence of this group is that the multicultural model for the film comes from the immigration model and the idea that “America is a nation of immigrants.” But Native Americans, Native Alaskans, and Native Hawaiians are not immigrants. And so they are excluded.

I turn now to transnationalism as a field of study. One way to think of transnationalism is that it arises in opposition to nationalism. The immigration paradigm I have been speaking about tends to support US nationalism, because the nation is built upon the backs and the labor of immigrants, who themselves call for recognition as nation builders whether they are US citizens or not. At the inception of Asian American Studies, the intellectual and political analyses of the US through the lens of Asian American history led to outcries against the historical exclusion of Asians from entrance or immigration, from full citizenship, and from rights to property. Nowadays this call for inclusion in the nation has been construed as support for US nationalism, and the old regimes of Asian American Studies, including literary studies, come under question, criticism, and attack from newer perspectives such as transnationalism, which counteracts nationalism by demonstrating and arguing how the cultures, economies, power, and very histories of nations have been constructed not out of a nation’s own innate genius but out of interactions among nations and the flows of capital and exploitations of human resources across national borders.

Thus far I have been speaking of Asian American literature and the study of it over the past thirty years as a “many-mouthed bird,” an expression I adopt from Louis Chu in *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (Chu, 1961: 16 and throughout the text), a literature and a field of literary studies that have expanded in variety even though the literature seems still dominated by an immigrant, persistently heteronormative paradigm that favors perpetuation of culture and identity “from generation to generation.” But now I turn to a discussion of a narrowing of the field.

Although my position as a Fulbright Lecturer in 2007-2008

made me responsible mainly for teaching (at Tsuda College and at Tokyo Kōgyō Daigaku or Tokyo Institute of Technology), when applying for the Fulbright grant, along with everyone else I was asked to provide a statement about what I wanted to research during my eleven months in Japan. I titled my proposal, "Reconfiguring Asian/Pacific American Studies." I based this proposal on a certain problem that has been running through Asian/Pacific American Studies and therefore through American Studies as well.

The problem I proposed to study was this: when the field of Asian/Pacific American Studies was born and entered American universities in the 1970s, the field was broad and open, with much new research and teaching not only possible but also needed. In the 1970s, if Asian/Pacific American Studies had boundaries, the edges of the field consisted of topics yet to be conceived and studied by scholars who had still to enter the field. Studies of Hawai'i were vital to the development of Asian/Pacific American Studies in many ways, with a recognition that the combined Asian/Pacific American population constitutes a majority in that state.

By the 1980s some of the newer scholars in the field, anticipating their struggles to be hired and then to earn tenure in American universities, began worrying about the "legitimization" of Asian/Pacific American Studies in the academy. The implication was that although courses in these studies were already established in certain American universities, the field was "illegitimate." It would have to achieve legitimacy by proving to be substantial in research conducted along the lines of current theories of historiography, literature, and culture and in teaching based on theoretical research but not mainly on the empirical, community-oriented research and pedagogies that predominated in the field for the previous ten years. But seeking "legitimacy" for Asian/Pacific American Studies in the 1980s seemed also to require centering the field first on California then on North America, conventionally recognized seats of power. Concurrently, "legitimate" interests and expertise in "theory" centered the

theories of European scholars and mainstream North American scholars who furthered those theories in literary studies throughout America. These European and American literary theorists were the models of academic, intellectual “legitimacy,” and a new generation of Asian American literary studies, in the 1980s, would have to conform.

