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Specters of the Cold War in America's Century:
The Korean War and Transnational Politics of National Imaginaries in the 1950s

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

in

Literature

by

Junghyun Hwang

Committee in charge:

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2008

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Co-Chair

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University of California, San Diego

2008

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Specters of the Cold War in America's Century:

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by

Junghyun Hwang

Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

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Professor Lisa Lowe, Co-Chair

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This dissertation explores the ways in which American as well as South Korean cultures of the 1950s, particularly in the transnational entanglements of the Korean War, functioned as crucial sites for rationalizing Cold War politics while negotiating national imaginaries under the emerging stipulations of global politics and power. In the first introductory chapter, I contextualize the rationale of Cold War politics within the Western

epistemological tradition as well as specific historical conditions of the Cold War and the Korean War. The second chapter investigates Cold War liberalism as the dominant ideology of 1950s America, which re-visioned the national imaginary of Manifest Destiny through a discursive integration of racial, sexual and national others while the juxtaposition of John Okada's 1957 novel *No-No Boy* unveils inherent ambiguities in the logic of inclusivity. Next two chapters focus on American popular representations of the Korean War, including William Styron's *The Long March* (1952) and David Douglas Duncan's photo-essay *This Is War!* (1951) in Chapter III, and several Hollywood Korean War films such as *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* (1955) and *Battle Hymn* (1957) in Chapter IV. These chapters explore how American nationalism merged with the Cold War global imaginary of "benevolent supremacy," and how this brand of Cold War Americanism was premised upon the recuperation of white masculinity through the representational incorporation of Cold War otherness into the metaphoric regime of marriage and the family. Chapter V shifts attention to the 1950s Korean society and the ways in which modern Korea was constructed in the transnational turmoil of war, Cold War ideology, Western modernity, and colonial legacies by scrutinizing South Korean films such as *Hell Flower* (1958) and *The Stray Bullet* (1961). Finally, in my sixth chapter, I attempt to put the Cold War in a broader historical perspective by juxtaposing the original Hollywood film *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962) with the 2004 remake as an occasion to ponder upon (dis)continuities of history from the Korean War to the Gulf War.

I. Introduction

“The Pacific is the Ocean Bride of America”:

The Cold War, the Korean War, and “Ghostly” Politics of History

The Pacific is the ocean bride of America – China and Japan and Korea – with their innumerable islands, hanging like necklaces about them, are the bridesmaids, California is the nuptial couch, the bridal chamber, where all the wealth of the Orient will be brought to celebrate the wedding. Let us as Americans – let us determine while yet in our power, that no commercial rival or hostile flag can float with impunity over the long swell of the Pacific sea. ... It is on this ocean that the East and the West have thus come together, reaching the point where search for Empire ceases and human power attains its climax.

Commodore Robert Shufeldt in 1882
qtd. in LaFeber, *The American Age* 182

We live in the era of the “post-Cold War” – a temporal marker that simultaneously expunges and implies what is deemed the Cold War, a term that “contains” the preceding historical period in a dual sense of the word. The demise of the Soviet Union following the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall was celebrated not just as the “end of the Cold War” but as the “end of History,” as an epochal milestone that arguably confirmed the triumph of capitalism and the verity of liberalism.¹ The past two decades since, however, witnessed anything but an apocalyptic arrival of millennium spreading affluence and liberty across the world. Rather, the official closure of the era was ironically met with a reinvigoration of residual Cold War conflicts as the dissolution of the USSR coincided with the U.S. invasion of Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War – an ongoing legacy to date of the violent Cold War

¹ It was Francis Fukuyama that put the concept into popular circulation. See his “The End of History?” in *The National Interest* 16 (1989): 3-18.

history in the region involving the Soviet Union, the United States, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. Later with the 1993-94 North Korea nuclear crisis, the specter of the Cold War proved once again alive and well, and again when President Bush named North Korea part of the “axis of evil” along with Iran and Iraq in the 2002 State of the Union address. Most recently, a resurgent Russia invaded Georgia in August 2008, ending the Pax Americana as the era of the U.S. “monopoly on the use of military force” (Krugman, online) and triggering speculation on a “new Cold War.” As such, we seem to cohabit with ghostly presences of the Cold War that persistently reemerge as memories of adversity and violence, sometimes getting deliberately recalled so as to configure and warrant current states of things. For example, the term “axis of evil” frames Iran, Iraq and North Korea as the archenemies of the post-Cold War world while inadvertently unearthing a string of tangled Cold War histories; at the same time, it is conjured from the traces of World War II Axis Powers and Ronald Reagan’s “Evil Empire” only to be recast as the premise of the “State of the Union” in the year 2002.

This dissertation explores the complex ways in which American as well as South Korean cultures of the 1950s, particularly in transnational entanglements of the Korean War, functioned as crucial sites for negotiating the terms of Cold War politics and determining political, economic, and ideological contours of the world for subsequent decades. Much as the Cold War has been typically associated with the American foreign policy imperative of “containment,” it was characterized by politics of “integration.” In other words, the Cold War was as much a Manichean conflict between the two opposing systems in which the U.S. attempted to contain Soviet Communism as a triangulated contest to win over and integrate the newly emergent global constituents in the so-called

Third World. Put in this way, the premise of defining the parameters of the Cold War seems based upon the presumed presence of otherness as the object to contain and/or integrate – the familiar process of subject formation in Western epistemology. The Cold War was in fact a product of Enlightenment rationality, a reconfiguration of modern concepts such as history and nation according to the postwar stipulations of power. It was a new regime of Western modernity in which the United States replaced old Europe as the self-ordained apogee of progress, distributing other nations accordingly into differential stages of modernization under the temporal scheme of evolutionary history. Considering the central role of the U.S., the Cold War was then significant for the development of American national identity, demarcating boundaries of “Americanness” in the process of expelling and/or incorporating “un-American” elements.

In short, this study approaches the Cold War as a neo-imperial regime of global government whose politics of containment/integration was premised upon the production of otherness by primarily reconfiguring the rationality of Western modernity into a theory of modernization. In doing so, it takes American culture of the 1950s as a vital space of public debate through which foreign policy was established in consideration of national interests while simultaneously producing American identity at the convergence of the domestic and the foreign. Focusing on cultural representations of the Korean War as a specific locus of intersection, moreover, this project examines transnational workings of cultural practice at both ends of the U.S. and Korea by scrutinizing the ways in which U.S. politics of the Cold War were intricately interwoven with historical events in Korea and vice versa. Finally, in giving culture a central place in analyzing the politics of the Cold War, it attempts to pay careful attention to the production of contradictions in the

process of cultural formations – the production of those elements that become expelled and silenced in the borders and boundaries of national subject formation. Through analytic exercises, this dissertation demonstrates how Cold War national identities were constructed in uneven exchanges among different intra-national and inter-national powers, and particularly, how the Korean War provided an imaginary geography through which the United States sought to rearticulate its national interests under the imperatives of the Cold War while Korea strove to build a modern nation-state out of the ravages of the fratricidal war.

The Cold War politics of neo-imperial government stemmed from the epistemological tradition of Western modernity whose central premise was the binary split between the self and the other. As William E. Connolly explains, modernity was governed by “the drive for mastery,” by the will of the self to control and impose order upon the natural world, generating “otherness” as a category of all that differ from this perfectly ordered harmony between the self and the other:

They become dirt, matter out of place, irrationality, abnormality, waste, sickness, perversity, incapacity, disorder, madness, unfreedom. They become material in need of rationalization, normalization, moralization, correction, punishment, discipline, disposal, realization, etc. (13)

The development of Western epistemology in this sense is based upon the exigency to rationalize the production of otherness, which culminates with the Hegelian philosophy of world history. Hegel presupposes oneness of Being with God or the essence of humanity as destined to seek agreement with the absolute purpose of existence, and this cosmic dialectic toward ultimate harmony is to be realized in the arena of human history

during the modern period.² His is a utopic vision of humanity finally coming at home in the world, a perfect state of balance and harmony realized here in human history.

Problematically, however, the utopic vision of historical teleology becomes translated verbatim into human space where the attainment of all-inclusive agreement or the state of “freedom” entails the negation of otherness that often includes concrete objects, beings, and societies. Thus, in the epistemology of Western modernity, “the implicit purpose of human history is to eliminate otherness” and the “politics of inclusivity engenders the assimilation of otherness” (Connolly 87).

The Cold War politics appropriated the rationality of modern liberalism in seeking to regulate the postwar world by producing and assimilating otherness into the modern dialectics of “freedom” or the telos of progress as the “free market” system. The teleological notion of history in modern epistemology was streamlined into a social scientist “theory of modernization,” which pursued to synchronize the historical of human space onto a linear path of natural time. It was a spatializing conception of time to rationalize the distribution of societies in space, or as Anne McClintock has expounded, the modern imperialist “panoptic time” deployed across “anachronistic space” (36-40). Put another way, the modernization theory functioned as a hierarchizing logic of political power that ranked societies on “an evolutionary trajectory” of progressive time

² Hegel translates the dialectic of the subject into world history as the arena of the dialectic of the (world) spirit, in which the content of the ultimate end of the spirit is realized. World history “belongs to the realm of the spirit,” whose ultimate end – variously called the hidden “intention,” “God” or “the divine will,” “reason” or “the Idea” – is worked out in and actualized by man and “by dint of arduous labours” (85). The ultimate end of self-realization of the Idea is a thing in the realm of philosophy beyond human history, of the Absolute Idea beyond its manifestations in the objective world. The collapse of Communism testifies at best not so much the final actualization of the idea of freedom as another dialectical process of negation and sublation.

“according to their spatial distance from an empowering model” (Harootunian 40-41). According to Immanuel Wallerstein, moreover, the politics of inclusivity turns out a liberal compromise to counterbalance “the modernity of technology” with “the modernity of liberation” by appeasing the “dangerous classes” with suffrage, the welfare state, and national identity; and the Cold War rationality was liberalism writ global to persuade “the new dangerous classes” in the emergent Third World by offering the equivalents on a world scale: universal suffrage in the form of the UN membership, the welfare state through U.S.-sponsored modernization projects, and “free world” identity (471-81). The modernization theory was thus an ontology of the Cold War that sought to organize the postwar world upon the legacies of Western modernity, in particular, with America at the apogee of its developmentalist worldview. In effect, it identified the telos of development with that which the U.S. proposed to exemplify and the dialectic of history with a process of Americanization.

Modernization was in this sense a Cold War ideology of U.S. brand. It was a political apparatus to govern the Cold War chronotope by establishing imaginary relations of the “three worlds” over real conditions of the postwar geopolitics, and significantly, it also demonstrated a particular worldview of the U.S. as the manufacturer and administrator of the ideology – a Cold War global imaginary that was constitutive of and constructed by American national identity. As Michael E. Latham defines, modernization was “an ideology, a conceptual framework that articulated a common collection of assumptions about the nature of American society and its ability to transform a world perceived as both materially and culturally deficient” (5). Developed by an army of American social scientists during the 1950s, the modernization theory was more than

anything a foreign policy strategy for the U.S. to “win” the “hearts and minds” of Third World peoples, thereby to “win” the Cold War for the best of U.S. national interests, and as an articulation of national interests, it resonated with older constructions of American identity epitomized by Manifest Destiny. Diplomatic historians such as Walter LaFeber and William Appleman Williams have argued that America was at the outset an empire built with the conviction that America’s domestic welfare depends upon sustained overseas economic expansion as manifested from the Monroe Doctrine (1832) to the Frontier Thesis (1893), from Wilsonianism (1918) to the New Deal (1933-36) to the Cold War. In this vein, the modernization theory may be seen as a crystallization of the traditional Open Door Policy, “America’s version of the liberal policy of informal empire or free-trade imperialism” (W. A. Williams 97) or “American nationalist globalism” (Fousek 7). Put differently, the Cold War was America’s regime of global government with the spearhead ideology of modernization, which boiled down to a rearticulation of American national imaginaries.

As such, America’s national imaginaries in relation to real conditions of the world were descended from the Western tradition of teleological and inclusive epistemology, bred by the distinctly American sense of Manifest Destiny, and developed into the “nationalist global” identity under the circumstances of the Cold War. The American subject is a descendant of the European planetary subject who, as Mary Louise Pratt describes, strolls the globe as the benign scientist-civilian simultaneously “innocent and imperial,” asserting hegemony with no apparent coercive apparatus (33-34). He is a Cold War emissary of America’s “benevolent supremacy,” as Melani McAlister argues, presenting U.S. power as “inevitably global in its scope, benevolent in its intent, and

benign in its effect” (46). The self-presentation of the U.S. as simultaneously benevolent and hegemonic, moreover, resonated with the ideology of modernization in proposing the newly decolonizing Third World nations to develop or rather to grow up and mature under the tutelage of paternalistic America. In this sense, America’s Cold War imaginaries were constructed through an integrationist politics of what Leerom Medovoi calls “identitarian governmentality”: “the production of identity” – American national or “free world” – functioned as “the dialectical antithesis of containment,” offering “a rhetoric of liberation” to counterbalance “a rhetoric of repression” (50-51). In short, American national identity was constituted through a process of simultaneous differentiation from and absorption of otherness or, as Christina Klein defines, through the formation of contradictory global imaginaries of containment and integration by a logic of “Cold War Orientalism” (16-58).

American national imaginaries of the Cold War were then premised upon Orientalist representation of otherness or upon a systematic production of knowledge about the non-West, for which the modernization theory functioned as a Cold War variation of Orientalism. Edward Said’s definition of Orientalism is poignantly illustrative of the production and proliferation of the Cold War ideology: it entailed “a distribution of geopolitical awareness” into texts as a systematic “elaboration” of a series of “interests”; it was derived from a “will or intention” to “understand,” “control,” “manipulate,” and “incorporate” “what is manifestly different [...] world”; in sum, it was “a discourse that is [...] produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power” (12). American national identity is premised upon such exteriority, formed by distancing and differentiating itself from imaginative geography and history while

concomitantly absorbing and obliterating that otherness into the sameness of the self. The living complexity of the non-West is reduced into a trope of American national imaginary, “some aspect” that is almost like the U.S. but not quite the same – an excess. In Said’s example, Mohammed was like Jesus but not like him after all; he is the “imposter” of Jesus and Islam is “imposture” of Christianity, and since he is “the disseminator of a false Revelation,” he becomes “the epitome of lechery, debauchery, sodomy, and a whole battery of assorted treacheries” (67). In this sense, exteriority seems always already inside the self, as abjection – as elements of “impurity” that the self seeks to expunge in order to become a social being but can never completely erase, those excesses that haunt the edges of the self as a symptom of failed identity. The object is “something rejected from which one does not part” (Kristeva 4), simultaneously marking and disrupting the fluid demarcations of the self: “the expelled object haunts the subject as its inner constitutive boundary,” testifying to “society’s precarious hold over the fluid and unkempt aspects of psyche and body” (McClintock 71).

And it is often the trope of marriage that epitomizes the formation of the subject, unveiling in the process moments of crisis inherent in the inclusive politics of Western epistemology. The dialectic towards the attainment of harmony turns out nothing but a failed attempt to obliterate and silence the impure:

It is in the *historical* act that Hegel sees fundamental impurity being expended; as a matter of fact, the latter is a sexual impurity whose historical achievement consists in marriage. But – and this is where transcendental idealism, too, sadly comes to an end – here it is that desire (*Lust*), thus normalized in order to escape abject concupiscence (*Begierde*), sinks into a banality that is sadness and silence. (Kristeva 29)

Reabsorbed in marriage or into the dialectic of the Idea, “defilement” becomes the

negation of consciousness, that is, “lack of communication and speech,” “a border of discourse – a silence”; but marriage is at the same time a contradictory site where “the ghost of the sadness Hegel saw in sexual normalization” haunts from “the abyss of [...] silence” (Kristeva 30). The contradiction resides in the paradox of the family as “both the antithesis of history and history’s organizing figure”: the family is offered as a metaphor of organic history only by voiding history, as a figure of history yet existing organically beyond politics and history proper, thereby naturalizing social/global hierarchy within a putative unity of interests, and in short, as a trope to sanction “hierarchy within unity” with the “alibi of nature” (McClintock 44-45). In other words, the iconography of familial and domestic space is deployed to enact discourses of nation, nationalism, and national identity as organic, unified, and teleological by domesticating national history – that is, by naturalizing the panoptic evolutionary time of nation into the anachronistic synchronicity of familial space, by claiming history yet voiding it.

In thus proposing a transnational study of Cold War cultures, this dissertation takes as its problematic constitutive processes of national identities, both American and Korean, under the particular geopolitical conditions of the Cold War. Also, in taking as its object of analysis a series of cultural representations on the Korean War, it attempts to pay attention to intertwined aspects of culture, representation, and the Korean War itself. First, it focuses on culture in its broadest definition, encompassing not only tangible products of a culture but also an entire array of feelings, experiences, and ideologies, expressed or silenced within a society. Put another way, it approaches culture in terms of Raymond Williams’s concept of “a structure of feeling,” defined as “practical consciousness” that is “actually being lived” and different from “official consciousness”

or “what it is thought is being lived” (131). Culture is a site through which a structure of feeling is produced, proliferated, and practiced in everydayness, transplanting officially formulated meanings and values into affective relations of emotion and daily existence, thereby easing the tension the subject feels with received ideology, facilitating conscious and voluntary participation in what he or she “feels” meaningful and valuable, and eventually generating social and material effects in the forms of laws, policies and institutions. In this sense, culture is a contradictory site where “a cultural formation comes into contradiction with economic or political logics that try to refunction it for exploitation or domination” (Lowe and Lloyd 1). Second, this is an analytical project about representations, which presuppose exteriority to the real or the original, enact a series of significations as “representative” of the whole and thereby provide the consumer of representations with a set of perceptions or imaginaries about the represented. In approaching cultural products as representations, this project is primarily interested in the production of Cold War national imaginaries that function as a “cognitive map,” “that mental map of the social and global totality we all carry in our heads in variously garbled forms”; and as “spatial analogue” of Louis Althusser’s notion of ideology, it indicates the subject’s “imaginary” beliefs in relation to his or her “real” conditions (Jameson, “Cognitive Mapping” 162-63).

Finally, this dissertation places the Korean War at the center of examining politics of the Cold War, particularly, with respect to the production of national imaginaries. The Korean War is called in the U.S. as the “forgotten war” – an act of naming that denies meaning, a contradiction in terms that betrays a paradoxical impulse to claim a memory of the war by disclaiming the historicity of it. The Korean War, in other words, seems to

exist on the borders of American consciousness as abjection, and in this vein, cultural representations of the war shed interesting light on the formation of American national identity. Incorporated in the epistemology of marriage or into the cosmic dialectic of world history, particular histories of the Korean War within the geopolitical dynamics of the Cold War seem forgotten and pushed to the margins of U.S. national imaginaries. Also significantly, the Korean War is prominently configured in American popular imagination through the trope of marriage and the family, projecting the U.S. national subject as the white patriarch-imperialist whose panoptic appropriation of world history attempts to absorb its Asian exteriority into the static familial space of Manifest Destiny. By juxtaposing cultural representations of the Korean War from postwar Korean society, furthermore, this study strives to bring entangled formations of respective national identities into a transnational Cold War context. The postwar Korean society was a crucial formative site for Korean national identity, which emerged as a result of complex, contentious and contingent historical dynamics crystallized as clashes between tradition and Western modernity; and the construction of the national subject turned out premised upon the reproduction of the patriarchal economy of evolutionary national time appropriated through the marital and familial metaphor. Before moving on to specific analyses of cultural texts, a brief scrutiny of Cold War as well as Korean War histories would be due in an effort to better contextualize cultural representations within specific historical conditions.

1. The Cold War and the Politics of Inclusivity

The Korean War was pivotal for the formation and development of the Cold War,

especially for the U.S. to launch and consolidate the Cold War politics of containment and integration. For one thing, the war procured the U.S. a political economic rationale to implement NSC-68 and inaugurate military Keynesianism, thereby laying groundwork for a U.S. hegemonic world system; and for another, Korea functioned as an exteriority for the construction of American national imaginaries, facilitating the politics of inclusivity for the absorption of America's domestic and foreign others into teleological narratives such as Manifest Destiny, "benevolent imperialism" and modernization. The five-year period from the end of World War II to the outbreak of the Korean War witnessed escalating geopolitical tensions over the reconfiguration of a postwar world order. The Bretton Woods system was established in 1944 to rebuild war-torn Europe, to develop newly emerging nations, and to rest the postwar economic system on gold and the U.S. dollar, but it was challenged by the Soviet refusal to join. As tensions mounted between the two major powers, George Kennan's famous "Long Telegram" came out in February 1946 vilifying the Soviet Union, which was followed by Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech later in the same year and crystallized into the Truman Doctrine of February 1947 and the Marshall Plan (1948-1952). NSC-20/4 came into being in November 1948 as the definitive statement of American foreign policy while the Soviet responded with the Berlin blockade from June 1948 to May 1949; and NSC-68 followed in 1950 consolidating American Cold War foreign policy with a specific proposal for the increase of military budget by four times from \$13 billion to \$50 billion, partly in direct reaction to such "shockers" of 1949 as the Soviet detonation of A-bomb and the Communist Revolution in China. The Korean War (1950-1953) was timely and decisive for the approval and launching of NSC-68, inaugurating an era of global militarization

and a full-scale Cold War.³

Indeed, NSC-68 was a crystallization of American foreign policy, for the ultimate implementation of which the Korean War played a decisive role. Following President Truman's Directive in January 31, 1950 to reexamine U.S. strategic plans, it was first completed in April, but it was not until December when Truman called upon the implementation of NSC-68's strategy of global containment, issuing Presidential Proclamation 2914 and declaring a state of national emergency. The Korean War broke out on June 25, 1950 and the crisis deepened as the UN forces crossed the 38th parallel to the North and drew the Chinese into the war in November, resulting in the declaration of a state of emergency in the U.S. on December 15. The gist of NSC-68 was its call for massive military spending along with tax increases and welfare spending cuts, for which an international emergency was required to get the money from the Congress, and it was Korea that "came along and saved [them]" (Acheson, qtd. in McCormick 98). Largely rearticulating NSC-20/4 and written by Paul Nitze, who replaced Kennan as Director of Policy Planning Staff, NSC-68 made "containment" official American foreign policy, unveiling concomitantly a whole battery of American ideologies it entails. It defines the nature of the Cold War as a Manichean conflict between "the idea of freedom" and "the idea of slavery"; in order to maintain a "free society" or "a market for free trade in ideas," it proposes to build American military and economic might, to establish a "functioning political and economic system in the free world," and to promote "a fundamental change" in the Soviet system; and in order to achieve these objectives, it calls for an effort "to

³ For the historical outline of the Cold War, see LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1996*.

change the world situation by means short of war” (NSC-68, 40-45). These statements translate in the realm of *Realpolitik* into propositions to militarize American foreign policy, to launch “military Keynesianism” by supporting military industry and military foreign aid, and to rebuild and integrate Germany and Japan into a European economic-military unit and a Pacific Rim regional entity respectively while simultaneously integrating the Third World periphery and semi-periphery into the industrial cores. In this sense, the Cold War reshaped the world according to the logic of preponderant U.S. political, economic and military power, and the Korean War “helped make it all seem a possibility – the great facilitator, the Korean connection” (McCormick 106).

