THE PACIFIC TURN
Transnational Asian American Studies

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Boundaries, history, and debates

The United States has a long history of intervention in the geographical section of the globe that stretches west from the western shores of the United States, including the Pacific Ocean and its many islands, reaching north to the Bering Strait and the islands of Alaska, across the ocean to the coasts of Asia, and most of Oceania. This stretch of the globe, encompassing diverse lands, waters, and peoples, is often referred to as a region: the Pacific, the Asia/Pacific, or the Pacific Rim. The region always includes East Asia, Southeast Asia, and many islands of the Pacific, and it sometimes includes Australia, New Zealand, Russia, the US, Mexico, Canada, and the western coastal nations of South and Central America. As a geographical construct imagined to interact with the United States, however, the “Pacific” has been Asian and Pacific Islander rather than Latino/a or white, anchored in East and Southeast Asia and supplemented, unevenly and inconsistently, by many of the Pacific islands.

The more recent adoption of the term “transpacific” to describe this region offers the latest iteration in a series of terms that have been used in the modern era. The debates over the origins, accuracy, and politics of the terms used to describe this region have been carefully and thoroughly analysed in several important scholarly volumes. Arif Dirlik raises many of the key concerns in his important introduction to What is in a Rim?: Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea (Dirlik 1998b). As Dirlik explains, “The Pacific Rim (or Pacific Basin, Asia-Pacific) is an invented concept” (Dirlik 1998b, 3), whose “material basis is defined best not by physical geography, but by relationships (economic, social, political, military) and cultural) that are concretely historical” (Dirlik 1998b, 4). According to Dirlik, “the idea of the Pacific, therefore, is not so much a well-defined idea as it is a discourse that seeks to construct what is pretended to be its point of departure” (Dirlik 1998b, 4). The contradictions, omissions, and motivations behind the various iterations of the “Pacific region idea” speak to the political work that these terms are doing. Dirlik articulates seven or more fundamental contradictions entailed by these terms, and the many important scholarly volumes that follow What is in a Rim? continue to highlight the shifting meanings of those terms and their important ideological implications.

Historically, US intervention in the Pacific stretches back at least to Commodore Perry’s “opening” of Japan in 1853. The US also participated in the exploitation of China by
European and other imperial powers well into the twentieth century. The US takeover of the Philippines following the Spanish American war in 1899 resulted in the United States officially possessing a formal colony. Throughout the twentieth century, however, the US has also maintained full administrative control over various Pacific islands, including Hawai‘i, which ultimately became a state in 1959. The Pacific was the site of intensive US military conflict with Japan during World War II, and then wars in Korea and in Vietnam and surrounding nations during the Cold War. The development of vibrant economies in Japan and the so-called Asian Tigers (Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, and Hong Kong) caused economic tensions between Asian countries and the US, and the rise of China has led to a shift in regional power in East Asia and shifts in US policy in the region. In the past ten years, US politicians have signaled their desire to pivot toward Asia, although more recent political developments in the US, including the election of President Donald Trump, leave an uncertain future of US engagement in the Pacific.

Within this shifting geopolitical context, the academic study of US engagement with the Pacific has also shifted. Several overlapping fields of US academic study, including Asian Studies, Asian American Studies, and Transnational American Studies have variously addressed this history of engagement. This chapter traces the transnational turn of Asian American Studies from the field’s earlier ethnic nationalist roots, the field’s place in the larger transnational turn of American Studies, its re-engagement with Asian Studies, and the new directions that are now emerging as a result of this (re)turn to the Pacific.

As Mark Chiang has detailed, Asian American Studies originated in the late 1960s; from its start, however, the field has interrogated the parameters of its object of study: Asian Americans. Scholars such as Yen Le Espiritu, Elaine Kim, David Palumbo-Liu, and many others have debated the complex status of the pan-ethnic formation Asian American and its assumptions, contradictions, and omissions. As the “Asian” in Asian American attests, the field was always already transnational, reaching beyond the Americas out to Asia in many respects.

