

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Transnational Assimilation: Literary Practices and the Racial Regime of
Cold War America

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in

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by

Yin Wang

Committee in Charge:

Professor Ping-hui Liao, Co-chair
Professor Lisa Yoneyama, Co-chair
Professor Takashi Fujitani
Professor Jin-kyung Lee
Professor Lisa Lowe

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Co-chair

Co-chair

University of California, San Diego
2012

獻給我的父親，與守護著我們的母親
To my father and our memory of my mother

You have to be taught to be second class; you're not born that way.
Lena Horne

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VITA

- 2012 Ph.D. in Literature
University of California, San Diego
- 2011 Dissertation Fellow
Chiang-ching Kuo Foundation
- 2010 Teaching Assistant
Revelle College, University of California, San Diego
- 2009 C. Phil. in Literature
University of California, San Diego
- 2006 Scholarship Recipient
Taiwan Scholarship for Study Abroad
Fulbright Scholarship
- 2004 M.A. English
National Taiwan University
- 2001 B.A. English
National Taiwan University

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Transnational Assimilation: Literary Practices and the Racial Regime of
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Yin Wang

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Professor Ping-hui Liao, Co-chair
Professor Lisa Yoneyama, Co-chair

“Transnational Assimilation” offers a dis-exceptionalist understanding of the U.S. political rationality in regulating and managing racialized nonwhite populations across its official territorial boundaries during the Cold War. Grounded upon literary texts that occasion the correspondent discursive force field—wrought by the willed-determination out of state policies and narrative stratagem oriented by variant personal and political engagements—this

dissertation examines the ways in which the post-Second World War U.S. deploys self-contradictory, but usefully generative, frames to contain the racialized nonwhite constituents and their alien “kins” from minor nations under the sway of Cold War superpowers. The chapters probe cultural consequences of U.S. administration of race in its transnational economic, military and political governance within the global Cold War order. Together the readings demonstrate that the self-congratulatory U.S.-exportation of multicultural (or, racial pluralist) model is probably a necessitated means for the postcolonial empire to tie as well as divide nonwhite populations with an artificial history of diaspora, underscored by essentializing racial differences and a monolinear temporality.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: Civilizing Rights and Multinational Culturalism in the Making of Transnational America

“Model Democracy” in Transnational Circuits

In 1965, the United States Information Agency (USIA) in India published a report on two hundred local graduate students' reaction to “Nine from Little Rock,” an Academy Award-winning documentary that USIA financed and internationally distributed in the previous year. The documentary was meant to update overseas audience with the current life of nine black students, who caught international attention in 1957 when they were literally death-threatened and obstructed by hundreds of segregationists objecting to their enrollment in an all-white high school in Little Rock, Arkansas. In the film, the nine students speak how they coped with that intimidating challenge, and resolved to pursue professional career and personal influence to change the society. The cinematic

narrative is considered a success, for the survey finds the “brown” audience respecting African Americans much higher than its non-viewing counterpart. In addition, insofar as the film eschews the involvement of local politicians (especially that of the governor), but underscores President Eisenhower’s will to end segregation culminating with his order of sending federal army to intervene, the majority viewers under survey were impressed with the antiracist measures taken by the U.S. government.

The critical scene of the twenty minutes film is, significantly, on the solemn march of soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division, guarding the nine male and female black students progressing into a historical school building. Aside from the climax, however, the report is critical of both earlier shots of the spectacular segregationist rally and an “ill-executed” scripted scene, where the protagonist Jefferson Thomas runs into a white schoolmate but acts in a terribly stiff and vexed manner. Overall, the report concludes with

satisfactory evaluations of the film's portrayal of dignified characters and cautionary remarks on the use of news footages for future production of motion pictures.

Rather than repudiating official stories of antiracist America such as the one above as incomplete, partial, or instrumentally propagandist, this project is interested in the larger story of transnational story-telling that requires alien participation throughout the cold war and well into the present. Millions of aliens have been likewise targeted for such persuasion and incorporated by all types of coordination, in addition to the "brains" of India as revealed by the anecdote. Without resorting to coercion and official rule, how does the United States convince foreign peoples under its domination with enticingly egalitarian communal imagination? What are the material effects of such enunciation of reforms and promises for the cause of "racial tolerance" in the United States? Does not the ensuing institutionalization of multicultural ideals make the United

States “as a whole” disinherit white supremacy, recognize the rights owned by people of color, and therefore establish an unprecedented democratic paradigm manifest in its treatment of both its constituents and foreign subjects? To these questions, “Transnational Assimilation” examines the conditions under which stories of America and its putative antitheses are constructed and instructed, the reasons why the figure of the alien summoned and silenced, and the paradoxical replications between multicultural pluralism and exclusionary nationalism.

The national(ized) image of the United States manufactured during the cold war period can be endowed with important pedagogical missions to motivate connections across boundaries constituted by ethnicity, language, and historical contexts. Pleas of universal enfranchisement, struggles against the intersected racial and class inequities, and continued contestations of freedom and equality have long been the purview of the post-Reconstruction

American social debates and movements, but they are also subject to the U.S. nation-state's cooptation and appropriation after the Second World War, as epitomes of "Western" liberty, democracy, and so-called progress, for the purpose of governing "non-Western" foreign subjects whose labor is integrated in the U.S.-coordinated workforce but their political existence is entirely occluded from its responsibility. At the outset, this dissertation interrogates the discursive economy undergirding the global dissemination of American political models, but the project's critical concern lies in exploring how the nationalist narration of rights and justice functions as a transnational epistemological regime to uphold and generate material military, capitalist and ideological interests. This project investigates especially scenarios where the official history of the minorities functions as a means of reaching and teaching the aliens—a site of irresolvable contradictions caused by interstate hierarchy and international racialization, but dialectically a site

where counter-narratives must emerge due to the impossibility of full performance of the designated tasks. In the chapters that follow, I read ethnic American literary writings characterized by international themes simultaneously as manifestations of dichotomized global geopolitics and as indicative examples that are not entirely or persistently successful in (re)producing transnational coherence.

“Transnational Assimilation” is centered on how non-Western (read: non-“white”) racial subjects across the non-communist hemisphere participated in the collusion of U.S. exceptionalism and liberal discourse through varied configurations of aliens waiting for enfranchisements. I read these anxiety-fraught abstractions—practiced through techniques of defamiliarization, ethnographic documentation, and tropes of rehabilitation—as substantial effects of the post-WWII U.S. monopoly on vocabularies and imageries concerning political modernization, egalitarianism, and universality. Taking an anti-exceptionalist approach to American Studies, I focus

on textual practices emerging from marginal sites of American domination that evidence how the asymmetrical military relations, capital flows, and cultural traffic revise and reorient—though by no means reverse—the Eurocentric view of West and East or the monolinear temporality of modernity. I read James Baldwin's skepticism of the metropolitan calls of Africanism and Eileen Chang's English-language ethnographic articulation of Chinese peasant consciousness, for example, as traces not only suggestive of a new global order established by the U.S. defeat of precedent colonial powers, but also reminiscent of colonial cartography and Orientalist desires. I look to these layered dictations at the time when liberal humanism displaces the colored alien from the imagery of noble savage to that of un(der)enfranchised national subjects, which comes extremely convenient in faulting the uncooperative regimes of the so-called third world or projecting sentimental ties to the imagined subaltern inside the adversarial camp of communism.

Each chapter of the dissertation presents a reading of ethnic American literary text with a transnational discourse functioning within U.S. empire-building projects. I begin with a story of humanitarian adoption of an orphan girl from the poor and patriarchal Asia to examine how the transnational architecture of U.S. liberalism justifies its post-WWII administration of devastated Asian countries. The first chapter, "A Beautiful Family without Unlikely Kin," teases out the mutual referentiality between the crudely executed description of Japanese *colonization* of Korean people under the name of modernization and the repressive rendition of U.S. *multicultural incorporation* of Asians with the nominal promises of economic opportunities, law-warranted rights, and institutionalized cultural identity. My second chapter continues to interrogate imperial-humanist narrative of non-West nations by focusing on ethnographical imperative placed on unofficial cultural ambassadors, who write with a journalist's authority but from an

impassionate discriminative optic, typified by Pearl Buck and her enduring bestseller *The Good Earth*. In this light, I understand Eileen Chang's *The Rice Sprout Song*—an Orientalist novel written by an self-Orientalizing ethnic Oriental woman—as a supplementary piece to the above in the sense of furthering its ethnographical reach and reifying the presumed contradiction between the Chinese state (which is disidentified as a state according to “Western standards”) and its subjects (seen as hapless human beings). However, the task Chang sets out to perform goes to the intriguing situation of “self-defeat” as the novel is quickly consumed and dismissed as an artless and readily replaceable cog in the representative apparatus of the allegedly unseasoned aliens. My final chapter focuses on cultural materialist reflections on metropolitan internationalism by James Baldwin in the early stage of cold war. I investigate how the writer's acute consideration of coalition formation between black Americans and colonized black peoples across the Atlantic brings up

provocative questions about diaspora, politics of representation, and nation-state as a privileged form of sovereignty in the modern age.

Taken together, these chapters complicate accounts of U.S.-

modeled humanist universality that normalizes both the

measurements of modernization and rectifying procedures of the so-

called premodern by showing the ways in which such narratives

have served to displace neocolonial subjugations, refurbish

colonialist narcissisms and paranoid fantasies, and fortify the

hegemonic “intercultural” optics sustained and fashioned by

powerful states. My project studies texts that employ or evince the

figure of the alien in ways excessive to the dominant organization

inasmuch to call into question the *dispositif* of “transnational” horizons.

My undertaking of subjected aliens as a crucial occasion

where the U.S. nation-state mediates its unrelenting use of force and

concurrent vows of rehabilitation in times of war is indebted to Lisa

Yoneyama’s various scholarly works and especially “Liberation under

Siege: U.S. Military Occupation and Japanese Women's Enfranchisement" (2005), in which Yoneyama elucidates the categorical framing of Japanese women under post-WWII United States occupation serves the U.S. imperialist interest in showcasing selected gender benefits granted to colored women, while masking and eradicating their life under occupation that is practically deprived of freedom and rights (889). Yoneyama further argues that the narrative of enfranchisement and democraticization of Japanese women produces "a normative cold war subject" that, by giving gender relations a singular value and significance, "marginalize[s] and subordinate[s] a number of other diverse feminist modalities and aspirations" that are of irreplaceable importance to social conditions of the former colonies and the mainland of Japan (890). In that spirit, my dissertation understands Chang-rae Lee's aestheticization of transpacific immigration, Eileen Chang's ethnography of communist China, and James Baldwin's anti-

universalist check with transatlantic black coalition as revealing occasions characterized by the figure of the alien, where the U.S. exceptionalist rule is played out premised on an unfinished warfare against communism and a *just domination* narrative that consolidates a cold war racial order. The texts I examine flesh out contradictions within U.S.-centered transnational discourses. They do so, however, not through nationalist or essentialist articulations of difference, but through comparisons of imperial promises of sweetness and light, unsuccessful transgression from the position of inarticulate subaltern to that of a knowledgeable anthropologist, and the unfeasible tale of an underdog's refusal of conditioned capital granted by the power that dehumanizes him but would also like to use him.

In our times when the United States continues to deploy narratives of national civil rights reform and minority enfranchisement side by side with its installment of military occupation and economic

exploitation around the world, I identify “transnational imaginations” as a valuable speculative space where crisscrossing discourses influence how we can observe, describe, and contemplate the global scale of Americanization accelerated in the previous century. My focus on literary characterizations of America and the rest of America imbricate the visible infrastructure of U.S. predominance in non-communist areas and the tacit yet overwhelming hegemony it maintains. In other words, I investigate multiethnic American literary works that occasion and complicate exceptionalist images of the United States which spell out the variant contradictions in its transnational governance; the bifurcation of geopolitics and culture in the epistemological containment of racialized others; and the sentimental narratives of rivaling national subjects that direct humanitarian prisms in accordance with international conflicts.

This dissertation develops with the premise that culture plays an important role in imperial or national call to arms, usually in

knowledge production regarding the irreducibly different, racial others. The variant “crusades,” distant or near, demands various sets of narratives to justify the war under different contexts and against different enemies. Mahmood Mamdani has pointed out that discussions of culture in our times push forward politicized agendas, with the pattern that they assume that “every culture has a tangible essence that defines it, and it then explains politics as a consequence of that essence” (17). Although configurations of culture owe their birthright to specific political demands, they live more and longer lives the inceptive political initiative does. Most of the world’s colonies gained independence by the 1960s, and the official death of cold war was conventionally dated by the Fall of Berlin Wall, but their cultural expressions—Orientalist histories, politicized diagnosis of “religions” all over the rest of the West, transcendentalist comparisons of “civilizations,” sketchy demonization of heads of “socialist” regimes—remain not only

aggressive but generative in the world(s) where we live and work today. Culture is far more complicated than just a means of obvious indoctrination, for it profoundly decides the ways in which we learn about modernity against “its” alternatives, the reasons why the universal assumes a higher authority over the particular, and the interrelated scenarios in which distinctions are made and reproduced between the just and the culpable.

Studying culture as a site where collectivities are forged and marshaled means, as other inquiries into the dialectic formations of power, studying culture as a site where incoherence and disobedience emerge by necessity. Following the enabling work of Lisa Lowe, I approach the *supranational* of the United States since the cold war simultaneously as “the medium of the *present*—the imagined equivalences and identifications through which the individual invents lived relationship with the national collective—[but also] the site that mediates the *past*, through which history is grasped

as difference, as fragments, shocks, and flashes of disjunction" (2-3, emphases in original). Not only does Lowe's *Immigrant Acts* resituate Asian American cultural productions from the multiculturalist "simulacrum of inclusiveness" to "countersites" that expose the contradiction between labor exploitation and cultural-political subordination (5); it also calls forth critical analyses moving beyond U.S. national frameworks that contextualize Asian American positionality as a contact zone for the history of U.S. imperial wars in Asia and the question of U.S. responsibility for the unstably alien-ized Asians (Lowe 2010). Indebted to Lowe's activist take on the distance between Asian American culture and the normative U.S. national subjectivity, my dissertation hopes to attend to cultural practices out of the diminishing distance between the economically and politically subjugated aliens and their cultural administrative institutions that produce comfortably resourceful and self-legislating imperial agents. The subjugated aliens have been trained in such ways that they live

and labor in an imagined synchronized present with the democratic empire, but in the transnational cultural imperial terrain they are cast, if not “sentenced,” to a distorted past which is not even “theirs.” Like the racialized minorities, they are conditionally included in the so-called multicultural society that imagines itself extending “without borders,” and yet they also *are*—for they cannot be otherwise—simultaneously the recalcitrant return of the repressed to the racialized minorities and the antagonized enemies to the normative national citizenry. Following the military domination has been executed over them long time ago, it is in social and cultural texts that these aliens continually evoke the imperial desire to use and rid, fetishize and denigrate, patronize and disgrace these vulnerable others. Depressingly, this project provides no hopeful example of the postcolonial-styled “writing back” undertaking, but it examines some indicative failures of compliant articulations, in practice and in theory.

“Multiculturalism” as a Supranational Regime

“At racial liberalism’s core was a *geopolitical* race narrative: African American integration within U.S. society and advancement toward equality defined through a liberal framework of legal rights and inclusive nationalism would establish the moral legitimacy of U.S. global leadership. Evidence that liberal antiracism was taking hold in the United States—civil rights legal victories, black American professional achievement, waning prejudice—was to prove the superiority of American democracy over communist imposition. It would demonstrate to non-Western countries that the social relations of capitalist modernity were not hopelessly compromised by white supremacy” (4-5; emphasis added).

--“The Spirit of Neoliberalism,” Jodi Melamed

In her penetrative observation of the U.S. historicization of African American struggles and conditioned enfranchisements during the cold war, Jodi Melamed situates such narrative production foremost as an ideological institution that both endorses the increasing influence of the United States to the world and dispels the apprehensive doubts of non-Western societies beforehand. As a thesis built upon Mary Dudziak and other critical historians’ groundbreaking studies of the U.S. preoccupation with fighting

against the communist camp at all levels in domestic politics and diplomatic relations, it probes not so much territorial annexation, political domination, and economic instrumentalization of the United States and its "protectorates" *inside the U.S.-centered transnational order* which is intimately tied to the global capitalist reign of neoliberalism at present, for that order not only substantially redefines the manpower and resources at the disposal of the United States to this date, but significantly forces crystallization of unmistakable white supremacy consolidated through capitalist subjugation of the non-Western peoples. Thus, I propose that we attend to the "official" antiracism of the postwar U.S. as a discourse intently working through *global* geopolitical considerations, in the sense that it is both unequivocally nationalist, which gives the nation a glorious progress from the past to the present along the lines of a monolinear temporality, and uncannily accommodating, as it presents not cases

but paradigms of freedom and universality appealing for adoption at any corner of the world.

Insomuch as the model democracy self-defined by “antiracism” needs exemplary subjects bearing witness to the fruition of indiscriminate emancipation, both at home and in the satellite lands, an emphatically “empowered,” non-white league of enfranchised “racial minorities” inside the national territory and liberated aliens from the presumably “backward” countries was called to the stage. These figures are translated into real life-stories of model minorities, successful immigrants, or fortunate survivors of communist prosecution and colonial rules gratefully marching toward America, physically or symbolically. In *Immigrant Acts*, Lisa Lowe points out mainstream narratives of immigrants in the United States produce a “simulacrum of inclusiveness,” which eclipses the contradiction between the U.S. economic exploitation of these racialized bodies’ relatively low-cost labor and the political denial of

commensurable rights. Connecting that very simulacrum to the disperse alien populations whom are willfully painted as symbolic "immigrants" to the exceptional democracy of the United States, such as the case of Japanese women under U.S. occupation elucidated by Lisa Yoneyama, it should be clear that the discourse of racial liberalism is the "soft" message the United States gives to the non-West peoples side by side with its iron-cold domination and indeed the entire world: We have treated our minorities with decency, and now we are going to rule you democratically.

There are two major critiques of U.S. imperialist orientations of multiculturalism that the dissertation hopes to make. First, in contradiction to white supremacists' fear of multiculturalism as heresy or insurgency and in contrast with the classical criticism of multiculturalism as a false celebration of a nonexistent racial harmony in the United States, this dissertation dissects its discursive formation as a mythology of U.S. national citizenship, one that

consists of mesmerizing stories but remains eternally ethereal. It is easy to hear complaints about the current U.S. society as one that fails to materialize the multicultural ideals it has promoted and advocated for the past decades, but it is immensely harder to examine how such ideas are subject to varied institutionalization in the aftermath of national divisions that took forms of bloodshed confrontations, destructive social unrest and incalculable personal and collective losses of the long 1960s. Unfolding these with the USIA-commissioned documentary that I refer to in the beginning of this chapter, the proper multicultural subjects are certainly not the nine armless black students, whose vulnerability are hypervisualized and consigned to a disgraceful past of the nation, but their future selves with all the privileges and influence which they dream to have, and the audience in India dreams to dream.

