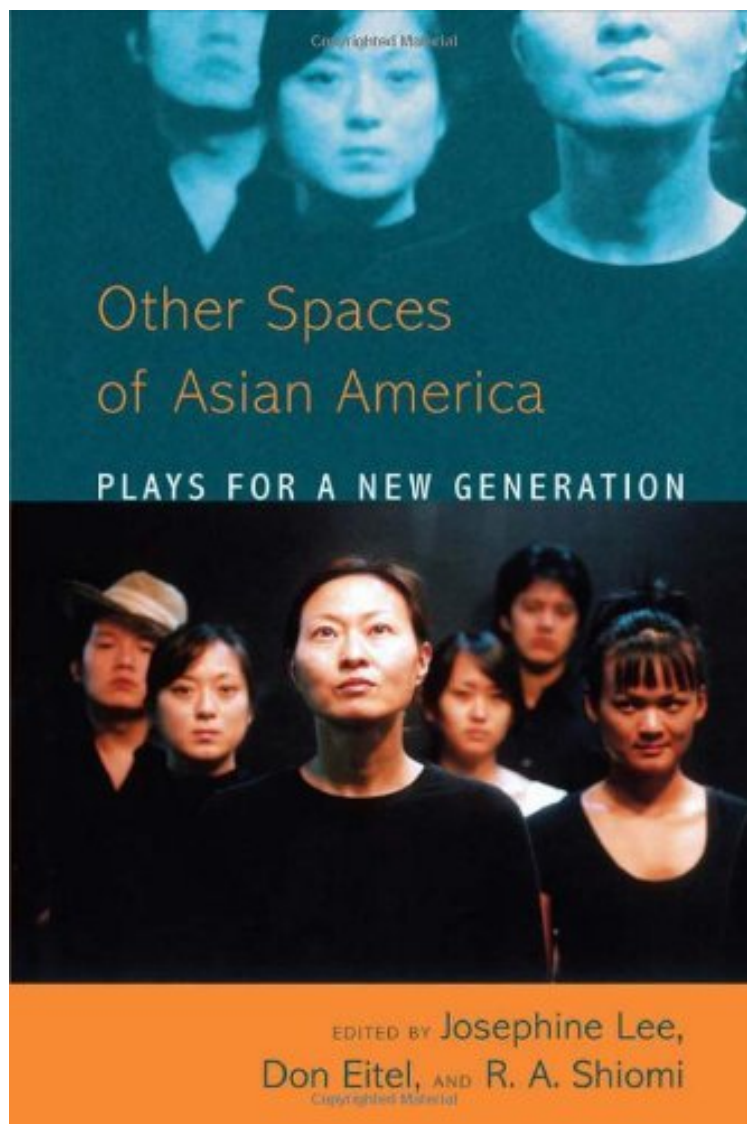


Asian American Plays for a New Generation: Plays for a New Generation

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before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Asian American Plays for a New Generation: Plays for a New Generation:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great stories! My only substantial complaint is the price. *shrug* By Anonymous Most or perhaps all of the plays in this collection were staged in Minnesota. Most seem to take place between 1950-1990, so I'm actually not sure if a "new generation" is quite apt! I'm old for a millennial, but I don't

quite remember 1990 myself. When I think back to that time, I have little flashes of crimped hair, Ninja Turtles and arguments among my peers about whether or not "bad" should be used to describe something cool. Anyway, there's so little on stage to represent Asian cultures in a way that isn't stereotypical, that maybe it is fair to say these plays are "for a new generation." Asian American identity is extremely variable. Because these plays highlight the uniqueness of some of those cultures, it makes the stories worth the read. Here are the seven plays in this book: 1. "Indian Cowboy," Zaraawar Mistry 2. "Walleye Kid: The Musical," Kurt Miyashiro (music and lyrics), R.A. Shiomi and Sundraya Kase 3. "Happy Valley," Aurore Khoo 4. "Asiamnesia," Sun Mee Chomet 5. "Sia(b)," May Lee-Yang 6. "Bahala Na (Let It Go)," Clarence Coo 7. "Ching Chong Chinaman," Lauren Yee

