

Banana Bending

ASIAN-AUSTRALIAN AND ASIAN-CANADIAN
LITERATURES

TSEEN-LING KHOO



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The image shows the Chinese characters for '香港大學' (Hong Kong University) written in a highly stylized, square-format calligraphic style. Each character is contained within a square frame, and the overall composition is vertical, reading from top to bottom.

Hong Kong University Press is honoured that Xu Bing, whose art explores the complex themes of language across cultures, has written the Press's name in his Square Word Calligraphy. This signals our commitment to cross-cultural thinking and the distinctive nature of our English-language books published in China.

"At first glance, Square Word Calligraphy appears to be nothing more unusual than Chinese characters, but in fact it is a new way of rendering English words in the format of a square so they resemble Chinese characters. Chinese viewers expect to be able to read Square Word Calligraphy but cannot. Western viewers, however, are surprised to find they can read it. Delight erupts when meaning is unexpectedly revealed."

— Britta Erickson, *The Art of Xu Bing*

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Introduction

B*anana Bending* is concerned with mapping, interrogating, and creating critical pathways for diasporic Asian literary studies. The book argues that in order to examine the disciplines and production of Asian-Canadian and Asian-Australian literatures, work needs to be considered within layers of nation, community, and the gendered self. Examining these layers enables a rigorous interrogation of the politics of racialisation in existing national spheres of culture and forges new modes of research and analysis for these literatures. To this end, the chapters chart a progression of these concerns by, first, explicating the national contexts for Asians and racialised writing in Australia and Canada and then shifting to examine specifically the significance of these layers for Asian-Australian and Asian-Canadian texts and their construction.

The title, 'Banana Bending', is a playful reference to the physical site from which I write¹ as well as a reformation of an epithet that, in the main, functions as disapproval or dismissal. The judgement implicit in deeming someone 'yellow on the outside, white on the inside' indicates a reductionist attitude to issues of culture, community, and race. Contrarily, I welcome the complex, overlapping, and sometimes contradictory narratives of identity the term 'banana' conjures. It encapsulates the specific concerns of communities in diaspora and operates as both defiance and recuperation. To this extent, I am using the term to mean hybridised Asian identities in the West, rather than specific reference to mixed-race origins, which is sometimes how the term is used. Examples of claiming and flaunting the 'banana' tag can be found in a range of popular cultural sites and critical deliberations about identity, from the Chinese-Canadian 'Banana Bloggers' who take advantage of Web diaries to express their opinions² to Chinese-

Australian filmmaker Tony Ayres's use of the term in *China Dolls*, a film about queer Asian-Australians. Given that this book interrogates and examines new strategies of reading, identification, and politicisation, it should be considered as bending 'banana' literature, that is, transforming current understandings of diasporic Asian literatures and their attendant critical apparatus.

The Australian and Canadian styles of multiculturalism are relatively similar (Australia based its agenda on Canada's policy), and the criticism of the policy has engaged with comparable issues such as the forms and practices of liberal racism. Critics such as Jon Stratton and Ien Ang consider this 'top-down', policy-driven style of multiculturalism as robbing the concept of revolutionary potential. They compare it to the unofficial multiculturalism that exists in the United States: "in the United States multiculturalism can only be conceived as *subverting* the national, while the Australian [and Canadian] national can be represented as *constituted by* multiculturalism" (151).³ Of course, national structures are rarely homogeneous, and Stratton and Ang's point about the policy draining energy from radical change perhaps neglects to acknowledge the material advantages in official multiculturalism. Simplistic versions of multiculturalism and its consequences often circulate in right-wing discourse, and it usually reveals "a binary approach to power relations, where any questioning of positionality or power is translated into rule by the other . . . so that power structures are not redefined, merely inverted" (Gunew, "Multicultural" 451). A knowingly complex and adaptable multiculturalism is a valuable socio-cultural environment for Asian-Australian and Asian-Canadian authors. In contrast to Stratton and Ang's argument, Chinese-Canadian author Paul Yee believes that "multiculturalism gives a useful message it's just one tool to fight racism. . . But it's important that this come from the top, as government policy" (Interview 345). Indeed, the presence of official support for such issues as equality and anti-discrimination sets the tone for the type of society envisaged by its citizens. Moreover, Gordon Clark, Dean Forbes, and Roderick Francis argue that "[m]ulticulturalism involves a claim for recognition which goes beyond merely accepting the existence of difference" (xii), and it is on this point of fully recognising Other groups, particularly racial minorities, that official multiculturalism often fails. This book is predicated on the recognition of value in communities and individuals exercising confident cultural and social citizenships.

Many of the continuing debates on multiculturalism revolve around terminology and categorisation. It has even been claimed in Australia recently

that the term ‘multiculturalism’ has “outlived its purpose” (Johnstone 29). In most discussions in Australia and Canada, multiculturalism has become synonymous with equity programmes, promoting diversity, and supporting those from identified ethnic communities. While some critics attempt to ‘ethnise’ everyone in society to make the deployment of community or class membership more obvious, the term ‘ethnic’ still defines “one’s sense of both belonging to a group and being ‘exclu[ded] from the national definition of a country’” (Gunew, *Framing Marginality* 49). Among the major debates in multicultural studies is the erosion and destabilisation of the connection between ethnicity and marginal identities. In addition, this field regularly interrogates cultural and racial assumptions through diversifying sectors including politics, the arts, and social justice.

When Asian artists actively engage with discourses of how they and their creative works are represented, they work towards countering stereotypes and creating alternative, nuanced Asian-Canadian and Asian-Australian subjectivities. This necessary step of acknowledging the conditions of production and distribution for their work, and in other creative spheres, enables these groups to move towards fully exercising cultural citizenship. When I argue for these Asian authors to ‘frame themselves’ and their work, I am proposing an active, interrogative, and confidently political structure for Asian-Canadian and Asian-Australian writers and their attendant critical studies. Russell Leong has stated that “[a]s we imagine our lives, we invent ourselves” (“Home Bodies” 12). My deployment of ‘framing’ does not signify the limits of the fields in question but, in fact, sanctions what Vijayandran Devadas calls “the discursive densities” of “lived realities” (71). *Banana Bending* also incorporates considerations of class in discussions of racialisation and community. Class differences affect the practices available for individuals to negotiate issues of identity. Andrew Jamrozik, Cathy Boland, and Robert Urquhart assert that “[t]rue multiculturalism . . . would have to be concerned not only with life-styles but also with life chances” (105). The effect of social mobility and privileged class access on literary production leads to differing forms of discrimination. As Gillian Bottomley observes, “[w]hen ethnicity co-exists with class disadvantage, ‘then powerful inducements exist for the members of such groups to assimilate into the mainstream culture, since this will improve their chances for a better life’” (*From Another Place* 24). Many of the works studied in this book reveal what these inducements are and how ambivalent personal and political negotiations address these lived conflicts. Discrimination is directed at lower socio-economic classes as much as those who are considered upper- or upper-middle class, as is

evident in the controversy about the ‘monster houses’ of the affluent business classes who emigrated from Hong Kong to British Columbia in the 1980s⁴

In constructing a frame of political activism and knowledge of coalitional powers for Asian literary production in Australia and Canada, this book produces unique comparisons between Australian and Canadian racial minority writers and their communities. Canadian author Larissa Lai describes her empowerment through writing as “a means of communication and discussion” and “a tool by which I find myself able to assert a presence” (“Stories” 3). These interventions into existing fields of national literature can transform writing and publishing conditions for Asian writers. Lai, and others, contend that ‘asserting a presence’ is a necessary step in validating cultural citizenship. Roy Miki takes this point further and states that “[w]hat is important for culture to thrive is a renewed belief in the viability of agency, so that writers from a diversity of subject-positions can develop the conditions in which social justice can be achieved through a language free from the tyranny of hegemonies of all kinds” (*Broken Entries* 123). Given Miki’s exhortation, then, the existence of developing fields in Asian-Canadian and Asian-Australian studies disputes, re-creates, and gains control of defining notions of ‘national literatures’ while questioning their cultural efficacy.

