

**Report on the International Symposium,  
"Asian American Literature & Asia: Citizenship, History, Memory, Diplomacy",  
held at Meiji University on December 20, 2014**

**Program:**

- 9:00-9:15**      **Introduction (Gayle K. Sato)**  
9:00-9:15      Opening Remarks (Greeting & Self-introduction, Goals,  
Acknowledgements, Overview of Program, esp. breaks)
- 9:15-10:20**    **First Session: Citizenship**  
9:15-9:20:      Introductions for First Session  
9:20-9:35      Talk #1  
Yu-cheng Lee, "Critical Ha Jinism; or, Ha Jin as a Critic"  
9:35-9:50      Talk #2  
Guy Beauregard, "On Not Knowing: Reading Asian American  
Literature After March 11"  
9:50-10:05     Respondent #1: Kevin Mark  
10:05-10:20    Q&A

Ten minute break

- 10:30-11:50**    **Second Session: History**  
10:30-10:35    Introductions for Second Session  
10:35-10:50    Talk #3  
Te-hsing Shan, "Angel Island Revisited"  
10:50-11:05    Talk #4  
Jade Tsui-yu Lee, "Drugging Asia: Transoceanic Imaginary of  
Opium in Asian American Literature"  
11:05-11:20    Reading #1  
Juliet S. Kono, *Anshū: Dark Sorrow*  
11:20-11:35    Respondent #2: Wing Tek Lum  
11:35-11:50    Q&A

11:50-1:25      **Lunch**

- 1:30-2:35**      **Third Session: Memory**  
1:30-1:35      Introductions for Third Session  
1:35-1:50      Talk #5  
So-Hee Lee, "History and Memory in *Still Life with Rice*"  
1:50-2:05      Talk #6  
Shyh-jen Fuh, "Remembering Home from Exile: The Philippines in  
Bulosan's Heart"  
2:05-2:20      Respondent #3: Juliet S. Kono  
2:20-2:35      Q&A

Ten minute break

- 2:45-4:15**      **Fourth Session: Diplomacy**  
2:45-2:50      Introductions for Fourth Session  
2:50-3:05      Talk #7  
Pin-chia Feng, "Visual Memories of the Chinese Railroad Workers  
in North America"  
3:05-3:20      Talk #8  
Eun-Gwi Chung, "Spotting Time-Place: Forms of Spatial Authority  
in Asian American Poetry"  
3:20-3:45      Reading #2  
Wing Tek Lum, *The Nanjing Massacre: Poems*

3:45-4:00      Respondent #4: Hideyuki Yamamoto  
4:00-4:15      Q&A

5:00-5:15      Closing Remarks (Gayle K. Sato)

## Abstracts

**Yu-cheng Lee, "Critical Ha Jinism; or, Ha Jin as a Critic"**  
Academia Sinica

This paper attempts to look at Ha Jin as a critic. I shall base my discussion mainly on Ha Jin's critical reflections on his role as a diasporic writer in *The Writer as Migrant* (2008), especially in *Zai taxiang xiezu* (2010), the expanded, Chinese edition of the book. I shall take Ha Jin's project as a polemic, in which he defends himself against the accusation of using English as a tool for literary production. In his argument, Ha Jin tries to construct a genealogy of non-native English writers writing in English, with Joseph Conrad and Vladimir Nabokov as prototypes. Finally, I shall also bring into focus the way Ha Jin celebrates the margin as a critical space of potential creativity and productivity.

**Guy Beauregard, "On Not Knowing: Reading Asian American Literature After March 11"**  
National Taiwan University/Academia Sinica

In my contribution to the symposium, I wish to discuss the stakes involved in reading Asian American literature after the disastrous events in Tōhoku in March 2011. I take as a theoretical starting point David Palumbo-Liu's (2012) investigation of "how literary aesthetics in particular help us meditate on the ways we are connected to, and act in relation to, others." What then could it mean to read Asian American texts—including Ruth Ozeki's novel *A Tale for the Time Being* (2013), a text that persistently emphasizes the act of *not knowing*—in the context of what Palumbo-Liu calls a "newly interconnected world"?

**Wing Tek Lum**  
Bamboo Ridge Press

Lum served as Respondent to the papers by Profs. Lee and Beauregard.

**Shan Te-hsing, "Angel Island Revisited"**  
Academia Sinica

Thousands of Chinese immigrants to the U.S. between 1910 and 1940 were detained on Angel Island before their identities were clarified. During their stay on the island, a number of poems were written and carved on the wooden walls of the immigration station to express their fear, anger, disappointment, frustration, and despair. The publication of *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940* (1980), co-edited by Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung, was a landmark event in Asian American history and literature. While *Island* focuses on the Chinese immigrants, *Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America* (2010), written by Erika Lee and Judy Yung, tries to construct a multiethnic and multicultural history of the island. The forthcoming second edition of *Island* this year makes a number of changes. This talk will compare these three texts on Angel Island by highlighting this place not only as a site of memory, but also as a point of departure.

**Jade Tsui-yu Lee, "Drugging Asia: Transoceanic Imaginary of Opium in Asian American Literature"**  
National Kaohsiung Normal University

Opium plays a crucial role in China's historical path to modernity and it fuels the rise and fall of two Empirical Regimes, China and Britain. It is not exaggerate to say that without opium, there are no empires. Considering its unique historical significance and intricate power relations with biopolitics, imperialist economy, state reformation, national interests and class tastes, this presentation aims to explore the representations of opium (opium trade) in Asian

American literatures. More than a substance, the opium (opium trade) is considered to be a potent metonym for historical mobility and cultural/political clashes. The emphasis of the research on opium is far more than the opium itself, but on the transoceanic journey of opium, seeing the journey the historical experiences shared by different Asian communities. Opium crossing the kala pani (impure/black waters) activates the ensuing oppression, brutality and suffering. The text in question is the 1993 novel *Opium Poppy Garden: The Way of a Chinese Grower* written by William Griffith. The present research attempts to highlight how, after several generations, memory and heritage, the dispersed opium continues to influence people of various places and times, within or outside the empirical regimes.

