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THROUGHLINES

Welcome to the inaugural issue of THROUGHLINES, a convening of writers, scholars and readers working at the intersection between Asian Pacific Studies and contemporary American literature. THROUGHLINES provides a resource for scholars faced with assembling syllabi for Asian American or any diverse Literature classes only to find themselves reaching for outdated texts, as well as Asian American writers seeking to connect with scholars and university students widely. It is intended to be a conduit for lively and vigorous dialogue across these fields that are intricately connected yet sometimes out of sync. Forthcoming issues will feature a rotation of book recommendations, syllabus shares, interviews, and lists of new books, old books and authors currently on tour. In this issue, **Jason Magabo Perez** [recommends](#) Jai Arun Ravine's *The Romance of Siam* and **Piyali Bhattacharya** [shares her syllabus](#) on looking at Asian American themes through literature and popular media. The first installment of our running inventory [taking stock](#) of recent publications by APA poets also makes its debut while THROUGHLINES [interviews](#) the collective behind **YAP**, a new art press from **Larissa Pham, Clare Mao, Jeesoo Kim, and Jaime Chu**. *We look forward to building this resource with you, and invite our readers to send along questions, comments, and pitches to kaya@kaya.com.*

THROUGHLINES Editors

Neelanjana Banerjee

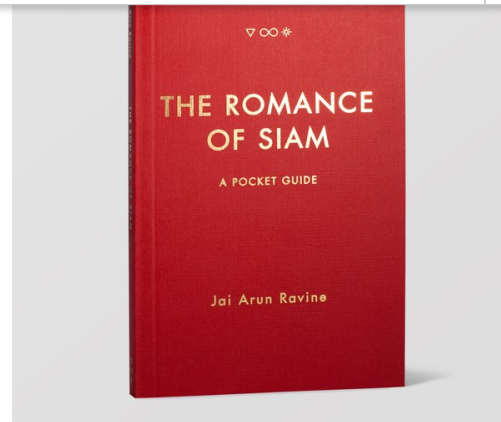
Karlynne Ejercito

Teraya Pamehta

JASON MAGABO PEREZ ON TEACHING JAI ARUN RAVINE'S THE ROMANCE OF SIAM: A POCKET GUIDE

Let's imagine you got some students who

English to the un-Englished, or simply backpacking their way through unemployment. Let's imagine that these students got a hunger and a thirst and a longing for the magically real happening elsewhere—that possibility of teleporting through a rice cooker, that possibility of reinventing oneself. Let's imagine these students fantasize about rocking Beer Chang tank tops and cargo shorts somewhere in some paradise. Let's imagine these students ain't even gotta be white! Let's be fair and equitable, these students are also you—before and now. These students, and you—before and now, might, however, desire whitely. In other words, these students, and you—before and now, might desire things and land and self and ideas and possibilities like an anthropologist-settler-colonizer-taker-overer. You all have that First-World burning for self-discovery, that Lorelei Gilmore feeling after Cheryl Strayed, or that universal white traveler feeling after Elizabeth Gilbert. White desire might be, and most likely is, articulated or entangled or whatever to your nonwhite desire, thus making impossible the distinction between what you all desire and what whiteness desires *for* you all. So, then, you all can admit: things, and you all, are a mess. And you all—desiring machine of whiteness or not—wish to study this mess. So, you all turn to Jai Arun Ravine's *The Romance of Siam: A Pocket Guide* (Timeless, Infinite Light, 2016). This book is so very mad complicated and so very mad troubling and so very mad inspiring. It is structured as a "subversive travel guide." You all find the book to be acerbic, satirical, playful, critically alert, wildly speculative, yet convincingly realistic. It is a genre-bending tour de force, a trenchant critique of



Jai Arun Ravine reads and samples all things regarding Thailand: YouTube videos; YouTube comments; travel guides; travel logs; tourist industry ephemera; films; pop song lyrics; and dissertations. In this book, you all find "rotting pad thai" and "abandoned rice cookers" and Jim Thompson and Nicolas Cage and Yul Brenner and Christy Gibson and Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes and Tiger Woods and Tony Jaa and white elephants and Sagat from *Street Fighter II*. You hear on full blast the Smashing Pumpkins' *Siamese Dream* and featured songs of the *Amazing Thailand* tourism campaign. This slim but gargantuan book of poetic riffs and obsessive sestinas disrupts and unsettles—with an unflagging commitment to messiness and mixedness and contradiction—both the settler and tourist imaginary within and the self-reinventing journey of whiteness. After working with and through the book, and desiring and undesiring, after supplementing your study with readings on Orientalism, tourism, and militarism, you all slip copies of this book into the travel sections of local bookstores, you all gift the pocket guide to friends and family who have quit their jobs or dropped out of school in order to find themselves in Thailand or elsewhere, and you all hand the book to white foodies who shamelessly reminisce about authentic Thai food and

Jai Arun Ravine conceptualizes as “white love.” The book is a choreography of poetics, fiction, lectures, and cultural commentary.

the local and beloved hell-far-from-Thailand Thai restaurant.

Dr. Jason Magabo Perez is the author of two hybrid collections of poetry & prose: a chapbook, Phenomenology of Superhero (Red Bird Chapbooks, 2016), & a full-length debut book, This is for the mostless (WordTech Editions, 2017). Currently, Perez is Assistant Professor of English at California State University, San Bernardino.

A LIST OF RECENT POETRY BOOKS FROM APA WRITERS, 2010-2018

This incomplete list is one in a series of inventories THROUGH LINES is developing as an informal resource for students, researchers and writers to find adjacencies among established and new writers alike. For an updated list of titles, visit: <http://kaya.com/throughlines/inventories/>

2010

[Janine Oshiro: Pier](#)

[Don Mee Choi: The Morning News is Exciting](#)

[Kimiko Hahn: Toxic Flora: Poems](#)

[Tan Lin: Seven Controlled Vocabularies](#)

[Shailja Patel: Migritude](#)

[Ken Chen: Juvenilia](#)

2011

[Matthew Olzmann: Mezzanines](#)

[Aimee Nezhukumatathil: Lucky Fish](#)

2012

[John Yau: Further Adventures in Monochrome](#)

[Cathy Linh Che: Split](#)

[Eugene Gloria: My Favorite Warlord](#)

[Lee Herrick: Gardening Secrets of the Dead](#)

[Karen An-Hwei Lee: Phyla of Joy](#)

[Tan Lin: Heath Course Pak](#)

[Hoa Nguyen: As Long As Trees Last](#)

[Cathy Park Hong: Engine Empire](#)

2013

[Lo Kwa Mei-en: Yearling](#)

[Kazim Ali: Sky Ward](#)

[Jaswinder Bolina: Phantom Camera](#)

[Koon Woon: *Water Chasing Water*](#)

[Nicky Sa-eun Schildkraut: *Magnetic Refrain*](#)

2014

[Janine Joseph: *Driving Without a License*](#)

[Sandra Lim: *The Wilderness*](#)

[David Mura: *Last Incantations*](#)

[Hieu Minh Nguyen: *this way to the sugar*](#)

[Sally Wen Mao: *Mad Honey Symposium*](#)

2015

[Rajiv Mohabir: *The Cowherd's Son*](#)

[Rick Barot: *Chord*](#)

[Dao Strom: *We Were Meant To Be a Gentle People*](#)

[Yaya Yao: *flesh, tongue*](#)

[Marilyn Chin: *Hard Love Province*](#)

[Wendy Xu: *Naturalism*](#)

[Ko Ko Thett: *The Burden of Being Burmese*](#)

[Sueyeun Juliette Lee: *Solar Maximum*](#)

[Nicholas Wong: *Crevasse*](#)

2016

[Matthew Olzmann: *Contradictions in the Design*](#)

[Don Mee Choi: *Hardly War*](#)

[Annie Kim: *Into the Cyclorama*](#)

[Cheonhak Kwon: *Love is the Pain of Feverish Flowers*](#)

[Hoa Nguyen: *Violet Energy Ingots*](#)

[Ocean Vuong: *Night Sky with Exit Wounds*](#)

[Jane Wong: *Overpour*](#)

[Natalie Wee: *Our Bodies and Other Fine Machines*](#)

[Leah Silvieus: *Anemochory*](#)

[Debora Kuan: *Lunch Portraits*](#)

2017

[R Zamora Linmark: *Pop Vérité*](#)

[Carlina Duan: *I Wore My Blackest Hair*](#)

