Positioning the New. Chinese American Literature and the Changing Image of the American Literary Canon. Eds. Tanfer Emin Tung and Elisabetta Marino. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010. H/bk 241 pp. ISBN 978-14438-2485-9. Price $51.76.

Positioning the New. Chinese American Literature and the Changing Image of the American Literary Canon, edited by Tanfer Emin Tunc and Elisabetta Marino, is composed of three sections, besides the preface, the introduction, a note on the contributors, and an index. The first section is called the "Chinese American Novel" and is the largest with six essays; three essays review Amy Tan's work, and the other three essays each deal with novels by different Chinese American authors. "Chinese American Theater and Poetry" is the second and shortest section with four essays, three on theater and one on poetry. The five essays in the third section, "Chinese American Short Fiction and Self-Writing," are in the most part dedicated to examining the canon of children's stories and the issues of identity and immigration in self-writing.

In the preface to this book, the editors reference how "writers of Chinese origin are reshaping the American literary arena, and in the process are conveying the complexities of cultural hybridity and multiculturalism" (ix). In their view, "[t]heir works are also regenerating and rejuvenating the image of America, rendering it in a constant state of flux" (ix), a state in which they wonder if "a canon can (and should) exist" (ix). The sixteen essays are set up to explore the Chinese American canon in the framework of the Western literary canon through approximately two dozen authors and their relationship to an America that is viewed as a multifaceted living space. In the introduction, Lina Unali seems to be advocating for a worldwide canon. And while it is certainly true that "most American and European students do not know anything about Asian history or literature" (3), one is unclear how it is also possible that "Chinese American literature and criticism now occupy an important place in the field of American literature" (Anna Pehkoranta 69). This discrepancy in American readership parallels the notion of canon throughout the book. In fact, there appears to be a disconnect in questioning the notion of a western canon while simultaneously wondering what members (should) belong to another canon, the Chinese American one.

The authors in this volume touch on the issues that plague ethnic groups (and not only in the United States) - racism, immigration, looks, interrelationships, exile, gender, traditions or language - but fortuitously none of them fall into "the trap of Orientalism / Occidentalism" (93). Although foregrounded by the tension of assimilation and difference, the essays in *Positioning the New* situate Chinese American literature in the greater framework of the United States, and manage to steer Chinese America away from being pigeonholed into an isolated and inert ethnic categorization.

The book as a whole is a good solid work on the subject of Chinese American literature in the United States. However, an essay dedicated exclusively to the history of Chinese American literature towards the beginning of the book would have been a welcome addition, a sort of treasure trove for readers new to the subject. Except for a few felicitous references to Amy Ling's study on the roots of Chinese American literature (86) - two Eurasian sisters from the 19th Century, Edith Maude Eaton and Winnifred Eaton - older scholarship is mostly absent.

In this study of how Chinese American literary characters position themselves alongside Anglo America, Jewish America, African America or Hispanic America, the larger US canon in the United States is in itself confirmed.

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