Second, regarding institutions of multiculturalism in light of their production of universality premised on the mythical national

citizenship of the United States, this dissertation observes that the engineering of normative beneficiaries of multiculturalism necessitates a liberation paradigm exclusively owned by racialized minorities within U.S. national imaginary. For some, this paradigm is flatly a fiction. In the chapter on James Baldwin, I focus on how his outspoken critiques of uniformed historic framing of black slavery and sentimental novels' dehumanization of black characters are reflective of the broader U.S. demands of national unity and the expansive structure of racist culture at that juncture. More importantly, such "paradigm" not only authorizes deprecation of foreign nations and their subjects marked as the rest of the West, but also dictates knowledge productions about colonization, dictatorship, or unfreedom. In "The Spirit of Neoliberalism," as Melamed positions the U.S.-established regime of "multiculturalism" a discursive weapon of its global governance at present—one that smartly rewrites and monopolizes meanings of antiracism so that the United States may

eloquently charge its foes with racism or monoculturalism—she reads the Patriotic Act’s protection of “Arab Americans,” “Muslim Americans” and “Americans from South Asia” as an instrument both to legislate the continued violence against the racialized minorities’ alien counterparts and to reassign racial privilege (to the former) and stigma (to the latter). My dissertation contends such “intraracial” demarcation along the lines of alien-ship is not novel. In the chapter on Eileen Chang’s *The Rice-Sprout Song* (1954), I read the overtly ethnographical characterization of the setting and characters as a schema that produces an epistemological hierarchy to accommodate the colluded relations between traditional anthropologist and research object, the West(ernized) and the Orient, elite writer and Chinese peasant, the so-called democratic and communist worlds. In the chapter on Chang-rae Lee’s *A Gesture Life* (1999), I explore how the protagonist’s lifelong pursuit of becoming an exemplary U.S. citizen is manifested through material

comfort, ideological compliance, and infinite commitments to rectifying Asian wrongs with American capital, which altogether makes him a multiply flawed, racialized figure under the representation of an acclaimed and popular Asian American writer. In these examples, the U.S. institution of multiculturalism habitually disavows its racialization of established categories of minorities (i.e., minorities conceived as worth-worrying threats) with a pluralist facade, which racializes under the guise of “cultural” terms, while in the meantime it also construes the aliens as the premodern “antecedent” to “recognized” minorities, which racializes in unabashedly imperialist terms. This is the underlying interdependence between modernist multiculturalism and xenophobia.

While Melamed illuminates clear enough how the paradoxical effects of U.S. institutionalization of multiculturalism paved the way for the current neoliberal domination across the globe, I would add the genealogy the conditions for my interest in the transnational

formation of U.S. governance, which started long before I became a foreign student in Southern California and experienced how “the war on terror” and financial crises brought significant legal and cultural changes to noncitizens in the country. Born in Taiwan after the U.S. and China built full diplomatic relationship and started intensive economic interactions, and growing up in a college town over the 1980s and the early 1990s watching *The Cosby Show*, *Star Trek*, and local news reports of environmentalists’ confrontation with American chemical companies in the country, demonstrations against the KMT regime, and cross-Taiwan Strait missile tests during election times, I used to be enthusiastic in speculating on what life in America was like, especially from friends and relatives who had immigrated to the United States, because, for me, it entailed both brilliant wonders and unfathomable appeals that felt so distant, yet so real, from a 16-inch television screen that sit stoically in our living room.

From Cartographical Uses of Diaspora

The black students believe that black studies concerns them and black people alone. But that is a mistake. Black studies mean the intervention of a neglected area of studies that are essential to the understanding of ancient and modern society. [...] Black studies require a complete reorganization of the intellectual life and historical outlook of the United States, and world civilization as a whole.

-- C. L. R. James, *"The Black Scholar Interview"*

"Diaspora" opens up a productive symbolic space for racialized minorities to demonstrate and practice acts of "alterity" that denaturalize and counter the mandate of homogeneity forced by the imperial or national state. Elaborations of diaspora, in this light, necessarily announce specified relationships between the site of their immediate struggle and another place, which serves the strategic point of comparison. In the first half of the twentieth century, the variant movements inspired and remarkably enabled by Pan Africanism in the West Indies, the mainland United States, African colonies and Europe often testify the mutual sustenance of

intellectual activism and transformative social revolution in the most substantial terms. However, under circumstances in which the state utilizes the institution of "multiculturalism" to regulate and manage racialized difference, prized narratives of diaspora are likely to take the rather unfortunate contour to both divide and reductively define the minorities by assigning them "ancestry stories" of native inheritance and migratory experience that, as "diverse" as they are, converge at their arrival at the glorified imperial or national territory. Not only do such "hijacked" narratives of diaspora yield an inclusive liberal façade to the empire or nation in power, they reproduce a racializing prism in the representation of the "origin" or the entire traverse, lending "evidence" and force to the conditions for migration and the continued force of displacement operated through rhetoric of racialism. Narratives of diaspora are populated and presented by real persons, but they are never told without a protocol of vocabulary and targeted audience(s). Listening to what

C.L.R. James had to say as early as in 1970 about the constraining epistemology of empty, homogeneous “black-ness” that travels across time and space, we can only hope now is not too late to animate interventions of the power-history circuit with critical revisits of diaspora beyond the confines of imagined identical raciality.

That said, it should be clear that this dissertation does not frame the three selected texts with the theme of colored immigrants’ successful settlement and enfranchisement in the United States: with or without conditioned rewards from the act of immigration, the migrant subjects do not stand for exceptional awardees of liberation for “their people,” struggling all the way to become American. A *Gesture Life* is not read as a story of a Japanese veteran purging his wartime crimes with American humanitarian charity, *The Rice Sprout Song* not an autobiography of a Chinese expatriate disenchanting communism with the liberal perspective of “the Free World,” and Baldwin’s essays not missionary statements of an African American

claiming sympathetic knowledge of their colonized brothers and sisters in the rest of America. Rather, the three chapters aim to detail the ways in which their alienship is never revoked, whereby the discourse of liberation turns to a nightmarish, invisible tutelage. That is, in contradistinction to the dominant trajectory of deciphering diaspora as allegories of relations between nations-cum-civilizations, this dissertation excavates traces of knowledge production which make that regime of truth tenable.

Some recent engagements with the question of the political in diaspora studies help shaping the interventions this project hopes to make. Brent Edwards reminds us that sensible considerations of diaspora must deal with the variant currents of knowledge production associated with the term, not least because the main contributors of the concept in the past have had clear awareness of it. In "The Uses of Diaspora," he looks at the "Africa interest" in early twentieth-century African American identity formation, candidly put

as “a discourse of internationalism aimed generally at the cultural and political *coordination* of the interests of peoples of African descent around the world” (46), and also at the concurrent development of prescient thoughts, which observe the distinction between the Pan African Conference held on 1900 and later political movements mobilized with varied citations of it. In his later book *The Practice of Diaspora*, Edwards employs the idea of *déclage* in his comparative study of black activism and intellectual dynamics in Harlem and Paris in the interwar period, emphasizing how the term diaspora “forces us to articulate discourse of cultural and political linkage only *through and across difference* in full view of the risks of that endeavor” (13; emphases added). With a series of deliberations, Edwards dislodges diaspora from History (with a capitalized H), but compellingly demonstrates it a critical site of contestations that open up plural accesses to the complicated pasts.

Another important inspiration for this project comes from Michelle Stephens's interdisciplinary project *Black Empire*, in which she studies three important thinkers to any history of twentieth-century U.S. political philosophy that were born and raised in West Indies: Marcus Garvey, Claude McKay and C.L.R. James. With the focus on the three thinkers' engagement of the concept of "New Negro" and their visions of polities transgressing national boundaries, Stephens observes how the thinkers from the so-called periphery would advance so deeply into the so-called center, and thence develop their "unexpectedly" comprehensive, counter ideologies. Overall, *Black Empire* prompts this dissertation to consider how diasporas within empire are racialized and historicized, and more importantly, how does the previous negligence of the three thinkers' Caribbean background and the present investigation of it altogether suggest of U.S.-West Indies relationship over the past century.

For my purposes, I identify the key contribution of the two volumes as their engagement with a conspicuous absence in earlier studies of American diaspora narratives: what the “alien” black activists, writers and scholars react to the division between America and the rest of America in the “diasporic” encounter. The more traditional approach of transnational diasporic cultures and literatures presumes intraracial communities—by *abstracting* the concept of diaspora, to use Brent Edwards’s term—outside the official territory of the United States, and thereby details how the “diasporic” black Americans gain inspirations from their exposure to the foreign society, with occasional extensions to how the “diasporic” American coordinate and mobilize the non-American for self-emancipating action. To move beyond the epistemological obsession of American influence in the so-called transnational studies, Edwards in his book *The Practices of Diaspora* shows clearly how the “intraracial” encounters is fraught with tensions and

misunderstandings, but nonetheless the interactions complicate, unsettle, even overthrow given beliefs about the black people and variant national formations. If Edwards carefully presents and justifies the context-specific partiality and political teleology of black American *uses of diaspora* in his book, Stephens's project takes the initiative to ask how the Caribbean elites could so eloquently articulate issues of iniquities to the American society to the extent that they claimed intellectual leadership in the American mainland. For unspecified reasons, Stephens does not treat the U.S.-West Indies relationship as a colonial one, but only calls the three thinkers' background as "imperialism," as a result of which the book does not clearly answer what disqualifies these three thinkers from the category of "American," which marks the starting point of this book project. Furthermore, as the book moves on to critique the sexist ideology and biased gender perspectives of Garvey, McKay and

James, the project misses a clarification of how it positions itself in relation to imperialist deprecating differentiation of colonized elites.

In "Transnational Assimilation," the texts to be studied are situated as "inconvenient" diaspora narratives that not just fail to produce U.S.-centric international allegories, but substantiate how that failure takes place due to the smart, versatile, and amicable power of racism, which is usually advanced through successful diaspora narratives. The three chapters look at different threads of transnational crossing in which the traveler is not happily enfranchised, but stranded in agony. Chang-rae Lee's repressed protagonist Hata cannot get away from his profound guilt toward his daughter; Eileen Chang's aspirations for a literary career in the U.S. proves an impractical illusion; and Baldwin feel not complacency but confusion and a little envy toward the French-colonized black students pursuing an independent nation. All the chapters aim to show that racism in our times take simple and complex forms, but

they educate the racialized others abundant lessons and survival skills, too. The first two chapters are centered on the alien subjects' active uses of diaspora, which shows a startling knowledge of American expectations of the subjugated noncitizens. The third chapter is centered on an unpossessed racialized minority subject's ruthless interrogation of the division between the normative "American" and the un-Americanized, a division that is not exclusively drawn upon citizenship but concerns a myriad of social privileges that collude and cooperate with race and racialism.

The order of the three chapters is attempted to show the discussions from the explicit to the paradigmatic. Especially with the last chapter, I hope to underscore that it is a mistake to take the objective of this project as issuing charges against U.S. citizenship as an abstracted concept or an equivalent to absolute privileges. On the contrary, this project is about how the category of "American citizens" has been built over time and under specific historical

contexts, how the discriminating force of telling the so-called American from those who are not has worked in multiple ways. Echoing C.L.R. James's quote in the beginning of the section, this project attempts reorganization of "the intellectual life and historical outlook" of the United States and beyond, among the infinite possibilities.

Toward a Critique of Humanist Neonationalism

As Jean-Luc Nancy reminds us, equality does not entail "a commensurability of subjects in relation to a random unit of measure"; it lies rather in "the equality of singularities." Stating the plurality of the singular thus becomes an effective mode of navigating the Babel of races, cultures, and nations produced by the long history of globalization.

--Achille Mbembe, "Provincializing France?"

In early 2011, *Public Culture* has a special issue "Racial France" that responds to emergent debates on the place of postcolonial studies "in the French archive and in current scholarship," which must be seen under the context of recent outbursts of racial conflicts and

some reflections on structure of academic interest(s). This issue “juxtaposes” three articles that engage the debate from contrasting positions, followed by discussions, specific “applications” and photo essays. Jean-François Bayart's “Postcolonial Studies: A Political Invention of Tradition?,” the first article, basically argues postcolonial studies is “largely unnecessary” for researchers of France today because “it” is a “sterile” import from the futile clashes of identities in the Anglophone world, and in fact, he continues, the main issues postcolonial studies sought to unravel already exist in “French literature” (under which he includes the works by Fanon and Césaire) and French intellectual history (under which he names Foucault and Bordieu). Robert J. C. Young finds the arguments in contradiction to each other. Achille Mbembe's “Provincializing France?” identifies the value of postcolonial studies to our understanding of the past and the present in the shameful persistence of slave trade and colonization across the centuries. Among his analyses of the reasons

why the colonial history of France continues to be disavowed in today's France, he attends especially to how the dominant belief of France *as a republic* has severely debilitated reflections on the country's imperial past and its relations to the present. Ann Stoler's "Colonial Aphasia: Race and Disabled Histories in France" emerges from the seeming contradiction between the abundant fragments of the colonial history of France and the intriguing absence of systemic treatment of racial relations therein. Her examinations focus on how academic disciplines have long served simultaneously *the guard and guardian of empire*, and how the effects—which she elaborates with psychological analyses of aphasia—result in a detrimental intellectual stasis.

The special issue starts with the problem of the "belated" emergence of postcolonial studies in French scholarship, but there is another way of seeing the situation: if it was not until 1978 that Said's *Orientalism* marks a new age for the West in which those formerly

colonized by British Empire were thereafter allowed to speak their world of colonial history, then perhaps it was not past the millennium that, due to the new movements of capital and population, the monochromatic society of France was no longer sustainable and the race-blind contentions had face their bankruptcy.

Going back to my own project, the serious question is, of course, Where is the place of postcolonial studies in the American archive and in current scholarship? It is said that postcolonial studies have prospered in the United States, but for obvious reasons the standard curriculum of postcolonial colonial studies are overwhelmingly concentrated on critiques of European empires. Since the 1990s, discussions of U.S. imperialism have steadily increased, but the focus was more on U.S. aggressions than U.S. imperial rules, and voices of the colonized or dominated remain barely audible. Where is the place of postcolonial studies to American Studies? What are the conditions that obfuscate

reflections on the imperial practices of the United States? In spite of the countless books and articles on postcolonial studies in print in the United States, why Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* and his uncompromising criticism of *French* colonialism remains the pedagogical example in teaching students the voice of the colonized?

Not only do I find Stoler's observation readily applicable to the division of academic labor in the current United States, Mbembe's dissection of the paradoxical nominal egalitarianism and "radical indifference to difference" in the discourse of France as a classical republic makes the comparison between secular France and multicultural United States inevitable.

Through the dissertation, I argue "humanist neonationalism" to be an effective trajectory to understanding the relationship between the mainstream culture of the United States and the non-West populations, in the cold war and at present. Neonationalism owe its

morphological structure and semantic signification to neocolonialism, but it is far more advanced than the latter in terms of integrating a populace of racialized differences. Neonationalism is also superbly comforting for its agents, who, be they participate in the enterprise of power consciously or unwittingly, tend to assert the moral superiority of their nation in its allegedly existing inclusiveness and willing accommodation to immigrants from around the world. As can be readily anticipated, the discursive structure of domination heavily deploys engagement and imagination out of humanitarian concerns in "reaching out" the non-West, but it is hardly possible for humanitarians to really deal with troubles in the world caused by violence undertaken on the presumption of equal humanities between humans. Humanist acts are based on good intentions, yet the advancement of their self requires the effacement, depreciation, repent or "reform" of others. Humanist neonationalism is in a circular production of its righteousness, and its illusive openness.

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CHAPTER TWO

No Easy Way Home: James Baldwin's Considerations of Being Black and American in the Early Cold War

Among all the ways of living in exile, those grounded on interrogating exclusionary measures taken by the power that defines and dominates where one is tempted to call home defy a contended settlement and perhaps preclude a definite end. James Baldwin, a key figure of the U.S. civil rights movement across the long 1960s, has spent most of his time living abroad since his first stint in France from 1948 to 1957 till his death in 1987. Away from his native Harlem and a tough upbringing out of a strained family and a segregated society, when Baldwin first reached the city celebrated for glamorous spectacles of modernity, he had the familiar feeling of being excluded as an ignorant and irrelevant stranger, for which he wryly observed that “the American Negro in Paris is very nearly the invisible man.” Rather than simply lamenting racism as a universal ill

of the modern Western world, he examined the history of French colonization across three continents, and the ways in which the majority of black and white Americans resident in Paris then tolerated and lived with that entrenched structure of prejudice. Baldwin's alien existence gives him an unexpected point of vantage to see the interrelated demarcations between his compatriots. He anatomized nationhood's underpinnings in race and class, firstly in his analyses of American students, many of which were G.I. veterans, and those who generate nationalist fervor for their wounded ego as well as those who take pride in their smooth assimilation without being bothered by living under the constraints of superficiality. Moreover, Baldwin gave serious thoughts of the slave ancestry of black Americans after his encounters with black students and black migrant workers from varied French colonies. Comparing without conflating their shared experience of denigration and exploitation, he did not immediately embrace or reject, but instead called into

question, the emergent transnational solidarity based on a recuperated “black” racial origin, at the time when the so-called third world and the U.S. were having an escalating tension over people of color’s worldwide liberation with or without communism. Oscillating between several possible destinations of belonging and yet refusing to inhabit any with regards to its mechanism of othering, Baldwin projects no utopian home at either shore of the Atlantic, but persists in his uncompromising drift.

Although Baldwin’s extended experiences of international travel and migration hinged by his literary career may seem distinctly exceptional, even incidental, they shed unusual light on the converged threads of the rise of the U.S. to a global superpower and the seemingly unstoppable train of decolonization after European empires fell apart following the Second World War. The traditional U.S. interpretation of the cold war is largely confined to diplomatic historians’ assessments of U.S. foreign relations—drawn heavily upon

archived English-language materials, mostly correspondence between consequential techno-bureaucrats as well as state-sanctioned official documents—with an overriding concentration on U.S.-Europe relations in the 1950s, which treat anticolonial insurgencies in the global south as crises to the Western liberal polity of communist conquest over the minds and hearts of the poor and colonized.¹ The separation of U.S. foreign maneuvers and its domestic political climate is obviously a result of disciplinary compartmentalization, and in effect a crucial epistemological means to maintain a coherently anticommunist stance of the U.S. in the ideological warfare. Against such background, the black American writer's perceptions of transatlantic antiblack racism provide a valuable point of entry to studying the remnant of imperial

¹ Among recent representative examples are John Lewis Gaddis's two newer books, *We Now Know* (1997) and *The Cold War: A New History* (2005), of which the former has been widely assigned as textbook of cold war history in university survey courses in the U.S. and the U.K., and the latter remains a popular read for the non-academic readers on the topic of cold war's transatlantic political impacts.

liaisons in the architecture of a new international order. Secondly, in addition to recent scholarly investigations of the interrelationship between U.S. civil rights reforms and overall tactical deployments for the establishment of the so-called Free World, Baldwin's essays helpfully illustrate the discrepancies between legislations and their practical results. For example, while Truman's administration has been conventionally marked by landmark bills and court decisions gesturing national desegregation, scholars such as Mary Dudziak, Thomas Borstelmann and others have elucidated both the underlying calculation of votes for winning elections and limitations of the acts that were meant less for substantial reforms than countering communist criticisms of the deprived status of the blacks. With the essays we are to read in this chapter, a better picture emerges regarding the extent to which racial issues saturate the reconfiguration of U.S. national citizenship whereas antiblack racism is not eliminated but tacitly woven into the fabric of U.S.-centered

cold war alliances. Finally, to the core concern of this chapter, with the cross-comparisons Baldwin makes between the colonized peoples' struggle for national independence and black Americans' demand of rights and justice, some critical considerations may be made concerning the solidarity between black Americans and Africa or the third world in general. With existent studies that approach the multiple dimensions of transnational black solidarity that focus on either the NAACP leadership, regional political leverage, and diasporic intelligentsia's contribution, etc., it is worthwhile to study the case of Baldwin as a caveat against the unsymmetrical cultural traffic and contentions of concentric collaborations that characterize a many border-crossing enterprises headquartered in the first world. In a direction downright opposite to his literary "father" Richard Wright, Baldwin insists on foregrounding his ignorance of the struggles undertaken by the colonized blacks he meets in Paris and million others living beyond his knowledge and

imagination. On what grounds does Baldwin hold back the worldly black coalition? What are the implications of his counter-internationalist or un-cosmopolitan position? Does he gesture any possibilities of contextualizing the problem of the color line across but not without national boundaries? These are the questions I hope to unpack in the ensuing sections.

