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**FIGURING FUTURES: EARLY ASIAN AMERICAN MIXED-RACE
LITERATURE**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

LITERATURE

by

MELISSA ERIKO POULSEN

June 2015

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ABSTRACT

Figuring Futures: Early Asian American Mixed-Race Literature

by

Melissa Eriko Poulsen

This dissertation examines figurations of Asian mixed race during the long period of Asian exclusion and enforced anti-miscegenation in the United States, when racial mixing was legally proscribed. During this time of U.S. expansion into Asia, and of unprecedented Asian immigration into the United States, such proscription helped maintain normative white identity while rendering the Asian American mixed-race body illegible, making cultural production one of the few sites where Asian American mixed race could be imagined. There, a defining feature of these figures was their consistent use in projecting potential U.S. futures; Asian mixed-race figures were used to work through the relationship of Asia and the United States, and of Asians in the United States, during these times of conflict with and phobia of Asia. Because this period's tensions emerge from the confrontation between "white" and "Asian," Asian mixed-race literary figures embodied through their mixed heritage the ideological and material threat Asia posed for the United States *and* the promise of a different future.

Tracing these early figurations of Asian American mixed race, this dissertation is arranged in two sections. Part One addresses representations of Asian American mixed race through American Orientalist ideology, where Asian mixed-race figures were used to support and naturalize U.S. imperialism abroad. Part Two

explores the writings and reflections of Asian mixed-race authors and artists who sought to reimagine Asian mixed race through visions of world community that resisted imperialism and racism. By spanning the long period of Asian exclusion, this dissertation thus begins to uncover established and emergent figurations of Asian mixed race in the United States. In doing so, my dissertation uncovers the genealogy of the current proliferation of mixed-race figures in contemporary cultural production, where mixed race is synonymous with a future post-racial United States, one that all too frequently aligns with U.S. imperialism. By exposing the instrumentalization of the early Asian American mixed-race subject, my project traces the uncomfortable residue of race at the heart of post-racial discourse, promoting caution around the simplified acceptance of mixed race as somehow beyond or between race, while simultaneously uncovering alternate, anti-racist trajectories.

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M.P.
Santa Cruz, June 2014

INTRODUCTION

Figuring Futures: Early Asian American Mixed-Race Literature

“*National Geographic* determined what Americans will look like in 2050, and it’s beautiful,” an article circulating on social media in the spring of 2014 claimed.¹ For weeks posts and reposts of this *PolicyMic* article – accompanied by glossy headshots of mixed-race individuals meant to represent “tomorrow’s America” (par. 4) – circulated around the internet in often uncritical acceptance of this storied future of an aestheticized, commodified, and problematic “end” to race in the United States. A bit more demure in its claims was the *National Geographic* article *PolicyMic* was summarizing. Here, author Lise Funderberg asserts that “the changing face of America” means “we’ve become a country where race is no longer so black or white,” one that “may be a pluralist nation by 2060” (80, 87). Rather than suggesting an end to race as we know it, Funderberg emphasizes a shift in race; the United States has begun to move beyond the binaries of black and white, and, by mid-century, will no longer have a white majority.² This is a far cry from the *PolicyMic* article’s claim that by 2050 we will have “sexed ourselves into one giant amalgamated mega-race” (par. 1) in the United States. However, Funderberg’s article is supported by a photo spread of mixed-race individuals, suggesting that “pluralist” might actually mean “mixed race.” Although Funderberg’s article develops around the U.S. Census Bureau’s prediction that “non-Hispanic whites will no longer be the majority” (87) by

¹ Zak Cheney-Rice, “National Geographic Determined What Americans Will Look Like in 2050, and It’s Beautiful.” *PolicyMic*, a media outlet aimed at millennials, has since been rebranded as *Mic*.

² Funderberg, “The Changing Face of America,” 87.

2060 – and, indeed, “pluralism” is “the presence or tolerance of a diversity of ethnic or cultural groups within a society or state” (“pluralism”) – the accompanying photos tell a different and revealing story. Funderberg may write that mixed-race individuals challenge racial boundaries and open dialogue for a more inclusive U.S. identity, but the visual construction of the article remains problematic, undercutting these more tempered claims.

PolicyMic’s apparently exaggerated interpretation brings to the surface the problems of *National Geographic*’s article and photo spread. Just as the *PolicyMic* article asserts, *National Geographic* offers mixed race as the United States’ progressive racial future. The headshots that dwarf the article – there are three pages of images for every one page of text – reveal the slippage between “pluralist” and “mixed-race.” The pluralist future becomes synonymous with a mixed-race future through these images, a problematic which I will develop shortly. Furthermore, though shot in the signature style of famed photographer Martin Schoeller, in the context of mixed-race history these photographs take on darker implications. Schoeller’s head-on, bare-faced images – gridded together by *National Geographic* and labeled with names, ages, and both state- and self-determined racial identification – are reminiscent of eugenics photos.³ Beginning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, mixed race was a subject of fascination for eugenicists. Their pseudoscience articles, frequently accompanied by headshots gridded together and

³ On another level, Schoeller’s photos reference Kip Fulbeck’s work, including the book *Part Asian, 100% Hapa* (2006), which also took head-on, bare-faced images and allowed the photographed subjects to answer the question, “what are you?”

labeled with racial identifications, were used to categorize and stereotype mixed race. For the most part, eugenics arguments negatively characterized mixed race through the theory of hybrid degeneracy, which claimed that mixed-race individuals were inferior to the races of their parents.⁴ Hybrid degeneracy was then used to justify the racial segregation enforced through antimiscegenation laws and restrictive immigration policies.⁵ In some eugenics studies, though, mixed race was viewed in a more favorable yet nonetheless stereotyped light.⁶ Regardless of their take on mixed race, many eugenics studies commented on the mixed-race subject's physical appearance.⁷ Thus waxing poetic about the physically "beautiful" mixed-race people of 2050 and the promise of a "mega-race," in conjunction with Schoeller's photographs, produces unsettling echoes of a century-old belief: eugenics. Rather than exaggerating or twisting the *National Geographic* article's visual message, *PolicyMic*'s sensationalism highlights the underlying racialized assumptions of the piece.

There is an eerie familiarity to these two articles – something anxiously repetitive about their images and content. In 1993, twenty years before the *National Geographic* spread, *Time Magazine* proclaimed on its cover "The New Face of America" with a computer-generated mixed-race cover model meant to be "a remarkable preview" of America's future. Much has been said and can be said about this magazine cover, which took fourteen photographs of individuals of different

⁴ See Cynthia Nakashima's "An Invisible Monster," 165.

⁵ Ibid, 166.

⁶ Ibid, 171.

⁷ Ibid, 170.

racess and genders and “blended” them into the female cover model in a neat merging of mixed race with cyborg. Eve, as the constructed image was nicknamed, was then used to suggest on *Time*’s cover that “immigrants are shaping the world’s first multicultural society.”⁸ In addition to its fallacious claim that the United States is “the world’s first multicultural society,” the *Time* special issue problematically uses mixed race as a stand in for “multicultural.” The *Time* special issue actually features a range of articles concerning immigration in the United States, with articles on mixed-race and intermarriage making up only one small part. Yet, like the *National Geographic* article, mixed race in the *Time* special issue is made to represent an imagined U.S. future.

Granted, the *National Geographic* article emerges in a different moment from that of the *Time* special issue, one conditioned by post-racial ideology. Spurred by the election of the first African American and mixed-race president of the United States, assertions of post-racialism contend that the United States is or will soon no longer be compelled and controlled by race. As the *PolicyMic* article asserts about contemporary racial identities, “the latest figures suggest we’re getting more comfortable with the idea [of “racial mixing”], or perhaps that we simply give fewer shits than ever before” (par. 7). Mixed race and interracial love, in this discourse, are used as examples or harbingers of the post-racial. Despite the two articles’ differing contexts, though, their underlying messages, as emphasized by their almost identical

⁸ For further reading on “SimEve,” as the *Time* cover model was nicknamed by Donna Haraway, see Haraway’s *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium* (1997) and John Chock Rosa’s “The Coming of the Neo-Hawaiian American Race” (2001).

subtitles and visual image styles, are the same. Mixed race, these magazines proclaim from the opposite ends of two decades, is the United States' future, the final and palatable end of race as we know it in the United States.

Beneath the promising images and words of these widely-circulated magazines, however, is a repetition of the very racial violence that mixed race is meant to overcome. These articles are reactivating long-held beliefs and stereotypes about mixed race, even as they claim to move beyond race. As previously discussed, they echo eugenic studies through their images and claims. They also activate the stereotype of the hypersexualized mixed-race woman to make their points.⁹ The *Time* cover model, for example, was created by melding equal numbers of men and women together, but gendered as female so that “several staff members promptly fell in love” (qtd. in Rosa 54). Similarly, the *PolicyMic* article leads with an oversized image of a woman despite the fact that both men and women were photographed for *National Geographic*. Both the use of stereotype and the unintentional references to eugenics studies emphasize the continued reliance on racialized tropes to predict this supposedly multicultural or post-racial future.

These racialized tropes are then implicated in the promotion of post-racialism as anti-racism. Yet, as a close reading of the articles and their images will suggest, post-racialism does not necessarily guarantee anti-racism. The post-racial message of the articles is most clearly asserted through a focus on the individual: the singular woman of *Time's* cover, the self-identified persons of *National Geographic's* photo

⁹ For a discussion of this stereotype, see Nakashima, “An Invisible Monster,” 169-170.

essay. These “individuals” are actually ideological representations of a new, raceless totality, but the façade of individualism is part of the articles’ post-racial fiction. That is, the models’ supposed post-racialism is simultaneously written on their bodies and evidenced through their (and their parents’) personal choice. On the one hand, then, simply identifying and being identified as mixed race is coded as post-racial.¹⁰ Yet even as the individuals’ choice to self-identify as mixed race is emphasized, the visual images with their eugenics references, and the census choice with its reminder of state control, underscore the way such personal choice is informed by the sociopolitical context. On the other hand, though, the supposed increase in interracial marriage that has and will produce this imagined mixed-race future, is problematically interpreted as inherently anti-racist and used to signal the arrival of the post-racial. Such a message transforms racial identity, and thus the path to a post-racial future, to a question of individual choice.¹¹

Yet race and racism, as so many scholars have pointed out, are systemic and structural with lived geopolitical and biopolitical consequences. Asserting individuality as a solution to racial distinctions obscures the fact that race also works on these larger, destructive levels. Mixed race and interracial love are not inherently progressive, and by emphasizing the individual and thus individual choice, the “structural, social, or historical constraints” (Elam 11) faced by mixed race and all

¹⁰ In her introduction to *The Souls of Mixed Folk*, Michele Elam offers further examples and analysis of contemporary works where mixed race when coded through individuality is equated with post-racial America. See *The Souls of Mixed Folk*, 9.

¹¹ For further analysis of the issue of individuality in relation to mixed-race politics and representation, see Elam’s “Introduction” in *The Souls of Mixed Folk* (2011), 1-26.

racialized individuals are occluded. In fact, there are many instances when categories of mixed race were used in collusion with, rather than as resistance to, racial categorization and hierarchy. Individual action does matter, but emphasizing that individual action alone is enough to overcome race is at best naïve and at worst willfully ignorant as it risks disguising the actual work that needs to get done. At the chilling heart of the equation of mixed race with the post-racial future is the leaving intact of racism through the burdening of physical bodies and individual actions with what is in fact structural and collective.

I open with a critique of these articles because they reveal a recurring mixed-race imaginary in the United States with which this dissertation is centrally concerned: mixed race as prescient of the near, progressive racial future. Despite the insistence of newness in these articles, this is actually an old formulation. This dissertation looks to the past and traces a historical genealogy in order to construct the critical framework necessary to begin to understand, critique, and move beyond this all too common representation of mixed race. More specifically, I will argue that the temporal character of these representations is closely connected to – and perhaps emerges from – twentieth century depictions of Asian American mixed race. By emphasizing this connection, my dissertation reveals the racism and twentieth and twenty-first century U.S. imperialism that underscore these claims of a mixed-race future.

Though *Time*, *National Geographic*, and *PolicyMic* are exploring mixed race generally, their claims about a multiracial future gain particular resonance when

understood in the context of Asian American mixed race. In fact, more than two-thirds of the individuals selected for *National Geographic's* article were, tellingly, Asian American mixed race. This portrayal is certainly inaccurate; according to the 2010 census from which the *National Geographic* article gets its data, selections of “Asian in combination with other races” made up 29.4%, or a little under one-third, of the two or more races population.¹² However, the *National Geographic* article's emphasis on Asian American mixed race despite its factual inaccuracies is by no means unusual, occurring frequently in cultural production. In contemporary imaginings of the future, Asian American mixed-race figures often appear; films like *The Matrix Trilogy* (1999-2003) and *Big Hero 6* (2014) and television shows like the forensic drama *Bones* (2005-present), as well as various depictions of superheroes, imagine and naturalize certain futures through mixed-race Asian Americans.¹³ The acclaimed 2004-2009 television version of *Battlestar Galactica*, for example, tells the story of an epic, repeating battle between humans and robots, in which the only human-robot offspring is an Asian mixed-race girl who ultimately becomes our Earth's mitochondrial Eve. The use of mixed race to represent U.S. futures, shown in examples from the twenty-first century here, actually has a long history in U.S. representations of Asian American mixed race. Why is Asian American mixed race in

¹² See Figure 3 of Nicholas A. Jones and Jungmiwha Bullock's *The Two of More Races Population: 2010*, 8.

¹³ While *Bones* does not take place in the future, I think it is significant that the only Asian American mixed-race character, Angela Montenegro, invents and uses a high-tech, futuristic computer program labeled the “Angelatron” to help solve murders by creating faces from bones. For more information on mixed race in *The Matrix*, see Leilani Nishime's “*The Matrix* Trilogy, Keanu Reeves, and Multiraciality at the End of Time” in *Mixed Race Hollywood* (2008).

particular so often used to imagine the United States' post-racial future? In this dissertation, I posit that this question can be answered by considering earlier incarnations and transformations of Asian American mixed race in cultural production. As I will trace, from its earliest appearances, Asian American mixed race has been associated with imagined U.S. futures.

This dissertation explores representations of Asian American mixed race in cultural production from the late-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries. This roughly marks the period when Asian American mixed race was legally proscribed in the United States by two types of often overlapping statutes. Anti-miscegenation laws outlawed the marriage between people of different races, although most often only where one of the partners was white. These were applied to Asian-white marriages as early as the 1860s and as late as 1967, when the *Loving v. Virginia* Supreme Court decision invalidated all anti-miscegenation laws. Almost simultaneously, Asian exclusion acts prevented and severely limited Asian immigration to the United States. The first of these laws, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, effectively barred Chinese immigrants from entering the United States. This was followed throughout the early half of the twentieth century by numerous other anti-Asian acts that maintained Chinese exclusion while targeting subsequent Asian immigrants. Exclusion acts were finally replaced with the less restrictive immigration quotas of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. Because of the legal restrictions faced by mixed race and Asian individuals, representations of mixed race during this period are distinct from contemporary representations. However, exploring this time frame also reveals

figurations of Asian American mixed race through which we might critique current understandings of Asian American mixed race while simultaneously uncovering alternate conceptions. I will argue that, like present-day representations of Asian American mixed race, early Asian American mixed-race figurations featured a distinctive future-oriented temporality that often projected potential U.S. futures.

A Note on Terms

Like any study of race, the study of mixed race risks reifying an oppressive category, so before continuing I will clarify both my terms and the intent of my study. This dissertation is a work of *critical* mixed-race studies, by which I mean to align with the work of recent scholars who research mixed race from a variety of disciplines, but always with the goal of exploring the concept of mixed race *not* as a social given, but as a constructed and constructing category with lived social, psychological, and historical effects. A critical study of mixed-race literature analyzes, rather than presumes, mixed-race figures.

Nonetheless, a critical study of mixed race is a contradictory work that risks reinforcing the concept of “biological” racial categories because the definition of mixed race has so often relied on blood quantum, as the term “mixed race” alone implies. Yet when engaged critically, mixed-race studies can perform the important work of questioning, challenging, and even rupturing racial categories. The study of mixed race is necessarily a study of racial borders and boundaries, ones often sutured by the racial myths and stereotypes specific to people and representations of mixed race. Dwelling in these in-between spaces, though, may also be a way to challenge

racial thinking. Both sides of this debate are played out in U.S. mixed-race discourse. However, this dissertation is not invested in finding mixed race as representing or representative. Instead I strive to expose the persistence of such mixed-race discourse, and what that suggests for a way out of racialist thinking that does not use racialized bodies as its path.

First, though, what is “race”? Following sociologists and race theorists Michael Omi and Howard Winant, I understand race not as a biological category, but as a social construction that “is a matter of both social structure and cultural representation” (56) and has real, lived consequences. Omi and Winant suggest the term “racial projects” as a way to understand the “linkage between structure and representation,” where racial projects are both “an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines” (56). The concept of racial projects is a useful way to think about the connection between representation and structure, one crucial for this dissertation, which explores both the representation and social structure around Asian American mixed race in the first half of the twentieth century. This connection is not a direct correspondence or reflection; instead, I contend that literature offers specific insight into this period because of the simultaneous social constraints and literary freedom during this moment of Asian exclusion and anti-miscegenation acts.

The relationship between structure and representation, then, is central to how I read the literature featured in this dissertation. Like scholar Jonathon Brennan in his pioneering work *Mixed Race Literature* (2002), I approach literary narratives *not* as

“cultural objects, reflections of multiple underlying cultural manifestations, as *true* books of mixed identity, but as literary works employing literary strategies such as metaphor and myth-making, as true *books* of mixed identity” (8). Constructions of mixed race, and indeed of race, involve literary strategies on and off the page. Reading mixed race (literature) as *true* books is the fault of magazine stories like *National Geographic’s*, while reading mixed race (literature) as true *books* is the outlook of this dissertation. During the time period this dissertation explores, literary strategies and the space of literature allowed authors to imagine Asian American mixed race in ways otherwise impossible because of legal and social proscription. At a time when anti-miscegenation laws and anti-Asian immigration laws constrained the lived reality of mixed-race individuals, literature became a space where Asian American mixed race and its future could be imagined. That being said, these representations were often still ideological, still implicated in the United States’ racial regime. My dissertation thus turns to various moments in the long period of Asian exclusion to understand how mixed race was being represented, how mixed-race futures were being imagined in relation to the nation, and what this meant for concepts of race and mixed race in the United States.

Finally, I will clarify the term “Asian American mixed race.” This is a useful term today insofar as it designates Asian mixed race in the United States while emphasizing a connection to an Asian American political identity. “Asian American mixed race” is an anachronistic term, however, when used to mark this subject position before the term “Asian American” was coined, before Asian Americans were

Asian, rather than a specific nationality, or American, rather than aliens ineligible for citizenship.¹⁴ During the first half of the twentieth century, Asian American mixed race necessarily signaled a transnational subject position because of U.S. Asian exclusion and anti-miscegenation laws. Thus I will use “Asian mixed race” to emphasize the transnational character of the lived experience of those who identified as and were identified as mixed race. While “Asian” here is an unstable term because specific nationalities were most often recognized rather than a racial alliance, Asian mixed-race individuals were often viewed collectively, through the term “Eurasian,” rather than specified via their nationality.

The term “Eurasian,” however, is used in this dissertation only to describe Asian mixed race in popular literature and film, where it was a frequently used label. I resist its use in describing Asian mixed-race individuals because of its pejorative association with British colonialism, where it signified, first in India and later elsewhere, a buffer class between colonizers and the colonized. Yet, just as “tragic mulatto” has come, for instance, to describe a stereotypical African American mixed-race figure in cultural production, I assert “Eurasian” during this time had a similar association. Additionally, the relationship to the history of European colonialism is a reminder of the U.S. imperialist project often associated with Asian mixed race in cultural production; the representational category “Eurasian” is deeply implicated in national and extraterritorial racial projects. Finally, I use the term “Asian American mixed race” in order to clearly shape the connections between the past and the

¹⁴ In *America's Asia*, Colleen Lye describes this as the “radical informality of Asian immigrant existence in the prewar period” (5).

present, while emphasizing my focus on the particular discourses developed around Asian mixed race in the United States.

A Note on Comparative Mixed-Race

One of the striking aspects of both *National Geographic's* "The Changing Face of America" and *Time's* "The New Face of America" is their construction of mixed race as a single racial category. To use the *PolicyMic* article's words, they share a future projection of the United States as "one giant amalgamated mega-race" (par. 1). These articles understand "mixed race," and its implied future, as a category encompassing all individuals who are mixed race; thus *National Geographic* unites people who identify as "black and white" with those who identify as "Korean and Hispanic" (86, 85). This is neither an unusual nor a necessarily problematic construction of mixed race. Certainly, there are stereotypes of and experiences shared by mixed-race individuals, particularly through the supposed existence of mixed race at the borders of racial categories. During the multiracial movement of the 1980s and 1990s, when mixed-race individuals organized for more political and social recognition, one of the questions posed was how various experiences could be united through an understanding of a common multiracial experience.¹⁵ Ideas about mixed-race individuals as a unified group of people had circulated long before that, too,

¹⁵ The multiracial movement is responsible for achieving the check-all-that-apply option in the U.S. census that enables articles like the *National Geographic* article I have been discussing.

perhaps the most famous of which was Mexican philosopher and politician Jose Vasconcelos theory of the cosmic race.¹⁶

Time's special issue and *National Geographic's* article thus recycle older ideas about a unified mixed race, but together represent a confluence of such thought in the United States in the present moment, one that seems closely aligned with post-racial ideology. In this leap from mixed race to post-race, however, categories of race are maintained. The *PolicyMic* article's descriptive "amalgamated mega-race" highlights the risk of merely creating another racial category with associated stereotypes and privileges. Furthermore, the creation of an additional racial category suppresses the historical specificity of racial oppression. Certainly, as in the above example, a person who identifies as "black and white" and one who identifies as "Korean and Hispanic" may have shared experiences. But there are also divergences that result from the historical specificity of African American mixed-race experience and, say, Asian American mixed-race experience. If we are seriously committed to the project of anti-racism, to the potential of an anti-racist future, then we must grapple with how and why mixed race as a category is activated unevenly in the U.S. racial regime.

Concern over the meaning and regulation of racial mixing has existed in North America since the initial British colonies were established. As early as 1661, anti-miscegenation statutes were passed, although miscegenation regulation gained more

¹⁶ Vasconcelos' concept of La Raza C6smica, which proposed mixed race as essential to the foundation of more inclusive communities, is explored by Gloria Anzaldúa in her groundbreaking text *Borderlands/La Frontera*.

urgency during the nineteenth century solidification of the U.S. racial regime and then reached its peak in the early to mid-twentieth century.¹⁷ Over this long history, mixed-race representations have been both broad and specific. While there are striking commonalities in representations, tropes that repeat across depictions of mixed-race figures, there are also specificities that reveal the differential deployment of mixed race in the United States. In this section I consider comparative mixed race in order to emphasize the particularities of Asian American mixed-race depictions.

Mixed-race discourse in the United States might be understood through two main representational strategies: denial and creation. Foundational Critical Mixed-Race Studies scholar Cynthia Nakashima outlines these strategies in her article “An Invisible Monster: The Creation and Denial of Mixed Race People in America” (1992). Denial and creation are used to reinforce racial boundaries that operate across legal, political, social, and cultural registers. The denial of mixed race often occurs through enforced and voluntary passing as – or choosing of – a monoracial alignment, thereby precluding the possibility of “mixed race” through the assumption of monoraciality. Discourses of denial exist on multiple levels. The Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, for example, which established the “separate but equal” doctrine, rested on the legal definition of mixed-race plaintiff Homer Plessy as African American.¹⁸ Famed author Onoto Watanna, a mixed-race Chinese Canadian woman,

¹⁷ See *Mixed Race America and the Law*. This first statute was adopted by then-colony Maryland to prevent the marriage of white women and black men (Saks 11). By 1949, twenty-nine states had anti-miscegenation laws (Johnson 5).

¹⁸ For an insightful discussion of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, see Cheryl Harris’ “Whiteness as Property.”

“passed” instead as Japanese because of the social capital to be gained from this identity at the turn of the twentieth century. In cultural production, the causes and effects of passing, often sensationalized, were captured in texts ranging from Kate Chopin’s “Desiree’s Baby” to Onoto Watanna’s “A Half-Caste.” At stake in these situations was not only the preservation of racial categories, but also the distribution of resources and access guarded by racial privilege. These stakes are evident even when mixed race is acknowledged, or to use Nakashima’s terms, created, often through dehumanizing stereotypes. These stereotypes included, for instance, racial science theories like hybrid degeneracy and hybrid vigor.¹⁹ Adopted from the language of genetics and integral to the eugenics movement, these terms predicted the outcome of miscegenation, suggesting that mixed-race offspring would be either worse or better, respectively, than the races of their parents. Along with scientific racism were stereotypes of mixed-race individuals as liminal and troubled, with psychological, moral, and social problems.

I am speaking of mixed-race representation broadly here, and these various strategies are applied unevenly and to different ends depending on the racial categories in question. For example, hypodescent, or the one drop rule, was a legally and socially enforced concept for African American mixed race that assigned a monoracial identity to anyone with “one drop” of African American “blood.” During slavery, this maintained a separation between slaveowners and slaves. After the Civil War, as suggested by the *Plessy v. Ferguson* example, hypodescent still maintained

¹⁹ See Cynthia Nakashima’s “An Invisible Monster,” 171-3.

racial segregation. In contrast, mixed-race Native Hawaiians faced a reverse hypodescent after the annexation of Hawai‘i. When the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act was established to return to Native Hawaiians a fraction of the land acquired by the United States through Hawai‘i’s annexation, only those with fifty percent or more Hawaiian blood qualified for land.²⁰ Asserting those who were less than fifty percent Hawaiian heritage as white, essentially denying mixed race, was a way to control access to resources and shrink the pool of candidates given land.²¹ Both of these examples highlight a legal denial of mixed race, but applied in distinct ways with specific short- and long-term consequences. With this specificity of mixed-race representations in mind, I turn now to a comparative analysis.

As suggested in the above discussion of hypodescent, African American mixed race was central in discourses of slavery. Mixed-race identity was prevalent and highly policed by blood quantum from the seventeenth century on with designations from mulatto to octoroon, which by the nineteenth century were overruled by an ideology of hypodescent that ensured the separation between slaveowners and slaves. This policing of racial borders by either tracking the persistence of race through blood quantum or denying the possibility of racial mixing through hypodescent worked to maintain the categories of “black” and “white” that determined biopolitical control both during and after slavery. Such policing, as Cheryl Harris asserts, reveals “the valorization of whiteness as treasured property in a

²⁰ For a cogent analysis of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, see Kehaulani J. Kauanui’s *Rehabilitating the Native*.

²¹ *Ibid*, 47.

society structured on racial caste” (1713). The concepts of hypodescent and passing highlight a regime in which propertizing claims were and are structured through race.²²

In cultural production, the mixed-race African American figure was often portrayed as the “tragic mulatta.” These characters, usually but not always female, were fated by their mixed-race heritage to doom or death, and were frequently featured in narratives of racial passing. Though utilized in a variety of stories, the tragic mulatta trope consistently revolved around the question of whiteness as property.²³ For example, the figure was first popularized in the 1850s by antislavery advocates.²⁴ Stories like Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* featured sympathetic mixed-race women portrayed through the conventions of sentimental literature in order to condemn slavery. The effectiveness of these stories hinged on the tragic mulatta’s closeness to whiteness. Post-reconstruction texts similarly explored this closeness, but pathologized and scorned the tragic mulatta as a means of condemning racial mixing and maintaining racial boundaries.

²² I draw on Cheryl Harris’ concept of whiteness as property, as outlined in her article “Whiteness as Property,” for the comparative understanding of mixed race in the United States that I propose here. In the United States “rights in property are contingent on, intertwined with, and conflated with race” (1714), and mixed race, in its deployment in literature and the law, reveals the interconnection of the two, as Harris suggests with her reading of passing and hypodescent. This forms the connective basis of and the distinctions among mixed-race representations as I argue here.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ See Eve Allegra Raimon’s *The ‘Tragic Mulatta’ Revisted*, 4-5.

The idea of property is also present in discourses around Native American mixed race.²⁵ Representations of mixed-race Native Americans were central to U.S. territorial claims as the colonies and then the nation expanded across the continent. Interracial marriage between white Americans and Native Americans was encouraged as a means of “bloodless conquest” of the U.S. frontier.²⁶ This was also true of white American marriages to Mexican nationals during the United States’ expansion into Mexican territory.²⁷ In keeping with the concern of territorial acquisition, mixed-race blood quantum laws were later established for the distribution of benefits to Native Americans, which disempowered tribes by purposefully decreasing the size of their population.²⁸

In cultural production, Native American mixed-race figures emerged popularly throughout the nineteenth century and reflected U.S. racial anxieties about the expanding Western frontier. The so-called “half-blood” figure “provided a dramatic symbol of the benign possibilities or malign probabilities” (Scheik ix) inherent in the encounter between the United States and Native Americans. In the United States’ violent quest for new territory, this figure was characterized as a cultural bridge between the territory’s past and its future, and often acted as an

²⁵ As Cheryl Harris asserts, “although the systems of oppression of Blacks and Native Americans differed in form – the former involving the seizure and appropriation of labor, the latter entailing the seizure and appropriation of land – undergirding both was a racialized conception of property implemented by force and ratified by law” (1715).

²⁶ See Patricia Riley’s “The Mixed Blood Writer,” 57.

²⁷ See Kevin R. Johnson’s *Mixed Race America and the Law*, 6.

²⁸ See Annette Jaimes’ “Some Kind of Indian,” 139.

interpreter or go-between.²⁹ As such, figurations of the half-blood were tinged with fear; as a potential double-agent or racial traitor, the half-blood might aid or betray white settlers. Because of the wide-spread discourse of the “disappearing native,” portrayals of half-blood figures were distinctively past-oriented, essential to the myth of how the West was won. They provided an enabling fiction in which the disappearance of the mixed-race Native American signaled a supposed ceding of the land to the United States.

Emerging in the last years of the nineteenth century, decades after these initial imaginings of African American and Native American mixed race, Asian American mixed race shares and specifies the conventions of mixed-race discourse and literature. Asian American mixed-race literature inevitably inherits a literary genealogy of tragic mulattos and traitorous half-bloods. Yet the history of the mixed-race representations traced above raises the question of the specificity of Asian American mixed-race literature. What particular images and narratives develop in the initial literary imaginings of Asian American mixed race? What literary figures, if any, emerge? How do these representations shift in later historical moments? In the following section, and throughout the dissertation as a whole, I argue that Asian American mixed-race literary figures are ideologically keyed to the United States’ geopolitical and racial future in literary explorations. Because Asian American mixed-race representations emerge in the early twentieth century alongside U.S. global ambitions in Asia and the Pacific, they are defined more by global geopolitics

²⁹ See Patricia Riley’s “The Mixed Blood Writer,” 58-59.

– by the propertizing claims of imperialism – than the biopolitical and continental claims of earlier mixed-race representations.

Orientalist Futures in Asian American Mixed-Race Literature

As with these earlier and contemporaneous literary representations of mixed race, Asian American mixed-race figures should be understood in their historical context, which influenced the character and the possibilities of Asian American mixed-race representation. The time period I look at in this dissertation, the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, might be understood as a period of legal and social proscription. Domestically, Asian exclusion laws and anti-miscegenation laws targeted Asians and mixed-race Asians in the United States. As previously mentioned, Asian exclusion laws barred Asian immigration and naturalization in the United States from roughly 1882, the year of the Chinese Exclusion Act, through 1965, the year of the Immigration and Nationality Act. Simultaneously, anti-miscegenation laws prevented interracial marriage and were enforceable until 1967's *Loving v. Virginia* Supreme Court decision.

These domestic policies of proscription were linked to the political and ideological relationship between the United States and, broadly, Asia. More specifically, though, during this period the U.S. imaginary of and international policy toward Asia centered – to different ends – around China and Japan.³⁰ I will review this shortly, but for now I want to assert that because of this the popular culture mixed-race figures my dissertation traces are Japanese or Chinese and white

³⁰ I draw here from Colleen Lye's consideration of the United States' differing perceptions of and policies towards China and Japan in *America's Asia*, 17.

American mixed race. Because the tensions of this period emerge from the confrontation, domestically and internationally, of “white” and “Asian,” Asian mixed-race literary figures embody through their mixed heritage the ideological and material threat Asia and Asians posed for the United States.

My decision to read Asian mixed-race representations across this long period of disenfranchisement cuts across previous efforts at periodizing the mixed-race Asian American experience. Groundbreaking work by Teresa Williams-Leon and Cynthia L. Nakashima in *The Sum of Our Parts* (2001) situates Asian American mixed race through three time periods: the anti-miscegenation and anti-Asian period of the late-1800s to WWII; the period of intense U.S. militarism in Asia from WWII until the late 1960s; and the multiculturalism of post-1965 immigration and the post-1967 multiracial baby boom.³¹ In another article, “Servants of Culture: The Symbolic Role of Mixed-Race Asians in American Discourse” (2001), Cynthia Nakashima divides the latter period further, considering the economic rise of Asia in the 1980s and the mainstream domestic emergence of an uncritical multiculturalism in combination with the multiracial movement in the 1990s.³² However, I argue that while this periodization does account for the most significant moments of Asian American mixed-race history, the distinctions are not as clear as presented here. U.S. militarism in Asia existed prior to World War II, and the “multiculturalism” of the 1970s and on finds roots much earlier in Asian American mixed-race representation. We need a longer though not totalizing way to understand the persistence of certain

³¹ See Williams-Leon and Nakashima’s *The Sum of Our Parts*, 5.

³² See Nakashima’s “Servants of Culture,” 40-42.

kinds of Asian American mixed-race discourse. I assert this lies in an understanding of U.S. geopolitics and the persistently shifting ideology of American Orientalism.

American Orientalism in the first half of the twentieth century enabled and was produced by U.S. empire as it reached into and across the Pacific. Ranging from the war in the Philippines, the annexation of Hawai‘i, and commercial presence in China and Japan, the United States spent much of the early twentieth century establishing an “informal empire” (Yoshihara 7) in Asia and the Pacific. American Orientalism, the discourse of the United States’ imagined Orient, emerged from and helped produce the interactions between these nations and the United States at this time. Like many other scholars of Orientalism, including Karen Leong, Mari Yoshihara, and Colleen Lye, I distinguish American Orientalism from European Orientalism in order to highlight this historical specificity.

Orientalism in general characterizes Asia and Asians as an absolute other and at this time appeared in the United States in the form of “yellow peril.” At its base, yellow peril discourse “combines racist terror of alien cultures, sexual anxieties, and the belief that the West will be overpowered and enveloped by the irresistible, dark, occult forces of the East” (Marchetti 2). Characterizing Asians as hostile and ready to invade the United States, yellow peril discourse reflected the early twentieth century American belief in “the split alternatives between the whole world becoming American and an apocalyptic clash of civilizations” (Lye 10). Yellow peril was a discourse about empire, about protecting American “civilization” on the domestic and international fronts.

Yet the discourse of yellow peril, and its associated anti-Asian policies and representations, was applied differently to the Chinese and Japanese because of their distinct sociopolitical situations.³³ Yellow peril discourse initially emerged in the United States in relation to Chinese immigrants arriving on the West Coast in the 1850s, and became increasingly hostile as the century drew to a close. During this time, the United States sought trade and influence in China alongside European nations. William Wu, in his early study of the yellow peril directed towards the Chinese, suggests yellow peril discourse was characterized by “possible military invasion from Asia, perceived competition to the white labor force from Asian workers, the alleged moral degeneracy of Asian people, and the potential genetic mixing of Anglo-Saxons with Asians” (1). Yellow peril can be understood at this time, then, as the racist expression of two things. First, it was a reaction to economic competition that “deflect[ed] criticism of the brutal exploitation of an expansionist capitalist economy onto the issue of race” (Marchetti 2). Second, it meant that “imperialist expansion was in part rationalized by the notion that a militarily powerful Asia posed a threat to ‘Christian civilization’” (2). Yellow peril fear operated on both these domestic and international stages.

Notably absent as targets of yellow peril discourse in the nineteenth century were the Japanese. Japan was “opened” to the United States and Europe in 1853 and

³³ In exploring the differential experience of the Chinese and Japanese in the United States, I draw from Lye’s *America’s Asia*. Lye uses a “historical approach to racial representation [...to] account for the specificities of different marginalized groups, whose stereotypical attributes are located in the shifting dynamics of social relations and social conflicts” (4).

for the remainder of the nineteenth century was largely exoticized and romanticized by the United States.³⁴ As Japanese immigration to the United States increased at the turn of the century, though, hostility also increased domestically, particularly on the West Coast.³⁵ Simultaneously, Japan's growing militarism and its imperial ambitions, underscored by the Russo-Japanese War, placed it in competition with the United States' interests.³⁶ Because of Japan's imperial aims, the yellow peril directed at the Japanese centered primarily on a fear of imperial competition. Thus, although yellow peril persists throughout the early twentieth century, it is in a shifting, differential expression rather than a generalized imagining of Asia, of "the Orient."

This dissertation explores the literary representations of mixed-race Asians in the United States throughout this period of yellow peril rhetoric. I argue that in literature, mixed-race Asian American figures were used to deploy, create, and contest American Orientalist ideology. In order to illustrate this, I divide my dissertation into two parts. The first half traces the inflection of Asian American mixed-race figures with an Orientalist futurity, while the second half looks at depictions of Asian American mixed race written against such cooptation. In order to untangle the complexity of these early discourses, then, this dissertation begins by analyzing texts where mixed-race figures are objects of representation and concludes by analyzing texts where mixed-race authors and artists are writing subjects.

³⁴ See Dominika Ferrens' *Edith and Winnifred Eaton*, 33.

³⁵ For a discussion of the discrimination Japanese immigrants faced in the United States in the early twentieth century, see Ronald Takaki's *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 180-181.

³⁶ For a discussion of the increase in yellow peril discourse after the Russo-Japanese War, see William Wu's *Yellow Peril*, 3 and Colleen Lye's *America's Asia*, 23.

Part one of the dissertation, “Orientalist Futures: Popular Imaginings of Asian American Mixed Race,” explores representations of Asian mixed race that are closely aligned with American Orientalist ideology. I use this section to trace the most common stereotypes of Asian mixed race in the United States and unpack their ideological underpinnings. I argue that a central commonality of these depictions was their distinctive temporality. By making the Eurasian figure representative of possible futures, the figure could be used to imagine those two possibilities mentioned earlier, of “the world becoming American” or the “apocalyptic clash of civilizations” (Lye 10). The Eurasian figure thus helped a white American audience consider the relationship of the United States to, in different ways, China and Japan. These imagined futures were frequently expressed through narratives of kinship, which might be understood as a literary rendering of the American Orientalist concept of Asia-as-proxy, where Asia and Asians were not figured as an absolute other, but a threateningly similar proxy for U.S. economic and military power.³⁷

The notion of the other as self, of Asia-as-proxy, although complicated as it was keyed to twentieth century dynamics between the United States and China and the United States and Japan, is expressed through the Eurasian figure as kin.³⁸

Kinship narratives echo earlier nineteenth century literary uses of the mixed-race figure in miscegenation and incest narratives. In these “racial romances,” mixed race

³⁷ This is Colleen Lye’s particular formulation in *America’s Asia* of an observation made by scholars working on American Orientalism. See *America’s Asia*, 10. This is theorized throughout the text; for her initial argument, see Chapter One, “A Genealogy of the ‘Yellow Peril,’” 12-46.

³⁸ The idea of mixed-race figures representing kinship between racial groups in literature is first explored by Wei Ming Dariotis in “Developing a Kin-Aesthetic.”

embodied a symbolic national family that reconciled racial differences during the tumultuous period of national expansion.³⁹ Well-known racial romances include *Ramona* (1884) where, for example, the eponymous Native American-Scottish heroine marries her adopted Mexican brother and repairs to the heart of Mexico as a symbol of a united, if banished, California during its transition to U.S. control.

Such kinship narratives are explored specifically in Asian American mixed-race texts in chapter one, “Vanishing Acts: Deferring the ‘American’ in Asian American Mixed Race.” Here, the Asian American mixed-race figure reveals the (Eur)asian other as proxy, as kin, and ultimately as the (white) American self. Onoto Watanna’s “A Half-Caste” (1898), Wallace Irwin’s *Seed of the Sun* (1921), and Sax Rohmer’s “The Daughter of Huang Chow” (1922), all offer emblematic examples of an identification with Asia through kinship, though this identification is ultimately deferred through the figure’s death or disappearance. This consistent move – a kind of symbolic resolution – can be best understood as an ideological reflection of American Orientalism, which at this moment contradictorily posited Asia as proxy, rather than absolute other. The tension produced by identification and its deferral, by the momentary revelation of the white American self in the (Eur)asian other, inflects the Eurasian figure with a future temporality as it reveals the possibility of Asian *American* mixed-race figures.

The shift from deferred future possibility to embraced future mixed-race Asian Americans is traced in the second chapter in this section, “The Golden Men:

³⁹ Racial romances, a term coined by literary scholar Jolie Sheffer in her book *The Romance of Race*, are discussed in-depth in chapter two of this dissertation.

Writing Hawai‘i’s ‘New Race’ as America’s Future.” Here I trace how the yellow-peril influenced figuring of Asian American mixed race explored in chapter one begins to shift only a decade later towards an embraced multiracial future. This shift importantly occurs in literature about Hawai‘i, a contested terrain of U.S. imperialism. Here, the imagining of Asian mixed-race figures as visionary prototypes of a U.S. multicultural future enables the myth of a U.S.-dominated Pacific region during a period – pre-World War II through the Cold War – when the United States was increasingly competing with and for Asia. Because of the geographical specificity of this initial figuring of mixed race, this chapter traces what I will call the “hapa” literary figure. Traditionally describing mixed Hawaiians, hapa has more recently and controversially been used to describe mixed Asian Americans. The changing meaning of the term “hapa” traced in this chapter reveals the shift in Asian American mixed-race representation. Beginning with the representation of hapa figures in texts by Jack London and the Chicago School of Sociology, this chapter analyzes the emergence of the hapa figure as multicultural prototype, a reading that crystalizes in James Michener’s Cold War-era novel *Hawaii* (1959). This emerging figure marks a key moment in the conflation of Asian American mixed-race figures and imaginaries of a post-racial United States.

However, the revelation of the (Eur)asian other as the white American self, or in the case of *Hawaii* as the future national body, does not necessarily mean Orientalism was therefore disrupted. Instead kinship also becomes part of the discourse of empire, one that reveals the specificity of the Orientalist ideology of U.S.

imperialism. As many scholars have argued, the United States saw its own expansionist project through an exceptionalist lens, as morally superior to European colonialism.⁴⁰ The revelation of proxy, kinship, and self in the (Eur)asian other aligned with the narrative of exceptionalism as it justified and naturalized U.S. presence in Asia. A careful unpacking of historical representations of Asian American mixed race reveals its ideological cooptation in the service of American Orientalism. What I want to highlight here, then, is the use of Asian American mixed-race figures to project and justify U.S. imperialism in Asia and the Pacific. Under American Orientalist ideology, mixed-race kinship narratives became speculations about the future and particularly the global reach of the United States vis-à-vis the “Orient.” Because Asian American mixed race becomes a stand in for geopolitical concerns, it only ever predicts an ideologically informed future.

Cosmopolitan Futures in Asian American Mixed-Race Literature

I have outlined so far the dominant discourses around Asian American mixed race. This dissertation seeks to historicize these cultural representations, to reveal the alignment of mixed-race representations and U.S. orientalist and imperialist ideology. At the same time, I seek to destabilize these representations and explore resistance to such an alignment. The second half of the dissertation, “Cosmopolitan Visions: Emergent Discourses of Asian American Mixed Race,” explores emergent discourses of Asian American mixed race, which questioned and reimagined representations of mixed-race Asians in the United States.

⁴⁰ See Karen Leong’s “Gendering American Orientalism,” 10

In her autobiographical reflections, “Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian” (1909), Asian mixed-race author Edith Eaton, penname Sui Sin Far, declares that “only when the whole world becomes as one family will human beings be able to see clearly and hear distinctly” (223-224). Coming in the midst of accounts of her own experiences as a British-Chinese woman living in Britain, Canada, and the United States in the late-nineteenth century, Eaton’s assertion reads as a prescription against the prejudice and racism she faced because of her mixed-race heritage. In “Leaves,” Eaton recounts experiences that leave her feeling “different and apart” (218) and “a stranger” (222) because of her mixed race. Against these, Eaton envisions a “one family” future where people once separated by social concepts of difference instead see one another as related and relatable. Because Eaton’s “one family” is a vision of “the world [as] Eurasian” (224), racial mixing becomes a solution to the misunderstandings and discrimination created by racist thinking. As revealed by her use of the word “world,” this future projection of an Asian mixed-race family also challenges national borders; as Eaton claims, “individuality is more than nationality” (230). Thus in her autobiography Eaton projects as solution to racism a future Asian mixed-race world where racial and national boundaries no longer separate humanity.

Eaton’s work reads interestingly with and against the *National Geographic* with which I opened. Certainly, her work can be problematic, but what I want to emphasize here are two important moves that she makes: a move away from race, and a move away from nation. Against race and nation, Eaton emphasizes a unified world.

In light of the American Orientalism I previously reviewed, with its tendency to us Asian mixed-race to predict and consolidate U.S. imperialist futures, we can clearly see Eaton's work as a reaction against Orientalism. Eaton does activate the idea of kinship, but does so against the categories supported by Orientalist uses of family, namely the category of "nation." Eaton's efforts were not isolated, but can be understood as part of a collection of texts that, though not often brought together, when they are reveal emergent expressions of Asian American mixed race. If the underlying message of texts like the *PolicyMic* and *National Geographic* articles is a desire for a post-racial future, the texts explored in the second half of this dissertation try to think through ways to actualize non-ideological, anti-racist futures.

Departing from the cooptation by U.S. imperialism revealed in Part One, Part Two of the dissertation explores the writings and reflections of Asian mixed-race authors and artists. This second half of my dissertation uncovers how Asian mixed-race authors and artists sought to reimagine mixed-race figures, to reclaim them from their symbolic use in popular American cultural production. These authors and artists wrote mixed race not in orientalist projections of the future, but as a potential answer to imperialism and racism. Mixed race fueled visions of a world united.

Chapter Three, "Citizens of Nowhere, Citizens of the World: Asian Mixed Race and the Cosmopolitan Future," explores the cosmopolitanism of many Asian mixed-race authors and artists. Rather than identifying as a single race or within a single national border, these authors and artists moved frequently across borders and projected cosmopolitan visions in their works. This chapter reads as exceptional of

such visions the work of Chinese-Belgian author Han Suyin. Though not American, Han's work reveals an Asian conception of mixed race, one that wrote back to and against those of the United States. Han's work asserts anti-imperialist, anti-racist visions of Asian mixed race as representative of a new world community. This critical cosmopolitanism is a conceptual and aesthetic practice as Han imagines an emplaced commitment to world community that is attentive to the relativity of experience. Writing of mixed race in war-torn China in two texts, *A Many-Splendored Thing* (1952) and *The Crippled Tree* (1965), Han explores the potentials and pitfalls of a cosmopolitan mixed-race figure.

Continuing the exploration of Eurasian cosmopolitanism, chapter four, "When Sculpture Becomes the World: Mixed-Race Belonging in the Work of Isamu Noguchi," focuses on the memoirs and artistic work of sculptor Isamu Noguchi. Frequently self-identifying as a "citizen of nowhere," Noguchi turned to art to find affiliation and belonging. His innovative focus on sculpture as space reveals an attempt to move beyond the limits of Eurasian cosmopolitan futures; instead Noguchi developed an aesthetic centered on creating community through new encounters with the earth. Noguchi's strategy intersects with Han Suyin's critical cosmopolitanism as it searches for world belonging through a consciousness of encountering the "earth," rather than race or nation.

The Problem with Tomorrows

By spanning the long period of Asian exclusion and exploring the representation of Asian American mixed race in literature, this dissertation begins to

provide an analysis of both the established and emergent figurations of Asian mixed race in the United States. This longer history of U.S. mixed-race futures then contextualizes and challenges contemporary representations like those of the *PolicyMic* and *National Geographic* articles. It is no accident that two-thirds of the images in an article about the United States' post-racial future are of Asian American mixed-race people. There is a history to these claims of a nation united through race mixing, one that conveniently and all too frequently aligns with U.S. imperialism. As this dissertation backdates and specifies this conversation, it is my hope it will lead us to ask of these recent images of mixed race – why now? To what end? As I uncover a longer history of Asian mixed race, I want to question the liberation associated with this kind of imagining of mixed race and promote caution around the easy, simplified acceptance of mixed race as somehow beyond or between race. Representations of mixed race are instead, as this dissertation will emphasize, too often ideological formulations. Mixed race is not the end point, but only ever a place to continue discussions, analyses, and critiques of race in the United States.

CHAPTER ONE

Vanishing Acts: Deferring the “American” in Asian American Mixed Race

“Only when the whole world becomes as one family will human beings be able to see clearly and hear distinctly.”

– Sui Sin Far, *Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian*

“He could not think of Kiku-san now as his own child – his very own blood – he would not!”

– Onoto Watanna, “A Half-Caste”

Perhaps one of the most well-known early representations of Asian mixed race in the United States today is also one of the most fleeting: the child of Pinkerton and Cio-Cio San in any of the many incarnations of *Madame Butterfly*.⁴¹ This portrait of a baby, destined to return to the United States in the arms of Pinkerton and his new American wife, is undeveloped, more of a central plot point than a character; as he is welcomed into Pinkerton’s American family and Cio-Cio San commits suicide, interracial romantic love is rejected and interracial familial love is preserved. The mixed-race child is acknowledged as a desirable part of the American family.⁴² Yet this representation of Asian mixed race, while famous, is seemingly out of place in mainstream cultural production during the first half of the twentieth century, when

⁴¹ There are a number of versions of the Madame Butterfly story. For a summary of the most famous Madame Butterfly tales, see Gina Marchetti’s *Romance and the Yellow Peril*, 79-81.

⁴² The Madame Butterfly plot, particularly its ending, varies depending on version. For example, John Luther Long’s short story ends with Cio-Cio San stealing away with her son after an attempted suicide. Nonetheless, in this version and others, the baby is still desired by Pinkerton and his American wife.

Eurasian literary figures were instead often portrayed as inassimilable, treacherous, or tragic and torn.⁴³ John Paris' widely read novel *Kimono* (1921), for example, features a Eurasian character, connected to an occult Asia, who disrupts the protagonist's once-happy interracial marriage, and Josef von Sternberg's popular film *Shanghai Express* (1932) follows a Eurasian character who appears assimilated into white European society but is in fact mounting an attack for China. These negative American portrayals of Asian mixed race highlight the white anxiety of blurred racial boundaries as the Eurasian figure disrupts the concept of visually identifiable race and fixed knowable allegiances. Yet, the portrayals also work to resolve these racial slippages by characterizing those who threaten racial boundaries as villains or tragic anomalies. The fate of the Eurasian figure in these portrayals becomes a symbolic resolution as racial boundaries are preserved. Among these representations, the child in *Madame Butterfly* – and the symbolic embrace of racial ambiguity and crossing of racial lines his welcome into the American family represents – appears noteworthy. This chapter, however, will argue that it is a move hidden in many representations of Asian American mixed race during the early twentieth century. The Eurasian literary figure embodies not just a crossing of racial boundaries, but a recognition – if momentary – of the white American self in the (Eur)asian other.

I qualify the American self as white here because whiteness during this time stood in for national identity, for the “American.” Whiteness signified not only social,

⁴³ The term “Eurasian” was often used during this period to refer to people of mixed Asian descent in literature and film, and I activate it here to refer to the Asian mixed-race literary/filmic figure. Historically, though, the term Eurasian was used to describe British-Indian subjects.

but also economic and legal status in the United States. Cheryl Harris has traced how America's legal system intertwined with the economic as it "constructed 'whiteness' as an objective fact, although in reality it is an ideological proposition" by "accord[ing] whiteness actual legal status [thus] convert[ing] an aspect of identity to a vested interest" (1730, 1725). While Harris explores this concept in the context of African American and Native American experience in the United States, the connection between American white sociopolitical and economic identity is further illuminated in the context of Asian exclusion. Asian legal exclusion – from immigration, citizenship, interracial marriage, and land ownership – emerged in part because white workers feared the economic competition posed by Asian workers.⁴⁴ During the height of Asian exclusion, and particularly when it was directed at the Japanese, one *Overland Monthly* contributor went so far as to proclaim that "everybody is a 'white man' but the Jap" (Edwards qtd. in Lye 127) and by the 1922 *Ozawa vs. United States* supreme court case, the assertion that the Japanese were not white meant that they could not be citizens, could not be recognized "Americans."⁴⁵ That the Eurasian literary figure was consistently either white-Japanese or white-Chinese, despite the fact that other Asian mixed-race identities were present during this period, emphasizes the centrality of whiteness and American Orientalism to representations of Asian American mixed-

⁴⁴ This is an observation made by many scholars including Colleen Lye in *America's Asia*, Gina Marchetti in *Romance and the 'Yellow Peril,'* 2, and Cynthia Nakashima in "Servants of Culture," 37.

⁴⁵ See Lye's *America's Asia*, 127.

race.⁴⁶ Part of what is being protected or worked through in the literary imagination at this time is the maintenance of white America and its emerging empire. This chapter will argue, however, that the attempt to resolve the disturbance to white privilege presented by Eurasian literary figures is ultimately unsuccessful.

In U.S. cultural production in the early half of the twentieth century, Eurasian literary figures were often written through preexisting mixed-race tropes in the context of yellow peril narratives. While I will discuss yellow peril rhetoric in depth later, briefly, these texts frequently activate threatening and othering images of Asians.⁴⁷ However, Eurasian literary figures actually work to disrupt the stereotypes of yellow peril narratives as they grapple with the implications of the Eurasian characters' white heritages. These figures come to embody an underlying tenant of American Orientalism which yellow peril texts attempt to subsume: Asia-as-proxy. In American Orientalism, Asia might be understood as a "proxy" for the United States rather than an "antipode" (Lye 10) as earlier interpretations of Orientalism hold. That is, American Orientalism works to extend U.S. empire by positing Asia, at particular moments and in particular places, as a potential reflection of or substitute for the

⁴⁶ There were, for example, established Punjabi-Mexican and Filipino-Mexican communities in California. For further information on these communities, please see Rudy Guevarra, Jr.'s *Becoming Mexipino* and Karen Leonard's *Making Ethnic Choices*.

⁴⁷ William Wu, in his text *The Yellow Peril*, defines yellow peril broadly as "the threat to the United States that some white American authors believed was posed by the people of East Asia" (1).

United States.⁴⁸ In these texts written in the early half of the twentieth century, Eurasian literary figures symbolically embody the notion of Asia-as-proxy as their narrative and form produce a momentary recognition of the (Eur)asian other as self for white American characters and readers. Yet the figuration of the white American self in, or by means of, the (Eur)asian other is left unresolved as the texts disappear their Eurasian characters. Because of their inability to confront the “American” in the mixed-race Asian American, these texts perform vanishing acts, containing their mixed-race figures through travel that sends the character outside the realm of the narrative or through death.

The Eurasian literary figure thus gains a distinct future-oriented temporality – a deferred temporality – which allows such recognition to be deferred to a future encounter with Asian American mixed race. The containment of the mixed-race figure is a familiar ending in mixed-race literature generally, but is notable for Asian American mixed-race literature because of the direct connection to the Asian American mixed-race material and ideological existence in the early 1900s. In contrast to Latino, Native American, and African American mixed-race individuals, who had a long history in the United States and of whom there were specific if stereotyped literary portrayals, Asian American mixed race was illegible in the United States in the early twentieth century because of Asian exclusion and anti-miscegenation laws. The deferred future of Asian American mixed-race figures thus

⁴⁸ I am indebted to Colleen Lye in *America's Asia* for this particular formulation of the observation made by scholars working on American Orientalism. See *America's Asia*, 10.

reveals the material reality of Asian American mixed race in the United States at the same time it marks the ideological implications of identification with Asia at the turn of the century. Reading the work of Onoto Watanna, Sax Rohmer, and Wallace Irwin, this chapter will trace how texts acknowledge but finally defer the “American” in Asian American mixed race.

Kinship, Incest, and the Interracial Family

In 1899, Chinese-British author Winnifred Eaton, adopting the pseudonym Onoto Watanna, published one of her first stories about Japan, “A Half Caste,” in *Frank Leslie’s Popular Monthly*.⁴⁹ Barely 24-years-old at the time, Watanna – the younger sister of the now oft-proclaimed “grandmother” of Asian American literature, Edith Eaton/Sui Sin Far – set the stage for her prolific career with this tragic Japanese romance. It was a career that would find Watanna writing nine novels about Japan without firsthand knowledge, posturing as a woman of mixed Japanese descent at a time when Japan was seen in the United States in a more favorable light than China. She would be heralded in her own time as an insightful and authentic writer, only to later be branded a traitor and sellout for her trendy passing and stereotyped portrayals of Japan and the Japanese.⁵⁰ Yet Watanna’s controversial body of texts, as recent critics have contended, offers insights into the self-representations

⁴⁹ All three of the authors discussed in this chapter used pseudonyms. Because I speak primarily of their literary work here, I will refer to the authors by these pseudonyms.

⁵⁰ Linda Trinh Moser and Elizabeth Rooney offer a summary of Watanna’s reception by recent critics in the introduction of *‘A Half Caste’ and Other Writings*, xiii. Another text, Viet Thanh Nguyen’s *Race and Resistance: Literature and Politics in Asian America*, offers a summary and analysis of the receptions of both Eaton sisters by Asian American Studies, 33-36.

of mixed-race Asian American authors at the beginning of the twentieth century; because they were commercially successful, Watanna's texts reveal the negotiations in which mixed-race Asian American authors engaged. This story at the start of her career, "A Half Caste," bears particular importance for the work Watanna did portraying mixed-race figures, with the story's resonances echoing in her later works. Watanna wrote stories and novels that at once conformed to popular stereotypes of mixed race and contested these characterizations. This section gestures towards a common trajectory of Asian mixed-race characters by exploring the way Watanna courts and subverts expectations to create alternate encounters with Asian mixed race in U.S. cultural production.

Watanna's "A Half Caste" is a story of racial passing and incest which captures and questions turn-of-the-century U.S. representations of Japan. The story follows Norman Hilton, an American man returning to Japan to find all that remains of his "Japanese fashion" marriage to a Japanese woman: his "little Japanese daughter" (490). Although he discovers that his daughter is dead, he is able to find a replacement for his deceased family in the young, beautiful geisha with whom he falls in love, Okikusan, or Miss Chrysanthemum, in a nod to Pierre Loti's famed novel of the same name. In a tragic revelation at the story's end, however, Hilton discovers that Okikusan – or "Kiku" for short – is actually his supposedly deceased daughter. Drawing heavily from *Madame Butterfly* and preexisting mixed-race tropes, Watanna works in this story to critique her contemporaries' representations of Japan and of mixed race from within their popular narratives.

One of Watanna's more frequently analyzed stories, this text is often read as a sequel to or re-presentation of John Luther Long's 1898 short story "Madame Butterfly," and a response to Pierre Loti's 1887 novel, *Madame Chrysanthème*. Both of these texts are regarded as originators of the *Madame Butterfly* story and are exemplary of the rhetoric around Japan during this period.⁵¹ At the turn of the century, when Watanna first began writing stories based in Japan, Japan was imagined in U.S. cultural production as an exotic and desirable locale. The Japanese were praised for Japan's rapid Westernization by and for a tourism industry at its peak in the 1880s and into the 1890s, and Japan's militarization, still on the brink of posing significant threat to U.S. interests, was largely ignored.⁵² Instead, Japan and the Japanese were feminized and commodified in U.S. cultural production, perhaps epitomized by the flourishing sexual tourism industry captured so iconically by the *Madame Butterfly* stories. As depicted in *Madame Butterfly*, male foreigners overwhelmingly engaged Japanese prostitutes during this time in Japan. Japanese women were hypersexualized in the Western imagination, thought to "express unlimited sensuality, ... [be] more or less stupid, and above all ... willing" (Said qtd. in Leupp 178).⁵³ Many foreign men in Japan had port wives or consorts, as portrayed in the *Madame Butterfly* narratives. These temporary wives, or as Hilton calls them "Japanese fashion marriages," did not have the long term legal viability or obligation typically associated with marriage, since specified services were paid for, with or

⁵¹ See Dominika Ferrens' *Edith and Winnifred Eaton*, 143 and 158.

⁵² *Ibid*, 22, 33, and 40.

⁵³ For further information on portrayals of Japanese women, see Gary Leupp's *Interracial Intimacy in Japan*, 166.

without a contract.⁵⁴ These “marriages” did not necessarily guarantee acknowledgement of offspring, inheritance, or long-term financial support. They absolved the white, male foreign partner of these obligations. Thus in many ways, what was guarded domestically by, for example, anti-miscegenation laws in the United States was guarded internationally in Japan through these performative marriages that *Madame Butterfly* tales describe and romanticize.

The imagined sexual availability of Japanese women was an extension of the U.S. perception of a feminized Japan dominated by a masculine West. The narratives of performative family that infused treaty port liaisons were also those employed to justify and support U.S. imperialism in Japan. However, soon after the period in which “A Half Caste” was published, these familial narratives were replaced by yellow peril narratives because of the increasing presence of Japanese immigrants in the United States as well as concerns about Japan’s growing imperial power in Asia. Stories of family, then, supported stories of U.S. control in Japan at the moment in which “A Half Caste” was published, but this quickly shifted as power dynamics changed.

Watanna’s “A Half Caste” captures these earlier perceptions of a sexualized Japan and hypersexualized Japanese women as it reenacts the interracial love at the center of the *Madame Butterfly* story, but critiques that “love” as the result of the sexual tourism and exploitation engaged in by white American and European men.⁵⁵

Hilton’s attempt to reconcile with his past by promising to marry and love a new

⁵⁴ For further discussion of sex work in Japan during the Meiji Era, see *ibid*, 189-195.

⁵⁵ This is the theory asserted by Moser and Rooney in ‘*A Half Caste*,’ xv.

Japanese woman results in a close encounter with incest, which “foregrounds his past and present crimes” (Moser and Rooney xv), including marrying, fathering, and abandoning Japanese women. I argue, however, that the simple critique of and connection to *Madame Butterfly* texts is complicated by the presence of the mixed-race Japanese woman in the interracial couple. If we read Kiku as a version of Cio-Cio San, what does it mean to cast Cio-Cio San as mixed race? Or, if we read Kiku as a version of Cio-Cio San and Pinkerton’s child, what does it mean to imagine the *Madame Butterfly* baby all grown up, and a woman working in the sex trade like her mother? This story certainly critiques white American men in Japan, but it also critiques America’s discourses about Japan and about mixed race. Through its content and form, Watanna disrupts American perceptions of Japan and preexisting mixed-race tropes to create kinship between Hilton and his geisha, who is also his daughter and prospective wife.

“The Half Caste” complicates typical *Madame Butterfly* narratives, then, by creating Cio-Cio San as a mixed-race character. In the process, the text combines the *Madame Butterfly* narrative, or an orientalist stereotype, with a passing narrative, or a mixed-race stereotype. Reading the presence of both these narratives helps illuminate Watanna’s critique, but also reveals the way Asian American mixed-race figures function under American Orientalist ideology. The passing narrative, a staple in earlier mixed-race literature, was a familiar trope by the turn of the century. Passing as monoracial, typically white, is central in tragic mulatto narratives, where the failed attempt to “pass for white” emphasizes the tragedy of the mulatto character, who will

never actually be "white" and thus lives in constant fear of discovery. The discovery of passing is the inevitable resolution to the threat posed by a character traversing U.S. society's absolute racial boundaries.⁵⁶ The passing narrative is alluded to in Watanna's text as Hilton perceives Kiku as Japanese, rather than mixed race or white, which partly enables him to fall in love with her. As I will discuss shortly, however, this "passing" actually reverses that of tragic mulatta narratives, where characters attempt to "pass" for white.

Like its play with *Madame Butterfly* tropes, the text's exploration of racial passing questions its established narrative. As in many passing narratives, Kiku's concealed mixed-race identity is treacherous to racial, familial, and sexual boundaries because it almost leads to an act of incest. Yet the text turns the familiar narrative of passing on its head. The narrative construction of "A Half Caste" suggests that it is *not* Kiku who is deliberately hiding her identity, who is "guilty" of passing or committing incest, although she may go along with the misinterpretation. Instead, the reader is left with the unsettling realization that it is Hilton's, and perhaps the reader's, unwillingness to comprehend what Kiku has been telling them all along that leads to the acts of passing and of incest.

Throughout the story there are constant hints at Kiku's hidden identity which are at first coded as merely Kiku's uniqueness, her potential to be desired by Hilton. The first introduction to Kiku, for example, describes her "red cheeks, large eyes and white skin" (490). Because Hilton still identifies Kiku as a Japanese woman, this

⁵⁶ See Marchetti's *Romance and the Yellow Peril*, 69.

description can be interpreted as a description of her beauty to Hilton. It is only after the revelation that Kiku is mixed race that the text loops back on itself and this statement can be reinterpreted: the “visual” cues of race were there from the beginning. The exchanges between Hilton and Kiku are in fact full of such layered implications. Kiku insists that she is “different from aeverybody else [in geisha houses and in Japan]” and Hilton acknowledges that Kiku is “unlike any Japanese girl he had ever met” (492).⁵⁷ In a particularly telling quote, Hilton even informs Kiku that she “look[s] like a child” (494), with the subtext of this quote again emerging at the end of the text when Kiku is revealed to be *his* child. These duplicitous statements allow multiple interpretations and re-readings, marking and enacting the white anxiety of the racial identification of a mixed-race figure because the text refuses to state Kiku’s identity outright until its end.

Kiku and Hilton’s ambiguous statements help to disguise their incestuous implications while emphasizing Kiku’s mixed-race difference as both physical and temperamental. Reading the way “A Half Caste” maps visual and temperamental cues of mixed race helps locate this text in relation to larger contemporaneous mixed-race discourses, which centered obsessively on identifying and capturing mixed race through visual and psychological cues. Hilton, for example, is struck by Kiku’s lack of “artlessness.” He believes Japanese women are artless by definition, but finds Kiku “anything but” (494). If “artless” implies innocence and a freedom from artifice, then by this assertion Kiku is knowing, or as Hilton says, “a cynic” (492). Hilton, although

⁵⁷ Kiku speaks in a dialect of Watanna’s creation, as demonstrated in this quote by the word “aeverybody.”

not consciously, is highlighting a racial difference between mixed-race Kiku and monoracial Japanese women. In other words, this can be read by those in the know as a stereotype of mixed-race temperament. However, Kiku contradicts this by suggesting that acting artless is a part of her – and of all geisha’s – profession, a fact she emphasizes by refusing to perform for Hilton unless her boss is nearby. Ironically, though, it is her refusal to perform that leads Hilton to point to her artlessness. Of her smiles and happy attitude, she says, “tha’s worg’ for geisha girl...thad is my worg” (492). Hilton’s perception of the geisha as artless is actually an act of artfulness, but this claim falls on deaf ears because Hilton is unwilling to recognize his time with Kiku and other geisha as an economic exchange. Kiku’s assertions nonetheless draw attention to the reality of Hilton’s, and perhaps all *Madame Butterfly* Pinkertons’, imagined romantic interludes with geisha; they are acts that are part of transactions. With this reminder of work, Kiku grants agency to the geisha while highlighting Hilton’s objectification of the women. Aligning herself with the other working women, Kiku denies temperament as an indicator of race or of mixed-race exceptionalism. In this way, the text troubles mixed-race representations and *Madame Butterfly*’s underlying assumptions about the Japanese women they portray.

Kiku’s identity is finally revealed in a dramatic unveiling of her physical attributes at the moment of potential incest as Hilton embraces and kisses her. She insists that she “loog lig American” – the first time this is vocalized – and this vocalization allows Hilton to see her “thick, shining brown curls” and “the white

purity of her arms” (496). This creates another way of interpreting the earlier descriptions of Kiku, making ambiguous the assumption that this is a passing narrative, since she has been asserting her identity all along. What is more, the unveiling of Kiku’s identity through incest troubles the assumption that “passing” can exist at all. The almost-fulfilled act of incest draws attention to the idea that the Asian mixed-race character *is* part of the white American self already, thus the horror of incest, and not – as passing narratives imply – outside of the white self despite desperate attempts to “pass” as white.

The notion of kinship in this incest tale leads to what Critical Mixed-Race Studies scholar Wei Ming Dariotis has theorized in another context as the “kin-aesthetic” of literary representations of mixed race. Mixed-race figures can facilitate the “recognition of the Other as kin” (“Kin-Aesthetic” 177), often “destroy[ing] the racial categorizations that limit relations” (180), and in the case of “A Half Caste,” disrupting the stereotyped assumptions about mixed race. Literary scholar Jolie Sheffer has explored this specifically in relation to incest; she describes “racial romances” which feature a mixed-race character engaging, often unknowingly, in incest encounters and relationships.⁵⁸ Sheffer suggests racial romances use an allegory of family for nation in order to provide “an imagined resolution to U.S. racial and sexual inequalities” (5). Both approaches to kinship and incest narratives offer insight into “A Half Caste,” but here racial romance and kin-aesthetic are rewritten in a turn-of-the-century Asian American context. Stories like “A Half Caste” thus reveal

⁵⁸ See Sheffer’s “Introduction,” in *The Romance of Race*, 1-26.

the particular ideological value of Asian mixed-race figures; “A Half Caste” in this light exposes how mixed-race family narratives become key to exploring U.S. imperialism in Asia.

The relationship between mixed-race family narratives and U.S. imperialism is further clarified through attention to the reverse passing narrative. Hilton cannot even comprehend Kiku as a mixed-race woman, instead assuming she is a Japanese woman. This assumption does not reveal an anxiety of unrecognizable others, of the mixed-race figure disguised as the white figure, as passing narratives so often do. In these cases, as Cheryl Harris argues, passing gains resonance – and is depicted under the U.S. racial regime as threatening – because of the value given to whiteness.⁵⁹ In “A Half Caste,” though, this different narrative of passing reveals an anxiety of unrecognizable selves. Hilton is unable to tell that Kiku is his daughter, that the woman he exotified and objectified is part of his family. The difference in the passing narrative might be seen to align with the ambiguous American Orientalist depiction of Asia-as-proxy, which produces uncertainty as “Western interests are secured by making visible the Other’s difference *as well as identity*” (my emphasis, Lye 32). At the same time, the use of the family narrative, as in racial romance, neatly converts U.S. interests in Japan into a family affair.

The passing narrative further departs from traditional mixed-race narratives, like racial romances and kinship narratives, through its ending. Incest in “A Half

⁵⁹ See Harris’ “Whiteness as Property,” 1710-1714. Harris suggests that “the persistence of passing is related to the historical and continuing pattern of white racial domination and economic exploitation that has given passing a certain economic logic” (1713).

Caste” does not produce an imagined resolution to racial strife, nor does it promote better cross-racial understanding. Instead, the narrative realization of kinship, the moment of recognition, is denied in the end. Upon Kiku’s revelation, Hilton wears a look of “horror, and only half comprehension” (496). His “half comprehension” emerges from the “horror” of incest and his resulting insistence that “he could not think of Kiku-san now as his own child – his very own blood – he would not” (496). The text maintains Hilton’s denial. In his final description, Hilton wears the “same still look of despair on his face” (496), the look of half comprehension. Hilton’s character is forever frozen in the moment *before* he fully comprehends his relation to Kiku and the resulting implications of incest. His ability to maintain this ignorance is enabled by the text’s containment of Kiku; she leaves Hilton and the story, insisting that it is “bedder I daed” and leaving town so that “aeverybody thinging I daed” (496). The story, while allowing for Kiku’s revelation, refuses to move its implications forward; instead the recognition between Kiku and Hilton is left for another story, for a future meeting.

Yet even as this moment of identification is deferred, its containment is incomplete as its implications spill off of the page. Hilton may be frozen in half-comprehension, just as Kiku is disappeared and the story’s future is foreclosed, but the text’s readers cannot stop the moment of incest, and its implications for the white American self, from registering and replaying. The text, as I’ve mentioned above, loops back on itself as the reader attempts more than half-comprehension, so reencounters and reinterprets the exchanges between Hilton and Kiku in the light of

Kiku's revelation of her mixed race. The reader's experience, rendered through Watanna's careful narrative construction, cannot be contained.

Watanna's decision to name her story "A Half Caste," rather than *the* half-caste, further illustrates this. The use of the indefinite article "a" suggests that the half-caste of the title is not *only* Kiku. Kiku's story could be the story of any Asian mixed-race individual, transforming her figure into the symbolic. Yet, the title suggests not only that the half-caste is not *only* Kiku, but also that the half-caste is *not necessarily* Kiku. The title draws attention to the mixed-race woman who is writing the text: Watanna herself. Watanna consistently performed her adopted mixed-Japanese identity through biographical notes and publicity photos. While she did not deny her mixed heritage, she masqueraded so successfully that she was often referred to as a Japanese woman by her reviewers and publishers. Watanna herself "passed" as Japanese in a visible way that her readers simply chose not register. The implications of Watanna's story, then, echo even after the textual moment of recognition has been deferred.

Watanna's text – written by a mixed-race author who simultaneously wrote to and against dominant ideology, with here the play of the title reminding us that "a half caste" is not an objectified character but a writing subject of mixed-race descent – is in many ways emblematic of the deferred recognition this chapter highlights. In "A Half Caste," the recognition of the white American self in the (Eur)asian other is tracked through incest and kinship, narratives that highlight sameness, as a means to interrupt and rewrite the network of *Madame Butterfly* texts and passing narratives

circulating before and during Watanna's time. In some ways, it is not surprising that at this time, just before yellow peril fear was directed at the Japanese in the United States, this kind of kinship recognition might be imagined. However, this chapter will now trace how such recognition and its deferral moves into later cultural production, as well, including texts where mixed-race figures are objectified characters rather than writing subjects. The persistence of kinship recognition in these texts highlights its centrality to the ideological imagining of Asian American mixed race. I will read two representative yellow peril texts, "The Daughter of Huang Chow" (1922) by Fu Manchu-creator Sax Rohmer and *Seed of the Sun* (1921) by Wallace Irwin to illustrate how the kinship narrative works within yellow peril texts to destabilize yellow peril and other mixed-race narratives.⁶⁰ Ultimately, though, narrative deferral of kinship structures remains in place, pushing the implications of such kinship – of the white American self in the (Eur)asian other – to a future moment.

Before turning to a reading of these two texts, however, I would like to account for the differences between the three texts this chapter compares. While Watanna's text features a Japanese mixed-race woman working as a geisha in Japan, Rohmer's centers around a Chinese and Hawaiian mixed-race woman working for her antiques-smuggling Chinese father in London, and Irwin's text introduces a Japanese mixed-race man in California who restlessly wanders the world in search of revolution. These shifts in racial mixing, gender, and location reflect the historical

⁶⁰ These two texts were first linked by Cynthia Nakashima in her article "Servants of Culture," though she reads them to different ends. I assert these as representative because Rohmer is the well-known creator of emblematic Fu Manchu, and Irwin's text was a leading, widely-circulate yellow peril text.

conditions producing cultural representations by and about Asian Americans and Asian mixed race during this time period, to which I now turn. Contextualizing the next two yellow peril texts in relation to Watanna's emblematic short story emphasizes their historical specificity, while revealing the common foundation, American Orientalism, which produces their deferral of mixed-race recognition.

Contextualizing Early Asian American Mixed-Race Literature

In 1899, when Watanna published "A Half Caste," Japanese immigration to the United States was just beginning; only two thousand Japanese immigrants had entered the continental United States by the last years of the nineteenth century.⁶¹ The anti-Japanese rhetoric that would lead to decades of discriminatory legislation was just emerging on the West Coast at the turn of the century. In the years after Watanna's story was published, however, a yellow peril discourse once aimed solely at the Chinese in the United States began to be directed also at the Japanese. The remaining texts this chapter analyzes are a part of this yellow peril discourse, an aspect of American Orientalism.

Yellow peril discourse came into existence long before the nineteenth century; it first emerged in thirteenth century from fears of Genghis Khan and the Mongol Empire invading Europe and "combine[d] racist terror of alien cultures, sexual anxieties, and the belief that the West [would] be overpowered and enveloped by the irresistible, dark, occult forces of the East" (Marchetti 2). Beginning in the mid-

⁶¹ See Ronald Takaki's *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 180. Immigration to Hawai'i was higher, though at this time Hawai'i had just recently been annexed by the United States.

nineteenth century, however, a “historically specific rhetoric of the ‘yellow peril’ entered into transnational circulation with the onset of Asian labor migration to white settler colonies around the Pacific Rim” (Lye 18-19). During this time, the labor force was primarily Chinese, and as the population expanded, posing an imagined threat to the white working class and the U.S. labor movement, yellow peril discourse increased and “deflect[ed] criticism of the brutal exploitation of expansionist capitalist economy onto the issue of race” (Marchetti 2). Characterizing Asians as hostile, representative of “a host of modernity’s dehumanizing effects” and ready to invade the United States, yellow peril discourse reflected the early twentieth century American belief in “the split alternatives between the whole world becoming American and an apocalyptic clash of civilizations” (Lye 11, 10). Yellow peril discourse of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was tinged with economic worries transposed into racial anxieties.

Much early Asian American mixed-race literature can be understood in the context of such yellow peril discourse. However, what Colleen Lye has described as the “radical informality” (5) of Asian immigrant experience before the 1950s – that is, the lack of legal legibility and collective identity – meant that this discourse targeted different Asian ethnic groups at different times in distinctive ways; thus the Chinese were first subject to yellow peril racialization in the 1860s, the Japanese were in the early 1900s, and the character of the peril differed between the two.⁶² Regardless,

⁶² In exploring the differential experience of the Chinese and Japanese in the United States, I draw from Lye’s *America’s Asia*. Lye uses a “historical approach to racial representation [. . .to] account for the specificities of different marginalized groups,

American Orientalism's yellow peril racialization focused primarily on the Chinese and Japanese because these nations were central to the question of U.S. dominance in Asia and the Pacific.⁶³

Chinese laborers, almost exclusively poor and male, first immigrated significantly to the United States in the 1840s and quickly faced antagonism as the white working class perceived a threat from the "industrial army of aliens from the East" (Takaki 103). The Chinese were stereotyped as "intelligent and competitive [...and] represented an increasing rather than decreasing population" (103). Beginning in the 1860s, this yellow peril fear inspired many literary portrayals, perhaps most famously Bret Harte's poem "The Heathen Chinee."⁶⁴ Legally, the result was a rapid series of exclusionary laws; the Page Act of 1875, for example, prevented most Chinese women from entering the United States, and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 effectively ended Chinese immigration.

The Japanese immigrants to the United States faced a similar experience, despite initial attempts to avoid anti-Japanese sentiment. Upon observing the anti-Chinese sentiment in the United States, the Japanese government implemented strict requirements when they allowed immigration to the United States beginning in the 1890s, a good forty years after Chinese immigration had begun.⁶⁵ Thinking of

whose stereotypical attributes are located in the shifting dynamics of social relations and social conflicts" (4).

⁶³ As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, this is also why depictions of Asian mixed race tended to be of characters with white-Chinese or white-Japanese heritage.

⁶⁴ For more information about the Chinese yellow peril and cultural production, please see William Wu's *The Yellow Peril*.

⁶⁵ See Takaki's *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 46.

Japanese immigrants as representative of Japan, the Japanese government only approved immigration of healthy, educated Japanese men and encouraged the immigration of Japanese women.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, as the Japanese immigrant population began to increase and as Japan demonstrated its military prowess through the Russo-Japanese War (1905-1906), anti-Japanese yellow peril sentiment emerged.⁶⁷ Discriminatory policies and legislation were aimed at the Japanese, beginning with the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907.⁶⁸

The yellow peril faced by Japanese immigrants was distinct from that faced by Chinese immigrants. As early as 1902, white workers of California were asserting that “unlike the Chinese, the Japanese had a particular ‘virtue’ – their ‘partial adoption of American customs’ – that made them ‘more dangerous’ than the Chinese had been as ‘competitors’” (Takaki 200). The “Japanese peril” (200) centered on a fear of the Japanese ability to “adapt;” in a domestic context, this reflected the immigrant adaptation of customs, family, and farming life, and in the larger sociopolitical context this reflected Japan's quick modernization and imperial aims in Asia and the Pacific. Through yellow peril discourse, Japan and the Japanese became a threat not only to the United States, but also to the United States' interests abroad. Thus, while China and the Chinese were seen in a considerably more favorable light by the 1930s – signaled by the shift in immigration policy in the 1940s – Japan and

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ See William Wu's *The Yellow Peril*, 3.

⁶⁸ The Gentlemen's agreement, however, was a work of diplomacy as compared to, for example, the Chinese Exclusion Act, underscoring the differing political relationships between the United States and Japan and the United States and China.

the Japanese continued to be seen as a threat and were depicted in yellow peril terms.⁶⁹ The relatively favorable representation of Japan upon which Watanna had once capitalized, thus shifted dramatically in the early years of the twentieth century.

Yellow peril discourse helps to explain who depictions of Asian mixed race centered on and why; it also explains where those depictions were allowed to occur. The white anxieties captured in yellow peril discourse were reflected legally in Asian exclusion laws, but they were also expressed in anti-miscegenation laws, applied to Asians, and specifically to the Chinese, as early as the 1860s. Because anti-miscegenation laws required race to be specified, often by blood quantum, immediately identifiable, and legally recorded through marriage licensing, they were sites of “defining, producing, and reproducing...racial categories” (Pascoe 9).⁷⁰ They were laws that policed the boundaries of racial categories, naturalizing the illegitimacy of interracial love in order to restrict access to basic prerogatives of citizenship while also preventing the so-called amalgamation of the races through legitimized marriage and the eventual birth of mixed-race children. Anti-miscegenation laws prevented the legal and societal recognition of mixed-race individuals in the United States.

⁶⁹ The exception here would be in yellow peril pulp fiction, like Rohmer’s *Fu Manchu* texts, where yellow peril directed at the Chinese persisted. I would also argue, though, that these pulp fiction representations frequently merged Asian nations together into a conglomerate Orient, as will be seen in Rohmer’s “The Daughter of Huang Chow,” so that a Chinese villain became an Oriental villain.

⁷⁰ On the importance of racial identification to miscegenation law, see Peggy Pascoe’s *What Comes Naturally*, 111.

In contrast to the restrictive domestic context, interracial relations in the extraterritorial space of treaty port and military base proliferated, as portrayed in Watanna's texts, although in the specific form of white male and Asian female.⁷¹ As discussed earlier, though, extraterritorial interracial relationships nonetheless often operated within the same racial and gender regimes as the anti-miscegenation laws. Echoing this reality and supporting the ideological underpinnings of mixed-race representations, extraterritorial mixed race in literature might be perceived as less threatening to the U.S. racial order than those imagined in the United States. As such, many of the texts portraying Asian mixed-race figures link their Eurasian characters to extraterritorial locations: through birthplace, narrative setting, or projected future. These moves on the one hand reflect the lived reality of the time, while on the other help to contain the implications of mixed race for the U.S. racial regime.

Yellow Peril's Eurasian Daughter

With the relatively long history of yellow peril discourse in the United States firmly entrenched by the 1910s and 1920s, it is no wonder that the work of British author Sax Rohmer, first published in the 1910s, became immensely successful in the United States. Most famous for his character Fu Manchu, about whom he wrote

⁷¹ For more on extraterritorial interracial love, see Susan Koshy's *Sexual Naturalization*, 10. The result of extraterritorial interracial liaisons was a larger birthrate of mixed-race children abroad. Mixed-race children of Asian descent began to be associated with stigmas of war in Asia like licentiousness and prostitution, abandonment and orphanages. Later, just as extraterritorial interracial couplings ultimately gained legitimacy and legibility for interracial marriage as postwar immigration law normalized the relationships (12), the increased number of mixed-race children born from these marriages helped to increase the legal and social legibility of Asian American mixed race. This is a subject my dissertation will not focus on in depth, but which certainly needs more study.

numerous novels and short stories, Sax Rohmer, a pseudonym for Arthur Sarsfield Wade, was central in popularizing and refining the yellow peril literary tradition in Britain and the United States. He has been credited with creating the “first Asian role of prominence in modern literature to have a large American readership,” a role that cast Asian males as “evil incarnate” and as “representative of the Asian threat to the West” (Wu 165). The yellow peril aspects of Rohmer’s early Fu Manchu novels – *The Insidious Dr. Fu-Manchu* (1913), *The Return of Fu-Manchu* (1916), and *The Hand of Fu-Manchu* (1917) – portray the exotic and cruel Asian mastermind set on taking over the world using “complex, original assassination techniques” (165), aspects Rohmer used in his other stories featuring Chinese characters, as well. Of his texts centering on Chinese characters during this time, one of Rohmer’s short stories in particular, “The Daughter of Huang Chow,” is notable for its depictions of mixed race.⁷² Compiled in Rohmer’s short-story collection *Tales of Chinatown* (1922), “The Daughter of Huang Chow” centers on a Chinese mixed-race woman living in London’s Limehouse district with her father, the devious antiques dealer Huang Chow. Like most of Rohmer’s narratives, this story echoes the yellow peril tropes Rohmer developed in Fu Manchu that became so popular in the United States. Yet Rohmer’s yellow peril stereotypes are disrupted by his portrayal of Huang Chow’s

⁷² Rohmer was not a stranger to mixed-race characters; there were “half-caste” characters in his Fu Manchu series, and towards the end of his career Rohmer wrote a series about the mixed-race character Sumuru. *Tales of Chinatown*, in which “The Daughter of Huang Chow” is published, also features more Asian mixed-race characters.

daughter, Lala, whose mixed race renders knowable the supposedly “unknowable” Chinese of Rohmer’s yellow peril.

Rohmer is frequently acknowledged as central to yellow peril discourse in the United States: his texts sold many copies in the United States, ultimately spinning into a myriad of graphic novel, radio, and film adaptations.⁷³ Rohmer’s United States’ readership is credited for the 1930s revival of the Fu Manchu series when American publishing house Collier’s, which published much of Rohmer’s work, commissioned two novels to satisfy U.S. readers who were clamoring for more.⁷⁴ Rohmer subsequently “reward[ed] his American supporters” (Van Ash qtd. in Wu 170) by creating American characters and settings. This move to U.S.-based characters and storylines only confirmed Rohmer’s particular brand of Chinese-focused yellow peril, which had long since been solidified in American yellow peril discourse. Yet, fifteen years before Rohmer consciously claimed to do so, “The Daughter of Huang Chow” also attempted to appeal to American readers, through constant, apparently unnecessary references to the United States. At the beginning of the text, the soon-to-be-murdered criminal Diamond Fred insists that compared to “Frisco,” “this little old Chinatown [in Limehouse, London...] is pie” (4). Limehouse’s “sister colony” (14) is in New York, and though Lala has never lived in the United States, her monoracial Chinese father has. Rohmer builds connections between England and the United States by portraying the “colonies” of China invading these two Western powers. Yet by writing this way about the United States two Chinese “colonies” – New York and

⁷³ Wu, *The Yellow Peril*, 164.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 169.

San Francisco, with the latter marked as particularly dangerous – Rohmer suggests the United States is in more (yellow) peril. This is perhaps also why Rohmer associates Asian mixed race with the United States: Lala, with part “Kanaka” blood and reference to “the soft islands where she had first seen the light” (25), was born in the then-U.S. territory of Hawai‘i. Rohmer’s pervasive inclusion of the United States through character history and setting development can be read as an appeal to U.S. readers, much like his later moves with Fu Manchu texts. More importantly, though, these references insert this text into the discourse of yellow peril and Asian mixed race in the United States.

While Rohmer comments here on mixed race and played an undeniable role in formulating and popularizing yellow peril literature in the United States, his British roots are important to understanding his texts. Rohmer’s “Chinese” novels and short stories emerge from turn-of-the-century British relations with China. Britain’s imperial interests in China had been shaken by the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, an attempt to push out foreigners and Christian influence that shook the foundations of Western control in China, foundations which would be further shaken by the emergence of the Republic of China under Sun Yat Sen in 1912, and Nationalist China under Chiang Kai Shek in 1928.⁷⁵ From this context, the yellow peril expressed in Rohmer’s texts, and particularly the idea of an evil mastermind taking over the world, fit the mood of a Britain watching the Chinese taking back China.⁷⁶ Britain’s colonial concerns thus departed from those of the United States, where the

⁷⁵ See Seshagiri’s “Modernity’s (Yellow) Perils,” 169-170.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

development of yellow peril rhetoric centered more on Chinese immigration to and economic competition in the United States. In 1913, when the first Fu Manchu novel was published, there were about four hundred Chinese living in the Limehouse district in London compared to the thousands in the United States.⁷⁷ Despite different origins, though, both nations harbored a racialized, Orientalist fear, captured in much of Rohmer's work. Rohmer's "The Daughter of Huang Chow" intersects U.S. and British conceptions of yellow peril and mixed race, highlighting the transnational character of Asian mixed race even in American discourse. A careful reading of this story reveals how the kinship formulation found in Watanna's work travels into popular yellow peril fiction, while also offering a counterpoint to U.S.-based popular fiction texts.

"The Daughter of Huang Chow" follows the story of an intrepid officer of the Scotland Yard, John Durham, as he attempts to prove that rich and sinister antiques dealer Huang Chow is a murderer. A smuggler living in the Limehouse Chinatown district of London, Huang Chow kills the many men who attempt to steal his hidden collection of priceless jewels, disposing of their bodies in the Thames River. Disguising himself as John Hampden, an antiques trader, Durham works to uncover these murders by seducing Chow's Eurasian daughter, Lala. The "dark and arresting" (16) Lala is central to the plot; Lala is the receptionist for her father's business, screening customers before they enter her father's warehouse of treasures *and* she is the target of men posing as her "pseudo lovers" (53) in order to learn the location of

⁷⁷ Ibid, 189.

her father's treasure. Durham falls in love with Lala, who in an attempt to save the detective is killed by the monstrous spider guarding her father's treasure in an occult assassination that echoes Fu Manchu novels. Her tragic demise at the end of the text serves as a racist message of "Oriental" immorality, but also suggests the potential for identifying with the (Eur)asian other.

Through its narrative and characterizations, Rohmer's text is steeped in yellow peril rhetoric. Huang Chow is a quintessential yellow peril villain: introduced as "hellish clever and rotten with money," Chow is exotic and foreign, living in a place one might have to be "transported upon a magic carpet from a tube station to the Taj Mahal" (6, 17) to reach. Yet along with being exotic, unknowable, and filthy rich, Chow is "cunning[ly] cruel..." so that even his own daughter, Lala, fears the "dark and cruel side of his character" (55, 52). Rohmer thus creates a character who participates in the occult, making him treacherously unknowable, but who is also a ruthless, successful capitalist. He travels from port to port and is willing to work outside moral and legal laws to become rich and powerful; he is also technologically savvy, using cameras around his storeroom and jewels. At the same time, though, Chow guards his jewels with the occult, a monstrous spider from Surinam. Colleen Lye has asserted the "trope of economic efficiency" as the "most salient feature" (5) of anti-Asian representation, and Chow might be read as an embodiment of this trope. This aspect of Chow's character is epitomized in the ending scene, when Lala has been killed by Chow's "black soldier" spider. The story ends with the image of Huang Chow, on his knees by his dead daughter, "sprinkling priceless jewels over her

still body, and murmuring in Chinese: ‘for you, for you, Lala’” (62). This story, then, read through the character of Huang Chow, sets up a yellow peril plot where the evil, ruthless, and unknowable Chinese businessman is punished and contained by the death of his progeny and the triumph of the white police officer.

The yellow peril plot set up through Huang Chow is sustained also by the characterization of Chow’s daughter, yet her mixed race simultaneously creates ambiguity around the yellow peril message, forcing the text out of its rhetoric through an act of identification with her character, if only momentarily. Marchetti suggests that a “potent aspect” of yellow peril is “the sexual danger of contact between the races” of which “the power of the lascivious Asian woman to seduce the white male” has long been a part (2).⁷⁸ From the beginning, Lala seems to fit this stereotype; she had affairs with two previously murdered men and begins a relationship with Durham. When she shows interest in Durham, the narrator suggests her power over Durham. As he “fall[s] under the spell of [her] dark eyes,” he begins to see Limehouse, the site of so much criminal activity, more positively “through the haze of Oriental mystery conjured up by the conversation of his companion” (45, 25). When with Lala, Durham questions if his duty should be to her or to the case, although later, away from Lala’s “spell,” “doubts were to come” (29) about her innocence. Durham imagines Lala is “perhaps a vampire of the most dangerous sort, one who lured men to strange deaths for some sinister object beyond reach of a Western imagination” (33). The metaphor of vampire in Britain at this time had been

⁷⁸ In Britain, it was frequently Chinese men who were thought to seduce white women, as discussed by Lucy Bland in “White Women and Men of Colour,” 45.

associated with Chinese men.⁷⁹ Its connection to Lala, in conjunction with the idea that her aims are beyond the “Western imagination,” emphasizes her absolute Oriental otherness and its deadly appeal. Lala is depicted here as Asian, rather than mixed race. Yet, by the story’s conclusion, this stereotypical depiction of Lala is thrown into question: *Lala* is killed by the vampire-like fangs of the Black Soldier spider as she tries to save Durham. In the end, it is not Lala who has lured Durham to his death, but Durham who has lured Lala; it is not Lala who has access to the “sinister object beyond reach of a Western imagination,” but her father with his monstrous spider. In opposition to her early characterization, Lala is aligned with Durham and the “Western imagination” as she falls prey to “Oriental mystery,” creating ambiguity around her initial yellow peril depiction.

Such ambiguity, I assert, emerges because of Lala’s mixed-race identity. Rohmer activates familiar mixed-race tropes to depict Lala’s character, which work to both confirm and subvert her yellow peril depiction. Lala fills the classic role of the mixed-race go-between, a figure most often seen in Native American mixed-race narratives, who acts as a cultural bridge, often as an interpreter, and negotiates between his or her parent races.⁸⁰ These figures, though sometimes seen as helpful, are often depicted as double-agents or “race traitors.” In “The Daughter of Huang Chow,” however, Lala fills the role of mediating her father’s economic exchanges. Lala is the receptionist for her father’s antiques business-front and the unwitting

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ See Patricia Riley’s “The Mixed Blood Writer,” 58-59. William Scheik has also written extensively about Native American mixed race in literature in his book *The Half-Blood*.

seductress that protects her father's illegal activities from criminals and from the police. This go-between role is precisely what leads Durham to question her loyalty and suspect she might be a "vampire," a double-agent. Because this go-between role leads to Lala's romantic liaison with Durham, Lala becomes trapped between her love for her Chinese father and her love for the white Durham; thus like many tragic mulatto characters, Lala becomes tragically torn between her parent races.⁸¹

Although the tragic mulatto story typically leads the character to "wish desperately that they were white" (Nakashima, "Servants" 38), Lala's desires and identification are much more ambiguous. Lala does not appear to identify with her Chinese roots; she does not want to return to China when there are "so many more beautiful places to live in" (25) and "her mother's blood [speaks] more strongly than that part of her which was Chinese" (51). Lala's life, the narrator insists, "[is] that of a European and not of an Oriental woman" (52). Yet Lala also contradicts the apparent rejection of China and desire for whiteness when it is revealed that "she hoped, against the promptings of common sense, that [her father] designed to return East, there to seek a retirement amidst the familiar and beautiful things of the Orient which belonged to Lala's dream of heaven" (51). This quote identifies the "Oriental," not whiteness, as what Lala desires. Even quotes that emphasize Lala's wish to be white are deceptive; Lala's mother, the story implies, is European and Hawaiian, so while "her mother's blood spoke more strongly than that part of her which was Chinese," the result is a "softness and a delicious languor in her nature" (51) that

⁸¹ Cynthia Nakashima, in "Servants of Culture," briefly aligns Rohmer's story with tragic mulatto fiction, 38.

might be associated with racialized descriptions of Hawaiians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, rather than whiteness. This racialized languor, rather than any kind of western moral code, seems to account for her hatred of working in her father's business. Rohmer thus creates a profound ambiguity in Lala's identification that disrupts typical tragic mulatto tropes.

Even the clearest assertion of Lala's identification with whiteness – the moment she must choose between Durham and her father – is complicated. Only moments before she must decide to either stop Durham's murder or support her father by doing nothing, Lala wonders "if put to the test, which would she choose" and immediately decides "she [is] unable to face that issue" (54). Indeed, when Lala runs to stop Durham's murder, she is spared the choice between Durham and her father by her death. Instead, her motives as she runs to intercept Durham are unclear: is she stopping the murder for Durham's sake, to save his life, or for her father's, to save him from his own cruelty? Lala's death prevents the revelation of her choice. While "The Daughter of Huang Chow" might be read through the lens of tragic mulatta narratives, particularly with Lala's untimely death, Rohmer's text also hides a more complicated racial exploration, which is epitomized by Rohmer's use of narrative perspective in relation to Lala.

Even as the yellow peril and tragic mulatto plots unfold, even as the reader sees the treachery and tragedy of Lala, Rohmer switches the text to Lala's narrative perspective, aligning the reader with her character. "The Daughter of Huang Chow" is told in third person omniscient, but mostly from the perspective of the white men of

the story: first, one of the murdered men Diamond Fred, then Chief Inspector Red Kerry, then and for the majority of the text detective Durham, so the shift to Lala's perspective is noticeable. Early in the text Rohmer shifts briefly to Lala's perspective, revealing a single thought about Durham: "she did not quite like his moustache, and thought that he would have looked better clean-shaven" (17). The momentary glimpse of Lala foreshadows the penultimate chapter, "The Picture on the Pad," which is written almost entirely from Lala's perspective. The chapter explores her realization of Durham's true identity as a police officer, and her struggle to decide whether, if need be, she would choose to support her father or the detective. The depth of this glimpse of Lala's character is emphasized when the chapter shifts briefly to Chow's perspective. Rather than revealing Chow's inner thoughts, the narrative becomes purely descriptive. Though the chapter groups Lala with her Chinese father, Lala's character is rendered knowable – no longer beyond the "Western imagination," while her father remains a mystery. Rohmer's perspective choice renders Lala recognizable, but the possibility emerging with this recognition is precluded by her death and further foreclosed by the text's final reminder of Lala's kinship. It is not Durham who mourns Lala's death, but Chow, as he pours jewels meant for her in life over her dead body. While Chow's misery over the loss of his progeny might be read as the villain's punishment and the hero Durham's success, it also serves to reemphasize Lala's tie to the yellow peril and China, rather than to Durham and the West. In death, Lala is once again "beyond the reach" of the "Western imagination," her momentary visibility vanished.

In contrast to Watanna's and, as we will see, Irwin's more open-ended conclusions, Rohmer's story ends with the reassimilation of Lala into the Chinese family through her death. The dramatic ending of Rohmer's story is ultimately the containment through death of its subversive character. Nonetheless, Rohmer's text does emphasize a moment of transformation in Asian mixed-race representation, a moment where yellow peril rhetoric shifts to reveal not the unknowable Asian Other, but the knowable (Eur)asian self. Lala moves from being unrecognizable to recognizable, questioning the concept of the inscrutable Oriental. It is the question of this potential of the Asian mixed-race figure, this ability to question the divide of self and other, that Wallace Irwin's *Seed of the Sun* takes up. Irwin's text inverts the idea of the ability to recognize sameness; instead his text is concerned with the inability to recognize difference that is created by the mixed-race figure. The result, as I will argue, suggests a shift in the popular culture imagining of Asian American mixed race.

Hidden Japanese, Unrecognizable Americans

Around the same time that Rohmer's "The Daughter of Huang Chow" was published, Wallace Irwin penned *Seed of the Sun*, capturing the particular yellow peril fear targeting the Japanese in the 1920s and 30s, when Japan's militarization and imperial aims in Asia threatened the United States' militarization and imperial aims. The character of the text's fears is best captured by the text's antagonist, the Baron Tazumi, when he suggests that there might be "Japanese with blond skins and blue eyes" (233) loyal to the emperor. As this quote implies, *Seed of the Sun* is concerned

with Japan (the “sun”) colonizing the United States through farming and intermarrying with white American women to produce American children loyal to the Japanese emperor (the “seed”).⁸² Disguised as a marriage plot, the text centers on the recently-widowed Anna Bly who is struggling to run a farm in a Japanese-dominated California farming town while trying to find a husband. Yellow peril fears emerge around and through romance, as Anna must choose between two marriage proposals, one from her family’s long-time Japanese friend who is also the mastermind of Japan’s takeover plot, Baron Tazumi, and another from a local white farmer, Dunc Leacy. Anna’s final choice to marry Dunc abruptly resolves both the threat of interracial intimacy and of Japanese colonization. The text’s concerns, explored through Anna’s marriage choices, are actually concerns of the racial boundaries broken by race mixing: a fear of the (re)production of an unrecognizable Japanese subject. Yet mixed-race character Henry Johnson transforms this yellow peril hysteria into an alternate possibility: an unrecognizable American. That is, Henry holds open the possibility that “American” might not only be signified as “white” in dominant discourse.

This text’s yellow peril underpinnings, as Colleen Lye and Cynthia Nakashima have suggested in their readings of *Seed of the Sun*, can be understood in the context of regional economic and racial concerns, specifically in California, and I argue these are expressed through interracial marriage and mixed-race children.

Written during a spate of legislative activity, this text is deeply and complexly

⁸² This observation about the meaning of the title is also made by Cynthia Nakashima in “Servants of Culture,” 38.

concerned with yellow peril fears of Japanese economic and racial takeover. As its title implies, the yellow peril plot of *Seed of the Sun* centers on both land grabbing *and* reproduction, or rather a land grab configured through reproduction. This plot twist directly reflects legislative activity at the time, specifically California's Alien Land Law of 1913 (1913 Webb-Haney Act) and the informal Ladies' Agreement of 1920.⁸³ While the first prevented "aliens ineligible for citizenship," specifically Asian immigrants, from acquiring and owning land, the second attempted to prevent the birth of American-born Japanese children, who *could* acquire and own land, by banning picture brides.⁸⁴ Picture brides were Japanese women that Japanese immigrant men would marry in absentia in order to bring the women over as their wives, working around the Gentleman's Agreement of 1907, which had severely limited Japanese immigration to the United States.

The Japanese immigrant attempts to work around legal proscription is fictionalized sinisterly in *Seed of the Sun* through the Japanese farmer Shimba, Anna's tenant. Shimba has been convinced by his community leaders that he is "wasting his days with a sterile mate" (58) and so divorces his first wife in order to marry a young, "fertile" picture bride. As a result, Shimba's first wife is driven crazy, eventually committing suicide in Anna's garage. Procreating, the text suggests, is mandated by the Japanese community in California with little regard for individuals. By depersonalizing reproduction and the family for his Japanese characters, Irwin aligns himself with legal proscription and yellow peril visions of Asia, creating a

⁸³ See Ibid, 38, and Lye's *America's Asia*, 126.

⁸⁴ See Nakashima, 38.

different motive for reproduction and family: a plot to birth American-born children to purchase California land for Japan as a first step towards colonization. The text's yellow peril paranoia, however, does not completely emerge until it imagines how the Japanese might colonize the United States through interracial intimacy when picture brides are banned by the Ladies' Agreement.

The idea of interracial intimacy as a takeover method is driven by the legal realities of the early 1920s, but is suffused with long-standing white U.S. racialized paranoia around the danger of men of color to white women. The text's yellow peril fears emerge most clearly when Anna's white feminine purity is threatened. That the land grab is occurring through interracial intimacy is not revealed until Anna receives a marriage proposal from her close family friend, Baron Tazumi. Along with revealing the takeover plot, this proposal transforms Anna, the text's voice of anti-racist reason, and she begins to hate the Japanese. Although the Baron is a man she previously considered a dear friend, the proposal inexplicably infuses Anna "with a panic-stricken desire to run" (217). She quickly learns that the Baron is a polygamist, inspiring in her a fear of all "the smiling yellow people who encircled her" (228).⁸⁵ Through her encounter with interracial love, Anna's view of the Japanese begins to conform to the views of most of the white characters in the text. However, as soon as Anna marries white farmer Dunc Leacy, her fear of the Japanese and the text's land-

⁸⁵ Irwin introduces one of what he calls "households," implying that the Baron may have more, where the Baron's Korean mistress lives. The entire scene is suffused with orientalist rhetoric – general references are made to an exotic Asia, not just Japan. While this seems to generally remind Anna of the vast moral difference between the Baron and she, it's also a reminder of Japanese imperialism in Korea, notably figured through interracial marriage.

grab plot completely disappears. Upon returning to her former home in the text's last chapter, Anna notices that "all the signs on the stores were now in Japanese" (351) and hears the "feeble wail" (352) of an American-born Japanese baby. Yet she is undisturbed by the transformation, as she and Dunc ride off into the sunset, because it is segregated from her own (white) farm. While the takeover appears to continue by the text's end, because no interracial mixing has occurred, the text's yellow peril threat has tellingly disappeared.

Anna's plot and resolution reveal the central concern of *Seed of the Sun*, that sexual *or platonic* interracial intimacy might produce illegible, unrecognizable Japanese – or rather, the Japanese figured as the white American self.⁸⁶ This is first seen through the white real estate agent, Cyprian Helmholtz. With the farm under threat of debt, Helmholtz convinces Anna to sell her land to an undisclosed party who is later revealed as Japanese. The platonic interracial intimacy between Helmholtz and his Japanese employer makes Anna an unwitting participant in the Japanese takeover, just as surely as her marriage to the Baron Tazumi would. Irwin's text, as Lye suggests, uses a tropology of masks, as with Helmholtz, to signify "the erosion of whiteness as a reliable phenotype, the paranoid prospect of aliens masked as whites" (Lye 127).

Yet, *Seed of the Sun* goes much further in its play with racial indeterminacy as it imagines the possibilities of mixed-race Japanese subjects. To overcome the

⁸⁶ Colleen Lye also traces the concern of unrecognizable Japanese specifically in the context of land law and the economic, but not in regards to interracial marriages and mixed-race children. See Lye's *America's Asia*, 125-130. I draw my reading of Helmholtz from her text, 126.

restrictions of the Ladies' Agreement, high-ranking Japanese official, Baron Tazumi, lectures his Japanese brethren to "marry into this American stock" because "Japanese with blond skins and blue eyes will still be Japanese, quick with a God-given virtue – loyalty to empire and the Emperor" (Irwin 233). Tazumi, in other words, sees potential in mixed-race subjects – Japanese subjects with nationalist spirit who appear racially indistinguishable from white Americans. In a text that previously revealed only the Japanese desire to own California land through the birth of American born children and partnerships with white landowners, these words emphasize the underlying threat of mixed race as the idea of unrecognizable Japanese, or the Japanese figured as the white American self, is literalized. The heart of the yellow peril fear of *Seed of the Sun* lies, then, not in the fear of Japanese takeover, but in the fear that such takeover – via interracial couplings and mixed-race children – might erase the visible markers of difference.

In this context, the mixed-race character Henry is notable. As if to support the idea of unrecognizable Japanese, Henry's full name is Henry Johnson despite his Japanese father. Through name, Johnson textually passes as American. However, Irwin's text describes Henry as physically recognizable as mixed race. He is described as mismatched, "as though two incomplete faces had been joined" in "a bad job of assembling left-over features" (43). Mentally, Henry is also described as mismatched; he has "a bad habit of seeing both sides of a question" so that his "chimera" identity causes "the European goat in [him] to butt forward, [with] that dragon's tail...curling round some ancient tradition and pulling [him] back" (51).

Henry disrupts the fear of the text, then, by remaining visible. At the same time, however, Henry supports the text's anti-miscegenation stance. As he describes himself as "a despised thing...on the road to nowhere," Henry asserts that he is "an object lesson" of why the Japanese and white Americans should not "interbreed" (332, 329). Henry becomes the spokesperson against interracial relationships.

Although Henry may be recognizable, he is also still coded as a threat to the United States. Described as "dabbl[ing] in radicalism" (45), Henry has been across the world fighting revolutions. There his work in the Indian revolts against Britain and in World War I with Britain, for example, seems to demonstrate his suspect lack of commitment to either the West or the East. Now, in the United States, Henry is described as a socialist. When Henry is first introduced in the text, he is planning to quit his temporary job as a window washer, and later, in another job, he nonsensically "strike[s] for shorter hours and a smaller wage" (231). The identification of Henry as a "socialist" (51), even as he is used to mock socialism, places Henry in an anti-American stance. Henry may not fulfill the "white skins" of Tazumi's speech, but he nonetheless poses a threat to America, and specifically to the American protestant work ethic needed to compete against Japan in the text's story.

The text's initial portrayal of Henry's shiftless and tragic existence, bolstered by its insistent anti-mixed-race dialogue, is undermined by Henry's character development as well as plot points towards the end of the text. Although tragic and potentially dangerous, for example, Henry is also an interpreter and go-between for

Anna.⁸⁷ When Anna is in her moment of need, about to lose a critical harvest on the farm, Henry comes to the rescue as a go-between, not only helping Anna with work on the farm, but also attempting to find Japanese workers. He becomes a translator when he reads to Anna the Baron's previously discussed interracial marriage speech from the Japanese newspaper, and again when he reveals to Anna's son that the kites the Japanese fly say "Japan First!" (279). One of Henry's final exclamations in *Seed of the Sun*, "If [the modern world] could learn of Japan as Japan has learned of it" (333), thus emphasizes what his own role has been for Anna: to help her learn of Japan.

The role Henry plays here, aligning him with Anna, is further complicated by their relationship as Henry is transformed by Anna into the ideal American worker. In her moment of need, when the farm's prune crop must be harvested and preserved, Anna is deserted by her future husband, Dunc, and is instead helped by Henry, who all along has aided with the general running of the farm. Anna's influence has converted Henry from socialist to an embodied example of the protestant work ethic. As if to confirm the metaphor of religious conversion, Henry saves Anna's daughter from death-by-prune-preserver in an act of selflessness unimaginable for his original character.

In part because of these actions, Anna becomes conscious of Henry as "the only man about the place" (308) and an underlying, though unacknowledged, romance threatens to emerge. This romance is best captured when Henry returns a

⁸⁷ Nakashima also asserts Henry as a "translator and informant" (38).

stolen clock to Anna.⁸⁸ Henry has stolen the clock because it reminds him of Anna, which is “why [he] regard[s] [the clock] with so much affection” (309). This admission leads Henry to confess to Anna, with “every muscle in his queer face...tense with a burning seriousness, and his voice deepen[ing],” that he is “devoted to you and to your sister” (235). Henry’s “burning seriousness” and “deep voice” speak of romance, and his confession is only contained by the reference to Anna’s sister. With little previous interaction between Henry and Anna’s sister, her inclusion in his confession reads as a deflection rather than reality. In a story grounded on the fear of what intermarriage may produce, Anna’s relationship with Henry, her ability to accept Henry into her heart, both interrupts and confirms these fears. Henry, a loyal, child-saving echo of Anna’s husband, thus must be disappeared to Japan before any relationship, romantic or platonic, can be solidified. Identification with a mixed-race character, his potential inclusion in the American family, is pushed – as in Watanna and Rohmer’s texts – to a future moment.

Yet even as Henry is disappeared from the text, the possibility of an Asian American mixed-race character, an “unrecognizable” American, emerges. Henry, taking his “conversion” by Anna to heart, “return[s] to [his] father’s country to start a revolution on Christian principles” (333). While not specifically fighting for the United States, Henry’s leaving reveals he is a Japanese mixed-race figure who is not fundamentally loyal to the emperor despite what Baron Tazumi predicted. Certainly, this possibility is made ambiguous by his association with socialism, his description

⁸⁸ This act, returning something he stole, again emphasizes Henry’s conversion. In a way, he is confessing his sins to Anna, living up to her moral standards.

as a tragic or anomalous figure, and his affiliation with the “we” of Japan. However, his position as a translator and go-between for Anna, his continued aid to her, and his conversion support his alignment with the United States as well. Henry, while perhaps being contained as he leaves the story, is also becoming a proxy for the United States. As he disappears out of the text, Henry forces a consideration not of the Japanese figured as the white American self, but the American figured as Japanese. Henry becomes the American self in the (Eur)asian other through his mixed-race identity.

This transformation must be read with a grain of salt, of course. *Seed of the Sun* is, after all, a yellow peril text steeped in racism. Certainly, Asian American mixed race here works ideologically to bolster U.S. imperialism in Japan, in opposition to Baron Tazumi’s interracial marriage plan or Helmholtz’s interracial business alliance, which supported the story’s colonization plot. Henry’s representation is no less compromised than any other in the text, but it does capture the particular symbolic use of the Eurasian figure in the early twentieth century this chapter has been tracing. As in Watanna’s and Rohmer’s texts, these figures come to embody not only difference, but also the possibility of sameness in the service of U.S. empire.

The Seeds of a Mixed-Race Future

It is notable that *Madame Butterfly* tales often end with Cio-Cio San’s suicide: the future of her child, though projected, is left undocumented by the text and thus open, with only the promise of a recognition of kinship from the father; in these

cases, kinship is deferred. At the same time, the fact that *Madame Butterfly* stories feature a mixed-race baby is significant. The child, like the narrative itself, only holds the promise of the future. While “A Half Caste,” “The Daughter of Huang Chow,” and *Seed of the Sun* do not embrace their mixed-race characters as part of the American family, as *Madame Butterfly* narratives promise to do, they do hold open – if only briefly – this possibility. Hilton does not make it past his moment of half-comprehension, Lala dies before declaring her affiliation with Durham, and Henry leaves for Japan so that Anna can marry Dunc. Yet these possibilities of affiliation are nonetheless imagined.

While Watanna’s “A Half Caste” is perhaps the most emblematic exploration of kinship and shared identity as it plays with both narrative and form to achieve its ends, all three texts hold the seeds of a future representation of the Asian American mixed-race figure particularly through their imaginary of affiliation. They begin to move towards ideological imaginings of Asian mixed-race figures in American cultural production that emerge fully in the decades after their publication. In Rohmer’s “The Daughter of Huang Chow,” Lala’s Hawaiian heritage reveals an emerging pattern in cultural production around Asian mixed race. Rohmer presciently emphasizes the fusing of Hawaiian mixed-race identity with Asian American mixed-race identity, a move the next chapter explores in depth. This fusion, as I argue in the next chapter, creates a future-oriented, multicultural “hapa” figure that foreshadows today’s representations and use of the term “hapa.” Similarly, as I will discuss in later chapters, Irwin’s choice to move Henry to Japan to fight for a better understanding

between nations may not just be an act of containment. Henry might be read as moving towards a cosmopolitan identification that I will highlight in my final chapters. However, as I have traced throughout this chapter, these explorations of affiliation are not, in the end, full of anti-racist possibility. Instead, these texts suggest the ideological importance of Asian mixed race to American Orientalism. Henry, Lala, and Kiku – even in their potential for kinship recognition – are still part of the racist context of their stories. It is this ideological representation that my dissertation will continue to uncover and critique in its remaining chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

The Golden Men: Writing Hawai'i's "New Race" as America's Future

"Into this poi-bowl pour racial ingredients from the East and from the West, and out of the bowl is coming forth a new human type – The Neo-Hawaiian-American Race."

Sidney Gulick, *The Coming of the Neo-Hawaiian American Race*

"He was a man influenced by both the west and the east, a man at home in either the business councils of New York or the philosophical retreats of Kyoto, a man wholly modern and American yet in tune with the ancient and the Oriental. The name they invented for him was the Golden Man."

James Michener, *Hawaii*

In 1959, James Michener's epic historical fiction *Hawaii* introduced postwar American readers to a literary figure he called the "golden man." Emerging from the success of his Pacific War writing and immersed in the politics of the Cold War, Michener unveiled this "bright, hopeful man of the future" (807) to an American audience who rapidly made his lengthy novel, a fictionalized history of the archipelago, a bestseller. These mixed golden men possessed a "rare ability to stand at the conflux of the world" – for Michener, namely the East and West – and gain an "awareness of the future" (807) in a historical moment when the debate over Hawaiian statehood was resolving and the Cold War was escalating. Poised thus literally and figuratively between the United States and Asia, these harbingers of "a new type of man" (807) were the end product of Michener's final fictional text about

Asia and the Pacific.⁸⁹ For a man who believed writers were the “conscience of the world” obligated to write about “the problems of current society” (Michener qtd. in Klein 121), the golden men were a hopeful testament to the racial tolerance and multiculturalism possible for a United States plagued since the end of World War II by stories of racial violence.⁹⁰ Michener’s golden man – this literary figure of cultural and, I will argue, racial mixture – was a symbol of a multicultural America in the midst of the Cold War.⁹¹ What makes the golden man particularly distinct, though, is its historical and literary genealogy; the figure is an emblematic formulation of a specific imaginary of mixed race in Hawai‘i deeply entrenched in U.S. imperialism in the Pacific and Asia.

Michener’s gendered and racialized golden men were not new, but rather rendered literary a figure which had first emerged in Hawai‘i in the 1930s, and triangulated Native Hawaiian, Asian, and white Americans through the figuring of mixed race.⁹² That is, at this moment in U.S. discourse around Hawai‘i, the racialization of Native Hawaiians and Asian Americans, and its relation to the

⁸⁹ Although Michener wrote prolifically after the publication of *Hawaii*, he did not write fictionally again about the Asia Pacific. See Christina Klein’s *Cold War Orientalism*, 252.

⁹⁰ Ibid. Klein discusses at length in her text the work Michener did in *Hawaii* and in other texts about Asia to promote racial tolerance in order to aid U.S. global reach during the Cold War.

⁹¹ Ibid. Klein makes this claim about the entire text, and reads the golden men as a culmination of this idea, 258. While in agreement with Klein’s reading, this chapter departs from and expands on her work as it explores the golden men in the context of larger mixed-race discourses and Asian American mixed-race discourses.

⁹² Here I am drawing from Claire Jean Kim’s work on racial triangulation in “The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans” to emphasize how “racialization processes are mutually constitutive...and can unfold along more than one dimension or scale at a time” (106).

racialization of white Americans, was interconnected and explored through mixed-race figures like the golden men. Imagined throughout the 1930s as the “neo-Hawaiian American race,” these racially-mixed figures were “an amalgam ‘breed’ of Asians, Caucasians and Native Hawaiians” (Allen qtd. in Lee and Baldoz 91) that, because they combined the “best” of East and West while maintaining loyalty to the United States, heralded a racial future that ensured continued U.S. dominance in the Pacific.⁹³ What I am calling the golden man literary figure welcomes a celebrated, if nationalist, mixed-race future from the 1930s through the Cold War.

Tracing U.S. sociological and literary representations of mixed race in Hawai‘i from the early to mid-twentieth century, when Hawai‘i was formally a U.S. territory but not yet a state, this chapter reveals a moment of mixed-race conflation, one in which both Native Hawaiian and Asian American mixed race were symbolically taken up by and implicated in U.S. imperialism in the Pacific and in Asia. As I will trace, this conflation was a tool that naturalized Asian presence in Hawai‘i while erasing Native Hawaiian presence. I read as emblematic of this particular imaginary of mixed race Michener’s “golden man,” a culturally and racially mixed Asian, Native Hawaiian, and white American literary figure. Michener’s text, as I will demonstrate, appropriates and erases Native Hawaiian and Asian American social and political contexts as it weaves its myth of Hawai‘i. Yet the text also echoes earlier conceptions of mixed race in Hawai‘i. As Native Hawaiian mixed race and

⁹³ The connection of these works, from the Chicago School of sociologists to Sidney Gulick to James Michener, was first pointed out in John Chock Rosa’s “‘The Coming of the Neo-Hawaiian American Race,’” 49-56.

Asian American mixed race are imagined together, merging two different literary representations, an alternate literary trajectory emerges, one that imagines a potential U.S. future. This iteration of celebratory mixed-race future, however, comes at the cost of sustained understanding of Asian American and Native Hawaiian communities in colonized Hawai‘i. While this chapter thus uncovers a significant shift in Asian mixed-race representation, one that embraces rather than defers the recognition of Asian *American* mixed race, it also considers the implications of such a shift.

A Golden Archipelago

The golden man figure is particular to the site of its imagining, emerging from the imperialist and multicultural context of Hawai‘i, which I will briefly theorize here. As the “crossroads of the Pacific” in the early half of the twentieth century, Hawai‘i was a key imaginary in American expansion westward, particularly as the United States looked to China and Japan. From the 1840s on, U.S. politicians and military leaders identified Hawai‘i as an important commercial and military site for the United States.⁹⁴ As the United States strove to expand economically in the Asia Pacific, Hawai‘i was viewed as a stepping stone to “the commerce of the world” which William Seward, the U.S. Secretary of State throughout the 1860s, claimed should be “looked for on the Pacific” (Seward qtd. in Kent 42). The U.S. naval

⁹⁴ See Noel Kent’s *Hawaii*, 41.

holdings eventually established at Pearl Harbor through the Reciprocity Treaty of 1875 protected U.S. interests in Hawai‘i and encouraged expansion in the region.⁹⁵

The economic impetus that spurred militarization also led to a diverse population that suggested Hawai‘i as a space where “East meets West.” Hawai‘i was not only a site of U.S. imperialist movement eastward; it was also understood as a site from which Asians might move into the United States. While in the continental United States this fed the yellow peril hysteria around Asian immigration and the specter of Asian “invasion,” for academics studying Hawai‘i this movement offered insight into the workings of the so-called American melting pot. For these researchers, Hawai‘i was an ideal place to study the process of assimilation.⁹⁶ Hawai‘i, America’s territorial frontier, was thus also viewed as a racial frontier *and* a racial laboratory.⁹⁷

Since the 1920s, Hawai‘i’s diverse population and extensive mixed-race population had piqued the interest of academics, particularly anthropologists and eugenicists. However, as these disciplines’ emphasis on the biological rather than the social effects of race mixing lost favor and credibility, focus shifted to the work of Robert Park and the Chicago School of Sociology, whose work on race relations in Hawai‘i has been widely discussed.⁹⁸ Scholars like Robert Park, Romanzo Adams,

⁹⁵ Ibid, 53-54.

⁹⁶ See John Chock Rosa’s “The Coming,” 51. See also Shelley Lee and Rick Baldoz’s “A Fascinating Interracial Experiment,” 88.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ For one discussion of the shift from biological to sociological discourses of mixed race, see Warwick Anderson’s “Racial Hybridity,” S104-S105. For examples of discussions of Chicago School’s work on mixed race in Hawai‘i, see Arvin’s analysis

and Andrew Lind theorized race as “the outcome of environment and social structures” (Lee and Baldoz 92) rather than biology, and argued that race operated with the “movement of all newcomers towards assimilation” (95). Hawai‘i was held up as proof of this assimilation, proof of the American melting pot, with leading University of Hawai‘i researcher Romanzo Adams believing the theory of assimilation was particularly demonstrated in Hawai‘i through interracial marriage and mixed-race offspring.⁹⁹ For Adams and his peers, then, Hawai‘i was also a temporal frontier, whose unique territorial conditions offered a glimpse into the future of Asian immigrants, and indeed all immigrants, in the continental United States. Central to this imagining of the U.S. future, as I will later trace, was a triangulation of Asian, Native Hawaiian, and white Americans worked out through various figures of mixing.

From this milieu emerged the popular cultural vision of the golden man, the neo-Hawaiian American mixed-race figure. In 1937, spurred in part by the growing tensions between the United States and Japan, educator and missionary Sidney Gulick proclaimed “a new race [was] in the making [in Hawai‘i]” (v) in his *Mixing the Races in Hawaii: A Study of the Coming Neo-Hawaiian American Race*. For Gulick, this

of the Chicago School in relation to the contemporary use of hapa; Lee and Baldoz’s argument around Orientalism and the Chicago School’s work in Hawai‘i; and Rosa’s connection of the Chicago School with 1990s multiracial discourse in the United States.

⁹⁹ Lee and Baldoz importantly point to the flaw of the assertion that “interracial marriage was synonymous with social equality” (97). Sociologists like Adams did not recognize the race, class, and gender inequalities that existed within and around interracial marriages, and thus perpetuated a myth of racial harmony in the United States.

new race's "physiological characteristics [...would be] a mixture of Hawaiian, Caucasian, and Asiatic, while its psychological, social, political, and moral characteristics [would be] distinctly American" (v). Drawing heavily from Romanzo Adams' work, but relying on scientific racism rather than sociology to support his claims, Gulick asserted his neo-Hawaiian American race in an effort to "remove [American] anxiety regarding questions of national security and national defense" (3), anxiety that centered on the high number of Asian immigrants – and, at this time directly before World War II, Japanese immigrants specifically – in Hawai'i. Gulick thus advocated for Hawaiian statehood by asserting the decidedly American loyalty of this "new race." Predicting the "enormous possibilities for...geniuses of many kinds" (47), Gulick concludes the coming superior race would greatly benefit the United States.

Less than a decade later, at the close of World War II, scholar Stanley Porteus, who in much of his previous work subscribed to eugenics theory, similarly imagined Hawaiian mixed race in his book *Calabashes and Kings: An Introduction to Hawaii* (1945).¹⁰⁰ His text, which explores the history of Hawai'i, suggests that "the Hawaiians have been the universal blood donors to the melting-pot" and "have disproved, for all time, the theory that mixed bloods are necessarily inferior" (129). Citing a "study a few years back," which likely refers to Gulick's or Adams' work, Porteus describes the "superiority" of Chinese-Hawaiian, white-Hawaiian, and "tri-

¹⁰⁰ For a brief summary of Porteus' eugenicist beliefs, see Lee and Baldoz, 97. Porteus' book only briefly discusses mixed race in Hawai'i; the majority of the text tells a history of Hawai'i much like that fictionalized in Michener's *Hawaii*.

cross” Chinese-white-Hawaiians (129). Unlike Gulick, though, Porteus asserts mixed race as the solution to the *threat*, rather than assimilation, of the Japanese in Hawai‘i. Mired in the essentialist language of eugenics and wartime racism, Porteus asserts race-mixing as a solution to racial difference; for Porteus, “if human society should become so thoroughly homogenous that it would no longer consist of aggregations of peoples...then the world would be free from parochial, national, or racial feelings” (126). Porteus’ statements, as we shall see, are not far from the ideas set forth in Michener’s *Hawaii*.

This figuring of mixed race in Hawai‘i in academic and popular texts in the years preceding World War II has been discussed by many scholars, several of whom also argue for the connection to Michener’s texts. I assert, however, that in Michener’s *Hawaii* the golden man becomes a distinctly literary figure, one that can be read with the work of scientific and pseudo-scientific writers like Adams, Gulick, and Porteus, but also with the work of American authors who explored mixed race in Hawai‘i like Mark Twain and Jack London, to whom I will turn shortly. The meeting of these two genealogies in Michener’s golden man reveals the underlying constructedness of this mid-twentieth century literary figure; although the sociology and “sciences” of the time were studying mixed race in Hawai‘i, they were in fact often complicit in recasting racialized tropes produced in literary and popular culture. While the Cold War setting of Michener’s *Hawaii* distances his work from these earlier moments as the text activates mixed race to promote a colorblind state during the Cold War, this doubled genealogy also reveals the golden man as just another

incarnation of a long-standing and problematic conflation of Asian American and Native Hawaiian experiences through mixed-race figures in the service of U.S. imperialism. Ultimately, this chapter argues that this conflation reveals a significant shift in the ideological representation of Asian American mixed race in the United States.

The Alchemy of Mixed Race

Written in the midst of the Cold War, Michener's *Hawaii* and his golden men can be best understood through the lens of Cold War Orientalism, as literary critic Christina Klein has elaborated in her book of the same name. An expression of American Orientalism that emerged after World War II and persisted through the Vietnam War, Cold War Orientalism circulated among American intellectuals and policymakers, including James Michener.¹⁰¹ As discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation, American Orientalism has tended to construct East Asia, at various moments in various locations, as a proxy, although in the context of the first chapter, that relationship was nonetheless imagined antagonistically.¹⁰² Rather than antagonistic, Cold War Orientalism imagines a friendly proxy relationship. Emerging during a period when Cold War ideology projected "a racially and ethnically diverse America in the service of U.S. global expansion," Cold War Orientalism depicted noncommunist Asia through "the values of interdependence, sympathy, and hybridity" with a central goal of "U.S.-Asian integration" (Klein 11, 16) both

¹⁰¹ See Christina Klein's *Cold War Orientalism*.

¹⁰² For this particular formulation of the observation made by many scholars working on American Orientalism, see Colleen Lye, *America's Asia*, 10.

internationally and domestically. Rather than being liberatory and anti-racist, however, these concepts instead worked to support and often disguise U.S. imperial aims during the Cold War.¹⁰³ In *Hawaii*, Michener traces a fictionalized history of the archipelago that emphasizes the coming together – under American guidance – of a diverse body of immigrants, with particular focus on Asians. In this way, Klein asserts, Michener writes a history of Hawai‘i that “redeem[s...] the United States from the accusations of racism and imperialism” (259) during the Cold War. Central to this project is Michener’s creation of the golden men, whom he ostensibly uses to trouble the concept of race and mixed race in an effort to portray an inherently multicultural United States.¹⁰⁴ This chapter points to the text’s failure to do so because it merely recasts long-standing tropes of mixed race. The text thus reveals the persistent symbolic use of Asian and Hawaiian mixed race in cultural production.

Though the golden men become fully developed in *Hawaii*, the seeds for these figures were sown earlier in Michener’s career. Michener’s interest in Hawai‘i and the Asia-Pacific began a decade before the publication of *Hawaii* in his Pulitzer Prize-winning *Tales of the South Pacific* (1947) and its follow-up *Return to Paradise* (1950). Both begin to articulate the vision Michener expands and completes in *Hawaii*: a benevolently colonized Pacific that is central to the United States’ future because of its connection to Asia.¹⁰⁵ In the opening note to *Return to Paradise*,

¹⁰³ See Klein’s *Cold War Orientalism*, 16-17.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 259.

¹⁰⁵ Although I will not discuss it in depth here, it is notable that throughout *Return to Paradise* Michener understands the United States as one of the “good colonizing

Michener writes that “what happen[s] in Asia [is] of sovereign importance to my country” (*Return* 3). In other words, as one of Michener’s characters proclaims at the end of *Tales of the South Pacific*, “the future of America is with Asia” (277).

Although taking place in the Pacific, then, these books collapse and condense the space between the United States and Asia as the Pacific is viewed through its ability to facilitate U.S. connections with Asia. At the end of *Return to Paradise*, the text returns to this idea first developed in *Tales of the South Pacific*; as “the meeting ground for Asia and America,” the Pacific is “one of our highways to the future” (437). Like Park’s temporal frontier, Michener’s text also figures the Pacific as a path to the future, although in the opposite direction. As I will demonstrate, Michener’s vision of the golden men – and particularly their relation to Asian mixed race – is an embodiment of his understanding of the spatial and temporal importance of the Pacific articulated in these earlier texts.

The golden men, written well into the Cold War, are from their introduction distanced from the racial associations of the Chicago School’s studies, Gulick’s “neo-Hawaiian American race,” and even the more racialized language of *Tales of the South Pacific* and *Return to Paradise*. The golden men, Michener asserts in *Hawaii*, are a “product of the mind” (Michener 807), not racially but culturally mixed, which allows them to “see both the West and the East” and “apprehend the obscure future” (937). These skills lead to the political and economic success that suggests the golden

agents” (71) in the Pacific. Further, both of these texts begin to explore mixed race in the Pacific, like *Hawaii* through incest, which I discuss in *Hawaii* later in this chapter.

men are poised to help the United States in its continued dominance in the Pacific.¹⁰⁶ Michener emphasizes how little race matters in his golden men by using them to question the concept of race. Tracing the genealogy of each golden man into the distant past, Michener reveals that each man's ancestors traversed the globe *and* lead back to a single common ancestor. Race and thus mixed race become illogical separators as this distant ancestor reveals that "all men are brothers" (817). It is for this reason that Christina Klein reads the golden men as the apotheosis of Michener's ideological project in *Hawaii*. Through their multiple origins, the golden men naturalize globalism and American imperialism; rather than coercively engulfing, the golden men reveal that "America already and harmoniously contains all the world's people within itself" (Klein 259). I will argue, however, that *Hawaii* is preoccupied with race mixing not only as a way to link humanity through distant relatives, but also as an ongoing phenomenon within the U.S. racial regime, and that this reveals both a new figuring of Asian American mixed race and the uneven and deep-seated racial dynamics of Hawai'i that haunt this figure of the future.

Despite the late insistence that racial mixture does not matter, *Hawaii's* narrative structure establishes a social Darwinist mode that builds towards the appearance of the golden man, eight hundred pages into a nine hundred page novel. *Hawaii* begins with a chapter on the archipelago's natural evolution. "From the Boundless Deep" traces rocks rising from the ocean depths, vegetation unfurling from

¹⁰⁶ The label "golden" – which Michener, perhaps too insistently, argues does not reference skin color – might instead reference this "new man's" wealth, value, or status in the United States. In this vein, "golden" also plays on the alchemy of making gold from mixed elements.

the excrement of a bird lost at sea, and insects arriving by a storm.¹⁰⁷ Hawai‘i is thus introduced by a sketch of evolution-in-action; yet this evolution pushes beyond Darwin’s natural selection and works to establish Hawai‘i as a unique “laboratory” of the sort Park imagined. In *Hawaii*, these plants and animals “developed unique forms and qualities in these islands,” and did so “freely and radically up to [their] own best potential” because “there was then, as there is now, no place known on earth that even began to compete with these islands in their capacity to encourage natural life” (15). Even in this initial chapter on the creation of the islands of Hawai‘i, Michener begins to establish the social Darwinist potential of the islands – and hints at the coming “new type of man” (807). Indeed, the islands are “the youngest part of the earth’s vast visible surface” and thus become a singular site of experimentation since “they were raw...they were empty...they were waiting” (12). *Hawaii*’s subsequent chapters fill this waiting space with various people: the Bora Borans who become the indigenous Hawaiians, American missionaries, and immigrants from China and Japan. The text’s structure, as it moves from natural evolution to the arrival and settling of these various communities, invokes a social Darwinist logic that ends with the emergence of the golden man. Despite this, *Hawaii* insists that these golden men are not racially mixed, but culturally mixed. Yet the burden placed on the golden men to be bridges between nations and harbingers of the future is typical of representations of mixed-race figures, underscoring how this text might be read within a network of mixed-race literature.

¹⁰⁷ See Michener’s *Hawaii*, 6-8.

Hawaii becomes explicitly racially eugenicist in argument and tropes when the eugenic beliefs of one of the central characters, missionary John Whipple, are introduced and espoused. Though tellingly not identified as a golden man, Whipple is characterized as a visionary who shapes the successful future of his adopted island. Contemplating the measles-stricken Native Hawaiian population, Whipple believes that leading white families like his own must “bring some strong, virile new people...and let them marry with the Hawaiians” (286). This “totally new blood stream” (345) is provided by the Chinese, whom Whipple is instrumental in bringing to Hawai‘i. Whipple’s “solution” to “dying Hawaiians” uses interracial marriage and the birth of mixed-race children to promote eugenicist logic; “through [the Chinese],” Whipple proclaims, “the dying Hawaiian race will be regenerated” (439). The text goes on to specify this regeneration as more than cultural or racial preservation – it is eugenic reproduction. Chinese and Hawaiian babies are “some of the most handsome ever bred in the islands, extraordinarily intelligent and healthy” (440); as children, they are “superb human specimens” and “the glory of the islands” (440, 441). The language of scientific experimentation used in these descriptions confirms the idea of eugenicist experiment, which goes uncondemned in the text. In fact, the eugenics lens in the text continues throughout and explicitly connects these mixed-race children with the golden men. One of Whipple’s grandsons, “Wild Whip,” for example, earns the nickname the “golden stud” because he fathers children with a number of women of different races. The eugenic strains of the text, then, become entwined early on with the eventual emergence of the golden man.

By emphasizing eugenics and specifically Whipple's eugenicist plan, *Hawaii* avoids acknowledging the role of American colonialism in the deaths of many Native Hawaiians. Further glossed by the eugenics plot is the often violent history of Asian migration to and work in Hawai'i. Unlike the story presented in *Hawaii*, Asian immigrants came to work on plantations for little pay and in conditions specifically created to deter interracial coalition.¹⁰⁸ Instead of unpacking a complex moment in Hawaiian history, Michener creates a fiction of experimental eugenic "innovation," a story of romance and family rather than racial strife and exploitation. In this way, Michener's text might be read in a longer history of mixed-race literature that uses mixed-race figures allegorically to resolve questions of national community.¹⁰⁹ In the context of Cold War ideology, Michener elides histories of colonialism and capitalist exploitation by using the Asian-Hawaiian mixed-race figure to gloss U.S. imperialism.¹¹⁰ This figure, however, does not advance the "everyone's mixed" argument later touted through the golden man, but a contradictory racist assertion that renders ambiguous the final "progressiveness" of the golden man.

The contradictory and racist assertions that surround Michener's exploration of mixed race in Hawai'i are further complicated by Michener's literary treatment of different kinds of mixing in Hawai'i, specifically in relation to Native Hawaiian, white, and Asian mixed race. Native Hawaiians and Asians are differently yet

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, Ronald Takaki's description of life for plantation workers in "Raising Cane," in *Strangers from a Different Shore*.

