
Japanese Picture Brides and Their American Lives in Julie Otsuka's *The Buddha in the Attic*

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Abstract

Julie Otsuka's novel *The Buddha in the Attic* (2011) explores the experience of immigration, border-crossing, and uprooting through the gendered lens. Tracing the stories of Japanese picture brides and their American lives, Julie Otsuka's novel combines a literary and historical focus. The experiences of dislocation, otherness, assimilation, and exclusion mark the protagonists' lives, illustrating the dominant narratives of race, ethnicity, and gender. Crossing geographical borders as well as the symbolic ones urges the protagonists to confront not only their own selves but various realizations of the conception of otherness. Otsuka articulates the problems oscillating between national consciousness and ethnic particularity, providing a critique of U.S. structures of domination and oppression. My paper offers a discussion about Japanese American women protagonists who must constantly reinvent themselves in the play of difference. The female lens, which the author employs, allows her to demonstrate how they are subjected to forces guided by discourse of culture, ethnicity, and gender. The subaltern woman's perspective on the domestic politics of U.S. is rendered through a collective narrator, and the absence of an identifiable individual voice stresses the characters' fragmentation. America as home is transvalued, revealing itself as the site of unhomeliness, insecurity, and violence.

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