This chapter aims to enquire how the U.S. implements a transnational domain of governance as “an empire of liberty,” to borrow the phrase of historian Odd Arne Westad, one that encompasses European colonial networks so much so that divisions and hierarchies based on race are not dismantled but partially reconstructed, embellished, or transferred to surrogate actors. The U.S.-NATO alliance was maintained not only against the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, but also in cautious surveillance of Africa and Asia, where the former colonies to major European powers successively gained independence but were unstably involved with

the two blocs' rivalry. Africans and Asians have long been abjected as slaves, while in the cold war they were also casted as suspicious threats. Although American literary scholarship in the past has mainly familiarized us with the cross-currents of the juncture through W.E.B du Bois and Richard Wright, who strive to make manifest black Americans' expansive cultural legacy and revolutionary affinities with the transnational Left, this chapter approaches the scenario via the competing perspective held by James Baldwin, for whom intraracial bonding is inevitably conditioned and transnational advocacy cannot but replicate hierarchical international relations. There is nothing ambiguous about Baldwin's fight against racism in the twentieth-century U.S., but little evidence suggests he affiliates his mission with black internationalism. Extended from the Wright-Baldwin contrast, this chapter also attempts to be in dialogue with Paul Gilroy's notion of "the black Atlantic" whose enabling effects have been vibrantly discussed since the 1990s. The goal of the dialogue is

three-fold: to contemplate how the diasporic black writers and artists' identitarian links with the signifying history and economy of "Africa" are made, in what ways may they be related to U.S. nationalist appropriations of the civil rights reform, and what is at stake regarding atomized practices subscribing to such notion and the empire of liberty's legitimization of its extension in the name of democracy. By examining the above issues, I wish to take a closer look of black histories unevenly suppressed and disorderly ebbed across the Atlantic and beyond, so as to probe Baldwin's specifically pointed negotiation with the nation hopefully with greater sophistication and a deeper understanding of its disruptive potentials.

In the dissertation's engagement with racial relations in the cold war making of transnational America, this chapter analyzes how black Americans, categorized as the nation's major minority, become a critical site for registrations of a totalizing U.S. liberal management of racial conflicts, one that is of tremendous indexical

value not only for the consolidation of the new Western order, but also for countering communist allegations against the U.S. as a racist and imperialist regime. While in the next two chapters I look at how cold war-conditioned transpacific immigrations cause significant impacts on the dominant racializing structure imposed on Asians, in this chapter I look at how the myth of multiethnic egalitarianism of the U.S. was created at a time when black Americans had rather limited rights and the major radical forms of black American activism were largely articulated with communist visions and vocabulary. With Baldwin's essays of profound reflections on the possibilities and constraints of positioning the perplexingly subordinated status of black Americans during the early cold war period, I hope to show how the residual influence of colonialist racism against black bodies and the hierarchical order underlying transnational black associations prompt the writer's multifaceted considerations of being black and American at the same time.

This chapter is not an exhaustive assessment of James Baldwin's definition or activist positioning of black American identity, but rather an attempt to ponder how black Americans become a crucial category of American racial minority in the transitional period of the 1950s, when the U.S. state consolidates its transnational governance with a characteristic liberal façade and the cold war dichotomy seems to dominate dissident political organizations. While it might be pointed out that Baldwin made considerable adjustments of his position after he was directly involved with the civil rights movement through the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE),² the questions he raised in the earlier stage of the cold war nevertheless offer a valuable window for understandings of the significance of race in the making of a U.S.-centered new world order. The chapter is divided to three parts: the first section is centered on Baldwin's critique of "provincial" Europeans and their blindness to colonial

² For example, see Nabers 2005 and Norman 2007.

histories, the second on the uneasiness shared by black and white Americans in articulating racial relations of their country, and the third on the irreducible gap Baldwin feels toward black people from places with a history of French colonization.

Re-discovering the Old World

Although Baldwin had been a reviewer for years in New York of the overabundant (albeit mostly problematic or inadequate, as he saw them) literary renditions of “the American Negro” in American presses, upon arriving in Paris he had the dismay of finding immigrants and racial minorities were not yet taken as seriously as an issue, if not simply eliminated from sight, in the wealthier parts of Europe. He characterizes the Parisian attitude toward the American students as “arrogant indifference” (128), the result of a combined pride in European history, relics of Christianity, and claims of authentic heritage of the making of the modern world. Also he

examines how, in as much as the French emperors and merchants used to keeping their colonized servants in remote islands and jungles, the physical presence of a black man in the metropolis is neither expected nor welcomed, but conveniently contained in colonial relations. Ironically, Baldwin had the contrasting experience of hyper-visibility outside the big city. Over his several visits of a picturesque small town in Switzerland, he found himself in a village inhabited by some inculpably naïve and innocently well-intentioned local people, who could not suppress their curiosity and cluelessness at seeing the first black person in their life. Despite the author is savvy enough to understand the villagers' straightforward responses, he is not spared from their consequential effects of humiliation and dehumanization. He then ponders the conditions for the villagers possess the luxury of innocence, after a global robbery of humanity for three hundred years. Hence, with all these experiences of being an abjected alien temporarily away from the enervating

circumstances at home, Baldwin leads his readers to reassess the unique experience of being racial minorities in America: discriminated, but nominally recognized.

As a would-be immigrant from a disfavored country, Baldwin attributes his frustrations of self-identity no so much to the lack of knowledge on the part of the French as to their overconfidence in interpreting “the American conundrum” with exaggerated, partial, and oftentimes mistaken information. In his essay “A Question of Identity,” Baldwin describes that the American students in Paris enjoy a more privileged status than that of the others, and in general appreciate the air of freedom abroad until the moment they realize their wish of being liked as a person is probably never to be fulfilled. The reason is that, against his will and in spite of his protests, the American is confused with uniformed images of his country, such as “the Marshall Plan, Hollywood, the Yankee dollar, television, or Senator McCarthy,” and thus disposed to ungrounded judgments

without even the right to dispute or speak for himself. In other words, the European builds his knowledge of America by clinging “to such information as is afforded by radio, press, and film, to anecdotes considered to be illustrative of American life, and to the myth that [the Americans have themselves perpetuated]” (120), so that “America” becomes such a colossal fantasy from which hardly any individual may escape. It is not sheer Eurocentric belittlement of the rest of the world, but the self-blinding ignorance of its own productivity that makes the situation untreatable.

To the black American traveler, his lifelong alienation from his nation constitutes the impossible task of making articulate to himself or to others who he is. The European inquirers feel confident enough to locate the past of the black Americans as “a series of ropes and bonfires and humiliations” (121)—that is, through the lens of the institution of sentimental novels—and yet they demand personal

accounts of the established narratives from the living witness in front of them:

The Negro is forced to say "Yes" to many a difficult question, and yet to deny the conclusion to which his answers seem to point. His past [...] has been something vastly more complex, which, as he thinks painfully, "It was much worse than that," was also, he irrationally feels, something much better. As it is useless to excoriate his countrymen, it is galling now to be pitied as a victim, to accept this ready sympathy now which is limited only by its failure to accept him as an American. He finds himself involved, in another language, in the same old battle: the battle for his own identity. (120-21)

With regards to the European audience's epistemology based on national charters, the black American traveler is faced with the dilemma of either pitting himself against his countrymen, as an instrumental proof of the unspecified allegations of American racism, or taking up the terrible burden of elucidating the complexities of American racial relations, which is bound to be a suicidal failure, given the audience's lack of interest in that topic per se as well as its relevance to themselves. Therefore the black American traveler is

pushed to make the choice, which is no choice really, between accepting the ready sympathy that places him as a sub-American or retreating further in the realm of invisibility along with other castaways. By defining himself as a problem of America, he is able to retain some chance of making friends with Europe, if only theoretically.

To anatomize the unchallenged rule of white supremacy in Europe with a sharper razor, in the essay "Stranger in the Village" Baldwin depicts his status as a "living wonder" during his short-term stays in an isolated small town in Switzerland. He was warned before his first trip that he would make a sight there, but he was not prepared for being received as literally the first black person ever present in the village. The daring children of the village would come touch his wavy black hair and try rubbing off the tarry color of his hand, while those who are younger and shier would shout *Neger!* *Neger!* in groups whenever he passes on the street, and they make

sure to check how the stranger responds, each time with more or less blatant anguish and difference in manner. The adults, for sure, are able to embellish their curiosity or other feelings with gentler glances and more acceptable social demeanors, yet the village as a whole takes great pride in telling the stranger about the annual activity of its church, which solicits donations for “‘buying’ African natives for the purpose of converting them to Christianity” (163) and concludes the event with a role play in which selected boys of the village with blackened face playing the exact number of “saved Africans” on stage to pay tribute to the audience. Seemingly genuinely benevolent and totally unaware of the insults they make on the solitary stranger of African descent, the villagers, in Baldwin’s eyes, evince the perverse pursuit of proving their monopoly of authority and humanity by enforcing them on the disadvantaged others and harvesting the responses as confirmative evidences.

The village is both a real situation and a metaphor of a white supremacist order which stands undisturbed in the mid-twentieth century. As much as the village has had a communal life of centuries rested upon racial homogeneity, the inhabitants have never had the pressure let alone the obligation, to consider how people with different physique and complexion are just as human as they are. They do not necessarily consider themselves associated with slavery or colonization, for the village is content with its agricultural lifestyle of self-sustenance, and at the urge of the church, they may rightfully claim some contributions of alleviating the misfortune of those toiling faraway. However, under these circumstantial factors and self-apologies thence generated, Baldwin analyzes the bedrock of their racist contempt and the mechanism of their self-exoneration in terms of colonial relations, the tenacious force that undergirds the mainstream European perspective of non-white peoples. That is, if the Parisian arrogance is found upon the visible splendor of the city

and the myriad threads of history actually intersected there, the men and women, the farmers and store-keepers at the foot of the Alps dismiss the black American traveler with a more abstract but ruthless differentiation, i.e., the Western civilization created by the white man. Even the traveler brings to the village the very first typewriter there, he does not gain any respect for his knowledge or his profession in writing. In fact, as far as the villagers are concerned, there appears no huge distinction between the black traveler and the imagined "African natives," presumably savage and uncivilized as performed on stage, that they consider themselves kind enough to buy and redeem. In addition, Baldwin points out that there is a great deal of "will power" involved in the provincial white supremacists' naïveté. He succinctly put this: "Most people are not naturally reflective any more than they are naturally malicious, and the white man prefers to keep the black man at a certain human remove because it is easier for him thus to keep his simplicity and avoid being called to account

for crimes committed by his forefathers, or his neighbors" (166). That is, although it might be true that those born to the race of masters never get close to what the enslaved people feel, they cannot fail to know that their position built upon exceptional privileges, and that their every comfort in life is indebted to the sweat and long working hours of the racially subjugated. They cannot say their hands are clean without lying. Hence, it is for the sake of dissociating oneself from the condemnable complicity of colonialist aggressions that many of the racially interested recourse to the appealing persona of merciful naïveté, posing ignorance to cover up the stark conflicts between their dependency on existing advantages and their fear of the accompanied moral costs.

With his exposition of the provincial "European" mentality toward the black people, two of Baldwin's messages especially merit our attention at the juncture of European colonial powers in decline and U.S.-centered liberal order on rise. The first concerns how the

colonialist “legacies” in Europe result in the paradoxical incapability of dealing with racial differences. For centuries, the colonized are removed from the European sight, or left to the colonial agents and their tormenting heart of darkness. It has always been the responsibility of the colonized people to struggle against their dehumanized status and their invisibility, to make sense of their twisted love and hatred of the imperial mirror that denies them a desirable reflection, if at all. The masters have been used to ignore the slaves, who make no serious threat to the structure of domination anyway; those affiliated with the master share the entitlements to subordinate the slaved people, too, for the racial hierarchy underscored by guns and dynamites is so securely seated that appropriations of it are simply beyond dispute. The “European” optic is thus shown failing to capture the presence of those migrating from without or across the boundaries. The second and comparatively implicit message concerns the unique richness of “American

experience" with regards to the wars, tensions, and ongoing contestations about racial relations. As indicated by his description of the near impossibility of explaining to unknowing foreign inquirers what it is like about living as an underclass black man in America, Baldwin delves into the complexity of being conditionally contained and precariously included as the nation's major racial minority. This point will be explored in more depth in the next two sections, but here I hope to bring it to the foreground that the writer's complaints about racist behaviors and speeches he encounters in Europe invoke reflections on their American counterparts, for better and for worse. It is not that the white supremacists do not regard the enslaved people of color with colonialist contempt and condescendence, but rather that, for the way and the social fabric with which they live with each other, they have to develop more strategies to save their security and their business.

Contradictions within a United Front

Relentless in his critiques of the mainstream of the American life, Baldwin shows revealing ambivalences toward the rise of the U.S. as the world's strongest power, an irresistible happening that may eclipse domestic issues of inequality and incongruity on the one hand, or make more reforms urgent imperatives under global gaze on the other. Critic Laura Stevens has defined Baldwin's position as "African Americanism," a conflicting patriotism that is located between the dominant U.S. nationalist vision grounded on exceptionalism and the left-leaning cosmopolitanism aiming at transgressions across national boundaries, and therefore closely tied to the figure of immigrant, fraught with tensions out of the desire to settle and the desire of being able to assert the self with a distinct identity (95-97). Although the relationship between the position of "African Americanism" and the discursive body of immigrant narratives is worth being taken as a question awaiting for further

investigations, Baldwin's conflicting feelings of the nation of the U.S. intersect with the chapter's examination of configurations of race in the transnational making of cold war America on several points: How do American racial relations, overwhelmingly reduced to that between the black and the white, affect the international image of the U.S. in the early stage of the cold war? What are the most critical predicaments of making articulate the situation of the racial minority to the dichotomized international society? How does the advancement of American-modeled liberal regime across the first world constrict the possible forms of dissents, indicatively right at the point where it begins?

In "Encounter on the Seine" (1950), Baldwin gives vivid descriptions of how racial conflicts have brought home so much irreconcilable differences among the black and white Americans that both share the consensus of avoiding such topic in their unexpected encounter in a foreign society. The black American

sojourners are characterized by their tendency to keep a distance with oppressions of their past, especially those who remind them of their past oppressors, in their self-chosen tarry in the old world for the chance of a somewhat relieved new life. The unplanned encounter of black and white on the jolly and boisterous café tables by the Seine often stirs in both a mixture of embarrassment and discomfort. Their interactions are terribly restrained—since the felt gazes from the surrounding spectators not only forbids the expression of the truer and usually the more emotively punctuated sentiments, but inevitably make them aware of “being ambassadors,” or at least some kind of representative of their shared country (119). The suitable topic for such tightened conversation, therefore, goes to inviting subjects made for lighthearted and general discussions, such as, in the author’s signature way of comic relief, “the considerably overrated impressiveness of the Eiffel Tower” (120).

The wariness on both parts may be quite straightforwardly read as an attempt to keep the quarrels between the waters, but in the broader context of the global rise of U.S. power, their tactical “consensus” may be further interpreted as two gestures intimately related to the transitions then being adopted by their country. First, the contingent presentation of a “united front” to the onlookers is a necessitated means to maintain degrees of national dignity, from which their respective individuality cannot be separated. In spite of their entrenched distrust and conflicted relationship, they have learned from their own experience about how reductively Manichean the international views of their country are, and how many of the well-reported stories about America are either fabricated with hearsays and non-existing evidences or exaggeratingly adapted from events that serve the purpose of translating hostility and antagonism into seemingly unquestionable facts. Seeing in this way, their reticence can be reasonably

understood in an extended scope as an act preventive of lending any potential force to the rivaling camp. Second, the silence of the racially disadvantaged may be read not merely as a will to seek rest from a devastating past, but also a symbolic refusal of appealing to sensational victimhood in exchange of a ready recognition granted by the under-informed yet easily agitated foreign audience. It is easy to earn personal recognition by leveraging international feud and utilizing antipathy of the competitors or the enemies. As Baldwin portrays the encounter between the black and white the focus on the processing being contained in silence, or the former letting go a potentially useful opportunity of shaming the other for the benefits of elevating himself, his "African Americanism" clearly does not base itself on reverse racism or any pursuit that prioritizes the self-lionization.

In spite of their shared national identity, the white(ned) American and "the Negro" in Baldwin's essay regard each other "through the distorting screen created by a lifetime of conditioning"

(119). In the eyes of the racially privileged, his “darker brother” represents pain, grief, and rage, the counter-evidence to the national myth of immigrant prosperity and the golden haze of the New World’s democracy. The black American traveler sees his lighter-skinned compatriot not only from the history of his ancestors bought and utilized by white landlords, but also his own split ego, which “aches for acceptance in a culture in which pronounces straight hair and white skin the only acceptable beauty”(122). As if beckoning W.E.B. du Bois’s illuminating notion of “the double-consciousness of the black folks,” Baldwin has the telling description of how the black traveler is caught in the irresolvable predicament of (mis)taking the image of the white American his idealized self in the mirror, only to be chained by the relationship of mutual referentiality without reciprocity:

In white Americans he finds reflected—repeated, as it were, in a higher key—his tensions, his terrors, his tenderness. Dimly and for the first time, there begins to fall into perspective the nature of the roles they have played in the lives and history of each other. Now he is bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh; they have loved and hated and obsessed and feared each other and his blood is in their soil. Therefore he cannot deny them, nor can they ever be divorced. (123)

Written in an outstandingly religious tone, this paragraph highlights how power relations embedded on race contradicts with the principle of inclusiveness normally assigned to “humanity.” Whereas black traveler sees himself in the normative national citizen, this never happens happen vice versa. By legal definition they are both Americans, although in the social arena at home as well as abroad it is the white that define the category, as the black being defined by the nation’s demand of labor and means of maximizing “human resources” back to several centuries ago. If all the humans could be seen as the bearers of a single biological origin, then society must work man-made “wonders” by differentiating them with arbitrary

marks. No matter how entangled and mutually implicated their social and cultural existences are, in reality there is no magical melting pot, but ambivalent feelings toward the forceful inscriptions of color behind the making of a uniformed national collectivity.

In contradistinction with a critic's view of Baldwin's position as "paradoxical patriotism arises from [. . .] a prophetic desire to improve his country by critiquing the place wherein he was thrust by accidents of geography and genetics" (191), I argue it is rather the writer's affective investment with black American's simultaneous "alienation from the nation and its people" and uprootedness from Africa due to the distance of the Middle Passage, "a gulf of three hundred years," that prompts his critical negotiation with the mainstream of American society. Differently put, what thrusts upon him is the nation's production of a uniform citizenry, which not only disables the articulation of his abjected status within the country, but also "standardizes" his genealogical identity across the sea. Aligning

Baldwin with a patriotic stance risks underestimating, and reorienting, the writer's critique of racial tensions in side of the national subjects, although he is hardly hesitant to speak his passion for renovating the country that gives him sustenance and precious life lessons for a better future. With his compelling characterization of all the pains and humiliations built upon the color of his skin, persistently throughout his whole writing career, it seems far from precise to suggest the writer makes support and endorsement of the U.S. his priority. Also, given his penetrative observation of the privileged status enjoyed by Americans, the white much more readily so than their colored counterparts, there should be little doubt regarding his nuanced take of the rapidly rising status of his country and its participative alliance with the former colonial empires.

The cross-national alienation at the heart of Baldwin's black American traveler throughout his drift underscores the salient effects of race in the making of a transatlantic order. Alienation gives him

the traumatic experience of being scorned and rejected, but it also enables him to see through the deceiving appearance of romantic legends and popular myths. His comparison of the white supremacists living for generations in a removed European small town to the oppressive slave-keepers in the not-too-distant-past at Jamestown shows, clear enough, that he does not take the race he was born to and its history of forced settlement as narrowly as constricting accidents to himself and his people, but in fact the result of a large history concerning the convergence of colonial and settler capitalists' pursuit of interests. The tangible sense of alienation does not hinder his action, but rather proves to sustain his determination to dissect the composition of variant united fronts. Moreover, the black American traveler's involuntary experience of alienation also yields him the reward of superb alertness to membership invitations in general. As shown by the traveler's restrained and yet deliberately lighthearted interaction with his white countryman under the curious

gaze of foreigners in Paris, he has no illusion that the American racial hierarchy can be loosened any bit after a fun night of beer and laughter, or that several months of pleasant conversation with the friendly bistro owner in the secluded village in the Alps guarantees any change to the townspeople's overall reaction to this black man. With so much experience with divisions and demarcations standing behind grand narratives of harmony, the traveler is equally skeptical of the affective ties between the so-called compatriots and of the transformative effects of interpersonal communications. In lieu of a "home," the many years of alienation provide the exiled wanderer the precious precaution against some alluringly sweet promises.

On Conjuring Up a Brotherhood

This last section is an extended exploration of the reasons why Baldwin's hypothetical black American traveler maintains the direction of situating himself not so much in light of the worldly

coalition of the racially oppressed as an “inescapable part of the general social fabric” of America. The political position adopted by Baldwin is especially intriguing under the context of the ruthless anticommunist circumstances in the 1950s, a time when social criticism of most kinds is prone to be charged as treason, and antiracist mobilizations in the U.S. were strictly censored and constrained, to the extent that quite some scholars view the following decade a period of backlash. Why was the exiled writer so much bound by the racial inequities of his home country, when many black American activists and artists residing abroad keenly sought international connections that crisscross “the color curtain”? What might be the influences to his thoughts of internationalist coalitions of the colored peoples? How does his alienation from his home country relate to his self-consciously warranted understanding of national independence movements in former European colonies?

In Paris, a glamorous and heavily populated metropole, Baldwin's traveler has the experience of meeting the black students from France's colonies, or "French Africans" (as he calls them), and therefore to reflect on their vastly different lives in spite of their identical racial physique and complexion. Above all, he is startled by the bare means with which they manage their survival:

The French African comes from a region and a way of life which—at least from the American point of view—is exceedingly primitive, and where exploitation takes more naked forms. In Paris, the African Negro [. . .] leads here the intangibly precarious life of someone abruptly and recently uprooted. [...] They live in groups together, in the same neighborhoods, in student hotels and under conditions which cannot fail to impress the American as almost unendurable. (121-22)

Here, from the living conditions of the French African students, the traveler observes the ravenous exploitation of the indigenous Africans in French colonies. His observation of the precariousness of the colonized Africans visualizes colonialism's absolutist racial divide, and to that effect, tellingly scandalizes the lifestyle characterized by

ease and affluence enjoyed by the Parisians. On the other hand, the traveler is acutely aware of his use of American lens in seeing, feeling and imagining his identical-looking African men and women. The "American point of view" that he appropriates connotes primarily a comparatively remarkable level of the material basis for everyday life based on economic security and socially acceptable expectations. Although the traveler is undeniably alienated from the dominant narratives of U.S. history and social composition, he is nevertheless a product of the nation's advanced status in global economy, a fact that necessarily implicates his understandings of the rest of the world. In this light, the traveler's ways of regarding the vulnerability and deprivation of the French Africans in Paris reveal as much about the cruelty of French colonialism as the complexity of contemporary U.S. cooption of racial minorities under its economic and ontological rule.

The kernel of the commonality that the black American traveler finds in the French Africans is their ambivalence toward

nationality, which seems to be the only way to make their identity intelligible but meantime a betrayal of the actual exclusion and denigration they are forced to live with, inside the nation. As far as the French Africans are considered, as the traveler sees it, the remedy is relatively straightforward and basically dependent on their own efforts: they must gain independence from France, and build their own country that recognizes their rights and humanity. It is deemed that the realization of national independence takes certain pain and struggle in progression, that they must preserve through the hard times, and that eventually they will be able to harvest the fruit of freedom. But the traveler sees the plight of the black Americans as one without solutions. Their past has been so far removed, for which they do not have a new nation to expect, or tenable memories of the past for them to turn to. Their mother sings songs about the people living as motherless children; they heard the Haitians were able to trace their ancestors to kings of Africa in the distant past, but

they fear the longest way they can go is only to find their ancestors chained in auction blocks and waiting to be sold in much the same way as cattle and other goods. Moreover, it is as if their rejections of the nation would treacherously turn against themselves, for the black Americans can never ever claim themselves the constituency of any territory as rightfully as of the U.S. This is the reason why they are perplexed by the French inquirers' questions about national loyalty and their hesitance on categorizing them as Americans. This is also why, indeed, that the traveler is saddened by his self-defeating move of defending national dignity of his country, which treats him extremely unfairly and, in times of war especially, as nothing.

While Baldwin's lack of passion toward internationalist coalition of the transatlantic blacks has been largely seen as part of his long term quarrel with Richard Wright and his allies (Walters 1993; Campell 1995; Adesokan 2009), I would like to move away from that perspective of competitive rivalry and explore their different positions

via the former's statement that the black Americans are to recognize themselves as "hybrids," as in contrast of the latter's that the black Americans are to realize their identity and history by examining the current exploitations endured by the Africans, "the blackest of the black men." Baldwin's view of black Americans as the hybrid children of black and white parentage certainly carries reference to the gender dimension of hierarchical racial relations in the middle passage and hardship in the American settlements, but it also directs itself to the present and beckoning the future, to the changes that take place in black American lives. In this light, black and white no longer defines the oppositional extremes of privation and privilege, as the American society goes through transformations, and adopts more complex paradigms of stratification and discrimination. Embedding his claim on the society and culture in which he was raised, Baldwin chooses to take the tie between Africans and black Americans as one that cannot be separated from the power

relations of the U.S. and the newly independent nations. He expresses this position most clearly in his account of the First Conference of Negro-African Writers and Artists in Paris in 1956. He describes his feeling as a combination of excitement and uneasiness at seeing the African delegates in their custom dress, with detailed depiction of their appearance and the variant visual effects on the one hand, and his observation of their silence that stands in sharp contrast, which makes him reflect on the eligible ways of listening to their voice on the other. This juxtaposition is an effective literary presentation of how superficial (i.e., fabric-deep) it can be in "branding" ethnic characteristics and differences in our times, which involves the reinforcement of an asymmetric relationship played out through voyeuristic desire and exhibition of the self. Driving this point home, Baldwin's sarcastic portraits of Aime Cesaire, mainly in terms of his eloquence and management of media attention, and of the Francophone and Anglophone writers who seem to dominate the

discussion sessions, as the African artists hardly take the initiative of speaking, further foreground the presence of linguistic hegemony and discursive regimes in such an occasion intended to counter the world's lack of understanding of histories and creative practices in Africa. Positioning himself, at that time only a junior writer, in relation to the featured speakers from Africa, the Caribbean and the U.S., Baldwin takes the connotations of being a hybrid further to the politics of transnational representations and advocacy.

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CHAPTER THREE

A “Self-Ethnography” and the Order of Subalternization

Proclaimed to be based on a true event and the author's reliable personal sources, Eileen Chang's *The Rice-Sprout Song* tells a realistic story about Chinese peasants in famine and the misadministration of the Chinese Communist party-state in early 1950s. With a simple storyline and unadorned prose, this novel serves a “much-needed” informative piece to readers curious about situations behind the iron curtain, defined by the intercontinental front of Soviet sphere of dominance in the cold war. In the novel, the Chinese peasants demonstrate a moving perseverance to endure incessant calamities, whether tragically unavoidable or culpably manmade. The farmers remorselessly dedicate their entire life to farming and laboring for a better tomorrow, while their wives learn to become aggressive hoarders shrewdly defending the household

saving from predators of any kind³. Although the peasants are not without vehement sentiments from time to time, the novel characterizes their response to loss as unbelievably immense patience. On the other hand, the author also gives the party cadres vividly human characters, imbued with ambitions as well as weaknesses, and conflicting thoughts toward the commands from above. The cadres' job is described as maintaining the social and economic stability in the remote village, for which they may take full credits for the success but also the whole responsibility for any aberrations. They act on pride as much as fear. As the story unfolds, the conflict between the good peasants and the scarecrow cadres culminates with the nearly last scene of the village's annual New Year dance to rice-sprout songs—a custom used to be popular in

³ In the appendix of the novel (in both English and Chinese versions), Chang describes she heard a many chilling story about food shortage in rural areas of China when she still lived in Shanghai after the first wave land reform, from people in her circle “who had no habit of lying nor had any reason to lie.” Also, she says the story is inspired by a confessional essay she came across on newspaper, in which a young communist cadre repents his team's mistake in firing at the civilians at an accidental rioting.

northern China but has been appropriated by the Chinese Communist Party as a major form national folk art of the so-imagined entire Chinese people—with elder peasants moving awkwardly as replacement performers to the absent younger dancers, many of which shot to death in the rioting on New Year's Eve. With the heaviness of blood-stained silence, Eileen Chang closes the story against the title's suggestion of festive group dancing and hopes for the future.

Since its publication in 1954 under the auspices of United States Information Service (USIS), *The Rice-Sprout Song* has a bipolar reception discernibly influenced by the cold war geopolitical and ideological dichotomy.⁴ As an unusual bilingual work of the same anticommunist story translated by the author herself, debates persist to this date over which language is that of the original, and also the

⁴ Chang wrote bilingual novels *The Rice-Sprout Song* and *Naked Earth* during her stay in Hong Kong from 1952 to 1955, both carry a pronounced anticommunist theme and written under the sponsorship of United States Information Service. For the varied accounts of this cooperation, see Wong 11-13 and Kao 156-58, 249-58.

details regarding the commissioning process between the sponsor and the writer.⁵ By the time Chang left Hong Kong for San Francisco in the fall of 1955, the novel's English version has been published by Charles Scribner's Sons in New York, and continued to receive lukewarm but never exclusively negative reviews in mainstream print media, including *The New York Times*, *Time* and *Saturday Review*. Whilst the general American literary community showed only limited short-term interest in the anticommunist novel of China and its Chinese author, the Kuomintang (KMT) regime in Taiwan found Chang ideologically correct enough to be granted a uncensored circulation of her works, among the few notable writers that have earned professional recognition in republican China. The transpacific Chang phenomenon is nearly single-handedly started by the U.S.-based overseas Chinese scholar Chih-tsing Hsia. Having given the novel highest acclaims in 1957 in the respected literary magazine

⁵ For some of the most recent discussions of this contested issue, see Guo 2010, Lau 2010, and Shen 2010.

Wenxuezhazhi (Literature Magazine) edited by his scholar brother teaching in National Taiwan University in Taipei (formerly Taihoku Imperial University, 1928-1945), Hsia further credited Chang for her overall literary achievements as “the best and most important writer in Chinese today” in his book *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, published by Yale in 1961 (389). His recommendations were not only echoed immediately by Hu Shih and Joseph Shiu-ming Lau in the U.S., but also taken as guiding standards of style and language by several of aspiring “modernist” writers in Taiwan, whose works as well as Chang’s make unflinching market successes to the present.⁶ In sharp contrast, Chang was almost buried in oblivion for three decades in People’s Republic of China primarily because of the overt political stance. It was not until 1985 that Ke Ling, a personal acquaintance and a contemporary to Chang, called for a less Manichean assessment of her works and the possibility to recuperate memories

⁶ See Su 2006, a revised edition of the author’s PhD dissertation submitted to Hong Kong University, 2005.

of this precocious writer who made her name for her acute observation of wartime Shanghai as early as in the 1940s.⁷ Rediscovered, Chang has been read and studied from so much variant angles that a subfield of modern Chinese literature under her name could be said to have established. Before the turn of the century, literary historians have made competing proposals for re-reading Chang's works both within and beyond their so-called ideological, linguistic, geographical frameworks as well as references. David Der-wei Wang contextualizes the novel with the intriguing imagery about the semiotic interdependency between hunger and the female gender in modern Chinese literature (1998), whereas Liu Zaifu, along with several others, argues for evaluating Chang vis-à-vis

⁷ As pointed out by Chen Zishan, the political sensitivity of the issue may be born out by the essay's three versions published in Hong Kong (February 1985), China (April 1985), and Taiwan (March 1989), in each the author phrases differently his criticism of Chang's description of communist China (Chen 2009). As a side note, thanks to Ang Lee's adaptation of Chang's novella "Lust, Caution" into film in 2007, contestations over Chang's national loyalty has become a hotbed of heated debates again (cf. Lee 2010).

Lu Xun in terms of their engagement with modern Chinese culture and history, and gestures a celebration of the latter over the former (Lau 2002). The discussion goes on.⁸

With the contestations on the in/accuracy and in/significances of Chang's representation of communist China in view, in this chapter I hope to take a different perspective to investigate the undergirding dynamics of knowledge production by exploring the conditions under which the novel *speaks* for the Chinese peasants, against the Chinese communist party-state, and on behalf of the Chinese women and children, in the context of transnational U.S. warfare against universalized injustice in cold war. Instead of

⁸ Because of the limited scope of a chapter, I do not include the influence of Chang and her followers in Sinophone communities such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, or Europe. A key source of reference for the writing of this chapter is Leung Ping-kwan's 1998 article that interrelates Eileen Chang's Hong Kong experience and the marginalization of Hong Kong literature among Chinese national literary histories. Leung in his 2007 book also discusses how the USIS recourses in Hong Kong during the cold war period have been appropriated for indigenous cultural concerns in a wide spectrum. For Chang's alliance with pro-Japanese, left-leaning, and the so-called "third front" literary organizations in Shanghai and Hong Kong from 1941 to 1955, see Wong 2009.

dismissing the novel as a formulaic work out of anticommunist propaganda mandated by a U.S. government institution, I would like to investigate the epistemological rationality that mobilizes the organization of the materials both in this specific story and in the more general U.S. literary renditions of “cold war enemies.”

Regarding the prominent imaginary presence of the iron curtain, and all the Western legacies that contemptuously as well as amorously mystify the middle kingdom in modern times, the question that motivates the chapter is this: *Can the Chinese peasant speak?*

Following Spivak's elaborate arguments and the short answer that is no, we are left to ponder: Who gets to speak in the absence of the hypothesized Chinese peasant's voice? What are the criteria for deciding who is qualified and what authorities are worthy of recognition in the U.S.-centered transnational setting of cold war? How does literature matter in the geopolitical cold war? Observing the cold war hierarchy of nations based on their military and

economic strength, and the narratives of international incorporation manufactured or authorized by the U.S. (in competition with the Soviet Union), I suggest there are linear sequences of links in the identity web of transnational cold war that condition *relative subalternization* to be the dominant form for individuals to articulate who they are and legitimize the representations they choose to make. By exploring the ways in which relativist subalternization functions, my objective is not to raise an accusative finger at those labeled as the interested group, but rather to pick up what Aijaz Ahmad critiqued as “bourgeoisified” “opportunistic kind of third-worldism” in the cosmopolitan first world (86), and Rey Chow's analysis of “self-subalternization” in light of the interdependency between the ethnic minorities' construction of “native” categories and the capitalization of white guilt (13), so as to re-visit acts of “self-Orientalization” and “self-colonization” as parts of a longer performance of “the nation of nations.” By reading *The Rice-Sprout*

Song, my contention is that the silence of the peasants is productive not only for registers of ideological markers, but also for accounting for the positionality of those associated with a subordinated yet not oppositional status to the concentrated power. The order of subalternization can certainly be read as an order of subordination, but the point I hope to make is that those who own the privilege to subalternize the less privileged are also subordinated and subalternized by the powerful regime they help to maintain, and that perhaps no one can claim absolute victimhood of subalternization or deny complicity with the making of narratives that produce subordinate subjects.

In the dissertation, I study the literary and cultural configurations of race in the post-1945 transnational America, a superpower that has an unsurpassed military might in global expansion and in an unfinished war against the communist hemisphere. While in the precedent chapter, I looked at how the

onset of a new world order does not guarantee new opportunities for the racially abjected in their long-term struggle, in this chapter I investigate how the new immigrants and refugees from poor regions bring about new patterns of the country's discourse on saving innocent civilians from nations constituting the axis of communist or totalitarian evil abroad. In the main, I suggest that the exceptionalist self-fashioning of the post-Second World War U.S. is reliant on the subalternization of America's latecomers and those whom the latecomers left "back home"—the latecomers include the numerous economically desperate laborers, skilled workers, trained technical staff, professionals of all fields, who have left in the third world their dependent kin and their supposedly less competent fellow nationals. While the U.S. social mainstream is able to tacitly and innocently deprecate and discriminate the migrant bodies on racial basis, the latecomers' "spontaneous" accounts of their superior and fortunate differences from their native folks or their accidentally related ethnic

kinsfolk tend to be anxiety-laden if not deliberately explicit. Under such circumstances, their accounts develop along a monolinear temporality that conjures the bygone pasts and the contingent present with the characteristically twentieth-century passage to America. Underlying the latecomers' painstakingly endless defense against the encroachment of their backward past, in short, is the convergence of color line and global stratification in our times. *The Rice-Sprout Song* is not simply about China, but more about the so-called Chinese people, about how some Chinese are trapped by a wrongly-supported state in power while others are able to realize the situation and leave for better. In the pages to follow, I see this as the reason why this novel satisfies the American(-ized) critics with its characterization of the peasants' poverty as well as inarticulateness and with the promoting strategy of shaping the author as a witness fortunate enough to bring her experience of hardship to the benevolent cosmopolitan attention.