When Asian/Pacific American Studies became North-American centered, studies of Hawai‘i and the Pacific became increasingly marginalized, isolated, and tokenized. The efforts made in the Association for Asian American Studies to address this problem or variations of this problem were rather futile. The scholars in the field, including colleagues in Hawai‘i and other Pacific island groups, could not come to an agreement about whether and how Pacific Islander Studies may be related to Asian American Studies under a single intellectual, professional, scholarly, and academic category or political coalition and organization. The failure, I argue, has in part to do with the failure even of scholars who identify themselves with Asian/Pacific American Studies to understand or even to recognize the meanings and significance of the indigenous studies that are a basis for Pacific Islander Studies. By 2007, I saw in a book manuscript that the problem was for at least one colleague of ours so severe that it led to the exclusion of Hawaiian topics from the work of that scholar, who is not alone in avoiding the Pacific even while claiming to be writing Asian American Studies of “national” scope today. When I saw this happen, it was like hearing Peter, Paul, and Mary singing over and over again, “This land is your land, this land is my land, from California, to New York Island.” Where is Hawai‘i in this nation? Where is Guam? Where is American Samoa? The Northern Marianas? Wake? Midway?—all of them US “possessions” in one formal way other another. Could the denial of Hawai‘i be a way to disguise or to deny the imperialism that made it and other Pacific islands part of the United States in the first place? In mainstream American Studies as well, why is Hawai‘i not included, perhaps not even mentioned, in the book that stimulated a new interest in the study

of empire, *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (1993), edited by Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease?

So I proposed to Fulbright that I be enabled to go to Japan to study this problem of how “the Pacific” has been dropping out of the field of Asian American Studies.

During the year I had some time and occasion to think about how, after all, the field of Asian American Studies is founded upon histories of immigration, and my comments above are partly based on these reflections. With the opposition between transnationalism and nationalism in mind, in my study I wanted to see how transnationalism, applied to the United States and the Pacific, might affect or reconfigure an Asian/Pacific American Studies that has been based upon US nationalism. I planned to conduct my research on these problems and questions in a practical way. For my graduate seminar in American Studies during the fall term, 2007, at Tsuda College, I ordered two texts that we would read from cover to cover. The first was the March 2007 edition of the *American Quarterly*, the journal of the American Studies Association. This volume begins with the ASA Presidential address of Emory Elliott, “Diversity in the United States and Abroad: What Does It Mean When American Studies Is Transnational?” Elliott articulates what he considers to be key moments of diversity or its possibilities within American history, how American history has sometimes frustrated these opportunities, and a view of how transnationalism may bring global opportunities for productive cultural understandings, although his talk also cautions against an American sense of superiority that may destroy those possibilities (2007).

In the *American Quarterly*, a kind of transnationalist interest is demonstrated by Etsuko Taketani’s “The Cartography of the Black Pacific: James Weldon Johnson’s *Along This Way*.” Professor Taketani’s “Black Pacific” alludes to the “Black Atlantic,” the words of Paul Gilroy in his book about the African diaspora across the Atlantic. Taketani substantiates a history of how African American intellectuals of the first half of the twentieth century

envisioned Japan and, thereby, an America that might be conceptually reshaped by attention to Japan and its accomplishments as well as Japan's faults during the 1930s and the invasion of Manchuria. In her article, Taketani thus defines the Pacific not only as "Black" because of her choice of subjects but also as the ocean consisting of the US on one side and Japan on the other (2007).

The other text we studied in our American Studies seminar in 2007 is *The Japanese Journal of American Studies*, in its English edition for 2007, consisting of *Proceedings: American Studies in Trans-Pacific Perspective*, the articles delivered first as papers in the symposium celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the Japanese Association for American Studies, held at Nanzan University in Nagoya, 2006. The *JJAS* volume was more completely devoted to ideas and arguments about transnationalism "in Trans-Pacific Perspective" than our edition of the *AQ* was.⁴

Yet it seems to me that out of thirteen articles in the *JJAS* volume, only one, by Oscar V. Campomanes, makes a Pacific Islander people central and treats them as subjects rather than as objects of transnational movements outside their control. In the article titled "*La Revolución Filipina* in the Age of Empire," Campomanes' subject is Apolinario Mabini, a political advisor to General Emilio Aguinaldo in the revolution against Spain and then against the United States, 1896-1898 and afterward. Campomanes demonstrates how Mabini argued that the Philippine Revolution was an international, inter-colonial symbol of an anti-imperialist spirit alive and active in Asia and the Pacific, regardless of whether any particular group of Asian/Pacific revolutionaries won or lost politically or militarily. In seeing this active revolution going on in Asia and the Pacific, Mabini further saw a threat of a

⁴ Note that only a third of the total of fifteen articles (including book and exhibition reviews) in the *AQ* centered on transnationalism and in particular its trans-Pacific bearings. In its entirety, however, the *JJAS* volume we studied is devoted to data and ideas about a trans-Pacific American Studies.