The differing socio-cultural environments of Australia and Canada enable comparisons of how national multicultural agendas can influence, compromise, promote, or hinder fields of literary and artistic endeavour by Asian-Australians and Asian-Canadians. To explore the changing socio-cultural discourses in contemporary multicultural countries, I concentrate mainly on literary texts as forms of creative and political expression. These include works of fiction, autobiography, and some performances. The increasing numbers of publications, new writers, and academic researchers indicate a significant momentum in marking out and creating Asian-Australian and Asian-Canadian spaces.⁵ In answer to the question of whether sheer numbers of works or presence of authors can alter racial and cultural perceptions or inequalities, or whether words can ‘change things’, Leo Bersani argues “literature may not *have* much power, but it should certainly be read as a display of power” (in Frow, *Marxism* 234). Gaining literary/authorial recognition, altering critical categories, and building cultural community remain important and ongoing objectives. While this urge to step over boundaries is necessary to develop areas further, the lack of an area against which to relate is the problem besetting both Asian-Canadian and Asian-Australian literary studies. The body of criticism and publication, although expanding, is still relatively small, and this means that the fields are only

now achieving significant impetus Don Goellnicht's recent overview of Asian-Canadian literature's "protracted birth" (1) points to the lack of ethnic studies programmes in Canada as one of the key reasons why Asian-Canadian literature seems to be always in the 'announcement' phase

This book also addresses the issues involved when dominant codes recognise and incorporate certain kinds of diasporic Asian literature, allowing that this literature "may be contained within the particular understandings that the dominant grants it" and that it may lose "its latitude as a counterdiscourse and its ability to designate a shifting open space outside the hegemonic" (Palumbo-Liu, "Introduction" 17) These literatures have additional currency as components within the growing area of diasporic Asian literary studies — as contested as this discipline is — and 'travel' across contexts and reading strategies Asian-Australian and Asian-Canadian literary studies also provide valuable comparative perspectives to the more well-established field of Asian-American 'lit-crit'

The use of the term 'Asian' is strategically necessary to counter the plethora of ignorant, negative, or stereotypical images with in-depth and considered study These studies oppose the configuration of the 'Asian' or 'Asian' communities as monolithic or hermetic categories and acknowledge the usefulness of tactical group naming in contemporary societies in which "complicated entanglement of togetherness in difference" is "a 'normal' state of affairs" (Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese* 17) I focus particularly on writers and artists of 'East Asian' descent to oppose and question the collapsed category of 'Asian' while being aware that 'East Asian' is also a grouping that could iterate similar generalisations I deploy 'East Asian' to refer mostly to groups of Chinese and Japanese descent Occasionally in this book, this definition extends to include Korean, Vietnamese, and mixed-race groups In contemporary Western societies, the figure of the 'Asian' is still evoked in all its generality, with xenophobic assumptions either intact or deliberately resurrected Specifically in Canada, Australia, and the United States, this term tends to conjure images of peoples of Chinese or Japanese descent This is due partly to the Pacific Rim positioning of these countries, facing each other across the ocean and juggling economic concerns alongside those of race and culture While the book overall is concerned with Asian-Australian and Asian-Canadian authors, the analysis of their work does not categorise them as, say, the texts of an 'Asian-Canadian' writer but positions them with more specific sites of culture, community, and history For instance, in examining Joy Kogawa's work, I situate her within versions of Japanese-Canadian community and locate her work inside distinctive Canadian literary and cultural histories

The companion term to 'East Asian' is 'South Asian', which refers to writers of Indian, Pakistani, or Sri Lankan descent. It is not in common use in Australia but becoming more widely used in Canada. The demarcation between South and East Asian texts and communities is useful, because each of these groups comes from contrasting political and cultural sites. Generally speaking, South Asian literature and history engages more directly with post-colonial discourses and the socio-political legacies of colonialism. Similarly, East Asian literatures are often produced from histories of legislated exclusion and racist historical flashpoints (e.g., internment, riots). For South and East Asian authors in Western nations, however, experiences of racialisation or alienation are common tropes. The potential for coalitions between these groups to expose and interrogate inequalities and various forms of exclusion in Canada and Australia is significant. The increasing numbers of anti-racist groups and the implementation of their initiatives on a community level confirm the efficacy of group mobilisation for political ends. For the feasibility of this publication, however, discussion focuses particularly on East Asian diasporic texts. English-language texts are also emphasised, because an intrinsic part of the study is the circuits of production, circulation, and consumption for Asian-Australian and Asian-Canadian literature within each of their national contexts. In what ways do they tally with, alter, or reject, national literary bodies?

Chapter 1 provides an overview of race relations, racialisation in the arts, and multicultural politics in Australia, critically examining contemporary political and social formations for Asian-Australians within understandings of nation. It argues that the small population⁶ of Asian communities in Australia, in addition to the enduring 'whiteness' and resistance to confronting racism in Australia, result in an environment that is not conducive to the growth or institutionalisation of Asian-Australian studies. Considering Australia's deliberate international position and the growing 'borderlessness' of world trade and economics, Stephen Castles observes that it is in these conditions that recycled racisms emerge and "it is only because global influences make national culture so precarious that immigrant minorities appear as a serious danger" (40). Australia's historical perception of itself as isolated is "an imperialist conceit" (Lake 90), and the waxing interests in the Asia-Pacific trade zones exposes this narrow idea. Adding to the Hansonite paranoia about a 'new world order' are the significant changes in the numbers and sizes of Australia's ethnic groups. Some of these groups have developed so that the local concentrations of ethnic communities (often referred to in right-wing rhetoric as 'ghettoisation') have become exotic

aberrations in the Australian suburbs. Diane Powell notes that Cabramatta in New South Wales was declared “a tourist area in 1991, but it is essentially a tourist stop for Australians, not for travellers from abroad” (135). Even challenged by these significant communities, there is little momentum through federal or state governments to work towards equity and anti-racism in areas of Australian social and cultural life. In this conservative political climate, there is even more of a need for other organisations to be more politically vocal and to expose discriminatory practices. Prime examples of incidents that have galvanised Australian communities are those surrounding the SS *Tampa* and its ‘cargo’ of asylum-seekers, as well as ensuing government rhetoric about refugees and border-controls during the 2001 federal election.⁷ For Asian-Australian groups, the government’s lukewarm approach to anti-racism makes the process of lobbying for changes in policy or negotiating the restrictions of literary funding all the more difficult, and all the more necessary.

Chapter 2 addresses the other national focus of this book, the formations of Canadian multiculturalism. The chapter contends that Canada’s recognition of racial minority citizens through official edicts and ensuing anti-racist initiatives combat, to some extent, the legacy of racism represented by its history of anti-Asian legislation and violence. As a government policy, multiculturalism draws censure from both right- and left-affiliated critics and authors. Franco-Canadians read multiculturalism’s implementation as an attempt to dilute their influence on Canadian policy and politics. Multiculturalism allowed limited recognition of indigenous peoples and immigrants, and, in many respects, relegated Franco-Canadians to the position of ‘one of the minorities’. The tensions between French-speaking Canadians and English-speaking Canadians manifest themselves in secessionist politics. When groups try to carve new nations out of existing ones, the manoeuvre speaks volumes about the level of frustration for these communities that do not exist happily in multicultural Canada. Janice Kulyk Keefer explains why French-Canadians so strongly favour secession: “[t]he Quebecois . . . have always objected to multiculturalism as a manoeuvre to displace them from their roles as one of the ‘founding races’ of the country, and as such, entitled to recognition as a distinct society rather than as one ethno-cultural minority among many” (“For or Against” 14). The implementation of multiculturalism in Canada has decreased the profile of Franco-Canadians as one of the ‘original’ founders of Canada. This, however, only lends power to the Bloc Quebecois’ successive claims of Franco-Canadian marginalisation and exclusion with regard to conducting national affairs.

Chapter 2 proceeds to substantiate the important consequences of the Japanese-Canadian Redress movement, confirming its social, cultural, and political ramifications a decade later. In addition, it investigates the growth of racial minority community politicisation, especially in the arts, and the nurturing of Asian-Canadian literature as a discipline through community initiatives. Lynette Hunter suggests that the fraught category of what is colloquially known as 'CanLit' has many hurdles in its path of self-definition, and that there are factors that further complicate the circumstances for multicultural literature in Canada:

[i]t was still the case in 1993 that people could take degrees in Canadian Literature, but study it only as a specialism [sic] within British Literature. Any English-language Canadian canon will necessarily be contesting the firmly-defined, dominant British or United States' ideologies that provide the larger virtual public sphere for reading and writing (25)

While Hunter may overstate the novelty of Canadian studies,⁸ her observation of Canadian literature's squeezing between the major influences of Britain and the United States is valid. This squeezing results in a more aggressive assertion of 'Canadian literature', a set of circumstances that can often result in further marginalisation of minority literatures.

Chapter 3 concentrates on renditions of nationhood and citizenship in a range of Asian-Australian and Asian-Canadian texts. The chapter asserts the importance of actively reclaiming citizenship and positioning Asian communities and bodies within foundational narratives and the histories of Australia and Canada. The constructed nature of nation and nationalism informs both the status quo nationalism against which Asian authors are writing and the methods for challenging these nationalisms to become more inclusive, elastic ones.

Used initially in colonial situations to refer to countries that were considered 'not-nations', Benedict Anderson states that the purpose of adopting a single national identity is to fit "the short, tight, skin of nation over the gigantic body of empire" (*Imagined Communities* 13-4). To apply this apt analogy to the contemporary situation of Western countries like Canada, Australia, and the United States entails only a slight reinterpretation of terms. "The gigantic body of the empire" is not scattered across the globe but consists instead of culturally diverse communities existing in 'one' social space. The tensions are concentrated, then, on the processes of mediating cultural difference and societal (dys)functioning. The 'skin of nation' must now fit a wider range of cultural groups than ever before in Canada and

Australia, and the emphasis lies in recreating meanings for 'nation' rather than tailoring groups to represent any cohesive sense of the 'national'.

Chapter 4 shifts away from the structures of nationhood discussed in Chapter 3 to concentrate on issues of community and ethnicity for Asian-Australian and Asian-Canadian authors. It contends that the future strength of Asian-Australian and Asian-Canadian studies and their politics depend on negotiating contingent coalitions with other groups and more broadly defining community. The chapter discusses the term 'ethnicity' and its modulations when it is deliberated alongside multiculturalism in Australia and Canada. Ien Ang's article "On Not Speaking Chinese" clarifies the coalitions among Chinese groups (like the Hakka, Hokkien, and Cantonese) who formed "the greater imagined community of a unified pan-Chinese nation" (7) against the combined hostility of indigenous Indonesians and their discriminatory laws. Presenting a united front to convey a political message proves useful in such instances, but the danger of being engulfed by larger groups always remains. For the less politically established ethnic populations in particular, coalitions can be especially difficult.