Rather than categorizing *The Rice-Sprout Song* as a work of Chinese or American or Chinese American Literature,⁹ I approach the novel's existence across two languages as the product of one project, although my reading centers on the English version. What concerns this chapter regarding the two versions is not their respective date of birth in chronological order, but their markedly different levels of linguistic fluency and sophistication. Briefly put, although the two versions are clearly translated from one to the other mainly in a sentence-by-sentence manner,¹⁰ the English version is found to be far less effective than the Chinese one. Other than considering the difference as a fact of the author's linguistic command, I propose to juxtapose it with extended reflections on why

⁹ For a recent consideration of the novel as a work of Chinese American literature that provides ethnographical information with some unsettling effects aimed at the American readership, see Lee 2006.

¹⁰ The only major structural difference between the two versions is the author adds an extra chapter at the end of the English version, in which the story does not have further development but concludes with a more explicit ending, as the villagers find Gold Root's body in the river and have the burned corpse of criminalized Moon Scent hastily buried.

the story speaks to different readers with drastically different voices, and how the difference impacts on its reception and the reader's affective resonance. Moreover, with the USIS support for the publication of the novel's two versions, I wish to inquire into the designated parameter of the pedagogical mission and its unintended consequences. Why did the USIS decide to educate both Anglophone and Sinophone minds with the same story? Beyond the calculation of sheer expense and convenience, what might be illustrated by the concurrent distribution of the novel in Asia and America? If, to the Sinophone readers, the fact that the book is written by a well-educated bilingual writer and supposingly positively received in the U.S. sounds prized achievements, how many Anglophone readers would care about the novel's Chinese "twin" in Asia, which sells far more copies and has the epoch-making effect of opening up a transnational literary market for Chang's works outside China? What roles does USIS play in leveraging this uneven traffic of

cultural artifacts and intellectual desires in this nominally decolonized transpacific community?

In the novel, silence is recurrently deployed in situations where the characters are caught unable to articulate themselves, whereas speech is occupied by party slogans that are dully repeated and arbitrarily applied as chanted mantra emptied of meaning. In what follows, I will examine the ways in which the peasant is reified as the subaltern who is not heard, the CCP state as the persecuting structure of power that does not listen and continuously lies, and the whole narrative as an indispensable but insufficient source for making intelligible this nation of silence. The chapter is divided to three parts: first on the novel's characterization of the repressed state of the peasants, second on that of the conspicuously flawed narratives made by the party agents, and third on the cold war American critics' celebration and criticism of this realistic story. Throughout I center my analysis on how the diasporic author's efforts and their

results bear out a transnational order of subalternization under the infrastructure of a dichotomized ideological war.

To the Question of Chinese Peasants

Since the communist takeover of China has been overwhelmingly interpreted in the capitalist world as the result of the Chinese Communist Party's successful mobilization of a uniquely enormous mass of peasants against the Nationalist bourgeoisie, there is no better topic for a U.S.-commissioned novel than showing the Chinese peasants suffer in the new China and change their views of the socialist promises. Compared with Pearl Buck's bestseller *The Good Earth*, Eileen Chang's *The Rice-Sprout Song* gives not general impressions of an ahistorical China, but fact-based answers to the time-specific inquires into what life in China is like under the communist administration. In the appendix of the novel, Chang speaks of how the story has been conceived over her stay in

Shanghai after the CCP came to power in 1949, implying the material basis for the story setting in a village that is only forty Chinese miles away from Shanghai (30) but essentially another world. The situation of the novel is also clearly set in the immediate aftermath of the first wave land reform, with satisfactory annual harvest and heavy taxation for the costly support of the Korean War. However, in a vein that is not squarely oppositional to Pearl Buck, Chang provides plentiful ethnographical descriptions in the novel, even though she is known as a Shanghai native and a writer of popular romance living with affordable petite bourgeois preferences. The narrative is carefully crafted, not to be ornate but clean and precise. It introduces neologisms from time to time, with their Chinese pronunciation romanticized, and also a variety of traditional or new customs in display, such as the ceremonies of marriage and pig-slaughtering. In this section I tread the ethnographical writing style as the key to understand the novel, which is not to be conflated with

the autobiographical mode, but suggestive of the rich intellectual potentials in the narrative as elements of consciously produced discourse. Speaking in the omniscient third-persons voice, the writer positions herself as an observer that is intimately tied with but strategically distinguished from the observed.

Taking place in an unnamed village, the story is centered on a humble family of the T'ans. The wife Moon Scent goes to Shanghai working as a housemaid, shortly after giving birth to a daughter, while the husband Gold Root stays in the hometown farming and taking care of the infant with the help of his younger sister. The story begins with a long-awaited reunion of the family, although the moment of happiness does not last. Gold Root now owns a small portion of land, due to the nationwide redistribution of private properties, but like everyone else, he has very little rice left after paying the various government taxes. Moon Scent returns home with full expectations, only to be saddened by the reality and the

uncertain future. The tension of the story escalates as the Korean War worsens the national economy, whereby the party cadres exerts extra soft pressure to the peasants to turn in whatever remains in their hands. Reluctantly, the couple as well as the whole village gives in their last saving of food and money, but an accidental rioting erupts, and many are killed. The couple's daughter is trampled to death by the manic crowd, and Gold Root dies of a severe gun shot injury. To avenge herself, Moon Scent sets a fire to the village granary, and goes into the engulfing flames before they eventually consume everything. In the end, the party cadre gives a report on the event as a conspiracy schemed by Nationalist spies in the village, and the state-sponsored writer produces a play of accusative of Nationalist conspiracy with an ending scene of a spectacular fire.

With the character of Gold Root, the novel registers a rather schematic process from a peasant's dedication to the communist cause and his disillusion of its practices as a ruling power. Orphanized

in their young adulthood, Gold Root and his sister Gold Flower have no one to turn to but to earn their survival with their labor. The communist party promises them land and properties, which they dare not to dream, out of their humble background and parentless status. Upon their reception of the gifts, they show respect and appreciating love for the party-state as much as that for patriarchs in the old China—this explains why, at Gold Flower's wedding, Comrade Fei is held with awe as an elder relative in the extended family (at least until he grabs the bride's arm in a disrespectful manner). Gold Root's award of Labor Model brings home that he represents not just an ordinary peasant, but one of the best example envisioned by the ruling state. He works hard and for long hours, rain or shine, cherishing the yield of his land without complaining about it (at least in public). He knows his position. In the boisterous town hall meeting, he calms the public and proposes to let Comrade Wong give the village words of wisdom. If Comrade Wong is but a core cog

in the country's ruling machine, Gold Root knows himself—an illiterate peasant doing his best to feed and honor his family—is no more than an a disposable wipe to ensure the cog shining with dignity.

Chang convinces the reader of Gold Root's righteousness with his lack of eloquence. The silence of the disadvantaged characters serves to illustrate both their removal from dominant modes of signification and a simple refusal of pretension. Gold Root is helplessly bashful, lacking the talent and interest of artfully expressing his intentions. On his only visit to Moon Scent over her three years' stay in Shanghai, he has no idea how to have conversation with his wife when they are both nervously sitting in the kitchen of the mansion where she works, and in the embarrassingly long wait he takes notice of a doomed hen apprehensively clucking under the sink, as if to break the deadening silence on his behalf. On the first day Moon Scent comes back home, he asks her to cook a pot of steamed rice instead of the usual watery gruel with the meaning to celebrate, but

he is too shy to spell it out. He is described as too honest to wrap up his good intentions.

For most of the time, his silence bespeaks how he is mixed up in his mind and too ashamed to defend himself. For example, at facing his wife's interrogation on the tax rates and the meager money he has made out of his crops, he gets lost in the confusingly complicated tax rates and at times turns unreasonably defensive, a series of strange reactions by which his savvy wife can tell how hurtful it must be for him to recount the experience of hardship after the land reform. At most occasions, his silence is followed by the narrative's insertion of unspoken monologues that flow smoothly, not in the plain language that he daily uses, but through distilled thoughts and vivid snapshots of variant moments in his life that are now compellingly organized with meanings. On his way home after Moon Scent sees him off, he holds an old umbrella walking hesitantly on the pavement "dimpling with rain," with "his heart was a trodden

and squashed thing that stuck to the bottom of his soles," wishing that "he had never come to the city" (25). While these sentimental lines do not seem likely from Gold Root, they bear the bona fide signature of Eileen Chang among her celebrated romances.

Elsewhere, at the scene Gold Root quietly listens to his wife patiently declining the request of a small loan made by his married sister, he has flashbacks of how he and his sister share a childhood of poverty, and how he used to be able to offer her something as a loving brother no matter what (111-12). He does not know how to explain, with his newly received land and his honor of being Labor Model of the village, he cannot persuade his wife to at least treat his sister a decent meal. Overwhelmed by sorrow, Gold Root is described unable to say a single word at seeing his sister leaving with empty hands and in an untimely heavy rain, yet it is through such speechlessness the reader sees his dilemma best and feels the strongest drive to give him sympathy.

Living at the next door, however, Gold Root's cousin Gold Have Got and his clan illustrate for the purpose of the novel a contrasting silence of the Chinese peasant family. As Gold Have Got has been forcefully taken away for years by the Peace Army, a pro-Nationalist troop fighting against the Japanese during the Second World War, the household is sustained by the elder couple, Big Uncle and Big Aunt, and their practically widowed daughter-in-law, to feed the several young children that are still too young to labor. While Big Uncle is pretty similar with Gold Root in terms of his general reticence and occasional bluntness, Big Aunt fills the house with petty complaints, self-congratulations on feeble favors robbed from others, and repeated lines of CCP propaganda in praise of the non-existent contentedness of the peasants. At Gold Flower's wedding banquet, she is the one that transforms traditional remarks of blessing for the newly weds to words of gratitude for the Great Chairman Mao. Upon Moon Scent's return from the city, Big Aunt also delivers a whole set

of party-standardized model description of the progress of the country. With her pointless repetition of identical sentences and incidental ellipsis that are tuned against the party-state, she is shown to speak only for the sake of hiding what she really intends to say, but the impulse to hide is too strong, for the fear accumulated over so many years seems to have lost its distinct directions.

However, the voice of this unfortunate family is made most clear through the scene of Big Uncle slaughtering their pig. Dragging the starving animal to the public yard before sunrise, Big Uncle does not attempt to conceal his restlessness and anguish caused by the government's command of each family yielding pork to military dependents for the upcoming New Year. Making sure the pig has no way to escape its fate, the execution begins:

The pig went right on calling out with undiminished volume long after the pointed knife had been plunged into his throat. And the sound never changed—always a flat, expressionless, grating cry, uglier than the horse's neigh. But it was considered bad luck when the pig screamed too much, so toward the end Big Uncle put

out a hand to hold its mouth. After a while it made a low grunt as if saying: No use arguing with these people. And it became silent. (125)

The slaughtering takes place early in the morning, with the neighbors making a small crowd to speculate the execution, callously poised and mentally undisturbed, throwing in random comments to the family silently endure the bereavement of their remaining worthy property. This horrendous piercing sound of the dying beast takes the family back to an unforgettable day, when Gold Have Got was pulled away by a few soldiers forced into the house looking for livestock and young women. The soldiers "forfeited" their pig first, and demanded Gold Have Got to carry that pig to their camp, from where he never comes back. The sacrificed creature's useless cry voices the collective repressed fear of the absolute power. Forcing it to shut up, the family and the spectators see their bestial counterpart relent and heading to its mandated destiny ahead of them. It is only when all is done, or all the ugly voices are splashed and duly

dissipated in the air, that the people can resume their role in the terror-shadowed small town with their scripted lines to talk to each other again.

For a targeted readership to whom the Chinese peasants means simultaneously an enigma of the decadent Orient and a helpless hostage waiting for immediate rescue, Eileen Chang presents not their voice *per se*, but their situational silences that are framed, etched, modulated and totalized by her “concealed” voice of the narrative. She achieves this with the help of established stereotypes. The Chinese peasants are reinscribed as poor and passive, denied by available accesses to speak for themselves. Their plights are best revealed when they find themselves failed by words and struck by unspeakable feelings. Nevertheless, as I have tried to demonstrate, Chang deftly appropriates her ethnographer’s obligations and rights to hierarchically differentiate the perspective of the narrative from that of the portrayed peasants. It is with the

assumption of epistemological authority over the Chinese peasants that the novel finds, indeed produces, something distinct in them, something that has not yet been noticed by ethnographers starting from more distant positions and of less intimate relationship to the Chinese peasants. This is how Gold Root's righteousness is observed, and how the family of Gold Have Got's psychological state is captured through records of a New Year's sacrifice. Put otherwise, Chang does not only present the story as a (presumably victimized) Chinese ("peasant"), but rather as a knowledgeable Chinese (storyteller and ethnographer) that knows the Chinese (from a nationalized and peasant-centered position).

Naming the Native Villain

In addition to speaking for a putatively silenced national population, *The Rice-Sprout Song* posits the CCP regime as a silencing apparatus that monopolizes the production and narration

of history. By trivializing the effects and consequences of the land reform, this novel shows little if any affective investment with the CCP narratives of liberating the people by tearing apart the uneven distribution of wealth in China. From the story, the reader learns only that the Tans are given a beautiful antique mirror from the former landlord of the village, along with small portions of land, and that the party boasts the reform as an unprecedented achievement in history, but not how the transition is invested with infinite hope and yearning for freedom after prolonged warfare and economic turmoil. The land reform is depicted as a set of deceptively grandiose rhetoric that brings out disproportional little result except the uninvited famine. On the other hand, as will be discussed in the rest of the section, the novel projects a binary opposition between “the people” and the abstracted regime in light of the latter’s overdetermined representation of the latter. According to Comrade Wong’s bureaucratic mentality and measures, the villagers must always

unanimously put to practice whatever the party's decrees, and following this logic, aberrations of any kind must be the result of Nationalist subversion and conspiracy. The people need not to speak out for any particular matter, because they have already been represented by the existing, popular elected form of proletarian democracy. As for the party-sponsored scriptwriter Comrade Ku, it is his job to produce literary works that articulate the peasant's desires and convictions that are not readily visible on the surface but essentially sustain the ever-progressing advancement of communist revolution. He professes in the psychology of the people, or, how that psychology is coherent with the party's panoramic planning. In other words, both Comrade Wong and Ku Kang do their job as speaking the voice of the peasants, respectively via the administrative and cultural avenue. As much as they are authorized to speak without bothering to justify the probable savagery entailed in that authority,

the novel tells the reader that the peasants are forcefully imprisoned by an imposed silence.

Comrade Wong is portrayed as an old-fashioned technocrat that has spent all his life in the communist revolution long before the CCP takeover of the whole China. He is a man tied to the past, a personal past that marks his more idealistic days and a national past landscaped by endless destructions. The novel characterizes his intimacy with the Party by his longing for his former wife, and revolutionary comrade, Shah Ming (or, Bright Sand), with whom he has very briefly experienced the precious joy of companionship in an age of storming uncertainties but regretfully leaves behind for the greater cause of the army's hazardous cross-province march (66-81). Estranged from his blood family and his spouse from an arranged marriage, he prefers to station in the shabby temple of this nameless village throughout the year. He takes pride and pleasure in fixing small problems for the peasants who turn to him for help, feeling

immensely gratified that he is the respected guard and guardian of the village. Like a magistrate officer in the imperial period, he rules the villagers as a patriarch and an agent of some unchallengeable mandate, yet out of his loneliness as well as his individualistic need of recognition, he truly cares about the peasants.

Seeing New China plagued by problems that are too entrenched and complicated to be solved by the so-called paradigm shift, Comrade Wong observes an absolute submission to the current political hierarchy as the perennial rule of thumb in China for regional administrators like himself. In spite of his stout defense of his loyalty to the party-state, he is unhappy with the pervasive manifestations of nepotism in the ruling machine, such as “the officials’ wives holding sinecures; the importance of knowing the right people, of *chao kuan hsi*, finding connections” and so on (81-82). These thoughts do not disturb him too much, however, for he has “been trained to accept [The Party] unquestioningly (81). Little

surprise should there be when he forcefully applies the party doctrines to “explain” every command and asks for the people’s cooperation. While hearing Gold Root protest against the mandated donation to the dependents family of People’s Liberation Army on the ground of his own shortage of rice, Comrade Wong tirelessly delivers his speech, on and on, which goes “like a parallel line” that mimics but does not meet the reality. Functioning as a personified version of the abstracted Chinese Communist regime, Comrade Wong is characterized by the novel as a forceful contender that is not bothered by the contradiction between what he says and what he sees. Such absurdity reaches its climax in the aftermath of the rioting and the fire, as he blatantly lies by attributing the unplanned conflict between the angry farmers and the granary guards to a conspired subversive act initiated by Nationalist spies.

Compared with Comrade Wong, the scriptwriter character Comrade Ku opens up an alternative angle for viewing the Chinese

communist regime, which leads the reader to see not the naked force of the state but its powered appearances and variant personas in the realm of culture. Why does the novel stress the interpersonal tension between Wong and Ku, and what does that tension indicate about their respective position in the architecture of the Chinese communist party-state? What does Ku's frequent escape to the adjacent town for a full meal every a few days illustrate, other than his ridiculed gluttony and manifest weakness? What does his ill-arranged celebratory play of communism "as inspired by his living experience in the village" signify, in addition to his opportunism and lack of literary competence?

If the character of Comrade Wong is made to debunk the contention that the post-1949 communist government of China is a government of the people, Comrade Ku is made to announce the bankruptcy of post-1949 Chinese literature as a literature of the people. To the CCP, suggests the novel, cultural workers are as

important as the administrative political workers to the maintenance of its rule. That is, culture is meant to pick up where formal political practices cannot reach or at least as thoroughly. Therefore, as the rice-sprout song is transformed into a means of calling upon the people into coordinated movements to without coercion, the songs and plays are meant to inspire and educate those who cannot read. By the time the land reform begins, it is implied that the corresponding production of celebratory narratives is prosperous with institutional aids. This is the context under which Ku registers for the opportunity to leave his comfortable life in Shanghai so as to "learn about life" of the new nation in the country. Although he is despised by Wong as an opportunist and a belated witness to the glorious scene of peasant liberation where there are abundant stories to be effortlessly put to words, Ku is extremely weary about inadvertently evocating so-called reactionary or counter-revolutionary thematic in his work and heading into trouble. Knowing all too well that literature

in that time is to complement formalistic politics and never outdo or undo its implicit parameters, he works hard his dim-witted brain to make up a story that must sound authentic although not reflective of the real.

Reshuffling what he sees in the village and reframing them against his knowledge and conscience, Ku pens a fiction in the name of documenting facts of a specific date and location. With or without Wong's company, he does several rounds of interview with the villagers, most of which either watchfully avoid the topic of famine or seizes the opportunity to beg the Shanghainese elite of seeming influence to save their life from plunging into further misery. Unable to find appropriate drama from the stories, Ku dismisses them as "untypical" peasant samples. Instead, he creates his ideal characters by dressing the peasants of the village with his displaced desire: Moon Scent (whom he has been taking a sexual interest of) is reconfigured as a femme fatale contaminated by urban materialism,

her husband as a condemned landlord working for the underground Nationalist network, and the fire as an attempt of antigovernment subversion thwarted by the patriotic peasants in time. Depicted by the novel as a laughable parody of the numerous volumes of revolutionary writing circulated under the CCP administration, Ku's work is not so much a literary piece as a falling-apart tapestry that is nominally drawn from real persons and events in the country that he bears first-hand witness of but in truth based on his avoidance of and complete blindness to the actual disasters suffered by the people. In other words, whilst his play is self-fashioned as a work of the people, it is as a work by a self-indulgent petit bourgeois that possesses privileges inaccessible to the common people, and a work for an oppressive regime with leaders that take absolutely no responsibility for their mismanagement of resources and the massacre of innocents at the village granary. In short, Ku assists with the unwarranted power of the state in ways complement to Wong's.

