

UC Berkeley

UC Berkeley Previously Published Works

Title

Performing a Geography of Asian America: The Chop Suey Circuit

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/23p3k5tx>

Journal

TDR/The Drama Review, 55(1)

ISSN

1054-2043

Author

Kwan, SanSan

Publication Date

2011-03-01

DOI

10.1162/dram_a_00052

Peer reviewed



Project
MUSE[®]

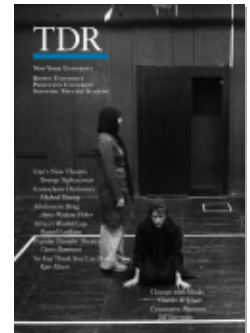
Today's Research. Tomorrow's Inspiration.

Performing a Geography of Asian America: The Chop Suey Circuit

SanSan Kwan

TDR: The Drama Review, Volume 55, Number 1, Spring 2011 (T 209),
pp. 120-136 (Article)

Published by The MIT Press



► For additional information about this article

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/tldr/summary/v055/55.1.kwan.html>

Performing a Geography of Asian America

The Chop Suey Circuit

SanSan Kwan

Exuberant big band music plays as a couple—the man in tux and tails, the woman in a satin evening gown—performs a vigorous tap dance. The woman wiggles her hips and shakes her raised index fingers; the man jumps down into a split and just as quickly slides back up. They Charleston. He moves to kiss her, she playfully slaps him and holds the tails of his coat as they mime riding in a car; he lifts her and swings her in the air, both of them grinning widely. This scene from the 1939 film *With Best Dishes* serves as the closing image for the documentary film *Forbidden City, USA* (1989), by filmmaker Arthur Dong. The black-and-white clip is like footage from so many of the Hollywood musicals of the 1930s and 1940s except, remarkably, that the dancing couple is Asian American and the audience sitting at tables surrounding the dance floor is white. There is a visual disjunct here, a sense of oddity, and perhaps also of exhilaration, in the sight of two Asians in the place of what has typically been a stage for whites. This should be Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, Gene Kelly and Cyd Charisse, Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland.

Instead, the extraordinary dancers here are Dorothy Takahashi Toy and Paul Wing. Toy and Wing were part of the “Chop Suey Circuit,” Asian American cabaret acts that toured a string of nightclubs across the United States during the 1930s and 1940s. Part of a clutch of “exotic”-themed acts and clubs like Carmen Miranda at the Copacabana or Louis Armstrong at the Cotton Club, these Asian American entertainers headlined at so-called “Oriental” nightclubs such as the Forbidden City in San Francisco (which remained open until 1962) and the China Doll in New York. They toured throughout the country to cities large and small, including Seattle, Chicago, Boston, Cleveland, St. Louis, Portland, Los Angeles, Kansas City, Atlanta, Wichita, Omaha, Corpus Christi, and Memphis. Some, like Toy and Wing, even toured abroad and secured cameo appearances in Hollywood films. Advertised as the “Chinese Frank Sinatra,” the “Chinese Fred and Ginger,” the “Chinese Sophie Tucker,” and even the “Chinese Sammie Davis,” these talented “Orientals” sang the popular songs and danced the well-known styles of the day. They performed in whiteface (or, in the case of the Chinese Sammie Davis, as blackface performing whiteface) for the pleasure of white audiences.¹ Many of the female dancers, promoted for their “exotic” looks, played on white American audiences’ stereotypes of the seductive

1. The Chop Suey Circuit was unlike the Chitlin Circuit, which began in the 1920s, in that the Chitlin Circuit is popular theatre, to use W.E.B. Du Bois’ famous requirement, “for, by, and about black people” (1926:134). The Chop Suey Circuit, on the other hand, describes entertainment that was provided primarily for white audiences. For an article on the Chitlin Circuit, see Henry Louis Gates (2001). See also Nadine George-Graves (2000) on “negro vaudeville” and Brenda Dixon Gottschild (2002) on black performers of the swing era. All three of these texts discuss black artists who performed primarily for black audiences.

Oriental beauty. The Chop Suey Circuit provided American club goers with entertainment that was novel and yet familiar—paradoxically exotic and accessible.

The World War II-era in the United States is marked by a distinct set of racial dimensions—the marks of which still outline race relations more than a half a century later. In mid-20th-century America, race was carefully mapped into an unambiguous cartography of segregation: Jim Crow laws in the South, ethnic and racial ghettos in the cities, and Native American reservations and Japanese American internment

camp in the hinterlands. Such an elaborate cartography ensured not only geographic, but also attendant social, cultural, and political marginalization of non-whites, barring them from full citizenship in American society. Though the USA's entry into WWII prompted a new internationalism and a wartime rhetoric of fighting racism abroad, this did not negate policies of racial segregation on the home front. The clearly mapped racial boundaries dividing the United States continued to contradict America's melting pot ideals. On the one hand, ethnic and racial others were encouraged to seek refuge and success in the United States, to abandon difference and assimilate into the white norm; on the other hand, continuing geographic and cultural isolation assured that these others were barred from full access.

There have been many good studies on the ways that the production of space contributes to the production of race (see Delaney 1998, 2002; Gilmore 2002; Hoelscher 2003; Kobayashi and Peake 1994; Laura Y. Liu 2000; Mitchell 2000). Race and geography work together such that race is in part created through place-making and place is largely created through racialization. Whoever has the power to organize social space gains the privilege to define race. The USA's history of racial segregation is a testament to that power: "Modern American segregation, or the geographical separation of people as a way of making and fixing absolute racial difference, offers the preeminent example of the interdependence between race and place" (Hoelscher 2003:659). The Chop Suey Circuit's raced bodies helped delineate geographies, which in turn fixed racial categories. Importantly, however, these bodies also managed to challenge segregation. Race and place are both processes whose presumably natural connection must be continually reproduced through performative cultural practices. The reiterative nature of performance, as well as its deployment of actual, live bodies moving in space and time, makes performance a way in which race and place are realized over and over again. The touring Asian American performers of the Chop Suey Circuit reinscribed America's racial cartography while also disrupting it. Their presence outside of the Chinatowns to which they were typically relegated as Asian Americans, their



Figure 1. *Forbidden City Chorus [1940s/'50s?]*. (Courtesy of MOCA Collection)

SanSan Kwan is Assistant Professor in the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance at California State University, Los Angeles. Her research interests include Asian and Asian American dance and performance studies. She has published in Performance Research and Dance Research Journal, as well as other anthologies and journals. She is coeditor (with Kenneth Speirs) of the collection, Mixing It Up: Multiracial Subjects (University of Texas Press, 2004). Her new book manuscript, Kinesthetic City: Dance and Movement in Chinese Spaces, is currently under review.

mobility beyond the barbed wire of the Japanese American internment camps, and their appearance in the rigidly black-white spaces of the Jim Crow South disturbed the embedded racial cartography of US cultural and legal practices. The Chop Suey Circuit's "almost the same but not white" (Bhabha 1994:89) exotic bodies allowed them entry because they were seen as novelties, as temporary sojourners, nonthreatening to the racial cartography because they were simultaneously recognizable and foreign.

