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Slanted Allusions Bilingual Poetics and Transnational Politics in Marilyn Chin and Russell Leong¹

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Tell all the Truth but tell it slant—

Emily Dickinson

The concept of hybridity has been taken for granted in Asian American cultural studies ever since the publication twenty years ago of Lisa Lowe's seminal essay, "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Making Asian American Differences." But it has been used primarily in relation to citizenship and identity and is seldom applied to aesthetics.² Literary analysis in the field has by and large focused on content, often overlooking the formal techniques of writers who engage in bilingual interplay. The lack of stylistic analysis has led to an eclipse of poetry by prose, to a stress on ethnographic rather than literary value, and to a foreshortening of the distinctive bicultural or transgressive vision of the writer. I hope to suggest in this essay an analytical strategy that can attend to both aesthetics and politics, promote exchanges between Anglophone and Sinophone worlds, and prompt Americanists specializing in other ethnic groups to undertake parallel investigation.

One reason bicultural discourse has been insufficiently analyzed and appreciated in Asian American literary studies is that the use of Asian material, particularly Chinese folklore or idioms, has been a fraught and controversial topic from the start. Award-winning writers of Chinese descent—notably David Henry Hwang, Ha Jin, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Amy Tan—have all been excoriated for catering to Orientalism or falsifying Chinese subject matter. Critical misgivings about the evocation of the Orient in Chinese American literature are so pervasive that Wenzhu Zhao (an Americanist in China) urges critics to turn their atten-

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tion to “works that do not address China or Chinese culture.”³ By contrast, Frank Chin, one of the most vehement critics of Hwang, Hong Kingston, and Tan, advocates a thorough reclaiming of an authentic Asian heroic tradition, including epics such as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Journey to the West*, and *Outlaws of the Marsh*.⁴ This wholesale endorsement of ancient classics contradicts his erstwhile insistence on the distinction of Chinese American literature from Chinese literature; it risks reinstalling patriarchal mores and even smacks of ancestral worship.⁵

In this essay I focus on two Chinese American poets’ deployment of hybrid poetics to demonstrate that it is possible to invoke ethnic heritage without either pandering to the desire for exotica or kowtowing to patriarchal authority. Looking askance at cultural legacies by employing what I call “slanted allusions”—referring to a novel interpretation of an autochthonous idiom or to a conscious reconfiguration of primary sources to convey transnational critique—is in fact one of the distinctive features of Chinese American literature. Furthermore, since telling it slant (see epigraph) is sanctioned by Emily Dickinson—a woman poet—and since “slant” as in “slant-eyed” is historically a racial slur hurled at “heathen Chinees,” my coinage—like the recuperative term “negritude”—harbors a subversive edge. Paying attention to the fresh ways writers draw from their transpacific roots can open up new avenues of study for scholars interested in decentering the Western classical canon, exploring the distinction between Chinese and Chinese American discourse, or teasing out the connection between art and politics. By analyzing Marilyn Chin’s “Get Rid of the X” and Russell Leong’s “*Bie You Dong Tian: Another World Lies Beyond*,” I wish to call attention to the connections between poetics and politics, to the writers’ transnational perspectives, and to ethnic signifiers that steer clear of the Scylla of Orientalism and Charybdis of ancestral worship.⁶

What Marilyn Chin and Leong have in common are a bilingual ability and bicultural sensibility, a Buddhist bent, a penchant for progressive politics informed by the feminist and civil rights movement, and a flair for polyglot interplay that implicates dominant Chinese and U.S. cultures. Both invested considerable time in their youth to learn Chinese. Chin got her B.A. in Chinese from University of Massachusetts, Amherst in 1977; Leong studied Chinese and Comparative Literature in National Taiwan University for a year and a half during 1974-1975. Both have acknowledged the impact of Chinese training on their writing. “How exciting

to have this great opportunity to make a ‘political’ statement about my bicultural identity by exacting my ideas with hybridized forms,” Chin exclaims. “I often put a drop of yellow blood in conventional form to assert my bicultural identity. . . To disrupt the canonical order. To piss on that establishment tree.”⁷⁷ Leong puts it more mildly: “I probably played around with words and double meaning when I was learning Chinese. It helped me appreciate the sense of pun in Chinese, which is somewhat different than in English. Studying Chinese helps me to be aware of the resonance of the language, and I will consciously choose names, titles, that I know make sense even in Chinese, such as *Phoenix Eyes*.”⁷⁸ In fact Phoenix—a bird that traverses eastern and western mythologies—appears not only in Leong’s *Phoenix Eyes* (2000) but also in Chin’s *The Phoenix Gone, The Terrace Empty* (1994).