“transnational” corporate imperialism already at hand and a recuperative, anti-nationalistic, anti-imperialist “radical transnationalism” to come. Transnationalism, Campomanes argues, is not new. Mabini and his contemporaries in the early twentieth century when a new global empire was on the march had their watchful, scrutinizing eyes on transnationalism and articulated its meanings (Campomanes, 2007).

To me it is ironic how some of the articles of both journals, in the editions we studied, inadvertently manifest the threat Mabini foresaw of a transnational imperialism, or transnationalism put to imperialist uses. Besides Campomanes in the *JJAS* edition, another exception to the predominant points of view from nations in power, in the two journal volumes I am speaking of, is an article by Chih-ming [Andy] Wang, in the *AQ*. “Thinking and Feeling Asian America in Taiwan” is written about and presented in the voice of a subject of a Pacific island, Taiwan, rather than the United States of America and its transnational place of power in the world and in history (Wang, 2007). We may also count as an exception to an imperialist tendency Seong-Ho Lim’s quantitative analysis, in the *JJAS* (2007), of the unpopularity of George W. Bush and the United States in South Korea, “Clashing Perceptions of ‘America’ in Trans-Pacific Relations: The Case of Anti-Americanism in South Korea,” in the *JJAS*. Lim’s report and analysis are a presentation of, by, and about the people discussed, South Koreans. I would say that both Wang’s and Lim’s articles are works of American Studies that demonstrate how the study can be centered on some specific place in Asia and not predominantly on the US and still be American Studies.

Curiously, however, few of the scholars who write the articles in either volume mention Pacific Islanders while discussing the Pacific and trans-Pacific studies. An exception besides Campomanes is Gary Y. Okihiro, but whose comments about two Pacific Islander spokespersons and a reference to Native Hawaiian activists are not central to his paper. The mentions of Pacific Islanders by Okihiro contribute no more to his article than another contributor’s single

reference to the “acquisition of the Philippines” by the United States, with no other explanation, as if there were no such thing as imperialism in how the US took control of the Philippines, of Guam, of Hawai‘i, of Okinawa Okihiro (2007: 80-82).⁵ I am defining “Pacific Islands” in a broad way, as did Japan in the first half of the twentieth century, calling these islands part of the Nanyo, the southern and Pacific Islands of Japan’s imperial dreams and ambitions.⁶ The Nanyo were spread across the seas from Okinawa to Taiwan to the Philippines and then eastward across the Pacific. What is lacking in most of the transnationalist articles we studied are the islands and peoples stretching as widely as the Nanyo even though the *JJAS* papers were from a symposium involving the “Pacific.”

At a symposium held at Rikkyo University on 17 June 2008, Professor Yujin Yaguchi noted that in a recent speech to members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) at a major conference held in Japan, Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda delivered something like a statement of a vision, a somewhat learned one, even, of the “Pacific as an Inland Sea.” The shock to Professor Yaguchi was that in an entire speech about how countries of the Pacific, from the United States and countries of South America at one edge to India at the other, will interact with one another in

⁵ The Australian scholar who contributed to the *JJAS* symposium and journal volume, Ian Tyrrell, writes: “The acquisition of the Philippines . . . paralleled and contributed to a heightened American interest in Asia” (2007: 47). Here transnationalism in the sense of a nineteenth-century attention to the making of an “Atlantic America,” Tyrrell concludes, served to mask and keep attention away from US imperialism in the Pacific (2007: 54-55). But Tyrrell’s bland mention of the Philippines is the only reference to a Pacific island in his article. The fact that he does not discuss, say, the imperialism of the US in taking over Hawai‘i in 1898 is yet further evidence of the hiding of US imperialism in the Pacific as well as evidence of another opportunity lost to present and examine how histories of US encounters inside the Pacific affected America’s destinies.