On the one hand, the Chop Suey Circuit entertainers succeeded at "playing Oriental," performing acts like the "Fan Dance," the "Chinese Sleeve Dance," and the "Coolie Dance," in order to give Americans a look at exactly what they expected the "Asiatic" to be. On the other hand, the Chop Suey Circuit was also about performing Americanness, as equated with whiteness. Dressed in bunny costumes and tap dancing to "The Surrey with the Fringe on Top," the mostly second-generation Asian American dancers and singers strove towards cultural assimilation. Presenting their Asian American bodies onstage, performing popular American numbers (which, incidentally, were largely black and Latin American forms appropriated and whitewashed), these entertainers simultaneously reproduced and blurred the boundaries of racial otherness.

While over 60 percent of their parents' generation had worked as manual laborers (Chun 2000:46), these performers dreamed of making it big on the American stage. But whatever their ethnic background, they had to fake accents, adopt Chinese-sounding names, and wear coolie hats. They performed "Asian" and at the same time managed both to maintain and challenge not only Orientalism, but also the peculiarities of the American racial cartography that at that time accounted mostly only for black and white.²

A Night in Chinatown

Vaudeville offered space for complex performances of race in America. On the vaudeville circuit from the 19th century forward, Irish Americans played blackface, Asian Americans played whiteface, African Americans played yellowface. These performers helped to solidify whiteness as the norm by deliberately enacting the grotesqueness of their masks (see George-Graves 2000; Gottschild 2002; Lott 1995; Moon 2005a). At the same time, the performances also worked as bids for belonging by the particular populations revealing themselves and their comparative normalcy under their masks, thereby reinforcing competing systems of racial hierarchy. Lee Tung Foo and Ming Toy are two Asian American vaudeville forerunners to the Chop Suey Circuit entertainers. In *Yellowface*, Krystyn Moon writes that Lee presented an "incongruity between fixed preconceptions of race and his capacity to impersonate non-Asian characters, speak English without an accent, and sing American and European popular songs" (2005b:1).

The American cabaret scene arose in the 1910s as vaudeville was on its wane and urban restaurant culture was emerging. In order to cater to the moneyed classes many fashionable restaurants and hotels offered social spaces where the wealthy could flaunt their money. These establishments offered dinner, drinks, social dancing, and floor shows. With the influx of people to the cities, this combination filtered down to more middle-class restaurants. In their heyday (see Erenberg 1981; Malnig 2001), cabaret clubs across the nation found that exotic themes were popular, including not only Latin- and Caribbean-themed shows, but also "Oriental" revues.³

2. Of course, the category "white" has long been contended. Across its history the US has seen social and legal battles over whether, for example, Irish, Polish, Italians (see Roediger 2005), Asian Indians (see Takaki 1989), and Latinos (see López 2003:2–4) could be considered white. Latinos have suffered a long history of discrimination in the US and, like Asian Americans, are also a visible/invisible third category, neither white nor black (see Alcoff 2005: esp. ch. 10, 11).

3. For example, the "Chinese Follies" at Town Ranch in Seattle ran for a third week in 1943, breaking the theatre's record for longest run and highest attendance (Robinson 1943:4).

The circa 1930s program for “A Night in Chinatown” at San Francisco’s Kubla Khan gives us a sense of what the Chop Suey Circuit acts were like. First on the bill was a large group number called “Street Scene” performed by chorus girls and the Sing Lee Sings; next was the trio “Chinese Sleeve Dance,” perhaps a modified version of the traditional Chinese dance form, or more likely just a vaguely Chinese-y dance; then a “Chinese Lullaby,” followed by a “Coolie Dance”—judging from the tongue-in-cheek sound of the title, probably a self-parodying Western style dance with the performers wearing coolie hats. After that came “Sing Lee Sings and Chinese Acrobats,” next “Sing Song Girls,” then “China’s Dancing Sweethearts,” a ballroom dance number featuring Jadin Wong and Li Sun, then “Oriental Interlude,” a solo, and finally a grand “Chinacongga” (“A Night in Chinatown” [1930s?]).

A review of the Forbidden City in a 1946 issue of *Variety* provides a similar picture. Emcee and owner Charlie Low introduces the line dancers who perform a “fast-moving boogie-woogie.” Jackie Lei Ling follows with a “smooth dance” (in ballroom dance categories, usually a waltz, foxtrot, or tango). Lew Fong Wah adds a juggling act. Then crooner Larry Ching, who the reviewer notes “has a good voice used with effect,” sings “Irish Lullaby” and encores with “As Time Goes By.” The ballroom dance couple, the Tàì Sings, is a revue highlight: “Their routines get sock reaction.” Jade Ling dances a rumba to “Begin the Beguine” and soprano May Lai rounds out the show. The revue ends with another line dance featuring six dancing girls and Jackie Lei Ling taking the vocal (*Variety* 1946:63).

The shows were very much American cabaret with a few superficial “Oriental” touches. As the *Variety* reviewer put it: “standard Oriental acts of persuasion” (63). Two or three tiers of dinner tables surrounded an open floor and a raised stage highlighted the five- or six-piece band. Chorus girls and showgirls would typically open the evening with a simple dance number spectacular mainly for its display of legs and elaborate costumes. The showgirls, usually taller, would line up in back and walk to and fro, while the chorus girls would dance a few steps. Then, there might be a singer who would perform a few songs and crack some jokes; he might also serve as emcee.⁴

At the China Doll, Jack Soo, later famous for his role in the movie *Flower Drum Song* (1961) and on the television series *Barney Miller* (1975–1982), was the regular emcee. After him, Larry Long became the emcee. A ballroom dancing pair might follow performing popular social dances—the rumba, the waltz, the cha-cha, the tango. The Tàì Sings were often featured for their elegant yet sensuous ballroom sequences—he in a tuxedo and she in a glimmering satin gown, skimming across the floor, sweeping up for a lift, pausing in their choreography for a low dip and a kiss (Lee 2001:243–44). The bands at many of the clubs were Latin (a phenomenon I will discuss below). At the China Doll, José Cabello directed the house band with Tito Puente as his drummer—both well-known musicians in the Latin Big Band community. Sometimes the show might feature a solo dancer who would show off his tap-dancing virtuosity or her amazing flexibility. Jadin Wong, popular for exotic dance numbers in which she mimicked Southeast Asian dance traditions, showcased her articulate hands. Dorothy Sun, at Forbidden City, wore a veil and harem pants and did a parody of “Little Egypt,” crossing her eyes and jutting her face towards her raised hands, which were joined in the shape of a cobra’s head (A. Dong 1989). At interludes the singer/emcee would appear in a plaid suit and straw hat (for instance), and roam the audience to take requests or perhaps pull off some slapstick gag. Often included, and always a big draw, was the striptease. Noel Toy was famous for her “Bubble Dance,” in which she strolled nude across the dance floor with a big beach ball held in front of her. She was billed

4. A review of the 1943 “Chinese Follies” tour gives an example of the kinds of jokes that were told on the Chop Suey Circuit: “Miss Wong hits microphone for a line of comedy chatter, announcing that ‘dancing is strenuous, but better than going back to laundry’” (Coghlan 1943). Obviously, this is an example of dancer Jadin Wong playing to her audience through self-Orientalizing mockery.



Figure 2. Chorus girls and showgirls of the China Doll Nightclub, New York City, 1946–1947. (Courtesy of Muriel Choy, MOCA collection)

the following acts: “Chinese Beauty Chorus”; “10 Oriental Swingsters”; “Gay 90s Sextette.” Also featured are: “Toy and Wing, 4 Kim-Loo Sisters, Ming and Chan, Joe Wong-Lai-Tel, Shanghai Wing Troupe.” Altogether the advertisement boasts a cast of “40 Chinese Artists.” A picture of Toy and Wing in a ballroom dance pose is beside a photo of the Shanghai Wing Troupe in a lineup with one preteen girl, three women, and five men, all in silken tops and pants. As was common at the time, the stage show was accompanied by a movie screening—in this case the film *When G-Men Step In* (“Chinese Follies” 1938). It appears from the advertisement and reviews I have collected that the “Chinese Follies” toured at least three times: 1938, 1943, and 1946. I have discovered ads and reviews documenting the show’s runs in Cedar Rapids, Seattle, and Reno.

Many of the more successful Chop Suey acts were one Chinese-themed act on a variety program, linking up with non-Asian American performers like the comedienne Martha Raye, the Benny Goodman orchestra, or Chico Marx of the Marx Brothers. Most acts ran around 45 minutes to an hour. Large, “all-Chinese” revues such as “A Night in Chinatown,” or the touring “Chinese Follies” at the Iowa Theater in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in 1938 had as many as 40 performers including chorus girls and band members, while smaller shows like the “Chinese Capers” at the El Rancho in Seattle, Washington, in 1947 had six Chinese performers backed by a non-Chinese band and a non-Chinese chorus (Daryl Harpa, his Movieland Band, and “Entertainers”). Ticket prices at most clubs ran from around 25 to 75 cents and sometimes included a film screening. Dinner shows cost two to four dollars. Clubs usually ran three or four shows per day.⁶ As for the theatre’s take, a combination film and stage show featuring stars like

as the “Chinese Sally Rand.” A Chinese acrobatic troupe, like George Wong and Company, might round out the evening, giving the program a specifically “Chinese” touch. To end the show with a grand finale, dancing girls in gold bikinis and Thai-inspired headdresses, for example, or Carmen Miranda-style outfits with layers of ruffles and fruit on their heads, or silken Chinese tunics with high mandarin collars and short shorts, etc., paraded to the audience’s applause (Kwan and Lee 2002–03).⁵

A 1938 advertisement for a three-day stop of the “Chinese Follies” at the Iowa Theater in Cedar Rapids, Iowa lists

5. Chop Suey programs outside San Francisco and New York, for instance in the Midwest, followed a similar pattern. The Minnesota Terrace club in the Hotel Nicollet in Minneapolis booked a “Chinese Fantasy Revue” in 1942. The program opened with the Toy Sisters (Dorothy Toy and her sister Lai Lan) performing “Charm from China”; then Florence Hin Lowe, an “Acrobatic Dance Starlet”; Kolma in “Oriental Magic”; plus the “Lovely Selma Marlowe Dancers” and all backed by Perry Martin and his orchestra (“Chinese Fantasy Revue” 1942).

6. For example, in 1941 the club Leon & Eddie’s in New York—“one of New York’s top popular-priced nocturnal haunts” (*Variety* 1941a)—featured Jadin Wong and Noel Toy on a mixed bill with non-Chop Suey performers. Shows were at 7:45 PM, 10:00 PM, 12:00 AM, and 2:30 AM. Dinners started from \$1.50 with a \$3.00

Toy and Wing at Shea's Buffalo in Buffalo, New York, in 1931 took in \$17,000 in one week, but the house average was \$12,500 per week. The surge was attributed to the popularity of the film and the fact that the competing club did not offer "a flesh bill" that same week ("Savitt-'Woman' Open Big in Buff" 1931). A manager at the Forbidden City remembers that at the height of its popularity the club took in \$2,200 a day (A. Dong 1989).

Producers at two clubs in San Francisco's Chinatown were Chinese American while producers at other clubs across the country were non-Chinese.⁷ Toy and Wing, who boasted a busy touring schedule in the late 1930s, were represented by the William Morris Agency, a major agency even then. Although star performers like Jadin Wong, Toy and Wing, and Larry Long were featured at major New York nightclubs such as the Orpheum, the Paramount, the Roxy, and the Strand, most Chop Suey revues were not signed for the most well-known clubs. It was harder for Chinese Americans than Euro-American performers to get gigs. A glowing review of Jadin Wong and Li Sun remarks, "If it were not for their race, they would undoubtedly be headliners in New York's Rainbow Room or some other first-line cabaret" (Morley 1941).

A comparison of the wages of African American, Asian American, and Euro-American cabaret artists from the 1920s to the 1940s indicates that black entertainers, whether on the black circuit or at white venues, made less than whites and Asian American entertainers playing only for white audiences even at the Chinese clubs made about the same or even less than black performers.⁸ On the Chop Suey Circuit, for example, featured vocalist Larry Ching was offered

minimum charge on weekdays and a \$3.50 minimum charge on weekends and holidays ("Night Clubs" 1941). In comparison, the same newspaper listing of nightclubs shows the Rainbow Room (a top club) with a similar mixed bill (Ozzie Caswell and orchestra; Clemente's Rhumba Band, José Fernandez and Juanita Deering, dancers, Rolf Passer, mental telepathist; Laura Dutton, singer). Dinner here ran between \$2.50 and \$4.00. After 10:00 PM there was a weeknight cover charge of \$1.00; on the weekends the cover was \$2.00. There was no cover charge for dinner guests except on Saturdays when the cover was \$1.00 ("Night Clubs" 1941). In sum, a Saturday night at Leon and Eddie's watching Jadin Wong and Noel Toy would cost a patron \$3.50 at the minimum, while a similar night at the Rainbow Room seeing other performers would cost between \$3.50 and \$5.00. The tickets to the 1938 "vaudefilm" offering of "Chinese Follies" plus movie at the Iowa Theater in Cedars Rapids, Iowa, cost 26 cents until 2:00 PM, 36 cents until 5:00 PM on Tuesdays, and 41 cents in the evening; children were 10 cents ("Chinese Follies" 1938).

7. Charlie Low was the producer at the Forbidden City and Andy Wong was the producer at the Chinese Sky Room, both in San Francisco. Eddie Pond was the producer at Kubla Khan, also in San Francisco. Tom Ball was the producer at the China Doll in New York. Other producers included: Harry Rogers for the 1938 Chinese Follies and Kenneth Walker for the 1943 Chinese Follies at the Dog House in Reno, Nevada.
8. Two scholars of the vaudeville and cabaret eras, Brenda Dixon Gottschild (2002) and Nadine George-Graves (2000), argue that black entertainers made significantly less than white entertainers. Gottschild quotes from Robert Sylvester's 1956 book, *No Cover Charge*: "Harlem salaries for capable entertainers [...] ranged from \$45 a week upwards. Any Harlem darling getting as much as \$200 a week was in the rarefied financial stratum" (2002:95). Gottschild adds that Margot Webb, a black chorine, made between \$25.00 and \$75.00 a week performing shows produced by black producers in the 1930s (2002:44). According to Jim Haskins, whose book on the Cotton Club is cited by Gottschild, this is significantly more than a sales clerk (\$5-\$10) or a stenographer (\$16) might make at that time (1977:44). Interestingly, Joanne J. Meyerowitz, in her study of women wage earners from 1880 to 1930, similarly found that in the 1920s "cabaret entertainers in Chicago earned from eighteen to seventy-five dollars a week, enormous wages to an unskilled woman worker" (1991:40). Meyerowitz does not distinguish across race here and so the assumption is that she means white women cabaret entertainers. In this example salaries between black and white do not appear significantly divergent. I do not dispute Gottschild's claim about black-white income disparity, though perhaps at the chorine level the differences were less pronounced. Of course, wages ranged widely in this profession depending on billing, venue, city, and so on. Major black artists like Ethel Waters and the Nicholas Brothers made around \$1,000 a week in the 1930s (Gotschild 2002:93). Bill Robinson became the highest paid black entertainer in a Broadway production when he took in \$3,500 for his work in a 1937 Cotton Club revue (Gotschild 2002:94). In comparison, Gottschild notes that the "the highest salaries paid to top white entertainers during vaudeville's golden age (the teens and early twenties) averaged — on a two-show-a-day schedule — \$2,500 to \$4,000 weekly" (2002:94).

