



I Hotel

Karen Tei Yamashita , Sina Grace (Illustrator) , Leland Wong (Illustrator)

[Download now](#)

[Read Online ➔](#)

I Hotel

Karen Tei Yamashita , Sina Grace (Illustrator) , Leland Wong (Illustrator)

I Hotel Karen Tei Yamashita , Sina Grace (Illustrator) , Leland Wong (Illustrator)

2010 National Book Award Finalist

2010-2011 Asian/Pacific American Library Association (APALA) Book Award Winner in Adult Fiction

2010 California Book Award Winner

Dazzling and ambitious, this hip, multi-voiced fusion of prose, playwriting, graphic art, and philosophy spins an epic tale of America's struggle for civil rights as it played out in San Francisco's Chinatown. Divided into ten novellas, one for each year, *I Hotel* begins in 1968, when Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy were assassinated, students took to the streets, the Vietnam War raged, and cities burned.

As Karen Yamashita's motley cast of students, laborers, artists, revolutionaries, and provocateurs make their way through the history of the day, they become caught in a riptide of politics and passion, clashing ideologies and personal turmoil. And by the time the survivors unite to save the International Hotel—epicenter of the Yellow Power Movement—their stories have come to define the very heart of the American experience.

I Hotel Details

Date : Published June 1st 2010 by Coffee House Press

ISBN : 9781566892391

Author : Karen Tei Yamashita , Sina Grace (Illustrator) , Leland Wong (Illustrator)

Format : Paperback 613 pages

Genre : Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction, Literary Fiction, Abandoned, Short Stories, Contemporary

 [Download I Hotel ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online I Hotel ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online I Hotel Karen Tei Yamashita , Sina Grace (Illustrator) , Leland Wong (Illustrator)

From Reader Review I Hotel for online ebook

Aubrey says

Lu Hsun gives up medicine. What's the point? He could study all he wanted to make his people healthy in body, but they were sick in their minds, dig. Now this might seem like a jump, but Lu Hsun thinks the answer is literature. So he starts a new life writing.

I know of the 'People's History of the United States' but what about the 'Non-White People's History of the United States'? Something huge and intricately spun and developed on a scale to put Gibbon to shame, something which may already exist and due to my inherent whiteness in a Silicon Valley suburb I mistakenly believe I have conjured up as the Next Big Thing, because what my piss-poor in the realms of consensual and non-fetishizing miscegenation people didn't invent, they stole and tied up the trail in court and copyright. Betty Boop, The Lion Sleeps Tonight, almost all of the '20's and 60's today's rap tomorrow's fashion everything in between, and that's just from black people.

I learned the hard way that whether it's the prison community or the Asian American community, the academy will close ranks to keep that experiment with reality out. In a short period of time, we saw the politicization of prisoners and the criminalization of students. And this scared folks. Students saw three choices: go to school, go to prison, go to war. We challenged the idea that society, and therefore education, should be controlled by the threat of punishment and the history of race.

So, Bay Area. Multicultural Chinatown Japantown the majority of my neighbors being of Asian descent after the requisite white flight, right? A white liberal's wet dream, a radical political hotspot with a heady history of the pushing the envelope straight white man, all full up in the books about the earthquakes and the fires and the drugs and the sex and all that white appropriated jazz leaving nothing for those who were here before and those who were brought here by force and those who came and could never blend in the skin tone range even though their lives depended on it. It leaves us here today with a video about the Berkeley protests of the 60's without a single black speaker, gentrification in the leaps and bounds of tech companies and the Ellis Act, and the awesome gutting of cultural minorities wielded by the one and only BART and its Oakland et al. stations. White people resting on their laurels when white people didn't do shit.

History tells us that the white man's pride is located in his laws, such that he will justify his pride and his greed, his great paternity and his superiority, with the great writ of his laws. Everything must follow accordingly. The white man will only give up or lose something if forced to do so by his own laws; in this way, he cannot lose face and continues secure in his pride that his law must be just.

I can just imagine the faces of people who followed me for my review of Les Misérables and are getting this 'reverse racism' 'radical' 'raging' instead of CAN YOU HEAR THE PEOPLE SING plastered on pictures of the Ferguson protests cause US Americans sympathize a lot more with their white-rinsed entertainment than their blood rinsed politics of the non-European people. Newsflash: if you read this book and don't find it extremely sexy, I can't help you, because not only is there erotica and ancient Japanese woodcut pornography and food that makes you want to eat the pages and thought writ large upon the planes of This Is What Happened and This Is How We Acted and This Is How We Are Building Our Hope, there's life. There's love. There's the young people before the respectability politics and the old people who could be left behind by the Capitalism Psychopathy train and all the Communists in between, and if that's a turn off for the love of

cognitive dissonance do not come crying to me about democracy. Some Ferguson protesters have baggy pants and don't wear shirts, Martin Luther King, Jr. always preached nonviolence in a suit, Malcolm X rallied to physical resistance in a suit as well, and both of the suit-wearers were murdered in cold blood. The only solution to today's democracy is to be rich and white, and those in disagreement are not the ones I'm writing for. Those offended by that, educate yourself. You would not believe the carnage that has been wreaked in the name of offense by those in suits.

Who, then, is the revolutionary woman? In these days she is a barefoot peasant, a child on her back, wielding an AK-47. Of course, she may be uniformed in cotton pajama trousers, batik sarong, sari, Mao jacket, jilbab, miniskirt, or Levi jeans; covered in straw hat, veil, hijab, worker's cap, or helmet. In every case, the winds of liberation blow through her fingers.

You could stick this in WWII Germany and you'd get a movie made out of it right quick because of there's one thing US Americans love it's a villain whose crimes they know they'll never be convicted of. Read the recently released CIA Torture Report if you don't believe me. Obama pardoned them all in efforts to "move forward" and in doing so became the final straw of why I will trust the most ineffectual protester over the President of the United States anytime, all the time, and if you're going to accuse me of racism because of that jesus fucking christ *please*. I don't have any black friends that I can talk to face to face and am as racist as they come, so we're going to move on from your pitiful attempt at derailment now.

So I tell people I don't want equal no equal rights anymore. I'm fighting for human rights. I don't want to become equal to men like them that beat us. I don't want to become the kind of person that would kill you because of your color.

-Fannie Lou Hamer

The police across the street who now guarded our four doors pointed at our stupid battle and laughed.

Politics is why my earliest US American ancestor was a landowner instead of a landstealer. Politics shafted the Indians of All Tribes occupation of Alcatraz Island and put the white straight man's landing on the moon in its historical place. Politics is the swooping of corporate interests into the refuge of minority cultures and building idols to Finance and Tourism on the guts of those who had the power of life but didn't know how to market it. Politics is Mark Wahlberg having a violent history of racist assaults and attempting to wipe the slate clean so he can expand his business and sell alcohol in California. If you've never been used as target practice by politics, congratulations. You haven't necessarily had an easy life, or are rich, or any of the requisites for happiness as mandated by capitalism, but if you are killed, rest assured your murder will not be justified and your murderer will have by legal standards committed a crime.

Now honey, not to confuse you or anything, but some of us are reading Borges instead of Mao.

Poem's like cuisine. Makes the world sensible. Ingredients in the head, then apply fire. Have you eaten today?

How about some warnings for people interested in picking up this book. Well, it's long, it's difficult, Yamashita swears more than I do, character development's like wut, dense political meanderings and controversial wieldings of meaning galore, feminism that repeatedly gives white feminism the finger, non-PC whatevers for those who need a slogan to delimit the boundaries of their Mayonnaise social justice, plot? Plot. Ten years of revolutionary activism in a hotel that ends up being destroyed anyway, and lost causes are never worth reading about, right?

Thus we emerged from every living crevice in our hilly city, every tenement, blighted Victorian, public housing project, cheap hotel, single or collective rental, many of us the forgotten and abandoned people whose voices were muffled in the underbelly of working poverty, stuffed into the various ethnic ghettos, we the immigrants from the Old and New Worlds, from the black and white South and tribal America, we the dockworkers of the long shore, we the disabled and disavowed vets, we the gay and leathered, we the garment workers, restaurant workers, postal and clerical workers, we who praised the Lord in his house at Glide and his People's Temple, we of the unions, tired and poor, we the people.

