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*from* Deracinations: Ten Sonograms

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# Monica Y. Youn

## *from* Deracinations: Ten Sonograms

### 10. Canon

An artsy chick, she dressed  
herself in “ethnic” patterned

skirts, read Plath, Sexton.  
She scoured the library stacks

for Asian poets, seeking  
a racial exemplar, an icon.

The sole result of her research,  
one anthology: *Citrine Candles* –

cherry trees, cheongsams,  
celadon teacups: “Orientalist

cliché,” she snorted in disdain  
(she had recently read Said...

or at least the introduction.)  
At her high school commencement,

she received the Agnes Lynch Starrett  
Poetry Award – the American

Heritage Dictionary  
and a hundred-dollar check.

Then off to college. “Write what  
you know,” said her workshop instructor.

“Here’s some Seamus Heaney.”  
She tried writing about her dad,



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her childhood, family dinners (instead  
of “ggim,” she wrote “nori”).

She studied critical race theory,  
took part in a sit-in to coerce

the university to teach Asian-  
American studies. (End result:

No dice.) She dated an initiate  
of a college secret society,

then unearthed his cherished  
stash of yellow-fever skinflicks

(“Naked Asian Naughty Hotties  
Take It in the Face!!!”). It’s *erotica*,

*not just porno*, he insisted  
when she ditched his ass,

*What, it’s not politically correct  
to have a type?* In her post-colonialism

seminar, she was taught to distrust  
the commodification industry,

attempts to package Asianness  
for Western consumption.

*As an artist of color, always ask  
yourself: Who is my audience?*

the prof cautioned. *Is this authentic  
interiority?* Am I self-othering?

Her new suitor was concentrating  
in English (but pre-med!): ardent,

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sincere. For the holiday season,  
(nondenominational)

he gifted her a signed edition  
of *Best American Poetry* (1996)

(editor: Adrienne Rich.)  
*Omigod, I adore her! Thanks!*

In the introduction, Rich critiqued  
*the legions of columnar*

*poems in which the anecdote  
of an ethnic parent or*

*grandparent is rehearsed  
in a generic voice*

*and format, whatever  
the cultural setting.* She shut

the reader, cringing. A rush  
of blood tinted her cheeks,

but (since she used self-tanner)  
wasn't noticeable from the outside.