\$45.00 a week for his work at the Forbidden City in the 1940s (Liu 2003)—about on par with what black or white chorus girls made. While Joanne Meyerowitz claims that a chorine’s wages were comparable to the high earnings of women in the sex trade (1991:40), Jadin Wong recalls making around \$25.00 a day as a dancer at the Forbidden City in the 1930s, stating, “I used to say to [the Chinese who thought we were whores] we’re not whores because if we were we would make a lot of money; we wouldn’t be working eight or nine hours a day and getting \$25” (J. Lee 2000:82). Larry Long recalls making \$250.00 per week at the China Doll in the 1940s. He was satisfied with his salary because, as he remembered it, average working-class wages at the time were around \$40.00 a week: “You were in the factory and you made forty dollars a week. I’m talking the ordinary person. I’m not talking about Chinese” (Long 2000). By comparison, Hildegard, a white singer famous for her French mannerisms was one of the “highest paid singers in the 1940s cabaret scene”; she reportedly made \$150,000 annually, or just under \$3,000 a week (Bernstein 2005). In sum, whereas white and black entertainers with the highest billing could make weekly salaries in the thousands, the lesser known black and Asian American entertainers made between \$45.00 and \$250.00 a week for their work. The most successful Chop Suey Circuit artists never made anywhere near \$1,000 a week because they never gained the status of black artists (like the Nicholas Brothers or Ethel Waters), much less white artists.

Performing Race, Performing Place

A new fascination for things Chinese was spurred on by the US involvement in the Pacific theatre during WWII. The Chinese were allies and Americans were interested in what these new and very foreign allies were like. Thus, Chinese Americans, previously the victims of exclusion acts and discrimination, were promoted to the level of curiosities. Of course, at the same time, Japanese Americans were being interned in camps and branded as traitors and enemies. Oddly, this very clear distinction between Chinese and Japanese did not extend to the differences among other Asian ethnicities. Aside from the Japanese, all things Asian were subsumed under the general notion of Chineseness. So despite the individual backgrounds of the Chop Suey Circuit performers, or the Thai-inspired headdresses they wore, or Jadin Wong’s fabricated Oriental dances, nightclubs advertised “all-Chinese” revues, stage names always carried the appended adjective “Chinese,” and particular shows were titled, for example, “China Fantasy Revue” or “Chinese Capers.”

This newfound fascination with things Chinese begs the question of how these previously alienated bodies, bodies not normally accorded presence on the American visual landscape, were made comprehensible, even desirable on the stages they toured?⁹ Anne Cheng, in her study of *Flower Drum Song*, offers two answers to this question: “one can either remake [the] alien body over as much as possible in the image of whiteness or one can make that alien body so exotic and other that it can be admired as such” (2001:45–46). In other words, either assimilate or distance the alien. The artists on the Chop Suey Circuit enacted both these choices.

In many respects, the Chop Suey Circuit reinforced segregation. The first nightclubs featuring “all-Chinese” floor shows were located in San Francisco’s Chinatown and went by names such as the Chinese Village, Chinese Pagoda, Jade Palace, Ricksha, Twin Dragons, Chinese Sky Room, Club Shanghai, Dragon’s Lair, Kubla Khan, and Lion’s Den (Chun 2000:65). Chinatowns all across North America have always served symbolically as sites of difference, as territory beyond the bounds of the West. As Kay Anderson writes of Vancouver’s Chinatown in the late 19th and early 20th centuries:

In the eyes of civic officials, “Chinatown” signified no less than the encounter between “West” and “East”; it distinguished and testified to the vast asymmetry between two

9. Legal and cultural exclusion of, as well as discrimination against, Asian Americans through the 19th and 20th centuries is well documented. See, for instance, Sucheng Chan (1991) or Ronald Takaki (1989).

“races.” As such, Chinatown was not a benign cultural abstraction but a political projection, through which a divisive system of racial classification was being structured and institutionalized. (1987:589)

Club performances assisted this separation. The Asian American bodies displayed onstage made material the fact of their difference and this performative process then contributed to the formation of Chinatown as an exotic landscape. By presenting shows in Chinatown, the nightclubs offered white customers a journey to the Orient. A program for the Forbidden City features a seductively posed Asian American woman in a backless leotard with a little fringed skirt saying into a telephone, “Come with me, please! I’ll show you how to have fun—in Chinese” (A. Dong 1989). Forbidden City was situated just on the other side of the tunnel that marked the border between Chinatown and white San Francisco (Lee 2001:240). The most popular and longest-surviving of the Chinese clubs, Forbidden City’s in-between location reassured white audiences of their safety and comfort while still suggesting entry into the “forbidden.”

As Anthony Lee has carefully outlined, this kind of self-Orientalizing was in keeping with wider efforts by the Chinatown business elite in the 1930s and 1940s to make the neighborhood look “Chinese” in order to attract tourists. Coiling dragons were added to street lamps and upward curling eaves decorated the facades of apartment buildings. These exoticizing projects produced an idea of Chinatown that suited the nightclub shows. Inventing the Orient in terms of the Western imagination was, of course, intended to make money for increasingly educated but still professionally excluded Chinese Americans. This Orientalizing echoed the plight of the Chop Suey Circuit performers who similarly hoped to win cultural citizenship in mainstream society by displaying their theatrical craft and yet always had to predicate their performances on their ethnic difference. A 3 December 1942 article in *Parade* magazine describes the various kinds of beauties “Johnny Doughboy” would meet on furlough: “So—let’s take a look at the girls our men may meet in the far-flung countries which they’re likely to visit for Uncle Sam.” The article is organized by nation, each allied country represented by a woman: “That’s why the girls we’ve photographed [...] symbolize the most alluring features of each nationality” (*Parade* 1942). “China” is depicted by Chop Suey Circuit dancer, Chinese American Jadin Wong, in heavy makeup, a high-collared, embroidered gown, China Doll bangs, and dragon lady fingernails.



Figure 3. Portrait of Jadin Wong wearing floral clothing, 1949. (Courtesy of Wally Wong, MOCA Collection)

The distinction between Chinese and Chinese American is obliterated. Furthermore, China is reduced—and feminized—to a single erotically posed woman. Wong, born in Stockton, California, is the metonymic icon for one of the “far-flung countries” the (white) United States enjoys “visiting” (sending armies to) but must distinguish itself from.

Many Americans had never laid eyes on any “Celestial Beings” before. GIs coming to the big city for the first time lined up at the Chinatown nightclubs in droves. They came to see in the flesh the dragon ladies, Madame Butterflies, and China dolls of their imagination. Of course, the myth about Asian female genitalia opening sideways lured many inquisitive customers: as the famed “Bubble Girl,” Noel Toy, coyly alluded, “Oh sure, didn’t you know? It’s just like eating corn on the cob” (in A. Dong 1989). Initiated by the war and encouraged by clubs like the China Doll and Forbidden City, Asian women became coveted objects of exotic desire:

If you should ask any one of the feminine half of New York what she thinks about the Oriental situation the answer would be, “I don’t like it.”