**Juliet S. Kono**  
novelist

Kono read excerpts from her novel, *Anshū: Dark Sorrow*, about the Hiroshima atomic bombing.

**Kevin Mark**  
Meiji University

Prof. Mark served as Respondent for the papers by Profs. Shan and Lee, and the reading by Juliet S. Kono.

**So-Hee Lee, "History and Memory in *Still Life with Rice*"**  
Hanyang Women's University

*Still Life with Rice* was published in 1996 and written by Helie Lee, a Korean-American woman artist. This is a kind of life writing, neither a novel nor a simple non-fiction story. She explores her grandmother's life history with the double narratives of the story-teller and the story-writer. Her grandmother, Hongyong Baek, was born in 1912 and grew up in northern Korea as the daughter of wealthy family and at 22 she entered into an arranged marriage. Drawing on interviews with her grandmother and writing in her voice, Lee dramatically describes the aftermath of Japanese occupation of Korea, which forced Baek and her family to flee to China in 1939, where they supported themselves by selling opium. After they returned to Korea, the Korean War occurred in 1950 and it also caused them the extreme hardship. Baek lost her husband to diphtheria and she was separated from her son, who had lived in North Korea until 1997, when he and his family escaped from North Korea. Since then, Baek had to support other children by practicing the healing art. And in 1972, finally Baek and her family emigrated to the US. Helie Lee confessed that the writing process of her grandmother's life story was her own process of searching for her identity as a Korean-American Woman.

**Shyh-jen Fuh, "Re-membering Home from Exile: The Philippines in Bulosan's Heart"**  
National Tsing Hua University

Carlos Bulosan left the Philippines for the United States in 1930, when he was only seventeen years old. During his long period of exile in the United States, the memories of his childhood in a little village of Luzon became important sources and inspirations for his writings. In his quasi-autobiography *America Is in the Heart*, a canonized work widely used in Asian American studies classes, there is almost one third of the narration being devoted to the rural life in the Philippines during his youth. The rural life of the Philippines is also vividly portrayed in *The Laughter of My Father*, a cycle of short stories evolving around a peasant family published two years before *America Is in the Heart*. This reading of Bulosan is interested in examining how Bulosan remembers his home through writing: what he chooses to preserve in his narration and what he omits, and how the selective act of re-collecting

betrays his desire and the repression, his love and wound. Furthermore, it goes on to address the different agendas of intervention implicated in the ways of remembering in these two sets of writing.

**Juliet S. Kono**  
**University of Hawaii Leeward Community College**

Prof. Kono served as Respondent for the papers by Profs. Lee and Fuh.

**Pin-chia Feng, "Visual Memories of the Chinese Railroad Workers in North America"**  
**National Chiao Tung University/Academia Sinica**

The year 2015 marks the official participation of Chinese workers in the construction of the Central Pacific Railroad in North America. And yet the significant contribution of Chinese workers remains a marginalized, even silenced, part of the official historical discourse. This regrettable lack nonetheless allows us to search for creative ways to reimagine the past. The first decade of the twenty-first century, for instance, saw a strong interest in documenting Chinese railroad workers by China's broadcasting companies. Many important Sinophone documentaries appear on the scene, such as the prize-winning *Chinese Workers on American Railroads* (2005), *Forgotten Chinese Workers* (2008), and CCTV's *Golden Spikes* (2010). In Canada, Hong Kong-born filmmaker David Wu directed a mini-series *Iron Road* (2008) and Hong Kong TV Station also produced a series entitled *History of Chinese Immigration* (2012) to ferry out the history of immigration of Chinese Canadians. While there is clearly a nationalist ideology behind this strong interest in the history of Chinese railroad workers in North America, it also contributes significantly to the preservation and circulation of Chinese American history. By comparing the visual texts produced by filmmakers from both sides of the Pacific, this presentation will probe into the aesthetics and politics of visualizing Chinese railroad workers at multiple fronts.

**Eun-Gwi Chung, "Spotting Time-Place: Forms of Spatial Authority in Asian American Poetry"**  
**Hankuk University of Foreign Studies**

If there's evidence of the literary form in the discipline of Asian American Poetry in America, this might be said of, first of all, ethnicity and identity politics. Recent readings of Asian American Poetry in Korea, however, seem to be geared toward the historical recovery and reevaluation of Asian American voices and memory in the literary texts. In order to theorize the formal aesthetics of Asian American literature and thus to describe a critical terrain of Asian American Poetry in Asia, in the following discussion, I will revisit a few influential lines that mark the spatial authority in Korean American Poetry. The call to attend more carefully to matters of places and spatial authority in Asian American Poetry in Asia derived from, in fact, a very practical demand in the field of Korean literature in Korea. In order to, at once, counterbalance the prevailing dominance of sociological studies of Asian-ness and thus, to re-imagine a racial form or formal race breaking the fixed cultural boundaries of Asian American Poetry, I will explore the critical meaning of spotting time-place in Asian American Poetry. In the presentation, I will see how a few experimental Korean American poets such as Myung Mi Kim and Jennifer Kwon Dobbs invite readers to reconsider the 'spatial authority' as the forms of memory and history.

**Wing Tek Lum**  
**Poet**

Lum read from his book, *The Nanjing Massacre: Poems*.

**Hideyuki Yamamoto**  
**Kobe University**

Prof. Yamamoto served as Respondent to the papers by Profs. Feng and Chung, and the reading by Mr. Lum.