[Bao Phi: *Thousand Star Hotel*](#)

[Sokunthary Svay: *Aspara in New York*](#)

[Jess Rizkallah: *The Magic My Body Becomes*](#)

[Kazumi Chin: *Having a Coke with Godzilla*](#)

[Michelle Lin: *A House Made of Water*](#)

[Hari Alluri: *The Flayed City*](#)

[Jennifer Cheng: Moon](#)

[Duy Doan: We Play a Game](#)

[Celina Su: Landia](#)

[Geneve Chao: Emigre](#)

[Adeeba Shahid Talukder: What Is Not Beautiful](#)

[Sesshu Foster: City of the Future](#)

[Vi Khi Nao: Sheep Machine](#)

[Faisal Mohyuddin, The Displaced Children Of Displaced Children](#)

SYLLABUS NOTES: ON TEACHING ASIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Piyali Bhattacharya, Vanderbilt University

In putting together a syllabus called, “Contemporary Asian America through Novels, Film, and Television,” I cannot divorce the reading list from who I am—which is to say that I cannot think about teaching without acknowledging my space as a woman of color in a university setting. It is specifically important to me to introduce students to writers they may never have had a chance to read before. Because this course is “contemporary,” I look for works published recently, while keeping in mind that the “canon,” as it currently stands, must also be addressed. My classroom is commonly the first and only space in which students systematically engage with writers of color, which has been thrilling for me. To watch them battle with ideas and delve into stories they would have otherwise not been exposed to is one important objective of this class but hardly the only one.

Since this is also a “W” or writing-intensive course, I have a conversation with my students that I call: “Curiosity, Engagement, and Articulation: Why we Learn to Write.” In this conversation, I ask them to think about where their curiosity comes from: why it is so important to be engaged in the world around them, and why it is crucial that we all constantly hone our skills at articulating our opinions regarding our various engagements. Another exercise we do is something called “Community Response,” a ten-minute freewrite that students engage in every other class period where they respond to something they have read or heard recently about either their local, state-level, national, or global communities (and therefore have to come to class with some idea of what is happening in the world that day). They must then reflect on what they read for class that day, making sure to note why what we read in this classroom is always connected to what is happening in the world around us.

Although this is a contemporary class, it is critical that the students have a thorough understanding of Asian American history and also Asian geo-spatial and historical relationships. I consistently find that students are stunned that Asian countries have been at war with each other, that Asians can be undocumented in the United States, and even that they surprise themselves when they realize that they

theme throughout the semester.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this class, we will interact with work created by contemporary Asian American writers, filmmakers and television producers. Through the lens of these texts, we will examine what it means to develop cultural, social, and political identities; how history, literature, and media shape those identities; and vice versa.

We will examine how class, gender, and immigration status affect the identity politics of various kinds of Asian American communities (in fact, these will be the three themes of our three sequences throughout the semester) and what part art plays in sharpening and minimizing those divides.

It will also be important to examine the literary components of each of these texts, so we will be paying attention to the specific language and phrasing these authors use, doing close readings of certain passages, and thinking about how voice, plot, character development and narrative affect the outcome of a given text.

Finally, we will use these texts as a springboard to examine how these issues play out in our own local communities, and how we can and must contribute to discussions on these topics through continuous and critical awareness of the art, literature and media that is created by, about, and around us.

SEQUENCE 1: The Model Minority Myth

Day 1/2

Kevin Scott Wong: *East Asian Immigrants*,
Chia Youyee Vang: *Southeast Asian Americans*,
Sunaina Maira: *South Asian America: Histories, Cultures, Politics*,
Very Short Introduction to Orientalism

WATCH: [An Introduction to Edward Said's Orientalism, A Macat Sociology Analysis](#)

Lisa Sun-Hee Park: *Continuing Significance of the Model Minority Myth*

Kat Chow: "['Model Minority' Myth Used As Racial Wedge Between Asians and Blacks](#)"

Day 3

Nina Rastogi: "[Beyond Apu](#)"

Saloni Gajjar: "[Aziz Ansari, Diversity, and Finally Being Able to See Yourself on TV](#)"