As a brainchild of Kennan, the language of NSC-68 does not veer much from that of its progenitor and frames national interests through a rhetorical claim of America’s moral superiority over the Soviet Union. In the Orientalist language, it differentiates America from the imaginary terrain of its own representation of Russia, thereby producing otherness as the premise of American identity. For Kennan, Russia – collapsed with the “Orient” – is an authoritarian and expansionist fanatic that calls for containment and ultimately assimilation: the “Russian or the oriental mind” is “insecure,” “fierce” and “jealous,” finding it “natural” to “move constantly” toward “a given goal” until it “has filled every nook and cranny available to it in the basin of world power” (118). Against such a formidable foe, he proposes “a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies” (119) until such tendencies find their outlet “in either the break-up or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power” (127). Reminiscent of Kennan’s sensational imagery, NSC-68 defines Russia as a “slave society” antipathetic to “freedom,” therefore opting for “the iron curtain, the isolation, the

autarchy” of its society and obsessed with the attainment of “absolute power” primarily by securing “the domination of the Eurasian land mass” (39-41). The United States, in contrast, is claimed as the champion of the “free society” and “the bulwark of opposition to Soviet expansion” whose moral authority allegedly resides in nothing less than the exceptional founding of the nation ordained by “Divine Providence”:

Our determination to maintain the essential elements of individual freedom, as set forth in the Constitution and Bill of Rights; our determination to create conditions under which our free and democratic system can live and prosper; and our determination to fight if necessary to defend our way of life, for which as in the Declaration of Independence, “with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.” (39)

Thus, the root of American Cold War foreign policy goes deep into the ideological bedrock of the national foundation – the national imaginary of Manifest Destiny in the tradition of modern Western epistemology. The concrete realm of Cold War geopolitics with conflicting national interests is transformed into imaginary geography predominated by moral struggles, and American interests are overlaid with the mythic language of national origins and identities by producing and simultaneously proposing to incorporate non-Western exteriority.

Early historiography of the Cold War was in general a reproduction of Kennan’s thesis, zeroing in on the paranoid nature of Soviet Communism, but later revisionist historians paid more attention to political economic factors in the Manichean worldview and the nature of American national interests in the manifest logic of containment and integration. The central concern of national interests came down to the question of securing natural resources and markets, triggering a series of U.S. initiatives to mold an international system in compliance with the imperatives of expansionist entrepreneurial

capitalism. According to Melvyn P. Leffler, the core of national interests depended on securing American access to Eurasian raw materials and viable European markets, and in fact, American national security was defined not so much in response to direct Soviet threats as it was formulated to safeguard American strategic and economic interests in the Eurasian landmass against Soviet domination.⁴ In other words, the definition of American national security was dependent upon political economic conditions of Eurasia and Europe, mandating American interventions with nationalist uprisings in the Third World and the wobbly economy of Europe in order to keep the regions out of Soviet penetration. Thus, the Manichean worldview of NSC-68 entailed specific military and economic programs to contain and integrate America's others into a global open market system. In particular, the Marshall Plan, also known as the European Recovery Program, presupposed the inclusion of the Third World, linking the U.S. and Europe to a particular model of development in the underdeveloped world. Triggered by the dollar gap crisis, the program was based on a triangular trade model, in which the newly liberated former European colonies would provide the market for European goods with dollars earned by exporting raw materials to the U.S. while those dollars would eventually flow into the Europeans who would buy American industrial products.⁵ In Asia, NSC-48/1, "the NSC-68 for Asia," instituted the same triangular trade with Japan as America's Pacific Europe and Southeast Asia as Japan's hinterland.⁶

Thus, the stake of the Cold War involved a lot more than the moral crusade set out

⁴ Melvyn P. Leffler, "National Security and US Foreign Policy" in Leffler and Painter 15-52.

⁵ Robert E. Wood, "From the Marshall Plan to the Third World" in Leffler and Painter 201-14.

⁶ Bruce Cumings, "Japan and the Asian Periphery" in Leffler and Painter 215-35.

in NSC-68; rather it concerned the control of political economic interests in the tumultuous postwar world where the containment of Soviet Communism meant nothing but the protection of American interests primarily by incorporating the non-Western others in Asia, Africa, and Latin America into America's Open Door. American interests in Asia, in particular, began early in the mid-nineteenth century, coveting the "China market" and adopting Open Door as official foreign policy with Secretary of State John Hay's famous "notes" in 1899.⁷ With the onset of the Cold War, Asia came to be incorporated into the American system of knowledge as the object of the modernization theory and as academic disciplines of social science from "area studies" to "Pacific Rim" discourse to "international studies," in which knowledge of Asia was produced for strategic purposes on behalf of American national interests:

[T]he ultimate force shaping scholarly studies of what used to be called 'the non-Western world' is economic and political power; this power is concentrated in the central state, but the most interesting effects of such power [...] reside in those local points or 'ultimate destinations' where power 'becomes capillary,' such as universities and academic departments and the organizations that mediate between academe and the foundations. (Cumings, *Parallax Visions* 174)

According to Bruce Cumings, East Asian studies began with the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) founded in 1943, in which Orientalists and social scientists developed the modernization theory as a means for gauging countries and cultures from Japan as "a success story" to China as "a pathological example of abortive development" (176). Then the "Pacific Rim" discourse emerged in the mid-1970s as a new inventory for Asian "miracle" economies in Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. Finally, as

⁷ See LaFeber's *The American Age* for the early history of American foreign policy in Asia as well as for the entire American history as that of expansionism.

globalization accelerated and the source of power shifted from the state to transnational corporations in the 1990s, “areas” collapsed into borderless “international studies.” In this way, “Asia” or the “Asia-Pacific” or the “Pacific Rim” was produced as an abstract concept, as a “U.S. global imaginary” (Connery 31). “The Pacific” was “invented” as it was conceptualized in terms of “a Euro-American global vision” informed by “the nascent capitalist order” (Dirlik 66).

If the Korean War played a decisive role in the development and implementation of NSC-68, facilitating the incorporation of Asia into the global imaginary of a “free” world, it also functioned as a crucial arena through which domestic politics were negotiated for the integration of America’s internal others into the national imaginary of Manifest Destiny. Specifically, Korea served as an international theater to stage a first meaningful step towards civil rights reforms. Pressed both from internal demands for equality and from a scrutinizing eye of the international community, President Truman issued Executive Order 9981 in 1948, demanding “equality of treatment and opportunity in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin” (qtd. in Dudziak 86), but the meaningful racial desegregation in the army came later during the Korean War largely because of desperate personnel shortages.⁸ Moreover, Korea functioned as the homogenized foreign body, onto which were displaced shifting (mis)fortunes of U.S. racial minorities as well as domestic racial tensions. Reflecting the conflicting stereotypes of Asian Americans both as the “Yellow Peril” and as the “model minority,” the Chinese and the Japanese switched their roles from allies to enemies and

⁸ Mary L. Dudziak sarcastically remarks, “Equality in service meant equality in death. The casualties of the Korean War would achieve the democracy at last” (88).

vice versa as historical circumstances dictated from one war to another; while North and South Koreans were collapsed with the Chinese and relegated into a monolithic category of “gooks” as the “treacherous enemy in ambush,” evoking the early memory of Indian warfare in frontier narrative.⁹ Most of all, it was rampant anti-Communism that was deployed as *the* ideology of Cold War America to contain and integrate domestic social minorities in terms of class, race, gender, sexuality, and so on. Closely following the intensifying Red Scare from the Hollywood Ten (1947-48) to Alger Hiss (1948-50) and coinciding with McCarthyism (1950-54) and the Rosenberg trial (1951-53), the Korean War arrived at the height of anti-Communist hysteria, helping to rally even labor and civil rights activists under the banner of national security.

Under the national security regime, anti-Communism proliferated as *the* exteriority to American national identity, as the ideological apparatus to contain/integrate internal others within national boundaries. Robert G. Lee argues that domestic politics were haunted by the Red, Black and White menaces, and that the promotion of Asian Americans as a “model minority” provided a convenient site to displace and contain these menaces by integrating labor discontents through the Fordist compromise, demands for racial equalities through liberal discourses of ethnic assimilation, and sexual liberation movements through the proliferation of the heterosexual nuclear family as the primary social unit. It might be added that the model minority myth was produced against the

⁹ Tom Engelhardt argues that American culture is built on a national narrative of triumph or “victory culture,” which emerged along the history of “reversals” between “us” and “enemy-ness,” between individual human beings and inhuman masses. It began with captivity narratives during the early settlement period. The already inhabited land was transformed into an “empty” land, a “virgin” soil, and the Indians were made “peripheral” to “our” “settled” land, “invaders” on “our new Jerusalem.” See Engelhardt 3-65; and regarding the shifting racial epithets about Asians during the Korean War, see Borstelmann 64-81.

Yellow Peril in the intensity of the Korean War, constructing the Cold War regime of national security through the dual politics of negation and inclusion. Egalitarian aspirations of American social movements became co-opted by the narrative of national security as George Lipsitz and Penny M. von Eschen illustrate the ways in which labor and racial struggles respectively became bureaucratized by jumping on the national bandwagon of anti-Communism.¹⁰ While Elaine Tyler May amply showcases the displacement of national security onto the “home front” to contain the “White” menace, Joanne Meyerowitz examines how the women’s movement and the movement for sexual freedom of the 1950s adopted Cold War language of domestic containment and used it to promote their demands for gender equity and sexual freedom.¹¹ As such, the Cold War

¹⁰ George Lipsitz illustrates that workers won power over their lives and private/public spaces by means of direct-action protests and mass mobilizations, but with the Cold War, labor organizations became bureaucratized as their leaders made wage concessions with managements in return for uninterrupted production. Nevertheless, he argues that the legacies of postwar working-class resistances and memories of class solidarity continued through civil rights movements, black power and women’s movements, and various counter-community formations.

Also, according to Von Eschen, the politics of the African diaspora emerged throughout the late 1930s to the mid-1940s with a vision of global democracy and took a unified/universalist stand against the worldwide imperialist oppression of persons of color. However, with the onset of the Truman Doctrine and the Cold War, anticolonial alliances espoused instead “anti-Communist anticolonialism,” arguing that “the abuses of colonialism opened the doors to Communists and that it was imperative that Asia and Africa remain in the Western orbit” (109). African American leaders seized anti-Communism as opportunities to argue that antidiscrimination measures were necessary for the U.S. in its struggle against Communism and also to carve out a space in the Truman administration to influence domestic civil rights. As a consequence of conniving at expanding U.S. Empire in favor of domestic political and civil rights, the U.S. economy was militarized to finance wars in Asia, Africa, and Latin America and skewed investment toward high-tech military industrial needs, which took away investments on social services and basic industrial infrastructure: “in a cruel irony, as the inequitable social relations of empire came back home, these processes eventually eroded the industrial and public sectors where African American workers had made significant gains” (187).

¹¹ In her study on the American middle-class families during the Cold War, May elucidates that the logic of containment/integration was epitomized in the self-contained nuclear family, cushioned with the abundance of consumer goods, nested in the “appliance-laden ranch-style home” (19), and secured within the boundaries of hetero-normative marriage. The “national security” was translated as secure jobs, secure homes, and secure marriages. The containment of

was on many fronts ranging from the political, economic and military maneuvering for an integrated world system to the racial/sexual policing of the body politic within the boundaries of the national security state. But the politics of inclusivity produces abjection, the sites of sadness and silence that haunt the borders of the normalization process.

2. Remembering the “Forgotten” War: A Brief Historiography of the Korean War

The Korean War is usually represented as a developmental narrative with a singular origin on June 25, 1950, when the war broke out with North Korea’s invasion of South Korea, undergoing a series of retreats and successful counterattacks and ending with the armistice on July 27, 1953. In U.S. historical and popular literatures, it is often depicted as a linear progress of events around a number of political personages or as a case to vindicate liberal causes for public support. For example, the war is accounted as a progression from U.S. intervention to the accomplishment of the mission to rescue the

the atom bomb and Communism was paralleled with the containment of “decadent,” “deviant,” and “dangerous” sexuality outside regulative boundaries of home and heterosexual marriage. The fear of Communism and nuclear warfare was “tamed” or “domesticated” within a wholesome family life in the suburb, functioning as a “bulwark” against the new “decadent” developments such as sexual liberalism, women’s emancipation, and consumerism (20-23). Women, specifically sexually frustrated moms, were blamed as responsible for weak passive sons and “pervert” homosexuals, the main cause for softening the “moral fiber” of national strength. In sum, overbearing moms, independent women, and homosexuals were to be contained as dangerous social cracks and conduits for Communist infiltration into the healthy national body.

Meyerowitz on the other hand proposes to explore a site of resistance to sexual containment, considering that the exclusive focus on “conservatism-and-constraints” might erase the complex history of competing voices and internal contradictions while downplaying women’s agency (4). As she concludes, sexual movements of the 1950s “reinscribed the ideology of the Cold War as they attempted to carve out respectable oppositional niches on gender and sexuality” (117).¹¹ Although she does not seem troubled by the absence of these movements’ critical grasp of the Cold War, the promotion of certain group interests/rights by underwriting the problematic ideology is as much a subscription to “liberal social change” as a symptom of co-optation as von Eschen illuminates above.

endangered nation. Despite the material and psychological hardships, the American soldiers would fight with courage and moral conscience in order to deliver South Korea from Communist North Korea. And General MacArthur, a heroic warrior-leader, would launch a string of ingenious maneuvers and finally “[hand] over the city [Seoul] to a grateful President Rhee” (Thomson, et al. 243).

The war, however, was more than a site of heroic narrative; rather it was an outcome of tangled strands of multiple historical forces from the division of Korea in August 1945 by the U.S. and the Soviet Union to the geopolitical power dynamics in the region to intra-national conflicts. Conveniently pushed aside and forgotten is the fact that both South and North Korea pursued a reunification by force throughout the late 1940s including persistent guerrilla warfare by thousands of partisans in the South and a series of border fighting culminating in 1949. Both Syngman Rhee and Kim Il-sung wanted to start a war of reunification, but were deterred by the disapprovals of their respective allies in the U.S. and Russia. It was Kim who finally seized a chance to put into action by gaining momentum from the success of 1949 Chinese Revolution and securing Chinese support for the war. It is often neglected that the UN forces also crossed the 38th parallel into the North after recovering Seoul, thus shifting from the war of containment to that of “rollback.” The war also came close to the brink of using atomic weapons as MacArthur later boastfully testified that he could have won the war in ten days if he had had dropped “between 30 and 50 atomic bombs [...] strung across the neck of Manchuria” (qtd. in Cumings, *Korea's Place* 291). Atrocities and destructions are frequently underplayed. North Korea was massively bombed with napalm leveling the region practically “off the map.” Thousands were massacred and placed in mass graves as the North and the South

alternated occupations and as both guerrillas and civilians were collapsed by foreign forces into indistinguishable “gooks,” somehow subhuman and dispensable.¹²

Ironically, the Korean War is *remembered* as a “forgotten war,” the naming that inadvertently reveals the structuring of official memory upon what has been silenced. In fact, as Paul M. Edwards says, the war has been “identified in so many ways that it is possible to argue that it has never been identified at all”: it was called the “forgotten war,” “the war nobody wanted,” “Mr. Truman’s folly,” the “wrong war,” the “Communist war,” the “Asian war,” the “unknown war,” the “emphatic War,” the “war that never was,” the “war before Vietnam,” and Edwards himself suggests, “the ignored war” (*To Acknowledge a War* 28). Interestingly, most of these are epithets of negation, betraying certain subconscious acknowledgement of contradiction in the naming of the war. Edwards suggests that it was the lack of a name – a “nonwar” definition that paradoxically enabled the war: by identifying America’s military involvement in Korea as a “police action,” President Truman was able to deploy U.S. troops to Korea without the approval of Congress and without declaring war (*To Acknowledge a War* 29). Hence, the Korean War was a war and at the same time not a war whose historicity is made visible by virtue of being invisible, present in its marked erasure. The paradoxical denial-as-acknowledgement is symptomatic of contradictions in identifying the war. It was an international war involving China, Russia, the United States and UN forces comprised of sixteen nations while simultaneously it was a civil war, a national liberation war, and a war of reunification for Korea, which was divided in 1945 as part of post-World War II

¹² For an extended history of the Korean War, see Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun* 237-98 as well as his two-volume epic, *The Origins of the Korean War*.

settlements between the U.S. and Russia. As a “proxy war” consolidating the Cold War, it was hailed in America as a “good war” fought to defend “free” society, but soon it turned out an “ugly war” where Korean civilians were held hostage by porous boundaries between the friend and the enemy, often reduced as subhuman, and massacred. The war was represented as a moral crusade for containment of Soviet threats, but it was also an imperialist war of integrating Asia for American national interests.

Such contradictions in the identification of the war are manifested in the historiography of the Korean War, in which the primary focus has been on the question of “who started the war and why, thus who is to blame?” showcasing characteristic confusions about the war’s origins, motivations and effects. Orthodoxist historians, such as Thomson and others quoted above, hold the customary view that it was a “good war” to defend freedom and democracy breached by the surprise attack from the North. Revisionists, on the other hand, question the traditional unilateralist standpoint, paying attention to a broad range of multilateral factors from U.S. policies to possible concerns on the Communist sides to tumultuous Korean domestic conditions. They tend to view that the North’s initiation of the attack was largely provoked by a set of conspiratorial foreign policies choreographed by the U.S., who needed an international crisis to serve American national interests, especially, by launching NSC-68. Among the revisionist critics, Bruce Cumings argues that the war was a revolutionary civil war which began not on June 25, 1950 but with the forceful division of the peninsula in August 1945 while others, particularly William J. Stueck, puts more emphasis on international contexts,

weighing Stalin's calculations over Kim Il Sung's assertiveness.¹³ The opening of Soviet archives in 1991 shed more light on long contemplated causes of the war: it was Stalin's final approval in May 1950 that enabled Kim to invade South Korea. More importantly, it was the changing international environment that led Stalin, who rejected Kim's request in March 1949, to change his mind in early 1950: namely, changes in geopolitical dynamics with the Soviet possession of the atomic bomb as well as with the formation of the Soviet-Chinese alliance following the victory of the Chinese Communist Party, and Stalin's assumption that the U.S. would not intervene if the North invaded, judging from Secretary of State Dean Acheson's National Press Club speech on January 12, 1950, which famously left the Korean peninsula out of the U.S. defense perimeter.¹⁴

As such, the representation of the Korean War as a moral crusade in American national imaginary comes in contradiction with the real conditions of Cold War *Realpolitik*: a war of "benevolent supremacy" to "liberate" Koreans from the threat of Communist "enslavement" turned out an imperialist war of conflicting national interests waged to build an integrated system of world free trade; besides, for most Koreans, it was more than anything a people's war – a fratricidal war of mutual cruelties and massacres. The seed of a war in the Korean peninsula was sown as early as 1943 when President Roosevelt suggested a multilateral trusteeship for Korea at the Cairo Conference where the Allied powers convened to discuss post-World War II settlements: Korea was to be held in trust by the four powers of the U.S., Great Britain, China, and the Soviet Union until it was deemed ready for self-government: "Korea shall become free and

¹³ For an introduction to Korean War historiography, see Hyun In-taek as well as Edwards's *To Acknowledge a War*.

¹⁴ Weathersby 65-66.

independent,” but “in due course” (qtd. in Cumings, *Origins* Vol. 1, 106). The trusteeship idea was proposed again in Yalta on February 8, 1945 and in Potsdam on July 22, 1945, but it was never materialized due to Roosevelt’s sudden death in April 1945 and a quick close of the Pacific War by the dropping of atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 1945. In a sweeping turn of events during that short period of time, Korea was partitioned instead at the 38th Parallel and the Soviet army entered the North while American forces began the occupation of the South, which lasted until August 15, 1948. As Cumings argues, the trusteeship concept was “a quintessential Rooseveltian imperialism,” “a grand design for a new world order” according to the American liberal vision with roots in the Open Door policy, an expansionism “that flowed freely, filled vacuums, abhorred obstacles, rejected the concept of a world divided into isolated spheres” (*Origins* Vol. 1, 103); it was a Rooseveltian containment policy that “embraced and enrolled the adversary in mutually beneficial relationships” (*Origins* Vol. 1, 130). Put another way, Rooseveltian liberalism was the epitome of “benevolent supremacy,” which promoted the U.S. as the champion of self-determination in opposition to old-world territorial colonialism, providing the paternalistic tutelage for colonized peoples while ignoring their impatience for independence.

Moreover, the trusteeship debate played a central role in determining future contours of the Korean domestic political terrain by consolidating the division and proliferating anti-Communism in the South as the paranoid basis of nation building, whose effects continue to be ferocious until today. A multilateral trusteeship was proposed again in Moscow on December 16, 1945 and the Moscow accords included provisions for a four-power trusteeship for Korea for up to five years. A nationwide

antitrusteeship movement emerged led by Kim Ku and leaders of the Korean People's Republic (KPR), which was declared on September 6, 1945 by the Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence (CPKI). However, under the manipulation of John R. Hodge, Commanding General of the United States Military Government in Korea, these leaders became presented to the Korean public as pro-Soviet advocates of trusteeship while the U.S., the proponent of trusteeship, was portrayed as the opponent of the idea. In the process, the Korean Democratic Party (KDP), formed on September 16, 1945 in opposition to the KPR by a group of former pro-Japanese collaborators who desperately clung to America and anti-Communism as their lifeline, became reinstated into power. As Hodge later put it, "it became so that trusteeship, Russian control, and communism are all synonymous" (qtd. in Cumings, *Origins* Vol. 1, 225).¹⁵ Thus, the trusteeship proposal for Korea showcases the underlying rationale of benevolent imperialism, anticipating a war stricken by historical ruptures and virulent animosities. The tutelary politics of inclusivity begets the violent silencing of resistant voices and the concomitant appropriation of the colonized others for the promotion of imperial America's national interests by distorting and manipulating developments of history.

The resultant war was a composite outcome of such ironic turns of events, skewing the prospect of building a democratic civil society towards dictatorships which maneuvered upon collective paranoia of anti-Communism. To date, South Korea commemorates June 25, 1950 as the anniversary of the Korean War rather than the truce date of July 27, 1953, blaming the North as solely responsible for the war and thereby amplifying hatred for North Korean Communism for the purpose of perpetuating

¹⁵ Regarding the trusteeship issue, see Cumings, *Origins* Vol. 1, 101-78.

oppressive regimes.¹⁶ But the official mythology of the Korean War as an anti-Communist crusade is premised upon the denied memories and experiences of the Korean people whose lives were ravaged by inexplicable mutual animosities and horrendous cruelties of war. The Korean War began in 1945 when the national partition intensified ambiguities in drawing the boundary between “friends” and “enemies”: for a short time in August and September of 1945, Koreans changed from “liberated” and “semi-friendly” people to “mobs,” “Communist revolutionaries” and “quasi-enemies,” getting the military occupation designed for Japan while Japan transformed from the “Yellow Peril” to “friends” (Cumings, *Origins* Vol. 1, 126-29). The American Military Government’s reinstatement of former collaborators with Imperial Japan, now armed with virulent anti-Communism, further aggravated the division among the Korean people, which was to crystallize into a series of rebellions, guerrilla insurgencies, and concomitant bloody suppressions by the Republic of Korean Army and rightist paramilitary youth groups: by 1950, more than 100,000 Koreans were already killed and about 20,000 suspected Communists were in jail in the South. Besides, hundreds and thousands of civilians were massacred in deadly scrambles of the initial few months at the outbreak of war: about 200,000 members of the infamous National Guidance League (Bodoyeonmaeng) were killed and buried in mass graves from July to August, 1950; the U.S. Eighth Army joined in mass civilian killings by shooting into crowds of refugees, strafing and blotting out entire villages under the military rationale that civilian refugees were indistinguishable from North Korean enemy soldiers in disguise; and the ROK soldiers had their share of killings in state-sponsored “reprisals” when they recovered

¹⁶ Kim Dong-choon, *War and Society* 65-83.

Seoul in September 1950 as well as later in massive campaigns for “exterminating” guerrillas remaining in the South. At the close of the war, more than two million civilians were estimated dead, more than a million Chinese were killed and about 37,000 U.S. soldiers killed or missing while North Korea lost more than 12 percent of its population.¹⁷

As such, this dissertation aims to analyze the contradictory ways in which the Korean War has been remembered as forgotten, represented in cultural terrains as the silenced exteriority to the constitution of imagined communities – in Pierre Macherey’s words: “that radical otherness from which the object acquires an identity, that initial difference which limits and produces all reality, that constitutive absence which is behind the work” (150). It strives to approach the cultural text not in search of some hidden meaning buried inside – “a presence or an interiority”; rather it seeks “a structuration,” that is, to analyze and constitute a structure of the work, which exists “by its determinate absences, by what it does not say, in its relation to what it is not” (Macherey 154). Put another way, it attempts to probe the ways in which cultural representations on the Korean War are articulated in relation to the particular reality of the Cold War, to “that intricate reality in which men – both writers and readers – live, that reality which is *their ideology*” (Macherey 155). Such an analysis involves a politics of “ghostly comparisons” that pays attention to the “ghosts of a surviving past,” coexisting with “the new in everyday life” as uneven temporalities, haunting and disturbing the stable boundaries of past and present, self and other, domestic and foreign (Harootunian 47). It is an endeavor

¹⁷ For genocidal aspects of the Korean War, see Kim Dong-choon’s two articles in English as well as his book in Korean, *War and Society*.

to investigate the specters of the Korean War in the everydayness of Now – history “filled by the presence of the now” (Benjamin 261), where “the shadows of another life constantly act upon and are acted upon by the ever new, the modern” (Harootunian 49).

In the first two chapters, I put the Cold War in American historical context. In this introductory chapter, I tried to locate the rationale of American Cold War politics within the Western epistemological tradition as well as within specific postwar historical conditions. I argued that the Cold War was America’s regime of global government by rationalizing the distribution of societies according to the hierarchizing logic of Western teleology with the U.S. at the apogee of development. As America’s system, the Cold War was also an arena in which American national identity was constituted through a process of simultaneous differentiation from and inclusion of otherness. The Korean War paved the way for the U.S. to launch and consolidate the Cold War by providing the U.S. with a political economic rationale to implement NSC-68 and inaugurate military Keynesianism. Moreover, it functioned as an exteriority for the construction of American national imaginaries, facilitating the politics of inclusivity for the absorption of America’s domestic and foreign others into teleological narratives such as Manifest Destiny, “benevolent imperialism” and modernization. The second chapter investigates Cold War liberalism as the dominant ideology of fifties America, which re-visioned the national imaginary of Manifest Destiny through a discursive integration of racial, sexual and national others while the juxtaposition of John Okada’s 1957 novel *No-No Boy* unveils inherent ambiguities in the logic of inclusivity. I examine Cold War consensus liberalism manifested in the American intellectual tradition, taking note of the ways in which they attempt to reclaim patriarchal authority both in literary and political domains through the

representational economy of interracial male bonding. Okada's novel as both an exemplary text of Cold War liberalism and a product of Asian American culture offers an alternative perspective on narrating Cold War minority integration into American national imaginary, complicating the white masculinist vision of benevolent liberalism from the marginalized position of the racial other.

Next two chapters focus on American popular representations of the Korean War, including William Styron's *The Long March* (1952) and David Douglas Duncan's photo-essay *This Is War!* (1951) in Chapter III, and several Hollywood Korean War films such as *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* (1955) and *Battle Hymn* (1957) in Chapter IV. These chapters explore how American nationalism merged with the Cold War global imaginary of "benevolent supremacy," and how this brand of Cold War Americanism was premised upon the recuperation of white masculinity through the representational incorporation of Cold War otherness into the metaphoric regime of marriage and the family. The Korean War was frequently represented in American popular imagination through a trope of marriage, but this image of domestic alliance was haunted by a sense of anxiety – a contradictory image of love plagued with a threat of death. Through critical analysis of texts, photographs and films, I argue that Korea functioned not only as an imaginary geography through which the Cold War politics of inclusivity were "domesticated" or translated into vernacular structures of feeling, but also it constituted "a terra incognita" of American national imaginary ridden with manifest anxieties that derive from the cultural malaise of the contemporary society and the repressed memory of nation-building violence. Both Styron and Duncan propose to integrate domestic and foreign others into a sweeping universal vision of "civilization," but it turns out that they attempt

to reclaim American national imaginary through a recuperation of white masculinity. Similarly, both Hollywood Korean War films represent the Korea-U.S. relationship in the domestic imagery of marriage and familial-filial relationship, subsuming Asian others into the white patriarchal adoptive family of “benevolent imperialism” through a self-justifying economy of empathic sentimentality.

Finally, in chapters five and six, I put the Korean War in transnational and transhistorical perspective. Chapter V shifts attention to the 1950s Korean society and the ways in which modern Korea was constructed in the transnational turmoil of war, Cold War ideology, Western modernity and colonial legacies by scrutinizing South Korean films such as *Hell Flower* (1958) and *The Stray Bullet* (1961); while Chapter VI juxtaposes the original Hollywood film *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962) with the 2004 remake as an occasion to ponder upon (dis)continuities of history from the Korean War to the Gulf War. Chapter V examines the formation of Korean modernity upon the two ideological pillars of the Cold War – modernization and anti-Communism, constituting the content of modern Korean nationalism or the national identity with which the Korean people were interpellated to identify as national subjects. Through analysis of the two contemporary Korean films, I argue that modern Korea was built on the ambivalent critical terrain of Korean modernity by simultaneously (dis)claiming the (dis)continuity of tradition/modernity: Korean men disidentify with nation/tradition as well as with Western modernity only to reclaim the teleological continuity of national history in the linear temporal path from tradition to modernity while in the process they attempt to resolve the contradictions inherent in the (neo-)colonial nature of Korean modernity by fetishizing, chastising, and ultimately integrating the female other into the order of

modern patriarchy. Finally, Chapter VI contemplates upon the continuing impacts of the Cold War upon the current post-Cold War manifestations of global violence. I argue that both versions of *The Manchurian Candidate* may be read as nostalgia films in that they relegate the historical events of the Korean War and the Gulf War into floating background images as the sexualized/feminized Asian other or as the vilified Arab “enemy.” As a result, specific histories from Korea to Iraq become silenced while simultaneously represented through popular clichés of Red Queens, Yellow Perils and “fanatic” suicide bombers, replacing history with nostalgia for home – the mythic Virgin Land of the American national imaginary. I conclude that the millenarian dream of utopia is haunted by the anxiety about doom as the desire for home stumbles upon repressed un-homely presences, upon the paradoxical impulse to remember by forgetting.

II. Cold War Liberalism, Masculinity, and Race in the American 1950s:

John Okada's *No-No Boy* in the Shadow of Manifest Destiny

In the United States, the 1950s was hailed as a time that would realize the visions of modernity with technological advancement finally liberating humanity from the shackles of oppression, but its optimism turned out riddled with great unease and apprehension about the same tenets of modernity – technology and liberation. War and technological innovation brought unprecedented wealth to American society as the mass production technique of Henry Ford's Model T was brought to the everyday intimacies of housing and food-preparation: suburban ranch houses in Levittowns equipped with consumer goods, fast food joints, and posh cars as a new status symbol.¹⁸ The glitz of abundance was, however, brought along with traumatic memories of the recent war of holocausts and nuclear mega deaths, blighting the zeitgeist with a sense of anxiety and consolidating a national security state upon the military-industrial complex.¹⁹ The fifties also witnessed a global wave of liberation from decolonization of Asia, Africa, and Latin America to the racial desegregation in the American military during the Korean War to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in May 1954, but it was simultaneously an era of the 1955 murder of Emmett Till in the Jim Crow South and America's covert operations abroad against national liberation movements in Iran, Guatemala, and Vietnam as well as direct military involvement in Korea. American culture of the fifties was

¹⁸ Halberstam 122-27, 132-33, 157-58.

¹⁹ Regarding the formation of the Cold War "gunbelt," see Ann Markusen, "Cold War Workers, Cold War Communities" in Kuznick and Gilbert 35-60.

imbued with such contradictory tendencies – optimism and anxiety, liberatory aspiration and counter-liberatory reactionism, integrationist impulse and containment politics.

As illustrated in Introduction of this dissertation, American foreign policy of this period was characterized by the integrationist imperative to “win” the emerging Third World for the West-North sphere of free market capitalism in the world divided up along the East-West as well as North-South axes. Corollary to the postwar global realignment, American society was undergoing a sea change in social relations of race, class, gender, and sexuality, and in the concomitant conception of national identity and citizenship. As Thomas Borstelmann has argued, the transformation of American society, especially with respect to its history of slavery and racism, was impelled in large part by international political conditions such as Third-World national liberation movements against Western colonial powers as well as the Second World War in which the U.S. was supposed to fight against racist Nazism while its own practice of racial segregation in the Deep South came under international scrutiny. The yawning chasm of contradiction in fighting the anti-racist and anti-colonial “good war” on the one hand and maintaining de facto slavery in its own soil while incarcerating 120,000 Americans of Japanese descent in concentration camps on the other hand was in fact a driving force, or rather America’s “Achilles’ heel before the world” (Henry Cabot Lodge, qtd. in Borstelmann 76), behind a series of legal reforms for racial integration: from President Truman’s 1948 executive order banning racial discrimination in the U.S. armed forces to the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act ending the ban on the naturalization of Asian Americans, from the 1954 declaration of racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Hart-Celler Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965.

The intellectual climate of the Cold War took shape in this changing domestic and international milieu of political, economic, and social integration. Disillusioned with the fascist war and the totalitarian turn of Communism with the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact while afflicted in the tense postwar environment of the Red Scare, New Deal liberals and socialists of the 1930s' Popular Front deserted their earlier ideological allegiance and joined the consensual "vital center," affirming liberal capitalism as the only viable social system. As an attempt to certify its centrist liberalism, a group of liberal intellectuals created the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) in 1947 by excluding Communists from its membership and distancing itself from Henry A. Wallace's Progressive Citizens of America (PCA). What these Cold War liberal intellectuals such as Reinhold Niebuhr, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Lionel Trilling, Richard Chase, and Leslie Fiedler proposed was nothing less than a reconception of American national imaginary by exempting it from the realm of *Realpolitik* and sheltering it in a psychospace of literary and cultural imagination. In redefining realism as lodged in individual psyche and preserved in the imaginary realm of American literature, they strove to break with the past association with the Popular Front while simultaneously reclaiming a historical continuity of the national imaginary – democracy, freedom, Manifest Destiny, etc. – from the nineteenth-century American Renaissance tradition. And it was to the contemporary politics of racial integration that they resorted for an imaginary resolution of contradictions thereby arisen – namely, the definition of realism as divorced from reality and the claim of historical continuity by breaking with the past.

As such, this chapter explores the ways in which Cold War liberal intellectuals attempted to reclaim the national imaginary of Manifest Destiny – "our free and

democratic system,” “our way of life” protected by “Divine Providence” (NSC-68, 39) – by appropriating literary representations of interracial male bonding as the premise of democratic vision. By scrutinizing John Okada’s 1957 novel *No-No Boy*, in particular, it approaches the discourse of Cold War liberalism from the marginalized position of the racial other, thereby paying critical attention to ambiguities and inconsistencies in the white male vision of liberal integration. The novel weaves a story of Japanese American internment experiences during the Pacific War retrospectively from the mid-fifties perspective, reflecting and reflecting upon the contemporary discourse of Cold War liberalism. Like Cold War liberals disavowing the past and the specter of Communism in order to reclaim historical legitimacy of Manifest Destiny through a representational inclusion of the racial other, Okada also seems concerned with the past stigma of alleged Japanese American disloyalty and its implication of threatening foreignness to national security, and similarly he resorts to the liberal discourse of (interracial) male bonding as a way not only to contemplate and confirm but also to contest and negotiate the premises of American national vision: the liberal capitalist definition of individual freedom in terms of citizenship and property ownership. As a novel of the fifties, *No-No Boy* employs literary and discursive strategies characteristic of contemporary consensus liberalism, but being simultaneously an Asian American cultural product positioned outside the normative Cold War discourse, Okada’s work also offers an alternative perspective to universalizing cultural memory of American nationalism. Moreover, when put in a transnational context of the Asia-Pacific wars and comparative racial discourses of the U.S. and Japan, it proposes a critique of the liberal theory of democracy and aspires to

re(en)vision modernity that includes not only technological progress but also the liberatory promise.

The postwar global sea change entailed a reconstitution of American society molding the 1950s into an era of consensus and conformism, and Cold War liberalism functioned as the prevailing spirit of the time mediating a reconception of national imaginary to accommodate changing sociopolitical contours. Schlesinger's *The Vital Center* served in 1949 as a kind of manifesto of postwar "new liberalism," which the author also called the "non-Communist left" or "new radicalism." In renouncing the socialist radicalism of the 1930s and reconfiguring its political standpoint towards the "center" by conflating and repudiating both Fascism and Communism as Totalitarianism of extreme far rights and far lefts, the book redefined the premise of American liberalism upon moral and psychological "truth" of human imperfectability and depravity.²⁰ As Thomas Hill Schaub details, the postwar "new liberalism" was based upon the reformulation of realism as "psychological realism," dismissing social reality as a site of totalitarian politics oppressing what is "truly real": individual consciousness. The "new liberalism" was a product of the Freudian adaptation of postwar historical conditions: Niebuhr's Christian realism provided essential components by opposing "the realities of human corruption and an irrational history" to "the utopian illusions of science and

²⁰ "The degeneration of the Soviet Union taught us a useful lesson, however. It broke the bubble of the false optimism of the nineteenth century. Official liberalism had long been almost inextricably identified with a picture of man as perfectible, as endowed with sufficient wisdom and selflessness to endure power and to use it infallibly for the general good. The Soviet experience, on top of the rise of fascism, reminded my generation rather forcibly that man was, indeed, imperfect, and that the corruption of power could unleash great evil in the world" (Schlesinger, Jr., Foreword viii-ix).

secular humanism”; George Kennan shared the assumption that liberalism had been “unrealistic” and contributed by proposing a “tough-minded realist” American foreign policy; and in *The Liberal Imagination*, Trilling affirmed irrationalism and conflict as a “natural” part of “psychic and social existence,” positing “moral realism” as the only possible source of reform (Schaub 12-22).

In effect, as Schaub insists, the “new liberalism” of New York intellectuals converged with the conservatism of New Critics, and as Suzanne Clark illustrates, they came together in redefining American literature as a realm of myth and rigorously distinguishing it from the sphere of politics. In other words, Cold War liberal intellectuals separated the realms of politics and literature, assigning literature to the sphere of myth and liberal manliness while simultaneously distancing it from politics as the domain of Kennanesque realism and frontier masculinity. Nonetheless, the intellectuals shared the politicians’ claim of “transcendental objectivity” in national policy in that their “whiteness” and “maleness” were taken as unmarked and neutral positions of “reason” to contain “reality” or the material presence of a threat – whether it be Communism or the marked body of the other – within the national security state and/or within the text (Clark 3). In safeguarding “new” liberalism as the haven of American literary tradition and liberal manliness, in short, Cold War liberal intellectuals turned out complicit in preserving white masculine hegemony and the concomitant liberal capitalist system. They were rebellious sons “without a cause” only to be vindicated as legitimate heirs to inherit the patriarchal system.

Thus, in a strange inversion of logic, Cold War liberalism claimed social reality as “irreal” and psychology as the true site of realism while asserting a continuity of

masculine rationalism by apparently breaking with it. The paradoxical turn was, according to Donald E. Pease, symptomatic of Cold War liberal logic. Labeling a series of Cold War events from the threat of Communism to the fear of the bomb as a mythological category of a “Cold War mentality,” it took flight into an imaginary solution by constructing a “Cultural Imaginary” as a cultural pre-conscious – a reservoir of residual political energies and counter-cultural possibilities. Put otherwise, in constructing a Cultural Imaginary under the rubric of an American literary canon, Cold War liberals transported politically charged materials into the realm of a cultural pre-conscious, and “these displaced representations, these residual political energies,” unable to be translated into civic liberties and stored instead within the cultural pre-conscious for preservation, remained “unrelated to the *Realpolitik* of the Cold War era” (Pease, “Leslie Fiedler” 184). And as long as Cold War liberals’ alternative consciousness, productive of a residual counter-culture, could not be realized in a concrete political terrain, it remained a Cultural Imaginary in an imaginary relation to its real political conditions and ultimately complicit with the Cold War mentality.

Moreover, the attempt to resolve contradictions of the liberal logic by taking refuge in the Cultural Imaginary found its representation in American literary tradition as an interracial male bond. In his 1948 article “Come Back to the Raft Ag’in, Huck Honey!” and later 1960 book *Love and Death in the American Novel*, Fiedler claims that the image of interracial fraternity comprises an “archetype” or a cultural unconscious of American literature: “the pure love” between “a white man and a colored” is set off against “the ignoble passion of man for woman” and the homoerotic love is consummated in “Nature undefiled” – “the inevitable setting of the Sacred Marriage of

males”; besides, the homoerotic yearning for the racial other is rooted in “the white American’s nightmare” of getting rejected for having “utterly offended” that other (“Come Back” 7-12). In other words, Fiedler sought to construct an alternative psyche to the Cold War mentality by invoking a “vision of shared humanity” represented in the literary masterworks, thereby facilitating an escape from concrete political commitments into the universalism of “inclusive humanity” (Pease, “Leslie Fiedler” 172). As illustrated above, the integrationist national myth developed under the pressure of historical conditions which mandated the inclusion of America’s national as well as global others; and what was ultimately at stake was, as Robyn Wiegman has argued, a reinscription of the white paternity as the historical subject of a pure, uncontaminated, and transcendental America, or simply put, a preservation of American white male hegemony. By insisting on the nonsexual nature, the homoerotic bond purges intimations of homosexuality; by setting the male bond in nature off against heterosexual marriage in the cultural realm, women are subsumed into compulsory reproduction while heterosexuality is maintained as an institutionally compulsory configuration; and by romanticizing social hierarchy, the interracial bond harnesses the demand of equality into a specular inclusion while eliding the “dark man’s subjectivity” for the “originary sameness” of Anglo-American masculinity (Wiegman 150-58).²¹

In this vein, *No-No Boy* provides an interesting testimony to the American culture of the fifties. As a cultural product of the time, the novel employs discursive characteristics of the contemporary “new liberalism” professing an integrationist

²¹ (Interracial) male bonding seems a prevailing discourse of the 1950s as Michael Davidson calls it “compulsory homosociality” to designate the ways in which same-sex relationship was mandated for social formation and power. See Davidson 15-16.

aspiration to the American vision of liberal democracy, but simultaneously as a work of marginalized Asian American culture, it is hesitant to conform to the narrative of Manifest Destiny betraying ambivalence about the liberal theory of nation and national identity. The plot deals with Ichiro Yamada's contemplative attempts to integrate into American society immediately following his release from two years in prison for refusing conscription during the Second World War. Ichiro is one of "no-no boys" who said "no" to the questions 27 and 28 in the loyalty questionnaire, refusing to serve in the American armed forces and to swear exclusive allegiance to the United States.²² The internment of 120,000 Japanese Americans marked the culmination of the history of U.S. racial politics, illuminating in particular the history of a racialized formation of the Asian American. The summary incarceration on the grounds of racial difference, nullifying in effect their citizenship, illustrates the racialized basis of the American national vision of liberal democracy, and especially in the context of the Cold War Manichean politics of containment by integration, the metamorphosis of the Japanese American from the wartime "yellow peril" to the postwar "model minority" dramatically highlights the paradox in the theory of liberal integration.

As the American portrayal of the Japanese changed from the wartime images of subhuman, inhuman, and superhuman apes, vermin, and war machines to the postwar pet pupils in need of democratic tutelage,²³ some among the interned Japanese Americans were reviled as "troublemakers" and segregated once more at the infamous Tule Lake

²² The question 27 asks, "Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?"; and 28, "Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power or organization?" Ngai 183.

²³ For the racial history of the Pacific War, see John W. Dower's *War without Mercy*.

camp while others were celebrated as war heroes of the 442nd Regimental Unit, the segregated Nisei combat team. As a medium of concurrent containment and integration, the internment was then an exemplary case of “benevolent assimilation,” which, as Mae M. Ngai explains, envisioned the camps as “planned communities” and “Americanizing projects” (177), anticipating the 1960s promotion of the Asian American as the prototypical “model minority.”²⁴ Moreover, as T. Fujitani argues, the transformation of the Japanese American from “the obvious symbol of racial discrimination into a living representation of America’s denunciation of racism” was supplementary to the Cold War construction of Japan as the “global model minority” under the rubric of the modernization theory (244, 253). Put another way, the internment and the subsequent shifts in postwar racial discourse recapitulate the Cold War liberal logic of “benevolent supremacy,” which in effect proposed a representational integration of the domestic and international racial others as a way to contain “threats” to the national imaginary of white patriarchal hegemony.

Woven by and simultaneously weaving its way into the contemporary milieu, *No-No Boy* appeared in this interesting dynamics of mid-1950s American society. Some critics see the parameters of the novelistic agenda compromised because of the limited options permitted to a minority writer by the dictates of dominant society while others find in the work insinuations of ambivalence or even unambiguous assertions of dissent. Viet Thanh Nguyen insists that Okada’s attempt to “recuperate manhood” is

²⁴ The War Relocation Authority (WRA) officials were New Deal liberals such as Milton Eisenhower, and his successor, Dillon Myer. They saw the camps as a chance to speed the assimilation of Japanese Americans through democratic self-government, schooling, work, and other rehabilitative activities. See Ngai 175-201; Simpson 12-75.

compromised by his “flexible strategy” or his decision to “accommodate, even marginally and ironically, the demands of dominant society” (158-59). In adopting the language that American society would understand, that is, the language of materialism, he argues that Ichiro eventually consents to the American values of liberal capitalism by “confessing” the “cryptic crime he has committed” and ultimately internalizing the “virtual panopticon” of American identity under the Cold War security regime (167-76). Daniel Y. Kim considers Okada’s novel as an exemplary narrativization of the “model minority” myth, positing Ichiro as a “maternal” agent of sentimental integration into the American Cold War “empire of feeling” (76-77). Apollo O. Amoko, by contrast, takes note of textual uncertainties, particularly emphasizing the “inconclusive ending” as an illustration of “Okada’s reluctance to endorse the triumphal and progressivist pedagogical discourses of the American nation” (44). Similarly, Naoki Sakai asserts that *No-No Boy* chooses to “remain in shame,” and that in refusing to be “shameless” by seeking recognition of the master, it attempts to “wager a counter-scenario that a minority individual can hold onto his or her self-respect” (255).

In a sense that every being is a product of its time and cannot exist “outside” history, Okada’s novel stands in concrete relation to the specific circumstances of its creation: the Cold War national security regime, society of affluence and conformity, intellectual culture of new liberalism, and the racialized position of the Asian American. Being within the confines of its time, *No-No Boy* is a novel of Cold War liberalism; but positioned “off center,” it also offers a “parallax vision” of dominant culture. In other words, although constricted by its marginalized position as the above critics maintain, I would argue that the ambivalent positioning of the novel at the interstice of the

Asian/American enables a critique of dominant culture, and if not a “radical” re-visioning of America, it can speculate an alternative vision to the national imaginary of Manifest Destiny. As a text of the Cold War, *No-No Boy* follows the premises of the new liberalism by assenting that American identity is based upon individual freedom defined in terms of the liberal capitalist theory of man’s rights as property ownership; and in the manner of the Cold War liberal turn to psychological realism, the novel focuses upon Ichiro’s emotional and psychological states revolving around the central conflict with his mother, staging the social question of racism as a domestic narrative of Momism and a crisis of masculinity. As a result, Okada echoes the Cold War liberal recuperation of white masculinity through interracial male bonding as he seeks to claim Japanese American masculine authority through patrilineal/fraternal male bonding off against (internal) female others such as Ichiro’s demonized mother and feminized/fecund Emi. At the same time, however, as a work from the margin, it brings the history of Asian/American racialization into a critical juxtaposition with the liberal integrationist stance by rejecting to endorse either Japanese or American nationalist pedagogies and imagining instead possibilities of interracial/interethnic solidarity for a realization of not only technological but also liberatory modernity.

To an extent, *No-No Boy* may be read as Okada’s monograph on the meaning of national identity and American citizenship, and his assumptions remain by and large within the parameters of the new liberalism, which postulates individual freedom as the basis of democratic society. In modern liberalism, the desire for “liberation” comes down to a form of “negative freedom” – “the desire merely to be free from a variety of constraints,” signifying “an individual’s struggles against the conformity demanded by

his fellows, thereby demoting civic covenants to the status of contracts and the ‘spirit of place’ to a cultural superstition” (Pease, *Visionary Compacts* 6). The splitting of individuality from collectivity was consolidated after World War II in reaction to the previous decades dominated by “masses,” culminating with the redefinition of realism in terms of psychological reality and upholding individual freedom as inviolable “rights of man” – that is, property ownership as inalienable rights of citizenship. Okada’s exploration of American identity is premised upon these liberal assumptions. Ichiro’s agonies over his experiences of racism and injustice seem concerned more with individual practices of bigotry and/or generosity than with the problems of social system. So he despairs over “the bigotry and meanness and smallness and ugliness of people” (135) while feels consoled to find out that there is “still plenty of good people around” (226). As he sums up the whole problem as “a matter of attitude,” the solution comes with a change of his attitude to “feel good” about the world: “Mine needs changing. I’ve got to love the world the way I used to. I’ve got to love it and the people so I’ll feel good, and feeling good will make life worth while. There’s no point in crying about what’s done” (209). In this affective and moral universe, the question of national identity and citizenship is likewise translated into the familiar language of the contemporary new liberalism. Ichiro sincerely sympathizes with such families as the Kumasakas and the Kenjis who own houses and therefore have earned their rights as citizens just like millions of other Americans. In fact, “the pattern of an America” he aspires to be part of is imagined in terms of propertied middle-class family life: “in time there will again be a place for me. I will buy a home and love my family and I will walk down the street

holding my son's hand and people will stop and talk with us about the weather and the ball games and the elections" (52).

Having "a place for him" in the America he dreams entails Ichiro to consent and conform to manifest American values of liberal democracy by following suit to confess and purge anything "un-American" in him according to the dictates of the internal security state, and the "half of [him]" (16) he is so eager to excise turns out embodied in his domineering mother who is just like millions of other Philip Wyliean mothers in Cold War America. *No-No Boy* is marked by "its obsession with disloyalty, insecurity, surveillance, and confession," reflecting its time infested with McCarthyite red baiting and compulsory loyalty oath programs such as the federal employee loyalty program,²⁵ subjecting the entire American population to the presumption of guilt and to mass conformism (Nguyen 161, 167). The nagging sense of guilt, the infection of disloyalty that Ichiro desperately seeks to excise, boils down to an anxiety about maternal influence – a sense of crisis that masculinity is stifled by "sexually frustrated mothers" who turn their "perverted desires" toward their sons, "thwarting the boys' natural masculine development" (Elaine Tyler May 84). Ichiro's mother is probably on a par with Raymond's mother in *The Manchurian Candidate* as one of the most monstrous mothers in Philip Wylie's line of Momism. She is the embodiment of control and hatred:

Ma is the rock that's always hammering, pounding, pounding, pounding in her unobtrusive, determined, fanatical way until there's nothing left to call one's self. She's cursed me with her meanness and the hatred that you cannot see but which is always hating. (12)

²⁵ According to Nguyen, the federal employee loyalty program was mandated through Truman's Executive Order 9835, subjecting 13.5 million federal workers, or a total of 1 in 5 American workers, to security checks by 1953. 4,756,705 were actually checked, and the FBI conducted 26,000 field investigations. See Nguyen 167.

Just as the general population of the time was obsessed with soul-searching for a slight hint of Communism – that “alien” disease that infiltrates and infects the healthy body (politic), Ichiro compulsively looks inward to eliminate the part of him that is “foreign,” therefore, disloyal and threatening to wholesome American identity: “the sickness of the soul that was Japanese once and forever” in his mother (104), at whom he hurls his ruthless invectives, unambiguously repudiating and casting her aside.

Hence, Okada’s project of recuperating Japanese American masculinity involves emulating hegemonic masculinity, which is signaled by the ability to own – from houses, cars, furnishings, to businesses; more specifically, it entails the rehabilitation of patriarchal authority by consolidating a homosocial bond among intra-ethnic and interracial males precisely in and through the bodies of the females. Ichiro is sympathetic with various father figures from his own father, to Kenji’s, to Mr. Carrick, a liberal white man who offers him a handsome job, thereby establishing a patrilineal bond against the abhorred body of his mother. Although condemned as “a goddamned, fat, grinning, spineless nobody” (12), “a weakling in the shadow of his wife” (212), Ichiro nevertheless finds his father “a reasonable man” and “a man of natural feelings,” unlike his mother who “tried to live her life and theirs according to manufactured feelings” (212). Applying the timeworn dichotomy of nature-culture and reason-irrationality to the respective genders, he proceeds to find an ideal paternal figure in Kenji’s father: “a big man, almost six feet tall and strong” and “a painter and paper hanger” (117), who could laugh with his son “comfortably,” “the father because he loved his son and the son because he both loved and respected his father, who was a moderate and good man” (118). As a man of

physical strength, reason, and natural feelings, he could perfectly fit the image of a rugged frontiersman in the American mythic territory. Mr. Carrick may be Ichiro's another surrogate (white) father, "a big-mouthed, loud-talking, back-slapping American" (150) who epitomizes "the great compassionate stream of life that is America": "good and gentle and just," "a heart of kindness and patience and forgiveness" (153); who practices "compassionate capitalism" and "privatized policy of affirmative action" (Daniel Y. Kim 73). Ichiro's desire for a father-son male bond then resembles in a way the interracial male bond of Cold War liberalism in that he attempts to establish "a masculine sameness" as the ground of "America" – the homosocial bond invested with "reproductive responsibilities," "the spiritual and symbolic procreations that engender 'America' along an unambiguously masculine line" (Wiegman 158).

Ichiro's quest for male bonding is more prominent in his fraternal relationship with Kenji, a Nisei veteran who has returned with a stump in place where his leg used to be. As each other's alter ego, Ichiro and Kenji are complementary to the recuperation of impaired Japanese American masculinity, which they attempt to claim by imagining middle-class family life mediated through the fertile body of Emi, a Japanese American woman deserted by her Nisei husband. While Ichiro is "one already dead but still alive and contemplating fifty or sixty years more of dead aliveness," Kenji is "the other, living and dying slowly":

They were two extremes, the Japanese who was more American than most Americans because he had crept to the brink of death for America, and the other who was neither Japanese nor American because he had failed to recognize the gift of his birthright when recognition meant everything.
(73)

Ironically, it is Kenji's maimed body that confers on him "the right to hold [his] head high" (64) which is the right for "the abundance and happiness that pervaded a Japanese household in America" (120), whereas Ichiro's whole body renders him a nobody incarcerated in "a prison of forever" which "he had carved out of his own stupidity" (40).²⁶ The complementary bond of brotherhood forged by the two comes down to the same desire to claim an America that will rehabilitate their damaged masculinity by integrating them into the patriarchal family of America. And it is Emi who would mediate their integration into American society through her "reproductive" capability to procreate for the formation of family and thereby to facilitate Ichiro's – and by proxy Kenji's – assimilation into the American middle class. She is represented as feminine and fertile: "slender, with heavy breasts" and "rich, black hair which fell on her shoulders and covered her neck," with "her long legs [...] strong and shapely like a white woman's" (83). Besides, she is patriotic and professes her abiding faith in America – "This is a big country with a big heart. There's room here for all kinds of people" (95), exhorting Ichiro to be "equally big and forgive them and be grateful to them" (96). Understood as such, *No-No Boy* does appear an exemplary Cold War narrative that consents to the American values of liberal capitalism and the integrationist myth of benevolent liberalism in upholding middle-class domesticity as the essence of Americanism and premising it upon the recuperation of Japanese American patriarchal authority. However, Ichiro's constant

²⁶ The fraternity between Ichiro and Kenji also mirrors the irony of masculine and racial identities. As Nguyen argues, "the irony of masculine and racial performance" dictates that "war participation had to be physically evident in order to overcome that other physical stigma: racial identity" (170-71); "Kenji's missing leg and visible stump become symbols for the phallus: the missing leg is the physically disempowering price Kenji pays for the symbolic power that remains visible in the stump, so that the phallus is always absent but always present, bestowing power and extracting pain" (171).

and self-conscious return to his contradictory positioning in-between Asian and American opens up a space of ambiguity allowing the return of those moments hovering underneath.

As an Asian American cultural product, *No-No Boy* is first and foremost a crucial log of American history of racial injustice, and thereby it brings a critical perspective to the liberal theory of nationalism, sovereignty, and citizenship. As Lisa Lowe has argued, the concept of American citizenship has been formed over against the history of exclusion and integration of Asian immigrants by means of a series of immigration laws and acts. While anti-Asian exclusionary laws prohibited Asian immigrants of various nationalities from becoming American citizens from the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act to the 1917 Immigration Act designating a “barred Asiatic zone” to the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924 introducing a “national origins” system; a set of repeal acts were passed to integrate them in reaction to the changing tide of global political dynamics during and after the Second World War from the 1943 enfranchisement of Chinese Americans into citizenship to the 1952 repeal of the ban on the naturalization of Asian Americans to the 1965 repeal of the 1952 national origins quota system. Formed as an anteriority to the sealed body of the nation, a locus of the national other in and against which citizenship is construed legally, economically, and culturally, the history of Asian American immigration and racialization functions as a site of “critical negations of the nation-state,” “a generative site for the critique” of the universality of nationalism (Lowe 8-9). In this sense, Asian American culture constitutes an “alternative” site where lost memories and fractured histories are preserved and can be brought into a critical juxtaposition with nationalism as well as the liberal definition of “inalienable individual

rights” as “citizenship rights” guaranteed by sovereign nation-state (Lowe 4-9; Ngai 3-12).

Being acutely aware of racialism at the base of American idealism, Okada painstakingly records the repressed stories of the Japanese American internment while carefully proposing a liberatory vision that goes beyond the boundaries of nation, race, and ethnicity. He documents different fates of Japanese Americans subjected to demands and decrees of the nation: the forced relocation and loyalty oaths, segregation, imprisonment, conscription, and the program of voluntary repatriation under the 1944 Denationalization Act. Around central conflicts between Nisei veterans such as Kenji, Eto, and Bull, and no-no boys like Ichiro, Freddie, and Gary, *No-No Boy* also weaves the stories of those who “voluntarily” returned to Japan: Emi’s father, who became sick of Japan, but could not come back; and her brother-in-law Mike, who being a World War I veteran, was furious about the internment, became a leader in the troublemaking at the Tule Lake Center, and elected to go to Japan. Out of these intimate experiences of marginalization and racist mistreatment, Okada notes a painful recognition of the legacies of racial politics: African Americans at the Club Oriental jeering at Ichiro, “Jap-boy, To-ki-yo,” “[p]ersecution in the drawl of the persecuted” (6); Jim Eng the owner of the club stopping two blacks from entering, to which a Japanese customer cheering, “Hail Columbia” (134); a recent immigrant woman “with the dark hair and large nose who has barely learned to speak English” vacating her bus seat when a young African American man occupies the other half (135). At the same moment, the author interjects possibilities of inter-ethnic solidarity through Ichiro’s sympathetic attitudes towards the “persecuted” others like the lone black man who was not welcome and left ignored throughout the

service at a small white church in Idaho (231) as well as through an episode of interracial bonding between Gary, another no-no boy and his African American co-worker, Birdie (226). Unlike the logic of (interracial) male bonding for the recuperation of liberal white and/or Japanese American masculine authority, Ichiro's sympathetic vision of interracial solidarity derives from a mutual understanding as those sharing the experiences of discrimination and disenfranchisement.

Put in a transnational context, moreover, the liberatory aspiration for equality and interracial solidarity merges with a trenchant critique of nationalism and imperialism. In a sense, *No-No Boy* is a quest narrative in which Ichiro proceeds in search of national belonging, but instead of becoming an avowed national subject, he expresses profound skepticism about nationalism, both Japanese and American:

Was it [Ichiro's mother] who was wrong and crazy not to have found in herself the capacity to accept a country which repeatedly refused to accept her or her sons unquestioningly, or was it the others who were being deluded, the ones, like Kenji, who believed and fought and even gave their lives to protect this country where they could still not rate as first-class citizens because of the unseen walls? (104)

In rejecting both his mother's blind identification with Japanese nationalism and self-effacing hyperloyalty of such Nisei veterans as Eto and Bull to the myth of Manifest Destiny, Ichiro brings forth traumatic memories of the Pacific War – a war of violent subjugation of the colonized, marginalized, and racialized, in which not only Japanese Americans but also many Asian peoples fell victim to American and Japanese nationalisms respectively. Just as the Japanese/American was subjected to discrimination and persecution on the grounds of racial difference and represented as anything but human, Japanese imperialism operated on the same exclusionary and dehumanizing logic

of race with respect to its own colonized subjects. The Japanese perceived themselves as the “Yamato race,” a “pure” and “superior” race destined to lead “lesser” racial and national subjects in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, a conceptual space of Asia-Pacific Japanese empire proposed as an “organic” family bound by interracial bonding among Asian peoples.²⁷

In this perspective, Ichiro’s downright castigation of his mother may be understood beyond the Cold War politics of gender – the recuperation of masculinity in and through the female body mediating a contiguity between men. Instead, Ichiro’s rejection of his mother may be viewed in transnational historical contexts as an unequivocal condemnation of imperialist nationalism. Ichiro’s association and later break with the Momotaro myth is symbolic of his troubled relationship to his mother. The myth represents Ichiro’s relationship with his mother as an allegory of Japanese nationalism. It was one of stories his mother used to tell him:

There was a time when I was your son. There was a time when I no longer remember when you used to smile a mother’s smile and tell me stories about [...] the old woman who found a peach in the stream and took it home and, when her husband split it in half, a husky little boy tumbled out to fill their hearts with boundless joy. I was that boy in the peach and you were the old woman and we were Japanese with Japanese feelings and Japanese pride and Japanese thoughts [...]. (15)

During the Pacific War, however, the myth was widely used as propaganda of Japanese Pan-Asianism as a story of the Peach boy conquering the demon with the help of a dog, a monkey, and a pheasant, signifying “divine Japan and its lesser Asian followers driving out the white imperialists and establishing their supremacy” (Dower 253). Ichiro’s brutal and ruthless condemnation of his mother then comes as his denouncement of her blind

²⁷ See Dower regarding Japanese colonial politics of race and racism.

nationalism and Japanese imperialism: “Not your strength, crazy woman, crazy mother of mine. Not your strength, but your madness which I have taken. Look at me!” (43).

As such, *No-No Boy* offers a valuable insight into the culture of the 1950s American society in its complex stance to the multiple historical contexts of Cold War liberalism, Asian American racialization history, and transnational history of the Pacific War. The oft-quoted ending leaves the novel with a hopeful note, with a “glimmer of hope” (250) and with Ichiro chasing “that faint and elusive insinuation of promise” (251). That note for hopeful future may convey Okada’s liberatory vision which renounces any system of oppression – be it racial/ethnic hierarchization, nationalist politicization of immigration and citizenship, or imperialism. Published in 1957, about a decade after the end of World War II, *No-No Boy* is documentation not only of the internment but also of the Cold War, and as a record of the 1950s it provides a critical perspective to the contemporary discourses of consensus liberalism, sentimental integration, and benevolent imperialism. Particularly considering that it came out four years after the end of the Korean War, through which the Japanese/American consolidated the metamorphosis from the “yellow peril” to the “model minority,” often off against shifting racial stratifications of the Chinese and Koreans, Okada’s desire for interethnic solidarity presents a meaningful occasion to ponder upon the meaning of a truly egalitarian democratic society.

**III. Love and Death in America's War in Korea:
Manliness, Nation, and Empire in William Styron's *The Long March* (1952)
and David Douglas Duncan's Photojournalism**

In a cartoon about the Korean War, C. D. Batchelor, a Pulitzer Prize-winning political cartoonist for *New York Daily News* for 38 years,²⁸ describes a newly-married couple on their honeymoon in a hotel room of Far East Inn. The groom is the U.S., a middle-aged man who looks tired, disheveled, and anxious, and the bride is “Korean ‘police’ action,” a voluptuous woman with a face of Death, who complains, “Somethin’ tells me, Sam, you no longer love me quite – so much” (Figure 1). Significantly, the drawing represents the relationship between the U.S. and Korea as a newly-married couple whose relationship seems already crumbling on their honeymoon. Moreover, the groom, the national self-image of the U.S., is no longer a virile young man reminiscent of the mythic frontiersman but rather an exhausted and frustrated senescent man. Finally, Korea is presented in a dual image, a virginal bride inviting the white male hero to rescue and fertilize her and simultaneously a Death incarnate threatening to devour and annihilate the hero and what he represents – presumably, democracy, freedom, or Western civilization in general.

With these implications of the drawing in mind, this chapter examines an American national imaginary as it evolved in coordination as well as in conflict with the

²⁸ C. D. Batchelor won the Pulitzer Prize in 1937 for his April 25, 1936 *New York Daily News* editorial cartoon. Similar to his depiction of the Korean War, the war is represented as a whore with a face of Death propositioning to a young man labeled “All European Youth,” captioned: “Come on in. I’ll treat you right. I used to know your daddy.” See Caswell 18.

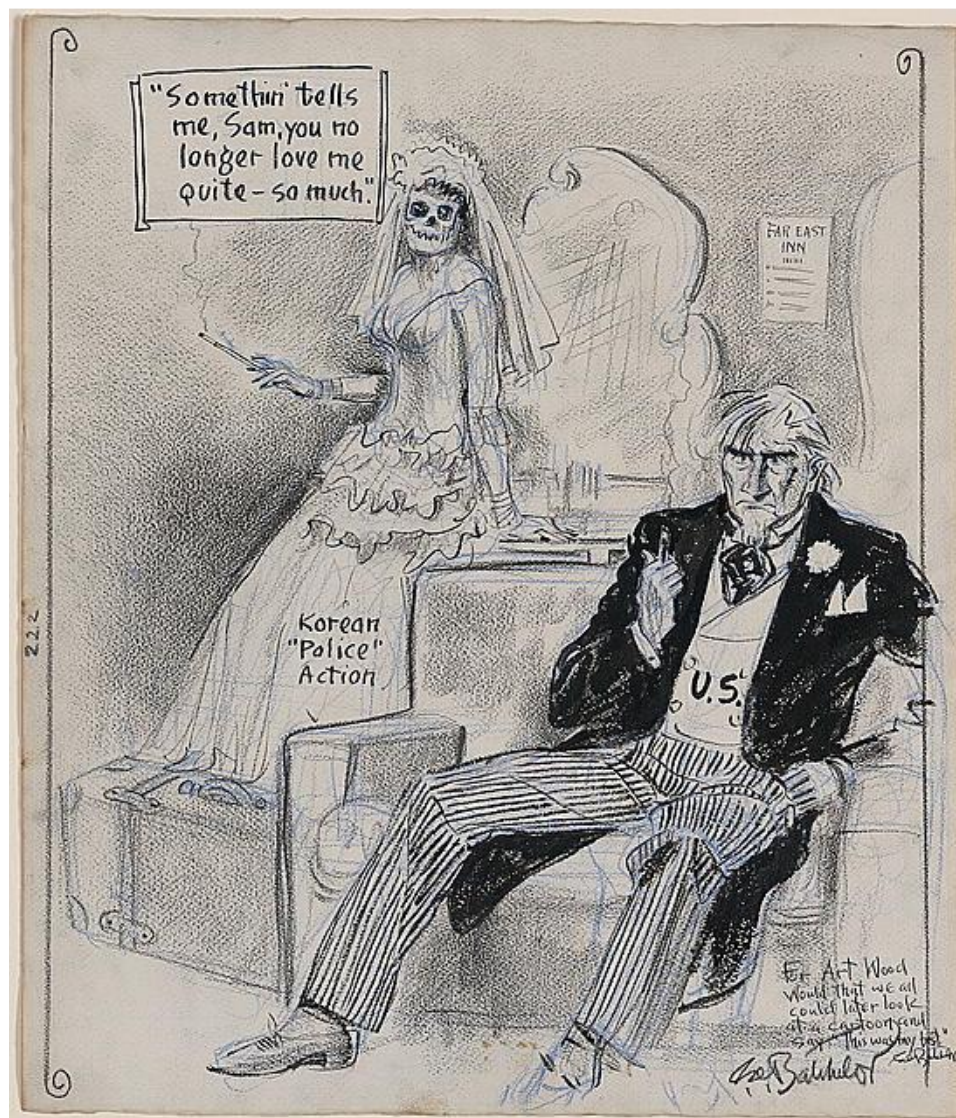


Figure 1. A cartoon on the Korean War by C. D. Batchelor, 1950.
(Art Wood Collection of Caricature and Cartoon, Library of Congress)

culture of the Cold War, especially with the Korean War not only as a site of political-military contestations but also as a critical terrain imbued with American mythic imaginaries. More specifically, I wonder why this war of “containment” was imagined in the domestic image of marriage, a trope of alliance, between the U.S. and Korea, and if the U.S. involvement in East Asia was perceived as an alliance, why this representation seems so troubled with certain angst. I also wonder what made the U.S. visualize itself as a tired elderly man rather than in terms of virile frontier masculinity, and if this change in the representation of American manliness signals transformations in the American national imaginary, what this change might suggest about American national identity in the Cold War context. In conjunction with the U.S. self-image as an ageing man, I am curious as well about the contradictory ways in which Korea was perceived and figured in the imperialist trope of the feminized other, simultaneously virginal and threatening, a dual image of love and death.

In short, this will be a study of American Cold War nationalism as manifested in mass culture by scrutinizing a Korean War novel and several photo-journals from the *Life* magazine. I will attempt to contextualize the love-death trope within the political, social, and cultural climate of the American 1950s before examining how this cotemporary spirit of contradiction was woven into William Styron’s *The Long March* (1952) and David Douglas Duncan’s photo-essay *This Is War!* (1951), concluding with contemplation on the significance of love-death duality in representing an imperial other by studying a few *Life* magazine articles on Korea. In examining how American men as writers, journalists, and soldiers understood themselves and American society within the historical conditions of the Cold War and the Korean War, I hope to illustrate and unweave ideological

entanglements of manliness, nation, and empire.

1. Domesticating Foreign Policy, Cultural Malaise, and National Imaginary

The trope of love and death in Batchelor's cartoon eloquently epitomized the contradictions of contemporary America in its foreign policy stance, social milieu, and national imaginary. The marriage trope was, first of all, befitting to emphasize the integrationist policy towards Asia by "domesticating" foreign policy in affective terms of personal feelings and attitudes. The split domestic image was a means to graft a set of arbitrary ideologies such as the dual politics of containment and integration as "natural" human emotions of fear and sympathy. Secondly, duality was characteristic of the social and cultural milieu of the American 1950s: the surface of affluence and contentment barely covered up repressed anxiety in the national symbolic whose schizophrenic impulse was constitutive of Cold War liberalism, the representative spirit of the time. Finally, the uneasy alliance of love and death was symptomatic of the contemporary cultural malaise whose etiology seemed to lie in the national imaginary plagued with the memory of nation-building violence and anxiety about national identity.

First of all, the trope of marriage was a domesticating strategy of Cold War foreign policy. In his controversial speech delivered to the National Press Club on January 12, 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson excluded South Korea from the U.S. defense perimeter in the Pacific, inducing a conspiracy theory that the U.S. deliberately lured North Korea into attacking the South. Less noticed was the significance of the speech in setting up the contours of U.S. foreign policy in Asia in compliance with the Truman administration's official stance of "containment." Entitled as "Relations of the

Peoples of the United States and the Peoples of Asia,” the speech emphasized the relations between “the peoples” as the bedrock of diplomatic relations. Acheson asserted that “there are fundamental attitudes, fundamental interests, fundamental purposes” of the peoples of the U.S. and Asia, which “determine and out of which grow the relations of our countries and the policies of our governments” (238). And for these policies to be effective, he proposed that the “fundamental attitudes” of the peoples on both sides must become “articulate through all institutions of our national life,” through the press, the radio, the churches, the labor unions, the business organizations, and “all the groupings of our national life” (238).

A few months later in the March 1950 speech, Loy W. Henderson, U.S. Ambassador to India from 1948 to 1951, expounded a similar message on the importance of establishing mutual relations between the U.S. and Asia. Linking “feelings” of peoples with “policies,” he insisted that “feelings of sympathy and friendliness” between the peoples derived from “understanding” and “knowledge” and that they were imperative in determining the “success” of foreign policies (460-1). To help increase “contacts” and exchanges of “information,” the U.S. would support Asia in multiple ways from giving direct economic or military aid, to providing loans through international organs such as the International Bank or the United Nations, to assisting cultural exchanges by admitting thousands of Asians into U.S. universities. Notably, he explicitly pointed out that the U.S. would support only those “free countries of Asia,” “outside of those behind the Iron Curtain,” and that it had no imperialist designs, neither “territorial ambitions” nor “special political or economic” aspirations in Asia, that it simply desired “friendly and mutually beneficial relations” (461-2).

Given a few months prior to the outbreak of the Korean War on June 25, 1950, the two speeches epitomize U.S. Cold War politics of not only “containing” Communism but also “integrating” Asia into the U.S.-led “free” world. The containment policy was conceived as a compromise between the two opposing political stances – between nationalists and internationalists, liberals and conservatives, realists and rollback advocates. Internationalism was an “open door” policy advocated by Franklin Roosevelt – a vision of one world based on liberal capitalism, capitalist free trade on the one hand and representative democracy on the other. Rollback nationalism, in contrast, wanted to rid the world of Communism through direct territorial expansion using strong military power and deregulation of the economy. Containment was a compromise set forth by Harry Truman. As its metaphor “bulwarks” suggests, it settled with the “open door” only to one side of the two blocs while containing the other side with “bulwarks of defense.”²⁹ Thus, implicit in the containment policy was a dual project: both *integrating* the “free” world on this side of the border and simultaneously *containing* Communism on the other side of it.

At the same time, it is noteworthy that top diplomats of the time phrased U.S. foreign policy in terms of friendly “feelings” and mutual “knowledge” between the peoples in the U.S. and Asia, calling for a wide range of programs from economic-military actions to cultural exchanges to public educations. Klein suggests that the U.S. developed dual “global imaginaries” of containment and integration as cognitive maps of the Cold War world, which became translated into the structures of feeling of “fear” and “sentimentalism” respectively (22-23). According to her, containment was deployed

²⁹ See Cumings’s introduction to *Child of Conflict*, 5-10.

through “the emotional glue” of fear – fear of expansion abroad and infiltration at home, fear of weakening “moral fiber” and national security threatened by “deviant” racial and sexual elements (36). Integration, on the other hand, was articulated in the sentimental tradition of bonding “us” Americans with “them” Asians through an emotional process of sympathy and identification. The domestic imagery of marriage on the verge of destruction was then an indication that politics was premised upon not only articulating its ideology logically but also translating it into lived daily existences. As an imaginary mental mapping of the social and global totality, a Cold War cognitive map impelled to reduce “real” conditions of the world into an imaginary representation of a coherent two-bloc system. This illusory belief nevertheless produced material effects as concrete attitudes and actions, that is, as structures of feeling.³⁰ In other words, the conflicting domestic vision of love and death was imbedded in the popular sentiments of sentimentality and fear, which were in turn inextricably linked to the Cold War political imperatives of containment and integration.

Furthermore, the same duality characterized 1950s’ America – a society of abundance riddled with anxiety, consensus with ambiguity, and conformism with dissent. The assumed unity of the fifties was spawned by postwar prosperity and a newfound faith in effectiveness of capitalism as the best way to eliminate inequities, symbolized in the much documented middle-class suburban ideals. But the surface consensus was impaired with anxiety as earlier ideals from the 1930s Cultural Front reversed into new threats, replacing the “mass” with a “mob,” the welfare state with a totalitarian state, and

³⁰ Regarding the concepts of “cognitive mapping” and “structures of feeling,” see Jameson 162-63 and Raymond Williams 128-135.

participatory public culture with the mass-produced culture industry. The homogeneity of the middle-class culture was in fact premised upon heterogeneous counter-cultures of inner-city working-class and other social minorities while the celebrated American affluence flourished on the violence fed by the growing military-industrial complex with the gunbelt expanding along “classless” suburbia.³¹ This dualism of the American fifties was a product of both the postwar conditions and long-term developments of American history – unique Cold War elements from nuclear weapons to anti-Communism to the rise of the military-industrial complex intermixed with long-term historical trends from postwar demographic, sexual, and communications revolutions, to desegregation to civil rights movements.³² As a symptom of specific social-historical conditions, this split vision thus demands further investigations into the American society of the 1950s within the Cold War global as well as particular American historical contexts.

Significantly, the dualism was symptomatic of a Cold War variation of American liberalism, whose psychological turn on this particular spatio-temporal axis of the Cold War and American history was inherently related to contemporary cultural anxiety about American national identity. Cathected with postwar Freudian psychology and existentialism, the Cold War liberalism espoused individualism and psychological “truth” in reaction to the mass-oriented popular culture of the 1930s, betraying in the process conceptual contradictions in its doctrines. The postwar “new liberalism” was formulated

³¹ For overall cultural studies on the American 1950s, see Warren Susman, “Did Success Spoil the United States? Dual Representations in Postwar America” 19-37 and Jackson Lears, “A Matter of Taste: Corporate Cultural Hegemony in a Mass-Consumption Society” 38-57 in Lary May; also, see Ann Markusen, “Cold War Workers, Cold War Communities” 35-60 and Alan Brinkley, “The Illusion of Unity in Cold War Culture” 61-73 in Peter J. Kuznick and James Gilbert.

³² Kuznick and Gilbert 1-13.

as “psychological realism” in opposition to social realism and naturalism of the Cultural Front by dismissing social reality as “totalitarian” and re-defining instead individual consciousness as truly real (Schaub 3-49). Inverting the definition of “reality,” Cold War liberals also labeled any attitudes towards *Realpolitik* as pathological symptoms of a “Cold War mentality” while resorting instead to a “Cultural Imaginary” as a legitimate reservoir of political energies and counter-cultural possibilities (Pease, “Leslie Fiedler” 155-98). Cold War liberalism was then premised upon a psychologization of reality and a concomitant repression of politics in the public sphere. Through its paradoxical logic, Cold War liberalism inverted reality as “irreal,” claimed historical legitimacy by denying past legacies, and de-politicized the public sphere by abducting it into a-historical and a-political psychic realms. In this vein, the Cold War psychological turn to logical paradoxes sheds light on the love-death duality in Batchelor’s cartoon image not simply because it reflects the postwar vogue of Freudian psychology but because it bears testimony to the contemporary cultural malaise called American Cold War anxiety.

In that sense, lastly, the uneasy cohabitation of love and death was a pathological symptom of American national imaginary whose mythic geography of “Manifest Destiny” was haunted by the memory of nation-building violence and anxiety about national identity. If the postwar liberal turn to psychology was premised upon the impulse to de-historicize the contingent, Sigmund Freud in contrast offered a de-universalizing analysis of civilization in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930). Characterizing the progress of civilization as the struggle between Eros and Thanatos, or between libido and death instincts, Freud introduced a notion of “social neuroses” as historically contingent and culturally specific: “under the influence of cultural urges, some civilizations, or some

epochs of civilization [...] have become ‘neurotic’” (110). According to him, a sense of guilt originates from the super-ego, the internalized death instinct, which in the form of conscience activates aggressiveness against the ego as a need for punishment. When the sense of guilt was produced by civilization, it remains largely unconscious and appears as “a sort of *malaise*, a dissatisfaction, for which people seek other motivations” (99). Thus, as a psychic construct of the particular societal context, Cold War anxiety bespeaks a cultural pathology rooted in the contingent and the specific. Interestingly, it seems that Freud provided a prescient prognosis about the particular post-World War II American malaise:

The fateful question for the human species seems to me to be whether and to what extent their cultural development will succeed in mastering the disturbance of their communal life by the human instinct of aggression and self-destruction. It may be that in this respect precisely the present time deserves a special interest. Men have gained control over the forces of nature to such an extent that with their help they would have no difficulty in exterminating one another to the last man. They know this, and hence comes a large part of their current unrest, their unhappiness and their mood of anxiety. (111-12)

The conflicting vision of love and death seems deep-set in the cultural memory of violence from the recent world war to the contemporary war in Korea to the past wars of nation- and empire-building. Perhaps, the American malaise was embedded in the symbolic registers of the American national mythology – the myth of the Virgin Land and the “radical innocence” of the American people built by repressing “the specter of the nation-founding violence” (Pease, “From Virgin Land” 207-8).

To put it differently, the American malaise of the 1950s might have been derived from the national memory of violence, of which the aggressive and destructive tendency seemed to have gone beyond the possibility of human mastering. Tom Engelhardt,

naming the American national memory as “victory culture,” argues that victory culture began to erode with the atomic explosion over Hiroshima, in which the resounding totality of victory gave “an eerie twist” to the sense of victory, puzzling the boundary between victory and defeat. He claims that American victory culture stems from the nation-building wars against the Indians, which justified the slaughter as a divine right by reversing the indigenous people into the “invaders” on a “new Jerusalem,” a “virgin soil,” but that it all began to erode with Hiroshima, was challenged by the stalemate in Korea, and ended with Vietnam (3-65). Perhaps, victory culture is still in its throes with the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as the rhetoric of American “homeland security” on post-9-11 “Ground Zero” gives another “eerie” resonance to the national memory of the plundered Indian “homeland” and the “ground zero” of leveled Hiroshima.³³ Derived from the memory of violent national foundation and imperial expansion, American Cold War neuroses then boiled down to an anxiety over American national identity, over national boundaries that would hold America as a bounded and coherent nation.

As such, the Cold War containment policy can be understood as an official expression of the anxiety over American “nationness,” a precept of the cultural super-ego in Freudian term, demanding to police the American “body politic” by containing undesired “bodies” outside the national boundaries. “The human body” as a model for any bounded system was a useful metaphor for “the national body” and as a practical means to construct an imagined national community through the gender, sexual, and racial politics. The politics of the body functioned as a formative apparatus of modern

³³ About the relevance of the history of U.S. imperialism to the current unfolding of American “war on terrorism,” see Pease, “From Virgin Land to Ground Zero” 205-13, and Kaplan, “Homeland Insecurities” 82-93.

“imagined communities,” with race activating a sense of “blood” relation, sexuality prescribing normative sexual attitudes, and gender identifying the nation with the male body.³⁴ This naturalizing, normalizing, and patriarchal politics of national body-building coincided with the emergence of modern nationalism, constructing the male body as a symbolic representation of the nation. Especially, against the backdrop of the French Revolution, “heroism, death, and sacrifice” became associated with manliness while “freedom” was promoted as “an integral part of sacrificial death” for “a higher cause” of the nation (Mosse 50-52). Thus, the modern nation was born in the form of the white heterosexual bourgeois male body, willing to die for the “*patria*” and for the higher ideal of “freedom.”

Interestingly, in Cold War America, the naturalizing, normalizing, and patriarchal policing of the national body was similarly combined with the paradoxical definition of “freedom” as “conformity” in that “autonomy” was reduced to “inner” freedom “to choose whether to conform or not,” to a form of “higher conformity” (Ehrenreich 40). In this sense, the 1950s cultural malaise was rooted in the anxiety about containing America’s nationness within the white male body that was simultaneously free and bound. This paradoxical national body was to be ensconced, as Clark argues, in a new liberal ideal of manliness as epitomized by a new breed of sensitive, rebellious, and sexually ambiguous Cold War stars such as Montgomery Clift replacing the old virile masculinity of a John Wayne-like Western hero. But this liberal manliness was not so much about a new revolutionary subject challenging the hegemonic consensus as it was complicit in excluding and suppressing dissent and hybridity, ultimately reaffirming the

³⁴ See Jane Sherron De Hart, “Containment at Home,” in Kuznick and Gilbert 124-55.

racial, sexual, and gender politics of modern nationalism. Cold Warriors turned out to be, so to speak, grumbling yet dutiful sons of virile frontiersmen. By splitting the political as realist from the literary as mythical, liberal intellectuals not only endorsed the political imperative of masculine mastery of reality manifested in various forms of Communism, women, minorities, or nature. They also re-inserted liberal manliness into the same masculine mastery to create and contain reality within the closed body of the text.³⁵ As such, the freedom of individual from the oppressive national totality was transcended, as it were, into autonomous conformity to the American national collective imagined as white heterosexual bourgeois manliness.

It is in these contexts that Batchelor's political cartoon should be understood. The marital image of a U.S.-Korea alliance was part of an effort to graft the Cold War ideology of containment and integration into mundane structures of feeling or to domesticate politics. The rendering of the union as doomed, however, reveals certain anxiety or cultural malaise rooted in the specific historical and societal conditions of the American 1950s, and these spatio-temporal conditions seem to indicate that American Cold War anxiety was derived from the national imaginary haunted by the memory of nation-founding and empire-building violence. Moreover, the troubled American nationhood in the body of an ageing man discloses another dimension of dualism in Cold War nationalism. The image of an elderly "Sam" not only shows the changing historical circumstances in which virile frontier masculinity from the turn of the century was being redefined, but it also insinuates that the racial, sexual, and patriarchal symbolic of the nation would remain in its unmarked white masculinity. Finally, it was the politics of

³⁵ Clark 1-39.

Cold War liberal inversion that enabled the oppressive national security state built upon the paradoxical celebration of individual freedom, and it was by means of the repressed other, be it Communism, women, minorities, nature, or even Korea, that the American nationness could be imagined as a coherent and seamless community.

2. Cold War Manliness in the Imagined Community of America

In Cold War America of the 1950s, the public space was excluded from both the political and the literary: it was either shunned as “totalitarian” and “pathological” in favor of “psychological realism” or it was ignored as “realist” therefore inappropriate for literary imagination. As such, mass culture was left to flourish in close alliance with immediate realities in the neglected public sphere. This chapter examines several products of two mass cultural genres – a war novel and articles from *Life*, a representative popular magazine of the mid-century. Both the war novel and the popular magazine were crucial cultural media intimately tied to the volatile public space of the 1950s. *Life* was a highly successful photojournalist magazine from its 1936 foundation until the mid-1960s, functioning as one of Washington’s “paraphrasers” translating the principles of Cold War foreign policy into terms and forms of popularly accessible culture (Klein 63). The war novel, characterized by its interest in war and death, is also a particularly apt medium to explore the immediate conditions of cultural malaise in the war-weary postwar American society. War novels of World War II and Korea, in particular, were distinguished for their interest in the individual psyche, guilt, and motivations for fighting, reflecting the tenor of the period. Whereas their literary predecessors following the First World War experimented with the form to convey the reality of war itself, “expressing shock at the

physical facts of war, horror at the brutality of the totalitarian military structure, and disenchantment with western world diplomacy, politics, and Christianity” (Miller 134), postwar novelists turned to the inner plight of the individual for subject matter and to the realist style for an anchoring narrative ground. This postwar trend of the war novel reminds us of the psychological turn in postwar American culture, and as Arne Axelsson argues, this inward tendency seems to paradoxically highlight overwhelming uncertainties of the outer world, hanging “in the balance of megadeath,” where “reality itself, in particular in the Korean context, provided enough surrealism and absurdity” (xv-xvii). To put it differently, inner dramas of new war fiction might serve as a useful gateway to a collective subconscious of American Cold War anxiety in the midst of the unreal realities of violence.

William Styron’s *The Long March* is one good example. A war novel set against the surrealistic reality of the Korean War, it focuses on an inner drama about the self, personal or collective guilt, and individual freedom in conflict with the social system. Written during the summer of 1952, the novel deals with an autobiographical incident from 1951 when Styron was called up for the war in Korea and returned as a marine reservist to Camp Lejeune in South Carolina. The narrative, concerning a thirty-six-mile forced march and an accidental mortar explosion that killed eight young recruits, is woven around a conflict between Colonel Templeton representing the system and Captain Mannix an anti-heroic rebel as it is observed by Lieutenant Culver the narrative voice of the author. As Styron articulates in an afterword, the novel was to be a reflection about “murky, surrealistic, half-lunatic unreality” of a war in Korea, the war “which lacked so utterly a sense of human identity, and which in so sinister a fashion presaged the faceless,

soulless, pushbutton wars of the future,” and ultimately of war that had become “*the human condition*” (188). As it turns out, however, the story concerns not so much this particular war itself, its historical contexts, political issues, or even physical aspects of combat. Nor does it seem to consider “the human condition” as materialized under the specific historical circumstances of the Korean War and the emerging Cold War. The narrative is instead dominated by a preponderant sense of the self, as Samuel Coale describes it, “encapsulated” in “anxiety, guilt, doom, or self-scrutiny,” often “verging on the narcissistic and solipsistic” in practically eclipsing the social scene (31). This “encapsulated self” harrowed with a sense of guilt epitomized American cultural malaise, wavering in-between Eros and Thanatos, as in Batchelor’s cartoon, over the questions of individuality, national identity, and the ever-returning presence of otherness.

The Long March is a prototypical period piece of the American 1950s in a sense that it captures an etiological cause of American cultural discontent as a Freudian struggle between love and death instincts, a schizophrenic wavering in the national imaginary between a nostalgic longing for a “new Jerusalem” and a sense of impending catastrophe. Lieutenant Culver, as the author’s mouthpiece, represents the confusion and frustration of his generation of people in the face of another war closely tailgating the recent global war. Having served as a marine in Okinawa, he has successfully adjusted to his middle-class life with a wife, a little girl, and a law degree before he was called back for a “police action” in Korea. Confounded and “no longer an eager kid just out of Quantico with a knife between his teeth,” he muses that “he was old, and he was afraid” (3). Like the groom in Batchelor’s image, he is tempered, tired, and haunted by a recurring vision that wobbles between a sunny dream of home and a chilling intimation of death. The

vision of home he repeatedly returns to is a nostalgic dream-like image floating in a timeless unspecified past. It is an image from “an earlier, untroubled day at the end of childhood” of two little girls playing tennis in a sunny afternoon, calling to him “voicelessly, as in a dream” (6). But the image of this timeless home dissolves into an uncanny reminder of death as he broods over his existential impasse, feeling “unmoored and unhelmed upon a dark and compassless ocean” (24): The field tent he was in “might have had all of the appeal of the *home* which he so desperately hungered for, had it not been so cold, and had it not seemed, as he sat there suddenly shivering with fear, so much more like a *coffin* instead” (26; emphasis added). Culver’s existential anguish then epitomizes the anxiety of his time in that his sense of discontent is typically reduced to a psychological question of the generalized human condition, uprooted from societal contexts and relieved from the burden of history. Following Freud’s diagnosis of a sense of guilt at the core of cultural neuroses, moreover, Culver’s troubled vision of home-as-a-coffin seems lodged in the American national imaginary: “the pressure Americans felt – and still feel – to exaggerate their guilt, while minimizing their political responsibility, through a vision of history which wavers between a nightmare of doom and a dream of utopia” (Cushing Strout, qtd. in Coale 31).

The dual vision in the American national imaginary came to an even sharper division with the Cold War, which mapped the world as a Manichean opposition between two warring camps by reducing ideological, political, and historical complexities into a conflict between individual freedom and totalitarian will. Braiding such a binary worldview with the contemporary vocabulary borrowed from existentialism and Nietzschean philosophy, Styron presents “*the human condition*” as a master-slave

dynamic, in which the master or “the system,” representing variously the world, nature, fate, God, or the nation-state, is ultimately affirmed over the slave that embodies not so much the universal individual as a particular group of marked bodies. The fateful opposition is dramatized through a conflict between Colonel Templeton and Captain Mannix. A “regular” in his early forties and a perfect epitome of the esprit de corps of the marines, Templeton is a detached, rational, yet devout and pious impersonation of the system; on the other hand, Mannix is “a dark heavy-set Jew from Brooklyn” and “a bitter man” (11) rebelling for the sake of rebellion itself. Indeed, Culver compares them to “classical Greek masks,” in which the Colonel’s “cleanly and prettily” sculpted grin is contrasted to the Captain’s “darkened, downcast face” of “both fury and suffering, like the tragic Greek mask, or a shackled slave” (20-21). Templeton is portrayed as almost divine: In him, “all emotions – all smiles, all anger – emanated from a priestlike, religious fervour” (21); he seems to exist in a state of “equilibrium” (20), absolute in his command with a voice which simply “expected to be obeyed” (13). Mannix, in contrast, is resentful of the Colonel simply “because he possessed over Mannix [...] an absolute and unquestioned authority” (13); he is a slave with “a flat Mongoloid cast in his face,” outraged “at the Marine Corps, at the system, at their helpless plight, the state of the world” with “unqualified cynicism” (22-23).

In presenting the master as divine and the slave as haplessly trapped in the natural order of things, Styron misappropriates the Nietzschean critique which proposes the master as life-affirming and this worldly in opposition to the slave filled with a life-

denying negative will to power.³⁶ Furthermore, by equating Templeton's absoluteness with the military and national system, to which Mannix is to be sublimated, the author ultimately endorses the higher conformity to the national collectivity. At the same time, however, he also discloses certain anxiety that haunts the national imaginary because Mannix, far from being the universal male body with which the nation is to be identified, represents the marked body of America's otherness. "Mannix the revolutionary," reminiscent of the left-socialist revolutionaries from earlier decades, may be like "the rest of them, caught up by wars in which [...] the combatant served peonage" to the mechanical system, but "*his own particular suffering* had made him angry, had given him an acute, if cynical, perception about their *renewed bondage*" (31-32; emphasis added). Strangely and rather abruptly, Mannix's adversity is collapsed with the haunting memory of slavery:

Tormented beast in the cul-de-sac, baffled fury, grief at the edge of defeat – his eyes made Culver suddenly aware of what they were about to see, and he turned dizzily away and watched the wreck of a Negro cabin float past through the swirling dust: shell-shattered doors and sagging walls, blasted façade – a target across which for one split second in the fantastic noon there seemed to crawl the ghosts of the bereaved and the departed, mourning wraiths come back to reclaim from the ruins some hot scent of honeysuckle, smell of cooking, murmurous noise of bees. (44)

Then, Mannix's "particular suffering" represents not so much "the universal human condition" as a particular group of enslaved and/or marginalized people in the specific historical context. But the author refuses to further explore this particular historical scene; instead, he subsumes the historical into the generalized master-slave dichotomy.

Significantly, Styron depends on the politics of the body for this sweeping

³⁶ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* 9-33.

generalization by reducing all – from the Korean War to slavery to the human condition – to a question of manliness. He suggests that Mannix’s rebellion is after all not against Templeton’s forced march, the Marine Corps, or the system. Rather, he rebels out of fear that “he wasn’t going to make it” (50), out of frustration that he was “not *man* enough” to possess “enough free will” and to say “no” to the system: “But [Culver] was *not* man enough, he knew, far less simply a free man; he was just a marine – as was Mannix, and so many of the others” (74). According to this, Mannix’s “particular suffering” is then inherent in the universal human state of “unfreedom,” which is simultaneously the state of “unmanliness.” Through a curious inversion of logic characteristic of Cold War liberal paradox, however, man becomes “manly” and thus “free” by precisely acknowledging one’s “unfreedom” and concomitantly conforming to the system with higher awareness. In the final scene following the fateful confrontation with Templeton, Mannix runs into a “Negro maid” on his way to the shower at the camp, and as the towel falls by accident from his waist, he stands in front of her as “a mass of scars and naked as the day he emerged from his mother’s womb, save for the soap which he held feebly in one hand” (88). And only then, only in the state of primordial innocence, he can speak like “a man” “not with self-pity but only with the tone of a man who, having endured and lasted, was too weary to tell her anything but what was true” (88). Exorcized and matured, Mannix can become a “free man” only by regressing to his bare humanity, and here Styron’s study of “*the* human condition” comes down to a mythical state of universal humanity. But this state of pure being is far from “universal” because Mannix, the “dark” Jew with a “Mongoloid” face, has to come face to face with his past in the form of his dark comrade-in-slavery and before he can be allowed in the “universal” human family, he

must cleanse himself of all his resentment and anger, and maybe “whiten” himself with the “soap” of “civilization.” Thus, in this psycho-narrative space with the social and the historical purged, the marked body in revolt becomes humanized and ultimately integrated into a higher order of self, whose unmarked and neutral body turns out that of white masculinity.