Unlike early Asian American writers intent on “claiming America,” these two re-claim both China and the United States—but on their own terms via rhetorical turns. They tilt their Chinese allusions so that the indigenous expressions acquire another shade of meaning. Chin reformulates lines and images from a Tang verse to divulge oppressive ethnic and gender difference, and to launch a feminist declaration of independence. Leong reverses the trajectory of the Chinese proverb *Bie You Dong Tian* [Another World Lies Beyond] to reveal racial and social stratification, and to remember migrant laborers on both sides of the Pacific. Their cultural references resist—rather than reinforce—both patriarchal authority and Orientalism.

The following poem by Chin plays on the Yin and Yang dyad, and signifies on a Tang lyric:

Get Rid of the X

My shadow followed me to San Diego
 silently she never complained.
 No green card, no identity pass
 she is wedded to my fate.

The Moon is drunk and anorectic,
 constantly reeling, changing weight.
 My shadow dances grotesquely
 resentful she can’t leave me.

The moon mourns his unwritten novels,
 cries naked into the trees and fades.
 Tomorrow, he’ll return to beat me
 blue—again, again and again.

Goodbye Moon, goodbye Shadow.
My husband, my lover, I'm late.
The sun will plunge through the window.
I must make my leap of faith.

Chin parodies a popular poem by Li Bai (李白, 701-762),
known honorifically as "Poet Immortal":

月下独酌 [Drinking Alone Under the Moon]

花间一壶酒
A jug of wine amid flowers
独酌无相亲
Alone I drink without companions
举杯邀明月
I lift my goblet to toast Bright Moon
对影成三人
Facing my Shadow we make three
月既不解饮
But Moon knows not how to drink
影徒随我身
Shadow dogs my body in vain
暂伴月将影
I'll stay with Moon & Shadow
行乐须及春
To make merry while spring lasts
我歌月徘徊
As I sing Moon lingers
我舞影零乱
As I dance Shadow tangles
醒时同交欢
Sober we keep good company
醉后各分散
Drunk we part ways
永结无情游
Tying an eternal knot with no string attached
相期渺云汉
We shall meet beyond the stars

(My translation)

Li Bai's male speaker, rhapsodic in his sublime solitude, is transfigured in Chin's poem into a desolate modern wife who, like her shadow, may be an illegal immigrant ("No green card, no identity pass") yoked to her spouse. Also like her shadow or her darker side, the female speaker is at first self-effacing and acquiescent, projecting all her emotions onto the moon and her shadow.

The difference in agency between Li Bai's speaker and Chin's speaker is pronounced. Although both of them personify the moon and the shadow, the male speaker in "Drinking Alone" always calls the shots: he takes the lead in singing and dancing, disparages the moon for being an inept drinking companion and the shadow for being an impersonator. The female speaker in "Get Rid of the X," on the other hand, seems diffident and obliging. Li Bai's speaker belittles the moon and the shadow; Chin's speaker is the one who is being deprecated, resented, and disciplined.

The contrast may be attributed to gender difference. On one level, the "drunk and anorectic" moon in the second stanza is a clever anthropomorphic metaphor that captures the waxing and waning of the moon. But anorexia nervosa is an eating disorder mostly afflicting young women under pressure to live up to the "Barbie Doll" image, who have to be willowy to please their boyfriends and lovers. The female speaker may be revealing her own negative self-image, depression, eating disorder, and alcoholism. The shadow's annoyance at being a hanger-on similarly tells of the speaker's ambivalence toward her spouse and their enmeshment.