*King***SEQUENCE 2: Those Left Out of the Model Minority – Religion, Gender and Sexuality**Days 10 - 12Tanwi Nandini Islam: *Bright Lines*Days 13 - 16Catherine Chung: *Forgotten Country*,**SEQUENCE 3: Those Left Out of the Model Minority – Documentation**Day 17Jose Antonio Vargas: “[My Life As An Undocumented Immigrant](#)”Zi Heng Lim: “[For Asian Undocumented Immigrants, A Life of Secrecy](#)”Days 18 - 20**WATCH:** [The Danger of a Single Story](#), TED Talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
The Leavers, Lisa Ko**SEQUENCE 4: Asian Americans and Race Relations**Day 23**WATCH:** *Mississippi Masala*, Mira Nair, dir.Day 24Angry Asian Man Blog: “[An Open Letter to our Asian American Families about Black Lives Matter](#)”Day 25Jeff Yang: “[Will Asian Americans Get Behind Black Lives Matter?](#)”Katie Zhu: “[Asian Americans Must Stand Up & Say Black Lives Matter](#)”Roxane Gay: “[Where Things Stand](#)”Kavita Das, “[Writers Shouldn’t Romanticize Rejection](#)” and “[On Parsing](#)”Ilana Masad: “[Read Between the Racism](#)”**SEQUENCE 5: Visibility and Representation**Day 26**WATCH:***Fresh Off the Boat*, Eddie Huang, writer. Season 1 Episode 2 (“Home Sweet Home-School”), Season 1 Episode 4 (“Success Perm”), Season 1 Episode 13

Day 27

Master of None, Aziz Ansari, writer.
 Season 1 Episode 2 (“Parents”), Season 1
 Episode 4 (“Indians on T.V.”)
 Scrubs, [Season 5 Episode 1, 6:07 – 7:07](#)
 Clip of Aziz Ansari on Jimmy Fallon,
 “[Aziz Ansari's Real-Life Dad Is a Hit on
 Master of None](#)”

Amanda Hess: “[Asian American Actors
 Are Fighting For Visibility, They Will Not
 Be Ignored](#)”

Sam Levin: “[We’re the Geeks, the
 Prostitutes: Asian American Actors on
 Hollywood’s Barriers](#)”

Olivia Mazzucato: “Asian American
 Representation in Popular Media,”

Day 28

Joe Berkowitz: “[Maybe We Need To Get
 More Pissed:](#)” [John Cho on Asian
 Americans in Hollywood](#)

E. Alex Jung: [Constance Wu Slams Matt
 Damon’s Great Wall Film for
 Perpetuating a ‘Racist Myth’](#)”

Laura Bradley: “[Hawaii Five O’s Daniel
 Dae Kim on His Exit: “The Path to
 Equality is Rarely Easy,”](#)”

INTERVIEW WITH

Y
A
P

For this series of interviews, THROUGH LINES will be interviewing artists, writers, and editors to interrogate the relationship between cultural production and the production of race and power.

This YAP is a small art press based in New York City, started by Larissa Pham, Clare Mao, Jaime Chu, and Jeesoo Lee. On the eve of their launch in March, we discussed friendship and the uncertainties of publishing. The first book is about crushes, *I’ve fallen in love or imagine I have* by Clare Mao. For more information, go to: <http://www.yapyapyap.org> or—better yet—follow them on Instagram and twitter.

becoming friends to the inception of YAP?

Larissa Pham: YAP originally started when Jaime and I were in Europe and we would hype up each other's questionable decisions by saying "ya ya ya ya ya." We started YAP initially to publish Clare's book, and Jeessoo came on board to help get things in order.

THROUGHLINES: *Were there other presses you were looking at and going, "Oh, this might be something I would want to do—but differently?"*

Clare: Instead of responding directly to other presses and wanting to do things differently, it came more organically from a desire to make the books we wanted to see. The rhetoric around identity politics, especially in mainstream publishing, can often be stale, when it's not inaccessible and silo-ed from a larger conversation. Either it's heavy on theory or it's so retread that it doesn't mean anything anymore: when anyone can say they're for amplifying minority voices, it tends to become an ad-lib for diversity marketing.

THROUGHLINES: *What do you see as the confining parameters of the existing publishing landscape?*

Larissa: Publishing, even and maybe especially indie publishing, feels insulated from people who aren't already in the scene. Within the scene, there tends to be a noticeable paucity of representations among minority voices, as if there were only a handful of ways to be "Asian." We are interested in being playful with our politics, which means not being too heavy-handed about who we are or what we do.