Published at the height of cold war paranoid and anticommunist conservatism in 1955, the novel certainly cannot be the earliest journalist coverage of communist China, but its characterization of the two CCP cadres suffices to lend remarkable comfort and confidence to the Anglophone readers. Wong and Ku are caricatured as such to invoke despise, derision, and probably also some condescending pity. As the former is depicted as someone that is “out of pace” and sadly disregarded by the party that has used up his youth, the latter is described to be over-desperate of fame and interest from the newly established nation. The older is too old to carry out schemes of reform, while the younger is utterly obsessed with self-interest. Together they make a perfect match, for the purpose of the novel, to provide the reader with a spectacle for obvious criticisms of China and gaining self-reassurance as her political rival. As important, since the demarcation is made and substantiated by a native informant of the

antagonized enemy, the reader is freed from the potential charge of ungrounded speculation and demonization of the mystified unbeatable Asian foe. The communist state of China is unveiled by an escaped citizen that articulates, with vivid images and personas, how its working consists of repressing and misrepresenting the people on the one hand and rewarding its executive agents with portioned power and undeserved recognition on the other. The clownish cadre characters in this realistic novel thus confirm prevalent “understandings” of CCP in the literary and ideological languages of the U.S. If all wars must be made as right wars, the cold war tension between China and the U.S. is no exception, if more extreme.

For a Love Couched on Ease and Sympathy

In spite of the abundant ethnographic data and the epistemological affiliation in the narrative that are all too ready for instrumental uses of the exceptionalist self-positioning of the U.S., it

remains a question of how such a novel is integrated by this powerful nation's archive of knowledge consisting of so-called universal paradigms and regional particularities. If the novel is taken for granted and taught as a piece of quasi-autobiography, what is occluded from the view is not only the driving force of the writing—the author's desire of immigrating to America—but also the intended audience, the imagined theatricality of the presentation of the narrative, and the accordingly managed pitch and speed of the narrating voice that organically make the composition of the novel. Locating this novel the field of modern Chinese literature, what resists containment is not only the transnational genealogy of the novel's production and its English version that has been "debated" as the original one, but the ways in which geopolitical dynamics in the Asia Pacific has made modern Chinese literature a site of multivalent contestations and with unstable boundaries. In other words, the decision to include or exclude the novel points to irreducible

differences between curriculums and invented traditions of “modern Chinese literature.” It would be a fallacy, and a simplification of the American cultural apparatus, to take the novel simply as a mouthpiece of a monolithic anticommunist ideological will issued by the U.S.

Considering the novel’s unsatisfactory market record and critical assessments since its publication, along with their impacts on the author’s ensuing frustrations in building a literary career in the U.S., *The Rice-Sprout Song* can be taken the beginning of Chang’s failing efforts of becoming an American writer. That said, my point is not at all directed to the author, who continued to intermittently produce well-received pieces in Chinese, but to reflecting the criteria for canonical pieces about China by authors of variant background and active in different contexts. If Pearl Buck and Yu-tang Lin have provided American readers impressive information about a generalized cultural China, how does this English debut of Chang

fare at the time when China has recently turned from a U.S. ally to a communist enemy? Compared with later Chinese-born writers that address the problems of the Chinese Communist regime (such as, say, Nien Cheng and Ruoxi Chen), what are the reasons for the former's unremarkable sale and undeniably narrower sphere of influence? How may we explain the missed encounter of Chang's efforts and the unspoken expectations of successful works about China in that juncture?

Regarding the phenomenal American middlebrow interest in representations of contemporary Asia that reaches its zenith from 1945 to 1961, Christina Klein has insightfully identified among them the thematic dominance of "Cold War Orientalism" which, indebted to yet reverberant with what Said analyzed of nineteenth-century European imperial powers, denounces the colonialist imposition of racial segregation and "generate instead a wide-ranging discourse of racial tolerance and inclusion that served the official ideology

undergirding postwar expansion" (11). Klein grounds her study on literary, cinematic and theatrical representations of Asia usually expressed through an American protagonist in-transit—as traveler, soldier, diplomat, reporter, teacher, etc.—that appeals to sentimentalism to project U.S.-Asia relationship in light of reciprocity, exchange, and mutual benefits. She observes that “the distinctive form of Orientalism that middlebrow Americans produced and consumed during the early Cold War period must be seen, then, as working through a logic of affiliation as well as through difference” (16).

With *The Rice-Sprout Song* as a contrasting case with the major body of Klein's object of research, I propose that, while the middlebrow investment in sentimental feelings for Asia evolves from a characteristic in the depictions of exotic Asia to a standard demand for Asian writers' writing of Asia, the Orientalist foundation of racial hierarchy is now civically masked (through a logic of affiliation) yet

structurally unaltered. Book reviews of *The Rice-Spout Song* share the pattern of hastily extracting the story and impatiently covering the ethnographical details. Along with varied errors made out of careless reading of the text, the middlebrow and erudite reviewers convey the message clear enough that they do not find the novel worth studying, largely though not exclusively because the authentic picture of China is not painted with authentically tongued English. However, the novel is unanimously credited as a welcomed addition to the available English recourses for the Americans to better understand "what life is like in China."¹¹ The suffering and demise of the people invoke compassionate responses, whereas the party cadres are pitied and often exculpated as puppets of a devouringly oppressive regime. The fact that the readers should have such readily choreographed feelings for the characters without caring as

¹¹ For example, a history professor teaches this novel in his undergraduate course of modern Asian history in the late 1970s, although he confuses the novel with Eileen Chang's less known USIA-commissioned work *Naked Earth* (Yang).

much about the novel suggests ruptures between their appreciation of the context and that of the text, or more specifically in my reading, ruptures caused by the text's insufficiency in dramatizing and sentimentalizing the victimhood of "the Chinese people."

Upon its first and only U.S. print in 1955, *The Rice-Sprout Song* is taken as an account of real life in China by a writer who is supposed to "know her stuff" but not much else. Reviewers are not pleased by the Chinese-born author's English. A review in *New York Times* complains the name of character being written in pidgin English as if "Miss Chang's ear has [. . .] failed her" (Espey 5), while another in *Saturday Review* half-jokingly remarks that "[Miss Chang] has written this story in English, and if her Chinese is as good then it must be very good indeed" (Schoyer18). As the reviewers are mainly writers who have written about China or academic readers of Chinese literature, their anxiety toward the native informant expressed in "Anglocentric" linguistic terms is revealing, which is apparently not just about their

personal advantages nestled in transnational hierarchy, but about the enduring rule of Orientalism in the narrative enterprise that critiques the racially and economical dominated Other. Also, there are plentiful stereotypical impressions and transhistorical associations in the reviews. For example, one reviewer identified the prose used in the novel with “the economy and restraint that we associate with Chinese painting and poetry” (Burger 11), another replaces the trope of iron curtain with “Bamboo Curtain” (Schoyer 18), and there are variant comparisons of Chang with major notable names in standard curriculum of modern Chinese writing (mostly twentieth-century short stories) in U.S. colleges. Eagerly reaching out and yet unapologetically Orientalist-minded, the writers and critics of modern China demonstrate their unchallengeable authority in rectifying a third-world writer’s linguistic mimicry and their extraordinary confidence in deciphering if not recycling signs of the still enigmatic “China.”

Can the native informant speak? By definition, the native informant speaks of his native community upon the request of the interested foreign inquiry-makers. The native informant is held accountable for the foreign inquirers' expansion of knowledge—which is necessarily in service of their expansion of power—and for “home delivery” of packaged answers and bonus accessory kits ordered by the latter. The native informant profits from his commodified narratives, but there is no guarantee that he is welcome beyond the doorstep, or that his product will not lose its appeal in fierce market competition. Additionally, if the consumers themselves happen to be rivaling manufacturers of narratives displayed on the same shelf, little surprise should there be on their fastidiousness about the product's flaws where the superb strength of theirs lies. Their rationale is simple: since the native informants cannot represent themselves crisply and clearly enough, they have to be represented by those of us who have the established the authority in

understanding them. Fashioning themselves as knowledgeable advocates of the underseasoned diasporic elites who “know their stuff” but cannot articulate their knowledge, the middlebrow authors and highbrow experts speak of the third world, a lot and aloud.

Aside from the language issue, *The Rice-Sprout Song* fails to make a sentimental novel that enables the readers to lavish their emotions. In fact, the novel has the tendency to foreground the physical surrounding, instead of the involved characters' mentality, in setting up the critical scenes of the story. The novel begins with a series of “objective correlatives” to visualize the village's economic and spiritual deadliness: a string of identical “thatched privies” under the bleached sunlight, a row of empty shops, and in each of the shops a long-faced storekeeper that looks somewhat irritated and worrying. To illustrate how the peasants keep their life going in spite of the worsening famine, the novel tells the reader how there is light smoke coming from all the chimneys of the village at regular

mealtime, creating the chilling effect of a make-believe peace. Moreover, the novel does not identify a black and white morality or a religious source of redemption. As discussed, the party cadres are fully humanized, for which they follow their conscience in their critical thoughts but they also pursue ravenous vanity and ugly interests. The peasants are good-natured but capable of rebellious acts. Blurring the boundaries between servitude and selfishness, and distinctly individualist in their politically subversive acts, peasants in the novel resist definite labels and hence reject either condemnation or condolences.

The polarized takes of Chang's aesthetic of understatement in this novel in Sinophone and Anglophone communities bear out contrastive expectations of the author and her work in the larger context of cold war cultural politics. To the Sinophone critics, the author's avoidance of exaggeration and indulgence is a virtue in itself. The skillful artlessness of the narrative is praised by Hu Shih as an

outstanding literary method to represent famine, and highly credited by C. T. Hsia as a remarkable achievement to reveal the natural glow of human nature in a time of extreme darkness. Although Chang makes her legendary name mainly as a romance writer, this novel proves her artistic strength in an alternative "experiment." Meantime in the U.S., *The Rice-Sprout Song* did not win the mind and heart of the American readers, and was soon replaced by anticommunist testimonials that are more explicitly, more personal, and with more sensational depictions of a pathologized reality. The successes of the latter largely explain the failure of the former, if I may also add that the land reform is not as productive for dramatic engagement as the Chinese Cultural Revolution. From a stylist of essay and fashion in wartime Shanghai to a Chinese woman who has made her way out of "Red China" to get "her story" told to the cold war American readers of cosmopolitan concerns, Chang assumes a vastly different position at the cost of losing certain rights over her voice.

Conclusion

With an anticommunist novel centered on famine in China, written by a Chinese author arriving in the U.S. on refugee visa and published under the auspices of United States Information Service, this chapter investigates the politics of subalternizing representations across the cold war dichotomy and within the formation of a humanitarian yet still Orientalist transnational America. I begin by exploring how the narrative addresses the Chinese peasants in the voice of an ethnographer and of a compatriot, in the production of truthful accounts of the silent subaltern for readers with limited or overdetermined access to hearing from the Chinese. Reading carefully the novel's descriptions of the peasants' inability to speak for themselves, I observe how the writer as a diasporic third-world elite explains and theorizes her subaltern counterparts for the epistemological and ideological interest of cosmopolitan consumers. Additionally, by examining how the narrative posits an opposition

between the abstracted communist state and the struggling civilians, I propose the novel's humanizing characterization of the communist party cadres serves to dehumanize the power in rule on the one hand, and project onto the national population a collective victimized image on the other. As the novel portrays the communist state an exclusively exploitative regime that deprives and distorts the rights of its people, the narrative legitimizes its advocacy by directing blames toward the Chinese Communist Party and hence disburdening itself from the culpability of subalternizing the Chinese peasants. However, instead of locating the novel as a mere instrumental piece safely inhabiting inside the monolithic U.S. cultural and political will, I look into the American market response to and critical assessments of the work, so as to consider the multilayered utilization of product that is not exclusively in service of the ideological commands of the state, but also as an occasion to make manifest the hierarchical order of knowledge production about

China across the Pacific. In seeing the major reasons for the “failure” of the novel lie in the author's less-than-perfect uses of the acquired language of English and the story's incompatibility with dominant formula of sentimentality for the Orientalized, I hope to bring to the surface the intriguing question that haunts the making of transnational American literature in the second half of the twentieth century: How can the native informant speak?

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CHAPTER FOUR

A Beautiful Family without Unlikely Kin: Racial Governmentality and Chang-rae Lee's *A Gesture Life*

Fleshed out by Chang-rae Lee's 1999 novel, *A Gesture Life*, are telling lessons about assimilation, given through the narrator's experience as an ethnic Korean soldier in Japanese Imperial Army during the Asian Pacific War and his later life as a Japanese immigrant in suburban New York State since the 1960s. Throughout his life, the protagonist-narrator Hata manages to survive in environments that are hostile by default, or negligent at their best. Seeking material comfort and only minimal recognition, his tactics is to prove himself useful, easy to deal with, and forever grateful for whatever gets counted as kindness. But the fact he was born an alien, or, of a supposedly inferior breed, is never forgotten or "forgiven." His ethnicity subjects him to cajole, humiliation and aggression, with variant causes that are associated with his lower

rank status, his enviable achievement at work, or anything that triggers others' lust of bully or sense of insecurity. As a result and because of this, he assiduously fashions himself as the most upright and unthreateningly loyal member of his community. During the war, he resists taking refuge in alcohol or sex like his fellow Japanese soldiers, and never fails to perform his duties as an exemplary servant. Later on, settling in a small town with an overwhelmingly white population, this Japanese veteran assumes the role of "good Charlie" in his interaction with the neighbors, who delight in returning him gestures of lukewarm friendliness, and also the role of a forgiving saint that pardons the boys who smash his windows with the conviction that they will one day grow up and repent. Year after year, Hata gradually furnishes his house and his life with the major elements characteristic of the middle class in the U.S., showing how persistently he has educated himself a whole way of living that he does not *naturally* belong to. Success in assimilation, the story hints, requires

infinite and uninterrupted efforts of gladly confirming the hierarchical order of “lifestyles” characterized by different ethnic communities and the immutability of racial categories.

Since its publication in 1999, this novel has been productively analyzed as an Asian American novel centering on Hata’s memories of Asia that are distinctly produced and consumed in an American context. Insightful analyses have been made to underscore the mediated optic and multiculturalist instrumentalization of Asian American representations of Asia, as occasioned by this specific text and in broader examinations. Refuting the essentializing take of the so-called ethnic literature as ethnic writers’ autobiographies or ethnographies of their “home” community, the critics simultaneously inquire into the circumstances under which the figure of victimized Asian women has been recurrently summoned to the stories, and assigned the task of illustrating the backwardness of Asian customs and values, which in the whole lends force to claims of U.S.

exceptionalism and the transnational dominance of U.S.-modeled democracy (Kang 2003 and Chuh 2003). More recently, the parameters of Asian American interventions are further interrogated in terms of their relevance to the U.S. nation and via the politics of oppositional identities. Lisa Lowe examines how the narrator “simulates a ‘post-racial’ American voice in order to insist on a triumphant recovery from both colonialism and war in East Asia,” thus disburdens not just himself from crime and guilt reckoned by the figure of comfort women, but the U.S. from responsibilities of imperial wars that persist to haunt Asian American immigration beyond the repeal of individual laws (234). Christopher Lee, in a contrasting move, argues for reassessing the value of “identitarian logic” in reading Asian American literature, and analyzes the novel as a work that presents competing minority positions, with marginalized subjects functioning as sources of meaning that authorize socio-

historical knowledge and the narrator Hata amending “the crisis of representation” in Lukacsian vein (97).

What motivates me to continue the discussion of racial America with *A Gesture Life*, in addition to the discussions of oriented representations of Asia and their implications to the politics of minority-making in post-1965 U.S., is the question of how the narrator's interspersing investments with home may offer clues for reading a tale of assimilation, a never-ending story that interconnects the colonized's journey to the metropole and the postcolonial immigrant's relocation in the imperial nation. If race has been a haunting presence to the post-1965 historicization of Asian American immigration and the (model) minoritization of those who were born in the U.S. and those whose families have lived in the U.S. for generations, could race be less than a real violence that subjugates and subjectifies immigrating Asians who carry the weight of their identity-ordained history and work at full capacity in hopes that they

and their children may enjoy a more privileged life in the U.S.? Formal decolonization around the world in the wake of the Second World War cannot and does not abolish divisions drawn along the color line. With the onset of cold war, the U.S. establishes a transnational dominance undergirded by a “postcolonial” regime in Asia that simultaneously racializes and redefines the formerly colonized lands and peoples, now renamed as nations and national citizens¹². The coloniality of the minor nations and their peoples, subaltern or elite, is not only eclipsed by the nation-to-nation paradigm coordinated by U.S. geopolitical schemes, but displaced by enticing narratives of

¹² Although the scholarly take of Cold War order as dominated by an informal global empire of the U.S. have been endorsed for long by academics who position themselves on the left, both outside and inside of the U.S. (Cummings 1999, Johnson 2000, Harvey 2003, Wang 2010), in this dissertation I do not intend to simply push forward or refute that assertion, whose major concerns are the imperial outlook of U.S. domination and taunting predicaments of its near-unintelligibility. Instead, I hope to observe the internal contradictions of the rule, and cross-cultural negotiations in response, with the particular interest in how racial conceits have been reconfigured and put to service for more complicated uses. For the lack of a better word, I use the term “coloniality” to engage with race-determined divisions, associations, and difference productions, with self-conscious irony of the term and the so-called context of postcolonial age after the two world wars.

modernization modeled on U.S. experience. The old colonizers are defeated and expelled, but the new national and transnational order does not close conditions of coloniality. Let us take Hata as an example. If imperial Japan has been a forced destination and an impossible place of belonging, then what characterizes postwar America when he makes the decision to immigrate? How different and how similar are the situations for him to survive as a stranger with a distrusted and despised "origin"? What happens to him when he manages to not let anything happen?

In this dissertation, I have been exploring how the scheme of transnational incorporation in post/cold war America functions as a desire machine made to justify the global presence of America by passionately faulting "backward" communities abroad and rescuing the persecuted innocents. While in the previous chapter, I locate the machine in the anticommunist allegations against China and the channeled sympathies for Chinese women and children at the early

stage of cold war, in this chapter I ponder the interrelationship between the machine and the metaphorical economy of home, as played out via interracial gender relations, miscegenation, and transnational adoptive parenting. In the main, I argue that imperial societies draw heavily upon the image of family—as a lofty yet achievable goal, bonded by mutual recognition among its members, and above all, distinct from relations solely determined by traffic of blood. This master trope of family penetrates the contexts of Japanese Imperial Army and American suburbs, but it calls for quite different responses. That is, whereas the imperial family of Japan requires its subjects to take oath of unconditional loyalty and renounce their ties with racialized enemies, the transnational family of America is obsessive with the mission of “accommodating” those outside of its normal reach and prompts dissemination of such agenda to the domestic and intimate quarters of its members’ life, as exemplified by transnational adoption. Put otherwise, while the

“monoracial” family must maintain its coherence by removing those whose existence threatens its narrative of racial homogeneity, the “antiracist” family has the mandate to support and nourish the abjectly racialized in ways that are provably equivalent with how it raises its own blood kin. As will be elaborated in what to follow, I see this as the reason why Hata pursues his dream of becoming Japanese by disowning his Korean sister, and seeks assimilation to cold war America by adopting a Korean daughter.

