

SPRING 2010

KARTIKA REVIEW

EDITOR'S NOTE

KENJI LIU

As a child, I'd often max out my library card and bring home dozens of books. Curled up in the sun on my parents' old couch, I devoured stacks of sci-fi novels in long sittings. As an adult I have less time, but I still use writing to examine my world and imagine new ones.

I think good creative writing sparks a partnership with the reader because the imagination is evoked. This is an active relationship rather than the more passive one that television provides. To riff off of Paolo Freire, writing can help you examine the limits and possibilities of your life, and by extension society.

Writing by Asian Americans has often struggled for readership and distribution. We have often had to start our own presses, create alternative media and promote our work at the grassroots. Aside from a few notable exceptions, this is still the case.

Additionally, readership isn't guaranteed. Up until a couple years ago, literary reading was on an alarming decline in the US, especially among young people. (Unfortunately, these studies did not include Asians.) We need to cultivate future readers.

Towards this it's with great pleasure that I debut as Poetry Editor at *Kartika Review* with a wonderful selection of contributions in this issue. Although the second half of this issue is specifically themed around "home," in my mind this threads through the first section too – home as physical, imagined, alienated, changing, gone, or pieced together.

For fiction, J. A. Pak writes of a grandmother who earns and loses a chance at true happiness. Peter Tieryas Liu's characters wander a city seeking lasting human connections with uncertain results. In Victor Luo's small town, a sakura tree brings a little magic into a young student's life as he or she considers the possibility of a mediocre life.

In poetry, Vuong Quoc Vu draws us into the dream of an aging father haunted by the past. The tenderness and precariousness of a working-class family is depicted in Eugenia Leigh's poem about a mother's love for her small

daughters. Barbara Jane Reyes asks a simple question about a father's home, unearthing numerous fragments. Aimee Suzara evokes Langston Hughes while firmly avowing the place of Filipinos in US history.

In creative non-fiction, Amanda Griffith and Thai Le Nguyen show us the sweet bond between a young girl and her dog. Ancestry, citizenship and social class mingle provocatively in Michael Janairo's evolving relationship with the Philippines. Two lives arc toward each other and then apart in Tasha Matsumoto's remembrance of her relationship with her grandmother. Lastly, John Stenberg struggles with his assumptions as he recounts a late-night encounter with a migrant shopkeeper in Shanghai.

I urge you to read these wonderful pieces actively, teasing out the themes, complexities and contradictions. Curl up in the sun somewhere with your laptop, e-reader, print out or actual paper book. See what kinds of worlds you find yourself in. Welcome to our seventh issue!

-- Kenji Liu, *Poetry Editor*