THROUGHLINES: *When you're not based in New York, it can be difficult to tap into the scenes that are the most visible. On the one hand, New York is in a position where you need it for wide distribution. On the other, the silo effect (or its inaccessibility) is essentially a side effect for managing overproduction.*

Clare: We want to be more internet-based than New York-based—after all, we were all raised by the internet, found each other via the internet and continue to make friends through it.

Larissa: We're more acutely aware of how the internet plays a part in creating and maintaining our networks, so it makes sense to intervene in the space where all our friends are concentrated and where we direct our intellectual/social labor. I would hate to think of YAP as merely part of the New York publishing industrial complex.

Clare: Uh, that I shouldn't have bothered entering it at all. To be honest, getting into things as a *publisher* has been enlightening. Not to sound like a cop but even the logistical and financial stuff helps me understand why traditional publishing can be stale.

Larissa: We're realizing how expensive and bureaucratic everything is. You need a lot of capital upfront to start a press. We have an advantage in that three of us work in publishing and media, so we understand it to some degree, and are jaded by it—yet we still think there's room for books that are new and exciting to us. One reason it feels stale is that a lot of the same kinds of people make big decisions, resulting in the same books, the same parties.

Jaime: Trade publishing tends to say, “Fuck No” first and we are the kind of people who say “Fuck Yes” first.

Larissa: Money in publishing is so covert. The rates that are offered to writers are laughably low, and it's not like that in other industries!

Clare: Publishing is so dumb because you ostensibly work in it for passion because you love books and yet you're seldom rewarded as readers.

THROUGHLINES: *What could make publishing feel less stale?*

Clare: To me, the people doing the most interesting creative things these days are musicians, DJs, and people who organize parties. While they have their own set of problems, there's something about the ethos of parties that I really love and I don't think you can find in publishing.

THROUGHLINES: *There's a more conspicuous lack of, say, self-consciousness wrapped up in party culture—ideally, assuming you're at a good party. Dance culture can be politically radical in that sense, which is hard when you're around a bunch of party nerds desperately clinging to some anachronistic idea of the '70s or The Partisan Review.*

Larissa: Publishing parties are so awful. They always remind me of going to college and realizing I hadn't read enough, that I was boxed out of so many conversations because I didn't have the same cultural upbringing as these kids who grew up in like, Manhattan.

THROUGHLINES: *I don't think I ever figured out how to get into the box. I could imitate the mannerisms but i always ended up sounding like Manhattanite drag.*

THROUGHLINES: *You mean something tending toward high end normcore or DIS mag?*

Clare: Yeah! We want instead to question that tendency and work toward a kind of earnestness. It's recapturing that joy we had as Asian American teenage girls. We all had that genuine and even uncool euphoric moment when we met each other so hopefully we can create a space like that for other people as well.

THROUGHLINES: *Growing up, what did the space you created look like between all of you?*

Larissa: We partied a lot! Even before that, I found a power in Asian female friendship stemming from the realization that we don't have to be inherently in competition with each other.

Clare: Mine was getting put in a group email with four other Asian girls, one of whom used to be friends with my CYBERBULLY on LiveJournal. Asian girls on the internet really changed my life.

Jeesoo: My best friend Vivian showed me Mitski, and we listened to "Best American Girl" together in my room -- that really took our friendship to the next level. The two of us also read Larissa's book in the same bedroom but separately in silence before YAP was even an idea!

Clare: Something else that's interesting for us is that while we all are kind of the same genre of Asian girl today, we also all came from really different backgrounds. We're interested in capturing that plurality of Asian girl experience. For example, I grew up in a majority Asian community in Flushing so had a different relationship with the self-hatred assimilation narrative.

Jeesoo: We come from four different corners of the country. I grew up in Texas, so I was constantly surrounded by shit I hate like basing adolescent culture around sports and trucks. I think one of my old high school classmates went so far as playing in the Super Bowl.

Larissa: I grew up in liberal yet white supremacist Portland and I didn't feel as though I had become raced until I was in college, where most of my identity stuff was around being first-generation.

Jaime: I grew up in Hong Kong and moved here for high school!

THROUGHLINES: *Any final words?*



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