But she wouldn’t be thinking about politics.

The truth is that the so-called “Yellow Peril” already has engulfed New York. But nicely.

What has happened is this: Some of America’s best known swains and wolves have discovered the allegedly superior charms of pretty Oriental damsels and now every Asiatic gal in show business is getting a terrific rush from the guys of the Café Society set. (*Real Screen* [late 1930s?])

Chop Suey Circuit dancers like Noel Toy and Jadin Wong performed to excess the erotic exotic. As the United States began to exercise its global hegemony, the need to define US Americanness became imperative. Toy and Wong enacted the American anxiety over racial difference—a national need to distance and to radically other the Asian American body in order to solidify authentic, white Americanness. The Chop Suey Circuit entertainers, their Orientalness highlighted for white audiences, ironically gained notice while assuring their own isolation as the Asiatic other.

The nightclub performances reinforced the fiction that Chinatown was not in the United States. Chinatown dancers and singers remained foreign, alien, and unassimilable. Securely held within the borders of their ghetto—or just barely outside of it and then only to beckon audiences in—these novelty performers posed little threat to the territory and citizenship that was the right of white Americans. The racializing of place through performance reinforces hierarchies of difference:

Indeed by situating one such place “in process, in time” [...], it is possible to demonstrate that as a Western idea and a concrete form Chinatown has been a critical nexus through which a system of racial classification has been continuously constructed. Racial ideology has been materially embedded in space [...] and it is through “place” that is has been given a local reference, become a social fact, and aided its own reproduction. (Anderson 1987:584)

Despite the curiosity generated by the war in the East, it was preferable to view Asians in America from a distance, across a border marked by a fantastical Chinese gate and shrouded in an Orientalizing mist obliterating the second word of the category, Asian *American*.

At the same time, of course, the United States defines itself by its immigrant history and its exuberant ability to assimilate ethnic others. So to return to the second possibility that Cheng cites for making the abject Asian American visually acceptable on the American stage, the Chop Suey Circuit entertainers also actively produced themselves as earnest mimics of “real” Americans. Taking on designations like the “Chinese Fred and Ginger” they appealed to audiences as novel replications of famous white originals. But, as one review at the time implies,

they never quite achieved full American status: “The ballroom dancers of the week, Jadin Wong and Li Sun, are a pleasing Chinese couple, but they seem a trifle out of their element in what one may presume are typical Occidental maneuvers” (L. Dong 1992:134). The Chop Suey Circuit entertainers thus dramatized the always-imperfect transition from alien body to domestic body. Despite the American assimilationist imperative, the Asian American remained foreign. Crooner Larry Ching could never be billed simply as Larry Ching, only ever as the “Chinese Frank Sinatra.” His so-called Chineseness was the defining feature of his performance; it was why audiences listened to him. His act was a parody, a Chinese imitation of genuine whiteness that never erased the boundaries of racial difference. As Lee argues, the Chop Suey Circuit entertainers were “applauded and enjoyed not for closing the gap between the races but for maintaining (and making entertaining) the distance between them” (2001:248–49). Their acts were neither liberatory nor transgressive, but merely amusing. Show numbers with titles like “Coolie Dance” suggest that the performers were making light of their own attempts at whiteness. Rather than assimilating and gaining recognition, they reinforced the border between white and Asian, affirming the superiority of whiteness. Of course, when reviewers cite, for instance, Toy and Wing’s “speedy imitation of American jitterbugs” (*Variety* 1941b), we are reminded of the fragility of such a border and, in fact, of the ambiguity of Americanness as whiteness. The “American jitterbug” is, after all, a white appropriation of the African American lindy hop, which arose in New York during the Harlem Renaissance.

An exploration of the stage space of cabaret illuminates some of the racial contradictions at play on the Chop Suey Circuit. The stage, too, is a geographical site. As a place of the imaginary, of performance, stage space, ideally speaking, makes possible racial complexities that are not conceivable on the terrain of the “real.” Unlike a proscenium stage, however, the nightclub stage is at the level of the audience and as such is a space used alternately by entertainers and patrons. The division, then, between audience and performer is blurred. Immediately following the floor shows, patrons stepped onto the performing space and danced with each other. Some photographs of the Chop Suey Circuit show the Asian American entertainers sitting at tables with white audience members. The racial ambiguities that are revealed by the Chop Suey Circuit on dance floors that are themselves ambiguously separated from quotidian space serve to emphasize the lack of any rigid distinction between performance practice and the performativity of everyday life. When it comes to racialization, stage and street are not far apart.

Crossing Borders

The contradiction between the ideal of US multiculturalism and the alienation of Asian Americans is captured in Karen Shimakawa’s notion of national abjection (2002). For Shimakawa, abjection is a never-finished process by which the abject body is continually pushed outside national boundaries but never fully expelled because this abject body is necessary to the construction of a coherent white US Americanness. Thus the Chop Suey Circuit sold both the exotic “Chineseness” of the performers and the novelty of Asian American entertainers *inadequately* imitating the popular (European, Africanist, and Latin) American acts of the day. The potentially liberating aspect of abjection is that its contradictions are always partially revealed and deconstructed through the process of performance. Performance both constructs race and reveals the contingency of race as a construction. The sight of “Asiatics” performing “Occidental maneuvers” implies that race is merely an act. As Dorinne Kondo has argued, cross-racial performance can “cast into relief the ways our essentialist notions of race and other social forces are in part enacted through intonation, gesture, movement and accent” (2000:83).

Chop Suey Circuit performers could sometimes turn these expectations on their heads. Ruth and Hank Wong recount the act of a father and son singing team at the China Doll. The father would speak in exaggerated broken English between songs, making himself the butt of his son’s jokes. Then the music would start and he would break into perfect English, singing all the familiar American tunes. In other words, as they cracked jokes in English and mimicked



Figure 4. Photo of Jadin Wong in a scene from the 1939 20th Century Fox production *Mr. Moto Takes a Vacation*. (Courtesy of Wally Wong, MOCA Collection)

the popular dance styles of the day—the rumba, the mambo, the waltz, the cha-cha—these Chop Suey Circuit performers revealed Americanness as an unstable category, already tainted by a not-quite fully domesticated Otherness. The spectacle of Asian American bodies dancing “American” dances that themselves have fraught histories of ethnic appropriation reveal the truth that miscegenation is taking—has already taken—place. Asian American performance has been—and continues to be—about the negotiation between the obstacles of Orientalism and the struggle for cultural citizenship. The Chop Suey Circuit, like the dish it is named after, a dish invented in Chinese America, reveals an America “constituted by a fantasy of ethnicities” (2001:37), as Anne Cheng phrases it. That is, Asian American performers are neither “authentically” Oriental nor “truly” American. The United States’ “melting pot” both welcomes the outsider and seeks to expel her.