In the final instance, this state of freedom, obtainable through higher conformity, means to acknowledge war as “*the* human condition” and accept death willingly in the manner similar to modern nationalism’s equation of freedom with voluntary death:

[Mannix] seemed no longer the man who could sicken himself with resentment, but relaxed, pliable even, like a huge hairy baby soothed by the wash of elemental tides, ready to receive anything, all, into that great void in his soul which bitterness and rebellion had briefly left vacant – all – the finality of more suffering, or even death. War was in the offing. A promenade of waves, snow-crowned like lovely garlands in the dark hair of girls, swelled eastward towards Africa: past those smoky heights, more eastward still, the horizon seemed to give back repeated echoes of the sea. (41)

And in the process, the particular war in Korea becomes also swept away into the universal tide of belligerent human civilization, the ever-advancing and ineluctable fate. In the sweeping generalization as “an Aggressor enemy” (18), Korea remains invisible and phantom-like; not even a group of hated individuals, it is obliterated as merely another aspect of hostile environment, as part of the natural human condition. As such, in the psychoscape of the Cold War, Styron’s rebels rebel for the sake of rebellion itself and “merely to enter a higher stage of encapsulation” (Coale 37), or a higher form of conformity harboring the desire to uphold the nationalist imaginary while simultaneously disclosing the haunting presence of the repressed other. The Korean War functioned as a signifying field of ambivalence for the collective subconscious of the 1950s American

society. The obsession with the private psyche verged on the ambiguous desire for the all-subsuming gulp of universality and the cry for individual freedom merged with the rallying call for nationalist conformity. In the symptomatic dualism of Cold War America lodged the desire to re-enshrine the national imaginary, as it were, in the national temple of Templeton's unmarked white male body by un-marking the bodies of otherness through the paradox of universality only to re-mark and obliterate them.

Thus reflecting the public sentiment of the fifties, *The Long March* embodied the postwar cultural spirit of Cold War liberalism in taking flight into psychology and equivocating conformity as freedom. The ambivalence of the fifties was as much mirrored in the mass media as in popular war fiction. Mass-media journalism flourished in the late forties and the fifties as technological and communications revolutions made possible a myriad of forms from magazines, radios, movies to television. Faced with overwhelming realities from wars to atom bombs, the "new journalism" or "nonfiction fiction" began to develop in search of a new form suitable to convey realities that were as much actual as they seemed fictive, emphasizing personal perspectives rather than the "objective" stance of conventional journalism and striving to communicate experiences rather than the "facts."³⁷ The influence of the nonfiction and the new journalism was noticeable in Korean War writing such as Martin Russ's *The Last Parallel: A Marine's War Journal* (1957), which chronicled a self-conscious marine's odyssey from Camp Pendleton through the battlefield along the 38th parallel in Korea.³⁸ But the book is

³⁷ About the new journalism, see Hellmann 1-34.

³⁸ The memoir shows some characteristics of the new journalism with its plotless journal following a series of moments without any necessary logic, with the young man's self-reflexive questioning of war's reality and Marine Corps masculinity, and with his deliberate attentiveness

ultimately a Bildungsroman about a dissenting American youth maturing into a full-fledged marine, and the flowering of the genre had to wait until the 1960s and Vietnam for such journalist-writers as Truman Capote, Norman Mailer, Hunter Thompson, Tom Wolfe, and Michael Herr. The ambivalence in journalistic writings about the Korean War was derived less from conscious disillusionment and active dissent than from “surprise,” “shock,” and “resignation” (Moeller 272) about the bewildering war, and from the characteristic wavering of the mid-century transition era, neither comfortable with the normative truth in the conventions of World War II nor ready to embrace the indeterminacy of reality as the Vietnam War generation did. Such ambivalence of the time was frequently manifested in photojournalism, which was having its heyday before the full-scale arrival of television and through which most Americans experienced the war in Korea.

Photojournalism was in a sense *the* journalistic medium for the Korean War not only because it was the primary source through which the American audience experienced the war: with television sets reaching only 34% of American households by 1952, “Korea was the last war that most Americans viewed primarily through photographs in print” (Moeller 303). But more significantly, the photographic medium itself attested the characteristic indeterminacy regarding Korea. Neither confident about “truthful” representation of reality as in the earlier world wars nor downright disillusioned with undefinability of truth as in Vietnam,³⁹ the Korean War

to the presence of ethnic others within the Marine Corps as well as civilian Koreans he encountered.

³⁹ As James Goodwin argues, “There it is” could serve as a summary phrase for Vietnam expressive of absurdity, undefinable truth, and irreferential reality as illustrated in Michael Herr’s rhetoric of grunts in *Dispatches* (1977); while World War II could be summed up as “Here Is

photojournalism wavered in-between as its self-conscious assertion of the transparency of photographic representation stumbled upon the absurd realities of Korea. As such, the influence of the *Life* magazine, the first of the American photo-essay magazines, could never be exaggerated.⁴⁰ With the advent of Korea, *Life*'s propagandistic unison during World War II also gave way to a cacophony of ambivalence: conservative editorials were in discord with more liberal journalist-photographers' copies; combat pictures followed the World War II convention of romanticizing the war while frequent close-ups of individual soldiers in their naked moments of physical pain, agony, and bewilderment bespoke prevalent uncertainties about the war; and the conflicting photographic types mirrored ambivalence about the ideal manliness as a national symbolic, split into John Wayne-type virile frontiersmen in combat photographs and sensitive, self-conscious Gregory Peck-type liberal youths in individual close-ups.⁴¹

David Douglas Duncan's photo-essay about the Korean War provides an apt illustration of such ambivalence regarding both Korea and the photography itself. One of *Life*'s correspondents covering the war along with Carl Mydans, Margaret Bourke-White, and others, Duncan is most well known for his photographs of the U.S. marines,

Your War" from the namesake of Ernie Pyle's photographic collection published in 1943, which proposed a "truthful" representation of the foreign war for the home front as "a masculine community" of journalists and soldiers living a life of "Walden Pond," of "simplicity" and "vitality" (160-66).

⁴⁰ The triumph of *Life* was immediate and overwhelming from the moment it hit the stands in November 1936, and its new visual form of journalism thrived on the "visual richness of war" (Moeller 219). Reflecting the position of Henry Luce, the founder of *Time-Life* and an unabashed champion of the American cause, the magazine's editorial stance was overtly geared to help mobilize patriotic public opinion. As admitted in a self-advertisement run in November 1942: "LIFE serves as a force in creating a sound, practical Psychological Front in the common, united effort to win this war and world-wide freedom. [...] We Americans [...] must get our inspiration to work and sacrifice through facts we read and hear" (qtd. in Moeller 222).

⁴¹ Moeller 315.

especially his pictures of the marines retreating from the Changjin Reservoir in the winter of 1950, which were also published one year later in a single volume under the title, *This Is War!* Differences in critical opinion seem to ascertain indeterminacy in his photographic representation: James Goodwin classifies Duncan within the conventions of World War II photojournalism while Susan D. Moeller seems inclined to see in him signs of Vietnam. Whereas Goodwin finds an Ernie Pyle in Duncan for the definitive “American presence” in his images, the individual and personalized portrayal of combat, and the “eyewitness” treatment of military life (175), Moeller sees a forerunner of Vietnam in that his photographic documentation was less “an affirmation of what was possible” than “an exposure of America’s and American’s limitations” (211). Reflecting the new fifties’ attitude of subjective realism, as it were, Duncan’s photographs seem to waver: his rhetoric and photographic composition follow the tradition of war report while unsublimated tensions and contradictions are made visible in the subject of his pictures, anticipating Vietnam.

Duncan’s *This Is War!* is constructed by and large according to the earlier conventions of rhetorical as well as photographic composition. He begins his collection first and foremost by interpellating the reader as “YOU” “the Main Character,” as the participant in experiencing the “essential truth” of war that his images supposedly convey.⁴² His photographs are arranged in a sequence of three sections with each section preceded by a narrative introduction, which progresses, as if in a Hollywood movie story, from the marines’ arrival in southern Korea and initial battle engagements in the summer

⁴² Unless noted otherwise, all the following references to Duncan’s work are from the collection, *This Is War! A Photo-Narrative in Three Part*. Since the book has no pagination, descriptions as well as direct quotations will be given without page numbers.

of 1950 (“The Hill”), to the movement northward to regain Seoul in September (“The City”), to further northward and the fateful withdrawal from the North in December (“Retreat, Hell!”). Implicit in the progressive narrative and the sequential photographs is a celebration of heroism, an affirmation of the American presence in the war, and a concomitant belief in the progress of democracy, freedom, or civilization as the ultimate effect of the war. This stance of engagement is also observable in the composition of the images: subjects are balanced one another in symmetry or in equilibrium thereby representing reality as organized and controlled rather than contingent; in the first section, U.S. marines march mostly from left to right or towards the camera insinuating a heroic progress toward a battlefield, but in the last section about the retreat, the directions are generally reversed moving from right to left or away from the camera; in action shots, American soldiers are in the foreground against the faceless enemy in a blurred or unidentifiable background; and the close-ups of individual soldiers are shot in three-quarter posture or in profile to emphasize a heroic war drama.⁴³

Duncan claims “essential truth” of war as a masculine drama both by resorting to the putative “neutrality” of the photographic apparatus and by sublimating historical particularities of the war in Korea into a universalizing logic of progress and civilization. His truth claims, however, falter upon self-contradictions and paradoxes. His desire to locate truth in a progressive narrative of war and civilization seems haunted by certain uneasiness, a sense of anxiety derived from the American national imaginary in which “truth” of “civilization” boils down to a progressive narrative of the mythic American

⁴³ For more detailed analyses of Duncan’s photographic composition, see Moeller 298-320 and Goodwin 179-82.

frontier. Put another way, the ambivalence in Duncan's photographs seems symptomatic of fifties' cultural malaise, a mood of anxiety resulted from the Freudian sense of guilt lodged in the repressed memory of violence underlying the progress of civilization, from the absent presence of repressed otherness.

As "the truth-telling Ernie Pyle of Korea" (Moeller 292), Duncan solemnly declares that "truth" lies in a masculine drama of war and civilization. In a cable to *Life*, he proclaims: "EYEM GOING BACK THIS TIME TRYING GIVE YOU STORY WHICH IS TIMELESS NAMELESS DATELESS WORDLESS STORY WHICH SAYS VERY SIMPLY QUIETLY 'THIS IS WAR'" (*Life* 18 Sep. 1950: 41). His desire for the "timeless nameless dateless wordless story," however, does not concern "the war in Korea" so much as "war" as the universal human condition with "neither climax nor ringing conclusion" to it. Interestingly, he does attempt to divorce an abstraction of "war" "as flung dramatically down off the highest benches of every land," but it does not lead him to tackle this particular war on a concrete ground. Rather, he would locate the truth in "the look in the man's eyes who is taking his last puff on perhaps his last cigarette." In other words, the truth of the universal human condition resides for him in a masculine drama of the military, which the "transparency" of his photographic medium can presumably mirror for the reader.

To begin with, Duncan attempts to corroborate his truth claims by relying upon the putative "scientific" authority of the photographic medium. He erases his subjective viewpoint only to collapse it with the supposedly detached and objective singular eye of the camera, and he presents his photographs as pure denotations of truth unmediated by the connotation of a written text. He proclaims that he would present the book "without a

single caption,” erasing himself as a mediator between his photographs and the reader because he would not want to impose his own interpretations for the pictures. Curiously, however, he immediately overwrites himself by proposing “a short textblock” for each picture-chapter in order to provide “the necessary background for comprehending the ordeals” of these men and to help “[the reader] to feel something of what [he] felt, and, possibly, to think some of the things that [he] thought during those dreary months before the pictures of the book made it possible for the men to tell of themselves.” Thus, he claims neutrality and denotativeness of his photographic images by first erasing and then re-inserting his subjective filter; and as if he was self-conscious of his double move, he contradicts himself once again by reasserting that his text should be not so much a means of his interpretive intrusion as a kind of neutral, transparent window, “only a word screen upon which these men project their own story.”

Much as Duncan intends to claim objectivity behind his own viewfinder, he seems quite self-conscious about certain ambiguities in that he compulsively professes a subjective positionality in his photographs. Moreover, he practically admits that his pictures are as much mediated as any written text by insisting they be “read as carefully as you might read the story in their faces and hands and bodies.” His photographic stance follows the Western tradition of “Cartesian perspectivalism,” which posits a lone eye that is “static, unblinking, and fixated, rather than dynamic, moving,” producing “a visual take that was eternalized, reduced to one ‘point of view,’ and disembodied” (Jay 7). This allegedly disincarnated and absolute eye could be, however, construed either as transcendental or as contingent: “If everyone had his or her own camera obscura with a distinctly different peephole, [...] then no transcendental world view was possible” (Jay

11). The photograph, especially, the press photograph professes to be “a mechanical analogue of reality,” but its purely “denotative” and “objective” status has every chance of being “mystical” and “connoted” at all levels from the production to reception (Barthes 18-19). Also, the “code of connotation” is “neither ‘natural’ nor ‘artificial’ but historical” or “cultural” in that one’s reading of certain “timeless” values in a photograph is dialectically connected to a process of signification that is “always developed by a given society and history” (Barthes 27-28). In other words, the “timeless nameless dateless wordless” truth of war is not transparently reflected in “the eyes of men”; rather, it may be excavated through a dialectical exploration into the specific spatio-temporal conjuncture of this particular war in Korea.

In claiming transcendental truth, Duncan also makes resort to a universalizing narrative of progress and civilization. But his universal story of civilization is inextricably rooted in the specific historical context of American national imaginary as his textual as well as photographic compositions are woven through the narrative of progress reminiscent of the mythic language of the American frontier. In the preface, he lifts all the particularities of the war in Korea into a universalized warscape of human civilization, into “a story of war, as war has always been for men through the ages. Only their weapons, the terrain, the causes have changed.” In his war story, “the truth” boils down to the masculine camaraderie: “something of the comradeship that binds men together when they are fighting a common peril,” “something of the agony, the suffering, the terrible confusion, the heroism.” This putative universal story of war and male camaraderie, however, evolves in the familiar pattern of American frontier narrative in his tripartite “textblock.” Moving from the battle hill into the enemy territory of the

foreign city, finally to the sea for rehabilitation, the narrative follows the pattern of the frontier myth, in which as Richard Slotkin amply illustrates, the hero undergoes a cycle of separation from the colonial metropolis, temporary regression into a wilderness, and regeneration by surviving the violence of the Indian war. With the coming of the Cold War, he adds, heroes came to transgress borders and in the process of combat evoke and purge the “dark” elements from within themselves.⁴⁴

The text is structured as a frontier narrative in which a white hero-intermediary reports an eyewitness account of Indian warfare following the narrative pattern of separation, regression, and regeneration through violence. Himself a masculine man leading a “rough, tough life,” a la Hemingway, “deep sea diving off the Florida coast” and “photographing hunting and fishing expeditions” (Downes 42), Duncan establishes himself as a Hawkeye-like participant-intermediary who tells an eyewitness account of combat, or the putative “truth” of war as a story of masculine camaraderie: “I was one of [the marines] in World War II” and “shared their lives, as they did mine” from the South Pacific islands to Tokyo Bay.⁴⁵ In his narrative, the metropolitan “heroes” “regress” into the wilderness in “The Hill”: “these tobacco-chewing, raw-knuckled, bristly-headed youngsters in already-faded khaki were coming to fight in Korea.” “Wounded and broken” after a series of combat, they descends further down to the heart of wilderness in “The City” as the “representatives” of “civilization”: “For it must have been the same when early men banded together at the mouth of their cave to stop the attacks of hungry

⁴⁴ Slotkin 1-62, 347-404.

⁴⁵ The 24 July 1950 issue of *Life* shows a portrait of “Lieutenant Duncan” in the U.S. military outfit, “bearded, begrimed” grasping “his carbine in one hand, film in other” and allowed to “roam and shoot as he pleased.”

beast – and some had been killed, but They had lived ... and the cave and its secrets and all the families and their dreams had been made safe ... the Group had survived.” In the final section, after having “transgressed” into the enemy territory, they are exorcised and “regenerated” to carry on the task of civilization: “In the distance, shimmering with sunlight, lay the sea. Then they stood upon the beach. They stood there bearded, without feeling, alone among all other men, but alive – alive upon a beach where other men of their kind found them ... and carried them away in ships, to live, to think, to fight again.”

Duncan’s combat and individual photographs are also based upon the similar narrative pattern of progress. He arranges his images in a sequence so that the Korean War is presented as a developmental drama of heroic marines from initiation to regeneration: marines marching on nondescript winding country roads to the battleground, marines engaged in battle on this side of the hill against the invisible enemy in the unidentifiable mountainous background, marines as liberators in deserted and ruined streets of Seoul, and marines freezing in the icy Siberian wind retreating along dark North Korean ravines to a seaport. Especially, his close-up shots of individual soldiers emphasizing inner conflicts mirror the Cold War Manichean confrontation and its displacement onto the private terrain of the individual’s psychological and moral maneuvers. Interspersed among the combat pictures are individual close-ups, similarly arranged according to an internal logic of narrative progress. Portrait shots from the initial phases of war show marines smoking grimly in profile or looking determined about an imminent fighting, which follow images of wounded soldiers in pain or faces crying for a loss of comrades after a battle, climaxing with intense wide-eyed stares of those who have seen and confronted the “dark” element during the retreat, finally

reaching a *dénouement* with smiles of bearded, smoking men against the pale bright winter sunlight upon their arrival at Heungnam Harbor, smiles of composure and maturity of those who have survived and regenerated. As such, the logic of progress and civilization in Duncan's narrative and photographic compositions are premised upon the specific American historical and cultural imaginary.

At the same time, however, Duncan's images fall short of a transparent analogue of the developmental logic they are supposed to represent. Rather, they reveal traces of the characteristic ambivalence of the time – the cultural malaise that boiled down to anxiety about the ideal manliness as a national symbolic. The men in his pictures show not so much virile frontiersmen upholding the cause of the war as shocked, surprised, and resigned looks of bewildered and tempered manliness. The celebrated dedication, self-sacrifice, camaraderie, and heroism of the U.S. marines trail off in the face of the ambiguous war whose obscure cause was to defend “freedom” and “democracy” of abstract “civilization”; an international war of Manichean ideologies that was also a civil war waged amongst Koreans struggling to build an independent nation; and the war that was not a war but “a police action” against the ungraspable enemy whose “crime” was an unfamiliar ideology called “Communism.” Perhaps, the ambiguity in the cultural climate of fifties America was a symptom of self-consciousness about the contradictions inherent in the heroic self-image of America's nationness, a symptom of a collective discontent resulted from the repressed memory of national violence and from the unacknowledged consequences of the U.S. intervention in Korea.

Not surprisingly, Duncan's portrayal of American hero-marines are premised upon the silenced presence of America's others whose representation, or absence, returns

an ambiguous gaze of the repressed. In general, Duncan is reticent about those on the other side of the battle line: he simply bundles up enemy soldiers as “the Reds,” “the Commies,” or “the gooks” without paying any particular attention to their individuality or “humanness.” But his abstraction of the other does not amount to a downright subhumanization as the World War II photojournalism routinely did about the Japanese. Rather, he captures them as “manly” counterparts of American marines: “men they have never seen, with whom they have no immediate quarrel, men who will kill them on sight if given first chance.” Also, describing his picture of a North Korean POW lost in thought with his head bandaged and a cigarette butt burning in his fingers, Duncan depicts him as much self-reflective and sensitive as any U.S. marines he portrays: having lost a morning battle over “the City,” “[t]here was no free afternoon for the prisoner who sat unmoving, [...] for he too must have had his mornings prowling loose, deep inside.” Another interesting image is an extreme close-up of a Chinese POW, which might be intended to signify “effeminacy” of the enemy with his eyes averted from the camera and his fur hat looking like a garland; simultaneously, however, the image is also reminiscent of an Indian warrior with a feather headdress, conjuring the memory of frontier violence while his pensive, brooding look reminds viewers of irrepressible humanness of this particular individual, inducing them to wonder what he might be thinking about – maybe his home, his family, or the meaning of this war for him (Figure 2)? As such, Duncan’s portrait shots unveil the ambivalence in the American national imaginary, in which the regeneration of white masculinity is compromised and the humanity of the other becomes irrepressible.



Figure 2. A close-up of a Chinese POW
Copyright has been obtained. © David Douglas Duncan, *This Is War!* (1951).

Maybe the connotation of such ambivalence was inevitable considering that signification is always developed in connection with a given historical and cultural context. The Korean War was dualistic itself with the first war for containment ending on September 30, 1950 as the UN forces crossed the 38th parallel into the North for a new war of rollback. The signification of the parallel changed with the shifting nature of the war: when crossed by North Koreans, it was the inviolable “international” boundary evoking talk of “Hitler-style aggression,” but when the circumstances reversed, it was deemed “an imaginary line” with “no de jure significance,” granting immunity to the U.S. forces to transgress it in “the pursuance of a rollback” (Cumings, *Origins* Vol. 2, 709-11). Duncan’s photo-essay chronicles this dramatic transformation during the initial six months of the war. The first two chapters cover the war for containment beginning with the battle along the Busan perimeter in August and back to Seoul after the renowned Incheon Landing on September 15 while the last chapter depicts the aftermath of the war for rollback – the Chinese entry into the war and the subsequent retreat of the UN forces in December, focusing on the withdrawal of the First Marine Division from Yudam-ni near the Yalu River back to Hagaru and further to Heungnam, a seaport on the east coast of North Korea. Absent in Duncan’s photo-essay is the transgression of the 38th parallel by the U.S. forces, and maybe it is the absent presence of this borderline, the wavering between a war of containment and a war of aggression, that haunts the denotative impulse of his photographs. The Korean War was a combined outcome of domestic and international conflicts – a “result” of multiple causes to which America contributed a crucial factor by dividing the country along the 38th parallel in August 1945, thereby subjecting the nation just liberated from Japanese colonialism to another form of foreign

occupation in the name of “trusteeship” and setting off decades of fratricidal confrontations until today. Perhaps, in the symptomatic ambivalence of the American 1950s lodged the specter of the Korean War, Lady Death in the bridal gown haunting the anxious, senescent groom.

3. In Conclusion: “A Terra Incognita” of Empire

Shortly following the outbreak of the war in June 1950, *Life* ran feature articles on Korea, sizing up the unknown country for the American public. The July 10 issue located the Korean peninsula “in center of explosive area,” literally mapping it on a hemispheric globe of the Asia-Pacific. In the half-globe with the north and south poles drawn horizontally, the Asian landmass designated as a “communist sphere” hangs dark and heavy on the top half of the page while in the bottom half of the Pacific Ocean, the Philippines and Japan are precariously propping up the continent from left and right. Indochina, Taiwan, and Korea are pinched in-between the two spheres of interest, demarcating the lateral boundary or “bulwark” against the overwhelming presence of China and the Soviet Union. The cartographic rendition of Korea in its relevance to the Manichean power dynamic presents a dramatic case for the U.S. intervention in the war as a necessary step “to dampen a small explosion” “before Communist aggression moved elsewhere in Asia and blew up most of the Orient” (29). Also, the same issue allotted a few pages to “Korea,” providing a bird’s-eye view of its geography, its people, and its history. Under the heading, “This strange land has bracing climate and depressing proverbs,” the title photograph shows two elderly men in traditional gentlemen’s robes with three children in front of them (Figure 3) while the text informs about the country’s



Figure 3. Photographic faces of Korea
With a featured article entitled "This strange land has bracing climate
and depressing proverbs." (*Life* 10 July 1950)

size, climate, people, language, religions, about customary clothes in white, “the color of mourning,” and proverbs of “a sad and apprehensive cast” (73). Next two pages run an aerial picture of a Korean rural village – an image of the pristine, exotic “Orient” with thatched cottages in the foreground and rice paddies blending into the horizon in the back (74-75). After a photographic summary of “the sad history of a vassal state” covering from 1122 BC to 1949 (76-77), the feature ends with a photograph of refugees, a woman balancing a huge bundle on her head and a man next to her glancing at the camera, captioned: “Wearily trudging refugees are a sight which is almost as old as the land itself” (79).