While the chapter resists notions of any singular community identity or ethnicity, it does argue that the formation of contingent coalitions between certain groups remains valuable action for raising group profiles and cohering during political activities. Applying Rey Chow's observation that "part of the goal of 'writing diaspora' is . . . to *unlearn* that submission to one's ethnicity" (*Writing* 25), this chapter reads ethnic community negotiations through the events surrounding anti-racist initiatives in Canada such as the controversy surrounding the *Writing Thru Race* conference (Vancouver 1994) and, subsequently, critical analyses of Hiromi Goto's *Chorus of Mushrooms* and Simone Lazaroo's *The World Waiting To Be Made*. Addressing the issue of forging ethnic identities, Gillian Bottomley states that "[t]he central question of [her] research has continued to be 'how do people maintain a positive sense of themselves in circumstances in which they are systematically devalued?' Rephrased in Foucauldian terms, this question could read, how is it possible to resist subjection?" ("Identification" 41). Goto and Lazaroo achieve precisely this form of resistance in their novels, overwriting the surrounding society's discriminatory ascriptions with their own versions of who an Asian woman can be. Their novels insist that the point of multiculturalism proper in Canada or Australia is not to "soften people's hearts — but to debunk the myths of difference that inform those attitudes" (Kay Anderson, "Otherness" 78). The abilities of the texts to render complex and engaging vignettes of growing up in Nanton, Alberta and Perth, Western

Australia, also integrate Other writings about childhood into Canadian and Australian fiction.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus more closely on gender issues and interrogate 'Asian' gender and sexuality as markers of critical cultural shifts in the emerging 'disciplines' of Asian-Canadian and Asian-Australian studies. Each chapter investigates distinct formations of gender in both nations, interrogating the binary of male and female within the twin contexts of Australia and Canada. These issues include literary reconstructions of sexuality for Asian individuals, as well as reassembling categories and ascriptions of masculinity or femininity. Given the deliberate simplicity of (white male) national representations, provocations and challenges for them are many, but these icons have the power to endure. Chapter 5 makes a return to the interrogation of nationalistic discourses, such as war, and contends that the range of Asian masculinities that can represent types of the 'national' are broad and more constructively concentrated in process than in resolution. It examines texts by Brian Castro (*Pomeroy*), Terry Watada (*Daruma Days*), and Wayson Choy (*The Jade Peony*). As well, the discussion of Asian-Australian masculinities draws attention to the photographic works of Hou Leong, who imposes himself on white Australian male bodies in "An Australian", and the performative work of Hung Le (*Yellow Peril from Sin City*), a Vietnamese-Australian comedian. Locating Asian masculinities within national discourses works in two ways. It erodes the whiteness and the 'rightness' of existing national representations while developing specific and alternative ways of representing Asian men.

Chapter 6, similarly, examines Asian women's fiction and versions of family and femininity in Asian women's texts. It focuses specifically on the politics of assimilation and tropes of border-crossing in Hsu-Ming Teo's *Love and Vertigo* and Larissa Lai's *When Fox Is a Thousand*. Asian-Australian and Asian-Canadian women's literature is evolving to speak to more and different audiences, developing into a field beyond the clichéd marketed categories of confessionals or other voyeuristic narratives.

These chapters examine the power of these gendered representations and their persistence in contemporary Canadian and Australian societies. In particular, the latter part of the book narrows the critical focus to Asian gender and sexuality in the context of the national environments detailed earlier in the book. While there is an emphasis on the textual contexts within discourses of nation and Australian or Canadian culture, the use of Asian-American texts and theory is unavoidable in discussing diasporic Asian gender and sexuality, as Asian-Australian and Asian-Canadian studies are in their

early stages. In discussions of diasporic Asian homosexuality in particular, material from American sources provide the theoretical bases from which to recontextualise and specify gay and lesbian representations not yet significantly profiled in Australia or Canada. In the process of complicating and diversifying representations and ways of reading these dialogues, gender representations diverge from recognised tropes of Asian masculinity and femininity. In their lack of certainty about sexual preferences, or their confused gender identifications and roles, contemporary evocations of Asian gender and sexuality present new generations of multi-layered, ambiguous, and unclarified characters. Strategic group or community identifications can result in strong political or social statements, but it is the fractured nature of individual configurations of sexuality and gender that can often propel constructive reformations of masculinity and femininity.

Banana Bending concludes with a discussion of possible directions for both Asian-Canadian and Asian-Australian literary criticism. This document maps the situation as it can be assessed in the early part of the new millennium, but with the fields growing and diversifying so quickly, it indicates only the start of what are becoming dynamic areas of study. The beginnings of the activist impetus bode well for more direct challenges to, and revisions and recreations of, existing structures and canons. One of the most important differences between Australia and Canada with regard to their racial minority artists and the stimulus for further publications or initiatives is the availability of community support. This community support does not necessarily have to be culturally based but, ideally, it allows avenues for informed feedback, learning the restrictions and language of funding applications and for presenting works-in-progress. The success of several Asian-Canadian authors is due in no small part to their participation in the writers' circuits and community events (for example, Wayson Choy, Hiromi Goto, Larissa Lai, Shan Mootoo, and Terry Watada at various Asian Heritage and Writers' Festivals). Lillian Allen lists the combination of factors that can reverse racist practices and exclusionary literary canons as "meaningful change and critical mass" (in Monika Gagnon, "Building" 117). Although the situations in Australia and Canada appear positive for the growth of diasporic Asian criticism and writing, both of the aspects that Allen mentions are crucial if momentum is to continue in the future. The fields will not progress significantly to challenge existing conditions of literary production and consumption if the Asian communities that produce the texts are not participating in politicising themselves, their communities, and, ultimately, transforming their own constitution in configurations of Australian or Canadian culture and nationhood.

Conclusion

These are the gates and you can either kick them open or walk through
in silence Same dif

(Fred Wah, *Diamond Grill* 164)

It is crucial at this point in the growth of diasporic Asian literatures and their criticism to emphasise the Australian and Canadian contexts in which particular works operate. This act of demarcation is a deliberate resistance to the threats posed by the continual development and dominance of Asian-American studies, as well as the danger of buying into myths of 'diasporic community'. While it is undeniable that Asian-American studies and its objectives affect the study of diasporic Asian writing elsewhere, it is equally important to maintain caution about homogenising international contexts. Fears of engulfment or generalisation have been realised with the inclusion of Asian-Canadians as 'American' authors, and the broad categorisation and marketing of many Asian women's texts without particular siting of the works or their authors. This book has argued for complex consideration of the politics and permissions in self-representations of Asian subjectivities in Australia and Canada, particularly addressing facets of nation, community, and the gendered self. In doing so, *Banana Bending* delineates the multiple and layered effects of these factors on individuals, groups, and how they negotiate their creative and socio-political living spaces.

The analysis of the Australian national context emphasises the points at which the government has neglected to activate anti-racist strategies to accompany the nation's multicultural realities. Australia's historical trajectory

is not encouraging for changes in societal practices, as it consistently fails to recognise *and address* the roots of inequity. Examples of this include the deferred efforts for reconciliation with the Aboriginal communities of Australia, as well as the neglected, mostly unknown, historical incidents of Japanese-Australian internment, head tax, and other regulations enacted on Chinese peoples in Australia. Considering the political state of post-Hansonite, John Howard-led Australia — one in which race and politics have become more than ever inextricably tied — the awareness of racialisation and exclusionary processes would seem to promise a more active engagement with these issues. A result of the fraught period of One Nation's rise is the politicisation of Asian communities in Australia. The formation of the Unity Party is just one example of Asian-Australians choosing the political track to vocalise to the government their concerns about Australian society and its policies. Even without the agitation provided by the One Nation Party, this type of civic participation and cultural confrontation can only accelerate once it has been established. This momentum depends on continued growth in Asian-Australian community activism and participation in the public spheres of government policy and the arts. Their confidence in challenging existing structures of discrimination or exclusion signifies the ability to conceive of themselves and their communities as very much a part of Australia and, therefore, with the same levels of citizenship and civic rights. Contrary to some attempts to portray ethnic constituents as 'innocent pawns' for major party recruitment, Gianni Zappala argues that 'ethnic' constituents/groups are quite specific, and strategic, about why they are interested in joining a party or election campaign (70–2). In realising the need for assertive establishment of their citizenship and active repudiation and recreation of representations, many Asian-Australians have undertaken roles in arenas of politics, community management, literature, and other artistic fields.

The building of intercommunity coalitions is important for lobbying impetus as well as creating different (Asian-)Australian spaces. Moreover, the inability or reluctance to work with other racial minority groups for common political causes reinforces the stereotype of anti-racist politics being self-serving or 'ghettoised'. Enduring issues include the politics of 'divide and conquer' endemic to identity politics, maintenance of gender divisions, manifestations of homophobia in ethnic communities, and effects of internalised racism on individuals and communities. Forging more links with other racial minority groups drives future prospects for social change to combat precisely these forms of division and racialisation. Ella Shohat and

Robert Stam claim this cohesion is “what neoconservatives . . . find threatening about the more radical forms of multiculturalism”, that is “the intellectual and political regrouping by which different ‘minorities’ become a majority seeking to move beyond being ‘tolerated’ to forming active intercommunal coalitions” (299–300) In Australia, the next step for Asian communities after establishing a profile and their politicisation involves broadening the focus of anti-racist work to dismantle discrimination and exclusion for all people of colour, not just their own groups Lack of certainty and confidence in voicing their own grievances maintains the difficult relationship between ethnic communities and Aboriginal peoples.