At its start, as cultural nationalist texts such as the pioneering anthology *Aiiieeeee!* demonstrate (Chin et al. 1974), Asian American Studies scholars focused primarily on the experiences of Asian Americans within a US national frame, with a particular emphasis on the immigrant narrative and Asian Americans’ struggles for political and cultural acceptance in the face of institutionalized racism. Within this framework of national belonging and racial identity, Asian American Studies commonly positioned itself as distinct from Asian Studies, deemphasizing the study of Asia. As Kandice Chuh puts it, “Institutionally and politically long-compelled to assert the Americanness of Asian American literatures, [the study of Asian Americans] has in many instances come to all but deny any connection—historic, geographic, linguistic—to ‘Asia,’ in effect reproducing a seemingly immutable split between Asia and America” (Chuh 2001, 278). This split also reinforced the disciplinary divide between Asian Studies and Asian American Studies, a divide that scholars such as Sucheta Mazumdar and Rachel C. Lee sought to bridge, in ways that retained and enhanced Asian American Studies’ concerns with social justice.³

In 1993, Elaine Kim argued, however, that conditions were changing:

The lines between Asian and Asian American, so crucial to identity formations in the past, are increasingly blurred: transportation to and communication with Asia is no longer daunting, resulting in new crossovers and intersections and different kinds of material and cultural distances today.

*Kim 1993, xi*
The transnational turn, the immigrant, and US imperialism

Most scholars, however, saw the transnational turn in American Studies and Asian American Studies as a salutary call for a more thoroughgoing political engagement with US domestic and imperial power. In 1993, Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease published their edited volume *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, a foundational text in the transnational turn in American Studies. Within Asian American Studies, the foundational text of the transnational turn is arguably Lisa Lowe’s *Immigrant Acts* (Lowe 1996). Lowe focuses not simply on the Asian American within an American context, but on the figure of the immigrant from Asia, broadening her perspective to include US intervention in Asia, and to highlight the process by which the Asian immigrant becomes assimilated (or not assimilated) into the nation. Lowe emphasizes “the ways in which Asian Americans … are not exclusively formed as racialized minorities within the United States but are simultaneously determined by colonialism and capital investment in Asia” (Lowe 1996, 8). Her focus is transnational, and she proposes “a new political subject allegorized by the ‘immigrant’”—a subject “articulated simultaneously within both U.S. national and global frameworks” (Lowe 1996, 34).

Lowe argues that the Asian immigrant fulfills a special role in the American national imaginary. According to Lowe, “[i]n the last century and a half, the American citizen has been defined over and against the Asian immigrant” (Lowe 1996, 4). Unlike “the American soldier, who … is the quintessential citizen and therefore the ideal representative of the nation, … the Asian American of Asian descent remains the symbolic ‘alien,’ the metonym for Asia who by definition cannot be imagined as sharing in America” (Lowe 1996, 6). The assimilation of the Asian into America is constantly “defer[red] and displace[d]” (Lowe 1996, 6); the immigrant is “produced by the law as margin and threat to [the] symbolic whole” of the nation (Lowe 1996, 8). For Lowe, the figure of the Asian is the other within or the other just outside against which America is defined and consolidated. Crucially, Lowe locates the Asian American at the center of the political and cultural contradictions of the nation. The Asian immigrant becomes a figure of resistance (Lowe 1996, 9), and Asian American cultural production similarly resists the dominant paradigms of a majority culture since it is “materially and aesthetically at odds with the resolution of the citizen to the nation” (Lowe 1996, 30).