After about two months into the war, the August 21 issue of *Life* published another report on Korea under a somber, exhortative heading: “Korea teaches us that to save Asia we must know about the people.” John Osborne, one of the magazine’s correspondents, begins the report with an interesting full-page photograph by a U.S. Army photographer. The image is shot from a camera positioned inside or on top of a U.S. military tank, judging from the extreme close-up of a gun barrel in the foreground, while a street in front is eerily empty except a lone jeep approaching toward the camera from the opposite direction, and dwarfed to the sidewalk on the left are three Korean elderly men in white robes hastening their way in a single file (Figure 4). Originally captioned: “American tanks advance through a village-somewhere in Korea,” the picture is reframed here as a “case of the three mysterious Koreans” insinuating that these apparently “harmless patriarchs” could easily turn out “enemy infiltrators” disguised in the traditional white robes “bulging with what could be hand grenades” (77). In the subsequent article, Osborne recounts “the ugly story of an ugly war,” which “force[s]

upon [U.S. military men] acts and attitudes of the utmost savagery” such as blotting out villages or shooting and shelling refugees because enemy infiltrators “*may*” be hiding among “the anonymous white clothing of the Korean countryside” (77). Although he seems aware of the political nature of the war since he attributes such acts of “savagery” to the fact that “this is a guerrilla war, waged amongst and to some extent by the population of the country” (78), he is nevertheless unwilling to explore historical reasons behind it. Instead, he finds the cause of “savagery” in “the people”: “the unknown and unknowable” “Asian coolies” who “plod by, eyes down, backs bent, legs pumping up and down in the stiff and universal fashion of the burden bearers of Asia,” the treacherous “gooks” who change “from green to white” to hide in ambush among refugees (82). Refusing to probe into the “ugly” truths unfolding before his eyes, moreover, he attempts to subsume the war into a universalizing march of Western civilization. Observing a Korean boy fascinated by hovering helicopters and associating him with an American boy delighted about his first bicycle on a Christmas day, he finds in these modern industrial products a possibility of “communication” between “the American West and the people of South Korea,” pondering that “the machine age and the machine man of the West can be pretty wonderful” (86).

Typically, these articles visualized Korea as a “terra incognita” of American imagination through a dualistic appropriation of the unknown other as “bridal” with pristine, passive, and virginal innocence or as dangerous with mysterious, unpredictable, and fatal “savagery.” Western popular culture, especially the visual media such as cinema, visualizes the non-Western other through the images of scientific gadgets such as map, compass, or camera, which aligned with the hero’s thus West’s point of view, probe,

excavate, and discipline the antiquated and feminized other. Specifically, the West's visual media reduce the non-West into an archeological and ethnographical spectacle as the "mummified" past waiting to be "rescued" by the Western hero-cum-camera eye or as the feminized landscape to be "penetrated" and "tamed" through the West's "civilizing mission" (Shohat 50-55). *Life's* portrayal of Korea above keeps to heel of the West's disciplinary practices. Korea becomes incorporated as a necessary bulwark in the Cold War planetary mapping of the Manichean confrontation while the image of the globe sutures the American spectator to "a godlike cosmic perspective" through its "kinetic possibility" and "global ubiquity" (Shohat 47-48). Also, it presents Korea as a land of the past inhabited by ancient "patriarchs," clueless children, and helpless refugees, a "sad" people in a pristine landscape with a "sad" history full of "sad" proverbs. Simultaneously, however, this "virgin land" can be an unyielding "wilderness," inhabited by civilians-turned-guerillas in ambush courting danger, death, and thus "taming" by the West. These images render Korea as an anachronistic space inhabited by "backward" people, whether "virginal" or "savage," thus demanding the West to intervene and "normalize" the country as part of the singular progressive time of "civilization." As a result, the West's "rescue of the past" with the "machine" of modernity obliterates the present voice – a historical perspective on how and why the present war was engendered in this particular place.

The Korean War was a violent showdown of civil war embroiled with the international Cold War. It was most of all an explosion of revolutionary desire for nation-building and unification while deplorably entangled in internecine confrontations among political factions vying for state power. Nevertheless, an all-out war might not have been



Figure 4. "The case of the three mysterious Koreans"
A photographic preface to John Osborne's article, "Korea teaches us that
to save Asia we must know about the people." (*Life* 21 Aug. 1950)

necessarily inevitable if it had not been for the contemporary geopolitics of Cold War. In a sense, it was an offspring of U.S. containment policy – a surrogate war for the U.S.-led anti-Communist global crusade. The civil war began long before North Korea crossed the 38th parallel on June 25, 1950. It began in 1945 when following the defeat of Imperial Japan and the liberation of Korea after 35 years of occupation, the U.S. and the Soviet Union divided the peninsula by the arbitrary line along the 38th parallel, picked Rhee Syngman and Kim Il Sung as their preferred leaders, and set up separate regimes in the South and the North. It was also an international war resulted from U.S. containment policy: the primary purpose of the U.S. military government in South Korea (1945-1948) was in maintaining the anti-Communist status quo in the South by restoring ex-collaborators with the Japanese into political and military power while suppressing nationalist struggles as “communist,” ignoring the Korean people’s wish to build an independent and unified nation.⁴⁶

Thus, the foundation for guerrilla warfare, which Osborne blamed on the alleged “savagery” of the “Oriental” mind, was in fact laid by the U.S. military government’s containment policy, pitting those ex-elites restored to power, who desperately clung to the U.S.-introduced ideology of anti-Communism to protect their vested interests by overriding their illegitimate colonial pasts, up against those moderate-leftist nationalists struggling for independence and unification. Political struggles for independence and nation building were transformed into left-right ideological clashes, sowing the seed of a guerrilla war waged amongst Koreans themselves in a vicious cycle of mutual violence: it

⁴⁶ For the political and sociological significances of the Korean War, see Kim Dong-choon, “Forgotten War, Forgotten Massacres” 523-44. For a more detailed discussion, see also his book written in Korean, *Jeonjaeng-gua Sahoe [War and Society]*.

was initiated by the Rhee regime's brutal suppression of opposition in the April 3 insurrection on Jeju Island and the sympathy rebellion in Yeosu-Suncheon in 1948, which triggered in turn a chain of reprisals once the all-out war broke out in 1950. As such, the Korean War was a composite outcome of the legacy of Japanese colonialism, nation-building efforts in post-colonial Korea, and the U.S.-Soviet Union-led Cold War. But the initial division was "the de facto beginning of the Korean War," leading to the killing of more than 100,000 Koreans and imprisonment of about 20,000 as "suspected communists" by the time the full-scale war began in June 1950 (Kim Dong-choon, "Forgotten War" 525-26).

Dubbed as "forgotten" and hastily swept under the rug of American consciousness, the Korean War constitutes "a terra incognita" of American national imaginary – the non-expungeable other in American identity constructed through a willed amnesia of a selective past in the national mythology of Manifest Destiny. It was crucial in setting up the cultural contours of American Cold War imagination. Batchelor's contradictory image of Korea, simultaneously a pristine-virginal bride and a threatening temptress, was rooted in the ambivalence of the fifties' cultural malaise: the Cold War politics of integration was premised upon the ultimate obliteration of the other by the universalizing sweep of "civilization"; the postwar celebration of "individual freedom" was no more than a psychologized quid pro quo for "higher conformity" to the repressed national memory of nation-founding and empire-building violence; and the dissenting stance of liberal manliness was ultimately complicit in reaffirming the national symbolic in unmarked white masculinity. The marriage trope of U.S.-Korea relationship also revealed the ambivalence in American national imaginary. Marriage posits an alliance

between two reciprocal parties, but it also connotes an incorporation of the feminized other into the domestic space of a patriarchal-national family, through which an exploitative relationship of hierarchy is “naturalized” as an organic familial unity.⁴⁷ Batchelor’s couple appeared already estranged under the weight of contradiction in representing an unequal relationship as a marital union. Moreover, the striking duality of the bride as both virginal and deadly was a symbolic manifestation of the repression in American national consciousness, foreshadowing a future amnesia and a collective will to blot out the war in Korea from the memory of Americans.

Forgetting is a crucial factor in the nation-formation since it presupposes “a common past” consolidating a present consent to continue a national community. But if “deeds of violence which took place at the origin of all political formations” (Renan 45) come back haunting the collective consciousness as cultural pathology, or if the amnesia masks a reality that is relevant to us now in the post-Cold War era, it may be about time to face up the buried memories in order to mend a torn national psyche. For we live in a reality in which:

we all are a product of Korea whether we know it or not; it was the Korean War, not Greece or Turkey or the Marshall Plan or Vietnam, that inaugurated big defense budgets and the national security state, that transformed a limited containment doctrine into a global crusade, that ignited McCarthyism just as it seemed to fizzle, and thereby gave the Cold War its long run. (Cumings, *War and Television* 148)

⁴⁷ McClintock 44-45.

IV. Imagining Home in Cold War America: The Hollywood Korean War in *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* (1955) and *Battle Hymn* (1957)

Caught between the patriotically charged World War II films and the critically acclaimed Vietnam War movies, the Hollywood Korean War film seems as much forgotten as the “forgotten war” itself. About 50 films were produced with Korea as a direct or background setting beginning in 1951 with Samuel Fuller’s *The Steel Helmet* to 1963 when Vietnam took the foreground of the American public’s attention.⁴⁸ Trailing behind the fading memory of the glorious war and into the anxiety-ridden Cold War era, many Korean War films follow generic conventions of the World War II combat film with some Cold War-related variations while at the same time evolving in symbiosis with the contemporary popular Hollywood genres from film noir to family melodrama. It is precisely this unique historical locus that makes the Hollywood Korean War film an interesting semantic terrain through which emerging Cold War ideologies were probed, produced, and propagated. These films showcase a cultural arena in which the national imaginary of Manifest Destiny was promulgated positing the U.S. as the self-anointed leader in the emergent tripartite global system. What, then, are some of the conventions and characteristics of these Hollywood genres from the World War II combat film to the Korean War film to family melodrama? What specific Cold War ideologies are interwoven with the U.S. national imaginaries in these films? What do the films try to represent and underwrite, and in the process, what to repress and undermine?

⁴⁸ For an extensive filmography of the Korean War-related movies, see Lentz as well as Edwards.

This chapter examines several Korean War films, particularly *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* (Mark Robson, Paramount, 1955) and *Battle Hymn* (Douglas Sirk, Universal, 1957). Set during the Korean War, these films use the war mainly as a backdrop to tell the stories about Americans themselves, about their perceptions and rationalizations of the Cold War, about love and anxiety of their families, and about personal guilt and self-redemption. In cinematic form and style, they share generic characteristics of the contemporaneous Hollywood genres such as the World War II combat film, film noir and family melodrama. Notably, family is frequently at the narrative center of many Korean War films, and in portraying the war as a family drama, these films try to recast the U.S. as a coherent nation-family while at the same time integrating Asian peripheries into a neo-imperialist adoptive family of America. By examining such dramatizations of the war, I intend to illustrate that the Hollywood Korean War film functioned as a crucial cultural site through which postwar political-economic imperatives were translated into the U.S. national imaginary and consolidated with the proliferation of the technologies of Cold War government. Simultaneously, I am interested to see what contradictions may emerge in the cultural reworking of the political, what lies in the unconscious of the imagined nation, the forgotten, elided, and repressed terrains of the national imaginary.

1. A Genealogy of Hollywood Korean War Films: The Cold War as Family Drama

The Hollywood war film has a dual significance in locating the Korean War film as well as the war itself within the broader political economic context of the Cold War. The Hollywood World War II combat film not only establishes a paradigm for subsequent war films from Korea to Vietnam, but it is also an early product and

continuing propagator of the postwar Cold War world system. Hollywood's "conversion" to the "war film" was impelled as part and parcel of a massive defense buildup initiated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the prewar years of 1940 to 1941 in an effort to revitalize the American economy and bring the 1930s Great Depression to a definitive end. The defense industry was concentrated on the urban-industrial centers where the box office surged with the influx of laborers and army draftees coming for new factories and new army camps. As the U.S. entered the war after Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the movie industry "converted" to war production in support of the war effort, producing about 20 percent of war-related movies out of the total films released during the years of 1942 to 1945.⁴⁹ The Hollywood war film was then inextricably bound to the reconstitution of the American economy on the foundation of the military industry. It was both an offspring and a progenitor of the defense-based economy as the beneficiary of the war boom and the advertisement for its base system. In this way, the motion picture industry took part in setting up the roadmap for the postwar political economic system, laying a seedbed for the first "hot war" of the Cold War era.

The World War II combat film also set a paradigm for the later war movies, solidifying generic conventions and facilitating the combat film genre as an effective narrative apparatus of the U.S. national imaginary. Some conventions of the combat film include a focus on actual military battles, "last stand" conventions, the group dynamic and celebration of technology of the U.S. military, and the horrors of combat and

⁴⁹ For postwar historical circumstances, see Schatz 89-110. He discusses some representative World War II war movies as well as the historical context of the Hollywood's conversion to the war production. He sees *Casablanca* (1942) as an exemplary "conversion narrative" signaling the American conversion from neutrality to selfless sacrifice.

soldiering.⁵⁰ Particularly interesting is the composition of the combat unit in such a way as to represent “America” across all racial, ethnic, religious backgrounds, ideological, economic, class-related statuses as well as geographical origins. It provides a compelling narrative propaganda with a paradigmatic “mixed group” of “the American melting pot”: “They are from everywhere: West Point, Middle West, California, New York, Pittsburgh, the South, and nowhere. They are geographically mixed, as they are racially and intellectually” (Basinger 51-53). Then, as a product of the reshaping military-based political economic structure, the Hollywood war film also functioned as a cultural translator of the political imperatives, proposing the U.S. as superior not only morally but also in military technology and as an integrated nation of the “melting pot” in terms of class, race, ethnicity, religion, region, and so on.

Emerging out of the Hollywood war film, the Korean War movies revisit the familiar territory with some variations under the changing historical circumstances. The group unit is modified to include the Japanese as new friendly minorities and to redefine Communist China as the new enemy along with Russia. Now military technology features new jet airplanes, the helicopter, brainwashing techniques, and M.A.S.H. (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital). There is an increased cynicism about fighting wars and skepticism about military leadership, demonstrated as patrols that become lost, the “Ghost Patrol of the Korean War.” Moreover, the issue was not the war itself, but “a grab bag of current ideological and social problems” of the 1950s: “Communism, race relations, the morality of killing, juvenile delinquency, divorce, and family conflict” (Basinger 178). Out of these, two characteristics stand out as new generic conventions of

⁵⁰ See Schatz 112-14.

the Korean War film. One is the theme of “family conflict and/or responsibility”: “The Korean combat movies are about American families back home, American families waiting in Japan, and about love and romance in both places. Unlike their original World War II counterparts, they bring these stories directly onto the screen” (Basinger 178-79). The other convention is the use of civilians, especially orphaned children attached to the hero. By featuring women and children, the Korean War movies try to appeal to the audience’s sense of responsibility for civilians and thus, by extension, family, that “We must take care of them and teach them,” thereby justifying the inevitable question of “why we fight” again, “so soon.”⁵¹ Thus, descending from the World War II combat film genre, the Korean War film developed dialectically with the shifting political economic conditions of the Cold War and performed as a cultural apparatus propagandizing political and military imperatives of the era. Particularly, its emphasis on the family and the use of orphaned children are symptomatic of the emergence of a regime of Cold War government.

As a regulatory regime premised upon the Western logic of liberal democracy, Cold War governmentality was deployed to reorganize the postwar world order primarily in two ways: first, to integrate the so-called Third World peripheries into a U.S.-centered global free market system, and second, to arrange such a political-economic system through techniques of self-regulation by displacing historically specific and contingent social relations into de-historicized private domains of psychology or affective-familial dynamics. Confronted with the postwar dollar gap crisis as well as Communist challenges in Russia and China, the U.S. sought to maintain its wartime boom economy into the

⁵¹ See Basinger 176-79 for generic conventions of the Korean War film.

peacetime and ultimately its ascendancy as a global superpower by implementing a series of doctrines and institutions from the Truman Doctrine to the Marshall Plan, from NATO to World Bank to IMF. These political, financial and military establishments were primarily concerned to integrate the economic peripheries into the industrial cores or the Third World into the U.S.-centered First World in the postwar three-world system.⁵² In this sense, American Cold War foreign policy was as much a doctrine of “containing” the alleged Communist threat as a positive process of “integrating” the “free” world: vacillating between containment and co-optation, distantiation and affiliation, Cold War foreign policy was as much about containing the rival Communist bloc as it was about integrating newly decolonizing territories.⁵³ Moreover, this political-economic imperative of absorption was simultaneously recast in the domain of culture as expressions of individual hearts and minds. The U.S. tried to win the heart of the Third World nations by projecting American power as “benevolent supremacy” or a “benevolent” alternative to colonialism as it collapsed totalitarianism with Communism.⁵⁴

The discourse of “benevolent supremacy” was in fact nothing but a Cold War global deployment of the “modernization” ideology grafted upon the American nationalist imaginary of Manifest Destiny. It was a euphemistic term of Cold War diplomacy for “imperial tutelage” under which newly liberated nations in the Third

⁵² According to McCormick, the overriding goal of American foreign policy was the “integration of a reindustrialized Germany into a European economic-military unit, the integration of Japan and the Asian rimlands into a regional entity, the integration of the Third World periphery and semiperiphery into the industrial cores, and the integration of all into all. One world, and free!” (106)

⁵³ See Klein (19-60) for the specific ways in which the two Cold War global imaginaries of containment and integration were developed and proliferated as affective structures of fear and a sentimental sense of self-in-relation.

⁵⁴ See McAlister (43-63) for her analysis of the discourse of “benevolent supremacy” in U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East.

World should be chaperoned out of the alleged “colonial nonage” in order to achieve a state of self-determination or modernization.⁵⁵ The postwar “modernization theory” was an American brand of European modernity geared up to constitute the West with the center in the United States stressing that any society can rationalize itself on the linear path towards progress, but the particular model of rationality was always America: “progress always means Americanization” (Sakai 97-98). In other words, the modernization theory was a postwar adaptation of European modernity⁵⁶ with American nationalism at the core of its universalism. In this sense, the politics of Cold War government was conceived in the Western tradition of Enlightenment liberalism and promulgated by a particular ideology of “American nationalist globalism” (Fousek 7) – an American national imaginary that sought to realize its nationalist values in the postwar global arena. In this national-global imaginary, concrete social relations were displaced

⁵⁵ Recasting imperialism in the affective vocabulary of “benevolence,” Cold War politics also meshed the postwar economic theory of “modernization” with a psychopolitics of identity or “identitarian governmentality.” The concept of “identity,” first emerged in the 1950s as part of Cold War psychopolitics, posits identity as one’s inherent right to self-determination, a psychologized concept of autonomy preceding historical and societal conditions, of sovereignty detached from territory and state. Implicitly, as the individual acquires one’s identity by growing up through adolescence to maturity, newly sovereign nations emerge from “colonial nonage” and are in need of the Western institutions for “protection” and “tutelage” in order to achieve a state of self-determination. See Medovoi 11.

⁵⁶ The politics of Cold War governmentality can be understood as an American adaptation of the European idea of modernity – the ontology of universal inclusion into its linear time scheme of advancement. As an attempt to naturalize the particular political rationale as universal truth in the imagined mapping of U.S.-world relations of power, its integrationist stance towards the Third World is tantamount to the absorption and obliteration of the other in the “all-inclusive” project of modernity. The modern “politics of inclusivity” posits the telos of human history as the achievement of absolute oneness between humanity and the essence of the highest form, be it God, Spirit, Reason, or Freedom, and in the process, all that fall outside the determined path to agreement are branded as abnormal and to be eliminated as “otherness”: “The politics of inclusivity engenders the assimilation of otherness” (Connolly 87). Put differently, “Europe” as a particular historical subject of modernity imposes itself as the universal and reduces all particularities as the other. With the emergent postwar political-economic conditions marked by U.S. global hegemony, in particular, this claim to universality shifted its particular emphasis from the European notion of modernity to the American theory of modernization.

and co-opted as women who found work and independence during the wartime economy were absorbed into the self-contained nuclear family, as the international racial alliance traded its anti-colonial egalitarianism with the Truman Doctrine's anti-Communist nationalism for domestic civil rights measures, and as Asia was re-conceptualized as the "Pacific Rim," an abstract spatialization according to the linear temporality of the modernization theory.⁵⁷

This national-global imaginary of Manifest Destiny constitutes the particular cultural terrain through which the political-economic absorption of the Third World was translated into imaginary national-familial relations. This narrative site of the Cold War was premised upon a patriarchal economy, envisioning America as a racially and sexually integrated national family and thereby attempting to reinvigorate mythic white masculinity and reproduce racial, sexual, and gendered elisions. It is a mythic narrative of inclusion that transforms systems of "exploitation and oppression" into "mutuality and originary sameness" romanticizing social hierarchy as a sentimental (interracial) male bonding relation (Wiegman 157).⁵⁸ In the postwar historical context, furthermore, the white patriarchal imaginary of a nation-as-family extended to incorporate the Third World into an empire-as-adoptive family. As the national narrative imagines a coherent America by "including" racial, sexual, and gendered otherness into the national family of

⁵⁷ See Elaine Tyler May for sexual containment in Cold War nuclear family, Penny M. von Eschen for a history of racial political resistance and Cold War co-optation, and Bruce Cumings's *Parallax Vision* about the emergence of "area studies" in Cold War America.

⁵⁸ The integrationist national myth developed in the specific context of the Cold War, in which civil rights movements pressed the integration of the American national other in order to reassert the white patriarchal paternity as the historical subject of a pure, "uncontaminated," and transcendental America. This "homoerotic" male bond, while purging intimations of homosexuality, reproduces simultaneously the subsumption of women to compulsory reproduction and the elision of the "dark man's subjectivity" eschewed for the "nostalgia of Anglo-American males." See Wiegman 157.

white patriarchy, the Cold War rhetoric of integration attempts to absorb the Third World other under the “benevolent tutelage” of a white patriarchal America by “adopting” those others as wives, sons, and pupils. Just as the narrative inclusion of America’s internal other is designed to recuperate the mythic white masculinity, the Cold War integration of the Third World is premised upon the American nationalist myth of Manifest Destiny.