Although the Asian communities in Australia have yet to make significant overtures to Aboriginal groups in forming coalitions against racism in Australia and in Australian social structures, this neglect is not a one-way street Addressing this point, Sneja Gunew argues that

[t]here have been certain kinds of alliances between the old colonizers and Aboriginal peoples, and that has now come out in rather dreadful ways in relation to the continuing battles around what is termed Asian immigration You have spokespeople from the Aboriginal communities who are combining with the right wing in denouncing Asian immigration. Partly that is because of those earlier histories — there are alliances amongst the oppressed and the oppressor that unite against the new groups, particularly Asians from South-East Asia (“Postcolonialism/Multiculturalism” 212)

She adds that the concerns that Aboriginal activists have expressed are “understandable and substantiated fears that discussion of multiculturalism can distract attention from the issue of land rights” (“Multicultural Multiplicities” 455) For a movement of Asian-Australian activism and critical politics to advance constructively, and for Australian institutions to engage constructively with issues of racialisation, one of the most pressing projects is the formation of coalition affiliations between Asian-Australian groups and other racial minority communities in Australia as well as similar groups in other countries. Until racial judgements and resulting inequities are exposed, interrogated, and perhaps even solved, Asian-Australian studies, and multicultural work in general, risks remaining more reactive than original. This is not to say that work currently in circulation is not challenging, but I would emphasise the importance of leading the agenda and not only being subject to it

In contrast, Canada as a nation has a longer history of, and seemingly

more effective processes for, engaging with racial minority concerns. One of the most significant is the recognition and redress of the wartime injustice meted out to Japanese-Canadian citizens, and the official government apologies to Native Canadian groups. The significance of official Redress in 1988 accompanied the validation of racial-minority citizens as Canadians and, as such, able to claim for injustice and to demand equal opportunity. Being able to constitute themselves as 'Canadian' in the eyes of the law fuels the ability to conceive of their own communities and their activities as part of nation-building and, in turn, nation-splitting. An essential part of empowering communities and individuals of Asian descent is the discovery and exploitation of avenues of challenge for status quo representations and processes

Although the Canadian government has acknowledged some past wrongs, the task of eroding or dismantling the racist and exclusionary structures of society remains ongoing. Black Canadian writer and activist Dionne Brand observes that "[n]otions of access, representation, inclusion, exclusion, equity, etc., are all ways of saying 'race' in this country. . . So it's made comfortable to talk covertly about race in this country without saying that we live in a deeply racialized and racist culture which represses the life possibilities of people of colour" (in Monika Gagnon, "Building" 116). Groups of Asian-Canadian literary and political activists who are agitating precisely to expose the racialised culture of Canada have taken up Brand's point. The mobilisation of anti-racist organisations, especially in focusing on racism in the creative arts, testifies to the impetus for changes in existing representations of Canadian culture. Gunew contends that, in contrast to Australia, "in Canada there appear to have been more frequent alliances among indigenous and ethnic groups, which have been united especially by the fact that both are targets of racism by virtue of their status as 'visible minorities'" ("Multicultural Multiplicities" 455). Lucy R. Lippard adds that:

tentative coalitions forged between the various so-called minority cultural communities are not only providing a respite from the confrontational aspect of white/other relationships, but are providing tremendous emotional support and a broader, kinder buffer zone within which to ally and act (in Wah, "Half-Bred" 2)

As others have argued, changes to systems of power and representation, dismantling and exposés of the "sanctioning filter[s]" (Gagnon, *Other Conundrums* 24) of government funding, are ongoing processes that require

vigilance. The coalitions between racial minority artists and indigenous Canadians, such as the now defunct artist-run group Minquon Panchayat, signal a step away from the destructive politics of infighting. Maryka Omatsu attributes the initiatives between Asian-Canadians and Native Canadians to a deliberate solidarity in the face of common discriminations. She describes the formation of the Japanese Canadian-Native Task Force, however, as motivated by impulses beyond contingent politics: “Japanese Canadians feel bonds of kinship with the people of the First Nations, perhaps because at base we come from the same racial stock and there’s a sense that together we’ve shared a history of discrimination in North America” (175). The vastly different histories of Native Canadians and Asian-Canadians, I would argue, invalidate this kind of comparison. The reason is that the particular colonial oppressions and legacies of Canada’s indigenous groups are situations for which Asian-Canadians can express sympathy and some forms of solidarity but cannot claim to share. In saying this, I am not advocating a hierarchy of victimage; rather, I want to iterate the strategic quality of coalitions and their potential for contingent but powerful effects.

Even with the level of attention Asian-Canadian authors have had in the past few years, making inroads into Canadian literary discussions, being in the early stages of the discipline means that there is still much in process. The aims of *Asianadian*, a now defunct journal founded in the 1970s and run by an activist group of Asian-Canadians were:

1. To find new dignity and pride in being Asian in Canada.
2. To promote an understanding between Asian Canadians and other Canadians.
3. To speak out against those conditions, individuals, and institutions perpetuating racism in Canada
4. To stand up against distortions of our history in Canada, stereotypes, economic exploitations, and the general tendency towards injustice and inequality practised on minority groups.
5. To provide a forum for Asian Canadian writers, artists, musicians, etc.
6. To promote unity by bridging the gap between Asians with roots in Canada and recent immigrants (Journal Cover)

All of these aims are still valid, and the fact that none has been made obsolete indicates the slowness of real changes in social relations between dominant Anglo-Europeans and increasingly proactive racial minority communities.

For Asian-Canadian activists and scholars, the influence of Asian-American studies remains strong. Its proximity means that Asian-Canadian

studies continually treads a fine line between critical inspiration and following theoretical trends. The recent crises in Asian-American studies offers a few lessons for disciplines which are only just establishing themselves and emphasising their independence from the umbrella categories of multicultural and Canadian (or Australian). Various State Governors' conservative pushes for 'equality' in educational institutions, particularly in California, had seen the abolition of affirmative-action quotas at some universities. This led to a reduction in the enrolment numbers of African-American and Hispanic-American students, but an increase for Asian-Americans (Kenneth Lee 1). Affirmative action appeared after the fight against the inequalities of judging *only* on merit-based entry exams had already taken place. Two-thirds of Asian-Americans support the arguments against quotas in California — Kenneth Lee asserts that "Asians say they have more in common with whites than with blacks or Latinos" (1). Lee's statement corresponds with Palumbo-Liu's contention that Asian-Americans are the "frontline forces of the white bourgeoisie" ("Los Angeles" 371). These perspectives indicate the inadequacy of self-serving anti-racism, that is, maintaining enthusiasm for the measures only when there is a direct gain for one's own community.

For the survival of ethnic studies in American universities, long-time activist and Asian-American academic Ling-Chi Wang proposed the idea of merging with the smaller but extremely broad-ranging stream of American studies. American studies has met this proposal with little enthusiasm, fearing that their areas of study will be overtaken by the ethnic studies areas. Ironically, the potential abolition of ethnic-identified schools of study meant that taking this drastic step into American studies might have been their only chance to survive. Although Australia and Canada have not implemented the same measures of affirmative action as the United States, the dynamics of the situation are equally applicable. To gain recognition and validation for, say, Asian-Australians is only ever a partial and deceptive gesture if equal autonomy and efficacy is not afforded Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australians. The processes of racism are the same, they may only differ in the intensity of their application.

Writing Asian-Australian and Asian-Canadian narratives into the historical and creative spaces of each nation broadens definitions of who belongs in those societies. These groups need to see themselves as part of the national, as contributors and transformers, creators and deconstructors. Many Asian-Canadians and Asian-Australians echo 'Model Minority' traits in their attempts to assimilate and not call attention to themselves or their communities. As the discussion of Kogawa's and Sakamoto's texts confirm,

Japanese-Canadians felt themselves somehow to blame for their predicament in the Second World War internment camps. The Redress movement proved that the government of the time acted unjustly and in abrogation of their citizenship rights, apportioning blame away from the communities themselves. Japanese-Australians who were interned in the same period, however, have yet to publicise or discuss their cases. Yuriko Nagata indicated that, during her research for *Unwanted Aliens*, some interviewees refused to talk about the war years, because they were ashamed of what had happened to their communities (“Chrysanthemum”). Until these groups in Australia have the confidence to deliberate openly about these issues, they remain trapped in self-effacement and without the full quota of their civic entitlements. The dissemination of Asian community participation in Australia’s and Canada’s defining national moments — such as fighting in the wars, rebuilding after national floods, and pioneering the growth of small towns — recreate figurations of who ‘rightly’ belongs and instil a grounded sense of how these communities have developed. Whether they are oral history-/documentary-style publications such as those by Diana Giese, or the hybrid biotext and photobiographic forms of Fred Wah and William Yang, they succeed in ‘colouring’ in national narratives and literatures and, therefore, composing Asian groups as whole citizens within Canada and Australia.