Some Asian American performers crossed racial borders meant to keep the races in their place. A number of Japanese American performers, avoiding internment, went on the road presenting themselves as Chinese. Jack Suzuki became Jack Soo, and Dorothy Takahashi took the name Toy.¹⁰ Toy was with her dancing partner Paul Wing in New York when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor: “We went to work one day and saw the papers—it was Pearl Harbor. Ed Sullivan got a hold of it that one of us was Japanese and put an article in his column. [...] We told Monte Proser that ‘we think it’s best that we don’t stay on.’ [...] We headed off and played all the little towns, staying away from New York for a time” (Toy and Wing 1993:110). When the United States entered the war, Wing was drafted and Toy went on working under her Chinese pseudonym: “During World War II, my parents were forced to go to a [Japanese internment] camp in Topaz, Utah. They did not want us to have to go there, too. So my sister and I managed to get to Chicago and did an act together during the war. It was the Toy Sisters” (110).

10. “Dorothy and I, we team up. Go to Chicago. ‘Toy and Wing’—and we had to go like that because Japanese weren’t as popular as the Chinese in those days. Everything was Chinese. All the culture was Chinese” (Toy and Wing 1993:105).

Following the example of performers like Caruso Lagrimas, who was of Portuguese, Spanish, Filipino, and Chinese descent and took the name Tony Wing, these Japanese American performers capitalized on Americans' ignorant perception that all East Asians "looked alike." Their cross-ethnic performances of self cast into relief the contradictions of an American racial cartography that incarcerated Japanese Americans and ghettoized Chinese Americans in Chinatowns, while simultaneously subsuming generic Asianness into the category "Chinese."

Chop Suey and Jim Crow

Not only did the Chop Suey Circuit slip outside the bounds of internment, but also some performers toured the South during the era of segregation and in doing so revealed the inequities of Jim Crow.¹¹ The stark borders delineating black space and white space in the South allowed no room for Asian Americans. Ruth Wong, a dancer on the Circuit, recounts a time when she went to see her husband, an acrobat, perform in Fort Worth, Texas:

I went up to see [my husband's] act and it was in, like, a stadium, and I went up and the man says to me, "You're in the wrong section." I said, "Why? I'm watching the show from here." "You're in the black section. You're not supposed to be here." [...] I guess I was supposed to be in the white section. I don't know. I'm not white, I'm not black. (Wong and Wong 2000)

Similarly, Toy Yat Mar, the "Chinese Sophie Tucker," describes boarding a bus while on tour in the South and not knowing whether to sit in the front or the back. "Fortunately, there was something in the middle, so I sat down in the middle of the bus. But nobody sat beside me" (in A. Dong 1989). Dorothy Toy discusses the discomfort of not knowing which spaces were interdicted to her and which were safe (Toy 2007). In Jim Crow America, black and white territories were clearly marked, but space for Asian Americans was uncertain. Thus, as touring performers, the Chop Suey Circuit dancers and singers could sometimes move across black-white boundaries because no exclusive territory had been delineated for them. Helen Wong Jean recounts, "We also toured the Southern states. Usually we played four days, sometimes a week, at a time. We met very few Chinese. Generally we stayed in [white only] hotels and we didn't notice any prejudice, perhaps because we were there such a short time" (1989:115). Jean's experience suggests that perhaps the Chop Suey Circuit entertainers' brief tours to the South, along with their distinctly exotic billing, helped them pass under the racial radar.

Recent scholarship, however, argues that the figure of the Asian¹² in the South was actually a crucial force for both maintaining and disrupting the black-white taxonomy.¹³ In her article

11. I draw here mainly from personal accounts by performers who toured the South. Jadin Wong and Li Sun played at the Blue Room in the Roosevelt Hotel, a club advertised as "The Pride of the South," in New Orleans for a four-week engagement (*New Orleans States* [late 1930s?]). A review of the show states: "Jadin Wong and Li Sun are among the smoothest exhibition ballroom dancers China has sent to America. They demand great applause for every dance but the audience really falls for their typical Chinese folk song, written, as Li Sun announces, by the great Chinese composer, Ginsberg" (Hyde [late 1930s?]). Typical of many reviews of the Chop Suey Circuit performers, identification of their Chineseness is primary, while evaluations of their performances are secondary. While other reviews of engagements in cities outside the South do sometimes make special note of the fact that the Chop Suey Circuit performers are American-born, this review misses that fact and characterizes them as hailing straight from China. Such a misstatement is one degree different from most reviews, which append the adjective "Oriental" or "Chinese" in describing these entertainers, but do not make the mistake of claiming that they are directly from China.

12. In this section I tend to use "Chinese" and "Asian" interchangeably as all Asians were generally perceived to be "Chinamen" at the time. It is true that there was a larger concentration and history of Chinese laborers in the South than Japanese or other Asians.

13. Asian American laborers were present in the South from the early 19th century onward (see Jung 2006; Loewen [1971] 1988; Quan 1982).

on 19th-century “Black Orientalism,” Helen H. Jun (2006) demonstrates the ways in which African Americans of the 19th century utilized Orientalist narratives of the Chinese as heathens as a way to emphasize their own distance from this foreign, sinful race, as well as to support their project of racial uplift and US cultural citizenship. At the same time, to reveal just how intertwined the plight of blacks and Chinese were, most black presses of the time opposed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882¹⁴ because it solidified the possibility of national exclusion based on race, thus making blacks vulnerable to segregation.

Similarly, Sanda Mayzaw Lwin notes the positioning of Asians as both radically other and “ordinary” in comparison to African Americans in her discussion of the figure of the “Chinaman” during the turn of the 20th century. Justice John Marshall Harlan in his lone dissenting opinion in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (the 1896 Supreme Court case upholding Jim Crow) uses the trope of the “Chinaman” to emphasize the paradox between blacks as true and deserving US citizens and Asians as “a race so different from our own” (in Lwin 2006:20)—where “our” encompasses both white and black as the only two conceivable races in the United States. Harlan attempts to reveal the hypocrisy of Jim Crow by noting the “Chinaman’s” legal right to occupy a seat on a whites-only train car while the black citizen must remain segregated. In this way, the figure of the Chinese disrupts the logic of segregation but does not trouble the black/white racial landscape. Lwin discusses the ways in which the figure of the “ordinary Chinaman” had, by the late 19th century, become such a familiar representation that it worked to create yet another binary, that between citizen and foreigner. Asians served as a rhetorical foil to solidify the black-white binary *within* the US racial map by emphasizing their essential outsidership. This “chiasmus of ordinary difference” (2006:28) made Asian Americans at once mobile and invisible, disruptive and preservative.

Recalling Shimakawa’s ideas about abjection, we know that this invisibility is the antipode that helps to define the US racial landscape. In fact, to put it more accurately, Asian Americans were not invisible but actually visibly excluded from the bilateral racial order of black and white. So what happened when Asian American performers toured the segregated South? Like Harlan’s Chinaman, did their corporeal presence upset a world defined strictly by black or white? Or did their perceived foreignness merely enforce it? The answer is, they did both.

As we know from the WWII-era cabaret scene, the black-white binary was already blurred in popular performance. The “Africanist presence” (see Gottschild 1998) and Latino influence, though denied and obscured, were central to “American” popular music and dance (see Gottschild 2002; McMains 2001/2; Roberts 1999). African-rooted Latin jazz (rumba, mambo) and dances (cha-cha, tango, samba) prevailed in all of the nightclubs. “American” dances like the jitterbug and the Charleston derived from African forms mediated through the experience of slavery and segregation and further modified by Euro-American aesthetics. But at the China Doll, for instance, the commingling of Latin bands and Asian American performers along with mostly Jewish waiters and an Irish American manager attest to a US racial taxonomy far more complex than black and white. All these groups were marginalized. Their relegation to exotic-themed nightclubs (Cocoanut Grove, Cotton Club, The Mocambo, etc.) catering to white audiences solidified not a black-white binary but a white versus non-white binary.

