

# LETTER TO STUDENTS

from *amerasia journal*

*Forget it, Jake, it's Chinatown.*

These are the last words of Roman Polanski's 1974 classic *Chinatown*. For the first 125 minutes of the film, I could not pinpoint anything remotely "Asian" about the story. Only in the closing scene does a seamy, night-time Chinatown finally appear.

It is not unfamiliar to have almost anything Asian reduced to a punch line, a coded metaphor, a conveniently-

packaged fad. Often, these limitations lead to equally narrow possibilities of what is "Asian"—whether it is hyped-up success story, meek model minority, spiritual guru, exotic oddity, perpetual foreigner, or as in *Chinatown*, anything associated with inscrutable indecency.

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*Amerasia Journal* Intern

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