What do I need to say to get you to read this book? If I haven't said it already, I can't help you.

That's another thing to take into consideration, the way things happen because you are young and don't know any better. You might say it's youthful idealism, but youth doesn't really know what's ideal. It just feels right sometimes.

Must rescue books, Sesshu announces with determination.

Life is politics is life.

Ruth says

This historical novel consists of ten linked novellas about radical political figures and artists involved in the Asian American movement in San Francisco. That makes it sound much drier and more technical than it is. I was drawn in and absorbed by the stories, some of which were familiar and some very unfamiliar. I recognized all the references to Maxine Hong Kingston and to some of the labor leaders, but other things were completely outside the narrative I had learned about US history. I really liked the way all the different styles of writing in the different sections came together.

Easton Smith says

The International Hotel sounds like quite the hub of heart and of struggle; a living, changing embodiment of a dozen diasporas squashed together by oppression, history, and a gentrifying city. The hotel is the center of this story, and yet, after six hundred pages, I am left wishing I knew more of its smells, the character of its hallways, the personal traumas of its older inhabitants. I would easily swap a few more of these details for the two hundred-plus pages of this book that are devoted to squabbles about Mao and Lenin and the "alphabet soup" of leftist organizations. And I am a person who can actually appreciate a few squabbles about Maoism and Leninism.

The disjointed structure feels at times fun and engaging, and at other times confusing and convenient. I often felt like I had no bearing on the story. The Hotel is supposed to hold the story together, to be the common thread, but it is often lost as the characters, some of whom don't even seem to interact with the hotel, twirl frantically around us. I understand that this is how movements work, how lives feel so often, how a decade must play out: chaotically, stored in the memories and humors of a thousand people. But, as a novel, I just couldn't quite sink my teeth into it as far as I would have liked.

Is this a book about "America's most transformative decade," as the book jacket claims? Or is it a book about

a hotel, its people, and the struggle to hold on to a small, beautiful scrap of space? Can't it be both? Well, I think it does try to be both, and it feels stuck between the big story and the small story. And the small story suffers the worse for it.

I do think, all said, that some specific people would really enjoy this book: those who live in the bay area, those who have close connections to Asian American ghettoized communities, those who are engaged in anti-gentrification struggles, and those who really care a lot about the internal squabbles of leftists in the 1970s.

It is true that, after several hundred pages of this often frustrating novel, I felt like I was also struggling along with the characters to find, to hold, to save this hotel. This investment made the final pages of the book some of the most affecting and beautiful.

Rebecca McNutt says

I Hotel is undoubtedly impressive and full of history, society, nostalgia and excitement, all fit into a short space.

C says

10 chapters written from different perspectives and styles. I'd say that's virtuosic. I like best the naturalistic and journalistic styles. Even though the book is short, it is also dense. It's like a great Chinese painting, or poem. I think there'd be new discoveries if I read it again.

Oriana says

from Rain Taxi via Powell's:

Huge, messy, and frantically fun, I Hotel offers a very believable panorama of life at this time. It's apparent that Yamashita did an incredible amount of research for the book. The portraits of these early generation Asian Americans, some of whom were or knew people who had been imprisoned in internment camps, denied a humane wage, got fucked with by the cops and the government, fought losing battles for citizenship, and lived in deplorable conditions, are quite moving and conveyed without sentimentality. It's an impressive accomplishment from an author who continues to push the boundaries of innovative fiction.

Jonathan says

Very impressive indeed - perhaps a point of reference for the style would be somewhere between Venessa Place and Vollmann's non-fiction.

Second half better than the first, so I would advise keeping going if you are unsure.

Go read the other reviews on here for more of an idea - this book was successful enough not to require anything more from me

Adam Dalva says

An under read, under appreciated 21st century gem, one that's worth going out of your way to track down.

Difficult to explain this book concisely: basically, it's 10 linked novellas centered on the I Hotel in San Francisco that range from 1968-1977 and detail, with excellent historical research, the travails and successes of the region's "yellow power" movement. Each novella takes on a different slice of the Asian immigrant experience in America, and each has some degree of stylistic variety. They vary somewhat in quality but when they're good they're REALLY good and the noble failures (two of the ten) are quite interesting.

I, HOTEL is most notable for its extreme formal innovation mixed with its effortlessness. The book never draws attention to how showy it is. That makes it at once much wilder than, let's say, INFINITE JEST and also more pleasant to read. (with pleasant not a value judgement, per se, I like INFINITE JEST). In its academia it reminds me a bit of some of the higher scenes in ULYSSES (which I think she's referencing) but despite its breeziness, it's nearly completely non-commercial in its subject matter. Basically, it's the least hubristic book of hubris that I've found.

As a work of pan-Asian unity this also stands out. Yamashita is a Japanese-American who lived through the time-period and setting of this book, but she launches immediately and masterfully into the Chinese experience with the 3 likable, nuanced characters in Part One, which had more twists than East of Eden but always felt very controlled. I was initially stunned when I, HOTEL revealed itself to be linked novellas (and disappointed, because I loved the early characters), but part 2 was rollicking and fun and provided a different slice of the Asian-American experience, with just enough callbacks to keep the continuity of the novel in play. This persists throughout - old favorites return and you begin to feel a strange sense of community.

I also like that I, HOTEL is also sort of boring at points. I mean that as a complement: a good campus novel should be a bit boring, and the nuances of the radical politics seem well researched and authentic.

I think this is a great, natural contrast with the GOLDEN NOTEBOOK, which is almost as formally ambitious but also a semi-mess and very self-aware. I, HOTEL doesn't exactly remind me of anything else though - maybe in its humor and slang, WHITE BOY SHUFFLE by Paul Beatty, but that's not nearly as effortless or as maximalist. I haven't read MASON AND DIXON so I say this loosely, but it's a bit like imagining late-career Pynchon writing accurate, observed historical fiction. There's an incredible section on the meaning of hotels on 599 and 600 which reminded me very profoundly of Rick Moody's excellent HOTELS OF NORTH AMERICA. So, this is as great and bonkers as anything.

It sticks the landing too. The last page (the whole last novella) is genius, the last sentence is perfect, and I'm incredibly admiring of the structure of the thing now that I'm on the other end of it. Each novella is quite distinct - the one with the cook was perhaps my favorite, but they all have their merits. This is a real discovery, a borderline "lost" novel. I'm thinking about writing an essay one of these days.

Bridgit says

First of all, I am not Asian or an Asian American. I wasn't even alive in the 60s or 70s and I have been in San Francisco for a total of 5 days in my whole life. So not exactly the 'target market' for this book. With that caveat, this was a HUGE struggle to finish. I would have put it down a long time ago if it weren't for the fact that it was the book of the month for my book club. As it was, it took 3 separate attempts to get past page 24, including 3 times where I fell asleep after reading 5 pages.

I honestly have no idea what I read. There is no 'story' just images and feelings and ephemeral ideas. I don't think the format did anything for the book. It certainly gave it a different vibe than straight up prose, but I'd be hard pressed to say that it was something that made it better. I had to skip whole parts because they were completely indecipherable.

That said, I think that this book will probably appeal to a lot of the more cerebral readers out there, or people who were in any of the three categories I listed in my first two sentences.

Glad to be done. Very glad to be done.

Breslin White says

This novel has the structure of a play, literally and figuratively.

James says

As a matter of principle, I avoid hotels, in any form, at all costs. But *I Hotel*, like the ones in Vegas, I just couldn't seem to resist.

The publishers refer to Karen Tei Yamashita's *I Hotel* as "This dazzling, multi-voiced fusion of fiction, playwriting, graphic art, and philosophy [that:] spins an epic tale..."

On other matters of principle, I am always cautious when the word "epic" gets thrown around like blame after an oil spill. But flipping through its pages, *I Hotel* does appear to have graphic and stylistic elements in the realm of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, *House of Leaves*, and *VAS*.

Which makes me excited. It's the future of literary storytelling. Language and ideas still dominate, but there is no reason why the form cannot evolve to be more nuanced, interesting, and visual. Novelists have been keeping too many tools in the toolbox for too long.

I'm going to just come out and say it: I am pro e-reader. I'd love to read *I Hotel* on one. Because the only negative thing about the experience thus far has been holding the damn book up. Because despite its modernist underpinnings, *I Hotel* is a veritable work in the classic sense. It is not for the easily distracted, weak, or dumb. The paperback I borrowed is over 600 pages.

And isn't the title clever? Like iPod or MymaxiPad.

The prose, too, is fine. Nibble on this, from page 2:

“Who are we to know that our black daddy Martin with a dream and our little white father Bobby will take bullets to their brains? By the end of the year, we are monkey orphans let loose, raising havoc; no daddies to pull the stops, temper the member; got those wired tails swinging from every rafter, we are free at last, brother, free at last.”

I particularly like “black daddy Martin with a dream,” and “temper the member.”

And here’s some of that philosophy they were talking about earlier:

“There exists an unscientific attitude toward language that results in doctrinal disagreements. We must understand that problems are formulated in words, and that a change in the attitude toward language can help us become understanding listeners.”

She need not continue the obvious: “and therefore fix our fucking problems!”

I’m really looking forward to this one...

Despite my initial enthusiasm, *I Hotel* is not a good book.

Do not read it. It is long. It is boring. It is disappointing. It is safe. It is easy. It is pointless. It has no edge.

2010 ytd, I can only recommend *Reality Hunger*.

And *White Hotel*. But that’s from 1981. The ’80s generated a lot of marvelous creations, yours truly being one of the many significant yet underrated entities in question from that special time.

I Hotel is cumbersome, disjointed, schizophrenic, frustratingly sprawling, and lacking in cohesion. There are no compelling protagonists. There is a lot of telling and very little storytelling. It’s just all over the place and entirely overwhelming in the worst of ways. It is a big book of very little, suffering from what must certainly be at this point some kind of Asian-American authorial cliche to engage in sprawling multi-generational sagas.

Acknowledging this irrefutable mediocrity, Yamashita apologizes in the Afterword: “Thus the structure I chose for the book is based on such multiple perspectives, divided into ten novellas or ten “hotels.” Multiple novellas allowed me to tell parallel stories, to experiment with various resonant narrative voices, and to honor the complex architecture of a time, a movement, a hotel, and its people.”

First of all: hogwash. Boring! Obnoxious MFA semantic posturing. You should honor the complex architecture of your novel!

Second of all: The afterword is better written than the novel.

Gordon says

This book is a masterpiece.

It's somewhat experimental fiction, and clearly not everyone likes that (see other reviews), but as a whole I have seen nothing that tackles the subject matter and time period with such attention to detail, spirit, and, well, affection. Not nostalgic -- if anything certain segments remind me too much of situations I'm glad I'm not in anymore -- but *I Hotel* distills the political time and place of SF in the '70s better than anything I have ever read.

This book makes the untold history of this time come alive. Best book I read in 2010.

Timothy Hallinan says

This is the best, most original, most ambitious, funniest, saddest novel I've read so far in 2011, and I can't actually imagine I'm going to read anything much better in the next 8 months.

Yamashita tells the whole civil right story through the Asian-America perspective, centering on a dilapidated and eventually demolished long-stay hotel in San Francisco. The book is a series of linked novellas -- one per year for a decade (1966-1977), each focused on the inhabitants of the hotel or activities that took place there.

The early novellas about the uprisings in the Bay area colleges and universities are just dazzling, with a heartbreakingly portrait of S.I. Hayakawa, the brilliant Japanese-American semanticist who was exactly the wrong person in exactly the wrong place when he was president of San Francisco State.

The book uses narrative, drama, analects, artwork, comic books, FBI records, documentary film scripts, letters, and documents of all sorts. Some sections contain the best short stories I've read in years.

This is a brilliant book, all 605 pages of it.