Take Larry Long’s experience. Called the “Chinese Sammie Davis,” Long joked, “Why don’t you call Sammie Davis the black Larry Long?” (2000). Long once played Harlem’s Apollo

14. The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act barred Chinese laborers from immigrating to the US and denied them naturalization. It was the first US act to deny immigration based on race (all Chinese laborers, regardless of nationality, were excluded). The act, as well as the other bans and court cases that extended it, effectively froze the Chinese American population in 1882, making the Chinese permanent aliens and preventing them from assimilating or developing as other immigrant communities did. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 finally abolished the series of quotas based on racial origins. As a result post-1965 America has seen a rapid influx of new Asian communities (see Chan 1991; Lowe 1996; Takaki 1989).

Theatre.¹⁵ He describes a racialized hierarchy of performers at the theatre as it was inversely inscribed in the location of dressing rooms: he had to climb several flights of stairs to the top-most dressing room (2000). Long, a Chinese American performer frequently compared to a black performer in whiteface, performed with the lowest billing at a black venue. Long also remembers an experience in segregated Delaware in which his racial status vis-à-vis his fellow African American performers was reversed. He went into a diner to buy food for the Inkspots, who could not enter (2000). But over time, things changed for Chinese Americans. James Loewen, in his book on Chinese Americans in Mississippi, claims that within the structure of black-white race relations in the mid-20th century, Chinese Americans by the 1960s engineered a “transition from near-black to near-white” ([1971] 1988:135). Long’s experiences show the ambiguity of this transition, however. No matter the degree of proximity to either side of the binary, Chinese Americans were still a “third race” for which there was no real place.

In her book about the “all-girl” bands of the 1940s, Sherrie Tucker discusses the racial issues raised by the International Sweethearts of Rhythm, a mixed-race band, touring under the rigid rules of Jim Crow. The “international” appellation was initially included to account for the band’s light-skinned—and later white and at least partially Asian, Latina, and Native American—members. That is, when the band traveled through Jim Crow territory “the international theme was, in part, code announcing that the white-looking women in the band were not North American white women but exotic light-skinned women from other (non-white) lands” (Tucker 2000:149). This tactic protected the band from the Southern white police who strictly controlled the color line and who would have severely punished the Sweethearts if they had any white members. The international guise also appealed to the band’s mostly African American audiences by suggesting solidarity between American blacks and other peoples of color. The Sweethearts offered a way to imagine a world beyond the stark choices of Jim Crow.

Willie Mae Wong, a part-Chinese, part-black woman who grew up among blacks in Mississippi, was aggressively recruited to be a member of the Sweethearts. Her carefully constructed foreignness was often mentioned in the black press as a way to highlight the internationalism of the band.¹⁶ One reviewer wrote that, “Willie Mae Wong, the Oriental saxophonist, is en route to China Town in San Francisco to see her people” (in Tucker 2000:184). Of course, for Wong, as for the Chop Suey Circuit performers, her mobility was predicated on a racial system that excluded Asian Americans (see note 11). Whether in New York’s Chinatown, in Reno, Nevada, or New Orleans, Louisiana, Chop Suey Circuit performers were necessarily defined by their foreignness. Nevertheless, the effect of an Asian American presence in the South was to reveal the injustice of Jim Crow. About Willie Mae Wong, Tucker explains, “And the presence in the band of a young woman who was neither white nor black had a symbolic power for audiences who knew that the black/white binary did not account for everyone, that blackness was bigger than Jim Crow might think” (2000:192).

Thus, Asian Americans challenged the limits of black-white segregation by raising the question of how other categories beyond black fit or did not fit. But these Asian Americans were only able to move through the USA by emphasizing their own exoticism, thereby confirming the black-white Jim Crow system. Following the logic of abjection, Asian Americans were alienated from the black-white landscape and this expulsion gave them a comparative mobility that actually served to further derogate blacks. Paradoxically, their presence in the South performing with black entertainers revealed the inadequacies of the Jim Crow system, which could not fully contain the complexities of race. “It is by movement within and between [racial] hierarchies, and across the boundaries that delineate one ‘culture’ from another, that the possibility of cultural creativity, resistance, and transformation opens” (Mitchell 2000:256).

15. It is unclear from Long’s account (drawn from an interview) when this gig occurred.

16. In fact, her name was not Wong, but Lee. The band’s leader had her change it to Wong so that it would sound more definitively Chinese (Tucker 2000:192).

Performing a Geography of Asian America

The Chop Suey Circuit charted new terrain in Asian American geography. Touring across the nation in the mid-20th century, at the cusp of changes that would eliminate the immigration exclusion acts that barred entry to Asians, Asian American performers helped map a terrain beyond the Chinatowns, the Little Tokyos, the Manilatowns, and, of course, the internment camps.

But does finding a place ensure acceptance? In many ways the presence of Asian Americans onstage only contributed to a process that solidified whiteness and derogated blackness. For the Chop Suey Circuit entertainers the choices were only ever between playing the erotic exotic or the “honorary,” if bogus, white. The Chop Suey Circuit suggests the ways that the raced, performing body, onstage and on tour, carried the capacity both to reproduce boundaries of otherness, while also disrupting the logic of segregation. The presence of Asian American bodies performing typically white forms (appropriated from black and Latin forms) throughout the black-white spaces of the Jim Crow South, and of Japanese Americans dancing and singing exuberantly beyond the barbed wire of the internment camps, reveal how performing bodies can challenge existing racial cartographies. They tap danced to “A Tisket, A Tasket” in order to claim cultural citizenship, but they wore coolie hats to be comprehensible. As an abject population, expelled from the black-white racial landscape of America, they gained some small purchase, some access, not, paradoxically, by performing belonging but by revealing the difference underneath their whiteface.

