

novels, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Childhood among Ghosts* (1976) and *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* (1989) are discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 ranges in focus from Denise Ferreira da Silva's book, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, 'foreground[ing] the dangers of the transparent I and its manifestations as the idealized critical subject' (p.99), to Lukács's *The Theory of the Novel*, claiming that '[t]he realist novel is characterized by a self-reflexivity' (p.99), to an examination of Korean American author Chang-rae Lee's novel *A Gesture Life* (1999) which conflates 'transnational memory and responsibility' (p.99). Chapter 5, 'Semblance, Shame, and the Work of Comparison', deals with the impact of 'new critical rubrics such as diaspora, hemispheric studies, globalization, and polyculturalism, and denationalized frameworks such as Asian North America, the hemisphere, and the Asia-Pacific' (p.121), and takes Sri Lankan Canadian writer Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* (2000) as its central text. Here, the tensions of a novel that 'ends up confronting its own inability to escape its Western positionality, [with] angst-filled realization that sheds light on the condition of literary representation in the post-colonial world' (p.140), are reiterated in Lee's concluding lines: 'the politics of post-identity inheres precisely in the ongoing work of abandoning Asian American Studies while abandoning ourselves to it' (p.152).

Also relates to:

Culture, Identity, Gender and Relationships

History

ASPIRING TO HOME: SOUTH ASIANS IN AMERICA

Bakirathi Mani

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Bakirathi Mani, Associate Professor in the Department of English Literature at Swarthmore College, employs an interdisciplinary structure to frame her close observation of 'the constraints of form and genre that shape the ways in which we look at diasporic popular culture' (p.8). Her ethnographic context is the immigrant communities of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan origin in America; the cultural productions she examines embrace documentary, a Broadway show, visual art festivals, films and literature. Herself an Indian national from Japan, Mani describes her engagement with South Asian public culture as demonstrating how 'locality is experienced relationally and contextually, as an ideology of situated community that includes my own diasporic experience' (p.9). In this volume, '[r]eorienting the purview of Asian American studies westward toward the subcontinent' (p.10), 'the unexpected relation between frameworks of racial politics in the United States and formations of postcolonial nationhood in South Asia' (p.10) are thoroughly examined.

The first chapter, 'Postcolonial Locations', explores Jhumpa Lahiri's collection of short stories, *Interpreter of Maladies*, and her novel, *The Namesake*, 'both texts that feature stories of middle- and upper-middle-class Bengali immigrants' (p.31). Here, Mani describes how diasporic subjects negotiate differences between 'their national, religious, and regional identities on the subcontinent and their ethnic and class identities in the United States' (p.34), and reads these works as postcolonial literature, thereby '[r]ealigning the relationship between immigration, postcoloniality, and citizenship [to enable] us to see the ways in which South Asians produce and inhabit locality' (p.35).

'So Far from Home' tracks the factual narratives of three documentaries, *Knowing Her Place*, *Calcutta Calling* and *Bangla East Side (BES)*, using them as 'ethnographic texts' (p.25). The first documentary features Vasu, a middle-class woman who has migrated more than once between Madras (now Chennai) and New York. For *Calcutta Calling*, the filmmaker Sasha Khokha interviewed teenage girls from Calcutta who had been adopted by White American families in Minnesota. *BES* is a collaboration between the co-directors and young people in an after-school programme aimed at establishing dialogue about Muslim American experiences post 9/11. In *Knowing Her Place*, the protagonist is treated as an individual; in the other two films, the focus is on 'youthful protagonists who reflect new forms of multiculturalism in the United States' (p.81). However each film contributes

to a blurring of difference in class, religion and national origin, leading to a more 'heterogeneous quality of what it means to be "South Asian"' (p.81).

In Chapter 3, 'Beauty Queens: Gender, Ethnicity, and Transnational Modernities at Miss India USA', Mani returns to the subject she opened her introduction with, the Miss India USA pageant. The author attended several such pageants between 1999 and 2004 and compiled an archive of Miss India USA and Miss India pageants in India from 1996 to 2006. The aim of this chapter is to exemplify how the beauty pageant acts as 'a multifaceted site for the formation of South Asian identities and communities' (p.123). Mani also traces the course of charity donations 'from the Miss India USA pageant to various nonprofit organizations in India [outlining] the transnational circuits of gender, culture, and capital that bind together ethnic beauty pageants in the United States with the political and economic development of the Indian state' (p.123).

'The Art of Multiculturalism: Diasporadics, Desh Pardesh, and Artwallah' explores the more domestic annual art festivals organised by young immigrants between 1999 and 2005 in Toronto, New York and Los Angeles, as embodiments of locality with 'an affective experience of belonging' and as 'ethnographic, historical, and performative texts' (p.165). Desh Pardesh, for example, which translates as 'Home Away from Home' (p.171), was the first South Asian art festival in North America and developed out of Salaam Toronto!, a one-day event in 1988 sponsored by Toronto-based South Asian gay men's organisation, Khush, and was a forerunner of Diasporadics and Artwallah.

The concluding chapter, "'Somewhere You've Never Been Before": The American Romance of Bombay Dreams', analyses Andrew Lloyd Webber's Bollywood-inspired musical during its New York run, framing the production as 'a social text about South Asians in diaspora' (p.209). As an archetype of 'being a racial minority in the United States' (p.251), it compounds the way South Asians have 'dynamically reshaped the multicultural landscape of the United States' (p.251), while the cultural works they have produced still reproduce 'notions of postcolonial citizenship' (p.252). South Asians become postcolonial and multicultural subjects who contest the latitude of Asian American studies.

Also relates to:

Culture, Identity, Gender and Relationships

Migration, Immigration and the Refugee Experience

ACROSS MERIDIANS: HISTORY AND FIGURATION IN KAREN TEIYAMASHITA'S TRANSNATIONAL NOVELS

Jinqi Ling

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In this elegantly written, intellectually meticulous reframing of Asian American studies, Jinqi Ling shows that the novelistic oeuvre of Karen Tei Yamashita proposes a South-North axis to extend and reconfigure the pre-existing East-West axis that had been paradigmatically established in Edward Said's *Orientalism*. In his preface, Ling sets out his agenda: 'the reading strategy I adopt involves extension, / revision, or recoding of Yamashita's politics through my own critical methods, which I see as spatial-materialist and neohistoricist in orientation' (pp.xii/xiii). Dividing the corpus of Yamashita's work into two groups, novels which adopt 'extrater/ritorial perspectives' and deal with 'events outside the United States' and those which adopt 'partial or complete U.S. points of view or fictional settings' (p.xiii), Ling is concerned with the ways in which Yamashita highlights Japanese immigration to Brazil pre-World War II and the exploitation of Brazilian-born Japanese manual labourers in Japan, contributing new perspectives on previously under-explored elements of Asian American experience. Yamashita's examination of transnational connections and her 'choice of a South-North per/spective' (p.3) stemmed from her personal experience as a third-generation Japanese American in Southern California, from a desire to understand her family history in Japan, and from her 'incidental discovery of the existence of large Japanese diasporas in contemporary Brazil' (p.3). In the first chapter, Ling discusses Yamashita's 'spatial politics' and 'narrative strategies', harnessed to 'create historical space

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