Beats and Bandits

Lawson Fusao Inada and the Asian American Movement

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DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195332735.003.0004

Abstract and Keywords
This chapter presents a spectrum of poetic responses to American Orientalism by Asian American poets in the early years of the ethnic nationalist movement. Largely forgotten poets like David Hsin-Fu Wand played native informant to both Pound and Snyder, but the Orient was a prisonhouse for activist poet Lawson Fusao Inada, who turned instead to African American and Chicano artistic influences. In reading the differing transpacific and American alliances imagined by Asian American artists, this chapter argues that a literary legacy of Orientalism exerted significant pressure on the formation of Asian American poetry.

Keywords: Lawson Fusao Inada, Haiku, Ethnic nationalism, Japanese internment, Jazz
The astonishing career of David Hsin-Fu Wand illustrates the peculiar burden of American Orientalism for Asian American poetry. Wand is best known—if he is known at all—for editing one of the first anthologies of Asian American literature, *Asian-American Heritage* (1974), but his strange career reveals the changing exigencies of avant-garde American poetry. We can begin to see the curiosity of his position in Wand's note to *Asian-American Heritage*:

Since 1956 I have published original poems and translations in international magazines and anthologies under the nom-de-plume of David Rafael Wang. My role as a poet has been kept distinct from my role as a professor, and the two identities coexist in a symbiotic relationship much as Dr. Haggard and Mr. Jive. As David Hsin-Fu Wand I am chiefly a critic and teacher of English and comparative literature, while as David Rafael Wang I am a poet, found by most of my friends to be rather anti-intellectual in my poetry. (173)

The janus face of David Hsin-Fu Wand and David Rafael Wang provided Wand with a singular freedom, but his critical detachment from his poetic persona made him suspect, both as poet and critic. This divided self demonstrates a shifting cultural climate, in which a single bardic voice became increasingly difficult to sustain: Wand's disparate poetic and scholarly careers reveal the perils of a transition between modernist Orientalism and minority poetics.
In another biographical sketch, Wand describes David Rafael Wang as a “direct descendant of Wang Wei (701–761), major Tang Dynasty poet and painter”: David Rafael Wang “wandered off to the United States at 17. In 1964 he was reborn in Los Angeles as an American citizen.”¹ Between arriving in the United States at seventeen and becoming a naturalized citizen in California, Wand attended Dartmouth College and became an ardent disciple of Ezra Pound, visiting him from 1955 to 1957 at St. Elizabeths Hospital in Washington, D. C., where Pound was committed for a charge of treason. Wand went on to transform himself into a Beat and finally a scholar of Asian American literature. In “The Strange Progress of David Hsin-Fu Wand,” the only essay on the subject, Hugh Witemeyer characterizes the erratic shifts of Wand’s career: “His politics passed from a neo-fascist ideology of racial purity and male chauvinism in the mid-1950s through the radical liberationism of the later 1960s to a liberal advocacy of minority and Third-world literatures during the 1970s” (191). Wand was a neo-fascist because he blindly followed Pound, imbibing the worst of his teachings, and he became radicalized in the 1960s because he found a new master in Snyder. His political vacillations thus followed the progress of American Orientalism: Pound discovered an ideal fascist civilization in Confucian China, and in Eastern spirituality Snyder found a mode through which to access his American dreams. Wand’s odd and seemingly incoherent trajectory traces the development of American avant-garde poetry, from Orientalist to Asian American.²
Witemeyer reads the progress of Wand's poetry, “from the first, tentative utterances in English to a confident, versatile, and wholly American speech” (“Strange Progress” 191) and Warren French, who mentions Wang in *The San Francisco Poetry Renaissance*, notes his “transition from Oriental politeness to Western frankness” (79). Through Wand's exceptional linguistic abilities, he produced studied imitations of his mentors. Just as he adopted the most extreme of each of their political stances—becoming, for example, a Hitler sympathizer in the presence of Pound—his poetry, too, was chained to both the form and content of the work of Pound and Snyder, whether in planning a cycle of cantos or copying intimate familial scenes from Snyder's verse. His poetic pastiches were akin to the mask of David Rafael Wang—neither revealed anything about David Hsin-Fu Wand. Pound's greatest lines revealed the “ego scriptor cantilenae” and Snyder risked didacticism to present his values, but in holding fast to the fiction of David Rafael Wang, Wand kept himself at an unknowable distance.

The only certainty of this cipher was his Asianness. Witemeyer discusses the significance of his name, “Hsin,” a rare ideogram whose beauty captivated Pound; Pound cited this character, in slightly modified form, in Canto 96. Pound read Wand's poetry and chuckled over Wand's zeal in parroting his views, but it was finally Wand as a “Chinese character” in the Fenollosan sense that interested Pound, a fact which Wand seemed to understand in swearing to Pound in a letter that “as a Chinese I feel myself forever in your debt...I proclaim you the maestro of modern Chinese literature and consider your wisdom to have surpassed that of Confucius.” And later, for Snyder, Wand played a fellow Zen lunatic, as evidenced in his “Quartet for Gary Snyder,” which closes with a sketch of Snyder's “rusty/hair and/iron-/hard nature.” French notes that Wand was the only contributor of “Oriental origin” to the *Beatitude Anthology*, and in discussing Wand's role in the San Francisco Renaissance, French concludes, “His career offers, however, an upbeat study not only of the assimilation of an artist from another culture into the American avant-garde (p. 93) but also of the role of the poetry renaissance in such a transformation” (83). As Oriental informant, Wand secured a foothold in the poetic arenas of both high modernism and the Beats.
With the waning of the San Francisco Renaissance, Wand, “like a number of others,” as French puts it, “spent his time in the 1960s acquiring a doctorate in comparative literature from the University of Southern California” (82). In 1971, Wand completed his dissertation, “Cathay Revisited: The Chinese Tradition in the Poetry of Ezra Pound and Gary Snyder,” which brought together his tutelage under his two masters. Wand’s dissertation argues that American modernists introduced the Chinese poetic tradition to Western audiences, and in analyzing Pound and Snyder as evidence of this claim, his readings demonstrate that their poems are absolutely and faithfully Chinese in sensibility. Perhaps most intriguing, however, are his brief admissions of his relationships with Pound and Snyder: he mentions David Rafael Wang’s conversations with Pound in a footnote (64), and he cites a poem by Wang in the conclusion—all the while without revealing that Wang is his “nom-de-plume.” This bizarre self-promotion reappears in his articles on Asian American poetry, as in his 1973 “The Use of Native Imagery by Chinese Poets Writing in English,” in which he cites David Rafael Wang as “the most widely published of the Chinese poets in America” (75).

Wand’s Oriental postures held few charms for an emerging coalition of Asian American artists and scholars. Having presented himself as a fascist sympathizer to appease Pound, Wand was then reborn into the San Francisco Renaissance, but his third transition never quite took. Witemeyer notes that Wand was “at odds” with the radical minority movement: Witemeyer cites the obituary of Wand written by Joseph Bruchac, Wand’s publisher: “There were many Asian-American writers who were not fond of David….Some felt, perhaps, that his scholarship and his approaches to Asian-American literature smacked of a sort of cultural imperialism” (“Strange Progress” 206). In making himself over yet again to fit this latest standard, he did not have recourse to the mask of David Rafael Wang; he was stuck being David Hsin-Fu Wand. Though he had excelled at locating the cutting edge of poetic movements, Wand could not do the same with Asian American poetry.
Wand's own assessment of David Rafael Wang's poetry in his 1978 article "The Chinese-American Literary Scene" reveals the reasons for his inability to fit himself into the new movement: reading five different poets including Wang, he concludes that "all five poets are highly Chinese in their sensibility, despite their choice to write in English rather than Chinese" (141). Wand traded on his Chineseness in his poetry and, by extension, he believed that Asian American poetry ought to do the same. In his 1973 essay on Chinese American poetry, Wand reproduces Fenollosa's argument for the deep accord between Chinese and American poetry by citing the "accidental similarity in the syntaxes of the two (p.94) languages—both English and Chinese having the 'natural' word order" ("The Use of Native Imagery" 73). Wand's repetition of American Orientalist rationale imported a long-standing transpacific fantasy into a discussion of Chinese American poetry. Schooled by Pound and Snyder in the American avant-garde, Wand could not imagine an Asian American avant-garde that did not subscribe to a special valorization of the Orient. As a poet, Wand attained some success through flattering mimicry, but his foray into scholarship—his attempt to catch the next wave—only unmasked this strategy. Indeed, as his scholarly career progressed, he paraded the distinction between Wand and Wang as evidence of his successes in two worlds, never realizing that this doubleness undermined both.
Wand's splitting of poet from scholar was ultimately a strategy to install David Rafael Wang as the next American poet in the genealogy from Pound to Snyder. Yet it was precisely the aspect he capitalized on—his Oriental quality—which vitiated his candidacy for the avant-garde. Avant-garde poetic movements proceed alongside their theorizations, but Wand and Wang allied themselves to two different movements: in order to attach himself to what he perceived as a vogue for minority literature, the scholar aligned himself with the Asian American movement; but the poet belonged to an American Orientalist tradition which clung to the vestiges of the American bard. Wand's schizophrenic selves produced a scholarly persona as untenable as his verse, and the two faces of David Hsin-Fu Wand and David Rafael Wang finally appear as a strange and unwanted luxury. Perhaps the most mysterious aspect of Wand's life was the circumstance of his death: he fell from the eleventh floor of the Barbizon Hotel in New York City while attending a meeting of the Modern Language Association's Commission on Minority Groups. What caused this fall remains unknown, but the stunning shift from neo-fascist poet to radical critic in Wand's life suggests a dangerously unstable character whose vacillations ultimately could not be sustained.
David Hsin-Fu Wand aped the Orientalist gestures of Pound and Snyder without understanding their aims: they were not after Asiatic sensibilities—instead, they used the Orient as a conduit to a deeper cultural figuration. To write poetry as Wang and criticism as Wand thus violated the central tenet of the poet-pedagogue, who binds poetry to a cultural creation. To write one kind of paradise and live another was simply unthinkable to Pound, who paid a heavy price for his beliefs, and to Snyder, who was willing to sacrifice poetry for the “real work.” Hence, though Wand imagined himself continuing their legacy, he debilitated his own efforts by championing a Chinese lineage and not an American one. The poets who forged a new American culture were the leaders of a panethnic coalition who aligned their poetry with their politics in the conviction that an aesthetic revolution could mean a cultural one; Asian American literary expression is, as Lisa Lowe puts it, “an aesthetic product that cannot repress the material inequalities of its conditions of production” (p.95). It was thus the poets of the ethnic nationalist movement who understood the aims of the American avant-garde and crafted their own version of it for a new era. It may seem like a paradox that the ethnic nationalists were in some ways closer to the cultural ambassadors of American Orientalism than Wand, an apologist for their most damaging beliefs, but it was the Asian American movement which created a new American culture.
The poets of the Asian American movement were emphatically anti-Orientalist; in fact, the movement was itself largely defined against a history of Orientalism. In creating their new vision of America, the leaders of the ethnic nationalist movement found themselves on often hostile terrain—and they were ready to wage war. They fashioned their panethnic union in response to American fantasies of a distant Orient and anti-Asian policies in America; against transpacific bridges, they erected cultural bridges within the United States. The kinds of coalitions they made were crucially shaped by an American Orientalist past, and nowhere was this pressure more evident than in their poetry. Asian American poets faced a uniquely perplexing legacy: they were heirs to an avant-garde shot through with Orientalism. Though they could and did forcibly decry fantasies of the Orient, their avant-garde poetics were themselves a part of an American revolutionary lineage. This chapter examines the activist formation of Asian American literature, and it reads both a critical disjunction and significant continuity between counterculture forms and Asian American aesthetic productions. In order to explore the range of Asian American cultural alliances, I pay particular attention to the poetics of Lawson Fusao Inada, who led the drive to install an alternate tradition by refashioning a Beat legacy into a new cultural creation.