References

- Alcoff, Linda Martin. 2005. *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Anderson, Kay. 1987. “The Idea of Chinatown: The Power of Place and Institutional Practice in the Making of a Racial Category.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 77 (December), 4:580–98.
- Bernstein, Adam. 2005. “Cabaret Performer Hildegard Dies at 99.” *Washington Post*, 1 August. www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/07/31/AR2005073100965_pf.html (19 May 2009).
- Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Chan, Sucheng. 1991. *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History*. New York: Twayne Publishers.
- Cheng, Anne Anlin. 2001. *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- “Chinese Fantasy Revue.” 1942. Personal papers of Dorothy Toy.
- “Chinese Follies.” 1938. Personal papers of Dorothy Toy.
- Chun, Gloria Heyung. 2000. *Of Orphans and Warriors: Inventing Chinese American Culture and Identity*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Coghlan, Willard. 1943. “Chinese Follies’ Revue Sparkling.” Review of Town Ranch show. *The Seattle Star*, Oct 6. Personal papers of Jadin Wong. Archive of the Museum of Chinese in America, New York.
- Delaney, David. 1998. *Race, Place, and the Law, 1836–1948*. Austin: Texas University Press.
- Delaney, David. 2002. “The Space that Race Makes.” *The Professional Geographer* 54, 1:6–14.
- Dong, Arthur. 1989 (DVD 2003). *Forbidden City, USA*. VHS. Directed by Arthur Dong. Los Angeles, CA: Deep Focus Productions.
- Dong, Lorraine. 1992. “The Forbidden City Legacy and its Chinese American Women.” In *Chinese America: History and Perspectives* 2:125–48.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. 1926. “Krigwa Players Little Negro Theater.” *The Crisis* 32, 3 (July):134–36.
- Erenberg, Lewis A. 1981. *Steppin’ Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890–1930*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Gates Jr., Henry Louis. 2001. “The Chitlin Circuit.” In *African American Performance and Theater History: A Critical Reader*, eds. Harry J. Elam, Jr. and David Krasner, 132–48. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- George-Graves, Nadine. 2000. *The Royalty of Negro Vaudeville: The Whitman Sisters and the Negotiation of Race, Gender, and Class in African American Theater 1900–1940*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. 2002. "Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference." *The Professional Geographer* 54, 1:15–24.
- Gottschild, Brenda Dixon. 1998. *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Gottschild, Brenda Dixon. 2002. *Waltzing in the Dark: African American Vaudeville and Race Politics in the Swing Era*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Haskins, Jim. 1977. *The Cotton Club*. New York: Random House.
- Hoelscher, Steven. 2003. "Making Place, Making Race: Performances of Whiteness in the Jim Crow South." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 93, 3:657–86.
- Hyde, Bert. [late 1930s?]. "Laughs Dominate Show at Roosevelt." Review of floorshow at Roosevelt Hotel, New Orleans. *New Orleans States*. Personal papers of Jadin Wong. Archive of the Museum of Chinese in America, New York.
- Jean, Helen Wong. 1989. "Playing the Palace Theatre: A Chinese American's Recollections of Vaudeville." In *Chinese America: History and Perspectives* 3:111–16.
- Jun, Helen H. 2006. "Black Orientalism: Nineteenth Century Narratives of Race and U.S. Citizenship." *American Quarterly* 58, 4 (December):1047–66.
- Jung, Moon-Ho. 2006. *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Kobayashi, Audrey, and Linda Peake. 1994. "Unnatural Discourse: 'Race' and Gender in Geography." *Gender, Place, and Culture* 1, 2:225–43.
- Kondo, Dorinne. 2000. "(Re)Visions of Race: Contemporary Race Theory and the Cultural Politics of Racial Crossover in Documentary Theatre." *Theatre Journal* 52, 1:81–107.
- Kwan, SanSan, and Cynthia Lee, Co-curators. 2002–03. *Gotta Sing! Gotta Dance!* Exhibit. Museum of Chinese in America, New York.
- Lee, Anthony. 2001. *Picturing Chinatown: Art and Orientalism in San Francisco*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lee, Joann Faung Jean, Ed. 2000. *Asian American Actors: Oral Histories from Stage, Screen, and Television*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company Publishers.
- Liu, Laura Y. 2000. "The Place of Immigration in Studies of Geography and Race." *Social & Cultural Geography* 1, 2:169–82.
- Liu, Marian. 2003. "Rediscovered Chinatown Crooner of the 1940s Cuts First Album." *San Jose Mercury News*, 28 June. www.lexisnexis.com.mimas.calstatela.edu/hottopics/Inacademic/? (9 September 2008).
- Loewen, James W. [1971] 1988. *The Mississippi Chinese: Between Black and White*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.
- Long, Larry. 2000. Interview with Renya Larson for *Gotta Sing! Gotta Dance!* 16 June. Archive of the Museum of Chinese in America, New York.
- López, Ian Haney. 2003. "White Latinos." *Harvard Latino Law Review* 6:2–7.
- Lott, Eric. 1995. *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lowe, Lisa. 1996. *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Lwin, Sanda Mayzaw. 2006. "'A Race So Different From Our Own': Segregation, Exclusion, and the Myth of Mobility." In *AfroAsian Encounters: Culture, History, Politics*, eds. Heike Raphael-Hernandez and Shannon Steen, 17–33. New York: New York University Press.
- Malnig, Julie. 2001. "Two-Stepping to Glory: Social Dance and the Rhetoric of Social Mobility." In *Moving History/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*, eds. Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright, 271–87. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

- McMains, Juliet. 2001/2002. "Brownface: Representations of Latin-ness in Dancesport." *Dance Research Journal* 33, 2 (Winter):54–71.
- Meyerowitz, Joanne J. 1991. *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880 to 1930*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mitchell, Don. 2000. *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Moon, Krystyn R. 2005a. "Lee Tung Foo and the Making of a Chinese American Vaudevillian, 1900s-1920s." *Journal of Asian American Studies* 8, 1 (February):23–48.
- Moon, Krystyn R. 2005b. *Yellowface: Creating the Chinese in American Popular Music and Performance, 1850s to 1920s*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Morley, Alan. 1941. "Screenings and Reel Dust." *Vancouver News Herald*, June 25. Archive of the Museum of Chinese in America, New York.
- New Orleans States*. [late 1930s?] Advertisement for Blue Room in The Roosevelt. Personal papers of Jadin Wong. Archive of the Museum of Chinese in America, New York.
- "A Night in Chinatown." [1930s?]. Performance program. Archive of the Museum of Chinese in America, New York.
- "Night Clubs." 1941. Personal papers of Jadin Wong. Archive of the Museum of Chinese in America, New York.
- Parade*. 1942. "Here Are the Girls Johnny Doughboy Will Meet." *Parade*, 3 December. Personal papers of Jadin Wong. Archive of the Museum of Chinese in America, New York.
- Quan, Robert Seto. 1982. *Lotus Among the Magnolias: The Mississippi Chinese*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.
- Real Screen*. [late 1930s?]. "New Slant on Broadway." Archive of the Museum of Chinese in America, New York.
- Roberts, John Storm. 1999. *The Latin Tinge: The Impact of Latin American Music on the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Robinson, Casey. 1943. "'Chinese Follies' Starting 3rd Week at Ranch Tonight." *The Seattle Star*, 19 October:4. Archive of the Museum of Chinese in America, New York.
- Roediger, David. 2005. *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Become White. The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs*. New York: Basic Books.
- "Savitt-'Woman' Open Big in Buff; Raye's Fine 21Gs." 1931. Personal papers of Dorothy Toy.
- Shimakawa, Karen. 2002. *National Abjection: The Asian American Body Onstage*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Takaki, Ronald. 1989. *Strangers From a Different Shore*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Toy, Dorothy. 2007. Interview with author. Oakland, CA, 12 October.
- Toy, Dorothy, and Paul Wing. 1993. "'The Chinese Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers': Toy and Wing." In *Tap! The Greatest Tap Dance Stars and Their Stories, 1900–1955*, ed. Rusty E. Frank, 102–10. New York: Da Capo Press.
- Tucker, Sherry. 2000. *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Variety*. 1941a. Review of current show at Leon & Eddie's, NY. *Variety*, 1 October. Personal papers of Jadin Wong. Archive of the Museum of Chinese in America, New York.
- Variety*. 1941b. Review of current show at Roxy, NY. *Variety*, 23 July. Personal papers of Dorothy Toy.
- Variety*. 1946. Review of current show at Forbidden City, San Francisco. *Variety*, 27 March:63. Personal papers of Jadin Wong. Archive of the Museum of Chinese in America, New York.
- Wong, Ruth, and George Wong. 2000. Interview with Renya Larson for *Gotta Sing! Gotta Dance!* New York, 15 June. Archive of the Museum of Chinese in America, New York.