Asian Americanist scholars have responded to Lowe’s redefinition of the field in varied ways. Some scholars, such as Mae Ngai, retain the vector of immigration but similarly move beyond idealized narratives of assimilation and integration. Ngai’s *Impossible Subjects* (Ngai 2004) explores the complex and ideologically fraught history of Asian immigration to the United States, telling an important story of the formative influence of US institutionalized racism and its connections to US imperialism in Asia. In *America’s Asia* (Lyke 2004), Colleen Lyke brings together the specter of yellow peril and the image of the model minority, where the threatening immigrant/invader and the ideally assimilated racial group are linked through their common trait of prodigious economic productivity. Other scholars such as Aihwa Ong have emphasized the liberatory potential of transnational mobility, viewing the movements of certain transnationally mobile Asian American subjects—“flexible citizens”—as disruptive of established patterns of oppression by US culture and the US state.4

The editors of *Transnational Asian American Literature: Sites and Transits* argue that the increasingly global movements of Asian Americans—the “diasporic, mobile, transmigratory nature of Asian American experience”—require new conceptions of subjectivity in Asian American Studies (Lim et al. 2006, 1). A transnational context is needed to account for new locations and “different Asian American ethnic groups—South Asian, Korean American, Vietnamese, and South-East Asian American, for example” to expand a field that has been “dominated by East Asian American writing” (Lim et al. 2006, 14). In their articulation of a
more transnational Asian American Studies, Shirley Geok-lin Lim and her co-editors in this volume (preceded in 1999, by Lim et al., Transnational Asia Pacific: Gender, Culture, and the Public Sphere) follow the logic of the migration of Asian American bodies, tracing the history of their geographical location through time. The editors thus tie our understanding of the salient contexts of literary analysis to the history of the bodily presence of the author in certain spaces. This transnational expansion of the field is thus defined by its continued focus on a migratory model of literary analysis, where literature is grounded in and expressive of a contextual history that is tied to the formation of the author’s identity.

Many other Asian Americanists have followed and expanded on Lowe in articulating transnational Asian American studies as most urgently focused on the critique of US imperialism in Asia. In her 2014 introduction to The Routledge Companion to Asian American and Pacific Islander Literature, Rachel C. Lee highlights Asian Americanist “scholarship’s turn away from interpreting Asian American literature through a liberal, rights-based notion of national belonging” (Lee 2004, 4). As Lee explains,

the last eight years have seen Asian Americanist literary study emphasizing the centrality of American empire and militarism as driving forces for literary and aesthetic productions… In these articulations, Asian Americanists have certainly been influenced by postcolonial theory’s investigations of the afterlives of territorial imperialism. (Lim et al. 2006, 3)

Scholars such as Victor Bascara and Jodi Kim point out that the US has been a formal colonial power (in the Philippines) and still controls a network of territories in Pacific islands from Guam to Okinawa. Their scholarly work also critiques US exceptionalism and, as Yuan Shu and Donald Pease have put it, “the US-centered global order that Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have euphemistically referred to as ‘Empire’” (Hardt and Negri 2015b, 20). In Ends of Empire, Jodi Kim (2010) examines US imperialism and Asian American Studies “at the intersection of American studies, ethnic studies, critical race studies, and postcolonial studies” (Kim 2010, 9). Kim focuses specifically on the Cold War and redefines the Cold War as a period centered around a US “imperial formation” marked by “more informal or neoimperial forms of political, economic, military, and cultural domination that stop short of territorial annexation” (Kim 2010, 18).

Asian Americanists thus offer powerful critiques that foreground US imperialism, thematize Asian American resistance to or complicity with the projection of US power, and parallel the work of Americanist scholars who have highlighted US imperialism in other contexts. As their work demonstrates, the transnational turn has helped to broaden the field’s narrower traditional focus on discrimination within the US to foreground the profound impact of US interventions in Asia. Yet even as they have expanded their focus beyond the US borders, Asian Americanists have often kept their focus on US actions and on the consequences for US-based Asians and Asian Americans. And now that the critique of US imperialism abroad has come to dominate the field as the primary way to read transnational Asian American works, this approach risks overemphasizing US influence and even constructing US imperial power as inevitable. In effect, the practice of making visible US imperialism and domination in East Asia can itself become recursively US-centric.