Creating Asian America

Wand's introduction to his anthology *Asian-American Heritage* opens by mentioning a 1971 conference panel "devoted to the 'problems and potential for research in Asian-American Studies'":

> During a question-and-answer period following a panel discussion in which eight authorities participated, it was brought up that there is a prevalent belief that Asian-Americans are too busy chasing commercial success to engage in art and literature. While this belief may be an oversimplification, it must be admitted that there is, in the Asian-American literary community, no spokesman of the stature of Eldridge Cleaver, James Baldwin, or Imamu [sic] Baraka (better known to whites as LeRoi Jones). (1)
Between the cited African American luminaries and the whites mentioned in parentheses lies a missing Asian American cultural leadership. Wand goes on to say that “the two Asian-American writers best known to the white world are probably Dr. S.I. Hayakawa and Dr. Lin Yutang,” although “they are rejected as representatives of the Asian-American conscience by Chinese-Americans of the postwar generations and by nisei” (1). For Wand, this disjunction between white recognition and rejection by Asian Americans meant a leadership vacuum, but the leaders of the Asian American movement rose from the ranks of the American-born Chinese and Japanese that Wand discounts as “militants, such as Frank Chin and Lawson Inada” (4). In his article “The Chinese-American Literary Scene,” Wand surveyed five poets (including himself) along with “a lone playwright,” Frank Chin. Wand concluded that “like the five Chinese-American poets, Frank Chin shows a sense of humor;” “but unlike the Chinese-American poets, he lacks their syncretism and equanimity. His humor is mordant and bitter. In this respect, he might be more American than Chinese” (144). This “mordant and bitter” humor assumed the leadership of a new American culture which radicalized a community and continues to drive theorizations of Asian American literature.
In 1974, the same year of *Asian-American Heritage*’s publication, Chin and Inada, along with Jeffrey Paul Chan and Shawn Wong, edited their own Asian American anthology, *Aiiiiiiieee!*. 10 Wand's introduction asked “What is an Asian-American?” (2), but *Aiiiiiiieee!* simply claimed its members, stating in the preface that “our anthology is exclusively Asian-American. That means Filipino-, Chinese-, and Japanese-Americans, Americans born and raised” (vii), and presented a fully formed culture: “Asian America, so long ignored and forcibly excluded from creative participation in American culture, is wounded, sad, angry, swearing, and wondering, and this is his AIIIEEEE!!! It is more than a whine, shout, or scream. It is fifty years of our whole voice” (viii). The ethnic nationalists never asked Wand’s question about Asian American identity because they insisted upon their status as “Americans born and raised.” 11 *Aiiiiiiieee!*’s preface states that “Chinese- and Japanese-Americans have been separated by geography, culture, and history from China and Japan for seven and four generations respectively” (vii), and their focus on American experience excluded voices prominently featured in Wand’s *Asian-American Heritage*.

The earliest literature Wand’s anthology presents is that of Sadakichi Hartmann, a striking turn-of-the-century figure. In *Quiet Fire*, a historical anthology of Asian American poetry, Juliana Chang introduces this character:

> Asian American poetry dates as far back as the 1890s, with the publication of poems by Sadakichi Hartmann, considered among the first to write Symbolist poetry in English, and Yone Noguchi, whose work interested his well-known contemporaries Willa *Cather*, Thomas Hardy, and George Meredith. Hartmann served as secretary to Walt Whitman, and had the dubious distinction of being referred to by Whitman once as “that damn Japanee.” (xvi)

Noguchi traveled in elite literary circles, and Hartmann enjoyed an especially precious reputation, which Kenneth Rexroth discusses in *American Poetry in the Twentieth Century*: 
At the beginning of the century the most outstanding personality was Sadakichi Hartmann. Half German, half Japanese, he came to America in late adolescence and almost immediately was writing poems, translating from French and German, and giving lectures on the European avant-garde of the day, and generally playing the role of Atlantic bridge. (28)

Hartmann presents an extraordinary example of unconstrained literary exploits, and his work demonstrates an array of influences as varied as Pound's. Rexroth goes on to mention Pound, who, according to Rexroth “has said that if he hadn't been himself, the next best thing would be to have been Sadakichi” (29).12

Aiieeeee! 's preface, however, dispenses with Noguchi and Hartmann:

The tradition of Japanese-American verse as being quaint and foreign in English, established by Yone Noguchi and Sadakichi Hartman [sic], momentarily influenced American writing with the quaintness of the Orient but said nothing about Asian America, because, in fact, these writers weren’t Asian-Americans but Americanized Asians. (xv)
The category of “Americanized Asians” was cast on the lowest echelons of *Aiieeeeee!’s* cultural order; the activists defined Asian American experience as distinct from the “geography, culture, and history” of Asia, and the “quaint and foreign” writers who mistakenly presented such elements were paradoxically denounced as “Americanized Asians.”13 *Aiieeeeee!* simultaneously valorized American experience and denounced “the quaintness of the Orient” as a fatal Americanization. The ethnic nationalist formation thus split American experience from American Orientalism, demonstrating a peculiar double bind for Asians in the United States: this kind of Americanization meant a betrayal of their American experience. Asian American literature was born out of this political maneuver: in the absence of a single common experience, as in the case of African American culture, or a common language, as in the Latino case, a political ideology of resistance held the formation together. In *Asian American Panethnicity*, Yen Le Espiritu explains that “their very existence presupposes some amount of consensus” (16),14 and it was in the service of this consensus that the editors of *Aiieeeeee!* made decisive cuts which have been the source of continuing criticism.15

(p.98) In fact, we may register the force of the activist consensus in the experience of Sadakichi Hartmann himself. As Harry Lawton and George Knox write in the introduction to *White Chrysanthemums*, a collection of Hartmann's *bon mots*, Hartmann's literary celebrity came to an abrupt end: “Then came Pearl Harbor. Hartmann immediately fell under a cloud of suspicion because of his ancestry, although he had been a naturalized citizen since 1894” (xv). The luxury of being Sadakichi Hartmann did not last; Hartmann's singular experience suddenly aligned itself with the larger condition of the Japanese in the United States. Once his bohemian freedom is revoked, Hartmann becomes legible as an Asian American—a fact which reveals the potent formulation of the ethnic nationalist movement, which yoked Asian American literature to anti-Asian experience in the United States.
The editors of *Aiiieeeee!* had specific anti-Asian experiences in mind: they focused on Chinese exclusion and Japanese internment. In fact, though the anthology includes Filipino American literature, the second paragraph of the preface explains that “Filipino America differs greatly from Chinese and Japanese America in its history, the continuity of culture between the Philippines and America, and the influence of western European and American culture on the Philippines. The difference is definable only in its own terms, and therefore must be discussed separately” (vii). *Aiiieeeee!*’s prefatory material thus includes a separate “Introduction to Filipino-American Literature,” penned by Oscar Peñaranda, Serafin Syquia, and Sam Tagatac which notably proclaims, “We cannot write a literary background because there isn’t any...the only published writing we can speak of that is worthy of note are those writings of Filipinos in the Philippines about the Philippines” (xlix), and presents in large part the history of imperialism in the Philippines. In *Aiiieeeee!*’s competing introductions, we encounter both an exhortation to speak with a “whole voice” and an exigency regarding cultural specificity. The separation of the Filipino case reveals the significance of differing transpacific relationships: United States and European imperial incursions into the Philippines impinge upon the experience of Filipinos in the United States. Hence, though Chin et al. emphasize the multiple generations and deep roots of Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans within the United States, the movement’s defining element of Asian exclusion requires significant attention to specific histories of United States-Asian relations. Though Asian American writers were prohibited from peddling in the “geography, culture, and history” of Asia, they had to attend to shifting—and ever-deepening—American interests in Asia which would condition their American experiences.
We may measure the significance of the activist creation in the rapid growth of Asian American literature. In 1991, the four editors regrouped to issue an updated version titled *The Big Aiiieeeee!* The revised anthology in fact narrowed the focus of the earlier version, this time devoting its (p.99) pages solely to Chinese American and Japanese American literature and experience, yet its contents boasted a three-fold increase in length. The new introduction held fast to their original claims: “We begin another year angry! Another decade, and another Chinese American ventriloquizing the same old white Christian fantasy” (xi). In the early 1990s, *The Big Aiiieeeee!* underscored the contours of Asian America as it was created in the late 1960s; and though the second version contracted its conceptual boundaries, it presented a much wider generic range. The strength of their paradigm lies in this ability to present a “whole voice” even as it operates on a principle of exclusion; Chin et al. created a coherent and lasting movement by combating an enemy which showed no signs of weakening: “the same old white Christian fantasy.”