The problem with the marriage is disclosed in the third stanza. The husband is apparently a novelist manqué who takes out his frustrations on his wife.⁹ The speaker, still projecting her own emotions onto inanimate objects (in this instance, the moon), mourns his writer's block, either because she measures her own worth by his success or because she dreads the violence his thwarted literary ambition will unleash: "Tomorrow, he'll return to beat me/ Blue—again, again and again." The repetitive battering is a far cry from the *carpe diem* motif in Li Bai's poem. In its stead is the prospect of endless pain, endless blue—in both senses of bruise and melancholy.

In the last stanza the "lunatic" influence of the moon is replaced by solar enlightenment. Unlike the Tang speaker who hankers after a reunion in the galaxy with the moon and his shadow, Chin's female speaker is bidding a long farewell to her husband and her shadowy lover after discovering her pregnancy ("I am late"). Passive throughout the first three stanzas, she initiates her first—and perhaps also final—move in the last line of the poem: "I must make my leap of faith."

This line is richly ambiguous and is open to at least four interpretations. First, Chin may be toying with another jarring analogue to Li Bai. According to a popular legend, the drunken

poet fell from a boat while trying to embrace the reflection of the moon, and was drowned. Against his besotted leap is the possibly suicidal attempt of Chin's speaker, who may have determined to leave her conjugal prison by jumping out of the "window." "Faith" in this instance could refer to the Buddhist belief in reincarnation. Second, she may be trying to induce an abortion by a fall. Third, she may have resolved to take charge of her own life—to have "faith" in herself—by leaving her abusive husband and her self-denigrating alter ego. Fourth, and closely related to the third, she may be making her leap of faith as a poet. Unlike her unproductive husband and her mute shadow, Chin's speaker has at last found her voice through the written words; she has "reported a crime" (to borrow Maxine Hong Kingston's idiosyncratic paraphrase of the Chinese idiom for "revenge") and composed a vengeful poem entitled "Get Rid of the X."

This enigmatic title is likewise open to multiple conjectures. "X" may refer to an ex-husband or an ex-lover: the speaker is quitting both her violent husband and the maudlin moon. But in the context of her pregnancy "X" may also refer to a sex chromosome: a female has two X chromosomes, while a male has one X and one Y chromosome. A suicidal interpretation would mean that the speaker is getting rid of herself, a female made up of two X chromosomes. A pro-choice reading would suggest that she is getting rid of a presumably female embryo. These two readings would suggest that the speaker either wishes to be reborn a male or wishes her embryo to be male. Since the speaker never asks to be given a "Y," however, it is possible that she merely wants to dispense with the extra X: either to be reborn into a new sex herself or to give birth to a child who does not carry any gender baggage.¹⁰

Both "Drinking Alone under the Moon" and "Get Rid of the X" celebrate a kind of self-sufficiency. But Chin's poem, in exposing domestic violence, deploring female dependence, and gesturing toward gender emancipation (by tinkering with sex chromosomes and adumbrating a lesbian liaison with her shadow), plays fast and loose with the Tang poet's romantic reverie. The last line can thus be read as the poet's flagrant attempt to turn up her nose at ancestral worship: to free herself from the anxiety of the Chinese classical influence and specifically from the grip of the Poet Immortal. With her slanted allusions and neologistic puns, Chin is signaling her own autonomy from Li Bai—from whose inebriating imagery she has cross-fertilized a sobering repartee.

Significantly, “Get Rid of the X” frames the speaker’s unhappy marriage within the context of Chinese immigration. This context presents the conjugal discord in another register—allegorically as an abortive American Dream reflecting the collective experience of Chinese Americans historically. In a long poem pointedly entitled “A Portrait of the Self as Nation, 1990-1991” Chin has used the conceit of marriage to set forth explicitly the parallel between sexual and racial subordination: “This is the way you want me—/ asleep, quiescent, almost dead, sedated by lush immigrant dreams of global bliss, connubial harmony.”¹¹ As these lines suggest, the stereotype of Asian women as docile wives morphs easily into the stereotype of the Asian American model minority—accepted and even touted by the dominant culture as long as they refrain from protesting against the structural asymmetries in American society.