Jasmine says

i've been reading this book for a while. according to goodreads since december 11. up until the last novella I was planning on giving it 3 stars. I mean it's a great book and I enjoyed it, but it has its issues as does everything. BUT the last novella is a really beautifully written who are we. Of the ten sections there are 3 really good sections: the first one, the one about ben and the last one. The other sections vary in their greatness, but none of the book is actually bad.

so the problems:

Parts of the book are historical events that would be much happier if they were better explained. I mean you can just call someone a paper aunt and then move on, and I mean I know what that is, but I think the book would benefit from having that explained especially for all the people that weren't in my american immigration class in college. A lot of the organizing and protest stuff probably could have benefited from better explanation, but since I don't know what I don't know I can't pinpoint exactly what I needed to follow the book better. The sections that I liked were the ones about people and relationships instead of the ones about

weird organizing things in the city.

I read an author quoting an author once. I don't remember who I was reading but I think he was quoting ann patchett who said, paraphrased, *when you do research for a novel read one book then write your novel.* this book suffers from over research. it is so busy telling you every little thing that happened at moments it reads more like a history book than a novel. I think this style tends to lose a lot of the emotional weight of the events. If you think about tim obrien, he was able to convey the historical reality of vietnam war, because instead of writing about everything that happened he wrote about a few emotion laden events, and we leave that book feeling like he understand the horror that was vietnam. After some of the novellas in this book I left thinking, well god I guess that happened and I should remember these facts about it. Now I've forgotten all that. There is a reason I don't read history books.

I think this book would have benefited from being drawn into one story line instead of being separated like it was. Although I do understand the artistic decision to separate it.

I recommend the book though, it's a good read.

Elaine says

I really wanted to like this book, with its fascinating subject matter (Asian American radicals in San Francisco from the 30s through the 70s) and creative structure (reminded me most of Bolano, of things read recently). However, the political didacticism was just too heavy handed -- the mind numbing factionalism and doctrinalism of those years too lovingly recreated, while the energy and excitement was really not. Almost no one emerges from the novel's intricate structure and political detail as a compelling character -- you'll find yourself straining a lot to remember who is who (it is a strange irony in a book that repeatedly attacks the racist "all Asians look alike" meme that, while Yamashita's characters are Filipino, Japanese, Chinese -- their backgrounds of oppression leading to radicalism and participation in campus boycotts and revolutionary splinter movements are all so similar that you can't keep them straight). The dialogue is stilted and heavy, the complexities a little too complex for a plot you don't care about and that barely exists. The bright exception is the ribald, gluttonous voice of Felix the tale spinning Filipino chef -- the only place where the novel escapes its academic didactism to become a gripping narrative. This glimpse of what this book could have been makes the failure of the larger project that much sadder.

Bjorn says

Just wow. A huge, sprawling, aimless and yet deadeye story of identity, resistance, success and failure, all that jazz (as in free, as in Rahsaan Roland Kirk's twin saxes blowing different melodies at the same time, as in Miles' electric phase fusing white-boy funk with black panther politics, as in Thomas P), ancient folk tales and pragmatic political actions, Mao vs Reagan, all scattered out over 600 pages, 10 years, the echo of billions and centuries in a few dozen people over 10 years, spoken in scores of voices and a new genre for every chapter. Written in every perspective and yet somehow ending in a clenched-fist first-person-plural. I'll try to write something more coherent about it, but I'm not sure I can.

Anna says

Set during a turbulent decade spanning the late 60's through the early 70's, *I Hotel* is the expansive story of the Yellow Power Movement, set primarily around the International Hotel, the home of aging Asian migrant workers and the headquarters for many of the movement's activities, told over 10 novellas or "hotels."

It's funny. I read this for an independent study and spent much of my month dedicated to it bemoaning its high difficulty level, its constant changing up of prose style and narrative structure, its occasional distance from its characters. While I recognized its fierce intelligence and ferocious ambition, it was a book I thought was easier to admire than to love.

Yet, it's this book, out of the several I read, that haunts me to this day. Sure, it's a difficult read, but it's a book that didn't treat me like an idiot and expected me to keep up. It's one of the few books that I've ever read that I can honestly say made me smarter and more knowledgeable. Much of what I know now about the fiery activism of the sixties and seventies not only from the Asian American Movement but also the Civil Rights Movement, Black Panthers, and Chicano Movement came from my time reading this book. Furthermore, in the end, I *did* connect with the characters: I still sigh over Olivia Wang and Ben San Pablo's bittersweet romance or wonder how Felix Allos is getting on or try to square my reaction to the acid temperament of Aiko Masuoka. Mostly, I mourn the loss of the International Hotel, whose destruction is not only the end of the book but also is the most tangible end of the Yellow Power Movement.

It's that kind of novel. I can't say I'd recommend it to everyone, but to certain people, I think this can be not only a book to read but to experience. You'll leave the book deeply and indescribably changed.

Darryl says

The International Hotel (I-Hotel) was built a year after the devastating 1906 San Francisco earthquake in Manilatown, a community of some 20,000 Filipino immigrants on the edge of Chinatown. It was a residential hotel, which mainly housed Filipino and Chinese immigrant bachelors who worked in nearby businesses but couldn't afford homes, along with a smattering of artists and community and political activists that moved there in the 1960s. The I-Hotel sat in the shadow of the Financial District's famed Transamerica Pyramid, and as the area became more populated with gleaming office buildings the land adjacent to the hotel became more desirable while the building seemed more and more out of place. The hotel was purchased by a wealthy Chinese investor in 1968, who planned to tear down the building, evict its residents, and build a more profitable high-rise tower.

The residents of the hotel and community activists fought the developer and the city for years to prevent its demise. However, in 1977 the city's police department physically overpowered dozens of protesters and forcibly evicted its remaining residents, who were mostly elderly men who had lived there for decades, and the building was torn down immediately afterward. Ironically, the planned commercial development never took place, and a reincarnation of the I-Hotel for low- and middle-income residents was built on this site in 2005.

Karen Tei Yamashita, a professor of Literature and Creative Writing at UC Santa Cruz, uses the I-Hotel as the basis for this ambitious, sprawling, unique and successful novel about the Asian American civil rights

movement, or Yellow Power movement, in San Francisco, Berkeley and other Bay Area cities in the 1960s and 1970s. The book is divided into 10 novellas, and each revolves around mostly fictional characters who are deeply involved in the burgeoning movement, including student protests at San Francisco State and UC Berkeley, the Native American takeover of Alcatraz Island, the efforts of farm workers to earn a decent wage and working conditions, and, of course, the unsuccessful efforts to save the I-Hotel. Yamashita uses a variety of tools to tell these stories, including poetry, portraits, graphic art, and government manuscripts.

Most of these novellas were very well done, and the book's ending was superb. Throughout the book I felt as if I was an observer being pulled along, sometimes breathlessly, from one story and one locale to another, in a whirlwind series of historical and personal narratives by a persistent and passionate guide. At the book's end I was somewhat fatigued, a bit overwhelmed, but ultimately grateful for the journey and what I learned along the way.

Mark says

Relentlessly intelligent, both in terms of literary style and substance. Alternating poetry, prose, screenplay and line narrative, I Hotel runs the gamut from hip and light-hearted to horribly sad. Full of truths and insights into an explosively intense and volatile period of recent history - the life of the left in the late '60's and early '70's. The frame is the Asian American experience, particularly in NoCal, most particularly in San Francisco. Readers are treated to compelling historical fiction regarding Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese and Chinese experiences including internments, human smuggling, sweatshops, and blatant discrimination. At the same time, diverse characters provide insight into a rich variety of political, cultural and intellectual traditions and achievements.

Told as a series of loosely interwoven stories, I Hotel can be a bit of a challenge at times. In fact, I decided to finally let go of trying to find threads between stories and characters. I found it more rewarding to enjoy each segment on its own. May be worth a re-read someday.

John says

(@Jack Waters: You indirectly 'recommended' this to me when I saw a pic [which you recently posted on FB] of yourself and the author of this book, Karen Tei Yamashita. My curiosity was piqued, I went online, read a little bit about this book, I Hotel, and I'm really looking forward to picking up a copy now and getting into this collection. :) Thank you!)