⁶ My scant knowledge about the concept, mapping, and writings about the Nanyo, considered by imperial Japan to be the southern islands of the Pacific, come from the dissertation by Naoto Sudo (2003).

and across this Inland Sea; yet Mr. Fukuda said not one word about the Pacific Island nations and the Pacific Islanders inside this “sea” (2008). For some reason, the scholarly exercise of thinking about America and the Pacific, about a Pacific-centered conception of America, and about transnationalism typically leads us to leaving the Pacific Islands and Pacific Islanders out, while most arguments about transnationalism are about the US, quite as Mabini warned in speaking of “transnational imperialism.”

We should reflect on how Asian American immigration, Asian American history and culture, and Asian American literature and studies have participated in the nation-building of the US through its projects of empire. Then we should reflect on whether and how Asian American Studies is participating in projects of transnationalism that repeat the ways of imperialism in objectifying and ignoring or erasing peoples who are not seen as having full citizenship in nations. In saying this, I am thinking in part about the situation of Taiwan in the world of nations.

Asian/Pacific American literature and the fields of study, research, and teaching about this literature can add something to transnationalism to give it sight and vision where its eyesight is weak. When the call for proposals for our present conference refers to a dynamic or tension between the ideas of “Asian” in the term, “Asian American,” versus the particularities of specific cultures within the region or the concept called “Asian,” it occurs to me that almost all works of Asian/Pacific American literature are set by their authors in specific places and specific communities and usually in specific times as well. Indeed, about ten years ago some Asian American artists protested that they were being treated as “Asian Americans” or “Asian American culture.” The jazz saxophonist Fred Ho sneered that he is Chinese American, not “Asian,” even though he more than most other artists is dedicated to politically coalitional, multicultural Asian American and Afro-Asian American arts. “Asian American” is thus an analytical category, some responded; it is not a category of “identity.” A parallel debate seems underway now, in part because theories,

concepts, and practices of transnational analysis and critique may prompt artists and scholars of literature, culture, and the arts once again to ask if the dominant trend is to categorize an entire hemisphere under one “Asian” label. The specifics and particularities that are still considered important to literature lead to the creation and study of cultural productions that, like the ones discussed in Professor Wang’s article in the *AQ*, have settings—spatial and temporal boundaries—that are usually not blurred but are explicit and explored. To give one example: Sung Rno sets his first major play, *Cleveland Raining* (1994) on farm lands one hundred miles south of Cleveland, Ohio, in “apocalyptic time” (1997: 228). The postmodernist touch of wrenching our sense of particulars by setting the time in this way is given a strange clarity in the play, however, by a specific basis in the Biblical story of Noah and the Flood, a type for the anti-type apocalypse of the Book of Revelation at the Bible’s end.

Transnationalism too may privilege specific nations even while bringing down their borders, powerful nations especially. Pacific Islander literature (and in a sense I am again including the Taiwan in this category) has recurrently appeared and disappeared in Asian American literary studies on these grounds: Pacific Islander literature is not a literature of immigration; and Pacific islands are not considered to be among the world’s great powers or in need of denationalization. Just so, ideas of Native Hawaiian sovereignty too do not fit paradigms of an Asian American literature of immigration or of diaspora.

I therefore want to devote the rest of my time to literature of the Pacific, specifically to three examples of Native Hawaiian history, culture, poetry, and music. To do this, I first want to note that in her desperate attempt to persuade people of the United States not to allow their nation to take her nation away from her people, in 1898 Queen Lili’uokalani wrote an entire book, *Hawai’i’s Story*, beginning with her own genealogy, her right and legitimacy to rule, and ending with the events where an American foreign minister along with American armed forces helped a group

of American businessmen take her off her throne in 1893, an action that the former President Grover Cleveland had judged to be an illegal act of war on the part of the US. More than half of the thick book, however, tells about the succession of Hawaiian kings in her lifetime, the institution of a constitutional monarchy where the ruler was elected, and something like the everyday life of the royalty and the people. The history of Hawai'i in the nineteenth century is, like any living nation's history in any time, rich with change. One of the Queen's assumptions, difficult for others to grasp now that the monarchy is of the past, is that as long as Hawai'i is a sovereign nation, whatever happens in Hawai'i is Hawaiian. When for instance her brother David Kalākaua, the king who came before her, ordered that the 'Iolani Palace be built for him in European, almost Baroque style, this was not a European palace, nor was it a sign that Hawai'i was becoming more European and less Hawaiian. The palace was and is Hawaiian, just the same as a neo-classical White House is American and is not Greek or Roman, because the White House is in and of the sovereign nation of the United States of America. Christianity became the dominant religion of the Hawaiians not because Christian missionaries forced them into it but because it was the Hawaiian rulers' choice. This way of looking at change is what I mean when I speak of putting Hawai'i and Hawaiians at the center of an idea of what "Hawai'i" is: not Hawaiians as one of many peoples who make up a predominant multicultural society, but an idea of Hawaiian history as being fundamental to the one place in the world that goes by that name, Hawai'i.

The first recording is a combination of Hawaiian song and chant. In it, the performer Charles Ka'upu and the musical group called Hapa blend the "modern" style of Hawaiian melodic music with the ancient chant, in a performance known as "Hole Waimea" and "Waikā." In this performance the musicians show how modern Hawaiian music is beautifully related to the chanting that preceded it in history. The performance demonstrates a cultural agency, the power of the artists to change the cultural production and

expression, in this case by combining the ancient style with the modern. I give you the lyrics, the *mele*, the poetry. But the performance includes more. In this mele, perhaps of the 1780s, warriors of the chief Kamehameha are hard at work making spears for battle, in the Mahiki forest of Waimea on Hawai'i island. The cold, wind-driven rain of the highlands of Waimea is called the Kīpu'upu'u. The spear-makers are chilled by the rain, but they must love the forest absolutely while they work because their survival and success in war depend on the spears that the forest yields them. The words about the 'ōhāwai, the lobelia flower's petals, are metaphors for the sexual parts of Uli, the goddess of the forest called Waikā, and the *koai'e* blossom representing males are together images of sexual acts and a relationship between the spear-makers and the forest that is so intense that it is painful. Among the spear-makers was a squad of runners who carried and delivered messages and items among the outposts of the army. They were called the Kīpu'upu'u after the hard, cold wind and rain of Waimea. Along their route they encountered cliff after cliff along the coast of the island. The song is about war and love, fear, deprivation, discipline and the resulting fullness of heart that these warriors must have in order to confront the enemy. This mele is so deeply embedded in a Native Hawaiian history—of Native Hawaiian people, about Native Hawaiian people, and by Native Hawaiian people—that its allusions escape many of us today:

Waikā

Kū akula 'oe i ka Malanai a ke Kīpu'upu'u	You endure the gentle Malanai wind and harsh Kīpu'upu'u rain
Holu ka maka o ka 'ōhāwai a Uli	Soft are the wet crevices of the goddess Uli
Niniau 'eha ka pua o ke koai'e, 'Eha i ke anu ka nahele a'o Waikā.	Weary and hurt is the koai'e blossom, Hurt by the cold of the forest Waikā.

[Here occurs a chant. No written lyrics and no translation.]

Aloha Waikā ia'u me he ipo la,	Love me Waikā as only a lover
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me he ipo lā	could
Ka maka lena o ke ko‘olau	The yellow-eyed blossom of the ko‘olau
Ka pua i ka nahele o Maluleia	Is the blossom of the woodland of Maluleia
E lei i hele i ke alo o Mo‘olau	Like a garland for the journey to face Mo‘olau
‘Eleu hele ka huaka‘i hele i ka pali loa.	Travel quickly en route to the far cliff.

—recorded by Charles Ka‘upu and Hapa (2004)

While the text of “Waikā” is grave with its themes of war, at the same time the melodic performance of this mele, song, is gorgeous, like a love song. To catch any interplay between love and war, life and death, in “Waikā,” however, a listener today would need not only to hear the song performed but also to learn about its text, its contexts, and its subtexts.

Kamehameha, the chief whom these warriors served, succeeded in the 1790s to unite the chiefdoms of Hawai‘i to establish a kingdom under his rule. A hundred years later his final successor, Lili‘uokalani was deposed not by her people but by American businessmen. A Lady-in-Waiting to the Queen, Ellen Wright Prendergast, composed the following song, performed by Genoa Keawe in the mid-1970s.

Kaulana nā Pua	
Kaulana nā pua a‘o Hawai‘i	Famous are the children of Hawai‘i
Kūpa‘a mahope o ka ‘āina	Ever loyal to the land
Hiki mai ka ‘elele o ka loko ‘ino	When the evil-hearted messenger comes
Palapala ‘ānunu me ka pākaha.	With his greedy document of extortion.
Pane mai Hawai‘i moku o Keawe.	Hawai‘i, land of Keawe answers.
Kōkua nā Hono a‘o Pi‘ilani.	Pi‘ilani’s bays help.
Kāko‘o mai Kaua‘i o Mano	Mano’s Kaua‘i lends support
Pa‘apū me ke one Kākuhihewa.	And so do the sands of Kākuhihewa.
‘A‘ole ‘a‘e kau i ka pūlima	No one will fix a signature

Maluna o ka pepa o ka 'enemi Ho'ohui 'āina kū'ai hewa I ka pono sivila a'o ke kanaka.	To the paper of the enemy With its sin of annexation And sale of native civil rights.
'A'ole mākou a'e minamina I ka pu'ukālā a ke aupuni. Ua lawa mākou i ka pōhaku, I ka 'ai kamaha'o o ka 'āina.	We do not value The government's sums of money. We are satisfied with the stones, Astonishing food of the land.
Mahope mākou o Lili'u-lani A loa'a 'ē ka pono a ka 'āina. Ha'ina 'ia mai ana ka puana Ka po'e i aloha i ka 'āina.	We back Lili'uokalani Who has won the rights of the land. Tell the story Of the people who love their land.

—written by Ellen Wright Prendergast, a Lady of the Court of Queen Lili'uokalani in 1893 (1970).

—when all is taken away from us, we will eat the stones, the astonishing food of the land. This is one of the deepest expressions of the value known as “aloha 'āina,” love of the land, which means both that we love the land and take care of it and that the land loves us and takes care of us in return. This song at the tumultuous time of the overthrow of the Queen was known as “Mele 'Ai Pōhaku,” “The Stone-eating Song,” and “Mele Aloha 'Āina,” or “The Patriot's Song.” The song was considered sacred and not to be danced in a hula. When Genoa Keawe performed it fifty or sixty years later, as you heard, she sang it to people like myself who were ignorant of what the song meant. Only sixty years after the US took over Hawai'i, we Locals did not know the Hawaiian language. We thought “Kaulana nā Pua” was a drinking song, a party song. Genoa Keawe smiled and smiled when she sang, laughing at us for our ignorance.

Now I bid you farewell with one of the most famous Native Hawaiian mele, this one composed by Lili'uokalani herself. She is one of the greatest composers in the history of Hawai'i, and this song is called “Aloha 'Oe.”

Aloha 'Oe

Ha‘aheo ‘ē ka ua i nā pāli Ke nihi a‘ela i ka nahele E uhai ana paha i ka liko Pua ‘āhihi lehua o uka.	Proudly the rain on the cliffs Creeps into the forest Seeking the buds And miniature <i>lehua</i> flowers of the uplands.
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Aloha ‘oe, aloha ‘oe, E ke onaona noho i ka lipo. One fond embrace, a ho‘i a‘e au A hui hou aku.	Farewell to you, farewell to you, O fragrance in the blue depths. One fond embrace and I leave To meet again.
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‘O ka hali‘a aloha ka i hiki mai Ke hone a‘e nei i ku‘u manawa. ‘O ‘oe nō ka‘u ipo aloha A loko e hana nei.	Sweet memories come Sound softly in my heart. You are my beloved sweetheart Felt within.
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Maopopo ku‘u ‘ike i ka nani Nā pua rose o Mauna-wili. I laila ho‘ohie nā manu, Miki‘ala i ka nani o ia pua.	I understand the beauty Of rose blossoms at Mauna-wili. There the birds delight, Alert the beauty of this flower.
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—written by Lili‘uokalani in 1877 (1970).

While “Aloha ‘Oe” was on its way to becoming world famous and “Kaulana nā Pua” raised shouts of protest over the US takeover of Hawai‘i, these Native Hawaiian expressions were already falling through cracks; they were mistaken for something other. In the case of “Aloha ‘Oe,” Lili‘uokalani was inspired not so much by tender feelings of farewell, but by actually seeing two lovers make love then part in a mountain forest after a romantic rendezvous. In the Hawaiian idioms for love and lovemaking, the rain and the forest at the beginning of the song are sexual metaphors. It is in Hawaiian a romantic, explicitly sexual love song. When Lili‘uokalani heard it played as a song of farewell at a missionary’s funeral, “She was shocked,” write Samuel H. Elbert and Noelani Mahoe, compilers of *Nā Mele o Hawai‘i Nei: 101 Hawaiian Songs* (1970: 35), the source for the lyrics I present in this paper.

When I was in Taiwan last May, I heard someone say that although Taiwan slips in and out of the attention of the United

States these days, maybe it's better this way, because Taiwan can govern and live as the people debate and choose. My talk ends with consideration of Hawai'i just so that I can make the point that Hawai'i too slips in and out of American consciousness and the willingness of scholars of Asian American Studies to take Hawai'i seriously. At this moment in history, however, Hawai'i is on Americans' minds because Barack Obama was born and raised there. Imagine. He and I are alike, children of the sands of Hawai'i. Not surprisingly, during his Presidential campaign people we might call "ordinary Joes" of the nation asked dubiously if Barack were really eligible to run for President, when he "wasn't born in America." Now imagine how Native Hawaiians might feel and think if they were to learn that a majority of Americans do not know or believe that Hawai'i is a state. I look forward to learning whether, what, and how with his now vast experience and his intellect Barack Obama may think about Asian/Pacific American Studies, immigration, diaspora, transnationalism, and sovereignty in Hawai'i. He is to be the first President of the United States who might very well be able to meet us—you and me—and be ready by experience and study to understand what we talk about when it comes to Asian/Pacific American literature and studies. I hope to see you there at the White House one day.

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移民、離散、跨國主義與原住民： 二十世紀亞太美國文學的多種樣貌

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摘 要

自從一九八一年起，我在大學裡教授亞／太美國文學，至今已有二十幾年了。這篇文章的想法大多來自於課堂上的經驗。在這篇文章裡，我運用移民、離散與本土性三個批評典範來分析亞／太美國文學過去四十年的發展。我指出，在美國以及亞美文學裡，離散範式並未完全取代移民範式，儘管歷史證據顯示移民範式的確已逐漸淡出亞美文學研究的核心。我亦指出（以夏威夷為代表的）本土性典範對亞美文學發展的重要性，以及這個範式如何受到移民與離散兩個範式的影響。而近年來的跨國主義浪潮不只改變了亞／太美國文學的樣貌，更多本土性想像造成衝擊。在文章裡，我會在適當之處談及不同的亞／太美國文學作品。這不只是為了凸顯亞／太美國文學的多種面貌，同時也是為了指出這多種多樣的風貌，對進入二十一世紀的我們仍將具有重要的批判意義。

關鍵詞：亞／太美國文學、移民、離散、跨國主義、本土性