In particular, I found plays (1) and (6) extremely moving, but here are some of my thoughts about each of them: 1. "Indian Cowboy" is about a man in India who was adopted by a family who loves him. But he looks different from them and this perception of being different becomes a lifelong challenge. It's hard for him to integrate his perception of himself and the way others treat him into a comfortable sense of identity. He wants to be an actor, and he goes to New York and L.A. to do his best. Casting directors don't think he looks Indian; they aren't sure what he looks like... maybe Greek or Mediterranean. He struggles with identity and with finding work as an actor for years until he starts finding high-paying gigs testing out security at airlines. He tests security by posing as a Saudi Arabian man looking for flight lessons. Needless to say, things get very difficult for our struggling actor when the government decides to be interrogate our main character for these acting gigs that he took. The play is extremely moving and possibly the most well-written of the seven. 2. "Walleye Kid: The Musical." This was a musical we can't hear, so that's a little frustrating. Other than that, it's a decent play about Annie, a girl of Korean ethnicity whose adopted American family lives in Minnesota. As she approaches adolescence, she faces some name-calling and other struggles in an all-white community. After her first major incident of inappropriate name-calling relating to race, Annie goes on a journey with a spirit guide to Korea. There, she gets a realistic look at the circumstances that might have surrounded her adoption. 3. "Happy Valley." I kept reading this play because it was well-written, but also because wanted the main character to get run over by a car. I kept waiting for something awful to happen to her. That is the unfortunate truth. I tended to enjoy antiheroes when I was a kid, but antiheroes seem to work best in narrated memoirs, biographies, and action/adventure, not so much in this play. The play is about a niece and uncle who live in Hong Kong at the time just before it got turned over to China. The play's dialog and style has notes of Oscar Wilde and a lot of Britishisms. The Uncle is a pleasant fop or a dandy who defies the stereotype a little bit by his being an Asian man born and raised in Hong Kong during that era. The niece, the main character, is a bratty little girl who is never reprimanded for all the truly evil things she says and does. I don't like to use subjective, emotionally-charged words like that to judge people, but for instance: she is constantly verbally abusing the Filipina maid (by far the most likable character), constantly verbally abusing the mainland Chinese woman her uncle marries (you come to like the implied gold-digging woman due to the attacks and insults she constantly has to brave), threatening suicide, cutting off her Uncle's wife's hair while she's asleep, and being completely self-centered in general and totally lacking in any kind of empathy for others for the entire duration of the play. I say this as someone who enjoys characters with a lot of personality, but this play really went too far in creating a character who is very difficult to feel any sympathy for because she has no interest in others' needs, rights, and feelings for the entire stretch of the play. It's realistic since the character is only about 14, but it really grates on my nerves. But this play and its characters made me more aware of how hard the transition must have been for Hong Kong to pass from England to China. 4. "Asiamnesia." This play is about Asian film stars in the 20th century. The author makes educated guesses about the things they would talk about if they had a chance to interact with each other. I didn't know about these women before, so it was very interesting to hear about them and wonder what the source material for this play was. This is kind of a play about actors for actors, like Indian Cowboy. 5. "Sia(b)." I had a hard time understanding this play. It's mainly about trying to educate the audience about the Hmong people today and in the past, and lectures directly at the audience like a lot of other theatrical protest plays. Unfortunately, I turned the last page still without learning as much as I would've liked to. The plot line seemed scattered, and the characters' having the same names made the play even harder for me to follow. It might be easier to follow as a staged play. The author leaves a lot of room for improvisation. It ends on quite a sad note as the main character's father suddenly seems to become the main character. I wanted to know more about him and his struggle to merge into a dramatically different culture. 6. "Bahala Na (Let It Go)." I read this book in a little cafe and had to hold back my tears in public. Wow! If the first one wasn't the best one, this play has to be it. There are three war stories compacted into it! But war stories tend to have an advantage in terms of getting a high emotional reaction, because war is inherently dramatic. It is the ultimate drama. 7. "Ching Chong Chinaman." This is the only straightforward, traditional comedy of the bunch. I think this was supposed to be the cream of the crop, winning awards and what not, but I found it pretty bland. I think too many theaters flavor fluff with a veneer of reckless edginess in an attempt to draw in those shrinking crowds. I'll buy tickets to this kind of popular, but not too popular show too, because I can at least talk about it with a wide variety of friends and also know more of the canon other literature references. It's a risk attending a really new or different performance that might leave you bored or let down and therefore irritated as well as a little bit poorer. It's also easier to get an audience for a good comedy than a poorly done drama by an unknown playwright. But this play only seemed to imitate popular sitcoms

and other domestic comedies that have literally been around since ancient Rome. Form your own opinion about this play though, because it is entertaining. It's about an Asian-American family that's been in America for about three generations. The characters have never been to their countries of ethnic origin. Their culture is entirely American, and when someone from China comes along, they don't know how to handle him. He defies their stereotypical expectations for him to like Chinese food and be good at math. I found some of this as unamusing and offensive as Christmas Tree from Avenue Q. Don't get me wrong- Avenue Q is great. But each play is using the characters in order to point out the absurdity of these racial stereotypes, and that they aren't always true. Depending on how you go about directing the play, it can seem more like this kind of satire is all about enjoying how funny these racial stereotypes are based on the idea that these stereotypes are true. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By AnthonyFast shipping and new as stated

Asian American plays provide an opportunity to think about how racial issues are engaged through theatrical performance physical contact, bodily labor, and fleshly desire as well as through the more standard elements of plot, setting, characterization, staging, music, and action. Asian American Plays for a New Generation showcases seven exciting new plays that dramatize timely themes that are familiar to Asian Americans. The works variously address immigration, racism, stereotyping, identity, generational tensions, assimilation, and upward mobility as well as post-9/11 paranoia, racial isolation, and adoptee experiences. Each of these works engages directly and actively with Asian American themes through performance to provide an important starting point for building relationships, raising political awareness, and creating active communities that can foster a sense of connection or even rally individuals to collective action.

"The quality of the plays in Asian American Plays for a New Generation and the diversity of the themes—interracial desire, racial profiling, and grief—is particularly impressive. The plays engage sophisticated ideas about migration and home; imposture and authenticity; political allegory; fantasy and reality; and, of course, identity politics. Leers' Introduction and Shiomi's Afterword serve to frame the work, providing the necessary grounding to orient the reader to the origins—and significance—of this fine volume."—Leslie Bow, Professor of English and Asian American Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison