

ZINC: Perspectives of Identity in Asian –  
Australian Literature  
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Thesis submitted for the award of Doctor of Philosophy.  
University of Technology, Sydney 2007

## Certificate

I certify that this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being submitted as part of a candidature for any other degree.

I also certify that this thesis has been written by me and that any help that I have received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

Production Note:

Signature removed prior to publication.

Michelle Bakar

## Acknowledgements

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This novel and the accompanying exegesis were undertaken for personal reasons; to understand my authorial identity, why I write and why I am unable to write what I feel is 'expected'. The journey of researching and contrasting, of encountering new writing and theories has instilled a significant and ever-present confidence within me; which will ensure that I will never write what is expected.

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## List of Publications

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Bakar, M. 2007 'Chinese Whispers' *Yuan Yang: A Journal of Hong Kong and International Writing*, HK University Press, Hong Kong \*

Bakar, M. 2006 'The Oriental Express' *EAPSU Journal of Critical and Creative Work*, English Association of Pennsylvania State Universities, Kim Long (ed) Volume 3, <http://www.eapsu.org/>

Bakar, M. 2006 'The Oriental Express' *Southerly Literary Magazine*, Vol. 66, Number 2, Brandl and Schlesinger, Australia.

Bakar, M 2006 'Island Sacrifice' in *Antipodes, North American Journal of Australian Literary Studies*, Special Issue: The Sacred in Australian Literature, Bill Ashcroft (ed) December, United States of America.

Bakar, M 2006 'Chinese Whispers' in *Timbuktu*, Vol.1, No. 2, Wales.

Bakar, M 2006 'Oriental Express' in, *Postcolonial Text*, Vol 2, No. 2, University of British Columbia.

Bakar, M 2004 'Not That Old Thing Again: On Being Mistaken as Chinese', in *Graduate Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, Border and Boundary Crossing, Vol. 2, No. 2, Auckland University, New Zealand.

PLEASE NOTE: The above journal publications are chapters from the creative component of this doctoral exegesis.

## Abstract

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*ZINC: Perspectives of Asian-Australian Literature* is made up of two parts. The first, called “ZINC: A Novel in Six Acts” is a collection of stories concerned with the cultural and political landscapes produced by migration and multiculturalism. The collection explores how contemporary processes of social, historical and political change dramatically impact on the identities of first and second-generational Australians of Hong Kong Chinese descent and records the ways certain characters lead their lives and how each character understands home as a place or a form of belonging in Hong Kong and Australia. What has resulted is a collection of stories that attempts to describe a series of interlinking journeys, or ‘acts’. Each story takes the reader through both real and imagined terrains which are contemporary and historical; Imperial China, colonial Hong Kong, the city of Melbourne and suburban and metropolitan Sydney; simultaneously engaging with the cultural changes and social relations that are reconfigured by larger experiences and patterns in the characters’ lives.

The second part, an exegesis called “ZINC: Perspectives of Asian-Australian Literature”, explores the impact of selected authors on the creative pieces and contextualises the literary landscape and subjectivities of the author within the framework of Asian–Australian literature. This exegesis aims to identify thematic references within the chosen literary works and explore issues within the uniqueness albeit categorisation of what is termed ‘Asian–Australian writing.’ Keeping this in mind, this exegesis will also examine if or how Asian–Australian writers represent their racial differences and whether or not these representations appear to ‘imitate’ a non-minority English-writing author. Importantly, this dissertation hopes to offer the reader a way of understanding and redefining the fluid multiplicities that are Asian–Australian identities living in Australia today and how they are envisioned and experienced, showing the diverse and distinct cultures that are scattered over as many places as there are people. This dissertation is about breaking, altering and rewriting dominant myths and narratives about Asian–Australian sensibilities by calling attention to the continuities and discontinuities of people’s lives.