Yet though the rival remained consistent, individual Asian American texts were accountable to their specific histories in order to present their own cries of protest. Daniel Y. Kim notes the significance of the activist achievement in *Writing Manhood in Black and Yellow*: “I believe it is crucial to acknowledge the debt that current Asian American literary and cultural critics owe to the legacy of Frank Chin” (127). Kim specifies this debt as a “pressure to historicize”:

Nearly all scholarly studies of Asian American literature thus begin by sketching out a specifically Asian American cultural history—a history that begins with the influx of Chinese immigrant labor in the nineteenth century, tracks the legislative and judicial exclusions that have impeded the access of various Asian groups to full United States citizenship, examines the impact of Asian immigrant labor, takes up the internment of Japanese Americans in World War II, explores the impact of various United States imperial endeavors in Asia on immigration patterns, and concludes with the increasingly heterogeneous and transnational quality of the Asian population in the United States in the wake of the immigration reforms of 1965. (205)
The Asian American movement registered the deeply felt repercussions of transpacific contact for their two banner cases, and the editors of *Aiiieee*! presented their inability to account for Filipino American experience as evidence of their commitment to firsthand experience. The later waves of Asian migration to the United States cited above presented further differences: Lisa Lowe explains that

the post-1965 Asian immigrant displacement differs from that of earlier migrations from China and Japan, for it embodies the displacement from Asian societies in the aftermath of war and colonialism to a United States with whose sense of national identity the immigrants are in contradiction precisely because of that history. (16)

*We may in fact see the Filipino American experience as an important precursor to these later repercussions of bellicose American interventions in the Pacific. Though the editors of *Aiiieee*! separated and ultimately excised Filipino American literature from their pages—despite the fact that the influx of Filipinos to the United States overlapped temporally and spatially with Chinese and Japanese exclusion—in reading Asian American literature in transpacific contexts we continue to adhere to the dictates of the ethnic nationalist formation, which emphasized American experience shaped by specific transpacific histories.*
The opening anecdote of Wand's introduction to *Asian-American Heritage* took assimilation as its first premise—the Asian Americans “busy chasing commercial success”—while the furious cry of “Aiieeeee!” marked its defiance and insisted upon a racialized identity as “yellows” which registered the hard limits of an assimilation process understood to be a false and ultimately doomed aspiration for whiteness. *The Big Aiieeeeee!* presented a concerted effort to excavate an Asian American literary past, and if we go back over its contents, we discover piece after piece which expresses confinement. This emphasis on coercive forces emphatically separated the Asian American movement from the discourse of ethnicity, which sketches a trajectory from ethnic difference to Americanization. The texts which have emerged as most representative of the Asian American project of cultural reclamation are the Chinese poems carved into the walls of the Angel Island detention center and the poetry of Japanese internment. The literary evidence of Chinese exclusion set the terms for Asian American literature, and the later trauma of Japanese internment presented terrible proof of the pattern. The creation of Asian America was driven by the constant threat of exclusion and removal, and the innovation of Asian American literature was to transform this source into a vital wellspring of aesthetic expression.

Dharma Trouble
The persecution of Japanese in the United States became a flash point for Asian American literature because of the spectacular excesses of anti-Japanese policy. In its brutal demonstration of deassimilation, Japanese internment has come to stand as a key event for the literary project of the Asian American movement because it exposes the lie of Americanization. Chinese Americans made significant social gains in the World War II era—citing the relationship between Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans, Aiieeeee!’s preface notes in its first paragraph “the popularization of their hatred for each other” (vii)—but one of the central aims of the Asian American movement was to transform Japanese internment into an Asian American tragedy: if Asian American literature was a response to anti-Asian sentiment, then the literature of internment irrefutably (p.101) belonged to Asian America. The literary expressions of Japanese Americans in particular provide a dramatic demonstration of the gulf that separates Asian American experience from American Orientalism: Japanese culture became a source of suspicion for Japanese Americans—and, by extension, Asian America—yet the practices that endangered the minority population acquired an avant-garde cachet when they were adopted by the counterculture. The conundrum of Japanese culture in the United States—both dangerously foreign and a chic pose—presented unique constraints for Asian American artists.

The Japanese were corralled into camps because of their irredeemable otherness, but within the camps, liberal policies of Americanization prevailed; the paradox of the camps is that they were a part of FDR’s New Deal. The contradictory pairing of enforced ethnic enclave and a program of assimilation succeeded in making practices identifiable as Japanese both markers of identity and objects of derision. Buddhism provides a pointed example of a practice that posed serious risks for Japanese Americans in the World War II era. Alarmist texts like Alan Hynd's Betrayal from the East: The Inside Story of Japanese Spies in America (1943) expressed racist fears of Japanese religious practice:
The Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines were frequently the locations of secret meetings in the hours before dawn when engineers known to have been engaged in the construction of scale models of bridges, water-supply systems, naval bases and other such strategic locations unquestionably taught sabotage tactics to those in attendance. (155)

After Pearl Harbor, Buddhist priests were in the first group rounded up and incarcerated, and the Nazi resignification of the Buddhist symbol of the swastika dramatically symbolizes the grave liability of being a Buddhist in this era. As a result of such pressures, Japanese American Buddhism transformed in the camps. Renamed the Buddhist Church of America (BCA) in 1944, religious services were restructured to follow Christian models; these reforms drawn up in Topaz advocated the use of Judeo-Christian terminology, created a new mandate to conduct services in English, and fostered the growth of the YMBA and YWBA.

Representations of Japanese American Buddhism in the postwar era bear the scars of this suspicion. We can see the vexed status of Buddhism in two of the most widely read fictional accounts of internment: John Okada’s No-No Boy devotes a chapter to the “mumbo-jumbo” of a Buddhist funeral service which transforms the protagonist’s father, already a weak man, into an unsympathetic character whose Buddhism is only a simpering pose; similarly, Hisaye Yamamoto’s short story about internment, “The Legend of Miss Sasagawara,” sketches a portrait of an otherworldly Buddhist priest who stifles and ultimately destroys his daughter because he simply does not notice the outrage of the camps. The Buddhist priest’s religious fulfillment in the debased condition of internment debilitates his daughter, who refuses to adjust to camp life and goes mad as a result. The stigma attached to Buddhism kept Asian American Buddhist communities small, and though the overhaul of immigration legislation in 1965 brought a range of Buddhisms from different parts of Asia, by the end of the twentieth century, Japanese American Buddhism found itself hemmed in on two fronts because of its unique status as “neither convert or immigrant.”
The domestication and rejection of Buddhism in the camps stand in dramatic contrast to Zen’s heady rise. A decade later, the religion that had threatened the civic status of Japanese Americans entranced the counterculture. Buddhism, and Zen in particular, provided a set of practices for the counterculture, and though they were widely criticized as facile gestures, it was precisely their ease and quick familiarity that made them useful signs for the movement. D. T. Suzuki’s Zen was a Japanese export; it produced a convert community unencumbered by the Buddhism that had endangered Japanese Americans in wartime America. The attempts to assimilate Buddhism in the camps demonstrate one aspect of an effort to fold Asian practices into an American context, yet such modifications made some Buddhism unattractive to Zen lunatics. Though they too filled the empty center of Zen with homegrown transcendental aspirations, counterculture artists invested Zen with the power to alienate them from mainstream America while at the same time attaining a deeper belonging to America. In *The Dharma Bums*, Kerouac notes Japhy Ryder’s (Gary Snyder) distaste for a Chinese American Buddhism Japhy regards as overly domesticated:

> Across the street was the new Buddhist temple some young Chamber of Commerce Chinatown Chinese were trying to build, by themselves, one night I’d come by there and, drunk, pitched in with them with a wheelbarrow hauling sand from outside in, they were young Sinclair Lewis idealistic forward-looking kids who lived in nice homes but put on jeans to come down and work on the church, like you might expect in some midwest town some midwest kids with a bright-faced Richard Nixon leader, the prairie all around. Here in the heart of the tremendously sophisticated little city called San Francisco Chinatown they were doing the same thing but their church was the church of Buddha. Strangely Japhy wasn’t interested in the Buddhism of San Francisco Chinatown because it was traditional Buddhism, not the Zen intellectual artistic Buddhism he loved—but I was trying to make him see that everything was the same. (115)
This Chinatown instance transforms the hipster’s exotic landscape into the American heartland and astonishingly creates a Chinese American Nixon. Snyder, by contrast, championed an alliance between East and West that many Asian Americans preferred to sever.

Yet Kerouac’s lesson to Japhy that “everything was the same” couldn’t be sustained in his own assessment of Asian American participation in the counterculture. In Kerouac’s *Big Sur*, an account of a season of solitude in Big Sur in 1960, he introduces two minor characters: “our Georges and Arthurs” (162), two Asian American Beats who were part of the San Francisco scene. George Baso is Albert Saijo, a Japanese American poet who accompanied Kerouac and Lew Welch on a road trip immortalized in a small collection of haiku by Kerouac, Welch, and Saijo called *Trip Trap*—a riff on “Riprap” which invokes Snyder, far away in Japan, as a kind of guiding spirit for their journey. In *Big Sur*, Kerouac briefly describes the 1959 drive “with George Baso the little Japanese Zen master hepcat sitting crosslegged on the back mattress of Dave’s [Lew’s] jeepster” (55). Arthur Ma was Victor Wong, a Chinese American painter, journalist, and actor, described by Kerouac as Ferlinghetti’s “little Chinese buddy” (88). At the start of a long night of derangement with Arthur, Jack (Kerouac’s name for himself in *Big Sur*) marvels at these new friends:

(and here again another great gigantic little Oriental friend for me, an eastcoaster who's never known Chinese or Japanese kids, on the west coast it's quite common but for an eastcoaster like me it's amazing and what with all my earlier studies in Zen and Chan and Tao)—(And Arthur also being a gentle small soft-haired seemingly soft little Oriental goofnik). (97)
Jack is attracted to these gentle souls because they seem to embody effortlessly the Eastern religions he studied so fervently. Though they are minor figures, the quality of Kerouac's affection for them stands out: he writes, “I keep saying 'little' George and 'little' Arthur but the fact is they were both small anyway,” and alongside the “big ruddy” Ferlinghetti, Arthur is “the little childlike Chinese boy who looked so young most bartenders wouldn't serve him tho he was actually 30 years old” (99). For Kerouac, whose novels strove to present the innocence of a generation of angels, George and Arthur present a new kind of innocence.

In marveling over these new friends, Jack suggests their difference. Learning that “little old George Baso is probably dyin of T.B. in a hospital outside Tulare” (56), Jack visits George in the hospital and discovers that the previously charming and perverse character has been transformed, “as tho all the old humorous courage of the year before has now given away to a profoundly deep Japanese skepticism like that of a Samurai warrior in a fit of suicidal depression (surprising me by its abject gloomy (p.104) fearful frown)” (79). The bohemian has been reduced to Japaneseness. Jack is shaken by George's appearance:

I mean it was like my first frightened realization of what to be Japanese really meant—To be Japanese and not to believe in life any more and to be gloomy like Beethoven yet to be Japanese in gloom, the gloom of Basho behind it all, the huge thunderous scowl of Issa or of Shiki, kneeling in the frost with the bowed head like the bowed-head-oblivion of all the old horses of Japan long dust. (80)
In this portrait, Kerouac establishes an absolute racial difference. “To be Japanese” is altogether different from the Beat longing for alienation and derangement; this racialized dejection casts the Japanese American into “Japan long dust.” Upon describing George’s bowed head, Kerouac records George’s sentiments: “I guess all the Dharma talk about everything is nothing is just sorta sinking in my bones” (81). The Japanese does not have the freedom to indulge in “Dharma talk”; because he is unable to remove the Oriental mask that his friends playfully don, Buddhism ages and debilitates him. Indeed, George’s Japaneseess keeps him from being a Dharma Bum; such poses belong to those who do not bear the weight of the samurai.

Despite Kerouac’s portrayal, however, Albert Saijo remained a bohemian, as evidenced in his first book of poetry, *Outspeaks: A Rhapsody*, which he published in 1997 at the age of seventy. A chatty biographical essay in the text describes the decades between *Trip Trap* and *Outspeaks*, in which Saijo tuned out in Northern California and finally ended up in Hawaii. His biography is as remarkable as his poetry, which Rob Wilson describes as a “work of sprawling capital letters, Emersonian rant and discontinuity, and Kerouac-like dashes, language riffs, and sermonizing jeremiads on his Zen monk-poet life.”

*Outspeaks* is firmly grounded in the 1960s, a revelatory decade in Saijo’s life: “I CONSIDER MYSELF A CHILD OF THE ‘60S—IT WAS WHEN I BECAME A REBORN HUMAN” (197). Saijo holds fast to being a “reborn human,” and the unrelenting capital letters of the text are a testament to a steadfast desire to seek out pure exhilaration in an America where “THINGS SPOIL FAST” (199).

The voice of *Outspeaks* is rather different from the quiet companion role Saijo played in *Trip Trap*. A poem entitled “A SYLLOGISM NO DOUBT” suggests a memory of *Trip Trap*: 

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**Notes:**

24. *Outspeaks* is firmly grounded in the 1960s, a revelatory decade in Saijo’s life: “I CONSIDER MYSELF A CHILD OF THE ‘60S—IT WAS WHEN I BECAME A REBORN HUMAN” (197). Saijo holds fast to being a “reborn human,” and the unrelenting capital letters of the text are a testament to a steadfast desire to seek out pure exhilaration in an America where “THINGS SPOIL FAST” (199).
I COULDN’T BRING IT BACK—I WAS AT AN ODD PLACE WHERE THE WAKING STATE SLEEP & THE DREAMSTATE MET & A POEM OR APHORISM OR CALL IT WHAT YOU WILL CAME TO ME—I SET IT OUT IN PERFECT DICTION WITH JUST THE RIGHT WORDS—THE FEELING & IDEA WERE EXPRESSED COMPLETELY IN 3 SHORT (p.105) SENTENCES—NOW I SAID I’LL WAKE UP AND WRITE IT DOWN—but on the journey from there back to the waking state I lost it the poem or aphorism or call it what you will—I even went back to the place where it came to me & I even found it again but bringing it back I lost it again—you would never believe how beautiful it was (69)

There is something awfully familiar about this “perfect diction” that presents a dreamlike moment, in which “the feeling & idea were expressed completely in 3 short sentences”: Saijo is describing a haiku. The poem escapes him and he is reduced to saying “how beautiful it was”; it remains a strange and haunting memory of the past. Saijo’s “haiku on the road” in Trip Trap came easily because its form was claimed by the Beats, but decades later, he cannot grasp the form. In his inability to name the “poem or aphorism or call it what you will,” he reveals the precariousness of this Japanese form and turns the very idea of a haiku into a lovely and elusive memory. This suggestive reference to the forms of Trip Trap reveals the distance of the Beat past, but it also hints at the particular challenge that the haiku presents to Asian American poets.25
Saijo's haiku had been “in perfect diction with just the right words,” but this famously constraining form presented significant challenges to Japanese American poets. The small compass of the haiku, however, made its form singularly appropriate to the experience of internment. Literary culture thrived in the camps, but in this sphere as in all others, the fact of imprisonment was plainly evident: because poetry published in the camps had to get through a censor, interned poets often used forms strategically and expressed an emotion that would be undetectable at first glance. The Big Aiiieeeee! includes fifteen haiku by Violet Kazue Matsuda de Cristoforo, each of which is accompanied by a commentary on the camp experience which inspired the poem. In the introductory note to her work, the editors explain that “the object of the free-form haiku she wrote in camp was an emphatic expression of the fleeting deep emotion of a specific flashing moment” (355).

The simultaneous specificity and deep emotion of the haiku form provided an expressive outlet for many internees, and de Cristoforo's poetry captured difficult experiences in a small and sharply defined frame. The constraints of its form made it an exemplary mode for expressing the experience of confinement, but its popularity as an Oriental style added another—and, for some, unwelcome—layer of constraint. In Asian American Literature, Elaine H. Kim notes Lawson Fusao Inada's critique of the form:

Although some of his own relatives even expected him to write Japanese haiku in English, Lawson Inada says that he deliberately avoided traditional Japanese literary forms, observing that “of the few Asian American writers he knew those he had read he considered inferior for trying to sound acceptable ‘Oriental’”: “No doubt a quaint collection of cricket haikus would have been cause to praise my Oriental sensibility.” Since his experience has been an American and not a Japanese one, Inada writes, trying to use Japanese poetic forms ... would not express his reality as an Asian American. (235–236)

The haiku was a form that Japanese Americans could not use freely; yet like Buddhism, it was easily appropriated by the avant-garde. Anti-Japanese sentiment made Japanese cultural forms a vexed proposition for Asian Americans, but such proscriptions also opened the way for aesthetic expressions rich in experiment.
American Way
The gestures readily adopted by the white counterculture became tangled in a complicated set of cultural negotiations for minority groups which sought to create their own culture. The innovation of the counterculture lay in its willingness to try on other cultures: though it was precisely this aspect which made it suspect, the possibility of not aligning oneself to the mainstream yet still claiming a place in the American landscape presented a powerful new opportunity for Americans who had long been barred from traditional modes of Americanization. Though minority poets fought cultural appropriation, they appreciated the new creation of the counterculture. The Beats used derangement—attained in various ways—to position themselves at the vanguard of a new culture, but Asian American activists used defiance to fashion a new avant-garde. Minority poets found a way into the American terrain through counterculture poetics: we can see a transmission of Snyder's legacy in *The Buddha Bandits Down Highway 99* (1978), a collection of poetic meditations on a California highway by Garrett Kaoru Hongo, Alan Chong Lau, and Lawson Fusao Inada. Lau discusses the genesis of the book:

I discussed with Lawson the possibility of doing a book together about our different upbringings along Highway 99. Everyone thought it was a good idea and so on a whim, I submitted a grant proposal to the then newly formed California Arts Commission....It was the bright-eyed optimistic early days of new Governor Jerry Brown's administration. There was also the fact that the commission had members like Ruth Asawa, Gary Snyder, and Peter Coyote who were active artists instead of arts bureaucrats.28

Snyder's Zen poetics—along with the fragile sculptures of Japanese American artist Ruth Asawa—had become a part of Jerry Brown's (p.107) idealistic administration, and in securing funding from the California Arts Commission, the Buddha Bandits aligned themselves to the California avant-garde of the previous generation.
The subject matter proposed by Lau resonated in particular with Snyder's poetry: Highway 99 featured prominently in Snyder's *Six Sections from Mountains and Rivers without End* (1965), the first published installment of the epic finally completed in 1996. The resonance and discord between Snyder's “Night Highway 99,” the first peripatetic poem in an epic modeled on the structure of Chinese scroll painting, and the raucous voices of the Buddha Bandits reveal both a shared landscape and very different cultural ambitions. Snyder's poem combines several different trips hitching along the West Coast, with stops in different towns that Snyder names along the margin of the page. Snyder introduces himself as

```
man
out of town
go hitching down
that highway 99 (11)
```

Each stopping point on 99 calls forth a different memory; we may piece together a small slice of Snyder's life with these vignettes, but we are also invited to survey the heterogeneous population that moves up and down the coast along with Snyder, who stands with them “on the rightside of that/yellow line” (15). In quick and often moving strokes, he relates the stories of the strangers he meets. Snyder blurs together a dozen different trips and leaps out of order on the map, but he describes one overarching trajectory southward to San Francisco, and the poem as a whole describes a movement from the wilderness to another kind of wildness.

In one instance, Snyder determines to hitch down 99 because he “Got fired that day by the USA” (16), and he describes losing his job with the Forest Service:

```
(the District Ranger up at Packwood
thought the Wobblies had been dead for
forty years
but the FBI smelled treason
—my red beard) (16)
```
Elsewhere in the poem one of his rides describes the persecution of the Wobblies, and Snyder cites the rallying cry of “Forming the new society/within the shell of the old” (13); but Snyder is agitating for a different cultural revolution: driven out of the “USA,” Snyder attempts to create a new society which follows the contours of the American landscape. “Night Highway 99” describes the members of this diffuse community, (p.108) from Native Americans riding buses to the memory of Sokei-An, the founder of the Buddhist Society of America. In his wanderings, Snyder lets us hear the voices and experiences of the different “natives” of this terrain, and they come together to transform the singular experience of the “man/out of town” to a communal first person:

Going to San Francisco  
   Yeah San Francisco  
   Yeah we came from Seattle (22)

This shift to the plural pronoun extrapolates from Snyder's singular experience to fashion a “we” which carries many different voices. Snyder is himself transformed by this plurality; indeed, he no longer exists when the poem finally arrives in the city:

SAN FRANCISCO  
   NO  
   body  
   gives a shit  
   man  
   who you are  
   or what's your car  
   there  
   IS no 99 (23–24)

The “man” who opened the poem becomes the object of a different voice by the poem's end. “Night Highway 99” presents glimpses into different lives and the sum total of the experience is to convert the poet into one of the many who move through the landscape; he can survey 99 just as his gaze can move through the Chinese landscape painting, noting the different figures—including himself—walking within the picture.

Stating that there “IS no 99” is an instance of Zen enlightenment, in which Snyder achieves the central aim of his poetics, as expressed earlier in “Night Highway 99”: 
—Abandon really means it
the network womb stretched loose all
things slip through (20)

Through walking and walking on 99, Snyder approaches the
Zen epiphany of nothingness; there is no 99, and the highway
which brings together a web of people and memories has
“stretched loose all” and inspired the moment of complete
abandon. Snyder thus locates Zen enlightenment in the
Western American landscape: whether alone by the side of the
road or sharing a long, careless night with others, the poet is
moved only by (p.109) the illumination of letting go. The
“night of the long poem” (13) finally permits the distinction
between first and third person to collapse. What remains is not
even the path that connects the different points of this
constellation: total abandon means that the existence of 99
itself wavers.

Years later, in The Buddha Bandits Down Highway 99, the role
of the solitary hitcher was occupied by three Asian American
poets. Inada’s introduction describes a joint performance of
the text:

   The Buddha Bandits first performed as a unit in the
   spring of 1977, at California State University, Long
   Beach. It was an evening unlike any other, an event:
   three poets in concert with some of the finest musicians
   of Asian America or any area. This book, then, is an
   outgrowth of that program, natural and continual: the
   music, the languages, the images.29
The singular event Inada describes was notably like one other: the famous Six Gallery reading that launched Beat mythology, in which Snyder read *Myths and Texts*—but with some salient differences. The Buddha Bandits' reading presents a culminating instance of the panethnic coalition, and its university location is of a piece with the aims of the movement, which created an interdisciplinary field in the academy. Inada cites a crucial continuity with their avant-garde precedent, however: "Above all, it is tradition we are conveying and carrying on, spanning waters, mountains, memories..." (original ellipsis). The "tradition" Inada emphasizes is, at heart, an Asian American one—as in his "The Discovery of Tradition," collected in *The Big Aiiieeeeee!*, in which he presents Toshio Mori and John Okada as Asian American literary forefathers—but his mention of "waters, mountains" echoes *Mountains and Rivers without End*, signaling that this text is a continuation of a tradition instigated by Snyder. Indeed, "Buddha Bandits" echoes "Dharma Bums," but with a difference: Buddhism is not central to *The Buddha Bandits Down Highway 99*, but the Buddha of the Buddha Bandits serves to align these new adventurers to the Dharma Bums of the counterculture.
Their formation is indebted to Beat culture, but the Buddha Bandits are “conveying and carrying” an Asian American tradition. Inada's introduction explains the impulse behind their coming together around an American highway: “It's a natural: the three of us, doing what we do. And 99 is no idle connection: call it a lifeline, a supply trail, a tokaido like a river…” (original ellipsis). This connection is a “natural” one, but not in the manner of Snyder’s celebration of wilderness. For Snyder, Highway 99 was just a road and finally nothing at all, but for these poets the highway is a river. In casting the highway connecting their hometowns as a river, the Buddha Bandits replaced the body of water which had traditionally been considered the lifeline home for Asian Americans, the Pacific. Linking Chinatown to Chinatown, 99 is, as Inada puts it, “THE YELLOW STRIPE DOWN THE BACK OF AMERICA”: the (p.110) “yellow” of the ethnic nationalists insisted upon a raced unity, and Inada makes clear their belonging to the American landscape. *The Buddha Bandits Down Highway 99* argues that Asian Americans are not only a part of America but also active participants in its culture. Snyder simultaneously opened and emptied the American landscape, but Hongo, Lau, and Inada want to fill it with their experiences.

The book is divided into three sections, one for each poet, and in his section Lau writes that “chinatown was upstairs in my gramma’s kitchen,” installing a foundational Asian American community into one American home. In Hongo’s section, a poem called “Pilgrimage to the Shrine” describes the three poets finding themselves at Tule Lake, a key site of internment. This pilgrimage brings together the Buddha Bandits: although initially “Alan recognized nothing”—a Chinese American detached from the site—while Inada utters “a few mantras,” as they approach the camp all three share a single emotion:

> But our eyes
> go blind, fill
> with tears and ashes
In contrast to Snyder’s “we,” this plural pronoun is a creation of Asian America, which transformed internment into a shared past. In using the highway as a figure that turns ethnic individuals into Asian Americans, the Buddha Bandits grapple with the United States from which Snyder gleefully described being ejected.

The final poem of the book, Inada's “I Told You So,” retraces a segment of Snyder's journey southward but ends in Fresno, Inada's hometown. The poem opens “up by Shasta,” and suggests a movement from “numbest winter,” through the town of Red Bluff, then through “Woodland Sacramento,” finally taking the exit at “the giant orange” to Fresno's West Side. Inada discovers that his old neighborhood has been rezoned into a shopping mall, but the memories flood back despite the commercial transformation. The poem writes out a fantasy of repopulating the now-antiseptic commercial park with the ragged inhabitants of the old West Side. Inada describes the pristine perfection of the new complex:

\[
\text{it's peaceful now} \\
& \text{with the perfect light} \\
\text{it's a Japanese garden} \\
& \text{you're contemplating it}
\]

The figure of Zen contemplation has become the style of choice of corporate structures—thus describing the fate of the Zen cultural revolution—and (p.111) Inada cheerfully describes the sullying of this purified space when “dawn shows up”:

\[
\text{then all the Brothers & Sisters} \\
\text{come out of the cracks} \\
& \text{start tearing things down}
\]

An array of unkempt characters from the old West Side appears, clogging the fountain, and

\[
\text{even your grandmother shows up} \\
\text{limping twitching fist} \\
\text{stuck full of fish bones}
\]

The Japanese grandmother assists in the destruction, and the grandson jumps into the action:

\[
& \text{you're helping her} \\
& \text{there's the helicopters}
\]
spraying
& the spray makes a rainbow
& you’re cracking up

The rainbow of racial coalition makes its appearance and “cracking up” means both laughter and the breaking up of the conventional ethnic body. The Japanese grandmother assists in tearing down the Japanese garden; her appearance marks the distance between a rarefied Japanese aesthetic and minority American existence.

