GOING TOWARD THE GHOST : THE POETICS OF HAUNTING IN CONTEMPORARY ASIAN AMERICAN POETRY

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This dissertation considers how social, historical, and political contexts "haunt" the work of Asian American poets. How does history (i.e. war, colonialism, and marginalization) impact the work of Asian American poets across time and space? How does language act as a haunting space of intervention and activism? I argue that haunting occurs formally as well as on the content level, using language and the page as a space to enact "ghostliness." Rather than a psychoanalytic understanding of haunting, I define haunting in terms of invocation: a deliberate, powerful, and provocative move toward haunted places. The poets included are: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Myung Mi Kim, Sawako Nakayasu, Bhanu Kapil, Cathy Park Hong, and Barbara Jane Reyes. I insist that form and history cannot be occluded from our discussion of Asian American poetry and poetry as a larger whole; by highlighting "the ghost," I seek to create sites of transparency, intervention, and activism in this critical field.

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