¹⁰⁹ See, for example, Jolie Sheffer's discussion of interracial romance in *The Romance of Race*.

¹¹⁰ Though I use the lens of Klein's *Cold War Orientalism*, here, this is not a part of the text that she reads.

constitutively racialized to promote a particular vision of U.S. presence in Hawai‘i. In order to fully understand this triangulation, though, it is necessary to briefly review previous tropes of mixed race in Hawai‘i, specifically in the work of Jack London which I will read in the next section. Michener’s *Hawaii* plays with these tropes, rewriting and at times repeating them as it works towards the appearance of the golden men.

Marriage and the Melting Pot

Jack London’s Hawaiian short stories are published in two collections, one posthumously, and stem from his two visits to Hawai‘i, in 1907 and 1912, when Hawai‘i was a recently annexed territory. His stories, which depict a variety of Hawaiian residents, contain representative examples of how mixed race in Hawai‘i was imagined on the multiple levels also found in Michener’s work. In particular, the short stories “The Sherriff of Kona” (1912) and “On the Makaloa Mat” (1919) employ Hawaiian-white mixed-race figures symbolically to justify U.S. expansion in Hawai‘i, while “Chun Ah Chun” (1912) employs Asian-white mixed-race figures symbolically to consider the opposite movement – from Hawai‘i (and Asia) to the United States. Reading these three stories together reveals the constitutive aspects of U.S. racialization of Asians and Native Hawaiians in Hawai‘i, and the central role mixed race played in this process.

For much of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries in Hawai‘i, race mixing was largely understood in terms of Native Hawaiian mixed race, or hapa-haole identification. Translating to part foreigner, hapa-haole is both an

ethnic signifier and an adjective most often understood to mean part white. The place of the hapa-haole literary figure in the American imagination is perhaps best captured by Jack London's Hawai'i short stories, which frequently worked to justify the U.S. presence in Hawai'i by characterizing Native Hawaiians as a disappearing "royal" people and culture. These stories, as I will demonstrate, alternate between depicting assimilating, elite mixed-race Hawaiians and degenerate, hapa-haole troublemakers. For London, the difference between assimilation and degeneracy depended on blood quantum and social status.

The strategic use of assimilating Hawaiian mixed race can be seen in the titular story of London's second collection of Hawaiian short stories, *On the Makaloa Mat* (1919). In this story, two elderly mixed-race Hawaiian sisters, Martha and Bella, look back on their married lives. Martha and Bella are the prosperous elite of the island, married to rich white investors, who trace their heritage back to Hawaiian royalty. The sisters' marriages are familiar tales of consolidating power; one sister recalls her uncle's advice to marry a white man because "the wealth and property of Hawaii was already beginning to pass into the hands of the haoles [...but t]he Hawaiian chiefesses who married haoles had their possessions" (*Stories* 113). Martha and Bella, the story suggests, remain members of the now white Hawaiian aristocracy because of their family's timely intermarriage with haoles.¹¹¹ Historically, interracial

¹¹¹ Martha and Bella's backstory is familiar for mixed-race Hawaiian literary characters, and can be seen in other works about Hawai'i including those by Mark Twain and John Dominis Holt. In Twain's letters to the *Sacramento Bee*, which would later become his *Letters from Hawaii*, Mark Twain understands "half whites" (arguably a translation of hapa-haole) as elites who he first sees gathering to greet his

marriage and mixed race in Hawai‘i were an integral part of consolidating power in the process of colonization. Although London’s story emphasizes the benefit to Native Hawaiians, in fact it was missionaries and businessmen who benefited, securing power, wealth, and land through marriage to Native Hawaiian women, often from noble or royal families.¹¹²

In “On the Makaloa Mat,” this hapa-haole history is used to justify the usurpation of the Hawaiian monarchy by white Americans as interracial marriage and mixed race are used to maintain an enabling Hawaiian presence in the new governing body. In a move that simultaneously emphasizes assimilation and maintains difference, the story describes Martha and Bella as “three-quarters white” rather than one-quarter Hawaiian, their children as “seven-eighths,” and their grandchildren as “fourteen-sixteenths” (108). Yet, while white blood quantum increases, an unchanging Hawaiian essence is highlighted; Bella is described as “the very picture of a chiefess of old Hawaii,” her heritage “full bursting through her ampleness of haole blood” (115). The emphasis on Bella’s undilutable Hawaiian heritage recalls the U.S. practice of hypodescent, or the “one drop rule,” which maintained slavery and then segregation by asserting that “one drop” of African American “blood” determined one was African American. Rather than a strategy to disenfranchise Bella,

ship with “foreigners and the better class of natives...in carriages and dressed in Sacramento summer fashion” (26). Later he observes the hapa-haole presence in the government, as well. Twain’s writing reflects the elite status associated with hapa-haoles at the time. Holt, who wrote in the late twentieth century, explored the disappearing class of elite hapa-haole families. See John Dominis Holt’s *Princess of the Night Rides and Other Tales* and *Waimea Summer*, both discussed later.

¹¹² See William Petersen’s “The Classification of Subnations,” 866

though, here hypodescent works to highlight Bella's royal lineage, which furthers a colonial discourse of assimilation and consolidated power by justifying the land and money now controlled by white American husbands and their compatriots.

At the same time, "On the Makaloa Mat" suggests the eventual fading of any reminders of miscegenation and thus any reminders of colonization. Although Martha's grandchildren's white blood "failed to obliterate the modicum of golden tawny brown of Polynesia...only a trained observer would have known that...the children were aught but pure-blooded white" (108). The younger generations, London suggests, are increasingly and undetectably assimilated into the ruling class of white American Hawai'i; the "golden tawny brown" that is "Polynesia" is disappearing in London's narrative. Yet its disappearance – and the exchange of power from indigenous Hawaiians to white Americans – is naturalized through the story of interracial love.

As illustrated in "On the Makaloa Mat," a frequent understanding of Hawaiian mixed race in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century was through assimilation. For many American eugenicists, for example, race mixture or miscegenation among Hawaiians signaled race assimilation through whitening.¹¹³ Beginning in the 1890s, scientific and educational writings aligned Native Hawaiians with "Aryan stock," suggesting that since Hawaiians were *almost* white they could easily be "brought into the fold of American-ness" (Desmond 51). It was because "Hawaiians' special destiny was seen as race mixing," (Kauanui 47) that mixed-race

¹¹³ See Susan Najita's "History, Trauma," 185.

individuals were used to justify colonization and disenfranchise Native Hawaiians. Legally such justification emerges in the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920 (HHCA), in which assimilationist views of miscegenation “blurred racial boundaries” (47) to the benefit of the American colonizers. Under the HHCA, meant to redistribute to Native Hawaiians some of the lands stolen from the Hawaiian monarchy during annexation, only Hawaiians of fifty-percent blood or more could qualify for homesteading lands, as a person of less than fifty-percent Hawaiian blood was considered “fully competent in their American citizenship to . . . secure and alienate private property” (47). The HHCA, as well as the numerous scientific and educational studies of the time, thus “attempted to ‘undo’ the native body politic – once recognized as sovereign – and reconstituted a new assimilable body consisting of a diverse amalgam of citizens” (67). Because certain blood percentages were designated as “assimilable,” Native Hawaiians with sovereignty claims were significantly reduced in number.

In his Hawai‘i work, written just before the HHCA, London was also conscious of an arbitrary blood quantum line in relation to his mixed-race characters. Where Martha and Bella of “On the Makaloa Mat” are described in relation to their blood quantum as “three-quarters white,” London labels mixed-race characters of fifty-percent or more Hawaiian blood as hapa-haole. This blood quantum distinction is made significant by London’s tendency to associate these characters with degeneracy rather than assimilation. Theories of mixed-race degeneracy emphasized that racial miscegenation lead to “genetic and hereditary decline” and a decrease of

“intellectual and moral progress as well as reproduction” (Najita, “History, Trauma” 186).¹¹⁴ While London’s use perhaps reflects the fear of degeneracy that existed on the islands themselves, and certainly picks up on discussions of mixed race and degeneracy in the continental United States, the blood quantum-based association of “positive” assimilation versus “negative” degeneracy also aligns with the logic of the colonial project in Hawai‘i. London’s short story, “The Sheriff of Kona,” in *The House of Pride* (1912) from his 1907 trip to Hawai‘i, reveals the limits of assimilation and the fate of those who cannot assimilate.

“The Sheriff of Kona” tells of the tragic fall of Kona’s beloved haole sheriff, Lyte Gregory, as he is stricken with leprosy and self-banished to Molokai. Lyte is an idealized man who is “straight American stock, but...built like the chieftains of old Hawaii,” (*Stories* 93) and who, in tasks like fishing and swimming is “cleverer than the average Kanaka” (94). Placed in contrast with this nativized white man is his betrayer, the “cursed *hapa-haole*” (97) Stephen Kaluna, who breaks the silence around Lyte’s leprosy and leads to Lyte’s self-banishment. Stephen, who is interchangeably identified as *hapa-haole* and “half-caste,” (99) is typecast as a “degenerate” mixed-race character. Described as “in his cups, and quarrelsome,” (97) Stephen exposes Lyte’s leprosy because he wants to pick a fight; here London creates the moral and intellectual decline associated with degeneracy by characterizing

¹¹⁴ Najita argues that degeneration was “the more widely held view” (186) about mixed race. While this may be true on the continent and in relation to, for instance, black-white and Asian-white mixed race, my research suggests that Hawaiian-white mixed race was more often seen in academic and literary work, because of the reasons discussed above, as a useful form of assimilation. Najita does point to a fear of degeneracy on the islands themselves, which I reference here.

Stephen not only as a quarrelsome drunk but a betrayer of good men. Furthermore, Stephen's family is suffering from genetic degeneracy because leprosy "ran strong in his family, and four or five of his relatives were already on Molokai" (97). The use of "ran" in this sentence suggests a genetic inheritance of leprosy, despite its actual pathology, perhaps *because* of their mixture. The contrast between Stephen and Lyte works to reveal a hereditary degeneracy, as Lyte, although white, is characterized as an ideal Hawaiian to Stephen's resentful, potentially disease-ridden body.

That Stephen is thus labeled hapa-haole and degenerate in contrast to the sisters of "On the Makaloa Mat" suggests the class and gender boundaries of assimilation. Miscegenation and mixed race, in other words, are characterized in London's work as acceptable only when they work in the service of colonialism, as they do in Martha and Bella's story. In Stephen's story, though, far from being assimilated, mixed race is degenerate and without a future. Gender also emerges here, with female mixed race, and its alignment with gendered metaphors of conquest and the birth of the nation's future population, less threatening than the male figure of Stephen poised to take down Lyte, the embodiment of American law and American Hawai'i.

Along with Hawaiian-white mixed-race figures, London also portrayed Hawaiian-Asian mixed-race figures. A very different portrait of interracial marriage and mixed-race offspring emerges in *The House of Pride* short-story, "Chun Ah Chun," one which reveals the triangulation of Asian, Native Hawaiian, and white Americans. This story centers around a wealthy Chinese merchant, Ah Chun, who

marries a mixed-race woman “legally a Hawaiian [...but] more of any one of three other nationalities” (163) including English, American, and Italian. Together they have fifteen children, and although these children have multiple heritages, the text emphasizes their Chinese heritage, for in “every feature of every face were haunting reminiscences of Asia” (161). Thus although potentially hapa-haole, this heritage is erased as the characters are coded as Asian mixed race. Unlike Martha and Bella’s mixed-race heritage, the Ah Chun children’s Asian mixed race is highly visible. Yet the Ah Chun children, like Martha and Bella, are also framed in a tale of assimilation into U.S. society. This Asian mixed-race assimilation, however, does not signify or attempt to justify a shifting of power in Hawai‘i. Instead, from their U.S. educations to the daughters’ white American husbands, the Ah Chun children are associated with the United States rather than China or Hawai‘i.

Although the Ah Chun children are described in apparently positive terms, their path to assimilation – marriage – is not as smooth a path as that of Martha and Bella. Their “blend of the races was excellent,” with all “healthy and without blemish” (161), yet the children are rejected by the American families of their suitors. The prejudices of American families towards Ah Chun’s half-Chinese daughters are overcome, however, by Ah Chun’s generous dowries. Money is also at the heart of Bella and Martha’s marriages, yet the selective elision of this, which is revealed in the comparison of these two stories, suggests the differing racialization being worked through. Where the assimilating mixed race in “On the Makaloa Mat” helped to naturalize U.S. presence in Hawai‘i, the assimilating mixed race in “Chun Ah Chun”

threatens with the opposite movement as Ah Chun's children settle in the continental United States.¹¹⁵

The assimilation of Asian mixed-race figures is mitigated by the expulsion of the Asian body from the U.S. national body. Ah Chun is described physically and socially in the terms of yellow peril discourse. He has “shrewd little eyes, black and beady and so very little that they were like gimlet-holes” (154). He is also exceptionally observant and philosophical, which leads to his unmatched economic success, as he goes from a “coolie” to a business and land owner. Yet, his economic strength is not one of subterfuge or competition, as other yellow peril narratives portray successful Chinese merchants; instead Ah Chun is “a moral paragon and an honest business man” (173). Even as Ah Chun is constructed against yellow peril depictions, he is also underscored as “alien” (175). Though Ah Chun lives an elite and socially diverse life – hosting Americans, Europeans, and Hawaiians, marrying a hapa-haole woman, and fathering mixed-race children – “he was Asiatic to the last fibre, which meant that he was heathen” (176). Motivated partially by “his alienness and his growing desire to return to his Chinese flesh-pots” (179), Ah Chun ultimately chooses to leave Hawai‘i and his family and return, not to China, but to Macao. Though his return to Asia is a comment on American greed and values, since he wants to escape his bickering, money-driven family, it also reads as a banishing of the

¹¹⁵ This difference can be seen in the different descriptions of physical attributes in these two stories, as well. While Martha and Bella's indigenous heritage is fading from visibility in the story, the Ah Chun children are marked by their Asian heritage.

Asian other from the American self.¹¹⁶ Even as Asian mixed-race figures (and their wealth) are assimilated, the Asian figure is removed from Hawai‘i and the United States.

Reading these three stories together highlights the distinctive tropes of Native Hawaiian and Asian American mixed race in literature about Hawai‘i, while revealing how they worked together, as well. Unlike London’s hapa-haole characters, which are ever-fading through degeneracy or assimilation, Ah Chun’s children are a part of the United States’ present and future. Indeed, Asian mixed race erases Hawaiian mixed race in “Chun Ah Chun” as the Hawaiian heritage of Ah Chun’s children fades after its first mention in relation to their mother; instead, the story meditates on Asian-white mixed race and its meaning for the United States in a way that parallels the consideration of the physical space of Hawai‘i as between the United States and Asia. If the Native Hawaiian figure offered a symbolic resolution to the U.S. presence in Hawai‘i, the Asian mixed-race figure became a way to imagine a relationship with Asia that distanced Asia while maintaining economic ties. Further, the Asian-Hawaiian mixed-race figure’s erasure, replaced by an Asian mixed-race figure, became a means to assert Hawai‘i as a space between, or mediating, the United States and Asia. Thus London’s “Chun Ah Chun” in many ways prefigures Michener’s portrayal of Whipple’s eugenics project and, as we will see, highlights the discourses

¹¹⁶ Though I am unable to explore it within the frame of this chapter, the story also mounts a critique as I hint here – albeit problematically constructed via racial stereotypes – of the United States.

occurring since the beginning of the twentieth century around Asian mixed race in Hawai‘i.

From Hapa-Haole to Golden

In *Hawaii*, over forty years later, Michener appears to reject the literary and legal use of Hawaiian mixed race, which he associates with colonialism, and instead espouses London’s “Chun Ah Chun” vision. Yet Michener maps this vision onto a U.S. expansionist perspective – a focus on the movement of West to East rather than London’s East to West – through Whipple’s eugenics project and through a play with incest and miscegenation plots. That is, by associating Native Hawaiian mixed race with incest and Asian mixed race with miscegenation, the text advances a tale that distinguishes kinds of racial mixing and thus more firmly triangulates Native Hawaiians, Asians, and white Americans. In *Hawaii*, Native Hawaiian-white mixed race is associated with incest.¹¹⁷ Incest first emerges in the early chapter “From the Farm of Bitterness,” when American missionaries have first come to Hawai‘i to convert Native Hawaiians to Christianity. Missionary Abner Hale is horrified to find a star convert, Keoki, marrying his sister, Noelani, in a demonstration of the ali‘i practice of incest. The marriage for Protestant Abner Hale is “abhorrent and unnatural” and puts Keoki “outside the pale of civilized” American society (336, 331). Yet *Hawaii* turns this distinction on its head when Abner’s descendants become incestuous. The white and white-Hawaiian descendants of the missionaries encourage

¹¹⁷ Michener’s association of mixed race with incest is not new; in *Tales of the South Pacific* he describes the descendants of the *Bounty* mutineers and Tahitians in terms of incest.

cousin to marry cousin in an effort to keep family money and power contained, paralleling the incest of many monarchies. The text's parallel of the American business elite with the practices of European monarchs offers a subtle critique, in the context of the Cold War, of older European colonial modes and separates a colonial American Hawai'i from the "new" multicultural American Hawai'i Michener attempts to advance with the golden men in the final chapter of *Hawaii*.¹¹⁸

Michener's use of incest can be read on another level as a tactic that affirms and naturalizes U.S. presence in Hawai'i. The incest narrative aligns with the work of racial romances, a term coined by literary scholar Jolie Sheffer to describe "the miscegenation and/as incest plot" (14) that features a mixed-race character engaging, often unknowingly, in incest encounters and relationships. Common in earlier, turn-of-the-twentieth-century texts, the act of incest expressed through the mixed-race figure works to highlight the illogic of race by suggesting familial unity and shared heritage despite racial difference. Racial romances use an allegory of family for nation in order to provide "an imagined resolution to U.S. racial and sexual inequalities" by highlighting "the erotic and political ties already binding the nation's diverse constituencies into a single family" (5, 14). In *Hawaii*, incest highlights a familial connection, a sameness, between Native Hawaiians and white Americans, naturalizing the progression from Native Hawaiian to American control of Hawai'i. The incest tale essentially incorporates Native Hawaiians into the U.S. national

¹¹⁸ For further discussion of how Cold War intellectuals attempted to distinguish U.S. foreign policy from European colonialism, see Christina Klein's *Cold War Orientalism*, 124 and 250.

family as a means to naturalize the U.S. annexation and eventual statehood of Hawai‘i. Thus, on one level, the text’s incest plot *aligns* with the use of Native Hawaiian mixed race to promote assimilation as seen in earlier works like those of Jack London.

Unlike London’s earlier depictions of Native Hawaiian mixed race, or the turn-of-the-century racial romances, though, Michener uses this trope to emphasize decay. By the final chapter of *Hawaii*, “The Golden Men,” the practice of incest within white American-Hawaiian business families has resulted in “upstairs rooms where several of the great families kept the delicate women whose minds had begun to wander” (809). Rather than signaling the emergence of the national (American) family in Hawai‘i, such mixed-race incest has led to various health problems. The gender considerations of earlier mixed-race Hawaiian representations are here turned on their head: the “future generations” promised by London’s Bella and Martha are threatened in *Hawaii* by recessive genetics, in stark contrast to the miscegenation promoted by John Whipple. Further, *Hawaii*’s “upstairs rooms” filled with wandering-minded women alludes to the “upstairs rooms” of Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*, where Edward Rochester’s creole wife, Bertha, is sequestered. By referencing this famous reminder of the British colonies, *Hawaii* parallels Rochester’s European colonialism to the white American-Hawaiian business families’ colonialism. Interrupting this incestuous and colonial passing of power, then, is the “new blood” provided by Whipple’s eugenics plot. Through the incest plot and the eugenics plot, mixed race becomes associated with white-Asian-Hawaiian mixture, rather than

merely white-Hawaiian mixture. Previous tropes of Native Hawaiian mixed race are rejected as colonialist and the introduction of Asian mixed race is aligned with America's new multicultural Hawai'i.

The contrast of incest and miscegenation further reveals distinct temporalities around the depictions of Native Hawaiian and Asian mixed race. In Michener's text, Native Hawaiian mixed race becomes associated with the past – both in the sense of the past governmental structures of monarchy and colonialism, and in the sense of a family dying because of incest. In contrast, Asian Hawaiian mixed race becomes associated with the future as it does in London's "Chun Ah Chun." *Hawaii* narrator Hoxworth Hale, a golden man and descendent of John Whipple, for example, believes that through racial mixing – the interconnection of Native Hawaiians and Asian immigrants – Hawaii is "building something...that will be infinitely better than anything Fiji or Tahiti [where mixing is avoided] ever produces" (761). This observation is confirmed by a visiting U.S. congressman who sees "many handsome Hawaiians whose blood was mixed with that of China or Portugal or Puerto Rico" and thinks that this "strange, new breed of men" is "the pattern of the future" (897). Although multiple mixtures are gestured to here, the reader is only introduced to Asian-white-Hawaiian characters in the text. It is in this mixture –of Hawaiian, white, and Asian (Gulick's "Neo-Hawaiian American Race") – that *Hawaii* projects a successful U.S. future in Hawai'i and in the Pacific.

In this light, the assertion of "cultural," or American, rather than "racial" golden men is rendered ambiguous by the problematic racial language and themes

that lead up to the appearance of the golden men. When the reader is finally introduced to the golden men, the claim that they are “cultural” is incommensurate with a text featuring a social Darwinist structure and eugenics plot. The insistence of cultural golden men seems instead an attempt to mask the text’s racial baggage, particularly in its reliance on racist tropes of mixed-race literature. Adding to this ambiguity, the golden men are still *raced* even as they are given multiracial genealogical histories that deny race.

Hawaii’s four golden men, rather than offering new literary figurations of race and mixed race, reveal racialization consistent with previous representations of mixed-race figures. The two hapa-haole golden men, for example, still align with earlier hapa-haole depictions. Hoxworth Hale, the Hawaiian-white narrator, is a visionary who moves Hawai‘i forward economically and politically through his family’s power and money; Kelly Kanakoa, the hapa-haole descendent of the previously mentioned Keoki and Noelani, is a “beachboy” – essentially a sex worker – who eventually, with help from a Chinese woman, Judy, becomes a successful musician entertaining tourists. The distinction in their two fates returns readers to the two fates of Jack London’s characters – the assimilating part-Hawaiian and the degenerate half-Hawaiian figure. Further, as if confirming Whipple’s beliefs, it is only the “new blood” Judy provides that helps Kelly recover from his “degenerate” ways.

Similarly, the remaining two golden men – “the crafty Chinese banker Hong Kong Kee” and the “dedicated Japanese politician Shigeo Sakagawa” – fit Orientalist

stereotypes. Hong Kong Kee is a far-sighted, economically capable Chinese merchant whose family, after Hoxworth's, dominates the Hawaiian economy. Shigeo Sakagawa is a model soldier-turned-politician intent on unionizing the work force, to Hoxworth's displeasure. Both are updated versions of yellow peril figures – the “crafty” Chinese merchant, the militaristic Japanese man, and the Asian threat to the United States' wealth and labor – prominent at the turn of the twentieth century, when Chinese and Japanese immigrants were seen as posing economic and social threats within the United States, and Japan in particular was seen as posing a threat to U.S. hegemony abroad. Though *Hawaii* portrays these two characters in a positive light, since their economic and military savvy are working in the favor of the United States, they are nonetheless inscribed by these echoes of yellow peril representation.¹¹⁹

That an Orientalist mode still persists in Michener's text is perhaps most clearly demonstrated through Michener's unwillingness to allow these characters interracial relationships. For example, when Shigeo, by then a successful and rapidly-rising politician, wants to marry Hoxworth's daughter, Hoxworth refuses to grant permission. Hoxworth asserts that “in an age of Golden Men it is not required that their bloodstreams mingle, but only that their ideas clash on equal footing and remaining free to cross-fertilize and bear new fruit” (937). While on the one hand this refusal of interracial love might be read as a final assertion that race does not and

¹¹⁹ Michener seems to hold up Sakagawa and Kee as “model minorities” – a stereotype emerging in the latter half of the twentieth century that posited economically successful Asians as an ideal minority group against which other people of color were compared. He also turns the trope of the Asian strike-breaker on its head by having Sakagawa dedicated to unionizing. Yet this is still portrayed as a “threat” to Hoxworth's control of Hawai'i.

should not matter, on the other hand it ends up emphasizing that race does matter for these golden men – only certain kinds of mixing, certain racial golden men, remain acceptable. That the Asian-white interracial relationship is still denied aligns with the Orientalist imaginings of interracial love and mixed race traced in the first chapter of this dissertation that deferred the acceptance of the (Eur)Asian other in the white American self. The “golden men,” rather than a new type of literary figure with potential to reimagine stereotypes and relationships, are still confined by the tropes of previous depictions. The golden man becomes a site of tension between racial and cultural mixing that remains unresolved; these cultural golden men, who are distantly mixed race and therefore all related to one another, “apprehend the obscure future” (937) which the text insistently sees as racially mixed to particular ideological ends. Certainly, as Klein argues, the golden men are in the service here of Cold War Orientalism, but the persistence of earlier literary tropes underscores the continuity of racialist thinking even as mixed-race figures are deployed to debunk that very thinking.

From Golden to Hapa

Michener’s engagement with mixed race, far from distancing itself from U.S. imperialism in Hawai‘i, reinforces it. The “positive” spin on Asian-Hawaiian mixed race works to naturalize Asian mixed race in Hawai‘i while disappearing Native Hawaiians and Native Hawaiian mixed race. Hoxworth Hale, for example, thinks about Native Hawaiians and wishes the United States could have “protected the Hawaiians” from losing “their land, their language, and their culture” (761). Yet he

also thinks of all the Hawaiian-Asian mixed-race people and concludes that the United States is “building something in Hawaii that will be infinitely better” (761) than places that discourage race mixing. In the imagining of the golden men, cultural or arguably racial mixture develops “a man influenced by both the west and the east, a man at home in either the business councils of New York or the philosophical retreats of Kyoto, a man wholly modern and American yet in tune with the ancient and the Oriental” (807). The golden man is a man who can understand Asia and the United States, but to the detriment of Hawai‘i. As scholar Paul Lyons has put it, “if the Golden Man sees East and West, one is left wondering whether he recognizes the ground he stands on as an Oceanian place” (168).

In disappearing Native Hawaiians through Asian mixed race, Michener again draws on the work of that “group of sociologists” who perfected the golden man. In the midst of their work on racial mixing, sociologists like Robert Park and Romanzo Adams were not primarily concerned with racial mixing and mixed-race people per se, but with the assimilation of Asians in the United States. They wanted to “demonstrat[e] the malleability of racial and ethnic traits [to] refute the nativist claims of the unassimiability of Asians in American society” (Lee & Baldoz 93). A review of the work of scholars like Romanzo Adams reveals that studying interracial marriage and mixed race in Hawaii was a way to understand Asian and white racial difference. In his work *Interracial Marriage in Hawaii* (1937), for example, Adams studies two mixed-race groups categorized by the census –Caucasian-Hawaiians and Asiatic-Hawaiians, specifically Chinese-Hawaiians who were one of the larger groups

of Asian Hawaiian mixed race.¹²⁰ Under the guidelines of the census at the time, Asian-Caucasian mixed-race individuals were categorized by the logic of hypodescent as Asiatic; Asian-Hawaiian-Caucasian mixes were categorized as Asiatic-Hawaiians (Lee & Baldoz 103; Gulick 30). The Asian-Hawaiian-white mixed race that would make up Gulick's neo-Hawaiian American race was not directly studied. In fact, the "Hawaiian" of Gulick's new race was also ignored. As a common denominator, researchers tended to ignore Native Hawaiians and implied the "dilution of Native blood" was desirable (Lee & Baldoz 100, 105). Despite the appearance of being interested in a newly emerging "race," these studies were instead concerned with thinking about Asian and white racial difference on the path to assimilation; Native Hawaiian mixed race became a tool, rather than a focus, of mixed race in Hawai'i. As these studies compared "Chinese-Hawaiians" and "Caucasian-Hawaiians," they "produced knowledge about the racial difference between Chinese and white people" (100). Michener's *Hawaii*, too, disappears Native Hawaiians, arguably in an attempt to produce knowledge about Asians and whites and theorize assimilation. The consistency of this move – from the 1930s to the 1960s – reveals the continuity and controversy of the figuring of Asian and Native Hawaiian mixed race in Hawai'i.

It is a controversy that continues today, activated specifically through the term "hapa." Today, hapa is a once liberatory Hawaiian term haunted by a legacy of colonialism. Originally referring to Native Hawaiian mixed race, hapa in recent years

¹²⁰ See Lee and Baldoz's "Fascinating Interracial Experiment," 98.

has been adopted by mixed-race Asian Americans. Identifying as hapa has been for some mixed-race Asian Americans a liberating experience of self-definition. Derived from the Hawaiian word for mixed Hawaiian, *hapa-haole*, “hapa” appeared to be an ethnic signifier that has never subjugated or disempowered people of mixed race as do terms like Eurasian and half-caste. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, “hapa” became a term that symbolized a new era of mixed-race identification, one defined by collectivity and self-definition rather than stigma and violence. By the turn of the century, the term was ubiquitous – appearing on t-shirts, in social media spaces, and in literature and art.¹²¹ Yet the term, as Native Hawaiian and mixed-race activists have increasingly voiced, is haunted by the legacy of colonialism in Hawai‘i; its appropriation reenacts the violence of settler colonialism – in this case, the complicity of Asian settlers to Hawai‘i in the colonization and subjugation of Native Hawaiians.¹²²

How hapa shifted from referring to Native Hawaiian mixed race to Asian American mixed race has yet to be fully studied; the creation of the neo-Hawaiian American race in the 1930s and its literary life in the golden man certainly marks an early moment of similar conflation.¹²³ Beginning in the period traced in this chapter, a

¹²¹ Perhaps the most well-known iteration of this is Kip Fulbeck’s work, including *Part Asian, 100% Hapa*, as well as the now-defunct university campus organization, The Hapa Issues Forum.

¹²² For more information on settler colonialism in Hawai‘i, see Candace Fujikane and Jonathon Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism*. For more information on the hapa controversy, see Wei Ming Dariotis, “Hapa: The Word of Power.”

¹²³ Maile Arvin’s *Pacifically Possessed* offers an insightful critique of the connection between this contemporary use of hapa, specifically in Kip Fulbeck’s work, and the Chicago School’s work in the 1930s.

violence parallel to that of the hapa controversy emerges as Native Hawaiian mixed race is subsumed both by the concept of the neo-Hawaiian American race and by the preoccupation with Asian and white racial difference that inspired it. The contention and conflation inherent in the use of the term hapa today, then, has a long history that can be located in the neo-Hawaiian American race and the golden man of the early to mid-twentieth century. Taking this longer view of the history of academic and literary understandings of race mixing in Hawai‘i thus reveals an enactment of settler colonialism in Hawai‘i. The elision of Native Hawaiians produced and reproduced in discussions of the neo-Hawaiian American race, the equating of the experiences and rights of indigenous people with ethnic Americans, and the focus on Asian mixed-race in relation to indigenous Hawaiian figures performs the work of U.S. colonialism in Hawai‘i.

Thus Michener’s narrative and development of the golden man literary figure confirms and supports the work of sociologists like Adams and writers like London and Gulick and might offer a genealogy for the term hapa in circulation today. The consistent depiction of Native Hawaiians as assimilating and disappearing through interracial marriage and mixed-race children works to disenfranchise the indigenous people of Hawai‘i. At the same time, the narrative of a neo-Hawaiian American race appears to idealize Asian Americans and posit them as a potential path for the United States’ success in “east” and “west” through a Cold War Orientalist lens. Imagining a “golden man,” specifically an Asian American mixed-race one, consolidates U.S. racial hegemony as a mixed-race identity, in the form of the golden man, was taken

up symbolically as a strategic U.S. mixed-race future. Thus turning to this earlier moment allows us to begin to puzzle out the larger histories and representations that surround mixed race in Hawai‘i and U.S. representations of Asian mixed race in the early- to mid-twentieth century.

The Tableau Vivant

I conclude this chapter by considering an emergent possibility for mixed-race figures in Hawai‘i, which works against the cooptation I have traced so far, in the work of Hawaiian author John Dominis Holt. Perhaps best known for his novel *Waimea Summer* (1976), Holt was the author of several monographs, a play, and two short story collections. His self-reflective “On Being Hawaiian” (1964) established Holt as an early voice in the Hawaiian Cultural Renaissance, the name given the 1970s reemergence of indigenous Hawaiian cultural and political expression.¹²⁴ Written in the years immediately after Michener’s *Hawaii*, Holt’s exploration of hapa-haole figures offers a key contrast to Michener’s golden men. Holt’s texts grapple with the disappearing of hapa-haole figures while making space for a hapa-haole subjectivity in the present rather than the past.

All of Holt’s work is deeply concerned with remembering the indigenous Hawaiian past as well as mediating an indigenous Hawaiian present. His early essay “On Being Hawaiian” outlines these concerns, which continue to surface in Holt’s subsequent work. Here, Holt suggests that Native Hawaiians “bear the burden of our local history that goes deep into time” (20). As “captive[s] to the spirit of the past”

¹²⁴ See Sheldon Hershinow’s “John Dominis Holt,” 61.

(21), Holt understands Native Hawaiians as “living symbols of a way of life long dead” (23), yet “On Being Hawaiian” also asserts an interest in discovering and portraying how Native Hawaiians “can use our talents in all areas of present day life” (25). Holt’s non-fiction meditations on the condition of Native Hawaiian experiences in the 1960s are translated to his fiction, often through the use of the hapa-haole figure. Holt himself was hapa-haole, with ancestors including Hawaiian and Tahitian ali‘i, a British Earl, and a French prince.¹²⁵ He was named for his grandfather, Colonel John Dominis Holt, who was a member of Queen Liliuokalani’s palace staff.¹²⁶ Holt’s fictional exploration of hapa-haole identity is particularly notable in his semi-autobiographical novel *Waimea Summer* and the short-story collection *Princess of the Night Rides* (1978). In these texts, by emphasizing a Native Hawaiian sense of genealogy, rather than an American sense of blood quantum and racial identity, Holt rejects both hapa-haole invisibility *and* a Hawaiian mixed-race future temporality; instead he imagines a hapa-haole subjectivity operating in the present.