Instead of framing the narrator as a Japanese expatriate, a Japanese American, or an ethnic Korean in diaspora, the chapter leaves his nationality as a site of contestations and dissects the narrator with a particular interest of understanding his endless pursuit and countless failures of becoming a fully recognized subject in the imperial terrains of Japan and the U.S. This reading trajectory is meant, first of all, to avoid naturalizing nationalities as they are “known,” used, and circulated after the global decolonization in the

twentieth century. By so doing, this chapter calls into question why the tags of nationality have been applied as if they are capable of referencing the totality and coherence of a singular group of people marked by one and only one shared "imagined community," especially to cases in Asia, Africa and Latin America. More critically, by exploring how empires are able to populate its workforce without necessarily acting explicitly in a colonialist manner, but creates handsome incentives for individuals to migrate, I hope to elucidate the cosmopolitan outlook of imperial enterprises and the contingent grounds upon which nationalities sit and wait for cooption. In other words, I attribute the unstable referentiality between nation and race not to the involved individuals or their "life journeys," but the interplay of imperial state's commands and national subjects' responses to them.

In the novel, the idea of blood kinship is recurrently deployed by the narrator to willfully switch his location and his relation with

others, which I take as an extraordinary device that enables the narrator not only to become desirable in his own eyes but also to become desired by whom he desires. In the pages to follow, I examine the circumstances under which he trades his kinship with the colonized for a re-approved or an improved familial status recognized by the imperial state. The chapter is divided to three parts: first on his disavowal of the “Korean blood” running under his skin, second on his abjection of “black blood” that comes unexpectedly to the family of him and his adopted daughter, and third on his vengeful desires toward “white blood” and its material embodiments. Throughout I will examine how blood tie imaginary and its variant contrasts mediate the imperial and nationalist calls in cold war America in a comparative perspective.

Loving a Sister Well and Wisely

At the evening that he staggers into a party full of frenzied men only to look for his missing daughter, Hata inadvertently harks back to the scenes he met young Korean "comfort women" in the Asia Pacific War long time ago. The big party house in suburban New York reminds him of the military camp in Burma he has once been stationed: desolate, abandoned and despised by the outside world, guarded by a despaired troop burning with fear of death and indulgence in carnal pleasures. Both are places that governmental authorities care not to administer, and yet they are the places where Hata has the unforgettable experience of seeing how his likes and loved ones are ill-treated by men of other races and with stronger force. Intriguingly, while he is sanguine in saving his underage daughter from those "men of color" whom he detests and criminalizes, his apologies for not being able to save the molested Korean girls, though consistently painful, somehow read purposefully purgatory and naturalistically detached. He describes the Korean

girls' child-like physical appearance in life and at their untimely death, and observes the soldiers' enforcement of violence as a display of their sexual restlessness and apprehensive dread¹³. His engagement with the sex crimes in the army does not address so much with interracial relations as militarist chauvinism. Compared with his emotionally charged accounts of black and brown men, I wish to ask: What are the reasons that explain Hata's contrastingly "reserved" perspective on saving his kinswomen from the hands of Japanese men? How does he position himself in the racial-gender power relations? How may we read the novel's exposure of the incoherent measures taken by the narrator?

¹³ Hata employs a noted "cold-blooded" language in his descriptions of the "comfort women" and the corporal who is losing his sanity over the prolonged wait for war. While this voice has been usually critiqued as a manifestation of his feigned objectivity and/or a problematic refusal of feeling, I take it as the voice he has been trained to use in diagnosis and post-mortem reports as an assistant medic, a post that suggestively positions him in the Japanese Imperial Army but grants him very limited authority.

Hata wins the trust and love of Kkutaeh, or K, the enslaved Korean girl that he “falls for,” in the manner of an ethnic kin. Their imagined blood tie is for sure embedded in their shared Korean ethnicity, but it also takes the concrete form of a shared spoken language. Hata starts with talking to her in Japanese as a well-intended medic, but it is not until he speaks “in her own language” that their communication truly begins. By listening to what she says, he is impressed and moved, finding her “much more confident and mature in her own tongue than when she mumbles and half-whispers in Japanese” (234). Kkutaeh, actually, has already identified Hata as a Korean from the excellent Korean he speaks, and by comparing him to her younger brother, she no longer sees him as a stranger, but a confidante. Later, their distance is further shortened due to their shared view of Korean people falling behind the worldly pace of modernization. Hata looks at his birth parents and relatives (ethnic Koreans living in Kobe) with contempt, for their poverty and their

inability to live beyond the confines of ethnic ghetto, even it has been quite some time since they moved to the metropole. Kkutaeh describes her family in light of patriarchal rule and male-heir worship, and talks about her dream about living as the characters in the modern French or German novels one day. They have the “insider’s view” of Korea’s predicaments and problems, and it is by simply sharing those thoughts without bothering to explain the underlying complexities that they have the feeling of sharing a world unknown to the outsiders or colonial rulers.

Although the “mutually” recognized kinship may at first bridge them across their unequal footings, gender soon overwrites such contingent connection. For Kkutaeh, her identification of Hata as an ethnic kin has her hastily remove the issue of race from their “relationship.” When Hata refuses to take her life upon her request, but rather violates her body for his sexualized pleasure in ways that are not too different from that of the Japanese soldiers, she feels the

double persecution of not only being used but being used by a countryman. Kkutaeh's (mis)recognition of Hata as her faithful ethnic comrade explains why she keeps seeing him as someone unlike the others, someone who should have the compassion to intervene the military mistreatments of colonized women. For Jiro Kurohata, or Hata in his full Japanese name, his identification of K as a Korean kin boils down to the question of whether or not treating her as an available object of his desire. The answer has always been clear to him, for, as suggested by his infatuation with a presumably "Japanese" female figure in a Western porn photo, sexual dominance has been an effective means for him to relieve his race-caused frustrations.

To probe the reasons for Hata's ambivalence toward identifying himself as a Korean and his way of executing sexualized dominance over a vulnerable Korean woman, it is necessary to carefully consider him as an adopted son to a privileged Japanese family. While there have been some scholarly analyses of Hata being

an object and subject of transnational adoptions (Jerng 2006) — i.e., he is adopted by an affluent childless Japanese couple in childhood and later on adopts a girl from Korea after settling in a small town of the U.S.—I wish to pursue another strand of discussion that treats the family not as utopian shelter, as it is conventionally construed, but a unit of socialization, a platform on which the macro-political contentions intersect with the supposedly private and personal statements. In short, I propose that Hata's adoptive family functions circularly as a metaphor and as an instrument that orients his identification with imperial Japan, or, approaching the issue from the other side, his endless labor to disengage himself from colonized Korea. Hata never mentions if his adoptive parents have said anything about his decision to join the army—for probably their strongest wish is that he stays in Kobe to inherit the gear factory and keep their company, or that he is free to choose whatever he likes to do as long as he has a healthy body and a happy life—but it is clear

that he thinks of a lot of obligations, most of which related to the ongoing war, that he has to fulfill in order to properly honor them. His "Korean blood" haunts the adoptive familial relationship as much as it haunts the avowed loyalty to the Japanese Imperial Forces. In order to become Japanese, he needs to reiterate the hierarchical relationship of Korea and Japan, and makes sure to prove himself already achieved the uplift from the abjected end to the desired other.

Hata's commitments to his Japanese "family" are simultaneously personal and national. His responsibilities to the "family" are articulated as his indebtedness to his adoptive parents in Kobe. This adoptive family is a metonymic replacement of his birth family, one that provides him with a clean and beautiful house rather than a shabby small room shared by all the families, and a surname of good reputation rather than one associated with a clan of hide tanners and rug maids. Perhaps more importantly, it is by entering this

Japanese household that he is given the opportunities of education, employment, citizenship, indeed a whole life that is orderly planned. Hata is conscious of all this when he ascribes the business of rearing him to “the purposeful society,” to which he feels he know even at the age of twelve that he “should always give [himself] over to its vigilance, entrusting to its care everything [he] could know or ever hope for” (73). In the army, the abstract “family” of Japan is personified by Captain Ono, who embodies both the absolute imperial commands and the figure of an authoritarian paternal authority. Despite Hata questions from time to time Ono's arbitrary orders and his abusive use of physical violence, he always convinces himself to hold faith in the Captain's judgments, with a genuinely admiration, and holds him up as the model for his own medical career after the war. Ono never hides his contempt in shaming the ethnic Korean lieutenant, but precisely by the same token he persistently exercises the imperial-familial mission to educate him (by

pointing out what he ought to strive for in order to rid his Koreanness) and whip him into a useful staff (by assigning him simple and labor-intensive tasks to relieve the working load of the higher ranked).

If readers of the novel find the major moral charge against Hata lies in his sexual assault on Kkutaeh at first and his rhetorical tricks for self-exoneration later, I think it is worthwhile to revisit the case with due consideration of coloniality in play. It seems to me the indictment cannot be simplified to the accusation that Hata takes advantages of a woman with his power as a Japanese soldier and later on disengages himself from the Imperial Forces, inasmuch as this view misses the crucial fact is that Hata has been totally despised in the Japanese Army during the war and very likely to be racially excluded in Japan all his life. Hata's demand of sex is made out of his desire—and more importantly, experiences of shame—in his struggles of becoming Japanese. What I hope to foreground here is, however, not the illogical suggestion that the discrimination he has

experienced can explain away his motive or alleviate his responsibility, but rather that this man is acting under a larger oppressive system of anti-Korean racism, one that constantly pressures him to become a worthy member of the imperial family without being tied to any colonized kin by all chances. On the other hand, Hata's disengagement of the deeds of Japanese Imperial Forces certainly has a lot to do with his desire for entering another imperial family of America, a point I will return shortly, but here I hope to say his "art" of disengagement is inseparable from the Manichean nature of the memory the colonized usually have with the former colonizer. His criticism of the decadent leaders and despaired fellow soldiers are largely aligned by a typical postcolonial perspective, whereby the faulting schema determinedly distinguishes him from the Japanese soldiers, to the extent that the past becomes a treacherous mirror that is too flattering (for someone like him) and also ruthlessly severe (for those who have been defeated) at the

same time. Once again, what I hope to bring up here is not that Hata succeeds in excusing himself, but that his method of making excuses should be attributed to the discursive schema of representing the colonizer in a so-called postcolonial age.

With all the characterization of an antihero protagonist, how may we read the novel's ways of unraveling immigration experiences from transasia Japan to transpacific America? Isn't it already clearly shown in the novel that Japan not only coerced numerous innocent women at its disposal to sexual slavery during the war, but also sent colonized men to the battlefield as utilizable manpower to kill and to be killed? Isn't the story a clear enough illustration of how Asian immigrants must make themselves a model minority in the U.S. so as to stay and enjoy the liberties and freedoms impossible in their countries?

If we read the novel as a truth-holding mirror of war crimes taking place back in Asia and the ways of Asian patriarchy injuring

Asian women, then we are suturing this novel with the scheme of transnational incorporation centered on postwar America that ceaselessly aims at saving wretched Asian individuals from backward Asian countries, and in that direction, we will be giving this Asian American novel a U.S. nationalist and exceptionalist agenda. As I have tried to demonstrate, as imperial Japan has enlisted men and women of variant status to serve the cause of its militarist aggressions, it is erroneous to dichotomize those who are involved as exclusively persecutors or victims, especially if the purpose is only to assign blame to an already demonized Allied enemy. Hata is for sure complicit in the Japanese Imperial Forces' sexual exploitation of vulnerable women, but his testimony cannot be held as transparent truth, for no testimony is told without an audience or without a protocol of probable vocabulary. Kkutaeh is an obvious case for discussions about the intersection of sexism and colonialism, but perhaps what calls for further reflection are the circumstances under

which Asian woman characters have been perennially created as such, not only in Asian American literature but in modern Asian literature and countless examples in literary works published over the world. Since when does it become a literary convention that modern girls of Asia must be enlightened by European literature at some point in their self-exploration?¹⁴ Could the scene, I wonder, ever be imagined the other way around? Without questioning the conditions with which the narrative is framed as an Asian immigrant's combined memories of Asia and America that are told both in the acquired language of English and in accordance with compelled ways of storytelling, we would lose sight of their relevance to U.S. postwar discursive construction of Japan, and of the repeated colonial mission proclaimed to rescue the colored women from the colored men.

¹⁴ In addition to the colossal size of literary examples of Nora's worldwide influences, the formula seems to remain unchanging in contemporary memorization of the communist age (popular examples including Jung Chang's *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* and Sijie Dai's *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*).

Instead, by applying the aforesaid metaphor of family for imperial order, I wish to venture to suggest that the story of an Asian immigrant relocating himself in America could be read in light of a solitary child's willing submission of itself to the system of transnational adoption, with its avowed loyalty to the family and simultaneous relinquishment of unwelcomed kinship. To maintain the glorious beauty of the victorious family named America, the child makes degrading remarks of its former foster family, Japan, and attempts to "disown" that tortuous relationship which may subject it to antagonism and doubts anytime in the new family. Also, the child tells the story of the premature death of its sibling with the calculated thought of how the story may push the new families to better understand his position and sympathize with him. There is a win-win rationality behind the new family's adoption of this child: With the child's successful settlement, the family is able to boast its achievements of multiracial co-prosperity, while of course the child

secures its survival and makes enough money to pay taxes and so fulfills its civic duties for the health and longevity of the family. In the following sections, I will focus on how "this child" passes along the parenting model and deals with its own irresolvable problems with it.

Fatherhood Business

Sunny is Hata's adopted daughter born in Korea of Asian and African American parentage. Her ethnicity is not specified to her adoptive father before their first meeting in the airport, to which the latter responds with "hesitance" and "blighted hope" on his face, while the precocious girl senses the uncertainties of her future awaiting ahead and weeps. Sunny is described to have an impressive look, and a unique charm combining her defiant independence and unrelenting resolves. She leaves home (and a life of comfort and stability made ready by her adoptive father) for New York when she is eighteen, after she has spent some time "hanging

around” with her friends who are mostly men of color “with criminal records,” and been treated as sore problems of the town. Fourteen years later, Sunny moves back to the town next to where her adoptive father lives, as a store manager and a single mother. She gradually resumes her connection with Hata, without great drama of reconciliation but with sober assessments of what has happened in the past.

In spite of the later happenings, the carefully arranged plan of transnational adoption is thought to give the Asian girl a promising new life in America. The international administering agency covers the fact that Sunny is a mixed girl abandoned by her genetic parents, most likely an American GI and a Korean woman, by “rewriting” the profile of her as an orphan girl from Pusan, a city in Korea. The edited profile of Sunny largely reduces the possible worries held by the potential American adopters, and considerably enhances the humanitarian appeal of case. That is, although the child waiting for

adoption is actually a living proof of American responsibilities for the wars and parentless children in Asia, she is now deceptively portrayed as a girl that is in dire situations, unassociated with any existing Asian or American family, and likely to have her life wasted away since, as cold war propaganda stories have it, Asian patriarchy has treated girls as worthless objects. At the other end, the adoptive father Hata makes every effort to get a girl from Asia and ensure the place Sunny calls home is somewhere people look up to. He works on their house before her arrival, mainly to make sure every detail is beautifully designed and excellently executed. With the seemingly endless construction of the house that is to be completed by no one but himself, Hata proves that Sunny will not have to worry about scant means or lack of parental care in America, as presumed her situation must be if she stayed in Korea.

However, it turns out that Sunny feels claustrophobic, and terribly treated by acts taken in the name of kindness by her

adoptive father as well as the complacent town. After trying to bear with what Hata provides for her, Sunny always ends up with an angered withdrawal. She quits playing piano, resists joining Hata swimming in the backyard pool, and apparently hates the idea of going out with Hata's radiantly white lady friend Mary Burns.

Confronting the implicit racial segregation observed by the townspeople, Sunny goes to the "mixed" parties, and later on unwaveringly defends her relationship with a black man. Although there is no direct mention of explicit racist incidents in her life or school, Sunny refuses to accept her adoptive father's servility to white supremacy, and chooses to embrace nothing but its opposite.

Hata convinces himself to believe the transnational adoption is a plan beneficial to himself and the adopted girl, although he refuses to face his overestimation of the parent's capacity for shaping a child's life under complex manifestations of social control. The plan of building a transnational adoptive family in America adheres to the

humanitarian mission of rescuing vulnerable innocents that are persecuted by savage foreign regimes and accordingly coherent with state-manuevered narratives that justify the wars as urged by moral imperatives. Hata's wish to launch such an adoptive family suggests his desire of acting—or, paying for their kids and moralizing familial bonding—in what he perceives as the American way. In addition, if the Asian immigrant were to rescue Asian orphans with the money and the morale he gains in America, the story will lend further support to prove the material abundance as well as pedagogical success of the postwar U.S. Hence, it ought to a genuine emotional reaction that the administering agent is deeply “moved” at hearing Hata's plan, or that the townspeople of Bedley Run make considerably more affective gestures to Hata for his dedication to this just and right cause. For the “personal” dimension of Hata, adopting an orphan girl is also a feasible way of replacing his regrets on not saving Kkutaeh and other Korean girls in the war.

With his capacity as a medical officer, Hata knows with his own eyes how the girls have pained in the comfort house. However, he does not follow the steps of Corporal Endo, who is mad enough to kill a girl to save her from further misery, or helps Kkutaeh to take her life as she asks for. The reason why Hata takes the arrival of the adopted girl to mark "recommencement of his days" is partly because he aspires to become American with the transracial adoptive parenting, and partly because this parenting also gives him the opportunity of paying off, albeit belatedly, his debts to ethnic sisters in the earlier war.

Hata's error lies in his failure to concede adoptive parents cannot, regardless of their wealth or power, shelter their adopted children from the invasive structure of racism. As Sunny's rebellion brings to the surface, in spite Hata's insistence on giving her a beautiful new life with a like-enough suggestion of blood tie, she has her own "ethnic burden" from which she cannot, and eventually will

not, walk away. It is not the envisioned family is not beautiful enough, but that its beauty is made possible only by Hata's infinite gestures of gratitude and acquiesce, a life-long job Sunny decides not to inherit.

Hata's own entry to the adoptive Japanese family is mainly characterized as a transition of class. As much as his blood relatives are ethnic Koreans speaking the Japanese language and living as Japanese ("if only in twilight"), the major issue he has to learn for passing is, simply, denying there is Korean blood running under his skin.

His most effective proof is not a DNA report, but his luxurious home and the memorable distance his schoolmates automatically keep with him due to the Kurohata family's prominent reputation. In stark contrast, Sunny's visible African American parentage unforgivingly calls for a genetic explanation that only serves to undermine the make-belief kinship. Inasmuch as the only workable solution of finding a black mother as "the missed kin" of the family is too outraging for Hata to give any consideration, he eschews the whole issue by

avoiding a straightforward account of Sunny's ethnicity in the entire narrative (albeit repetitiously describing her as dark-hued, coal-like, having unfathomable black eyes and black wavy hair). In other words, class privileges alone are not enough to register Sunny in the multiculturalist family of America, because her racial status is too stigmatized to be ignored, or honestly mentioned.