It is beyond the scope of this essay to elaborate on Chin’s unabashed embrace of the personal as the political throughout her extensive repertoire. Suffice it to note here that she invokes “Drinking Alone Under the Moon” out of neither nostalgia for the Orient nor delusion about the Occident, but to underscore the contrast between the Tang speaker’s masculine prerogative that allows him to indulge in a solipsistic ecstasy and her female persona’s material contingencies—including gender, citizenship, class, and sexuality.

Material contingencies are likewise embedded in the poetry of Russell Leong, as evident from “*Bie You Dong Tian: Another World Lies Beyond*.”¹² The poem was written at the request of KUSC, a Los Angeles classical music station, to commemorate the opening on February 23, 2008 of the Suzhou-style Chinese Garden—known as *Liu Fang Yuan* [流芳园]—in the grounds of the Huntington Library in southern California. The Huntington Library is famous not only for its collections of books and art works, but also for its spectacular botanical gardens, including the Desert Garden, the Rose Garden, the Shakespeare Garden, the Japanese Garden and, now, the Chinese Garden. *Liu Fang Yuan* is apparently one of the biggest Chinese gardens outside China and is meant to evoke the grace and grandeur of the ancient civilization. The construction of the garden took some ten years and cost over \$18 million. To approximate the authentic Suzhou style, the Huntington Library contacted the Suzhou Garden Development Co. in China, which supplied fifty craftsmen, eleven stone artisans, and much of the material for construction, including 850 tons of Taihu rocks.¹³ The

Chinese proverb 别有洞天 [*bieyou-dongtian*], along with its English translation “Another World Lies Beyond,” appears on a wooden placard just beyond the entrance to the Garden. The proverb suggests a transition from a workaday milieu to a transcendent Taoist heaven or to any entrancing landscape.

Leong uses the bilingual inscription on the placard as his title, but his poem deviates considerably from the indigenous significance of the Chinese proverb and probably also from the expectation of his radio hosts. If they had expected a paean about the picturesque Chinese garden, they would likely have been sorely disappointed. Despite the “exotic” title, the Chinese proverb’s trajectory from a quotidian to a rarefied domain is reversed in Leong’s poem, which moves from the magnificent exterior of the Chinese garden to other—less privileged—habitats. Water imagery—dew, tea, soup, lake, rain, rivulets—infuses Part I of the poem. The Chinese garden here is still under construction: “Girders peep from under the wood columns of the tea pavilion. / An orange tractor rigs its taciturn arm, waiting.” The steel girders anticipate the railroad imagery in Part II, and the personified orange tractor foretells the arrival of the Suzhou workers clad in “orange work vests.” Leong, I believe, intentionally hones in on the unfinished garden so as to call attention to the workers themselves rather than just to the gorgeous product of their labor.

Significantly, *Liu Fang Yuan* opened in 2008 to coincide with the hosting of the Olympic Games in China that year. Leong’s determination to render visible the work of migrant laborers thus has transpacific reverberations. Just as most people who admired the Bird’s Nest or the Water Cube during the 2008 Olympic Games did not usually give thought to the invisible migrant hands that built those grand edifices, so visitors to the Chinese garden in California are unlikely to think of the Suzhou workers who came all the way from China to complete the landmark project.

To counter such obliviousness Leong is at pains to flesh out these workers. The next stanza zeroes in on their simple diet and work uniform: “The workmen drink down their rice soup & steamed bread / (Wu, Ding, Yi—their family / Names—printed on orange work vests / And helmets they will don again today.)”¹⁴ These details decidedly shift the focus from the stately garden to the humble construction workers. The naming distinguishes them from a uniform mass. The accent on their Spartan fare further humanizes them—as opposed to promulgating what Frank

Chin elsewhere calls “food pornography,” the exploitation of the exotic aspects of Chinese food to gain popular appeal.¹⁵

The last two stanzas of Part I paint an idyllic scene of a heron drinking from a green lake and rain seeping into the Taihu rocks. The last two lines of this section inform us that the lake and the hut in the garden are meant to provide a respite from mental activity: “Rivulets down the hillside to *Di Lu Ting*—/Small hut—named by a scholar for washing away thoughts.” But even in the midst of this lyrical evocation the speaker hammers home the strenuous construction of the garden by trotting out figures such as “600 tons of Taihu rocks” and “10,000 tiles”—the latter matching the number of the “10,000 Chinese workers” in Part II.

