

From Vision to Version: Native Speaker as a Rewriting of East Goes West

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***Abstract** Asian American literature has often been studied in conjunction with other literary traditions, seen as both promising and politically correct when an Asian American text is related to a more canonical work outside its ethnicity. This paper posits that understanding an Asian American text through intertextuality with other Asian American texts offers a fresh perspective from which the texts are read. In this context, the paper examines *Native Speaker* (1995) as a rewriting of *East Goes West* (1937), a seminal text from the formative period of Asian American literature. The argument is that *Native Speaker* explores the (im)possibility of Asian American subject formation for a second-generation Korean American, continuing the (in)completed journey of *East Goes West*, in which a first-generation immigrant grapples with settling down, assimilating, and arriving. Both protagonists, Henry and Chungpa, face common challenges in the assimilation process, including language barriers, interpersonal relationships, and career obstacles. Henry, the protagonist in *Native Speaker*, experiences a profound disenchantment with the American dream, despite the seemingly improved social, economic, and cultural conditions compared to Chungpa's experience. While Chungpa manages to cling to his vision of the American dream, despite recognizing a hierarchical society structured by race, Henry is depicted with multiple adaptable identities, epitomized by his role as a spy. The paper contends that *Native Speaker*, as a rewriting of *East Goes West*, demonstrates a shift from the early immigrant's optimistic vision to a simulacrum—a copy that lacks an original.*

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