

SPRING 2010

KARTIKA REVIEW

A PREFACE BY

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Dear Readers,

Welcome to the Spring issue, the first of the new year! In honor of this, our seventh labor of love, we pulled together a *Kartika Review* like no other, asking emerging and established Asian American writers to contribute to what has simply, but affectionately, been referred to over the past few months as "The Home Issue."

A kernel of the idea first presented itself to fiction editor Christine Lee Zilka who, while teaching a composition class focused on Asian Pacific American literature to mostly Asian Pacific American students, noticed a recurring theme of "Home" and its ambiguity to a community comprised of dissidents, immigrants, and bi-cultural people. Students and the writers whose work they read may have shared the common thread of being of Asian Pacific Islander descent. However, these students were leading complicated lives: they lived in America, they were minorities, they had immigrated or been exiled, and even if they had been born in the United States, they were straddling two cultures.

Asian America and its literature, fortunately, has diversified and become richer over the years. For instance, our literature is no longer centered on immigration but now spans so many themes including themes that have nothing to do with race. Alongside that growth, the complexity of identity and where/what to call "home" has not lessened.

The idea of "home" began to take shape when Christine discussed it casually via twitter with a friend and writer you have seen in the pages of *Kartika*, Alexander Chee, not long after his "Portrait of My Father"¹ had appeared in the pages of *Granta's* "Father issue." Suddenly, Christine wished that she could ask other writers the same question about home.

And voila--the idea for this issue was born: What is Home?

¹ Alexander Chee. "Portrait of My Father," *Granta*, March 2009 (<http://www.granta.com/Online-Only/Portrait-of-my-father-Alex-Chee>).

So, we—fiction editor Christine + nonfiction editor Jennifer Derilo—partnered up with the entire editorial staff of *Kartika*, the four of us (including Sunny Woan and Kenji Liu) asking at first, friends and then friends of friends who all happened to be emerging and established Asian American writers. We asked our teachers and mentors, our friends, we asked the friends of our friends, and we mustered up the courage and chutzpah to ask writers we didn't know.

We were thrilled when they agreed to contribute to our pages. For weeks, as their pieces rolled in, we opened them like gifts, ecstatic. These pieces were magical, nostalgic, historical, even political. Their pieces touched us, their pieces thrilled us, their pieces made us squeal, made us cry, made us think more deeply about what it is we considered home.

Home, as you, dear readers, will discover with our Famous Writers, is everywhere, sometimes nowhere, is a place or not a place, is constant or always changing, is carried in the body via food, love, grief, imaginary worlds, or secrets. Home is ever expanding or locatable on a map in one or more grids or completely disappeared. Home is sometimes abandoned, other times re-inhabited, many times forgotten, but somehow it is always occupied or it occupies you.

Home doesn't exist anymore or has yet to exist. It can be found in pages, in myths, in objects, in a word. Home is a struggle between dealing with what you cannot change and finally making it your own. Home is the accumulation of stuff, brand new, secondhand, tucked away, inherited, misplaced. Home can never be revisited--or so most people advise--yet you may be obligated to return when time wears out bodies, when something feels like missing, when life moves without you.

But whatever its incarnation, its face, its story, a home lives.

What is home to you?

Christine Lee Zilka, *Fiction Editor*
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