

The Writer's Page

Alien Bunny Bots—or Not?

BY JANET WONG

Every once in a while I think about my “body of work.” It makes me feel important to think of my books in this way, and more than half of being an author is feeling important enough to believe that what you write deserves to be published. These ideas about my body of work usually come when I am starting to write a really stupid story about alien rabbits, a book that might have a chance of selling millions of copies and being turned into a movie with a Happy Meal stuffed character. My inner entrepreneur types the first chapter, but then my inner librarian warns that such a thing would not fit my body of work. I probably would have a much stronger body of work if only I could get past that stern, respectable librarian. It would be an uneven collection but also a more daring and varied shelfful. My inner librarian is quite firm: if anyone is to think of me a hundred years from now, it would be better for them to think of me as a multicultural poet, not the creator of *Alien Bunny Bots*.

People often describe me as a multicultural poet. I guess this is a good description. I am Asian, and I do sometimes write about being Asian. In the poem “Waiting at the Railroad Cafe” (from *Good Luck Gold*), I wrote about race discrimination taking the form of not being served in a restaurant; in “Noise” (also from *Good Luck Gold*), I wrote about being teased with a chant of “Ching chong Chinaman.” In “Other” (from *A Suitcase of Seaweed*), I wrote about seeing another Asian person in a room, the only other Asian person, and “recognizing my self in one quick glance.” There are a number of poems in those books that mention items from Asian culture: firecrackers, chopsticks, dim sum, kim chi, tea. There are poems that refer to less-obvious aspects of Asian culture, too: shame, showing respect, the expectation that kids will get straight A’s.

Some of my picture books also have multicultural content. *Apple Pie 4th of July* is about a girl’s resentment of her Chinese immigrant