Asian-Canadian and Asian-Australian authors rework representations and modulations of what ‘community’ can mean, for all its contradictory facets of restriction, encouragement, judgement, and nurturing. Asian communities are taking more control over the representation of their group identities, creative possibilities, and achieving social change at legislative levels through various group coalitions and conditional affiliations. The ethnicity tag, and the contemporary racialised overtones which accompany it, can be refitted and employed for reasons other than ‘ghettoisation’. A like-minded writing community, such as the Asian-Canadian Writers’ Workshop (ACWW), facilitates the work and publication of a growing group of Asian-Canadian authors. The political lobbying and knowledge power derived from such arrangements enables the staging of a wider range of artistic and literary events, more streamlined funding applications, and a higher chance of success in these projects. Moreover, when discussing the increase in Asian-Canadian publications, Hiromi Goto states “I would specify that there is a recent growth not in Asian-Canadian creativity, but in the distribution of Asian-Canadian works” (Interview 3). Her attribution of successes to increased attention, and not increasing numbers of writers or amount of writing,

supports the argument that the contemporary coalitions and canner negotiations with Canadian literary funding bodies by Asian-Canadians gains results.

The situation in Australia, however, is not as conducive to racial minority coalitions. The rapid rise and fall of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party and its racist election rhetoric boosted the politicisation of Asian-Australians. Leigh Dale argues that "[c]rucial to [One Nation's] rhetoric is the appropriation by various speakers of majority status, usually termed 'the mainstream', a trope that derives particular force and legitimacy when it is framed in terms of the national and specifically of protecting the national interest" ("Mainstreaming" 9). Dale's contention about the trope of the mainstream gaining importance when framed nationally fixes precisely on the reason why this book locates Asian-Australians in Australian history while also insisting on community activism and the forming of coalitions to induce specific changes. Although Asian-Australians have been involved previously in politics and various public roles, the momentum for lobbying government or other institutions has not yet been apparent.

The range of publications in this book demonstrates the possibilities and progressive initiatives of alternative or smaller presses, as well as the willingness of some larger publishers to support Asian-Canadian literature that engages with challenging issues for Canadian society (an example of the latter being Sakamoto's first novel) These instances of wider and more steady dissemination of Asian-Canadian literature mesh with community-oriented projects, festivals, and writing groups. The outcome is an Asian-Canadian literary scene that sustains itself through public profile and 'grass-roots' support of authors, established and new Another aspect on which Canada and Australia differ quite significantly is the way in which the potential reading audience for Asian-Australian texts is, at the moment, quite narrowly defined as a majority 'white' one, whereas Asian-Canadian work can justify the effort of launching novels at specific Asian community functions or festivals. The readings of Simone Lazaroo and Hiromi Goto manifest the complicated positionings and possible strategies within the constraints of different community discriminations and exclusions. Both novels interrogate any clear-cut definitions of community and ethnicity while still presenting narratives with culturally specific myths, in-jokes, and anxieties. These discussions advance beyond merely rejecting ascriptions of ethnicity (though this is a significant aspect) to connecting new renditions of Asian families, individuals, and their connections in society. Similarly, as the chapters on gender demonstrate, alternate visions of Asian-Australian and Asian-

Canadian masculinities and new directions for diasporic Asian women's literature require a multi-pronged approach which includes further historical establishment and 'writing-in' narratives alongside rhetorically adventurous and more textually playful literatures. Richard Fung emphasises the point that "[w]hatever formal strategies [Asian artists] choose, we need to situate and question ourselves as *subjects*. Not how we are seen but how *we* see. We must center our work on our own problems, desires and foibles" ("Multiculturalism" 19). The ability to frame themselves in society gives Asian-Australian and Asian-Canadian writers the power to create fresh depictions of themselves as subjects *and*, I would add, as readers. This latter point is important to ensure that narratives can be read in frames other than those of reactivity or the expectation to inform or educate. An example of this is Gordon Brent Ingram's declaration that Paul Wong's video, *Blending Milk and Water*, is "the stuff of new Canadian mythology" (18). Ingram warns against classifying it *only* as a gay or AIDS film, while also emphasising its radical view on the sexual displacement of gay Asians in Canada.

For Asian-Australian gay and lesbian studies, the momentum is only just beginning. The ability for gay and lesbian texts to cross cultural and national borders to site examinations within 'queer' frames may dilute the particularities of Asian-Canadian or Asian-Australian queer studies. As I have argued consistently, however, coalitions are as necessary as specification and context.

After making themselves visible, literally and politically, on various levels of representation, Asian writers in Australia and Canada must persist in interrogating the continual casting of racial minority citizens as 'out of the ordinary'. Many authors engage in this project by locating Asians in national histories and other hegemonic narratives. In this context, Australian cultural studies scholar Ghassan Hage playfully recasts the question of whether multiculturalism is 'good for the nation' by asking whether Whites are still good for Australia and whether they need help escaping their ghettos for the "multicultural mainstream" (*White Nation* 247). Hage's satire urges the development of the ability to think of Other communities and individuals as part of the decision-making and society-building structures of Australia and Canada. Until Asian-Australian and Asian-Canadian literatures can be read not only for their cultural specificities but also for their ability to more broadly represent 'Australianness' and 'Canadianness', they remain within the confines of 'old-style' multicultural literature.

The core issues of defining Asian-Australians or Asian-Canadians and

what 'Asianness' in these contexts might mean in literary and other representations must be coupled with interrogations of citizenship and belonging in formations of national literatures. It is this overarching, yet closely engaged, perspective that progresses these areas of study beyond merely binaristic or oppositional models. The difference in size of Asian populations creates very specific differences in political and creative momentum for artists of Asian descent in Canada and Australia. While these factors will still dictate community ability to build momentum and initiate larger changes, the interrelationship of Asian-Australian, Asian-Canadian, and Asian-American studies provides powerful encouragement to sustain and improve levels of literary and political representation. A proliferation of Lisa Lowe's 'alternative social practices' is not an instance of supplementing or degrading the existing national literatures but of rebuilding definitions of what national literatures are for. Especially in Australia, authors of Asian descent (with the exception of Brian Castro) are hardly established and, as yet, without a literary history directly addressing their work.

For both Asian-Canadian and Asian-Australian bodies of literature, this book initiates part of this specific and disregarded history. In doing so, I hope "it expands our field of vision without being expansionist, it includes without consuming, it appreciates without appropriating, and it seeks to temper politics with ethics" (Mae G Henderson 26). In many ways, this study is a starting point, one that establishes a basis from which to discuss these new disciplines, their attendant histories, and their complex interactions with existing versions of reading and representation. The processes of writing, publishing, and reading literature are imbued with a certain set of power relations that are central to changing the status quo. Avtar Brah concludes *Cartographies of Diaspora* by emphasising the importance of asking about

what patterns of equity or inequality are inscribed, what modes of domination or subordination are facilitated, what forms of pleasure are produced, what fantasies, desires, ambivalence and contradictions are sanctioned ... what types of political subject positions are generated by the operations of given configurations of power (248)

Researchers in Asian-Canadian and Asian-Australian literary studies need to confront these issues and consider how the politics of production mesh with reading and/or funding strategies for creative artists. A larger project, heralded by this book, is the examination of diasporic Asian literary studies, whether such a creature exists, and the implications of such a 'globalised' field of inquiry.¹

Increasingly, the study of diasporic and other racial minority literatures is less about straightforward reclaiming a voice or asserting identity and more to do with charting the constantly shifting processes of 'identity politics'. Smaro Kamboureli advises critics and artists to view "comfortable positions with suspicion" and posits the goal as being "mastery of discomfort, a mastery that would involve shuttling between centre and margin while displacing both" (*Scandalous* 130). Although population plays a significant part in the momentum and profile of critical and artistic activities, essential aspects of nurturing a dynamic community culture include drawing on strategic coalitions, establishing mentor structures, and the ability to exercise full cultural citizenship through confrontation, re-creation, and validation. Asian-Australian and Asian-Canadian literary studies have moved on from questioning their own presence to become forceful areas that pose broad, incisive questions about national cultures, conditional 'solidarity', and the transformative possibilities of individual creativity

Notes

Introduction

- 1 'Banana bender' is a colloquial term for someone from Queensland, Australia, where I am based.
- 2 See the "Banana Blog" ('blog' is slang for 'web-log', a form of online diary) at <http://drivel.ca/banana/index.html>.
- 3 Stratton and Ang continue with these details, emphasising some of the mechanics at work in official multiculturalism:

[I]n the US, the politicisation of multiculturalism has been largely from the bottom up, its stances advanced by minority groups (African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Asian-Americans and so on) who regard themselves as excluded from the American mainstream (and for whom the multicultural idea, *pace* Schlesinger, acts as an affirmation of that exclusion), while in Australia multiculturalism is a centre piece of official government policy, that is, a top-bottom political strategy implemented by those in power precisely to improve the inclusion of ethnic minorities within national Australian culture (126–7).

- 4 See Katharyne Mitchell, "Fast Capital, Modernity, 'Race', and the Monster House."
- 5 Significant new publications bringing together the important work of Asian-Canadian cultural theorists include Monika Kin Gagnon's *Other Conundrums: Race, Culture, and Canadian Art* (2000) and Richard Fung's *Like Mangoes in July: The Works of Richard Fung* (2002). The appearance of these books indicates, to some degree, the interest and currency of these topics.
- 6 Opponents of Asian immigration and some right-wing politicians always emphasise the overwhelming and villainous presence of Asian-Australians. This tactic often involves inflating the population of Asians in Australia (approximately 7 per cent of the overall Australian population in 1998) to magnify the threat.

- 7 See the special issue of *Overland*, “New World Borders”.
- 8 See the dissertations of Alan Lawson (1987) and Margery Fee (1981), both of which establish the history of ‘Canadian literary studies’ as a discipline.

Chapter 1

- 1 Some of the most significant developments in recent years are the ramifications of the Mabo ruling, a judgment that conceded for the first time that Aboriginal Australians were the original owners of the land. For more information see Michael Bachelard’s *The Great Land Grab* (1997) and Peter Butt, Robert Eagleson, and Patricia Lane’s *Mabo, Wik, and Native Title* (2001).
- 2 See special issue of *Overland* (164 [2001]) and Peter Mares’ *Borderlines: Australia’s Treatment of Refugees and Asylum Seekers* (2001).
- 3 Suvendrini Perera and Joseph Pugliese argue, still, that the situation has not altered that much: “[t]he current re-racialisation of Australian identity targets in particular indigenous groups who must be re-situated, structurally, at the bottom end of the ethnic scale. That is, it targets those racialised groups least conducive, corporeally and culturally, to the process of assimilation, and therefore least likely to be re-cycled into Anglo-Australians” (“Racial” 2).
- 4 See Ellie Vasta and Stephen Castle’s *The Teeth Are Smiling: The Persistence of Racism in Multicultural Australia* (1996), which engages principally with issues of racialisation in the Australian context. Also, see the John Docker and Gerhard Fischer collection of essays, *Race, Colour, and Identity in Australia and New Zealand* (2000).
- 5 Texts about Japanese–Australians in general are scarce, and the publication of Keiko Tamura’s *Michi’s Memories: The Story of a Japanese War Bride* (2001) is significant because of this dearth.
- 6 These include Gerhard Fischer’s *Enemy Aliens: Internment and the Homefront Experience in Australia 1914–1920* (1989) about German–Australians in the First World War, Barbara Winter’s *Stalag Australia: German Prisoners of War in Australia* (1986), and Bill Bunbury’s *Rabbits and Spaghetti: Captives and Comrades, Australians, Italians and the War 1939–1945* (1995) detailing the experiences of Italo–Australians during the Second World War. There are several books about the ‘Cowra breakout’, but these works speak more of the fear of ‘contamination’ from within than of the political and social conditions for Japanese–Australians.
- 7 In February 1999, a visit and seminar by Japanese–Canadian academic and Redress activist Roy Miki forged new links between Canadian and Australian Japanese communities. The smaller Australian communities lack the momentum necessary for instigating legal protests so, Nagata hoped, the seminars would attract interest and bring these issues to general public and academic attention.
- 8 Part of the Japanese–Canadian redress funds went towards anti-racist imperatives

- and the creation of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, an institution that has not been without controversy over the ways in which money has been spent
- 9 At the national Federation of Ethnic Community Councils Association (FECCA) conference in November 1998, the prime minister's intentions to privatise translation and language services were greeted with criticism and derision. Members of the community councils viewed it as yet another indication of the Howard government's failure to support the needs of different communities in Australia
 - 10 The amorphous asset of being a true Australian is a card played by former Senator Bill O'Chee when he accuses One Nation's Heather Hill of being 'not Australian enough' for a Senate seat. O'Chee, an Australian of Chinese descent, is a figure who is caught between pacifying the conservative rural segments of the National Party and directly confronting One Nation about racist policies and xenophobic comments
 - 11 Kalantzis and Cope end, however, on a note of economic rationalism which sits uncomfortably in a piece that hoped to widen conceptualisations of culture and art "[a]s we form increasingly significant trading and cultural relationships in the [Asia], these will have to be packaged in the openness of multiculturalism we might then be able to sell this multiculturalism to Asian countries as a *cultural technology*" (33, emphasis added)
 - 12 Consider the statement by one of the Asian Diaspora Day (23 August 1997, University of Queensland) participants who tried to rally a Japanese workmate to take part in anti-racist protests. The Japanese friend replied that the Japanese did not consider themselves 'Asian' and therefore were not the target of Hanson's rhetoric
 - 13 Politicians who spoke at the FECCA conference include Prime Minister John Howard, then Opposition Leader Kim Beazley, the Premier of Queensland Peter Beattie, the Federal Immigration Minister Phillip Ruddock, and the Democrats' Immigration spokesperson (and new party leader from 2002) Andrew Bartlett
 - 14 See *Ethnicity, Class and Gender in Australia* (Bottomley and de Lepervanche), *Intersections: Gender/Class/Culture/Ethnicity* (Bottomley, de Lepervanche, and Martin), *Mistaken Identity: Multiculturalism and the Demise of Nationalism in Australia* (Castles et al)
 - 15 These authors are Yasmine Gooneratne, Ninh Nguyen, Ding Xiaoqi, Subhash Jareth, Le Hang, Ouyang Yu, and Leshe C. Zhao. All of their work for *Influence* is new
 - 16 For books on the Demidenko/Darville events, see Reimer, as well as Jost, Totaro, and Tyshing
 - 17 Allen and Unwin, who publish Vogel award-winning manuscripts, now check their authors' bona fides and require the writers to sign a statutory declaration

- See also Kateryna Olijnyk Longley's article on these issues, "Fabricating Otherness"
- 18 This exposing of 'inauthentic' Aboriginality extends to authors such as Wanda Koolmatie, Bobbi Sykes, and Sally Morgan
 - 19 Recent publications in the area of Asian-Australian literary and cultural studies include Shen Yuanfang's *Dragonseed in the Antipodes Chinese-Australian Autobiographies* (2001), Ien Ang et al's *Alter/Asians Asian-Australian Identities in Art, Media and Popular Culture* (2000), and Helen Gilbert, Tseen Khoo, and Jacqueline Lo's *Diaspora Negotiating Asian-Australia* (2000)
 - 20 A number of historical and oral history works examine the engagement with Asian communities and their movements in Australia's history, engaging with the process of rewriting 'Australia' through history These include the popular historical work of Eric Rolls' *Sojourners* (1993) and *Citizens* (1996), and David Walker's *Anxious Nation* (1999) Several sociological and demographic studies detail community concentrations and/or other types of statistical data This includes publications such as James Coughlan and Deborah McNamara's *Asians in Australia Patterns of Migration and Settlement* (1997) Still others have focused on particular ethnic/cultural groups such as Mandy Thomas' *Dreams in the Shadows Vietnamese-Australian Lives in Transition* (1999), and Nancy Viviani's *The Indochinese in Australia, 1975–1995 Burnt Boats to Barbecues* (1996)
 - 21 See Neil Gotanda's article, "Multiculturalism and Racial Stratification", about the contrasting representational spaces occupied by Korean-American and African-American communities
 - 22 'Model Minority' is often used to describe Asian communities in Western nations because of the stereotype of their non-confrontational attitudes and quiet success in business It also becomes a restrictive ascription when applied by the communities to themselves See Henry Yu's *Thinking Orientals Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America* (2001) and Robert G Lee's *Orientalism Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (1999)

Chapter 2

- 1 Reform became the Canadian Alliance party in 2000 Manning was voted out as leader in favour of Stockwell Day This book locates the Canadian Reform party as complementary to the Australian One Nation party, marking a concurrent resurgence of conservative politics in both nations in the mid-late 1990s References to this party, then, are to Reform and Preston Manning rather than its current incarnation of Canadian Alliance (and Stephen Harper)
- 2 The motives of the Canadian Club in Hong Kong included trying to change the representation of Asian investment in Vancouver (and Canada in general) from only a negative one, and "they did not want Canada to be tarred with

- the same racist image that was being applied to Australia at that time [1988–89]” (Mitchell, “The Hong Kong Immigrant” 306)
- 3 Ong and Nomimi argue that “diasporic populations can introduce new or revive older forms of oppression into a nation-state” (*Ungrounded* 326) but also champion “the need to develop a new utopian imaginary that combines the experiences of displacement, travel, and disorientation, which many Chinese transnationalists have successfully negotiated, with an emergent sense of social justice” (330) As well as her universalisation of what might constitute ‘social justice’, I would question what it means for Chinese transnationals to “successfully negotiate” displacement and disorientation The multi-targetted forms of racism encountered in the West must surely also have effects
 - 4 The commission was headed by Henry Bird and awarded Japanese-Canadians \$1.2 million for *material* losses during the internment period There was no acknowledgement of the abrogation of their human rights or of the continuing effects that this uprooting caused the communities (Kobayashi, “Japanese-Canadian Redress” 3)
 - 5 See the Head Tax Redress movement’s webpage <http://www.asian.ca/redress/>
 - 6 See Miki “Asiancy”, Goellnicht “A Long Labour”, and Beauregard “What Is at Stake”
 - 7 See Miki’s chapter “Sliding the Scale of Elision” in *Broken Entries*
 - 8 The success for NeWest Press was Goto’s *A Chorus of Mushrooms* (1994), which won the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best First Book in the Caribbean and Canada Region 1995, was co-winner of the Canada-Japan Book Award 1995, and won the Grant MacEwan College Book 2000–01 Larissa Lai’s *When Fox Is a Thousand* (1995), published by Press Gang, was short-listed for the Chapters/Books in Canada First Novel Award
 - 9 The following publications have special issues focused on Asian-Canadian, diasporic Asian, or ‘ethnic’ literatures *Essays on Canadian Writing* (57 [1995] “Writing Ethnicity”, 75 [2002] “Race”), *Canadian Literature* (140 [1994] “East Asian-Canadian Connections”, 163 [1999] “Asian Canadian Writing”), *West Coast Line* (13–4 [1994] “Colour An Issue”, 30–3 [1996–97] “Transporting the Emporium Hong Kong Art and Writing through the Ends of Time”), *Prairie Fire* (21–4 [2001] “Race Poetry, Eh?”)

Chapter 3

- 1 See Ouyang Yu’s article, “Will Words Not Hurt Them?” for examples of enduring “verbal violence to Chinese in Australian literature” (103)
- 2 See Walker’s *Anxious Nation*, particularly Chapter Seven, “Pacific Visitors”
- 3 For examples of continuing discourses of disease surrounding ‘Asians’ in Australia, see Khoo, “Who” 18 A detailed examination of the rhetoric of disease and

infection and the ways in which it was deployed in colonial Australia can be found in Jo Robertson's PhD dissertation, "In a State of Corruption Dreaded Disease and the Body Politic" (1999)

- 4 This programme involved 'bringing home' United States servicemen's scattered progeny, conceived during their tours of duty in Vietnam Their status as citizens of the United States is constantly in question through intricate and often contradictory criteria (having to prove themselves the children of fathers who often did not even give their real names to their sex partners) even though, ostensibly, the policy of welcoming them 'home' is straightforward
- 5 See Neilson's article "Threshold Procedures 'Boat People' in South Florida and Western Australia"
- 6 See Guy Beauregard, "After *Obasan* Kogawa Criticism and Its Futures"
- 7 See Ueki's discussion of the stone bread and its analogies with Biblical manna, emphasising the Christian symbolism in the text and the forms of 'love' eventually discovered in the novel Sau-ling Wong includes the sections "The Case of the Stone Bread" and "Stone Bread An Intratextual Reading" (19–29) in the first chapter of her book, *Reading Asian-American Literature*
- 8 Mason Harris draws a rather generalised line between responses to internment and generational placement for Japanese-Canadians, attributing various reactions to whether they are *issei*, *nisei*, or *sansei* Although this model of criticism remains problematic because of its inherent generalisations, it is usefully used when Harris focuses on recollections and their effects "[f]or Emily remembering means re-establishing the facts of history, for Naomi, it forces the reliving of a damaged development" (44)
- 9 The name of the hill is most likely an allusion to Mackenzie King, the prime minister of Canada in the period of Japanese-Canadian internment
- 10 See Roy Miki's "Unclassified Subjects Question Marking 'Japanese Canadian' Identity" in *Broken Entries*
- 11 This is Sneja Gunew's term in her article discussing obligation and immigrant 'gratitude', "Against Multiculturalism" She uses the analogy of the 'host/parasite-guest' throughout a whole section, playing on notions of invitation, etiquette, and who has control of the party
- 12 The majority male population of these Australian and Canadian Chinatowns was often disillusioned by the lack of opportunity for, and discrimination against, them once they were in these countries The prices for bringing in family or a bride became so prohibitive that many never married and eked out lonely lives in Chinatown rooming houses, becoming a generation of 'old uncles' to the children of families that prospered after exclusionary laws were lifted
- 13 Timothy Tsu, writing about Chinatowns in Kobe, Japan, states

The Chinatowns were the victim of a vicious cycle that prevented them from physical and social upgrading Over the decades, not a few Chinese had become economically successful Most of them chose to move their homes out into the

suburbs. By moving they were after not just a more salubrious living environment, but also the social status of the suburban Westerners and upper-class Japanese. The wealth generated by the Chinatowns thus made little impact on their physical conditions (3)

- 14 See the CHAF site at <http://www.chaf.lib.latrobe.edu.au/>
- 15 See Denise Chong's *The Concubine's Children*, Wayson Choy's *Jade Peony and Paper Shadows*, Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café*, and Judy Fong Bates's *China Dog* for fictional/autobiographical depictions of Chinatown
- 16 *Survival and Celebration* details the lives of Chinese–Australian women from colonial to contemporary Australia. It tells of the intensely discriminatory environment in many Australian towns and cities and, more specifically, it includes white Australian women's lives and the difficulties of living with a Chinese partner in strongly racially divided social spheres.
Also, see *Banquet Ten Courses to Harmony* (1999) by Annette Shun Wah and Greg Aitken. The book is a popular overview of the evolution and influence of Chinese food and restaurants in Australia. It includes oral histories from restaurant families outlining their experiences and those of their predecessors. Partial recollections of women's roles and positions within these outlets can be gleaned
- 17 See Kate Bagnall's doctoral dissertation, "Golden Shadows on a White Land: The Real and Imagined Lives of Chinese Men, White Women and Their Children in Colonial Australia"
- 18 Referring to the odd circumstance of a government intervening in field workers' sex lives, Evans points out that

it is a measure of the racist nature of colonial society that any European prostitute found "cohabiting with Chinese" or ministering to the "carnal lust of niggers" was logically defined as being "of the very lowest class." The Queensland Government was thus prepared to countenance, in towns adjacent to areas where large aggregations of "coloured" male labourers were indentured upon sugar plantations or pearling luggers, the importation of a controlled number of Japanese females to serve as "suitable outlets for their sexual passion" (13)

- 19 There was also an instance when one of Zhou's line drawings of an Aboriginal group was deemed "caricature", and Zhou argued against this categorisation with its implication of 'making fun' of his subject matter
- 20 Consider the current Australian debates around authenticity and validation epitomised by the Leon Carmen/Wanda Koolmatrice hoax, Eddie Burrup, Archie Weller, and the accusations from his own family against Mudrooroo
- 21 See Brewster, *Literary Formations* 16–7
- 22 In an article which purportedly seeks to interrogate the manner in which One Nation and Pauline Hanson mobilise racial stereotypes and how these might be acceptable in 'Inalan' politics, Mudrooroo deploys numerous unquestioned clichés of his own about Vietnamese communities, and Asians in general ("Perils

- of Pauline”) Although he might have been attempting to depose ‘popular’ myths about the Vietnamese in Inala, what results is a listing of what ‘is said’, or ‘is thought’ of Vietnamese–Australians by the equally collapsed category of ‘Inalans’
- 23 Another case which galvanised black and Asian groups was that of Korean mother and shopkeeper, Soon Ja Du’s shooting of a teenage black girl, Latasha Harlins The case exposed many of the issues involved in “‘minority–minority’ conflict” (Gotanda 238)
 - 24 Scholars such as Regina Ganter, Peta Stephenson, Guy Ramsay, and Ann McGrath have written on Chinese/Aboriginal issues and relations A publication from the 2000 colloquium held in Canberra, “Lost in the Whitewash Aboriginal–Chinese Encounters from Federation to Reconciliation”, is forthcoming from the Centre for the Study of the Chinese Southern Diaspora (ANU)
 - 25 Yang’s narrative about far North Queensland ranges through Mourilyan, Cairns, Cooktown, Dimbulah, and Innisfail, and includes Brisbane as part of the journey ‘north’ from his usual base in Sydney
 - 26 Wah was closely involved in the establishment of TISH, a highly influential literary group founded in 1961 by writers dedicated to “a poetry of spoken idiom written in lines determined by oral rhythms” (Davey 790)
 - 27 In contrast, Neil Bissoondath argues against multiculturalism as being too much about cosseting minorities and emphasising difference to promote intranational divisions He titles his anti-multiculturalism book, *Selling Illusions*
 - 28 Similarly, Yang writes of discovering his Chineseness only after a name-calling incident in the playground when he is six (64–5) After retelling the incident to his mother and brother, he is admonished with “[a]nd you’d better get used to it”
 - 29 Yang’s other shows include *The Face of Buddha*, *China Diary*, *The North*, *Blood Links* and most recently *Shadows* in 2002, several versions of these shows, as with *Sadness*, were performed at various major international theatre festivals
 - 30 Johnston’s article on Eric Michaels’ autobiography, *Unbecoming An AIDS Diary*, examines the discourses surrounding HIV/AIDS representation, disease, and national identity The cover of *Unbecoming* shows Michaels, covered in the distinctive patches of Kaposi’s Sarcoma, “tongue fully extended challenging the gaze of the camera” (“Unbecoming” 66)
 - 31 The long-running dislike between the families meant that Yang’s mother did not want him to see his Auntie Kath and admonished him not to believe anything she said (31) This recalls, once again, Wah’s Acknowledgements in which he feels compelled to include a declaration of his intention not to hurt anyone and to cloak his ‘biotext’ as “faking it”
 - 32 Several prominent Chinese–Australian members of the Liberal Party broke away after the perceived ineffectiveness of the Coalition in addressing and denouncing the racist rhetoric apparent in One Nation’s policies They formed the Unity Party, a party that has the promotion and maintenance of multicultural ideals at the centre of its policy platform