The poem ends just after this moment of solidarity and dissolution:

god damn
man
this is
FRES-NO
baby

where can you go
from here

These lines resonate with the previously cited end of Snyder's “Night Highway 99”: both poems showcase a similar tone, and the separation of “fres” and “no” clearly recalls Snyder's rhyming of “no” and “San Francisco.” In place of Snyder's sublime negation, however, Inada insists upon his concern for “who you are”—precisely what no one cared about in Snyder's poem. If San Francisco is the destination for losing the self on a long path toward nothingness in Snyder's poem, Fresno is a paradigmatic space of racialized identification. Indeed, all three Buddha Bandits remake America in ways at odds with Snyder's Beat consciousness because they care enormously about who they are, as evidenced in the “Self Portraits” that close the book, in which a scribbled sketch of each poet accompanies idiosyncratic and longish bios. The Buddha Bandits Down Highway 99 transforms the “night of the long poem” of the Beat revolution in order to present an Asian American cultural collective, one which remakes the American landscape.

Inada's ABCs
Asian American culture required a new vision of American culture: Inada’s fantasy of “Brothers & Sisters” emerging from cracks in a smooth, corporate surface suggested a multiplicity of voices just beneath the surface, fighting to speak out. These voices did not present a simple harmony, and Inada’s poetry often returns to the scene of Fresno’s West Side to lay out the complexities of ethnic expression. Inada’s “West Side Songs” (1970), the last poem in Chang’s anthology Quiet Fire, presents a series of snapshots of the West Side’s different ethnic enclaves. The poem opens in “Whitearama”:

Catch the skyline, baby—
Security, Towne House,
P.G.&E.

Know what I mean?
That's Whitearama, baby,
the big wide screen. (91)

In its easy rhythms, the opening swagger of “Whitearama” presents an all-too-familiar landscape. The poem opens with this “big wide screen,” a Hollywood production we've seen countless times, in order to tear it open and expose the heterogeneous elements underneath. Having established this panorama, the poem moves from skyline to street, moving through different neighborhoods.

A distinct voice dominates each section, and Inada presents each in a different form. The tenth section, “Chinks,” opens with the emphatic alliteration of a children's taunt:

Ching Chong Chinaman
sitting on a fence
trying to make a dollar
chop-chop all day.

(p.113)

“Eju-kei-shung! Eju-kei-shung!”
that's what they say.

When the War came,
they said, “We Chinese!”
When we went away,
they made sukiyaki,
saying, “Yellow all same.”

When the war closed,
they stoned Japs' homes.
Grandma would say:
“Marry a Mexican,
a Nigger, just don’t
marry no Chinese.” (96)

The aggressive jangle of the taunt dictates the rhythm of the section, but the last line of the saying has been altered:
instead of completing the saying with “trying to make a dollar out of fifty cents,” the poem closes the jeer with “chop-chop all day,” simultaneously reinforcing the alliterated sound of the opening line and forsaking the rhyme. The unrhyming “day” opens up the initial chant and provides a linking assonance to the two following strophes: the children’s rhyme has been forced open and made serious, and, conversely, the ensuing betrayals are shown to have taken their cue from the childish attack. Framed within the guiding rhythms of the chant, Grandma’s lines express a sentiment that is as simpleminded as “Ching Chong Chinaman.” The poem casts Japanese American sentiment against the Chinese in the 1940s and 1950s in racist tones, but the poem does not present an absolute equation between anti-Chinese feelings held by whites and Japanese; the specific anti-Japanese actions detailed in the poem present strategic uses of ethnic differentiation and racial uniformity that correspond to a complex American history in which Japanese and Chinese were alternately separated and lumped together. The poem presents a stinging critique of Grandma, but it also suggests the power of “Whitearama” in setting the tone for her lines.

The next and final section of the poem trains ethnic caricature on itself:

XI. Japs
are great
imitators—
they stole
the Greeks’
skewers,
used them
(p.114)
on themselves.
Their sutras
are Face
and Hide.
They hate
everyone else,
on the sly.
They play
Dr. Charley's
games—bowling
raking,
growing forks
on lapels.
Their tongues
are yellow
with “r’s”,
with “l’s.”
They hate
themselves,
on the sly. I
used to be
Japanese (97)

In these sharpened lines, Inada entertains anti-Japanese stereotypes. Narrowed into a sword, the truncated lines and cutting diction come to a deadly point: to the poet's "I." This caricature distances the poem from the speaker, whose easy fluency in previous sections presents an unyellowed tongue, and the closing strophe turns “They hate” onto “themselves,” seemingly closing off the category of “Japs” from the speaker. The enjambed “I,” however, shows us that this divorce between “I” and “They” cannot be complete, and the lack of a period at the close of the last sentence—and, by extension, the poem as a whole—indicates a missing finality. This missing punctuation suggests that “used to be” does not have any terminal force in the context of being Japanese; the stereotype of the unassimilable alien makes the past tense of “used to be” a continuing imperfect. As in the “Chinks” section, the poem reveals its inability to transcend the perspective of “Whitearama,” which hangs suspended over the different ethnic enclaves.
Inada’s complex portrait of the American cityscape does not simply lash out against “Whitearama”; the initial white panorama first appears as an easy target, but the proliferating caricatures of the poem’s different sections, in which different ethnic groups use the terms of Whitearama against each other, suggest the force of this overriding perspective. Inada cannot ignore the frame that Whitearama provides, and the poem presents (p.115) ethnic groups in varying distances from whiteness. By burrowing into an American urban landscape teeming with rifts, “West Side Songs” presents difficult relationships between ethnic groups, from the complex antipathy between Chinese and Japanese to outright conflict, as in a section entitled “Sunset,” in which “Mexicans beat/the bad Japanese” (93). The poem’s presentation of an unfeeling “Whitearama” which overdetermines these fractious groups ultimately indicts this larger, hegemonic position; Inada makes his case against this overriding racism by presenting multiple manifestations of its logic within the city’s different enclaves.
Inada’s work as a whole is marked by an attention to relationships between groups of color, and in his landmark 1993 poetry collection *Legends from Camp* he cites a crucial link to African American culture. *Legends from Camp* describes a family that survives internment intact, and Inada is very clear about what held his family together: “The Music” (55). At the heart of the text is a section called “Jazz,” and its preface describes a stack of records—acquired by his father while serving in a munitions factory on Chicago’s South Side during internment—which traveled from Chicago to Amache Camp in Colorado, and finally to Fresno (55–56). Inada could only imagine the music contained on the records because he couldn’t play them in the camps, but these “fragile items” were “packed, carried and finally played” (56) in Fresno; unbroken, they became “the cornerstone of a collection, which continues to this day” (56). Yet the records were not silent in the camps because father and son discovered a way to play them, as Inada describes on an evening walk from the shower house with his father: “Coming back, warm and clean, glowing, all the stars were out. We paused; he was teaching me how to whistle. So I whistled, and then we whistled, ‘Melancholy Baby,’ his song, loud and clear—and glowing on the horizon, I could see, I could hear, Chicago” (56). “The Music” transports the boy from the camp in which he is incarcerated, moving him closer to a metropolis in the American heartland; “Melancholy Baby” belongs to both his father and the American city, thus creating a chain with links from son to father to America.

Later, back in Fresno, “The Music” expanded beyond the small figures whistling in the dark to encompass an entire community:

Moreover, the music we most loved and played and used was Negro music. It was something we could share in common, like a “lingua franca” in our “colored” community. And in our distorted reality of aliens and alienation, it even felt like *citizenship*. It seemed so very *American*—“un-foreign,” on “un-foreign” instruments—and the words it used were *English*. Not “across town” or “Hit Parade” English, perhaps, but nevertheless an English that, in its own way, did the job. (And we were all criticized, continually corrected and ridiculed in school for the way (p.116) we talked—for having accents, dialects, for misusing, abusing the language.) (57)
The father's gift to the son ultimately becomes a means of suturing a raced body into America via a language shared by an assemblage of different abusers of English. We may read the power of “The Music,” which binds together different groups, against the fracturing force of “Whitearama”: while the white panorama hovers above, intensifying alienation and multiplying divisions, the common language of black music provides a mode of unification against “‘across town’ or ‘Hit Parade’ English.” “The Music” which bound the family also has the audacity to suggest citizenship to a ragtag minority. This echo between domestic and civic spheres is unusual in ethnic immigrant experiences generally, but it is especially rare in the Japanese American case. The experience of internment, marked by the violation of domestic space, reshuffled familial order: as the Nisei rose to prominence, communicating with their wardens in fluent English, the first generation was simultaneously alienated from their children and left powerless.34 “The Music” provides a means of cultural belonging well clear of both the dominating order of the camps and “across town” English; and through its tones Inada demonstrates an aesthetic mode of securing a place in the United States.

In “Time, Jazz, and the Racial Subject,” a reading of Legends from Camp, Juliana Chang charts shifting interpellations in the text, from a poem in which Inada imagines a personal call from FDR, which Chang reads as an instance of “the state ‘hailing’ and calling into being the racial subject” (151), to a later instance of what she terms an “alternative kinship” in a moment with Billie Holiday. In this latter case, Inada describes asking Lady Day for her autograph:

After a while, in a hushed voice, he speaks: “Excuse me—but may I have your autograph?” Her face lights up as she smiles: “Why certainly, son! What's your name?” He tells her, and she pronounces it, somewhat “sings” it, as she writes in the book. Then, still smiling, she looks him straight in the eye and says, “You were here last night.” “Yes, I was, ma'am. I’ve been here all week.”

