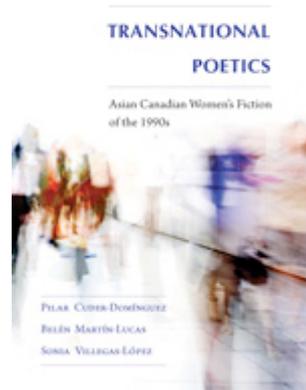


P. Cuder-Domínguez, B. Martín-Lucas, and S. Villegas-López. *Transnational Poetics: Asian Canadian Women's Fiction of the 1990s*. Toronto: TSAR, 2011. ISBN: 978-1894770682. CAN\$ 28.95.



Racial identity has been the subject of much scrutiny in Canada in the second half of the twentieth century, particularly in connection with the definition of a national identity. During the 1960s and 1970s Canada severed its last colonial ties with Britain while it engaged in the construction of a coherent national image (flag, anthem, and related symbols) that was distinctive from both their old imperial centre (the United Kingdom) and their powerful neighbour (the United States). There emerged then the notion of the “Canadian mosaic,” a symbol of inter-ethnic and inter-racial cooperation that gave the lie to the “American melting-pot” by reconciling differences instead of fostering assimilation into a normative white European identity. Even though the idea of the ‘two founding nations’ has proved extremely resilient and quite impossible to debunk, this framework opened up to other races and ethnic groups during the 1980s. In that decade, the writing of “visible minorities” in Canada attracted major media and academic attention for the first time. They became central to the project of displaying the pluralist makeup of Canadian society and culture as articulated in the Multiculturalism Act of 1988 and promoted from the institutions. By the later 1980s, however, critics and writers both expressed reservations pertaining to an official policy of multiculturalism that unproblematically celebrated “difference” without undertaking to analyze the unequal access to power of these social groups. Out of these debates there rises throughout the 1990s a new conceptualization of racial identity that starts by re-examining the very terms used for it, like “visible minority” or “woman of colour.”

This is the starting premise for the study carried out in *Transnational Poetics*. The volume gathers the results of a research project titled “Transnational Poetics: Racialized Women Writers of the 1990s” funded by the International Academic Relations Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) within the International Council for Canadian Studies’ “Canadian Studies in Europe: Institutional Research Program” in 2004. The general aim of the book is to determine to what extent the new generation of Asian Canadian women writers who started publishing in the 1990s feels at ease or at odds with a cultural climate that markets their writing as being exotic, and in what ways they relate to the poetics and politics of their predecessors. The book is divided into three sections: “Indo-Canadian Women’s Fiction in English: Feminist Anti-Racist Politics and Poetics Resist Indo-Chic,” “Racialized Bodies: Chinese Canadian Women’s Fiction”, and

“Beyond Redress: Japanese Canadian Women’s Fiction.” Among the writers discussed are Yasmin Ladha, Rachna Mara, Shauna Singh Baldwin, Shree Ghatage, Evelyn Lau, Larissa Lai, Lydia Kwa, Hiromi Goto and Kerri Sakamoto. Attention is paid too to their contributions to the new theoretical corpus on race and writing in Canada, and to how they problematize dominant conceptions of identity, not only in terms of race and gender, but also of sexual orientation.

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