**US-centric approaches and Japanese imperialism**

As scholars now work to reframe transnational Asian American studies, Jodi Kim’s inclusion of Japan in her critique of US empire points to Japanese imperialism as an important object of study (Kim 2010, 25). Setsu Shigematsu and Keith L. Camacho write:
The regions now called Asia and the Pacific Islands share a history of colonial rule by Japan and the United States. Imperialist wars initiated by these respective nation-states created wartime and postwar conditions of military invasion, occupation, and violence through which the peoples of these regions have struggled and survived. The parallels and interconnections between U.S. and Japanese imperialisms together constitute an important site of analysis to comprehend the current state of geopolitics, militarized movements, and migrations since the twentieth century. The clashing of the Japanese and U.S. empires variously devastated and made claims to liberate colonized subjects from the other competing imperialist power(s).

(Shigematsu and Camacho 2010, xvi)

Asian Americanist scholars have responded to the renewed visibility of Japanese imperialism by producing important work on Japan’s historical imperial aggression and wars of conquest; its war crimes, including the exploitation of “comfort women”; the impact of its tourism; and its economic domination of the transpacific region. This scholarship has helped to complicate a straightforward paradigm of US domination of Asia within Asian American Studies, more closely aligning Asian Americanists with Asian Studies scholars, who have been examining Japanese imperialism for some time. One of the central figures for this reframing in Asian American studies is Kandice Chuh.

In an article on “hemispheric studies” and the work of Karen Tei Yamashita, Chuh articulates “the need to look within and among but also beyond the Americas and specifically to Asia in critical efforts to challenge the discursive centrality of the US” (Chuh 2006, 619). Chuh challenges Asian Americanists to imagine a transnational Asian American Studies that is not always and automatically US-centric. Her concern is that one might merely replace a narrowed focus inside the territorial boundaries of the US nation-state with a slightly expanded focus that includes the extraterritorial activities of the same nation-state and little more.

In Imagine Otherwise Chuh argues, “Effectively, Asian Americanist practices … reproduced the territorial logic of U.S. nationalism” (Chuh 2003, 87) and “the practice of holding ‘Asia’ at a cognitive distance sustains a certain kind of imperialist epistemology responsible for conceiving Asian-raced peoples, among others, as Others” (Chuh 2003, 88). In one chapter of her book, Chuh analyses two Korean American texts, Ronyoung Kim’s (1987) Clay Walls and Chang-rae Lee’s (1999) A Gesture Life, each of which “thematizes Japanese colonialism” (Chuh 2010, 100). As Chuh explains, “[t]he novels point to Korean nationalism, Japanese colonialism, and U.S. racism as distinguishable but inseparably linked historical narratives that simultaneously underwrite the production of Korean and Korean American subjectivities,” foregrounding the limitations of interpretive frameworks that view “‘Asians in America’ and ‘Asians in Asia’ … as separate and distinct” (Chuh 2010, 88). In this way, Chuh examines “the ways that practices of Japanese imperialism participate in producing ‘Korean America’ as a formation that is both national and transnational” (Chuh 2010, 15). For Chuh, “efforts to understand the functionalization of Asian American social subjectivities are hindered … by ignorance of Japanese and Korean histories” (Chuh 2001, 279). Chuh emphasizes “the critical importance of thinking through global historical specificities as instrumental to understanding the particularities and ideologies constituting local Asian Americanist sites of intervention” (Chuh 2001, 279).

As Chuh’s analysis shows, a fully realized, transnationally focused interpretive practice must account for specific histories that exceed the geographical boundaries of the United States. These histories are not limited merely to the reach of US power into Asia and the Pacific.
They also crucially entail the histories of interaction between and among Asian-Pacific entities beyond the US, such as the history of Japan’s colonization of Korea. These often neglected histories are “distinguishable [from] but inseparably linked” (Chuh 2003, 88) to US-specific narratives and contribute meaningfully to Asian American identity formation and cultural production.

The polycentric transpacific

The transnational turn within Asian American Studies has led to a geographical expansion of the field. Journals such as the open-access Journal of Transnational American Studies (based at Stanford University) and Verge: Studies in Global Asia (published by Minnesota Press), have worked to bridge divides among a global community of scholars to explore transnational connections across the Pacific. The rise of the transpacific has also arguably made the racial formation “Asian American” more inclusive, incorporating Pacific Islanders into a broader category of Asian Pacific Islander Americans, for example.

As it has highlighted Asian contexts and intra-Asian dynamics, however, the transnational turn has also shown how the field has foregrounded and prioritized certain cultures and ethnicities while marginalizing and subordinating others. In many respects, Asian American Studies and the Asian American community have struggled from the start with what Rachel C. Lee calls in another context a “stratification” that prioritizes and positions “some ethnonational groups (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Indian, Vietnamese) over others (Kanaka Maoli, Samoan, Chamorro, Cambodian, Hmong, Bangladeshi, Nepalese, Okinawan, Lese-nese, and Jordanian, for example)” (Lee 2014a, 9; emphasis added). This stratification and the tensions that arise from intra-Asian differentiation, conflict, and histories of exploitation and domination are not erased through a turn to the transpacific or transnationalism more generally. In fact, as the term transpacific becomes increasingly paradigmatic within Asian American Studies, its specific geographical orientation toward East and Southeast Asia and the Pacific also influences broader perceptions of what counts as Asian American. In this way, the term arguably risks contributing to the occlusion of several groups that are already at the margins of the racial formation Asian American, such as South Asians and Arab Americans of Western Asian descent.7

Likewise, even as the Pacific has taken on increased visibility, the field has often treated Pacific Islanders as secondary or supplementary. As Erin Suzuki puts it,

Pacific Island studies critics Amy Ku‘ieloha Stillman, Vicente Diaz, and J. Kēhaulani Kauanui among others have pointed out how the transnational turn of Asian American studies has had a … tendency to exclude, elide, or appropriate Pacific Island histories and perspectives in contemporary formulations of the transpacific.

(Suzuki 2014, 356–357)8

In many respects, the occlusion of Pacific Island perspectives in favor of East Asian and other Asian perspectives within academic discourse neatly parallels the geopolitical history of multiple, overlapping colonizations in the Pacific, in which Asian nations as well as the US and Europe have subjugated and dominated Pacific islands.

The important work by Candace Fujikane and others on settler colonialism in Hawai‘i provides a model for attending to both the legacy of colonialism in the Pacific and the extent to which that legacy has been overlooked. Fujikane and Jonathan Y. Okamura, the editors of Asian Settler Colonialism (Fujikane 2008), follow pioneering critic Haunani-Kay Trask in
identifying Asians in Hawai‘i as settlers who benefit from the colonial subjugation of Hawaiians” (Fujikane 2008, 4). Fujikane argues, for example, that

ethnic histories written about Asians in Hawai‘i … do not address the roles of Asians in an American colonial system. Instead they recount Asian histories of oppression and resistance in Hawai‘i, erecting a multicultural ethnic studies framework that ends up reproducing the colonial claims made in white settler historiography.

(Fujikane 2008, 2)

The traditional concerns of ethnic minority rights discourse—Asian Americanists’ “focus on racism, discrimination, and the exclusion of Asians from full participation in an American democracy” (Fujikane 2008, 2)—effectively subsume or supplant Native Hawaiian histories of oppression and resistance.

Fujikane hits on two key recent developments within transnational Asian American Studies: the idea and importance of decentering the US and the recognition that multiple vectors of power crisscross the transpacific. Fujikane argues that “an analysis of settler colonialism positions indigenous peoples at the center, foregrounding not settler groups’ relationships with each other or with the U.S. settler state, but with the indigenous peoples whose ancestral lands settlers occupy” (Fujikane 2008, 9). Fujikane also points out that there are significantly different power relations among

Asian settler groups… [T]he intrasettler racism and discrimination they are subjected to illuminate the complex relations of power among settler groups. Some Asian groups, like Filipinos, remain politically and economically subordinated in Hawai‘i, and anti-Filipino racism in Hawai‘i is a legacy of Spanish, American, and Japanese colonial violence and occupation of the Philippines.

(Fujikane 2008, 9)

Fujikane’s example of the multiple layers of colonization and uneven privilege experienced by Filipinos in Hawai‘i speaks precisely to the need to rethink limited binary understandings of power in the Asia/Pacific.

In his foreword to The Transnational Politics of Asian Americans, Don Nakanishi highlights “the impact of international political conflicts and domestic political crises involving Asian homelands on interethnic and intra-community political relations involving Asian American communities” (Nakanishi 2009, xii). These “intra-community political relations,” as Nakanishi calls them, are impacted not just by contemporary events but also by the complex history of past interactions between and among Asian countries of origin. According to Nakanishi, “international politics are pertinent to Asian Americans in relation to a wide spectrum of bilateral and multilateral relations between the United States and Asia (or specific countries of the region that are homelands for Asian Americans)” (Nakanishi 2009, xii; emphasis added). Nakanishi’s emphasis on multilateral as well as bilateral relations moves beyond binary US-Asian relations to account for the importance of intra-Asian relations. In her book Planetary Modernisms, Susan Stanford Friedman uses the term “polycentric” to discuss a similarly complex spectrum of relations on a global scale. Friedman writes, “Polycentric and multinodal suggest power linkages differently. The globe, these adjectives suggest, has multiple centers or nodes of power, not one.Positing different cores existing synchronically within a single time period fundamentally rewrites … a Wallersteinian core/periphery/semiperiphery model” (Friedman 2015, 153).
To insist that the transpacific is not merely US-centric but polycentric shifts our critical perspective toward the identification of multiple networks of power that overlap and interconnect. Describing the transpacific as polycentric does not dissolve power relations altogether or create a field of equals. Nor does it overwrite the reality of US imperial and neocolonial power in Asia and the Pacific. It complicates the dynamics in the region, but not in a satisfyingly counterhegemonic way that promises to disrupt or unsettle existing relations of power, embodying critique through its complexity. Conceptualizing a polycentric transpacific retains the fact of uneven relations of power while pushing past fixed binaries or rigid hierarchies.

The Pacific turn of transnational Asian American Studies entails new directions for the field, its relation to Asian Studies and other scholarly disciplines, and new understandings of the place of the Asian American in the US and within broader regional and global frameworks. Conceptualizing a polycentric transpacific addresses many past omissions and contradictions but also generates new potential problems. Once one recognizes the Asia/Pacific “region” as a complex, multilateral, and polycentric network of interconnections, one must also attend to new issues, such as intra-Asian tensions, the legacies of the specific histories of Asian/Pacific nations and locations, the risks of overlooking peoples at the margins of Asian America, the pitfalls of US-centric or rigid binary thinking, the dangers of positioning Asian Americans as automatically resistant, and the enduring importance of the emphasis on social justice within Asian American Studies. As we reckon with the implications of the transpacific turn in Asian American Studies, we must preserve our ties to the history of the discipline, connect with the new conditions of the present, and anticipate the developments of the future. Above all, we must recognize that Asian Americans are a diverse population, variously positioned with respect to power, standing between and also bridging the Asia/Pacific and the US, two conceptual spheres that are often viewed as distinct yet profoundly overlap.