And you might say he never left. And what she wrote in that book, her book, was this:

For Lawson
Sincerely
And before he knew it, he was writing poetry. (58–59)

Chang reads Roosevelt and Holiday against each other: the former infantilizes the racial subject while the latter’s “recognition of him as part of a jazz community—her musical pronunciation of his name rearticulating (p.117) his subject position from that named by President Roosevelt—facilitates his entrance into a jazz-influenced poetry” (151). Following Chang's reading of Holiday's role in interpellating the young poet, I read this cold night under a streetlamp in conjunction with the instance of father and son whistling in the camps: just as “Melancholy Baby” transplanted them from the camp to Chicago, Billie Holiday herself “sings” Lawson into existence as a poet. I believe we may read Holiday's melody as a counterpart to Inada's father's whistled tune, thus creating a raced parentage which brings the poet to life and forms an American subject.

Inada's allegiance to black music creates an alternative to “Whitearama.” If we return to Inada's poem in The Buddha Bandits Down Highway 99, we discover a further cross-cultural link. As Inada approaches Fresno on 99, the memories flood back:

you take your old name back
Chano

This old name is not Japanese, as Inada explains in an essay in his third volume of poetry, Drawing the Line (1997):

After the war, we lived for a while in my grandparents' home (the home and family fish store had been entrusted to longtime friends) while my father picked peaches and grapes, eventually saving enough to resume his dental practice and rent a home several blocks away.

The very first day, I simply went across the street to play at the Palomino home, with their boys, Henry and Herb, only a few months separating us in age. And for the next decade or so, there were very few days when I wasn't at the Palomino home. They had five children, and I simply became the sixth; they even gave me my own name: Grandmother called me Losano, but little Sylvia said I was Chano, as I've been since. (57)
His “old name” is Chicano, and Inada describes an acquired ancestry: from the “grandparents’ home” “entrusted to longtime friends” during internment, to a different “Grandmother” who “called me Losano.” The Buddha Bandits Down Highway 99 features a repeated line by Inada that defines the “Brothers and Sisters” he imagines storming the mall complex: “the ABC's: Asian, Black, Chicano.” The entirety of Inada’s work suggests that Asian American culture and identity may only be legible within the “ABC’s”; the Japanese garden dismantled in “I Told You So” is culturally meaningless because it is not recognized by his “ABC’s,” and it is because the perspective of “Whitearama” is devoid of the cross-racial solidarity of the “ABC’s” that the different groups remain isolated and abject in “West Side Songs.”

Inada’s “ABC's” ultimately transcend affiliation in order to create alliances: his family is held together not by blood but by culture. I believe (p.118) that the drive behind Inada's poetry goes beyond the perplexing issue he discusses in his introduction to Legends from Camp as “‘tribal’ and ‘clan’ affiliations” (v), the group identities that the camps simultaneously enforced and undermined. The camps forced Japanese American families together after material evidence of their Japaneseness had been torched or secreted away, and culture for Inada instead took the shape of the treasured records from Chicago. “The Music” gathered a community of listeners and speakers, not in a familial model but in a cultural coalition. Inada cannot find a place for himself in a city dictated by “Whitearama,” but he discovers full belonging in a union of the “ABC's.” Internment destroyed Japanese American families that relied on Japanese culture as a binding element, and Inada's alliances ultimately present a strategy for survival in a difficult landscape. In forging ties across a fractured social environment, Inada traverses cultural bridges within the United States and not a transpacific one, made suspect in the wake of Pearl Harbor.

Citi-Zen-ship
If we recall Kerouac's yearning in *On the Road* to be “a Denver Mexican, or even a poor overworked Jap,” but most especially to be one of “the happy, true-hearted, ecstatic Negroes of America” (180), we discover a kind of mirror image of Inada’s “ABC’s”: Beat cultural appropriation on the one hand and a cross-racial coalition on the other. One of the side effects of Beat cultural appropriation was the sudden visibility of whiteness: Kerouac's lament against his existence as “a ‘white man’ disillusioned” in the above passage racialized whiteness and read it in a spectrum with minority groups. Though individual Beats felt the burden of their own whiteness, they did not then imagine its oppressive weight for the groups they desired to be. Yet it was precisely this weight that galvanized minority avant-garde artists of the next generation, who politicized their aesthetic labor by forging cross-cultural alliances. These alliances were crucial for their art because they provided a way of negotiating with the forms and practices aestheticized by Beat cultural appropriation. Inada's work demonstrates this new strategy for Japanese aesthetics and practices rendered Oriental by Beat admiration: within the framework of Inada's “ABC’s,” we discover ways of recuperating two hallmarks of Beat Orientalism: haiku and Buddhist practice.

Like the Japanese garden destroyed by the “ABC’s,” the haiku marks an unwanted sympathy with Japan and “Whitearama.” Yet Inada does not simply reject haiku; traces of the form appear in *Legends from Camp*, notably in a series of portraits of jazz greats entitled “Listening Images.” The title’s emphasis on listening returns sound and voice to the silence of the image presented by Poundian modernism. “Listening Images” opens with: *(p.119)*

LESTER YOUNG

Yes, clouds do have
The smoothest sound. (69)
Typically, the final line of the haiku creates a sudden juxtaposition to the scene deftly sketched in the first two lines; in this case, however, the name of the artist in the first line collides with the aural image that follows, thus creating an inverted haiku. Just as Billie Holiday sang out “Lawson,” we are meant to sing out these names and hear their music in the synesthesia of image and sound that follows. The long stretch of “smoothest” melds “clouds” to “sound,” and these gliding sounds—sibilance and rounded assonance—recreate the music of Lester Young. Inada's achievement is to get us to hear “The Music” in a form typically used to create a mute image; he turns the haiku itself into an instrument for hearing “The Music.”

Inada's evocation of “The Music” presents a stark contrast to the Beat reverence for jazz, figured in Norman Mailer's “White Negro” as a mode of alienation: the allure of the African American for Mailer lay in his proximity to death, and jazz was portrayed as an apocalyptic art. By contrast, “The Music” possesses a life-giving power. To turn to African American culture to stake out a subject position is a long-standing American tradition, but the black-yellow alliance proposed by the Asian American movement aims to counter a white appropriation suffered by both groups. Aiiiiiiiiii!s introduction singled out African American artistic expression because “they have been cultural achievers, in spite of white supremacist culture” (xxv). In the fine-tuned music of “Listening Images,” Inada rehabilitates the haiku by reframing it within his “ABC's”; he turns the form on its head and fills it with “The Music.”
The haiku was an emblem of Pound's modernist revolution, but when it was taken up by the Beats it was valorized as a Buddhist art. Just as Inada recontextualized the haiku, Inada presents an instance of reframing Zen within Asian American contexts in “Picking Up Stones,” a poem from Drawing the Line, in which he portrays Nyogen Senzaki, a Zen monk who was interned at Heart Mountain. After internment, Senzaki established a Japanese congregation in his apartment in 1945, and Rick Fields's now-canonical 1982 account of American Zen, How the Swans Came to the Lake, presents Senzaki as a lesser-known but significant figure in American Zen. Senzaki's own poetry presents a haunting sketch of his time in the camps, but Inada's “Picking Up Stones” imagines the effect of Senzaki's presence on the other elders of the camp, who pick up pebbles he has inscribed with simple Japanese words in an “Eastern eggless hunt” (124). The play of “Easter” and “Eastern” conveys the religious significance of this “amusing sight” of “these old people” (p.120)

shuffling about in dust,
mud, snow, sleet—
sometimes even crushing
ice with their feet— (125)

Their search for these trivial objects reveals the geography and geology of the land on which they are imprisoned: the stones themselves reveal “the colorful proximity of Yellowstone” and “pebble-searching”

had resulted in enlightening
arrowhead finds (125)

Zen enlightenment is recast as a discovery of Native American habitation on the land—a combination that recalls Snyder's overlay of Zen practice with Native American belonging to the land. Yet for Inada, these “finds” are not the result of an attempt to secure a place in the land; instead, the arrowheads reveal an American history to which the internees have been added. Discovering arrowheads has the effect of

inspiring some elders
to try their hand
at chipping obsidian
in this land
where the buffalo roamed... (126, original ellipsis)
Senzaki's stones finally lead to a paean to the American West, “where the buffalo roamed,” and its attendant request, “O give me a home.” Native Americans and Japanese Americans share this land, but this fact does not provide the pure solace that Snyder's “White Indian” imagined. Inada brings together Japanese American and Native American because they have been forced to share the same landscape; and despite their location in the American heartland, both groups reside at an often painful distance from an American home.

