Critical Voices from Malaysia brings together in one volume judiciously selected essays by lecturers and postgraduate students many of whom are, or have been at one time, based in the English Department of the University of Malaya's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. The essays gathered here bear testimony to the sheer variety of approaches and multiplicity of perspectives which continue to characterize the study of English Literature in the 21st century. It can be said that in putting together this volume, the intention of the editors was to demonstrate the eclectic range of academic interests and orientations pursued and embraced by the teachers and students of this particular English department. Carrying lucid analyses and interpretations of works by authors from Shakespeare to K. S. Maniam, this book is ideal for the university student and those who wish to enrich their own understanding of the works discussed here.
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Contributors

Ashraf-Ali Jamal
Formerly Senior Lecturer, University of Stellenbosch. Currently, lecturer at the Department of English, University of Malaya.

Ho U-minh Mahinda
Lecturer, Department of English, University of Malaya.

Neil Khor Jin Keong
PhD candidate at the University of Cambridge.

Kok Su Mei
Tutor at the Department of English, University of Malaya. Currently working her way towards an MA.

Emily Lau Kui Ling
Lecturer, Tunku Abdul Rahman University.

Leonard Jeyam
Lecturer, Department of English, University of Malaya. A published poet, he is currently pursuing doctoral studies at the University of Kent.

Lim Chee Seng
Professor, Department of English, University of Malaya.

Looi Siew Teip
Lecturer, Department of English, University of Malaya.
This paper explores an Asian perspective of America through a close examination of Anchee Min's first novel, Katherine (1995). Like much of post-Mao women's literature, the predominant theme of this novel focuses on the search for female selfhood. My main concern is with the Chinese female experience but it must be stressed that questions of identity and selfhood which were influenced by the larger socio-political milieu at the time affected every Chinese regardless of gender. During Mao Zedong's regime, one of the revolutionary movements that shaped and left an indelible mark in the lives of the mainland Chinese was the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" (GPCR). This massive revolution lasted for a decade, from 1966 to 1976. The utopian fervour of the GPCR to build a classless society demanded the denial of self through the imposition of a collectivist culture. This radical socialist revolution relegated one's sense of self to insipidity and powerlessness.

In delineating the theme of the search for female selfhood, Min, as a representative of the Chinese, reveals her thoughts of how the Chinese perceive the Americans. On the one hand, the American protagonist, Katherine, serves as a model and foil to the muffled individuality of both Chinese men and women. She is the lynchpin that precipitates the changes in her Chinese students and a figure that dismantles many of the ingrained ideas of the Chinese. On the other hand, Min turns the tables on this American representative by allowing for the possibility of the Chinese to assume the role of spectator, whereas Katherine resides in the spectacle positionality, as an object of spectatorship. Underscoring Min's perspective is an attempt to reconfigure the dominant ideology of Oriental-as-spectacle. In and through Katherine, she shifts the