Part I, with its emphasis on physical labor, provides a fitting overture to Part II, in which the speaker connects the Suzhou workers with the Tongva (Native American) people whose lands were taken away by Euro-American colonizers, with the Mexicans who now supply the bulk of the labor force in Southern California, and with the early Chinese immigrants who built the transcontinental railroad. Where water motifs suffuse Part I of the poem, earth imagery underlies Part II. The various ethnic groups in this section are linked not by the high culture of the literati emblemized by the Chinese garden, but by “Black/Eyes, sunburnt skin. Plain-clothed, blue and gray”—in other words, folks “who, in their labor/Become elemental with the Earth.”

Leong’s poem deflects the original intent of expressions such as *Bie You Dong Tian*, *Di Lu Ting* [滴露亭], and *Liu Fang Yuan* [流芳园]. The Chinese proverb that promises to lure visitors away from a pedestrian environment to an Oriental Eden is used instead to bring into focus the daily labor behind the splendid artifact. *Dong Tian* [洞天] (literally “tunnel sky”) also dovetails with the course of a railway, evoking the vista of digging tunnels and calling to mind the movement of a train from a dark cave or tunnel back out under the open sky. Instead of referring to the Taoist paradise for immortals, *Dong Tian* here intimates the haunting ground for the wandering apparitions of the Chinese railroad workers, many of whom were given the most dangerous tasks of handling explosives during the construction of the Southern Pacific Railroad.

Di Lu Ting (literally “Dewdrop Gazebo”)—“named by a scholar for washing away thoughts”—is conversely used to percolate reflections about subjugated civilizations and about the confluence of past and present, of the East and the West: “From below/The

hut's thatched roof you can see/The San Gabriel peaks, this garden/Wholly formed in China, yet forming another America." We are reminded—"Moment/By moment, century by century"—of the less than glorious chapters of American (and also Chinese) history, from the displacement of Native Americans and the maltreatment of Chinese railroad workers, to the current exploitation of migrant workers in both the United States and China. Rather than being a refuge for a visitor to escape from mundane affairs, the shelter triggers in its occupant an epiphany about accountability, connection, and solidarity across time: "You are new here. We have always been here./Yet now we share this place."

Liu Fang Yuan (literally "Garden of Flowing Fragrance") is meant to be redolent of the many trees and flowers in the garden. The poem, instead of capturing such aroma, invites the reader along with the Suzhou workmen to sniff the "foreign scent./Vagrant herb or voracious dynamite left/On the cotton trousers of 10,000 Chinese workers/Who dug tunnels for Huntington's Central Pacific." The olfactory slippage steers us from the pleasant scenery to a traumatic past. "Vagrant" is a zeugma referring at once to the herb transplanted from China and to the nomadic existence of the diverse minorities who have set foot on or been displaced from the land on which the garden now stands. Similarly, "voracious" not only denotes the explosive power of dynamite that made possible the Central Pacific, but connotes the countless Chinese lives devoured by those explosions. Furthermore, *Liu Fang* 流芳 [flowing fragrance] also means "to leave an honorable name." The expression is often used in the proverb *liufang-baishi* 流芳百世 [leave a good name for hundreds of generations]. The Huntington Library is named after Henry Edwards Huntington (1850-1927), whose eponymous legacy also includes a beach, a park, a hotel, a hospital, and a middle school. Huntington would seem to have succeeded in leaving his good name behind.

But a less propitious association of the name lurks in Leong's poem, for Henry was the nephew of Collis P. Huntington, a railroad magnate and one of the Big Four in the creation of the transcontinental railway; Henry held several key positions working alongside his uncle with the Southern Pacific. It was in the course of working for the Huntingtons under treacherous conditions that many Chinese railroad builders perished. In evoking the scent of dynamite and conjuring up the Chinese casualties, Leong's poem—rather than paying homage to Huntington—stands as a memorial to the many Chinese, Mexican, Latino, and Native

American workers who labored anonymously in the San Gabriel Valley.

While Leong was probably expected by his radio station hosts to write an occasional poem transporting listeners to the fabled Cathay, he had resisted the opportunity at every turn despite the tempting possibilities offered by the Suzhou-style garden. His Chinese allusions are laced instead with historical sedimentation, ensconcing China squarely in the United States; his *Liu Fang Yuan* is a “garden/Wholly formed in China, yet forming another America.” Beyond the seductive title “*Bie You Dong Tian*” lie the workaday worlds of the Suzhou migrants, the Latin security guard, other displaced people such as the Tongva Indians and the Mexicans, and the world of our Chinese ancestors—not those who loitered in a sixteenth-century Chinese garden in Suzhou, but those who lost their lives in building America. Contradicting the scholar who fancies *Di Lu Ting* to be the idyllic spot for cleansing the mind, Leong uses that very facility to jostle our memories of the earthly laborers of diverse worlds.

The policing of Orientalism and the demand for fidelity to the Chinese original in Chinese American writing have been so intense on both sides of the Pacific that any references to China are scrutinized with suspicion. Often left unscanned is their aesthetic and oppositional deployment. While Zhao rightly deplores the market forces that have predisposed some writers to include exotic content in their works, his injunction to counter Orientalism by focusing on the “American world” and confining critical attention to “non-Chinese subject matter” is no less problematic.¹⁶ Such a solution implies that, for Americans of Chinese descent, Chinese and American inheritance can always be bifurcated and that Chinese influence has no place in the United States. But there has never been a pure “American world.” In Edward Said’s words, “As an immigrant-settler society superimposed on the ruins of considerable native presence, American identity is too varied to be a unitary and homogeneous thing.”¹⁷ The point is nicely exemplified in Leong’s poem.

The ancestral cultures of immigrants are very much a part of the United States. For Chinese American writers and critics to quarantine Chinese topics borders on self-denial and self-contempt, a form of censorship that can only impoverish (Asian) American literary studies. Transnational resonance should be amplified rather than repressed in today’s rapidly globalizing world. Instead of calling for a moratorium on China, critics can combat Oriental-

ism by examining the inventive and subversive uses of Chinese sources—uses that may in fact challenge the cultural dominant in Sinophone and Anglophone nations and displace the supremacy of the Western heritage in the New World.

Ha Jin has observed (feelingly, I believe, on account of his own circumstances as an expatriate): “For many migrant writers, homeland is actually their mother tongues.”¹⁸ In the works of hyphenated American writers who have at their disposal two mother tongues, the interweaving of these languages can tell us much about their reservations and hopes regarding both their ancestral and adopted countries. The provocative amalgamation of bilingual discourse evinced in this essay amounts to formal insurrection. Both Chin and Leong resort to linguistic legerdemain to convey their critique of American and Chinese cultures. In “Get Rid of the X” Chin uses bicultural juxtaposition, parody, and puns to project an abject female alien who differs markedly from the insouciant patriarch in Li Bai’s drinking poem, departing from the lyricism of Tang verse to pitch a piquant utterance of her own. Leong skews the conventional meanings of Chinese tropes to extract semantic elements that resonate with the migrant experience, digging beneath the resplendent Chinese garden in southern California to ferret out buried chapters of transnational history. Their slanted allusions insinuate against both Chinese and American ideological norms. Unpacking their hybrid rhetorical strategies enhances our appreciation of their artistic innovation and political persuasion. Far from demanding reverence for cultural legacies, they command oblique performances. Through their feminist or socialist variations Chin and Leong at once interrogate, reinvigorate, and reclaim their dual linguistic homeland.