The poem ends with Senzaki's end:

    And as for Senzaki,
    he died in obscurity,
    an old dishwasher
    with a few friends,

    resting, perhaps,
    among headstones
    in Los Angeles,
    a citi-Zen of sorts,
    of the earth,

    (p.121)
    one who spoke
    broken English
    and wrote
    on some stones

    WHILE LEAVING OTHERS ALONE (126-127)

Inada reclaims this forefather of American Zen—a community largely composed of converts—for Asian America. “Picking Up Stones” insists upon the conditions of Senzaki's American existence: the job of “old dishwasher” and the emphasis on “broken English” bring his racial identity to the fore. In dubbing Senzaki a “citi-Zen,” Inada situates the Zen monk in Los Angeles, a city teeming with “ABC's.” Further, the emphatic statement of “leaving others alone” in the poem's last line suggests a rebuke to Beat Zen, which became a fad by not “leaving others alone” and instead fantasizing otherness. Inada's “Easter” in this poem finally resurrects Senzaki as an American citizen, and Senzaki becomes another stone on an American landscape dotted with arrowheads.
Activist Asian American poets redeployed the terms of Beat enlightenment in order to usher their own culture into existence. Alan Chong Lau recalled attending one of the seminars Frank Chin gave to university students across the country, in which Chin “would stomp around classes cajoling us to write about ourselves, shouting that there was a distinctive Asian American voice in literature, and that we should express it.”\(^{37}\) Ethnic nationalists girded aesthetics with political aims in order to present a new literary voice. The poets of this avant-garde faced a daunting literary history, and their response was “to write about ourselves”: against an Orientalist past, they created an Asian American history through which an antiracist voice would emerge. The movement made heavy sacrifices for cohesion—they ultimately kept out more Asian American artists than they brought in—but the streamlined entity they fashioned was able to make alliances across race through a political coalition. Against the open-ended grouping suggested by Wand’s anthology, in which a multiplicity of ethnicities could be collected under the title “Asian American,” the initial narrowness of *Aiiiiiiieee!*’s formulation permitted radical Asian American literature to circulate within different cultural ambits. In keeping a single politics at the fore, the ethnic activists ultimately discovered a way of building multiple bridges within the United States, through which Asian America became a link in a network of raced groups who shared a common ideology of resistance.

Notes:


(2.) Wand collaborated in a few translations of Tang Dynasty poetry with William Carlos Williams as well. Witemeyer notes that Wand’s letters to Williams “are disingenuously critical of Pound’s politics” (“Strange Progress” 198).

(3.) Wang “The Rub” (*Asian-American Heritage* 179) is an imitation of Snyder’s “The Bath” (*Turtle Island* 12–14).

(4.) Witemeyer, “The Flame-style King” 333.

(5.) Quoted in Witemeyer, “The Strange Progress of David Hsin-Fu Wand” 193.
(6.) Published in *Asian-American Heritage* 174–176. The poem's four parts describe a vision of golden, nude bodies, the disorder of an intimate relationship, a rugged outdoor scene set in China, and the death of the poet. The heterogeneous themes in “Quartet for Gary Snyder” allude to different Snyder poems and are thus unified by this influence.

(7.) Interestingly, Wand suggests Chinese qualities in the poetry of Wallace Stevens and Marianne Moore as well.

(8.) Wand's reading of Wing Tek Lum's Chinese sensibilities is especially off the mark (“The Chinese-American Literary Scene” 129–131).

(9.) Mentioned in Witemeyer, “Strange Progress” 191.

(10.) One 1972 anthology, *Asian-American Authors*, edited by Kai-yu Hsu and Helen Palubinskas, predates Wand and *Aiiieeeee!*. Chin et al. cite Hsu's critique of autobiography in their introduction (xxiii), and they name him in the dedication of *The Big Aiiieeeee!* as well.

(11.) More recent anthologies of Asian American literature are in fact closer to Wand's gesture of ethnic inclusion. For example, Koshy cites a review of Jessica Hagedorn's 1993 anthology *Charlie Chan Is Dead*, in which Sven Birkets complains that “there are just too many kinds of inclusions,” and critiques Hagedorn for not explaining “the need for, or grounds of, such inclusiveness within the contemporary context of Asian American fiction” (332).

(12.) Pound mentions Hartmann in Canto 80:

and as for the vagaries of our friend
Mr. Hartmann
Sadakichi a few more of him,
were that conceivable, would have enriched
the life of Manhattan
or any other town or metropolis (515)

(13.) “Americanized Asians” follow an Orientalist fallacy identified in *Aiiieeeee!’s* introduction: “The myth is that Asian-Americans have maintained cultural integrity as Asians, that there is some strange continuity between the great high culture of China that hasn't existed for five hundred years and the American-born Asian” (xxiv).
(14.) Espiritu provides a sociological portrait of the new conditions that facilitated consensus: “By the late 1960s, pan-Asianism was possible because of the more amicable relationships among the Asian countries, the declining residential segregation among diverse Asian groups in America, and the large number of native-born, American-educated political actors” (52).

(15.) Jinqi Ling emphasizes the “historically constituted constraints” (9) on Asian American expression and reads ethnic nationalism as “a manageable surface of contestation” (72). The most significant critiques of Chin et al. discuss their ideological limitations in questions of sexuality, as in David L. Eng’s analysis of Chin’s valorization of heterosexuality as a means of rescuing his protagonist in Donald Duk (97). Daniel Y. Kim extends this critique in his study; as he explains, “Where previous studies have done an effective job of ‘outing’ the homophobia of cultural nationalism, they have not attended sufficiently to the figural complexity of its articulation” (xxii). Nguyen critiques Chin’s “efforts to recuperate Chinese American masculinity and literature” (90) as an attempt to secure a literary market and indicteds his use of violence, which “serves as a disturbing bond of unity” (106). Nguyen provides a far-reaching critique of the formulation of and continuing adherence to Asian American cultural nationalism.

(16.) The Big Aiiieee! includes poetry (notably not included in the first version), historical accounts, sketches, and even a dictionary. Unlike Aiiieee!, it is arranged in chronological order, thus emphasizing the historical context of Asian American literature.

(17.) This founding claim of confinement and coercion is missing in the theorizations of the ethnicity school, as in Werner Sollors’s famous analysis of the ethnic experience as one which is marked by poles of consent and descent.

(18.) See Lye (141–203) and Simpson (43–75) for historicist readings of the camps that situate them within the context of liberal ideology.

(19.) Duncan Ryuken Williams 197. I owe my reference to Hynd to Williams’s essay.

(20.) Kashima 40–54.
(21.) Seager 57.

(22.) See chapter 2 for a discussion of Beat Zen.

(23.) Snyder attended a Japanese American congregation in Berkeley, however; Gray writes, “While living in the Bay Area, he immersed himself in the study of Buddhism and came to hold a special affinity for the Jodo-shin or “Pure Land” variety practiced by Japanese immigrants at the Berkeley Buddhist Church” (Gary Snyder and the Pacific Rim 100).

(24.) Wilson, “From the Sublime to the Devious.”

(25.) Outspeaks presents the meditations of a “reborn human” and not a Japanese American or Asian American—phrases he never utters to describe himself. Upon stating that he was born in Los Angeles, in a hospital which has since been torn down to make a freeway, Saijo writes, “YOU CAN’T GET MORE AMERICAN THAN THAT—BOTH MY PARENTS HOWEVER WERE FROM JAPAN” (192). Instead of an Asian American vocabulary, Saijo uses a Beat strategy of suturing himself in the American landscape.

(26.) Susan Schweik suggests an emerging Japanese American sensibility in Toyo Suyemoto’s forms: “In Suyemoto's ‘Hokku’ and ‘Tanka,’ the cultural differences between ‘Japanese’ and ‘European’ forms is at once stressed and minimized; it is, perhaps, exactly in that simultaneous emphasis and erasure that we can trace a specifically Japanese American discourse” (190). In her essay “Writing of Poetry” Suyemoto writes, “It may be strange that as much as I enjoy reading what is termed ‘free verse,’ I write consistently in form” (75).

(27.) In his foreword to White Chrysanthemums, Rexroth claims that Hartmann “was probably the first person to write English haiku” (ix). The American fascination with the haiku has produced a wide range of poetry, including Richard Wright’s haiku and experiments like John Yau’s “Sam Spade Haiku.”

(28.) Quoted in Chang, ed., Quiet Fire 122.

(29.) The Buddha Bandits Down Highway 99 is unpaginated.
30. Espiritu mentions that “on colleges and university campuses, the most important legacy of the Asian American movement was the institutionalization of Asian American studies” (35).

31. “The Discovery of Tradition” is dedicated to Mori and Okada and imagines them together, along with the poet: “I'm sitting here with Toshio and John, talking over such momentous things” (604). The first stanza of Inada's “On Being Asian American,” also in The Big Aiiiiieeeel!, states, “Of course, not everyone can be Asian American./Distinctions are earned, and deserve dedication” (619).

32. Hongo has since criticized the sociological bent of ethnic nationalism. See chapter 4 for a discussion of theorizing Asian American poetry.

33. The introduction to Aiiiiieeeel! quotes extensively from this poem, stating that “Inada wrote of hatreds and fears no Asian-American ever wrote of before” (xliv). Though this piece is celebrated by the editors, the anthology did not include any poetry.

34. Okada's No-No Boy famously captured this rift between generations, in a scene in the camps in which a young Japanese American sociologist accuses the Issei of not understanding their children.

35. Inada's account illustrates the difficulty of homecoming for internees: his father's farm labor is a return to an earlier moment in the immigrant narrative of progress from hard labor to entrepreneurship to white-collar work. The devastating disruption of internment collapses these stages as Inada's father goes from peach picking to his dental practice; spatial relocation upsets the teleology of American immigrant progress.
Nguyen's reading of cultural nationalism asserts the continuing significance of black and white: "While the creation of an autonomous Asian American identity will inevitably heighten the importance of multiculturalism in recognizing American diversity, this does not necessarily mean that the historically marginalized status of blackness and the historically privileged status of whiteness will not continue to serve as symbolic embodiments of failure and achievement for Americans, especially immigrants" (30). Similarly, Daniel Y. Kim states, "But what I intend this study to question is an assumption that cultural assertions of Asian American particularity must necessarily be attempts to transcend the constraints of the black/white binary. In fact, literary assertions of a distinctly Asian American sensibility such as Chin's do not necessarily seek to conjure forth a 'yellow' space discretely separated from a black one and a white one" (205).

(37.) Quoted from Chang, ed., *Quiet Fire* 117.