Notes

1 Recent works that use the term “transpacific” include Choy and Wu’s Gendering the Trans-Pacific World (2017), Takezawa and Okhiro’s Trans-Pacific Japanese American Studies (2016), Sakai and Yoo’s The Trans-Pacific Imagination (2012), Kinnemann and Mayer’s Trans-Pacific Interactions (2009), and Huang’s Transpacific Imaginations (2008) and Transpacific Displacement (2002).

2 For an overview of the debates and useful analysis, read Dirlik’s What is in a Rim? (1998), Wilson and Dirlik’s Asia/Pacific as Space of Cultural Production (1995), including a key chapter by Christopher Connery; Lim et al.’s Transnational Asia Pacific (1999); Hoskins and Nguyen’s Transpacific Studies (2014); and Shu and Pease’s American Studies as Transnational Practice (2015a). Shu and Pease provide a helpful summary of “collaborations among scholars in American studies, Asian studies, Asian American studies, and transpacific studies,” with references to the work of Sucheta Mazumdar, Sau-ling Wong, Susan Koshy, Lisa Lowe, David Palumbo-Liu, Inderpal Grewal, Yunte Huang, Shirley Geok-lin Lim, Erika Lee and Naoko Shibusawa, and Janet Hoskins and Viet Thanh Nguyen (Shu and Pease 2015b, 22–23).


4 For similar arguments about the disruptive power of Asian Americans in the US, see Lowe, “Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity” (1991) and Lowe’s revision of that essay in the third chapter of Immigrant Acts (1996). Sau-ling Wong has critiqued this view of the transnational, however, arguing that Lowe “valorizes” “the migratory process” as “nomadic,” “unsettled,” “multivocal,” “heterogeneous” and “conflicting” (2017, 14). Wong identifies a potential “class bias” that might be “coded into the privileging of travel and transnational mobility in Lowe’s model” (2017, 15).

5 Basara’s Model Minority Imperialism (2006) and Jodi Kim’s Ends of Empire (2010) are important explorations of US imperialism in Asian American studies.
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6 As the editors of *Transnational Asian American Literature* (2006) have noted, scholars have implicitly or explicitly assumed that Asian American literature ultimately refers back to the US: “The site of narrative perspective, albeit a narrative set in the Philippines or India or Brazil or Korea or a dystopic future, it is always assumed, is that of the United States of America” (Lim et al. 2006, 3).

7 See Davé et al. (2004), for a valuable overview of South Asian American Studies and its relation to Asian American Studies. Mixed race Asian Americans are also arguably positioned at the margins of the term Asian American, yet as Michael Omi explains in his foreword to *The Sum of Our Parts: Mixed Heritage Asian Americans* (Omi 2001), the study of mixed race experiences and identity generates many of the same critiques of traditional Asian American studies that the transnational turn has highlighted. According to Omi, *The Sum of Our Parts*

> disrupts the prevailing black/white paradigm of racial discourse by focusing on Asian American mixed-race identity . . . This text does not essentialize the category of “Asian American” nor treat it as a uniform and monolithic group identity. Several of the essays are attentive to the specific experiences of different Asian (pan)ethnicities such as Pacific Islanders, Southeast Asians, and Filipinos. In addition, the volume does not exclusively focus on white-Asian multiracial, but explores ‘minority-minority’ positions and identities. Whiteness is decentered in this examination.

> (Omi 2001, x)

Omi writes, “Lastly, this volume expands the interrogation of multiracial Asian identity by going beyond the borders of the United States” (Omi 2001, x). Even within the United States, “power struggles” over identity, categories, and political influence “do not simply occur across the color line, but also erupt within a community of color to reveal often invisible fault lines” (Omi 2001, xi) that can contribute to intra-Asian and intra-community tensions, for example, among Asian Americans.

8 For their specific arguments, as Suzuki puts it, “see Kauanui 2004, Diaz 2004, [and] Stillman 2004” (Suzuki 2014, 357).

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