Notes

1. This essay is excerpted from “Slanted Allusions: Bilingual Poetics and Transnational Politics in Marilyn Chin and Russell Leong,” upcoming from *positions: east asia cultures critique*, Vol. 21. Copyright 2013, Duke University Press. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the publisher. The full version contains a more elaborate definition of “slanted allusion” and an analysis of Marilyn Chin’s “Song of the Sad Guitar.” Earlier versions of this essay were presented at conferences in Zhejiang, Beijing, and Nanjing. I thank Marilyn Chin, Russell Leong, Li Guicang, and Wu Bing for their suggestions and encouragement.
2. Lisa Lowe, “Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Making Asian American Differences,” *Diaspora* 1:1 (1991): 24–43. There are two notable exceptions: Xiaojing Zhou, *The Ethics and Poetics of Alterity in Asian American Poetry* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006); Steven G. Yao, *Foreign*

- Accents: Chinese American Verse from Exclusion to Postethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).
3. Wenshu Zhao, "Why Is There Orientalism in Chinese American Literature?," *Global Perspectives on Asian American Literature* (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2007): 256. For criticism of the authors mentioned see Frank Chin, "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake," Jeffery Paul Chan, Frank Chin, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong, eds., *The Big Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers* (New York: New American Library-Meridian, 1991): 1-92; Sheng-Mei Ma, *Deathly Embrace: Orientalism and Asian American Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); James S. Moy, *Marginal Sights: Staging the Chinese in America* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1993): 115-129; Yan Ying [应雁], "The 'Authentic' Voice in Neo-Orientalism: The Works of Har Jin," [新东方主义中的"真实"声音:论哈金的作品], *Foreign Literature Review* (Beijing) [当代外国文学] 1 (2004): 31-37.
 4. See Frank Chin, "Real and the Fake."
 5. Frank Chin, "Real and the Fake," 32-51. Cf. Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong, eds., *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1974/1983): ix-x. I have taken issues with Chin in "Art, Spirituality, and the Ethic of Care: Alternative Masculinities in Chinese American Literature," Judith Kegan Gardiner, ed., *Masculinity Studies & Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002): 261-289; "Of Men and Men: Reconstructing Chinese American Masculinity," Sandra Kumamoto Stanley, ed., *Other Sisterhoods: Literary Theory and U.S. Women of Color* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998): 173-199; "The Woman Warrior versus the Chinaman Pacific: Must a Chinese American Critic Choose between Feminism and Heroism?," Marianne Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller, eds., *Conflicts in Feminism* (New York: Routledge, 1990): 234-251.
 6. Marilyn Chin, "Get Rid of the X," *Rhapsody in Plain Yellow: Poems* (New York: Norton, 2002): 45; Russell C. Leong, "Bie You Dong Tian: Another World Lies Beyond," *KUSC Newsletter* (March 2008).
 7. "An Interview with Marilyn Chin," *Indiana Review* 26:1 (2004): 113
 8. "转风: 梁志英访谈录," 单德兴, 《"开疆"与"辟土"—美国华裔文学与文化: 作家访谈录与研究论文集》。天津: 南开大学出版社, 2006. ["Phoenix in Transit: An Interview with Russell Leong," Te-hsing Shan, ed., *Exploration and Expansion of the Frontiers of Chinese American Literature and Culture: A Collection of Interviews and Research Papers* (Tianjin: Nankai University Press, 2006): 278.]
 9. As a poet, Chin is also "slyly commenting on the dominance of the novel over poetry" in the contemporary western world (email correspondence).
 10. The protagonist in Chin's "Parable of the Guitar" imagines a novel in which the denizens are "highly efficient creatures, each equipped with both a vagina and a penis for self-procreation." In *The Revenge of Mooncake Vixen: A Manifesto in 41 Tales* (New York: Norton, 2009): 193.
 11. Marilyn Chin, "A Portrait of the Self as Nation, 1990-1991," in *The Phoenix Gone*. For an insightful analysis of the poem see Yao, 209-216.

12. "Bie You Dong Tian" is reprinted in its entirety on pages 41-42 of this issue.
13. <http://www.cappers.com/print-article.aspx?id=1886>.
14. Leong discloses that Wu Ding Yi is actually the Chinese name of Bill Wu, to whom the poem is dedicated (email correspondence).
15. Frank Chin, "The Chickencoop Chinaman" and "The Year of the Dragon": *Two Plays* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981): 86; see also Sauling Cynthia Wong, *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993): 58-65.
16. Zhao, 256.
17. Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993): xxix.
18. Ha Jin, *The Writer as Migrant* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008): 78.