From the ways that he reveals his racist prejudice against the black people, usually fashioned as objective and general observations, it could be said the Hata joins the white supremacists' view of the black people either calculatingly thorough or, worse, unconsciously. In passing reference to the American cities and towns he has travelled before settling in Bedley Run, Hata coldly singles out Chinese and black laborers as the most abjected ethnic groups in this country, banished and feared by the public majority. His racist biases are also reflected by his rejection of Sunny's black lover Lincoln. Predisposing that man as a felon, drug-addict, drunkard and

womanizer, he fails to convince Sunny of his “judgments” but conversely fuels her rage against the antiblack racism tacitly held by the townspeople. Most revealingly, Hata describes his disappointment with the mixed blood of Sunny as the fact “fails” his original expectation of a child born to a humble but hardworking Korean family. By contemptuously speaking of Sunny’s “origin” as the result of “a night’s wanton encounter between a GI and a local bar girl,” and explaining how the product of such encounter totally ruins his dream of building a respected family in Bedley Run, Hata makes it explicit that Sunny’s black parentage makes her the least likable and likely kin to the transnational adoptive family.

So, how could we read the evidences of incompatibility, between a supposedly beautiful family maintained by a capable, affluent, self-Americanizing/self-Orientalizing Asian parent and a “rescued” child of not only insufficient racial likeliness to the parent but like-enough affinity with the most otherized ethnicity of America?

What is brought to the table by the interrelated effects of the adoptive child's racial "ambiguity"? How does the parent and child's respective racial un/likelihood to the conception of American national citizenship relate to their contrasting response to the racial foundation of adoptive transnational family which distinctly emerges out of the postwar U.S.?

The answers, I think, are in the mutually exclusive and therefore mutually constitutive ways in which Asian Americans and black Americans are placed in the narrative of national incorporation—and transnational coherence—in postwar U.S. As analyzed by Helen Jun in her newly published book, *Race for Citizenship*, meaning productions about Asian American and African American presence in the U.S. have been conditioned to displace each other's relationship with the state and reflect the shifting ways of manufacturing worth-including population to the white-centered national citizenry. Putting it more simply if not too reductively, the

rationales for which Asian Americans are included in the narrative of U.S. national incorporation, most commonly conceived as their intensive labor output and political conformity, are under the structural inevitability to be posited with the orientation to denigrate and depreciate black Americans. In a nutshell, the conditions with which Hata is adored and “tolerated” by the suburban town are precisely those that preclude the acceptance of half-black Sunny. Furthermore, as much as the model of transpacific adoptive family is meant to justify the military presence of America in Asia and foreground the generous American aid of the wretched Asians, the child's symbolic evocation of a despairing black American GI stationed in Asia must be strictly forbidden, because the image clearly threatens the “just war” narratives both in home scenarios and situations abroad. The figure of the missing black GI prompts a series of questions: Why does America send its black boys to a war that does not seem relevant to reasonable self-defense of the

country? Why do the soldiers restlessly wander in entertainment bases all over Asia where there are always sufficient supply of Asian women, and what are the differences between the indicted crimes of sexual slavery in the Asia Pacific Wars? Why there are so many mixed children orphanized or abandoned after the Asia Pacific wars? These are the questions that cannot be raised, or they will totally ruin the beauty of the transnational family stories.

Some Genuine Feelings

In addition to accounting his troubled relationship with Sunny, Hata also recounts several other families having insolvable problems in Bedley Run. Hata connects himself with those families via his acquaintanceship with the mothers, who treat him with fondness and warmth. First it is Mrs. Hickey, then Officer Como, and finally Mary Burns. Although Hata is never less than eloquent in showing his sympathies and support to these mothers who struggle to keep their

home from falling apart, he does not involve himself with their action or even emotions. *Hata always speaks as a most caring, heaven-sent wonderful friend, but his action or inaction never justifies him as such.*

How does race played out in the incommensurability between his words and his deeds? How does his failure in setting up a transnational adoptive family relate to his shrewd observation of the problems of other racially normative American families? How does the characterization of the narrator may suggest of the unconscious the text?

Mrs. Hickey is a genteel woman preoccupied with taking care of her dying son, at the same time running a medical supply retailer that she and her husband bought from Hata not too long ago. Being inexperienced to the business and under stern economic stress, she holds Hata's frequent visits and mentorship in gratitude, which is in sharp contrast with her husband's rush resistance. Mrs. Hickey takes Hata as a trustworthy mentor, confides with him the arguments they

have in the house, and invites him to see her son in the hospital whenever he has the time. Hata gives her the promise, but never intends to fulfill it. In fact, he does once step into the boy's ward at a night during his own stay in the hospital, seeing the boy in a sound sleep with electronic devices all over his bedside. However, with the unspecified concern that he fears the mother might "spy something damning in his face," Hata never visits the boy in his mother's company, till the accidental death of the latter.

Mary Burns also dies untimely, and in solitude, after her four years' romantic relationship with Hata and untiring effort of building a friendship with Sunny. She is the one that takes the initiative of approaching Hata and his daughter with whimsical passion and affection, but most of her warm feelings are unrequited, even if they are dutifully acknowledged. Mary Burns does not seem to share her late surgeon husband's sense of superiority or her daughters' materialist take of familial bonding, but in spite of her outstanding

beauty, generous sharing, and years of unconditional help in any sort, she utterly fails in gaining Hata or Sunny's love. Of course there is no law that they have to love her, but it is clear that she is hurt by how firm they are in *not* accepting her as a family. In her final days, although Hata knows perfectly well that his visit would bring her some joy and consolation that she must be keenly looking forward to, he chooses to not visit her, at all.

To account for these scenarios of callousness nearly amounting to *schadenfreude*, it might be useful to consider the variant ways in which Hata is related to these good mother characters in the transnational family imaginary. Mary Burns has meant to be a helper for Hata to set up the beautiful family as he wishes, but all her privileges—physical, material, cultural—render Hata an obviously unqualified operator of the cultural machine that is designed to save the wretched Asians. She is, first and foremost, *saving Hata* from his incapability of saving Sunny from immigrants' lack of social space

and people of color's exclusion from privileged spheres. She takes Sunny out to the country clubs, to luxury apparel boutiques and nice restaurants closer to the city, literally offering her American wonders unavailable in the adopted girl's native country. As a superb patroness that lends tremendous help to her beloved Asian man transforming the life of an orphan girl from a poor foreign nation, Mary Burns not just overshadows Hata, but makes his subordinated status embarrassingly evident. Her presence and interventions make Sunny an infantized victim luckily saved by some heavenly grace, and Hata as an object of a romantically indiscriminating love that is fortunate enough to be uplifted. Hata is able to see Sunny's jealousy of Mary Burns, but it is his own that eludes him.

As for the Hickeys, it is the hereditary heart disease of their son that occasions the convergence of Hata's overdue expectations for a medical career and his rage against racial inequity. Hata has a peculiar investment with the occupation of medical doctor, a

position that demonstrates its force in a both god-like and savage way that seems to acutely personify the image of empire. At seeing the terribly ill boy, Hata has the urge to caress his tiny heart in the same way that Captain Ono did to a Burmese cobbler in Southeast Asia decades ago, an act that is required to save a dying life, but more importantly one that is demonstrative of the doctor's power to intervene someone else's slide to death or life. Hata has wanted to be a doctor, but this wish has been thwarted in the wartime, when he is forced to the position of a despised servant, and infinitely postponed after the war, for he has no access to any recognized system of medical training in the U.S. and therefore starts selling medical supplies with the knowledge at his command. Nicknamed as Doc Hata by the townspeople, and yet questioned by Mr. Hickey as if he is a liar assuming the authority he does not deserve, Hata avenges himself with the fantasy of a reversed hierarchy. Put otherwise, the reason for Hata to takes the devilish pleasure in

witnessing the Hickeys paining and demising concerns not only what they do but also who they are (or born to be).

However, Hata is not always only calculatingly appeasing and vengefully indifferent to those whom he envies racially—he is willing to express conditional care for those who fall for disasters in their life and treat him with awe which boosts his sense of superiority. Officer Como is such a case. Having helped Como and her infant daughter when the husband died in an infamous accident, Hata is assured of their gratitude for him and thus interacting with the mother and daughter at unusual ease, for perhaps it is only when he is free from the worries about thanking them enough for their kindness and expressing proper agreement with their opinions. But even so, he finds the thought of their relationship being adoptive rather than blood-tied strangely “comforting” to him. That is, in spite his knowledge of the devastations the Comos have experienced, Hata still feels the need to wish them living with comparable if not

commensurable discomfort to what he and his likes have lived in their alien existence.

Despite the textual evidences above, literary criticisms of *A Gesture Life* do not seem to take much interest in pushing Hata's racial anger to the center stage.¹⁵ I gather there are at least two important reasons. Characterizing an immigrant with racial envy might terribly constrain the development of it. This is a most reasonable worry, since the mentality of self-enclosed vengeance is

¹⁵ My discussion of racial anger here is very much inspired by Anne Anlin Cheng's ethical theorization of social assimilation and "the problem of objecthood for theories of subjectivity" that are also anchored on *A Gesture Life*. However, rather than treating assimilation as an vexing issue posited to the ethics of survival for racial minorities in the U.S., as what Cheng intervenes in her essay, I approach assimilation a "fated" situation that has be endured by immigrants caught in irresolvable conditions of coloniality. That said, I still wish to quote a few lines from that essay, where there are important methodological echoes to the ways this dissertation tackles the taste of official and unofficial colonization:

The question of what objecthood means for the historically objected person, not uneasy to entertain, forms an important basis from which to confront the afterlife of subjugation. We must understand the function of objecthood for an oppressed individual's psychic makeup before we can "do away" with objectification and its consequences. This undertaking does not represent an intellectual luxury but, rather [. . .] a vital part of ethical conduct. (556)

very likely to bore the readers if it is to define every single act of the character, and thus foreclose effects of external influences upon the character over the passage of time or across varied crises. Moreover, such characterization risks reifying the trite, manufactured, and politically unproductive division between the immigrants and the so-called national citizens of the U.S. This worry encompasses the first one, but directs toward a broader consideration of how the division has been created and manipulated to serve the purpose of dissolve possibilities of cross-community solidarity, from the past and continued to the present, and how the division has the flop side of essentializing people who are involved with the categories and assigning to each category prescriptive narratives of non-existent homogeneity.

However, I wish to propose that an undertaking of the narrator's emotions and acting rationales as related to racial anger is worthwhile for a better examination of what I call as "transnational

racial governmentality” in postwar transpacific America, where the “postcolonial” nations function as critical markers of difference that colludes with colonial ways of racialization on the one hand, but disburdens imperial orders from holding responsibility toward their subjects on the other. By reading attentively Hata’s race-caused vexing experiences in the novel, we can hope for a better view of seeing how he is racialized not only because he is Asian but also because he is Japanese. He is multiply otherized, not only because he was not born of Anglo descendant, but because he is associated with the country’s prominent national enemy across more than a century of wars by his “Japanese” accent and his “unpronounceable” name.¹⁶ Hata’s depressing racial rage in his

¹⁶ The varied versions of Hata’s name are illustrative of his relationship with multiple national-cum-linguistic polities. He reveals only that he has a Korean name in early childhood, but never gives it in full. His name is changed to Jiro Kurohata after he is adopted by his Japanese parents, but again the readers are not given further information about his given name (literary meaning the second son in the family) or how that name may reflect the adoptive parents’ expectations of him (possibly to compensate for their loss of a son before adopting him). He uses the name “Franklin

immigrant life in the U.S. is far more complicated than that in Japan or his military service, because he is no longer a colonized subject coerced to racial denigration and second-rate citizenship, but one that voluntarily relinquishes his entitlements to the rights of Japanese citizens and seeks and builds a supposedly better life in the U.S. out of his will. In a colonial relationship, race-determined division is unambiguously the infamous foundation of the rule. In the transnational governance, race-determined division largely remains as the foundation of the system, but the new order claims to never force migrant labor-providers into its workforce, and promises to give them full rights when they are no longer protected by their origin nations and become its official citizens. Hata's repressed real anger bespeaks his difficulties in articulating the experiences of racism and racialization in a nominally postcolonial and antiracial powerful nation, where he lives and works at his own choice.

Hata" after he settles in Bedley Run, shortening his last name for easier pronunciation and possibly renaming himself after Franklin Roosevelt.

It is with these variant desires and frustrations that Hata stands out as a round character and an intriguing case for reflections of race in transnational America after the Second World War. The U.S. social and cultural structure that conditions and sustains his immigrant complex is not represented by degenerate mighty men such as Captain Ono or General Ishii, but instead benevolent mother characters who shoulder the labor to maintain a beautiful family not just their immediate kin but also for the extended community of their country. Hata's anger does not make him an evil bore, but on the contrary illuminates the depth with which he struggles against his sense of inferiority and justifies secretive thoughts of malice. These "backward feelings," I believe, could lead to valuable examinations of interracial and interracial relationships in the so-called post-racist age by posing some discomfiting questions. With his equivalent (if not slightly superior) economic privileges with the townspeople, why does Hata remain culturally strained and mentally compelled to gain

their recognition? What accounts for the different social tactics adopted by Hata, Sunny, Ronny, and the briefly-met Japanese American man from Bay Area? Why can't Hata make the decision to marry Mary Burns and raise Sunny together? What does it mean for Hata to have a beautiful family in a place where the standards or measurements of beauty have always been dishearteningly distant from his?

Conclusion

With the story of a man that learns Korean as his first language, fights the Second World War in the Japanese Imperial Army and spends the second half of his life in the U.S., this chapters asks not where he belongs to, but how the narration of his belonging(s) affects his survival in varied settings interchangeably as an imperative and as an opportunity. I begin by exploring how the imperial formation of transasia Japan is consumed by that of

transpacific America, primarily in terms of the so-called paradigm shift from an age of colonialism to one of postcoloniality. Drawing textual evidences from the novel, my major argument is that inasmuch as conditions of coloniality have not been terminated by formal decolonization, narratives of history articulated by the formerly colonized ought to be read with considerations of oft-ignored hierarchy in colonial collaborations in the past and conditioned ways of storytelling in the present postcolonial order. By investigating the institution of transnational adoption, I discuss the ways in which the trope of family serves an effective device for empires to recruit and register new blood without destroying their racial architecture. In contradistinction to the institutionalized celebration of transnational adoption as a philanthropic means of saving children from underdeveloped countries, I examine how its operative logic entrenches race-based divisions—not only between elite and subaltern nations, but between elite and subaltern communities

within national boundaries as well—and how it self-conflictingly disavows and remedies “coloniality” between nations. Moreover, I ponder what is repressed by the story’s presentation of interracial harmony by scrutinizing the discrepancies between the unreliable narrator’s words and deeds. In order to tease out as much as possible the combined threads indicative of his racial anger, I propose racialization of Asians in postwar America employs nation as a new critical marker of difference while maintaining its “older” optic and structure of prejudice, so much so that the yellow-skinned new immigrants must work extremely hard to be considered in the family picture of the beautiful country if they are not asked to return to where they “officially” belong.

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CONCLUSION

In spring 2010, the San Diego campus of University of California saw a series of student demonstrations, sit-ins and teach-ins, after-class meetings of the students, flyers, pamphlets and posters, all demanded the University to tackle racism in the extended college community. The protests were initiated by an open Facebook invitation for a “ghetto-themed” party, clearly to mock activities of the nationally observed Black History Month, that was undersigned by several UCSD students and quickly circulated. The black students association was the first to react, followed by other students associations, academic units, and eventually external organizations. On February 23, thousands of students and staff members joined the march from the heart of the campus to the city center, thus marked the culmination of the series of events.

At that time, I was reading and writing for a research project on how the national elites of Taiwan during the Cold War period

were shaped and educated by U.S.-sponsored epistemological apparatuses, in particular the global “cultural” network of United States Information Service. When the events took place literally on the way where I got my lunch every day, in the classroom, and over the Facebook feeds I read then, I was pulled out of my shell to listen and learn. Above all, I was struck by the widespread experience of racial denigration among my U.S.-born cohorts, and how such experience has radical impacts on the way they live. I do not know how if I was seen as an insider or outsider to the events, but I gave serious thoughts to what the “education” could be. On the one hand, 2010 was my fourth year of living in the post-911 United States. As a nonnative speaker with a two-character unmistakably Chinese name, and with adequate mental capacity of knowing my silence is normally taken as a sign of incompetence and ignorance, racism was neither new nor past to me. On the other hand, I encounter the question of locating myself, as a foreigner from a country under U.S.

dominance since the Cold War period, vis-à-vis the racialized minorities within the U.S. citizenry. Whilst black and Asian American students gave life-stories about how their parents—and themselves—had been cajoled and excluded on the ground of their ancestry of slavery, I wonder how the history of enslavement and racial hierarchy in their description actually continues to live on, and how it is continually denied, or obscured. I wonder how that denial is sustained by narratives of U.S. national history that not only consign colonial wars and aggressions to the past, but also make racialized constituencies enfranchised “postcolonial” subjects that are, as it were, “liberated” from the shackles of the allegedly “under-modernized” rest of the world. We have surely heard and read a lot about transnational coalitions of the civil rights movement, but, it seems to me, the artificiality, asymmetricality, and the political calculus regarding instrumental uses of ethnicity in those transnational connections have not been commensurably analyzed.

This dissertation attempts a critique of multiculturalism, or racial pluralism, as a state-sponsored institution that contain racial conflicts simultaneously at home and abroad along the course the U.S. substantiates its power as a global hegemony. My reading of James Baldwin's hesitance on black internationalism aims to bring to the fore how the kernel questions were sensed and mediated as early as the civil rights movement was incorporated by the state infrastructure. Whereas most critics of Baldwin interpret his agenda in terms of black nationalism, my engagement hopes to probe his thought-provocative doubts of uniform tenets and socialist vision as a reflective turn from the mandates of a Cold War-conditioned transnationalism, if not downright Americanism. The case of Eileen Chang is meant to illustrate the ways in which the cultural work of the Cold War recruits brains and talents across national boundaries, and therefore generates an appealing picture of racial synthesis in a global scale. Furthering the precedent chapter's analysis of the

interdependence between nationalist historiography and transnational temporality, the chapter on Chang demonstrates, with illustrative details, how the seeming inclusion and showcasing of the ultimate Cold War Other lend moral weight to a necessitated neo-nationalism of the United States couched on humanitarian images and language. The chapter on Chang Rae-Lee's acclaimed novel of Asian American wartime memories, finally, provides a valuable occasion to observe and dissect how an imaginary "Asia" functions to facilitate strategically useful (self-)articulations of Asian America.

Contradicting the common ways of cataloging and interpreting the novel as a piece of Asian American historical fiction, I hope to read the novel's staging of Asia as an *unnatural* process, one that is intimately tied to the predicaments caused by the formal institution of multiculturalism since the nineteen-seventies. Together, these chapters are designed to advance beyond the commonsensible horizon of framing multiculturalism as either a

superb national achievement of the twentieth-century U.S. or a sheer fiction deployed for Cold War propaganda.