Chapter 4

- 1 See Joan Walsh's e-article, "As American as Ethnic Studies"
- 2 For example, see the work of Canadians Dionne Brand, Richard Fung, Monika Kim Gagnon, Ashok Mathur, and M Nourbese Philip for perspectives on racialisation in the creative arts, and for Asian-Australian arts criticism, see Dean Chan, Melissa Chiu, Sneja Gunew, Jacqueline Lo, and Suvendrini Perera
- 3 Referring to the partial shift to the postmodern lack of fixity or, in some instances, the ability to explicate a subjective position, Debra P Amory comments

Doesn't it seem funny that at the very point when women and people of color are ready to sit down at the bargaining table with the white boys, that the table disappears? That is, suddenly there are no grounds for claims to truth and knowledge anymore and here we are, standing in the conference room making all sorts of claims to knowledge and truth but suddenly without a table upon which to put our papers and coffee cups, let alone to bang our fists (in Shohat and Stam 345)

- 4 First-time ethnic authors are often funded by government grants After one publication, they are in better positions to negotiate contracts with more established presses In Canada, some presses are awarded government funds to publish multicultural writers or studies In Australia, this happens to a lesser degree, as the current Howard government is phasing out support for (what they deem superfluous) 'multicultural' projects
- 5 'Preston Terre Blanche' refers to a melding of Preston Manning, former leader of the Reform Party in Canada, and Eugene Terre Blanche, a South African right-wing extremist The Reform Party ran on a platform of conservative rhetoric, harkening to days before politics were supposedly dominated by minority groups The Seven Deadly Disclaimers which encourage and perpetuate racism are denial, diversion, silence, defensiveness/anger, minimizing, discounting, and tokenising
- 6 The One Nation cultural policy, unveiled in the federal election campaign in 1997, basically abolished funding for the arts because the arts were not 'necessary'
- 7 The connotations of naming Muriel after the woman who is considered the first novelist ever (she wrote *Genji Monogatari* [Rimer 36–7]) entwines with the activities encouraged by Goto's novel reading for one's own sense of the world, making the story one's own, and knowing that to have the power of storytelling means that one can have the power to effect change
- 8 In many incidents in the book, these stereotypes are applied to Muriel One of the most incisive instances is Valentine's Day during school when, every year, she received multiple copies of the same card with "the press-out Oriental-type girl in some sort of pseudo-kimono with wooden sandals on backwards" (62)

- 9 See Ien Ang, “On Not Speaking Chinese”, and Allen Chun, “Fuck Chineseness”
- 10 See Maria Ng’s “Chop Suey Writing” Ng seems to take exception to the use of Chinese terms and expressions which may not necessarily be understood by non-Chinese readers (or even certain other groups of Chinese readers) and chooses to interpret these linguistic interventions only as new forms of exoticising Chinese culture (181)
- 11 His name connotes both a brand of industrial cleaner and a household deodoriser
- 12 *Puberty Blues* started as a novel by Gabrielle Carey and Kathy Lette It went on to become a film by Bruce Beresford in 1981 The novel is about the coming-of-age of two Australian teenage girls in an urban coastal setting It uses the beach as a site of conflict, desire, and performance
- 13 Some of this concern was oblique, in that the narrator fell into shoplifting expeditions for acceptance and to be a ‘cool girl’, but also because her father cut off her pocket money

Chapter 5

- 1 A handful of masculinity-focused publications have appeared recently, including David Eng’s *Racial Castration* (2001), the collection by Eng and Alice Hom *Q&A Queer in Asian America* (1998), and Jachinson Chan’s *Chinese American Masculinities* (2001) Chinese-Canadian Song Cho’s collection *Rice Explorations into Gay Asian Culture + Politics* (1998) covers similar social territory to Eng and Hom’s *Q&A* but provides much-needed Canadian perspectives to break up the US hegemony in diasporic queer studies
- 2 Outside the North American context, there are few books that focus on diasporic masculinities Exceptions include sections of Kam Louie’s *Theorising Chinese Masculinity* (2002), a publication that addresses classical and modern Chinese texts as well as diasporic intertextualities such as the Hollywood Bruce Lee/Jackie Chan/Chow Yun Fat phenomenon In Australia, the work of filmmaker Tony Ayres and photographer William Yang introduces discussions of representing Chinese-Australian masculinity and desire, specifically from queer perspectives
- 3 See Michael Leach regarding the racial antagonism of socialist and union groups in turn-of-the-century Australia, and K Victor Ujimoto for Canadian perspectives Ujimoto, in particular, engages with Peter Li and B Singh Bolaria’s argument that “racism is not an outcome of cultural misunderstanding, but rather ‘a deliberate ideology designed to justify the unjust treatment of the subordinate group for the purpose of exploiting its labour power’” (“Studies of Ethnic Identities” 224)
- 4 Ling states that the term ‘Model Minority’ “distinguished Asian Americans from

- blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans during the political ferment of the 1960s because the latter's back-talking militancy is typically viewed as a sign of male potency" (315)
- 5 Spivak argues that the process of entry to "civil society is a form of gendered admittance with permission "negotiated on the bodies of women" (9)
 - 6 Chin has published many novels (e.g., *The Chinaman Pacific & Frisco R R Co* and *Gunga Din Highway*) and short stories. He was on the editorial committee for the pioneering *Ameeeeee!! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*. Kingston wrote what are arguably the most studied and influential novels in Asian-American literary history, *The Woman Warrior* and its companion work, *China Men*
 - 7 A chapbook is a small book or pamphlet formerly sold by chapmen (merchants, traders, peddlers or hawkers of an itinerant nature) containing popular tales, treatises, ballads, or nursery rhymes
 - 8 "Digger" is slang for an Australian soldier
 - 9 Aside from his own head superimposed on recognisable white bodies to connote a level of incongruity, Leong has also reversed this by merging Princess Diana's head over the body of a "woman in exotic costume" (Cover of Perera 1995)
 - 10 For specific examination of the politics of comedy, see Wagg
 - 11 ANZAC is the acronym for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps and has become a common term in Australian popular discourse. Most often, usage of 'ANZAC' bundles national pride in bravery against the odds with an element of anti-authoritarianism and assertion of Australian individuality
 - 12 See Nagata, *Unwanted Aliens*
 - 13 Teruyo Ueki lists the Moru gang as one of several "disturbing elements" in Kogawa's depiction of the Japanese-Canadian community, stressing that "a close-range view of this small community, of course, reveals that it is not a uniform entity" (6)
 - 14 Kitagawa and Miki collaborated in assembling *Letters to Wes*, a collection of communications between Muriel and Wes during their internment, which emphasised the activist role that Muriel undertook. Omatsu wrote *Bittersweet passage: Redress and the Japanese Canadian experience*, which further documented the conditions and process of redress with historical background about the internment procedures. 'Internment literature' includes many collections of photographs and interviews with internees, as well as *O-Bon in Chimunesu: A community remembered* by Catherine Lang, which focused on the return of some inmates to their old site of incarceration at Lemon Creek
 - 15 When the *daruma* doll is bought, it does not have its eyes. The owner makes a wish and draws in one of the eyes, and when that wish is fulfilled, the owner must draw in the other eye to complete the face
 - 16 In the short stories, Watada relates incidents of vindictive bashings of rivals and "price gouging" at local camp grocery stores ('Kangaroo Court'). The latter

- habit finally drove the community to oust the “village leader”, or *soncho*, Isamu Sasaki.
- 17 Christopher Lee writes specifically about the third section by Sek-Lung in “Engaging Chineseness in Wayson Choy’s *The Jade Peony*”. Sek-Lung’s narrative encompasses the Chinese–Canadian/Japanese–Canadian tensions in Vancouver during the Second World War.
 - 18 This seems to be a recurring trope when ethnic groups seek to consolidate against ‘Western’ ideals. Kobena Mercer details the mobilisation of the Haringey Black Pressure group in London against gays in their midst, declaring that “homosexuality is something that has been introduced into our culture by Europeans: it is an unnatural set of acts that tend toward genocide” (45–6)
 - 19 See Andy Quan’s books *Slant* (2001) and *Calendar Boy* (2001). Quan’s work has featured in several anthologies, many ‘North American’ and some ‘international’

Chapter 6

- 1 See Khoo, “Selling Sexotica.”
- 2 Also see the exhibition titled “But Women Did Come: 150 Years of Chinese Women in North America”, a project of The Global Gathering Place (a joint initiative of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario and the Centre for Instructional Technology Development at the University of Toronto at Scarborough): http://citd.scar.utoronto.ca/ggp/Exhibits/Chinese_Women/index.html.
- 3 See Anna King Murdoch’s article outlining “the China Syndrome” in which ‘Asian–Australian’ writers come to mean only mainland Chinese authors who stayed on or emigrated after the Tiananmen Square incident and Southeast Asian immigrants who are forever configured as examples of their ‘homeland’.
- 4 For examples, see reviews by James Hall, Leonie Lamont, and Murray Waldren.
- 5 The RSL (Returned and Services League of Australia) is an advocacy and assistance group for Australia’s war veterans and their dependents. Ruxton retired in 2002, after twenty-three years as RSL President. He is notorious as an outspoken homophobe, xenophobe, and monarchist.
- 6 See Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Cartographies of Struggle”.

Conclusion

- 1 See *Culture, Identity, Commodity: Diasporic Chinese Literatures in English* (Ed. Kam Louie and Tseen Khoo), forthcoming.

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