Many of Holt’s stories that are concerned with mixed race are set-up around a pairing of an older, fading matriarch with an inquisitive young man.¹²⁷ These are not unfamiliar pairings or characters, but can be found in London’s makaloa mat matrons or Michener’s vital Hoxworth Hale and fading female Hales. Yet Holt reworks these characters and this pairing by altering how the matriarchs and their Hawaiian heritage are received by the younger generation. In this way, the pairing of matriarch and

¹²⁵ See Holt’s “On Being,” 93.

¹²⁶ See Hershinow’s “John Dominis Holt,” 62.

¹²⁷ Stories that do this include *Waimea Summer*, “Olga Kaupiko’s Treasure,” and “Family Portraits.”

youth allows an exploration of “the spirit of the past” (“On Being” 21) and “present day life” (23).

In Holt’s texts, hapa-haole identity, particularly that represented by his matriarch characters, is associated with anachronism, not unlike their depiction in Michener’s work. In his short story “Family Portraits,” for example, Holt describes the return of a hapa-haole man, Charles, to his great aunt on her deathbed. Charles associates his hapa-haole Aunt Emily with “the grasp of family and caste as it had been shaped by the forces that had organized the pattern of life in nineteenth century Hawaii” (111). Here, Charles aligns his family’s aristocratic hapa-haole roots with an older, colonial Hawaiian structure where hapa-haole families were part of the wealthy, ruling elite. In contrast, Charles thinks of twentieth century Hawai‘i as “charged with a fast-moving cosmopolitan air” as “the blending of people of all races, the blending of their habits, beliefs, and genes” (111) occurs. In the face of such mixing – what we might flag as a figuring of the “neo-Hawaiian American race” – Charles fears he and his family are “breathing anachronisms – figures in a tableau vivant, watching the scene from behind thick plateglass windows” (111-112). Charles’ fear of anachronism is only confirmed by the deathbed-setting of the story, as the last powerful matriarch of his family passes away.

Yet Holt grasps on to a hapa-haole present, as well, through characters like Charles. These young men, “although...part-Hawaiian, [are] a product of haole education. [They] belonged to the present – to the confusing present – in which the

old beliefs and the ancestral language were not passed on to the young” (68).¹²⁸ Yet even as these characters are depicted in some ways as assimilating, they are also constantly thinking of the Hawaiian past, and so resisting assimilation. In their impulse to understand the past, to return to their dying matriarchs and talk story, these characters insist on a hapa-haole present. Though Holt does not project an alternate hapa-haole future – most of his stories end without predictions or even resolution for the confusing present – his refusal offers a form of resistance to the co-optive predictions of mixed-race in Hawai‘i.

A key example of a hapa-haole present can be found in Holt’s *Waimea Summer*. A coming of age story of mixed-race boy Mark Hull, *Waimea Summer* explores Mark’s changing relationship to his Hawaiian and haole heritage during a fateful summer at a crumbling Waimea ranch. Living with his paniolo cousin, Fred, Mark’s journey is framed by his preoccupation with genealogy in the disappearing world of the hapa-haole aristocracy. Throughout the summer, Mark comes to terms with his own identity as he looks simultaneously back to the past and forward to his future.

Although Mark, his cousin Fred, and Fred’s children are all mixed race, it is notable that hapa-haole is not used until midway through the text, in relation to the rich, illustrious Mrs. Warrington and her entourage of equally wealthy friends. These “hapa-haoles of the old ranching families of the monarchy” (115) are associated, like

¹²⁸ This quote, from the story “Olga Kaupiko’s Treasure,” also tells the story of an older hapa-haole woman telling Hawaiian and hapa-haole history to a younger hapa-haole man.

so many of Holt's matriarchs, with a dying class. Mrs. Warrington, for instance, mourns that "once there was a whole world of hapa-haoles [...] except for [their] pure Hawaiian relatives, there was no one else" (132). In the book's present, the 1930s, however, their "ranks are thinning" (132). It is perhaps because of this disappearance that the final message of the text appears to push Mark away from his obsession with the past and with his genealogy, and towards assimilation – signified both by Mrs. Warrington's gift of money towards his education on the continental United States, as well as his final, dramatic departure from Waimea.

This same moment of departure, however, can also be read as Mark's reconciliation with his hapa-haole identity. Until the final scene in the text, Mark avoids identification as hapa-haole, associating the term instead with Mrs. Warrington. When hapa-haole is used in relation to Mark, it is by non-ali'i Native Hawaiians; Fred's workers, a kahuna, and another kahuna in charge of singing royal family mele all identify Mark as hapa-haole. For these characters, Mark appears privileged and thus is marked as part of the disappearing aristocracy once known as hapa-haole. Mark does identify his haole ancestors – "the judge, the British Earl, and the American missionary" – but it is only at the end of the text that Mark finally claims his Hawaiian ancestors, asserting that he comes "from chiefs" (103, 192). On the one hand, then, this ending points to Mark's embrace of his mixed-race identity, his refusal to assimilate. Yet, in this same final scene, when Mark meets a kahuna and is given a vision of his royal ancestors, he becomes terrified and refuses the kahuna's request that he stay and learn about his Hawaiian ancestors. Instead Mark runs away,

towards the boat that will take him away from the islands to his school in the continental United States.

Two things, however, prevent the certainty of this resolution, the certainty that Mark's rejection of the kahuna's offer means an acceptance of American assimilation. First, the text ends abruptly as Mark is running, not as he is boarding the ship, so Mark's future is left unresolved. Second, the text shifts during Mark's reaction to the kahuna from past to present tense. While the entire text before this moment is told as a reflection back on Mark's summer, as if told from a future moment, the text abruptly shifts to the uncertainty of the present.¹²⁹ Like Charles and the other young men of *Princess of the Night Rides and Other Tales*, Mark is left to make sense of his hapa-haole identity in the present through bearing witness to his history, however uncomfortable. These men are not stuck in the past, nor are they representatives of a future; instead they remain poised in the present and capable of shaping their own lives. For Holt, then, the tableau vivant feared in "Family Portraits" may not *only* be an anachronistic space of spectacle, but also a space of hybridity, of in-betweenness: at once live and still, representation and performance, granting subjectivity to what was once only the objectified hapa-haole literary figure.

The emerging potential of Holt's tableau vivant of the hapa-haole literary figure is also one found by Asian American mixed-race people in the late twentieth century when hapa was used as a term through which an identity free of and against

¹²⁹ Susan Najita offers an analysis of *Waimea Summer* in "Trauma and the Construction of Race in Holt's *Waimea Summer*," where she reads this final scene, including the tense shift, as well.

overdetermined representations of Asian mixed race could be imagined. Yet this latter usage is haunted by the cultural representations of Asian mixed race and Hawaiian mixed race in Hawai‘i, as traced in this chapter. A “hapa” identity, in the form of the neo-Hawaiian American race, was a way to disenfranchise Native Hawaiians, and a way to represent a strategic U.S. mixed-race future in Hawai‘i and Asia. The “future” deferred in early twentieth century Orientalist texts – explored in the first chapter of this dissertation – is embraced because of this early moment in Hawai‘i, marking a shift in Asian American mixed-race representation that backdates current depictions of a multicultural, post-racial United States and therefore reveals its persistence in U.S. racial discourse. At the same time, the potential of hapa-haole and hapa uncovered in Holt and in the later expressions of mixed-race artists and authors is one that will be the central concern of the following section of this dissertation. In the next two chapters, I trace Asian mixed-race authors as writing subjects, reclaiming the objectified Asian mixed-race figure. Against its use for United States nationalism, I trace the cosmopolitan potential of non-symbolic Asian mixed-race literature.

CHAPTER THREE

Citizens of Nowhere, Citizens of the World: Asian Mixed Race and the Cosmopolitan Future

“I knew already what the future had in store for them. My children would belong nowhere. Always there would be this double load for them, no place they could call their own land, their true home. No house for them in the world.”

Han Suyin, *A Crippled Tree*

“And my heart shall know what it is not to be one, yet not two, for ever almost, for my house of life has two doors...”

Han Suyin, *A Crippled Tree*

In author Han Suyin’s semi-autobiographical novel *A Many-Splendored Thing* (1952), mixed-race Asian protagonist Suyin controversially declares “Eurasians” as “the future of the world” (208).¹³⁰ Living in Hong Kong, caught between China and Britain during the tumultuous years of the Chinese Communist Revolution, Suyin imagines against this backdrop of division a hopeful future of a world united through mixed race. As “the fusion of all that can become a world civilization” (208), Eurasians, Suyin believes, might offer a way to bridge national, racial, and cultural divides, particularly those exacerbated between Asia, Europe, and the United States in

¹³⁰ *A Many-Splendored Thing* is loosely based on author Han Suyin’s romance with war correspondent Ian Morrison, recounted in her later memoir *My House has Two Doors* (1980). Though Morrison’s name is changed in *A Many-Splendored Thing*, the author’s is not. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to the author as Han Suyin or Han, and the character as Suyin.

the post-WWII, early Cold War period.¹³¹ Yet her assertion, with its eugenicist logic and implied superiority, is a discomfiting one, a problematic Han Suyin highlights later in the text. The idea of a Eurasian future, however, was and still is by no means unusual; Suyin is repeating an assumed potential of Asian mixed race that took root much earlier in the twentieth century.

Since the turn of the twentieth century, Asian mixed race has taken on increasing meaning in United States' cultural production. Because mixed-race figures are seen as existing between racial categories, they offer both a way to challenge and a way to reaffirm those categories. During the early twentieth century, Asian mixed-race figures particularly became a means of expressing, questioning, and imagining the relationship between Asia and the United States. Some authors, including the oft-read Edith Eaton, penname Sui Sin Far, imagined the future promised by a deracinated Eurasian subject.¹³² For these authors, Asian mixed race became a model of unification for a world they saw devastated by assertions of race and nationality. In contrast, nationalist U.S. depictions of Asian mixed race of the same time predicted a strategic mixed-race future, where Asian mixed-race figures in literary and popular

¹³¹ This chapter uses both the terms "Eurasian" and "Asian mixed race." I use "Eurasian" specifically when referring to literary representations of Asian mixed race in early twentieth century texts and in Han's texts. "Eurasian" was frequently the term used in popular culture representations at this time, and will help distinguish the literary figure and stereotype from lived and historical Asian mixed-race experience. Because of the colonial associations of Eurasian, which was first used in colonized India, I choose instead the contemporary term "Asian mixed race" elsewhere. Since this chapter and the next explore the work of authors and artists not necessarily or only affiliated with the United States, I use "Asian mixed race" rather than "Asian American mixed race."

¹³² See, for example, Edith Eaton's "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian."

culture naturalized U.S. imperialism in Asia and the Pacific.¹³³ By the time *A Many-Splendored Thing* was published, an Asian mixed-race future was a tried and true narrative, albeit an insidious one that either supported U.S. imperialism in Asia, or resisted it by presenting mixed race as a simplistic resolution to racism, rather than considering the structural and material legacies of race in the United States.

Yet I open with this declaration from *A Many-Splendored Thing* because in its repetition of earlier assertions of Asian mixed-race futures, in Han's restaging of the tired symbolic use of Asian mixed race, she begins to articulate a different imaginary, one that takes the Eurasian figure out of its nationalist cooptation, its symbolic future, and its racialist (and racist) roots. Reading Han's *A Many-Splendored Thing* as well as her later memoir *The Crippled Tree: China, Biography, History, Autobiography* (1965), this chapter traces her depictions of Asian mixed race as she explores and questions how a deracinated mixed-race subject might engage in anti-racist, anti-imperialist politics. Han's texts play with representations of Asian mixed race and its projected futures, although these texts ultimately reject any alignment with the concept of race and mixed race. Thus I read Han's work as an important early attempt to resignify and reclaim mixed-race literary figures while addressing the structures of race and imperialism these very figures are often used to elide.

The Eurasian Cosmopolite

With the promise of creating a "world civilization," the deracinated mixed-race figure of Suyin's declaration in *A Many-Splendored Thing* is distinctly

¹³³ I discuss examples of nationalist U.S. depictions of Asian mixed race in chapter two of this dissertation.

cosmopolitan, imagined outside the borders – be they national, political, or racial – often used to divide the world community. As this chapter will argue, cosmopolitanism was central to Han’s imagining of Asian mixed race, particularly as it resisted nationalism. At the same time, cosmopolitanism was also an expression of the lived reality of many Asian mixed-race individuals during the first half of the twentieth century. Before turning to this, however, I will briefly clarify my use of the term.

Cosmopolitanism, a political and social ideal of world community and governance, is often critiqued for its connection to European universalism, to a singular understanding of what the term “world” means, how it might be organized, and who lives in it.¹³⁴ My use of the term here is conscious of this baggage of imperialism and elite privilege, since its modern conception emerges from monopoly capital, colonialism, and Enlightenment’s Eurocentric humanism.¹³⁵ Yet I simultaneously work to recover the term, to emphasize what Bruce Robbins has called “plural and particular cosmopolitanism,” (2) which emphasizes the multiple cosmopolitanisms that are created through different experiences, moments, and locations. Cosmopolitanism may, for example, be associated with the privileged roaming of the globe that promotes an exclusive vision of human community.¹³⁶ Simultaneously, though, cosmopolitanism may refer to the forced migration triggered

¹³⁴ See Bruce Robbins’ “Introduction,” 2.

¹³⁵ See Gayatri Spivak’s “Forward: Cosmopolitanisms and the Cosmopolitical”; Chih-ming Wang’s “Cosmopolitanism without Empire?”; and Mike Featherstone’s “Cosmopolis: An Introduction.”

¹³⁶ See Bruce Robbins’ “Introduction,” 1.

by capitalism and war.¹³⁷ Conceptualizing plural cosmopolitanism reveals the uneven effects of imperialism and capitalism, and the multiple senses and politics of the world and of world community that emerge as a result.

This chapter is concerned with a particular cosmopolitanism: that of the Eurasian figure in the twentieth century. Like other cosmopolitanisms, the cosmopolitanism of the Eurasian figure is full of contradictions and ambiguities. It is both a lived experience and a philosophy explored in literature; a privileged view and an enforced way of life; an idealistic perspective and an imperfect way of imagining community. In using the term cosmopolitanism, then, it is precisely this tension – the hopeful vision of unity weighted by the reality of the exclusion and the violence that produce it – that I mean to call to the surface.

Cosmopolitanism, as a lived experience of Asian mixed-race individuals, was a result of legal and social conditions during the early to mid-twentieth century, which made the blurring of racial boundaries a simultaneous blurring of national boundaries. Many early Asian mixed-race authors and artists were born or raised abroad and traveled extensively within and outside of the United States over the course of their lifetimes. In a sense they were cosmopolitan figures, citizens of the world who traveled throughout Asia, Europe, and the Americas. The cosmopolitanism of early Asian mixed-race authors and artists was not necessarily or not only a privileged roaming of the globe, though. It was also a transnational movement that reflected the material consequences of being Asian mixed race during

¹³⁷ Ibid.

a time of legal proscription and cultural discrimination. Because both Asian exclusion and anti-miscegenation legislation rendered Asian mixed race illegible and illegitimate, Asian mixed-race authors and artists faced discrimination and proscription in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century. They faced similar social if not legal proscription outside the United States, as well.

While distinct from the oft-critiqued elitist concepts of a unified world, then, there were also privileges held by Asian mixed-race subjects, who often had elevated class status and increased mobility. By using the term “cosmopolitanism” in relation to Asian mixed race, I seek to call forth these simultaneous histories of privilege and oppression. Cosmopolitanism was a privileged view of the world *and* an enforced way of life. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, this troubling ambiguity of Eurasian cosmopolitanism is at the forefront in Han’s work. In her texts, Han develops a *critical* cosmopolitanism, one that attempts to address the historical, social, and structural legacies of imperialism and racism as they intersect with mixed race.

Born in China in 1917 to a Chinese father and Belgian mother, educated in Britain, and circulating in her adult life between Britain, Hong Kong, China, India, and Switzerland, Han lived a cosmopolitan reality while maintaining a strong connection to the land of her birth. The author of numerous fictional and non-fictional books, many about China and Chinese communism, Han dedicated herself to being “China’s spokesperson in the anti-Communist West” (Ling 174). This did not preclude her criticism of certain aspects of communist China, nor her simultaneous dedication to exploring her mixed-race identity. Han’s writing continuously returns to

the links and tensions between cosmopolitanism, Chinese nationalism, and Asian mixed race. Although Han had little connection to the United States, it is precisely because of this that her work is informative to my dissertation. Han's writings, particularly her Hollywood-bound *A Many-Splendored Thing*, were widely read in the United States and contributed to discourse around Asian mixed race in the United States. Her work thus lends insight into how understandings of Asian mixed race traveled to, rather than from, the United States; what futures in Asia were being imagined in relation to mixed race; and how this existed alongside ones produced in the United States.

My readings here will focus on two of Han's early literary works, *A Many-Splendored Thing* and *The Crippled Tree*. *A Many-Splendored Thing* tells the semi-autobiographical story of the doomed love of Eurasian doctor Han Suyin and British war correspondent Mark Elliot in Hong Kong during the Chinese Communist Revolution. Han's story, immortalized as a love story by Hollywood's film adaptation *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing* (1955), its accompanying song, and eventually a soap opera spinoff, is a complex meditation on Asian mixed-race during an unsettled time in China and Hong Kong. *The Crippled Tree* is the first installment of a multi-volume, experimental autobiography. Covering the years 1885 through 1928, *The Crippled Tree* tells the story of Han's parents' courtship, marriage, and life in China, and then turns to the first decade of Han's life as she struggles to come to terms with her mixed-race identity.

Beginning with *A Many-Splendored Thing* and expanded in *The Crippled Tree*, these texts reveal the development of Han's understanding of the anti-racist, anti-imperialist potential of mixed race and critical cosmopolitanism. In theorizing mixed race, Han explores a critical cosmopolitanism that reflects the experience of simultaneously belonging and not belonging, the interstitial racial and national space of Asian mixed-race identification. She attends to what literary scholar Katherine Stanton has suggested in another context as the cosmopolitan literary expression of the "states of feeling, modes of belonging, and practices of citizenship in an increasingly pluralized cosmos" (2). Han's critical cosmopolitanism, in other words, is an emplaced commitment to world community that is attentive to the relativity of experience and the multiplicity of identification. Thus Han explores world community with attention to her own experience as a mixed-race woman in Asia and Europe with multiple affiliations and loyalties. In Han's literary work, this is notably both a conceptual and an aesthetic practice; it is at once a future vision and a lived reality through form. That is, though cosmopolitanism here is literary, it might also be "more broadly conceived – as attitude, stance, posture, and consciousness – [all of which are] crucial to many of the other, nonliterary practices of cosmopolitanism" (Walkowitz 2).¹³⁸ Rooted in her experience as an Asian mixed-race woman in China,

¹³⁸ I cite here from Walkowitz' *Cosmopolitan Style*, which explores the critical cosmopolitanism of modernist writers like Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf. She suggests that a cosmopolitan aesthetic practice is most often associated with literary modernism, where practices of privileged displacement like dandyism and flânerie flourished alongside a more critical engagements with "narrative patterns of attentiveness, relevance, perception, and recognition" (6). I am interested in

and attentive to the connection between cosmopolitanism, privilege, and imperialism, Han Suyin articulates a critical cosmopolitan vision and aesthetic in these two texts.

Questioning the Future

Many people come to *A Many-Splendored Thing* today through the glossy Hollywood film, a romance set against the turmoil of the post-World War II years in Hong Kong. The love story between Suyin, played in yellowface by Jennifer Jones, and Mark, played by William Holden, is made all the more tragic by the swelling notes of the Academy Award-winning song of the same name. Yet the text on which the film is based offers a more complex love story. Although ostensibly about Suyin's interracial romance with Mark, *A Many-Splendored Thing* instead focuses mainly on Suyin's mixed-race identity during this time of sweeping political change in China. *A Many-Splendored Thing* is concerned with the automatically politicized position of the Asian mixed-race subject at a time when China was violently rejecting the imperialism of Europe. In light of this, the text considers if and how mixed-race subjectivity might help forge anti-imperialist paths, while questioning its typical literary representation. Suyin's relationship with Mark, emphasized by his English nationality although his real-life model was Australian, is a foil for these concerns rather than a focus of the text.

One of the primary ways the text explores these concerns is by experimenting with mixed-race representation. The assertion of a mixed-race future in *A Many-Splendored Thing*, with which this chapter began, is only a small part of a larger

thinking through Han's cosmopolitan aesthetic as well as vision, in how literature uniquely provided room for her critical cosmopolitanism.

survey of mixed-race representation in the text. Suyin searches for an expression of mixed race not encompassed by the racism and imperialism that she works against. Though Suyin does not arrive at a clear solution to these problems, *A Many-Splendored Thing* importantly marks the beginning of an investigation of mixed-race representation that author Han Suyin more fully develops in *The Crippled Tree*.

The setting of *A Many-Splendored Thing*, Hong Kong, is integral to such an exploration. In the 1940s, Hong Kong was poised between Britain and China, filling with those displaced by the war in China and faced by an uncertain future. As a British colony, Hong Kong was a cosmopolitan city influenced by both Europe and Asia, and had long been a bustling center of trade. Hong Kong's population hailed from around the world and included, like other British colonies in Asia, a sizeable mixed-race community. Figuring mixed race and interracial love in Hong Kong at this time, then, emphasizes both the status of mixed race in British colonies and the shifting implications of such identification during the uncertainty of revolution. Historically, mixed-race British subjects in the colonies were understood as a buffer class between colonizers and colonized. They held elevated class and social statuses because of their English heritage and yet simultaneously were barred from white privilege. Mixed-race individuals and interracial love thus occupied a contradictory space of acceptance and disdain, of privilege and oppression.¹³⁹ As Han's text illustrates, this position became even more tenuous when mixed-race individuals found themselves also facing an uncertain welcome in China. *A Many-Splendored*

¹³⁹ See Emma Teng's *Eurasian*, 9.

Thing tracks this tenuous position, which becomes central to Han's consideration of the representational possibilities available to the colonial Asian mixed-race subject.

Prior to Suyin's declaration of Eurasian exceptionalism, Han depicts Suyin's fluctuating relationship with her Eurasian identity. In the first half of the text, Suyin frequently bemoans the "schizophrenia" (76) of her Eurasian heritage; for Suyin "it's awful to be two or more people all the time" and "frightening to be so many different people, with so many dissimilar and equally compelling emotions, affections, ideas, *elans*, apprehensions..." (76, 99). Suyin feels divided as she circulates between different groups of friends in Hong Kong that are separated by race and class, and between her home locales of British Hong Kong and Chinese Chungking. Suyin's multiple affiliations become more than metaphor; her "schizophrenia" becomes a tangible reality as Suyin's lover Mark describes "the multiple [Suyins]" who exist so he "never know[s] which [Suyin] it is going to be..." (99).¹⁴⁰ Despite Suyin's discomfort with her so-called schizophrenia, the "multiple [Suyins]" are what distinguish her from "poor one-world people" (99, 208) and enable her claim of a promising future cosmopolitanism. Although she may not recognize it, Suyin's Eurasian "fusion" is an embrace of her "schizophrenia." They are two sides of the same coin, with both ultimately playing on the belief of fundamental (racial) differences that might be bridged by mixed-race individuals.

Despite pathologizing mixed-race identification, Suyin does not reject her mixed-race identification. Instead, her fluctuating relationship might be understood as

¹⁴⁰ The use of schizophrenia, or embodying multiple people to represent mixed race, is a trope continued in many of Han's later texts, as well, including *A Crippled Tree*.

a resistance to the external cooptation of mixed-race identity. For example, while with Mark in Hong Kong, Suyin is always conscious of how her Eurasian identity is perceived in the colonial setting. Because she knows “the word itself [Eurasian] evokes in some minds a sensation of moral laxity,” Suyin is wary of “becoming a cheap Hong Kong Eurasian” (167, 40). Suyin is fearful that her relationship, particularly if it remains an illicit affair since Mark is married, will align her with stereotypes of colonial mixed race including that of the sexually available mixed-race woman. Suyin is afraid that as a mixed-race woman her actions are only legible through stereotype. While she is conscious of the hypersexualization associated with the term “Eurasian,” Suyin also does not want her mixed heritage silenced. When Mark describes her as a “beautiful Chinese girl,” Suyin corrects him and interprets his erasure of her identity as “a prejudice against the mixed bloods” (76). She rejects both stereotyping and erasure of mixed race, and begins searching for a different expression of mixed-race identity.

Yet at times in the text Suyin appears to promote exactly what she rejects. Suyin frequently identifies herself as Chinese, insisting that since she was a child she “had wanted to be all Chinese, not a counterfeit semi-European” (52). Her desire to be identified as Chinese is revealed to be partly because of colonial racism. Though “in China no one ever [thought] of [Suyin] but as Chinese,” the “colonial English” made it “a shame and an inferiority to be Eurasian” (158). Just as with the fear of being a “cheap Hong Kong Eurasian,” Suyin is conscious of the way Eurasian identity in British Hong Kong is underscored by the racism of colonialism. In British

colonies, Eurasians often found themselves ostracized by both British and Asian communities. Yet in China belonging was determined through patrilineal descent, location of birth, and cultural practices.¹⁴¹ Indeed, the author Han Suyin may have been considered Chinese because of her patrilineal descent and Chinese birthplace.¹⁴² By rejecting Eurasian or “semi-European” identification for Chinese identity, Suyin is rejecting a mixed-race identification inscribed by racism. At the same time, Suyin appears to hold on to her mixed-race identity in *A Many-Splendored Thing*. She is, after all, angry with Mark for calling her Chinese rather than mixed race, and early in the book Suyin is excited to meet an old school friend who is “Eurasian like [her]self” (50). Yet Suyin is aware that her claims of Eurasian identity are inscribed by this colonial context and resists this negative cooptation. In fact, it is the consciousness of colonialism that interrupts Suyin’s earlier idea of a Eurasian cosmopolitan future.

By the end of the text, Suyin has moved away from her declaration of the Eurasian “future of the world” (208). What Suyin calls “racial Eurasianism” is a “small, negligible prejudice” kept up in the “outposts of empire,” like Hong Kong, by “bridge-bored white women” (235). Because of its continued ties to the racial logic of colonialism, Suyin discards a cosmopolitanism based on mixed-race identity. This is unsurprising because throughout the text, Suyin has distanced herself from any cosmopolitanism created as a result of colonialism. Hong Kong, for example, is depicted as a cosmopolitan space, where rich and poor meet, where British, Chinese, Japanese, and Americans live side-by-side, and where products from all corners of the

¹⁴¹ See Emma Teng’s *Eurasian*, 15 and 211.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, 209-210.

globe are sold; Hong Kong is a “beautiful island of many worlds” (17). Yet, beneath this cosmopolitan surface, Han portrays division and blindness. The rich are separated from the poor, the Chinese from the European, and their only meeting is in the commodities bought, sold, or stolen. Though Hong Kong has “all the ingredients” to be “the melting pot of the Orient,” it is instead “a place where everyone [meets] and stay[s] apart, divided by hedges of prejudice and hearsay” (59). Hong Kong’s cosmopolitan potential is limited by its life as a colony and the structures of race and class that maintain the distinction between colonizers and colonized. Although Suyin declares Eurasians are a “fusion,” perhaps paralleling her claim of Hong Kong as “the melting pot of the Orient,” it is a fusion haunted by the gossip of “bridge-bored” women – by the reality of mixing perceived by and existing in the exploitative and othering world of colonialism.

Instead of racial Eurasian exceptionalism and cosmopolitanism, then, Suyin begins to consider her mixed-race identity in cultural and national terms in an attempt to remove the binds of race: she is an “intellectual” Eurasian. Suyin’s concept of “intellectual Eurasianism,” which “has nothing to do with race,” is the “affliction” of “many young Asians” (235) educated in Europe. Echoing the language she once used to describe her racial identity, Han describes these young Asians as “habitual schizophrenes, divided within ourselves” (238), particularly during the Cultural Revolution in China. Like racial Eurasianism, Suyin understands intellectual Eurasianism as a result of colonialism; intellectual Eurasians are a “small ‘upper class’” brought to Europe but “return[ed] to be ‘kept in our place’ in colonial lands”

(235, 236). Suyin's concept of intellectual Eurasianism, then, emphasizes the very class privilege that might have made these intellectuals suspect in China at this time.

Unlike the resistance proposed by racial Eurasian cosmopolitanism, though – which answers racism with race and oppressive world system with another world system – Suyin asserts “intellectual Eurasians” might resist the strictures of their colonial upbringing by embracing Chinese nationalism, by choosing to align with China and rejecting Europe. Speaking of an “ardent nationalism,” Suyin valorizes intellectual Eurasians who “choose, not political creed, but our own land, China” (238). For Suyin, embracing Chinese nationalism, not as a political stance but as a love of place, is a rejection of the European individualism intellectual Eurasians have been taught and an embrace of the communal worldview Han associates with China. Intellectual Eurasian nationalism preserves the basis of Suyin's earlier Eurasian future – collectivity against prejudice – without the baggage of a reliance on mixed-race bodies and categories of race.

For the character Suyin, intellectual Eurasianism replaces racial Eurasianism as a less compromised vision of community through Eurasian identity. Still, author Han Suyin may be playing politics here as she attempts to resignify a racial and class identity under pressure at this moment in China. This is an unambiguous call to align with China and reject Europe, one that might strategically allow Han to maintain a relationship with communist China. The ambivalence of this position, however, seems to surface in her insistence that this is choosing China, a place and home, rather than a political creed. This is perhaps why, in the end, the protagonist Suyin is

unable to commit to Chinese nationalism since it requires “choosing” a (communist) Chinese identification over any other. Instead, Suyin remains in Hong Kong, “the haven of many like myself, waiting to make up their minds” (240). Her indecision, still intact at the end of the text, reveals her ambiguity about the assertion of nationalism, and the choosing of singular affiliation that it requires, as an answer to colonialism.

Like racial Eurasian cosmopolitanism, intellectual Eurasian nationalism is rejected by the end of *A Many-Splendored Thing* because, in choosing China over all else, it requires a closing off from the world. Though Suyin maintains an alignment with China in the end, there is a cosmopolitan character to her self-proclaimed nationalism. She does not seek community through nation-state, but instead is deeply dedicated to humanity, to people *over* and *in spite of* politics and nationality. For Suyin, politics are “passing things, but pain, and hunger, and poverty, like the proverbial brook, go on forever” (174). Even as her text expresses a desire to return to China, in part to help those in pain, hunger, and poverty, her vision of human connection prevents her long-term return to China which, she believes, would require her to reject parts of her identity. This is symbolically expressed through her love affair with Mark – an affair she would be forced to end if she returned to China which, in the midst of cultural revolution, she believes has rejected all things European. Because Suyin knows Mark will “never...live and work in this New China” where he will be “suspect, followed, censored” and deported, she returns to Hong Kong, where it is “possible for Mark and [she] to love” (239, 240). Hong Kong

is the only place where their “love exist[s]; there was no time and no place for [them] anywhere else in the world” (240). Han Suyin closes *A Many-Splendored Thing* not with a return to China, to nationalism, but to the colonial cosmopolitan world of Hong Kong.

By having Suyin choose Mark and Hong Kong, Han’s text suggests yet another means of confronting colonial racism through community. This is not a futuristic blending of all races into a world civilization, nor a nationalist collectivity in China, but rather a momentary series of interpersonal alliances articulated by Mark. Before his death as a correspondent in the Korean War, Mark writes Suyin of his realization that his interracial relationships “all are gateways” and that “it is only thus, through love, that comes the beginning of understanding” (290). On one level, this love is Mark and Suyin’s as they confront and often fail to overcome the prejudices facing interracial love in a colonial context. Their love’s failure to overcome prejudice is perhaps best exemplified at the end of *A Many-Splendored Thing* when Mark’s friend discourages Suyin’s proposed memoir as “sacrilege” because Mark and Suyin’s love is “an offense” (304). Yet it perhaps was still a triumph as it built cultural understanding at least between Mark and Suyin. On another level, this love is the platonic love between Mark and his fellow war correspondents including “Prasad for India; [his] friend An for Korea [...and]; Tomoji Murakata for Japan” (290). For Mark, love – in all its imperfection and incompleteness – is a way to break down “foolish and useless” (211) barriers between Asians and Europeans. This final vision of community uses individual action to address structural and social issues. Yet,

because of the consciousness of the colonial context throughout the text, this suggests the possibility that individual action might work against, rather than reinscribe or naturalize, nationalist and colonial ideology.

However, the potential of this vision – so centered on Mark – is fleeting. Not only does Mark die by the end of the text, but he makes these cross-racial connections because of a racist war. The correspondents are only brought together because of U.S. aggression in Korea against communism; Mark’s interpersonal alliances are inscribed by racial, national, and political divisions that are intimately connected to the colonial and communist division that infuse the text. Thus the question of world community is left unanswered at the end of *A Many-Splendored Thing*. Instead, *A Many-Splendored Thing* begins a series of explorations around mixed-race identification in relation to colonialism only to problematize any resolution found through mixed-race. The “schizophrenia” of Suyin’s multiple identification is echoed in the search for a larger meaning of mixed race, but perhaps what Han emphasizes in this series of starts and stops is the complexity and ultimate inadequacy of any representation of mixed race. *A Many-Splendored Thing* is not a tragic story because interracial love fails due to a racist world, but because in a racist world interracial love alone is not enough, and it is unclear what will be.

In this multiplicity of mixed-race depiction, one image in particular is expanded in *The Crippled Tree*. The final meditation on racial Eurasianism in *A Many-Splendored Thing* focuses on the positionality of mixed-race individuals. Suyin describes what she sees as the two potential identifications of mixed-race individuals

in Hong Kong: those who have a “feeling of a white superiority” and identify as Eurasian, and those who “dislike their white blood” and “become Chinese” (268). No matter the choice, she claims, Eurasians are the “true citizens of the sea-wet rock” (269). Unable to understand the “blazing torrid emotions” (268) of China’s communist revolution and unaccepted by Europeans, Eurasians are uniquely citizens of the island colony of Hong Kong. The description here suggests a lack of national allegiance; Hong Kong Eurasians are neither of China nor of Britain, but in-between and marked as “true” inhabitants of the colony. This does not necessarily leave Eurasians as cosmopolitan, but it certainly places Eurasians outside of the nation, whether China or England, and the text locates potential in this identification. Although Hong Kong is a colonial site, it is also the only place Suyin and Mark can love, and the only place Suyin can write of their love. Existing between Britain and China, between land and sea, is a space productive and at the same time destructive on many levels. Yet there is transformative potential, *A Many-Splendored Thing* begins to hint, in this Asian mixed-race positionality.

The Citizens of Nowhere

The ending of Han Suyin’s *A Many-Splendored Thing* leaves Suyin between land and sea, and Eurasians deracinated as “true citizens” of uncertain colonial spaces. Han’s final description of Asian mixed race conforms to a formulation circulating throughout the first half of the twentieth century: Eurasians as “citizens of nowhere.” This formulation – and the cosmopolitan potential of or against that notion – is one continued in Han’s later texts, particularly her autobiographical *The Crippled*

Tree: China, Biography, History, Autobiography (1965).¹⁴³ In this text, the exploration of Eurasian identity and cosmopolitanism begun in *A Many-Splendored Thing* is expanded and theorized. The highly-crafted first book of a six-volume memoir, *The Crippled Tree* traces the biography of Han's Chinese father and her Belgian mother, the story of their courtship, and the memories of Han's own early childhood, all alongside a detailed history of revolutionary China.¹⁴⁴ Han's sophisticated text embodies a fluid multiplicity in form and subject in order to reveal a functioning, non-symbolic mixed-race identity that extends to a critical cosmopolitan vision.

As in *A Many-Splendored Thing*, Han's memoir acknowledges negative Eurasian stereotypes and early on sets up several "tragic" Eurasian figures that conform to common popular culture depictions of Asian mixed race. Han's own father negatively describes a Eurasian as "a half-breed" who "behave[s] arrogantly" and tries to "curry favour with his white master" (*Crippled* 166). This description of mixed race conforms to the idea of the Eurasians who, in *A Many-Splendored Thing*, hold the "feeling of a white superiority" (268) and exist in compromise between colonizers and colonized. Later, Han's father asserts that his "children would belong nowhere" with "no place to call their own land, their true home" (*Crippled* 290),

¹⁴³ Han's memoirs include *The Crippled Tree* (1965), *Mortal Flower* (1966), *Birdless Summer* (1968), *My House has Two Doors* (1980), *A Share of Loving* (1987), and *Wind in my Sleeve* (1992). See Seiwoong Oh's "Han Suyin," 101.

¹⁴⁴ Han asserts this as a "revolutionary" period in *The Crippled Tree*, suggesting revolutions like the Revolution of 1911 were the beginnings of the Communist Revolution.

confirming a sense of non-belonging similar to that depicted in *A Many-Splendored Thing*.

Depictions of Eurasian figures' "tragic" lack of home were popular in early twentieth century texts; John Paris' *Kimono* (1921), for example, describes Eurasians as "denizen[s] of a dream country which has a melodious name and no geographical existence" (87). The tragic Eurasian trope is further figured by the text in the portrayal of Han's brother, George Son of Spring/Chou Tzechun, who seems to fulfill his father's prediction as "a young man, already lost, no place on earth for him, a Eurasian belonging nowhere" (*Crippled* 210). Part of his tragedy lies in his inability to render coherent his mixed-race experience. George/Tzechun has "two identities through his two names, [is] rich heir to two cultures, two races, [and is] two of everything except his own torn self" (211). Even here we begin to see the narrator's differing take on Eurasian identity as Han's brother's heritage is described as "rich." This memoir does not subscribe to mixed-race stereotypes, but meditates on them in order to articulate a way out of treachery and tragedy – a new way of embracing Eurasian identity and becoming a citizen of somewhere – while also emphasizing the historical and social, rather than personal and psychological, causes of tragic or treacherous Eurasian figures.

Han emphasizes the historical and social causes for treachery and tragedy through her focus on biography and memoir in relation to historical context. The narrator asserts that "being Eurasian was a calamity in those days, and still is today for certain people" (207). While on the one hand, this refers to psychological

calamity, which Han's personal experience in the text suggests can be overcome, on the other hand this emphasizes the biopolitical consequence of Eurasian identification during a period of imperialism in China. Han's brother, Sea Orchid, "died because he was Eurasian" (312) as did several other siblings "because they [were] half-caste, which mean the doctor might or might not bother to come" (347). Sea Orchid, for example, dies because he becomes ill in the middle of the night and the European doctor's wife "will not have [the doctor] kill [him]self for the sake of a halfcaste throwdown" (315). The racism faced by Eurasians had serious consequences and accounts for why, of her parents' many children, only Han and three siblings survive. Having previously articulated that "exploitation and oppression is not a matter of *race*" but are instead "the apparatus[es] of a world-wide brigandage called imperialism" (120), *The Crippled Tree* connects the lived experiences of Eurasians to imperialism, just as *A Many-Splendored Thing* does.

Yet, while recognizing the historical and social situation of Eurasian experience, Han returns to the personal and psychological aspects as well. Her descriptions of treacherous and tragic Eurasians, particularly in her depiction of her brother, serve as lessons. Walking with her "lost" brother, Han explains that she "watched, listened, learnt; and thus was saved" (210). Through her initially negative portrayals of mixed race, Han is able to begin theorizing alternate mixed-race identification. This alternate identification works in the face of "torn" Eurasian identities *and* of the claim that Eurasians belong nowhere. Through both content and form, Han theorizes mixed-race multiplicity and belonging, and seeks the promise of

world collectivity, though one not rooted in divisions of race or class, begun in *A Many-Splendored Thing*.

To Be Not One, Yet Not Two

Han's alternative conception of mixed race begins in the second half of *A Crippled Tree*. While the first half of the memoir tells the story of Han's parents and of Chinese history at the turn of the twentieth century, the second half explores the first decade of Han's life through Han's embodiment of her childhood, the character Rosalie. Early in the description of her childhood, Han writes that Rosalie will "know what it is not to be one yet not two" (291), an assertion that summarizes what Rosalie will come to discover: a way to prevent the fragmentation of duality associated with her "torn" brother, George, and other Eurasians, while also resisting a monolithic or monoracial identity by embracing multiplicity and relativity.

As suggested by her description of George as a "rich heir," Han embraces duality in her depiction of Rosalie. Duality is "an other life, a saving otherness which was also self" (364). Describing differing meals (European food and Chinese food), differing schools (Chinese schools and European Catholic schools), and differing societies (the "curtsies" of Europe and the "squalor" of Peking), Rosalie imagines she "could and did become someone else, at differing hours of the day" (364). Her changing personalities are further confirmed by her various names; "Rosalie was Moon Guest when she was Chinese, just as she was Rosalie when she was, not

European...but half-caste, a Eurasian” (412).¹⁴⁵ Rosalie’s duality is portrayed through self-conversations. Rather than merely the varying thoughts of a single entity, Han writes conversations between one Rosalie and another. For example, when Rosalie is crying over a lost friend, “someone else, who was also Rosalie, sat back watching her weep, sneering: ‘Look at yourself, you stupid, crying...you *know* it will stop hurting one day...’ ‘That’s just it,’ said Rosalie to Rosalie, ‘that’s what will happen. One day I won’t feel anything at all’” (383). The use of quotation marks to portray these conversations emphasizes that Rosalie’s duality, although positively framed as “saving,” is also a fragmentation, like split personalities or, as characterized in *A Many-Splendored Thing*, schizophrenia.

Indeed, Han writes that “in Rosalie, a fragmentation of the total self occurred, each piece recreating from its own sum of facts a person” (382). The “splitting, fragmentation of monolithic identity” (382) thus reveals that duality, as expressed in the Chinese and European comparisons, is actually multiplicity. There are many names, for example, that this Eurasian character answers to: Rosalie, Moon Guest, Little Moon (to her father), the Wicked One (to her mother), as well as the unnamed narrator (presumably Han Suyin) who herself has adopted a pseudonym as author.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Although I quote here to demonstrate the naming practices in *A Crippled Tree*, this quote also tellingly indicates the racialization Han/Rosalie experienced. Rosalie is able to identify as Chinese, but she is not legible as “European,” only as “Eurasian.” This is a distinction Han highlights in *A Many-Splendored Thing*, as well, when she explains that she “had wanted to be all Chinese, not a counterfeit semi-European” (52).

¹⁴⁶ Elisabeth Chou takes on the pseudonym Han Suyin because it was thought inappropriate for a wife of a member of the Chinese Kuomintang diplomatic core to write novels, as discussed in Amy Ling’s *Between Worlds*, 16. Han translated her

In *The Crippled Tree* mixed-race identity is not just a logic of twoness, but of multiplicity, and multiplicities that are sometimes but most often not understood through race. Han thus writes of “all the Rosalies, all the Rosalies-to-be”; there are “so many different Rosalies” (419). In her initial portrayal of Rosalie, then, Han already begins to fracture assumptions about mixed race. While embracing such multiplicity, though, the text is infused with caution around multiplicity becoming fragmentation. At times, fragmentation threatens to overwhelm Rosalie, filling her with “a new harshness” and making her “unreal to herself” (376). Yet Han also asserts that other Eurasians are crippled because they are “unable to face the contradictions latent in their own beings” (382). The text pushes to a resolution that will allow Rosalie to face these contradictions without tearing herself into two or more people. Rosalie finds wholeness, though *not* one-ness, through the recognition of emplaced cosmopolitan belonging.

In the midst of her fragmentation, “all the Rosalies” are “h[e]ld together, with delicate thread” by what Rosalie labels “beauty” (384). She is first introduced to beauty by her father, who takes her lotus viewing, a traditional Chinese contemplation of natural beauty with connections to Buddhism. The lotus flower, a Buddhist symbol, grows from the muck of a pond to become a beautiful flower on the water’s surface. It is fitting that in a text called the crippled tree – a tree that is crippled because its soil is so poisonous, as I will later discuss – the lotus flower, which grows despite its environment, marks the turning point for Rosalie. Once conscious of the

pseudonym as “a common little voice” and “a little voice that never stops talking” (Han qtd. in Dullea).

lotus flower, which is both culturally and physically aligned with China, Rosalie begins to find such potential in everything that grows from the muck of inequality, but particularly in the “hutungs” (384), or the alleyways, of Peking. There Rosalie finds beauty in “the beggars on their rubbish dumps, and Feng the rickshaw man, and the dying babies, and the frozen dead” (384). These are the invisible, the dehumanized, cast off by a China plagued by European imperialism. Rosalie begins to align herself with the people who will become valorized in the subsequent revolution. Here this might be read, as it was in *A Many-Splendored Thing*, as a political assertion on Han’s part. Yet there also seems to be a genuine alignment; later in the text, as I will analyze, Han speaks of mixed-race individuals as those crippled by an inhospitable soil, much like the lotus and those she associates with it. Though Han certainly is more privileged than the people of the hutungs, she ultimately develops an understanding of how alliances might be forged across class and racial lines, and against imperialism.

This “terrible” beauty that makes “everything...hurt more” (384), is what stops Rosalie’s fragmentation. Around the beauty, “one side of [Rosalie] grew, waiting while other Rosalies shouted and screamed, hurt and were hurt, wore out fierce loves and broke them, not careless, but because there was, in the end, no compromises with the lotus, the silence, the beauty that was horror, to be seen and smelt and felt...” (385). Rosalie finds unification, unlike her “lost” brother or Eurasian friends, through an embrace of China, of – as her father earlier states – “the things that grow in this earth of ours, this universe of poverty, torment and despair”

(74). Unification for Rosalie comes through a nascent alignment with China, hinting at Han's later affiliation with the People's Republic of China. This alignment in itself is notable because it suggests a different kind of affiliation than those imagined possible in *A Many-Splendored Thing*; she identifies not with the Eurasian "citizens of the sea-wet rock" (269), but across racial and class lines with the dispossessed.

Yet this deep nationalist commitment is tempered by a larger vision of the world. Just as her father's quote resists the nationalism of his statement through words like "earth" and "universe," which insist on a vision larger than China, Rosalie's beauty is not just an embrace of China. The beauty she sees she has previously labeled "the Others" (*Crippled* 357). These "Others were at first all animal...and then there were also Feng and all the other Others, a host of Others" (356-357). Rosalie finds unification, then, in the recognition of the Other in the context of imperialism in China. Yet, though these others are part of China, they also suggest a community of oppressed beyond China. These others are not only human, but also plants and animals, emphasizing a kind of affiliation beyond the categories of space and species created by humans. Han's imagery here, then, begins to resist the depiction of Eurasians as "belonging nowhere" (210), and writes against her father's fears that there will be "no house for [his children] in the world" (290), for just as her six-year-old self draws, Rosalie's "house of life has two doors" (291-292). A sense of place at once national and of the world, and an embrace of the other as self, helps thread all the Rosalie's into a single Han Suyin, not one and yet not two.

However, although threaded together, Han maintains her commitment to multiplicity. This multiplicity is simultaneously “all the Rosalies” *and* “all the Rosalies-to-be” that are “sloughing off the previous [Rosalie]” (419). Han’s multiplicity is a recognition of the instability of the self, of relativity in a single moment and over time. This commitment to multiplicity, emerging in the way she conceptualizes her identity and connects the other to self, extends to the formal construction of her text, revealing a cosmopolitan aesthetic. Han’s story unfolds through a number of different narrators and storylines: her father’s memoirs, her mother’s memories, her uncle’s voice, and several others, not to mention “Rosalie,” this earlier incarnation of Han Suyin. Each is given use of the authorial “I” and often speaks without quotations, as the narrator. In some cases, these narrators become the author, as Han quotes directly from family journals and letters. Furthermore, a single event, whether personal or historical, is often told multiple times by multiple narrators, or multiple times by a single narrator.¹⁴⁷ For example, the story of her parents’ meeting is recounted multiple times, and the story of railroad development in China is told from multiple perspectives.¹⁴⁸ As relativity and multiplicity are privileged, form becomes an enactment of Han’s conception of Eurasian identity. That is, the extension of the thematic of multiplicity and relativity to form embodies Han’s worldview of the other *as* self. Her memoir, her autobiography – that expression which tells the history of the self to the world – is told as much by Han (self) as by family, friends, and historical record (other). The idea Han comes to

¹⁴⁷ Amy Ling first points out this “innovative method” (114) in *Between Worlds*.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

through her Eurasian identity thus moves beyond a concept of race or identity to a concept of being in the world that recognizes the self as other – a cosmopolitan outlook *and* aesthetic.

Han's commitment to the self as other inflects her Eurasian cosmopolitanism with anti-imperialist intent. By resisting a single narration of her memoir – her authorial “I” – Han refuses to privilege the individual over the collective. In this way, Han samples from the collectivity valorized in *A Many-Splendored Thing's* intellectual Eurasian vision while rejecting its required choosing of national belonging. Han is committed to “our one world and one humanity” which she sees made invisible by “the apparatus of world-wide brigandage called imperialism” (*Crippled* 134, 120). Yet Han contradicts the impulse of mixed-race cosmopolitan visions to emphasize individuality over collective community and to make individual and personal what is structural, social, and historical. Han's Eurasian cosmopolitanism is not a hope for the future *racial* Eurasian world, but the future humanitarian world, conscious and attentive to multiplicity and relativity.

At the same time, Han's cosmopolitan vision also strives to avoid being disembodied or abstract in its “one world” and “one humanity.” This is reflected in her ongoing concern with citizenship, with belonging to China. Han rejects the notion of Asian mixed-race figures as “citizens of nowhere,” which in another light is being cosmopolitan, a “citizen of everywhere.” That Rosalie's mixed-race identification is first held together by natural beauty and others – lotus blossoms and animals – becomes significant in this light. Han avoids the abstraction of cosmopolitanism by

embracing an embodied world through nature imagery. Although this imagery in the end is contradictory and ambiguous, it is an important aesthetic turn that characterizes Han's cosmopolitanism.

Of Sea-Wet Rocks and Paradisal Islands

In *The Crippled Tree*, as Han's parents first move back to China from Belgium, there to face the racism and cultural misunderstandings that will forever mar their married life, Han's father begs that "the mountainous dark waters of...cruelty" be held at bay from the metaphorical "little island, almost paradisial miniature" (277) that he inhabits with his Belgian wife and Eurasian child. Yentung's island, a place protected from prejudice, echoes Han's earlier characterization of Hong Kong in *A Many-Splendored Thing*. There, the island is a place of Eurasian belonging, where Suyin might momentarily "sit, a few weeks, a few months – enough time to find a way out" (240) of the impossibility of her relationship with Mark during the Communist Revolution. Like Yentung's, Suyin's is a fleeting but safe island, where she and Mark might "steal from life a little sweetness before everything overt[akes them]" (240). In both *The Crippled Tree* and *A Many-Splendored Thing*, the island represents the only place where interracial love and mixed-race children can exist free of or despite the prejudice and judgment which threatens interracial relationships in both texts. Even though it is cast out of national location and depicted as between China and Europe, the island – metaphorical or not – is a physical space of belonging. For Han, it is an attempt to claim location, to claim emplaced belonging, and characterizes her cosmopolitan vision.

Though Yentung's island metaphor posits the ocean as a representative of "cruelty," *The Crippled Tree* later shifts the metaphor to highlight continental (national) land as the site of cruelty, and the ocean as a site of potential belonging. This occurs through the imagery of trees and of the seaside in *The Crippled Tree*. Imagery of the crippled tree infuses Han's text, becoming a metaphor for those scarred by racism and imperialism. In describing his wife/Han's mother, Marguerite, for example, Yentung says she faced the grief of cultural misunderstanding that would define her life in China "as a tree, crippled at its root by some voracious stabbing insect and forever after bearing the mark of the beast upon its unfolding" (288). Marguerite becomes "crippled" by her treatment in China by both the Chinese, who call her white devil, and the Europeans, who discriminate against her husband and children. The term "crippled" is also applied to Eurasians who cannot find peace with their identities as Han did. Han's brother is "crippled...for life" (207) by the innuendoes of his almost-illegitimacy, born four months after his parents' marriage; "others born...of two worlds" are "crippled" (382) because they cannot accept their fragmentation. The crippled tree thus stands for the damage done to interracial love and multiracial children off the island paradise and rooted in nationalized, or perhaps imperialist, land. Born from a crippled tree and subject to becoming a crippled tree, Han asserts she "would not be [one], marring the landscape with its own malady" but instead will "continue growing, where others had stopped" (18). The rootedness of the tree metaphor made healthy echoes the emplacement-via-beauty that holds Rosalie's multiplicity together. Like the lotus, which grows from the muck, Rosalie

will grow despite the unforgiving ground of her birth. Han's tree metaphor, as it intersects with that of the lotus, underscores what it means to root in hostile land, to search for belonging and, according to her own metaphors, unify a mixed-race identification.

This terrestrial metaphor, however, is interrupted by oceanic imagery that makes ambiguous the concept of earth-bound emplacement. Just as *A Many-Splendored Thing* ends by associating Eurasians with "the sea-wet rock" and Suyin with being "between sea and land" (269, 240), *The Crippled Tree* ends by associating Rosalie with the ocean. As *The Crippled Tree* comes to a close, its form becomes increasingly fragmented as Han describes Rosalie's preteen years and her struggle to come to self-awareness. This "time on in-between childhood and adolescence" is "sinister with water-loneliness, with the terror of submerged incomprehensible suffocation" (458). Water, in which Rosalie's tree cannot root, is a threatening image of not knowing, in Rosalie's mind, "who am I, what am I" (458). Read in relation to Yentung's "waters of cruelty," water comes to represent Rosalie's struggle for self-knowledge in the midst of prejudice and cruelty. Yet the water, as figured in the ocean, also becomes a space of promise. The last several pages of *The Crippled Tree* are full of mentions of a summer trip to the sea. This actual vacation becomes a metaphor of self-discovery as Rosalie contemplates "finding herself" in the future temporality of "tomorrow," and the final sentence of the book explains that "tomorrow would come the sea" (461). Thus the sea becomes representative of the future, and of the potential of mixed-race Rosalie's self-understanding. Yet, as in *A*

Many-Splendored Thing, this self-understanding is not actualized, but pushed to that ever-approaching moment: tomorrow.

Han's turn to the potential of the ocean is not an isolated occurrence in Asian mixed-race texts, but a consistent trope. For example, in her memoir *Holy Prayers in a Horse's Ear* (1932), Kathleen Tamagawa Eldridge asserts that "only the nonexistent [Asian mixed-race individual] can stand on their feet in mid-Pacific" (159).¹⁴⁹ Similarly, in *Frontiers of Love* (1956), Diana Chang's Eurasian heroine finds the ocean "more immediate than it ever had [been] before" (240) at the moment she reconciles with her Eurasian heritage. The alignment of mixed race with ocean space in Asian mixed-race texts might be read in the context of their cosmopolitanism, which – like Han Suyin's work – is partly based in the belief that Asian mixed-race individuals are, to quote Eldridge, "citizens of nowhere" (158). Outside of national boundaries, the ocean is the "nowhere" the deracinated mixed-race figure can claim.

The usefulness of the ocean trope in Asian mixed-race cosmopolitan texts becomes evident in the context of the ocean in the Western imagination. As an apparently unclaimed expanse of the planet, the ocean has long been viewed as cosmopolitan, particularly in the ships that traverse it, which in both historical records and literary representation held international crews and products.¹⁵⁰ In addition to, or perhaps because of, its symbolic existence outside of the nation, the ocean in the

¹⁴⁹ Eldridge uses the term "non-existent" here as she reflects on her legal status in Japan. Because she was never registered in Japan by her Japanese mother, she is told "that I do not exist, that I never have existed" (158). Her experience offers an example of the legal illegibility Asian mixed-race individuals potentially faced at this time.

¹⁵⁰ See John Mack's *The Sea*, 142.

Western imagination is also disembodied and ahistorical. If “space comes to us always already contorted, twisted in the asymmetrical double helices of right versus left, here versus there, front versus back, near versus far” then “the body in open water...is not a subject of knowledge in the ocean” (Casey qtd. in Connery, “No More Sea” 508). In the ocean, the body loses its physical points of reference. Since the ocean “has no history in the sense that it lacks both accessible archeological remains and...historical monuments” and “is also itself in a state of permanent physical transformation” (Mack 91, 95), the body also loses its historical points of reference. The ocean perhaps offers an imaginative space in which the racially-marked body might be imagined outside of the physical and historical markings to which it is so often subject.

Yet ocean space also takes on meaning specifically in the context of Asian mixed race in the twentieth century. The Pacific Ocean is a space marked by U.S. imperialism in Asia. The idea of sea power was “central to the West’s self-definition in the age of world conquest” (Connery, “Sea Power” 685). America’s Pacific, in this context, was seen as “an extension, temporally and geographically of the ‘American West’” (Connery, “Oceanic Feeling” 299) and was described in metaphors of lake, inland prairie, and highway.¹⁵¹ The Pacific was the United States’ route to Asia, and so the claiming of the ocean by Asian mixed-race authors is fraught with this metaphorical weight. Further, the claiming of ocean citizenship also replicates the erasure of Pacific Islanders in U.S. constructions of the Pacific. For example, when

¹⁵¹ For more on these metaphors, see Chris Connery’s “Oceanic Feeling,” 300.

early Asian mixed-race traveler and lawyer, Harry Hastings, announced in an interview his desire to “retir[e] to an island of his own in the Pacific” (Teng 167), he imagined a physical location that conformed to the popular understanding of Asian mixed race, but also ignored the indigenous Pacific Islanders living there, between Asia and the United States.¹⁵² Just as *A Many-Splendored Thing*’s claims of Eurasians as “true citizens” of colonial spaces, the Asian mixed-race trope of the ocean is haunted by this spatial reality of imperialism.¹⁵³ The Pacific Ocean is not a figurative or concrete empty space for mixed-race “citizens of nowhere” and is thus imperfect, problematic imagery, particularly for an author like Han Suyin, so attentive to historicized mixed-race imaginaries.

This is perhaps why, in the end, Han’s use of the crippled tree, island, and ocean is ambiguous in its association with Asian mixed race. Her inconsistent, fluctuating imagery resists a totalizing metaphor or alignment with a specific space for the “citizen of nowhere” to belong. Her imagery does, however, underscore this central yearning at the base of her Eurasian cosmopolitanism. Han is invested in emplacement, and while citizenship limits it, and world citizenship abstracts it, the environmental potentially offers an inclusive rootedness. Han gestures towards a mode of being grounded in the present and not dependent on racial identity, nationality, or individuality, and which therefore interrupts the predictive use of

¹⁵² Hastings’ interview was for the Survey of Race Relations; it was referenced by several sociologists including Everett Stonequist in *The Marginal Man*. For further discussion, see Emma Teng’s *Eurasian*, 165.

¹⁵³ See, for example, essays discussing Asian settler colonialism in Hawai‘i in Candace Fujikane and Jonathon Okamura’s edited volume *Asian Settler Colonialism*.

Asian mixed race. This is a move that my dissertation will continue to track in its final chapter in the work of another Asian mixed-race artist, sculptor Isamu Noguchi. Yet Han's extensive exploration of Asian mixed-race representation, her critical engagement with the problematics of how Asian mixed race had been and was being represented in the mid-twentieth century, offers an early and key example of the critical resistance to the cooptation of mixed-race identity. Han's work reveals the struggle to resignify Asian mixed race in literature, and is an important piece of mixed-race cultural production as it seeks alternate paths for mixed-race representation while simultaneously emptying mixed race of the weight of its symbolic meaning.

CHAPTER FOUR

When Sculpture Becomes the World: Mixed-Race Belonging in the Work of Isamu Noguchi

“I think of sculpture as something to be completely experienced, not just looked at. You’re encased in it – a back-in-your-mother’s-womb sort of thing. You’re an integral part of it. Your environment is your sculpture, your world. It’s *the* world, and the world then becomes a sculpture.”

Isamu Noguchi, *Essays and Conversations*

Late in his life, mixed-race Japanese American sculptor Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988) reflected on his artistic motivations. “My enthusiasm for making gardens may spring from my upbringing, in other words, from my longing for someplace where I belonged,” he mused. “I was born bearing the burden of two countries, and I have never ceased searching to answer where is my native place, where can I find a peaceful life, where is there a place where I can be of use” (qtd. in Duus 393). Looking back on a career that spanned much of the twentieth century, Noguchi identified his experience as a mixed-race Japanese American as foundational to his work with landscape. For Noguchi – who was born in the United States, raised in Japan, and traveled between both throughout his adult life – creating gardens emerged from the resulting desire to find his “native place.” This was a sentiment Noguchi would return to again and again throughout his career in relation to his artistic production. As he asserted in a 1984 interview, “I have always desired to belong somewhere...My longing for affiliation has been the source of my creativity” (qtd. in Duus 359).

Noguchi's discussion of his artistic inspiration, his focus on belonging and affiliation, emerges from the specificity of his career and his experience as a mixed-race Japanese American, to which I will shortly turn. At the same time, though, the search for mixed-race belonging and affiliation also finds resonance with the broader popular culture representations and experiences of being Asian mixed race in the twentieth century, making Noguchi's biography and career an ideal focus for an exploration of Asian mixed-race representation in the United States. Because the concept of mixed race challenges the assumed absolute boundaries of racial categories, the racial affiliation of mixed-race individuals is often questioned or suspect. In the case of Asian American mixed race, specifically in the early twentieth century, suspect racial affiliation was further complicated by the question of nationality. Social and legal precedent marked Asians as outside of the United States' national political and social body. Immigration policies limited or banned Asian immigration while denying naturalization and land ownership to first Chinese and then Japanese immigrants. A mixed-race Asian American identification therefore became not only a question of racial affiliation, but also of national affiliation. This political reality was popularized in cultural representations, where the Asian mixed-race figure's national belonging was frequently questioned. As John Paris' 1921 yellow peril novel *Kimono* put it, Eurasians were "denizen[s] of a dream country which ha[d] a melodious name and no geographical existence" (87). Such landlessness was cast at times as tragic, at other times as threatening, and in all cases as non-normative. Thus Noguchi's reflections on his artistic motivation resonate with

a larger question of belonging and affiliation circulating about Asian mixed race in the early to mid-twentieth century.

One answer to this perceived lack of national belonging was the assertion of cosmopolitanism, of belonging to an idealized world community, as discussed in chapter three. Faced with questioned affiliations and emerging from an experience of frequent border crossings and multiple identifications, Asian mixed-race individuals claimed an alignment with a world community, rather than a racial or national community. However, a cosmopolitan stance had also been coopted to promote U.S. imperialism in the Pacific and in Asia.¹⁵⁴ In these cases, Asian mixed race was used to promote a “world” community that was in fact American. With this in mind, this chapter traces alternate strategies of mixed-race representation and affiliation. More specifically, this chapter will explore how Isamu Noguchi activates emergent expressions of Asian mixed-race belonging as he navigates national and international spatial categories in his artwork.

Noguchi’s “longing for affiliation,” as he often claimed, was an integral aspect of his artistic philosophy. His work spanned a variety of art forms and styles including abstract sculpture, public sculpture, gardens, theater set designs, furniture, and more, with materials ranging from clay and stone to metals and balsa wood. Despite its apparent disparity, much of Noguchi’s work engaged with the central concern of sculpture as “the art of spaces” (Noguchi, *Essays* 35). As Noguchi elaborated in an essay on modern sculpture in 1949, “if sculpture is the rock, it is also

¹⁵⁴ For further discussion of cosmopolitanism and Asian American mixed race, see chapters two and three of this dissertation.

the space between rocks and between the rock and a man, and the communication and contemplation between” (35). Sculpture encompassed the forms traditionally associated with the term, like the rock, but in Noguchi’s understanding sculpture was also the rock’s surroundings and its relationship to those surroundings, including its human viewers. Sculpture was not just the rock, but also the viewers, the environment, and the relationship between the three. This relational philosophy of sculpture as space can be understood as a constant of Noguchi’s art, one that continued to develop throughout his career.

The attention to sculpture as space aligned with Noguchi’s expressed concern with belonging and affiliation, since he asserted that sculpting space was a way to sculpt belonging. Also in 1949, for example, Noguchi wrote that “our reaction to physical environment may be represented as a series of...aesthetic judgments” which “affect even the control of our emotions, bringing order out of chaos, a myth out of the world, a sense of belonging out of our loneliness” (31). Art – sculpture – created belonging, an idea he again supported in 1979 when he asserted that “people’s places in the world, their sense of belonging” could be “suggested by art” (143). To go back to the earlier rock example, making sculpture the relation between the rock, the environment, and the viewer was a way of connecting the viewer, the human, with a specific place. As visual studies scholar Bert Winther-Tamaki asserts, Noguchi “regarded the sculptor’s mission as one of carving meaningful ‘places’ out of abstract

‘space’” (120).¹⁵⁵ Notably, such place-making was not specific to mixed race, but a generalized aspect of his art that Noguchi claimed was inspired by his mixed-race experience. This place-making, generalized yet emerging from mixed-race experience, is the focus of this chapter. In particular, I will analyze two of Noguchi’s proposed sculptures, designed in 1933, *Monument to the Plough* and *Play Mountain*.¹⁵⁶ These massive proposed earthworks, both mile-wide triangular pyramids, offer insight into the potentials and pitfalls of Noguchi’s space-based exploration of mixed-race affiliation.

Before continuing, however, I want to assert my caution around too easy of an alignment of Noguchi’s biography and his artwork. In Noguchi’s case, scholars have argued that the reliance on his mixed-race heritage to interpret his work frequently “obscure[s] the specific aims of his sculptural practice” (Lyford 5) and is often used even when mixed race “has little to do with the form or content of the work in question” (Higa 63). Scholar Amy Lyford suggests this occurs because of the breadth of Noguchi’s work and, to some art critics, its inconsistency. Compared to the Abstract Expressionists of the same period, including Jackson Pollock and William de Kooning, who largely stuck to a single form and medium, Noguchi’s work is difficult

¹⁵⁵ Winther-Tamaki, in his chapter “Isamu Noguchi: Places of Affiliation and Disaffiliation,” explores how Noguchi created personal “places of affiliation” through his sculpture in the postwar years.

¹⁵⁶ *Monument*, as a sculpture, was never realized. A version of *Play Mountain*, on the other hand, was eventually built in Sapporo, Japan. In her biography of Noguchi, Masayo Duus recounts that at the end of Noguchi’s life there was interest in building *Play Mountain* in Sapporo. This ultimately led to the Moerenuma Park project which features a version of *Play Mountain* and was completed after Noguchi’s death. See *The Life of Isamu Noguchi*, 377-382.

to make cohesive.¹⁵⁷ Because his work “would not coalesce into a visible Noguchi brand...into the breach...slipped stories about Noguchi that deployed his mixed-race identity as a binding agent” (Lyford 205). Tasked with finding linkages between light fixtures and rock gardens, art critics and historians turn to Noguchi’s mixed-race identity.

However, Noguchi was an active participant in creating cohesion through his mixed-race identity. His interviews and memoirs make clear his own consciousness and exploration of mixed race and of popular representations of mixed race.

Arguably, Noguchi engaged with these public perceptions of his identity to gain various desired effects. As biographers like Masayo Duus and Ashton Dore suggest, Noguchi showed different sides of his personality to different people and shaped his stories with intent.¹⁵⁸ The catalog of Noguchi’s 1949 solo exhibition at the Charles Egan Gallery, as Amy Lyford has insightfully explored, is one example of this.¹⁵⁹

Playing on the popular understanding of Noguchi as an “Oriental” sculptor, the program for this exhibit opened vertically.¹⁶⁰ Within the program were images of Noguchi’s sculptures translated into stylized brushworks resembling Chinese characters.¹⁶¹ Noguchi played on his public artistic persona as well as stereotypical

¹⁵⁷ See Amy Lyford’s *Isamu Noguchi’s Modernism*, 204, and Bert Winther-Tamaki’s, “Isamu Noguchi: Places of Affiliation and Disaffiliation,” 115.

¹⁵⁸ See Masayo Duus’ *The Life of Isamu Noguchi*, 7, and Dore Ashton’s *Noguchi East and West*, 5.

¹⁵⁹ For a careful close reading of the Orientalism of this exhibit, see Amy Lyford’s *Isamu Noguchi’s Modernism*, 184-191.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid* 185.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*.

perceptions of Asian art to make his work legible to the American public.¹⁶² As this example suggests, Noguchi engaged with and crafted various public personas.

Perhaps even the statement with which this chapter opened, with its emphasis on mixed-race identity, was a strategic claim. Rather than speculate on intent, though, I want to stress that Noguchi was working within the confines of the representational possibilities available to him during his lifetime. He was read then, and perhaps still is being read, within the narrow outline of the U.S. mixed-race and Japanese American figurations which this dissertation has been tracing.

I therefore do not want to simplify or overemphasize an interpretation of Noguchi's work in relation to his mixed-race identity. Mixed race is not, nor should it be, the only way to understand his prolific and inspiring career. I do, however, want to read how Noguchi represented and publically negotiated his mixed-race identity within these confines. I argue that the slippage between his mixed-race public persona and his space-based artistic work reveals an emergent exploration of Asian mixed-race identification. By dwelling in this uncomfortable space, this "breach" where "mixed-race identity is a binding agent" (205) applied by critics and supplied at times by Noguchi, we might uncover how his sculpture tries to push against essentialization, tries to use mixed-race experience to craft community and belonging through a new kind of relationship with space, one perhaps not based on the nationalism and imperialism that so defined Asian mixed-race experiences and representations of the time.

¹⁶² Ibid 184.

The Geopolitics of ‘Not Belonging’

What about Noguchi’s life experience led him to claim his “desire to belong somewhere” (qtd. in Duus 359)? Why was he searching, as he claimed, for “belonging” and “affiliation”? Noguchi frequently spoke in a register of exile, identifying as a “misfit” (*Oral History*) and a “lonely traveler” (*Essays* 136) without a home, “an expatriate wherever [he was]” (qtd. in Duus 360). He associated this exilic experience with mixed-race identity. “Being half-Japanese and half-American,” he once proclaimed, “I am always nowhere” (qtd. in Duus 359). Rather than understand these statements as psychological or metaphorical expressions of mixed-race identity, for that is the realm of mixed-race stereotypes, these claims need to be contextualized in the social and political realities of the United States and Japan at the beginning of the twentieth century. For much of his early life, Noguchi lived in the tension that existed between these two competing empires.

Around the time of Noguchi’s birth in 1904, the diplomatic relationship between the United States and Japan was undergoing a dramatic shift. At the end of the nineteenth century, Japan had been imagined in U.S. cultural production in a favorable light, with Japan and the Japanese praised for their rapid Westernization.¹⁶³ Japan’s militarization, which had yet to pose a significant threat to U.S. interests in Asia and the Pacific, was largely ignored.¹⁶⁴ Instead, Japan and the Japanese were feminized and commodified in the United States.¹⁶⁵ Beginning in the 1900s, however,

¹⁶³ See Dominika Ferrens’ *Edith and Winnifred Eaton*, 33.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 40.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid* 33 and 40.

two factors led to a shift in U.S. perceptions of Japan and the Japanese. First, an increase in Japanese immigration led to antagonism towards the Japanese, particularly on the West Coast where many Japanese immigrants settled.¹⁶⁶ Second, Japan's rapid modernization and its military aggression, beginning with the Russo-Japanese War, led to increasing U.S. concerns about Japan as an imperial power.¹⁶⁷ The competing imperialism of the United States and Japan, to which Noguchi was exposed from birth through World War II, had very real effects on his life.

The son of an American mother, Leonie Gilmour, and a Japanese father, famed poet Yone Noguchi, Isamu Noguchi spent his early life – and much of his later life – traveling across national borders. Born in Los Angeles, Noguchi then lived as a child in and near Tokyo before moving in 1917 as a teenager to the American Midwest. Each of these movements was precipitated by his mother's consciousness of the racial discrimination her son might face during this time of increasing tension between the United States and Japan. The sharp rise of antagonism towards the Japanese in the United States during the early 1900s led to Noguchi and his mother's move to Japan.¹⁶⁸ In Japan, though, a young Noguchi was frequently ostracized because of his mixed heritage.¹⁶⁹ This was worsened by his perceived illegitimacy, living alone with his mother and a half-sister while his remarried father refused to

¹⁶⁶ For a discussion of the discrimination Japanese immigrants faced in the United States in the early twentieth century, see Ronald Takaki's *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 180-181.

¹⁶⁷ For a discussion of the increase in yellow peril discourse after the Russo-Japanese War, see William Wu's *Yellow Peril*, 3 and Colleen Lye's *America's Asia*, 23.

¹⁶⁸ See Masayo Duus' *The Life of Isamu Noguchi*, 45.

¹⁶⁹ For more on Noguchi's childhood in Japan, see Masayo Duus' *The Life of Isamu Noguchi*.

enter him on the family register.¹⁷⁰ In the late 1910s, Leonie Gilmour sent Noguchi back to the United States to attend high school, in part over concerns he would be conscripted into the Japanese imperial army.¹⁷¹ These transnational movements, then, were influenced by Noguchi's Japanese and white American identity at this particular moment. Noguchi's claimed lack of affiliation was a reflection of the sociopolitical context of the first half of his life. This movement across borders would continue into his adult life. From the Midwest, an adult Noguchi moved to New York, traveled between Europe, Mexico, and Asia, and in his older age established simultaneous studios in New York and Shikoku, with frequent stops in Italy for sculpting materials.

The sociopolitical context also influenced perceptions of Noguchi's artwork. Because Noguchi's life in the public eye spanned much of the twentieth century, tracing the reception of his work actually reveals how discourses around Asian mixed race in the United States have shifted with the century's changing Orientalist perspectives. For the purposes of this chapter, however, I will review the pre-World War II years, from the 1920s to the 1940s. During this time, when Noguchi first emerged on the American art scene, he was frequently viewed through the lens of "yellow peril," a racist fear of "inscrutable" and therefore threatening Asian others. Around the time of Noguchi's birth in the early 1900s, yellow peril discourse in the United States and particularly on the West Coast had increasingly targeted the Japanese. As Japan became a modern military threat, domestic yellow peril fear

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 55. Yone Noguchi never legally acknowledged Isamu Noguchi as his son.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 78. Duus also suggests there were concerns about Noguchi's "awakening sexuality" (Noguchi qtd. in Duus 78).

transferred from the Chinese – who had been the subject of yellow peril fear in the nineteenth century – to the Japanese.¹⁷² This yellow peril discourse was a particular expression of American Orientalism which, as discussed in earlier chapters, posited the Asian other not as antithesis, but as proxy.¹⁷³ Thus, Japan was viewed as a military threat not because the Japanese were perceived as unfathomable others, but because they were perceived as skillfully and threateningly adapting to European modernity.¹⁷⁴ By the 1920s, Japan was moving as an imperialist force into Asia, exacerbating yellow peril fears of Japanese military might and its threat to U.S. ambitions in Asia and the Pacific. On the domestic front, this meant increasing hostility towards the Japanese as the Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907, which had informally limited Japanese immigration to the United States, was replaced by the more openly hostile Immigration Act of 1924, which barred immigration from Japan.¹⁷⁵ There was also an increased focus on the Japanese yellow peril in cultural

¹⁷² I draw in this paragraph from Colleen Lye’s *America’s Asia*, where she considers the differential expressions of yellow peril aimed at the Chinese and Japanese based on historical context. For an initial exploration of the differential expressions of yellow peril that is theorized throughout the text, see *America’s Asia*, 10.

¹⁷³ This is Lye’s particular formulation in *America’s Asia* of an observation made by scholars working on American Orientalism, 10. This occurs throughout the text; for her initial argument, see Chapter One, “A Genealogy of the ‘Yellow Peril,’” 12-46.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 10.

¹⁷⁵ The Gentleman’s Agreement extended diplomacy to Japan by not legislating immigration quotas as the United States had for the Chinese. This desire to maintain diplomatic ties had shifted by the 1924 Act, which heightened tensions between the two nations.

production, with portrayals that included threatening “hordes” of Japanese intent on taking over the United States.¹⁷⁶

The increasing hostility in the United States towards the Japanese influenced perceptions of Noguchi and of his artwork. Interpretations of his art and his person were filtered through a yellow peril lens, often ignoring his American identification in the process. The most obvious example of the yellow peril-influenced receptions of Noguchi and his work can be found in art critic Henry McBride’s 1934 review of Noguchi’s exhibition at the Marie Harriman Galleries.¹⁷⁷ This show included many works inspired by the United States, including models of large sculptures like the *Monument to Ben Franklin* and the two models this chapter will focus on, *Monument to the Plough* and *Play Mountain*. The two *Monuments* in particular were meant to honor major figures in United States’ history, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. McBride’s response to this exhibit was to label Noguchi “wily”: a “semi-Oriental sculptor” who “all the time he has been over here, has been studying our weakness with a view of becoming irresistible to us” (qtd. in Noguchi, *Sculptor’s World* 21). Here, as a “semi-Oriental sculptor,” Noguchi is excluded from American identity. Although perhaps not all “Oriental,” Noguchi is absolutely foreign, outside of McBride’s American “us” which Noguchi “has been studying.” Activating yellow peril fears, McBride accuses Noguchi of intentionally working to be “irresistible” to Americans, painting the success of his “alluring suggestions” (22) as a sinister

¹⁷⁶ See for example some of the texts discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation, like Wallace Irwin’s *Seed of the Sun*.

¹⁷⁷ Noguchi describes and reflects on this exhibit, as well as McBride’s review of it, in his autobiography *A Sculptor’s World*, 22-23.

example of “Oriental” cunning. McBride’s vitriol here stems from the yellow peril paranoia of Japanese imperial influence and infiltration of the United States.

Noguchi’s mixed-race in particular drives McBride’s hatred and fear. An earlier yellow peril text had perhaps best captured the tenor of the yellow peril discourse that McBride’s review rests on when it claimed that “Japanese with blond skins and blue eyes will still be Japanese, quick with a God-given virtue – loyalty to empire and the Emperor” (Irwin 233).¹⁷⁸ McBride’s review ventures into incoherence unless read within this racist matrix of yellow peril discourse.

Although McBride’s criticism is arguably the most caustic, it was certainly not the only Orientalist discussion of Noguchi’s work. A year earlier the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* suggested that Noguchi “[thought] and fe[lt] as an Oriental, and not as a Westerner” (Altshuler 195). Such reviews erased Noguchi’s mixed-race identification as they labeled him “Oriental,” though here the subtext is clearly Japanese. Rejecting any connection with the United States, the reviewers rendered Noguchi and his work legible only through the available metaphors of Orientalism. The reception of Noguchi’s artwork was limited by the stereotypes circulating during the first half of his life. Yet the works so roundly slandered by McBride might actually be understood as working against such stereotypes. Both *Monument to the Plough* and *Play Mountain* are key early studies of Noguchi’s concept of the sculpture in relation to space, studies in which he also explores emergent articulations of mixed-race belonging.

¹⁷⁸ See chapter one of this dissertation for further discussion of yellow peril literature and Asian mixed race.

The sculptures *Monument to the Plough* and *Play Mountain* are what today might be called “earthworks” or “land art.” This type of art uses natural materials and landscapes to create sculpture, often in remote locations.¹⁷⁹ Both models are noteworthy for their proposed size alone, decades before earthworks became a recognized artistic form. Indeed, some art critics – and Noguchi himself in later interviews – identify Noguchi as an early progenitor of this type of art which emerged in full force in the 1960s.¹⁸⁰ However, more crucial to the purposes of this project are *Monument’s* and *Play Mountain’s* significance as early examples of Noguchi’s understanding of sculpture in space

Although the sculpture models were created early in Noguchi’s career, he referenced their significance throughout his life. He continued to pitch them even through his final career retrospective in the 1980s.¹⁸¹ *Monument* and *Play Mountain* in many ways were defining pieces of his artistic trajectory; years after the two were designed, for example, Noguchi identified the pieces as his “awakening to the place of space in sculpture” (*Sculpture* 13). These early earthworks helped Noguchi conceptualize and realize his practice of sculpture in relation to space. At the same time, *Monument* and *Play Mountain* also provided alternative answers to the question of mixed-race belonging and affiliation.

¹⁷⁹ Lyford, *Isamu Noguchi’s Modernism*, 41. There are many names for this kind of art. I will use the term coined by Robert Smithson, who was an innovator of this art. The term “earthworks,” as I will demonstrate, because of its emphasis on earth and work, resonates with some of the goals of Noguchi’s art.

¹⁸⁰ See Ibid, 41 and *Oral History Interview*.

¹⁸¹ See Lyford’s *Isamu Noguchi’s Modernism*, 203.

Several years before designing the two sculptures, Noguchi had pondered belonging and identity, finding an answer in “earth.” In his Guggenheim fellowship application from 1926, essentially an early artistic statement, Noguchi wrote that he wished to follow his father, poet Yone Noguchi’s, literary footsteps as the “interpreter of the East to the West,” but “with sculpture” (17). He wished to help bridge the ideological divides that had so defined his life. In the same essay Noguchi expressed his desire to “submerge himself in the study of the unity of nature so as to truly become once more a part of nature, a part of the very earth” (16). It would be through the medium of earth that Noguchi would begin to bridge, or rather, denaturalize the divides of East and West. Indeed, he asserted his 1931 trip to Kyoto, his first to Japan since he was a child, was a “close embrace of the earth, as a seeking after identity with some primal matter beyond personalities and possessions” (21). Beyond personalities and possessions, beyond that which divides humans, was the “primal matter” of “earth.” During this moment directly before the earthwork designs, “earth” became a medium of belonging and affiliation for Noguchi, one with potential beyond the concept of nation that had left him an exile.

Central to Noguchi’s concept of “earth,” as I will demonstrate, is its double valence. Earth is the name of our planet, and so suggests the large scope of a globe. Yet earth is also the terrestrial, the land beneath our feet, and so suggests a tactile medium. This double valence is a key part of the articulation of belonging and affiliation that this chapter tracks. If “earth” is working against “exile,” then the belonging Noguchi imagines in the above quote is inflected simultaneously with an

emplaced, tactile specificity and a broad, humanity-encompassing abstraction. Both these registers are present in Noguchi's earthworks, and it is the slippage between the two that offers an alternate articulation of mixed-race belonging.

Sculpting Nations: *Monument to the Plough*

“This was to be a triangular pyramid about a mile wide at each base. One side would be ploughed, another planted, and the third left fallow. At the apex would be the plough devised by Jefferson and Franklin. It was meant to be placed in Idaho.”

-Isamu Noguchi, *The Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum*

The *Monument to the Plough* model might be read as an answer to the question of exile through an assertion of American identity. The model was a grand vision of Idaho earth moved on a massive scale to honor American ingenuity in the United States' heartland. Commemorating the invention of a tool that could “break the plains,” the model was Noguchi's “monument to the American beginning” (Noguchi qtd. in Lyford 13), to the plow that enabled “the opening of the western plains” (Noguchi, *Sculptor's World* 22).¹⁸² The shape of a triangular pyramid, *Monument's* base was meant to span one mile on each side, with one side of the pyramid plowed, one planted, and one fallowed to represent the stages of farming.¹⁸³ Crowning the pyramid would be the plow created by Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, the same type of plow which farmers would use to maintain the monument's plantings.

¹⁸² I will discuss the imperialist politics of this assertion later in this section.

¹⁸³ For full description of the model, see Noguchi's *Garden Museum*, 144.

At first appearance, *Monument* does seem to be a sculpture about claiming American national belonging, not the least because Noguchi asserts it is. Looking back at *Monument* in the postwar years, Noguchi explained that it was part of his “awareness of being American” (*Garden* 236) and “indicated his wish to belong to America, to its vast horizons of earth” (*Sculptor’s World* 22). *Monument* was a declaration of his identification as an American, both culturally and artistically.¹⁸⁴ Yet it was simultaneously “a wish to belong,” emphasizing his sense of *not* belonging and therefore offering a key example of how Noguchi conceptualized belonging through artistic creation. Belonging is here expressed through the figure of earth, and is therefore defined as being part of a spatially realized United States – its “vast horizons of earth.” If earth is read here as soil, *Monument* becomes an act of spatial claiming: built from Midwestern earth, the piece is part of the United States’ vast horizons which Noguchi sculpts into his art piece. The figurative claiming of American national identity becomes a spatial claiming of land.

This physicality, this turn to actual earth through landscape art, is a key part of the aesthetic this chapter explores. Yet this approach to national belonging and affiliation – in conjunction with the sculpture’s subject matter (the plow) – becomes problematically entangled with the ideology of Manifest Destiny that underwrote U.S. colonialism. Here the slippage of the term “earth” becomes important; the “vast

¹⁸⁴ As discussed by Lyford in *Isamu Noguchi’s Modernism*, this desire was foiled by the rejection of his proposed earth sculpture by critics, particularly Henry McBride as discussed above, and by the Public Works of Art Program (PWAP) to which he proposed the construction. The PWAP was a program during the depression that employed artists looking for work. See *Isamu Noguchi’s Modernism*, 13.

horizons of earth” can be interpreted as nationalist soil *and* imperialist planet. The desire to belong to the United States’ horizons of earth recalls the violence of U.S. westward expansion, which, by the time this sculpture was created in the 1930s and certainly by the time Noguchi reflected back on it in the 1960s, included an ongoing reach across the Pacific and into Asia. Noguchi’s claiming of America activated the very imperialist ideology that excluded him, as a mixed-race Japanese American, from the national body.

In addition to the land and ocean encompassing spatial imaginary, *Monument’s* subject – farming and the plow – highlights a particular ideology of westward expansion through its reanimation of the Jeffersonian pastoral. Thomas Jefferson’s vision of an agrarian republic idealized farmers and farming, imagining the United States as a republic of “self-sufficient family farms” (Lyford 25) extending across the United States’ vast tracts of land. Jefferson’s agrarianism was pastoral, drawing on a long tradition of cultural discourse that romanticized rural life and its closeness to nature. For Jefferson, small farming communities were idealized figures of “preserving rural manners, that is, ‘rural virtue’” (Marx 126). Yet this vision of frontier land as a promised pastoral land implies an open and empty wilderness to be populated by dedicated farmers. America’s “destiny” across the continent was not a rural ideal, but a reality of genocide and destruction. Noguchi’s claiming of America – specifically because it references geospatial and pastoral imaginaries – awakens a controversial set of references, highlighting the violence inherent in national

belonging. This was a compromised claiming of America. Yet the sculpture can also be read as trying to address, if imperfectly, U.S. imperialism.

Noguchi's triangular pyramid finds inspiration from more than just Jefferson and Franklin's plow. Critics suggest that Noguchi's interest in sculpting land began with his first trip to Japan, which was directly before he designed *Monument*.¹⁸⁵ There, Noguchi was exposed to Japanese gardens, and so the argument goes that the gardens may have "offered a model where 'sculpture' is inscribed into the landscape" (Higa 64) in much the same way that *Monument* would have been.¹⁸⁶ If so, *Monument* gains an added complexity as national U.S. belonging is asserted through Japanese landscape forms. I, too, would suggest the connection to his experience in Japan, but rather as another experiment in belonging. As mentioned earlier, in Japan, Noguchi's "close embrace of the earth" had been "a seeking after identity with some primal matter beyond personalities and possessions" (Noguchi, *Sculptor's World* 21). Like his use of earth as a seeking after American identity in *Monument*, he understood his use of earth during his time working with ceramics in Kyoto as a seeking after Japanese identity. The move from Japanese clay to U.S. soil suggests influence in form as well as continuity in artistic project. It also complicates Noguchi's supposed claiming of American identity, since there were multiple and multiply-layered explorations of belonging.

¹⁸⁵ See Karen Higa, "Beyond East and West," 64.

¹⁸⁶ In "Beyond East and West," Higa offers a summary of these perceptions of *Monument's* influences, though she does not agree with them. Instead she points to the influence of Native American burial mounds. See "Beyond East and West," 64.

Other scholars, attempting to move beyond biographical interpretations of art, suggest alternate influences, specifically Native American burial mounds or Mayan architecture. *Monument's* design resembles “the platform mounds constructed by ancient indigenous Native Americans that dot the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley regions” (Higa 64), which Noguchi may have observed during his teenage years in Indiana.¹⁸⁷ At the same time, the structure resembles the pre-Columbian Mayan architecture that was frequently represented in 1930s American and Mexican art, which Noguchi presumably studied.¹⁸⁸ These influences suggest Noguchi’s interest in primitivism, a strand of modern art that appropriated the art and architecture of non-European cultures. In the United States in the 1930s, and thus contemporaneous with Noguchi’s *Monument*, primitivism used ancient American cultures to “create an American past for modern American art” (Lyford 27). These influences, then, align with Noguchi’s attempt to be seen as an American artist. At the same time, the use of Native American and Japanese design complicates the project’s relation to frontier imagery and imperialism by offering – on the Midwestern landscape – a reminder of colonized U.S. soil. What is suggested by a farm that is a burial mound? Or by Jeffersonian agrarianism expressed through Japanese landscape design? These many layers of *Monument* complicate a simplistic understanding or unquestioning acceptance of Noguchi’s stated wish to belong to America, particularly as these varying influences put pressure on the definition of the nation and its citizens.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ See Lyford, *Isamu Noguchi's Modernism*, 27.

Reading *Monument* as resistant to exile, as an assertion of national belonging, then, also means expanding the definition of “American” and drawing attention to the settler-colonialist roots of the United States. Despite this, the work is uncomfortably complicit with settler-colonialism as it glorifies a pastoral vision of Manifest Destiny. Rather than suggesting anything about Noguchi’s personal politics, this actually highlights the potential problems of thinking through the category of earth while still invested in national belonging as an answer to the stereotype and racism faced by mixed-race individuals. Carving out a space for mixed race in the nation does not address the imperialism and racism that necessitated that action in the first place. Yet when taken out of national context, as suggested by a close examination of *Play Mountain*, Noguchi’s other earthwork, to which I now turn, the figure of the earth holds a more liberatory potential.

Sculpting Worlds: *Play Mountain*

“*Play Mountain* was conceived as a way of building on a city block in New York a mountain, which would, in fact, be an enhanced area for children’s play. There were steps of all sizes, a slide with water in the summer, a longer one for sledding in winter. These sloping surfaces could also serve as a roof.”

-Isamu Noguchi, *The Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum*

Echoing the contours of *Monument*, Noguchi’s *Play Mountain* was the triangular pyramid of *Monument* moved to one of Noguchi’s hometowns, New York City: an Idaho mountain in Manhattan. With a base the size of a city block, this mountain was not meant to grow crops, but instead to provide a space for play. With

three sides rising up and the potential to build beneath the pyramid as well, *Play Mountain* was designed to expand the possibilities for play on the average city block. Noguchi's model, which included stairs, slides, a swimming pool, and a bandstand, was the first of the many playground designs he would develop over his career.¹⁸⁹ Noguchi, who had no children of his own, designed these playgrounds for a different reason, one that resonated with his artistic practice in general. Playgrounds were "a way of creating the world... a way of creating an ideal world – on a smaller scale" (Noguchi qtd. in Duus 378). In contrast to *Monument*, which can be read as a personal claiming of national space, *Play Mountain* was invested in world-making for many people. But what does "creating the world" mean? What does an "ideal world" look like? The context and design of this first playground, *Play Mountain*, provide some answers, while suggesting an emergent expression of mixed-race belonging.

Play Mountain came from Noguchi's realization that the "earth itself is sculpture" (Noguchi qtd. in Duus 377-378). Looking back on his career, Noguchi would also assert that "the idea of sculpting the earth followed me through the years, with mostly playground models as metaphor" (*Garden* 152). *Play Mountain*, and subsequent playgrounds, articulated a new interaction with or conception of the earth in Noguchi's work. I have already discussed the way "earth" resonates on two spatial levels in Noguchi's work, as soil and planet, and this is a resonance I want to maintain. However, Noguchi's focus on "earth" also related to a general concern about human interactions with the environment. Noguchi was interested in human

¹⁸⁹ For a full description, see Noguchi's *Garden Museum*, 144.

alienation from nature, in the idea that, as he wrote in 1964, “nature is no longer real for us or, in any case, out of scale” (Noguchi, *Essays* 66). He strove to counteract this in his work. Refuting his early interest in the innovations of industrialism, Noguchi claimed in his autobiography that “beyond the reach of industrially realizable design or architecturally applied sculpture was, I felt, a larger, more fundamentally sculptural purpose for sculpture, a more direct expression of Man’s relation to the earth and his environment” (*Sculptor’s World* 159).¹⁹⁰ Rather than sculpture mediated by and engaged with industrialism and the built environment, Noguchi turned to a sculpture invested in relating people to the earth on which they lived. Although preceding Noguchi’s recorded reflections on sculpture as a way to relate people to their environments, *Play Mountain* certainly embodies this artistic approach.

In *Play Mountain* the relationship with earth is explored, and it is a relationship not filtered through nationalism. The sculpture departs from the Jeffersonian pastoral of *Monument* as it brings the country, the Idaho mountain, into the city. In this way, the movement from west to east reverses that of Manifest Destiny, but what is more, the sculpture therefore does not explicitly invoke nation or nationalism. The emphasis, as Noguchi claims, is instead on the child’s world. This is not, then, the idealized pastoral scene of *Monument* expressed through harnessing land for farming. Instead, the mountain is a space of play in the city, and play becomes a way of making nature real.

¹⁹⁰ I want to note that while Noguchi uses the universal “man,” here, he was also excluded from its traditional definition because of his racial identity. The term takes on a more nuanced meaning as a result.

Thus the most significant aspect of *Play Mountain* for the purposes of this reading is that it was designed as a playground. Rather than a search for personal belonging, a claiming of American space, *Play Mountain* was a wish for the future, a future perhaps not made for the adults of Noguchi's time. Instead, this was a world created for children, one imagined outside the constraints of race and nation Noguchi faced in his own time. In describing playgrounds and sculpting for children, Noguchi emphasizes beginnings and newness. Children saw "a beginning world, fresh and clear"; they saw "the world as a totally new experience" (161). Yet the newness, the beginning, was also a return, as Noguchi imagined creating a space where children might "confront the earth as perhaps early man confronted it" (qtd. in Duus 378). The "beginning world" was a new world that traveled back to a romanticized early relationship with the earth. Whether or not this relationship actually existed, Noguchi's nostalgia for it highlights a desire to encounter the world outside of the restrictions of modernity, a modernity that made nature "no longer real," and which formed the "personalities and possessions" he sought to escape.

Thinking beyond the restrictions of the present, whether social, cultural, or political, was a key component of Noguchi's playgrounds, then. Discussing his interest in playgrounds, Noguchi explained that "maybe because I didn't have all the things that children do have – never did have – and maybe...because I was never educated or went to proper schools and had my brain washed...I can still think of things like [designing a child's playground]" (qtd. in Duus 378). Noguchi claimed his childhood between two nations helped him avoid an education, a "brainwashing,"

which would have inhibited his world-making abilities. In fact, Noguchi's playground worlds were based on a different kind of education, one that emphasized freedom. An art review of a later playground praised the design's open-ended lessons. The playground, "instead of telling the child what to do (swing here, climb there) becomes a place for endless exploration, or endless opportunity for changing play" (Noguchi, *Sculptor's World* 177). The worlds Noguchi built for children pushed against conventional notions of space and enabled an open, creative orientation to the world. Noguchi's playgrounds emphasized creation; their "sculptural elements" had "the added significance of usage – in actual physical contact - much as is the experience of the sculptor in the making" (161). The playground was a way of helping children construct their own spaces of belonging in the world.

By emphasizing a world created for and by children, Noguchi tries to imagine a community without the ideologies of race and nation. Rather than carve a space for himself in American or Japanese soil, *Play Mountain* explores how alternate relations to space might be supported – in this case, through children and play. Reading *Play Mountain* as an answer to the question of belonging and affiliation then, we see Noguchi discarding the categories of race, nation, and individuality that had haunted *Monument*. Belonging and affiliation are instead articulated through a simultaneously personal and communal engagement with the earth.

The Possibilities of "World"

The *Monument* and *Play Mountain* models were imagined in the years before World War II, and yet their interventions only become more significant when

considered in relation to the postwar context of mixed-race Asian Americans. Perceptions of Noguchi and his work would significantly shift after World War II, with the fall of the Japanese empire, the establishment of the United States as the Pacific power, and the rise of the Cold War which would find the U.S. fighting a different, though still “Oriental,” enemy. Noguchi’s mixed-race identity was no longer understood through exile, but instead became invested with significance for an imagined U.S. multicultural future. I review this post-World War II reception of Noguchi and his artwork here in order to emphasize how important his earlier *Monument* and *Play Mountain* concepts remain because of their work against mixed-race stereotypes throughout the twentieth century.

In 1968, in the foreword to Noguchi’s first and only published autobiography, his close friend R. Buckminster Fuller proclaimed the artist was “a founding member of an omni-crossbred world society” (*Sculptor’s World* 7). In words echoing the typical discourse around mixed-race Asians during the second half of the twentieth century, Fuller typified Noguchi as a “prototype artist of the new cosmos” and a “kinetic one-town world man” who is “inherently at home – everywhere” (7), a fate both “biologically and intellectually impossible...to escape” (7). The well-meaning Fuller – a longtime supporter of and intellectual influence on Noguchi – turned Noguchi’s self-proclaimed inability to “settle down” and “belong” into a positive precursor of the coming future in the clichéd language of biologically *and* socially inherent Asian mixed-race potential. Noguchi represented a future way of being in the world, one without borders.

This language was by now familiar in U.S. discourses about mixed race, whose stereotyped characteristics had first been understood from the late-1800s through a biology of pseudo-science and then in the 1920s through sociology and psychology. Indeed, even the idea of the Eurasian figure as cosmopolitan was a tired trope by the 1960s – emerging popularly, as this dissertation traces in chapter two, in 1920s Hawai‘i and gaining further traction throughout the Cold War. Fuller’s claims, though perhaps more ebullient than most, were in fact typical of the post-World War II reception of Noguchi’s art and persona.

During and after World War II, discussions of Noguchi, including some he himself supported, emphasized his mixed race as “a universalizing image of the hybrid postwar man” (Lyford 6). The developing Cold War rhetoric of American nationalism cast Noguchi’s mixed identity “as a symbol of a new world without borders” (67), although that world was first and foremost American. For example, Noguchi’s first show after World War II was *Fourteen Americans* at the New York Museum of Modern Art, in which curator Dorothy Miller sought to emphasize “that the world of art is one world and that it contains the Orient no less than Europe and the Americas” (qtd. in Lyford 130). This proto-globalization formulation was neatly contained by the title’s emphasis on “Americans,” rendering the “one world” a distinctly American world. Coming after World War II, and as the Cold War was beginning, Miller’s stress on including the “Orient” within this American world can

be read as an integral part of Cold War Orientalist discourse.¹⁹¹ That is, during a period when the United States was violently enforcing anti-Communism in Asia, labeling the “Orient” as part of an American “one world” worked ideologically to naturalize the alignment of Asia with the United States. As the only Asian artist in the show, Noguchi stood in as the “Orient” of Miller’s claim, though this was mediated through his mixed race. As one reviewer suggested, he “fashioned a conscience for a greater race than either of his own, humanity, and has fused in his art the East and the West as they were fused in his body” (Hess qtd. in Lyford 9). Asian mixed race suggested the fusion of East and West, producing – in this review’s logic – the “race” of humanity. That this is done as one of the “fourteen Americans” then aligns “humanity” with a United States defined exclusively through Orientalist categories.

In contrast to his pre-World War II reception, Noguchi’s mixed race was visible during the postwar in part because he stood as an “American” who conveniently encompassed both the United States and Asia (and, in this American imperialist logic, the world) during a period when the United States was competing with the Soviet Union and China for influence in Asia. An earlier show in California during the war had garnered similar feedback, when a reviewer claimed Noguchi was “a one-man melting pot” (Frankenstein qtd. in Lyford 126). Here the term “melting pot” inscribes Noguchi with U.S. assimilationist ideology while strangely limiting

¹⁹¹ I draw in this paragraph from Christina Klein’s concept of Cold War Orientalism in *Cold War Orientalism*. Klein explains Cold War Orientalism as an ideology that projected “a racially and ethnically diverse America in the service of U.S. global expansion” (Klein 11), depicting noncommunist Asia through “the values of interdependence, sympathy, and hybridity” (16).

that vision of the melting pot to Japanese and American. In post-war discourses, Noguchi unsurprisingly became a symbol of both U.S. melting pot and “world” community – with the linkage between the two revealing the cooptation of mixed race by American Cold War Orientalism.¹⁹² In a period when the United States was invested in the perception of itself as a multicultural, accepting immigrant society, Asian mixed race offered a symbolic confirmation of American acceptance.¹⁹³ Depictions of Noguchi, therefore, as a “prototype” of an “omni-crossbred world society” are not unexpected, but rather proof of both the cooptation of Asian mixed-race identity and the consistent Orientalist understanding of his work.

In the shift from pre- to post-World War II, perceptions of Noguchi’s Asian mixed-race identity were thoroughly inscribed by Orientalist discourse operating through race and nation. His assertion of exile, the idea he “belong[ed] anywhere but nowhere” (*Sculptor’s World* 39), might then be read as a resistance to Orientalism. As a young artist, Noguchi asserted his desire to bridge the divisions of East and West, and as he grew older he claimed he was “a fusion of East and West [...but...] want[ed] to transcend both worlds” (qtd. in Duus 109). He felt that his Asian mixed race left him in the position to foster understanding between and beyond the Orientalist divides of East and West. That is, beneath Orientalist divides he saw a world community, for “there is everywhere but one world really, and people are everywhere mutually involved” (*Essays* 95). For Noguchi, there was a community

¹⁹² For further discussion of the cooptation of Asian mixed race by American Cold War Orientalism, see chapter two of this dissertation.

¹⁹³ See Klein’s *Cold War Orientalism*, 11 and 259.

beyond East and West, posited beyond nation; during World War II, for example, against the “clear-cut pattern of nationalist aggrandizement,” he emphasized “the mass of humanity, multilingual and multi-colored” (qtd. in Lyford 138). In each of these statements, Noguchi reveals a desire to move beyond division and emphasize the unification of diverse people through “one world.”

Yet it becomes clear from the post-World War II reception of Noguchi and his work that such a move was ideologically weighted. The idea of a new world community, a community he imagined from his so-called “exile,” was coopted particularly in the Cold War years. Asian mixed race became a means of justifying and imagining the character of the United States’ extraterritorial reach. *Play Mountain*, however, suggests a different imaginary of world community. Instead of holding mixed race or global community as the answer to problems, it releases mixed race. The sculpture is not about carving out spaces for the disenfranchised, the expatriate, which might have been the endeavor of a sculpture like *Monument*. It is instead a gesture at the level of education and thus ideology: a way of educating children to encounter the world and one another without distinction and division. Simultaneously, it is a return to a focus on the earth as a tactile *and* abstract concept. Focusing on human emplacement and a larger communal relationship to earth, *Play Mountain* begins to question traditional spatial alignments. *Play Mountain* and subsequent designs suggest a vision of the future inspired by mixed-race experience yet not limited by race, nation, and its significance in the twentieth century.

Isamu Noguchi's work, then – like Han Suyin's work, discussed in chapter three of this dissertation – forges a new path in Asian mixed-race representation. Refusing an investment in the Asian mixed-race body, which is too often coopted for nationalist and imperialist interests, these artists instead used their mixed-race experience to experiment with alternate forms of community infused with anti-nationalist and anti-imperialist intent. Discarding the long-held image of a Eurasian future, they crafted instead an approach to the present, with an attention to the past and a hope for the future, based in the specific but ultimately connected spaces in which they found belonging and affiliation.

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