Specifically, this integrationist myth operates on the liberal logic of “reciprocity” in the symbolic economy of gift and debt. In the imperial ledger of “reciprocity,” “liberation” enters as a “gift” simultaneously incurring “indebtedness” in the part of “the liberated.”⁵⁹ The politics of Cold War governmentality was based upon such economic rationality of modern liberalism, legitimating violence as “accidental” in the process of attaining “liberation and rehabilitation” and as a result asserting American “innocence” and the “absence of malice” (Yoneyama 80). The liberated are presented as “belated new comers” who should bite the bullet of bitter history to catch up in the developmentalist path towards political-economic modernity while the white paternalist America is posited as allegedly pure and innocent, morally intact and magnanimously liberal, as the legitimate patriarch of both the national and imperial adoptive family. This mythic white masculine figure is embodied in the American Cold War global subject, who, as the emissary of “benevolent” imperialism and the liberal economy of reciprocity, represents the American nationalist global imaginary by resorting to sentimental literature as a

⁵⁹ Saidiya V. Hartman, in her study on the construction of modern black subjectivity with the abolition of slavery, claims that “[e]mancipation instituted indebtedness”: Emancipation, represented as “gifts” bestowed by paternalistic white liberalism, entailed “already accrued debt” and introduced the freed to “the circuits of exchange” mandating them both to “repay this investment of faith” and “prove their worthiness” (131). In this liberal economy of reciprocity, state violence of the past is liquidated into “benevolence” of white freedom-fighters and gift-givers while the burden of history is atomized onto the shoulders of the liberated now responsible to pay back by being “grateful” and by striving to become “worthy” liberal subjects.

venue for expression. He descends from the figure of a modern bourgeois subject, who, as a way to reconceive European imperialism according to the logic of emergent industrial capitalism, developed the myth of “anti-conquest”: an ideology whereby European bourgeois subjects tried to secure their “innocence” while maintaining European hegemony by resorting to sentimental literature as a means to deploy the capitalist rationalization of planetary “hierarchization” as a drama of “reciprocity.”⁶⁰ As such, the notion of “anti-conquest” resonates with the American Cold War imaginary of “benevolent supremacy,” finds an effective vernacular expression in the form of sentimental melodrama, and represents the U.S. imperialist intervention in Asia as a reciprocal partnership.

The Hollywood Korean War film, as a cultural crucible of U.S. foreign policy decisions, functions as a popular interpreter of the logic of Cold War government, portraying the U.S. as the melting pot of different races and ethnicities harmoniously integrated, as the nuclear family based on the heterosexual marriage, and as part of a global adoptive family. Specifically, the politics of Cold War governmentality was being elaborated in terms of integration, of the self in relation to others in sentimental family melodrama. Sentimentality, as a sense of feeling “right” for other human beings,

⁶⁰ As a bourgeois cognitive mapping of the world, “planetary consciousness” posits a benign homely traveler-naturalist whose apparent purpose is to collect and systematize all the flora and fauna on the earth, projecting an image of a European bourgeois subject “simultaneously innocent and imperial,” asserting a hegemonic vision with no apparent apparatus of domination. The bourgeois traveler premises his global imaginary on the sentimental writing, and by anchoring its expression in the “sensory experience, judgment, agency, or desires of human subjects,” that is, in the “authenticity” of “felt experience,” he displaces imperial imperatives as affective relations. Moreover, the sentimentalized global imaginary represents the imperialist expansion of capitalism as “a drama of reciprocity,” appropriating the reciprocity of gift exchanges whereby suppressing “the difference between equal and unequal exchange” and underwriting “the greatest non-reciprocal non-exchange of all time: the civilizing mission.” See Pratt 33-85.

connotes morality and provides a universalizing mode of imagining the self in relation to others as part of abstract humanity. In the Enlightenment tradition, emotion was recognized as bodily in nature or as “embodied thought,” connoting one’s “involvedness” and morality in that feeling “right” or having compassion for other human beings was regarded as a moral and virtuous human faculty (Howard 66-71). In this sense, sentimentality can be characterized as social and relational in that emotion can be defined as one’s feeling for, with, and in relation to others, that is, one’s identification with another. Sentimentality as an empathetic mode of inter-personal bonding, however, is double-edged and could generate repressive effects. In projecting oneself into another as a way to better understand the other, empathy attributes one’s own emotions to the object and as a result, obliterates the other. Sentimentality, therefore, seems a mode of expression particularly suited to the modern rationality of universal inclusivity, which turns out to be a project of self-preservation through the absorption and obliteration of otherness. The object of empathy ultimately eludes us because “it can only be brought near by way of a proxy,” proving sentimental empathy to be “an optics of morality that insists upon the other as a mirror of the self” (Hartman 20).

It seems no accident that melodrama, whose signature style of expression is sentimentality, was the representative mode of bourgeois art and functioned to translate the ontology of modern liberalism by purging reality into affective relations of democratic reciprocity. Melodrama is by definition a drama created out of “the banal stuff of reality,” charging the “real” and the “ordinary” with intense significances through “the indulgence of strong emotionalism” and “moral polarization,” and as a result, allowing us “the pleasures of self-pity and the experience of wholeness brought by the

identification with ‘monopathic’ emotion” (Brooks 2, 12). Just as sentimentality was collapsed with morality, melodrama emerged as the “moral occult” – a secular means to fill the gap resulted from the “desacralization” and the dissolution of an organic feudal society following the French Revolution (Brooks 15). Moreover, the rise of bourgeoisie implied “bourgeois democracy” whose presumed world of “equals” transposed the locus of power from social relations onto the private domain of “reciprocating” family members, “interiorizing” and “personalizing” ideological conflicts as Oedipal drama, gender relations, or sexual exploitations.⁶¹ Positing home as a democratic space whereby questions of social power are symbolically resolved as affective-moral problems, melodrama seems an effective apparatus to convey the Cold War imaginary of national coherence and global integration. As such, the Hollywood family melodrama functioned as a cultural translator of Cold War government by proposing a sentimental solution for a “morally” polarized world and integrating all into a national/global adoptive family. In this sense, the Korean War film functioned as a vernacular time-space dramatizing/displacing Cold War ideologies as questions of emotions and ethics while mobilizing the public support for specific foreign policy goals from the actual war to various ideological crusades.

Thus, the Hollywood Korean War film played a critical role in the crucial decade of the emerging Cold War. Modifying the generic conventions of the World War II combat film with the idiosyncratic family melodrama, it served as a cultural terrain in which Cold War politics of governmentality was translated into affective/moral relations.

⁶¹ Regarding the rise of melodrama as a bourgeois form of art and its stylistic characteristics in the tradition of the Hollywood family melodrama, see Elsaesser (43-69) and Nowell-Smith (70-74) in Christine Gledhill’s book.

Under the Cold War regime, political-social relations were portrayed as domestic relations where the divides of different race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and nationality were incorporated into the national-global family of America. In Korean War films, the war itself was figured mostly as a backdrop for a domesticated allegory of nation, positing the United States as an integrated nation-family as well as a benevolent/paternal partner of the Third World in the global adoptive family. However, culture is not only a site of capitalist commodification and reproduction of hegemonic relations of production but also a critical terrain in which contradictions manifest and contestations surface. Then, what contradictions, if not contestations, might emerge simultaneously while the politics of governmentality attempts to deploy the cinematic interpretation of the Korean War in the service of the American Cold War imaginary? I hope to examine several Hollywood Korean War films not only as an illustration of the American nationalist imaginary but also as an occasion to ponder upon contradictions such political imperatives might generate.

2. The Korean War and the Adoptive Family of “Benevolent” Imperialism

The Korean War film, as a grab bag of contemporary ideological and social questions, captures a multiplicity of national-global power relations and subsumes them into the Cold War imaginary of “American nationalist globalism” (Fousek 7). *The Manchurian Candidate* (John Frankenheimer, MGM 1962) revisits the Korean War as a fearsome site of film noir with phallic mothers, yellow perils, and brainwashing Communists only to integrate them into the imaginary family-nation. Other films intermix the combat film with the family melodrama in order to address various doubts

and fears about the war, the separation and disintegration of the family – *I Want You* (Mark Robson, Goldwyn, 1951) and *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* (1955), racial-ethnic conflicts in the recently integrated military – *Pork Chop Hill* (Lewis Milestone, Melville, 1959) and *All the Young Men* (Hall Bartlett, Columbia, 1960), anxieties about encountering the Asian others – *One Minute to Zero* (Tay Garnett, Grainger 1952) and *Battle Hymn* (1957), and the ultimate integration of all into the national imaginary. In these films, Korea/Asia is variously portrayed as partners and pupils, if not enemies, as part of the adoptive family of “benevolent supremacy.”

In Korean War films, the image of family is frequently employed to re-envision postwar America as a coherent national family by re-absorbing working women into the recuperated family with their veteran husbands as patriarchs or by containing/integrating racial others into the metaphoric family of a combat unit under white paternal leadership. Korean War films often pick up where World War II films left behind, calling men back to war while (ad)ressing the gash caused in the family with the imaginary bandage of nation-family. An early Korean War film, *I Want You* (1951) is one exemplary case in point. Set at the outbreak of the war, it portrays an American family torn between drafted sons and their resentful wives and mothers. With one son already lost in the previous war, the Greers agonize over the other two sons: one is a veteran who wants to re-enlist and the other draftee is the youngest son. As the title implies, they are wanted by both the nation and the family, and the conflict is resolved by a marital union between the youngest son and his girlfriend, conflating the domestic space with the national imaginary. Similarly, in *One Minute to Zero*, a widow whose husband was killed in World War II takes up his legacy and returns as a UN health official to another war in Korea

where she “vaccinates” Korean civilian refugees presumably against the infectious disease of North Korean Communism. In bringing the home front into the imperial space of war and politics, she is in turn integrated back into the domestic sphere by marrying Colonel Janowski (Robert Mitchum), another veteran returnee.

America as a rehabilitated patriarchal nation-family is also re-enacted as a racially integrated combat unit. For example, *Pork Chop Hill* and *All the Young Men*, following the World War II combat film conventions, tell the “last stand” stories of American platoons whose melting-pot group dynamics highlight shifting attitudes towards racial-ethnic boundaries. In *Pork Chop Hill*, Lieutenant Clemons (Gregory Peck) is in fact given a double duty, one to secure a “hill” from the Chinese army and the other to persuade his reluctant African American soldier Franklin (Woody Strode) to join the battle. Grunting and angry, Franklin keeps refusing to fight and hides in a shack while the remaining company leaves for the grim, sure-to-lose last stand battle. In a crucial scene where Clemons finds and confronts the hiding man, who threatens to shoot him knowing that he will be court-martialed anyway for defection and have to serve in prison, their dialogue echoes the contemporary mood of escalating civil rights movements at the turn of the fifties:

Franklin: Not when I can kill you right now, and nobody can call it murder.

Clemons: Nobody but you.

Franklin: Not even me. Ten years, you say. Real quick, like you say it. Ten years for what? ‘Cause I don’t want to die for Korea? What do I care about this stinkin’ hill? You ought to see where I live back home. I sure ain’t sure I’d die for that. It’s a cinch I ain’t gonna die for Korea, serve ten years for it, neither.

Clemons: Chances are you’re gonna die, like it or not. So am I, whether you shoot me or not. At least we’ve got a chance to do it in pretty good company. A lot of them came up here last night. They don’t care any

more about Korea than you do. A lot of 'em had it just as rough at home as you did. But they came up and fought. There's about 25 of them left. It's a pretty exclusive club, but you can still join up. If you want to.

Collapsing racial discrimination with class difference, Clemons successfully persuades Franklin to join the “exclusive club” and stand against their “common” enemy for the sake of their shared “home.” One year later in 1960, the theme of racial integration evolves to become the central axis of the plot in *All the Young Men*, in which the black man is now elevated to the position of a platoon leader and the racial tension between him and his mostly white men is symbolically or rather too blatantly resolved by having him transfuse his “blood” to his wounded white nemesis.

If African Americans are to be acknowledged as “blood” brothers in the founding of the nation, Asians realign stereotypically from “yellow peril” to “model minority.” The Chinese are transformed from an ally suffering from the Japanese imperial aggression to the treacherous “gook” in *Pork Chop Hill*, blasting their propaganda over loudspeakers in order to “brainwash” and win over American defectors. The Chinese and North Koreans, if they are recognized at all as different from South Koreans, are often conflated as the enemy in ambush, trying to infiltrate a defense cordon disguised as civilian refugees and making civilian sacrifices inevitable on the American part as in *One Minute to Zero*. The Japanese take the reverse course from the “subhuman” enemy during World War II to a benign and complying “partner.” In *Pork Chop Hill*, Lt. Clemons’s “buddy” is Japanese American Lt. O’Hashi or “Tsugi” (George Shibata) as Clemons calls him. O’Hashi is portrayed as Clemons’s “equal,” himself the leader of his own company alongside Clemons’s. They are ready to let go of the uneasy memories from the past and accept each other as “partners” in a scene where they talk about a possible bayonet charge:

O'Hashi: You know, my ancestors were pretty good at this banzai business.

Clemons: What do you know? A real, live volunteer.

O'Hashi: I never volunteer. Let's just say. I accept your kind offer.

Clemons: We're trying to make a coordinated attack. [...] You know, you may become a historical figure: the last man ever to lead a bayonet charge.

The portrayal of the Japanese as an “equal partner” to America reflects the postwar conditions that impelled the integration of not only Japanese Americans but also Japan into the U.S.-hegemonic world system.

As illustrated in the above examples, the Hollywood Korean War film was not so much about the war itself, about the historical conditions and conflicts of interests involved in the peninsula. Rather it was primarily preoccupied with zooming in on America, propagating its perspectives and its interests, and enacting its nationalist global imaginary. To put it differently, the Korean War functioned as the wilderness, the pre-symbolic site of nature, into which American male heroes escape away from the muddled social realities in order to recuperate the mythic white masculinity by striking a sentimental bonding with their historical other. The metaphoric gesture of bonding, however, entails the obliteration of otherness in avoiding historical specificities and instead relying on the de-historicized, psychic or emotional identification with the other. The nominalist inclusions of America's others from working women as a UN health official to African Americans and Japanese Americans as part of the team are imaginable insofar as they remain within the normative vision of white masculinist America. Elided in the imperialist myth of inclusivity is the historical violence from slavery to segregation to lynching of African Americans, from the internment of Japanese Americans to Hiroshima, and from Japanese colonialism to the forced division by the U.S. and Soviet

Union to the civil war itself in Korea. Curiously then, Korea is absent in the Korean War films, yet its presence resonates in the hollow of the American Cold War rhetoric.

If not already, often literally, obliterated from the scenes of their civil war, Koreans are otherwise included as modern subjects, newly arrived at the threshold of modernity and introduced to the liberal economic circuits of sentimental reciprocity. They are usually portrayed as war orphans, civilian refugees, or military “pupils” who would “reciprocate” Americans’ generous “gifts” from Hershey’s chocolate to military aid by providing “native” services as child protégés and “nurturing natives” for American heroes. Korean War films frequently feature civilian characters such as children and women from “Short Round,” a small Korean boy attached to the hero in *The Steel Helmet*, to a refugee boy who ends up working for the widow-cum-UN health officer in *One Minute to Zero*, to Chu, an orphaned boy who Colonel Dean Hess metaphorically adopts in *Battle Hymn* to Ms. Yang, again in *Battle Hymn*, as the “nurturing native” for the hero. As children who need mature to become responsible modern subjects and as women who need protection and a family, Korea is relegated to a subterranean site through which the political-economic rationale of modernization is deployed as the formation of modern subjectivity, and the absorption of Korea into the capitalist three-world system is staged as sentimental integration into an adoptive-imperial American family. Korea, as an unfamiliar locus of the imperialist war, functions as the racialized/foreign other against which America is constituted as a distinct, coherent, and familiar home. In other words, the process of “domestication” coincides with the imperial project of “civilizing” as the national imaginary of Manifest Destiny integrates America’s internal others into the patriarchal nation-family of “manifest domesticity” by projecting

the imperial other as “the foreign” against which “the nation can be imagined as home” (Kaplan, “Manifest Domesticity” 582). This imperialist imaginary of “manifest domesticity” operates in the Cold War continuum of American nationalist universalism.

Korean War melodramas such as *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* and *Battle Hymn* seize the war as a narrative occasion to deploy the Cold War imaginary of “manifest domesticity.” The hero is a bourgeois subject, innocent and non-imperial, and a homely family man, who “travels” to Korea not for a military glory or an ideological victory, but out of existential responsibility or as a spiritual journey to self-redemption. The two films develop around a central drama of sentiment such as the love of family, fear of death, romantic passion, jealousy, guilt, moral conscience, sympathy, humanism, and so on. In this melodramatic time-space of the Korean War, the Cold War political and economic imperatives are displaced as a conflict of emotion and morality, thus resolvable by the bourgeois economy of reciprocity. Needless to say, the myth of reciprocity among nations, represented as two parallel families, domestic partners, filial relations, or fellow travelers, occludes the implicit hierarchy within such binary couplings and obscures instances of subjection and violence as acts of humanitarian rescue and recovery. Through the process, moreover, America is once again imagined as a coherent family-nation-empire with the male hero as the patriarchal-planetary subject of American-world history.

James Michener, himself a bourgeois traveler in Cold War Asia, offers in *The Voice of Asia* his rationale for writing a story about the Korean War in *The Bridges at Toko-Ri*. As an explanation of “the simple A-B-C’s of America’s existence,” he relies on a moralistic rhetoric to justify the war of containment: “I tried to explain how if we had not

gone into Korea all of Southeast Asia would have fallen to the Chinese Communists. Finally, I endeavored to assure these doubting men that morality and right were with us” (65). Echoing the author’s pronounced intention, the movie has been typically received as an archetypical Cold War propaganda film, “with red-baiting politics, a strongly pro-military agenda, and an absolute blindness to the situation it addresses” (Mayo 463). But some critics argue that the film bases its moral justification of the war not as much on the claim of unequivocal commitment to the war’s meaning as conventional war films do. Rather it relies on the characteristic Cold War mode of representation in terms of negative existentialism: the soaring jet pilot’s “freedom” is simultaneously “subjugation” dictated by the overpowering and inscrutable “fate,” just as the military technological “might” is a sign of “weakness” against the immensity of “nature” (Schwartz 29). In this sense, it is not surprising that some critics find the film’s stance towards official discourse “ambivalent” and self-undermining, but I would argue that this is precisely the locus through which Cold War negative politics produce the myth of “anti-conquest,” proposing the simultaneity of subjugation and freedom, military might and existential weakness, violence and liberation. And the effective formal conduit for such politics is of course to blend the combat film genre with “the emotionally excessive, ideologically ambiguous dynamics of Family Melodrama” (Worland 360).

The Bridges at Toko-Ri portrays the conception of the Cold War as a drama of the national-global family by combining the combat film with family melodrama. The hero, Lieutenant Harry Brubaker (William Holden), represents a Cold Warrior-cum-bourgeois subject with Cold War planetary consciousness while his wife Nancy (Grace Kelly) is the emissary of manifest domesticity, integrating the home front into the imperial space.

Harry is not so much a military warrior as a bourgeois civilian. A lawyer from Denver and reluctant carrier pilot, he is “bitter” because he was called up again from his reserve service and had to give up his “home,” his “law practice, everything.” Having his “innocence” established as a loving family man and hard-working middle-class citizen, he is also educated as a Cold War imperial subject by Admiral Tarrant (Fredric March), a trenchant Cold Warrior, who symbolically “adopts” Harry as a surrogate son to substitute his two sons lost in the previous war:

TARRANT: You don't quit, and go on doing your job because you're here. It's just as simple as that. Son, whatever progress this world has made, it's always been because of the efforts and sacrifices of a few.

BRUBAKER: I was one of the few, Admiral, at New Guinea, Leyte, Okinawa. Why does it have to be me again?

TARRANT: Nobody ever knows why he gets the dirty job, and this is a dirty job. Militarily, this war is a tragedy.

BRUBAKER: I think we ought to pull out.

TARRANT: That's rubbish, son, and you know it. If we did, they'd take Japan, Indochina, the Philippines. Where would you have us make our stand, at the Mississippi? All through history, men have had to fight the wrong war in the wrong place, but that's the one they're stuck with. That's why one of these days we'll knock out those bridges at Tokori.

Harry Brubaker is simultaneously an “innocent” American and an imperial subject who accepts his “dirty job,” which is after all only a mission of destroying a bunch of “bridges,” as an existential fate and out of planetary responsibility.

While Harry represents a Cold War global subject epitomizing the myth of “anti-conquest,” his wife Nancy provides a sentimental integration of the family-nation into the global empire. With a “perfect blond wife” and “freshly scrubbed children” (Mayo 463), Harry's family is presented as a perfect American nuclear family of heterosexual union and an ideal nation worthy of its self-imposed global leadership. As Michener's intended

American audience, Nancy is transformed, by Tarrant once again, from ignorance and indifference to acknowledgment and support of the war:

NANCY: I don't even want to think about it. I suppose to you that's a sign of weakness, isn't it?

TARRANT: Maybe not weakness. But like most people at home, you've been protected. You're ignorant and defenseless. [...] Perhaps, if you don't let yourself think about certain things. If you refuse to acknowledge what you're up against, terrible consequences can follow.

Subsequently, Nancy shares with Harry in an intimate conjugal bedroom setting about the details of “those bridges” he has to demolish, and having been informed, she comes to acknowledge and stand by the nation’s planetary mission: “I know what the admiral was trying to tell me. I had to face those bridges, too. Well, I have. And I’ll be all right now.” Significantly, she is conflated in the following scene with “Tilly,” a large mobile crane used to block an incoming plane from crashing into the rest of the aircraft on the deck. As a barrier to protect the home, Nancy is the “bulwark” to contain external threats, against which she also embodies the steadfast and integrated home front – a statuesque figure of America symbolizing the mythic origin and locus of pure “Americanness.”

As such, the film dramatizes the U.S. Cold War imaginary, positing America as a patriarchal nation-family simultaneously reliant upon recuperating mythic white masculinity and eliding women either outside national history or inside the norms of compulsory reproduction. Admiral Tarrant represents the compulsion of the national imaginary to establish a masculinist genealogy of American history. As the symbolic father of America and its liberal cause, he claims historical legitimacy of a male genealogy as he, a World War II veteran, sacrificed his two sons in America’s “good war” and symbolically adopts Harry to continue his patrilineage. An aged savvy paternal

figure and a determined military leader, he is the protagonist of American “anti-conquest,” the “seeing-man” “whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess” (Pratt 7). His watchful eye is omnipresent, watching Harry coming back or leaving for a flight, Harry happy with his family or saying goodbye to his wife, or Harry in morbid fear of death before his destined mission. Like the stern figure of Uncle Sam in the military conscript poster that says, “I Want You,” he pensively wonders after Harry’s death, “Where do we get such men?” In contrast to his heroic sons, his women are too weak, unhealthy or mad, thus outside the normative path of history: after his son George’s death, his daughter-in-law simply crumbled, first “making love with every man in uniform” and becoming suicidal out of self-loathing, while his wife became demented with the loss of two sons, “sitting quietly alone in her room, knitting a baby’s sweater.” Or women are to be integrated into national history as a bulwark of manifest domesticity, illustrated by his symbolic adoption of Nancy.

The U.S. Cold War imaginary, premised upon the masculinist elision of women, is also reliant upon the imperialist myth of inclusivity, equating violence with benevolence and the appropriation of the Third World with integration into the “free” world. The sentimental integration of the home front into the Cold War planetary vision extends to incorporate America’s new ally Japan on the basis of presumed equivalence. The logic of reciprocity in the imperial space is deployed in metaphoric relations of domesticity as lovers and wives of American servicemen and as parallel families. A rescue helicopter pilot, Mike Forney’s ill-fated romantic passion for a Japanese woman, Kimiko, is a comical precursor to a full-blown romance consummated in an inter-racial marital union in *Sayonara*, Michener’s other famous novel-turned-into-film. The one-

time enemy Japan is even more significantly incorporated as America's partner in a bathhouse scene. The Brubaker family are enjoying at the hotel's sulphur baths until they are interrupted by a Japanese family, a couple with two little daughters, who politely bow and undress before getting into the adjoining pool. Scandalized at first, the Brubakers soon befriend the Japanese family, with the four girls exchanging greetings in Japanese and introducing themselves. In a noteworthy shot, the mother and two daughters of each family paddle towards the dividing wall between the two pools so that the two families face each other like a mirror (Figure 5). The Japanese wife asks Nancy, pointing at the Brubaker girls, "Belong you?" and then at her own two, "Belong me." As she compliments Nancy by saying, "Happy family," Nancy echoes beaming, "Yes, happy family!" In this domesticated space of melodrama, imperialist relations of domination and subjugation are occluded as familial equivalence, and the history of postwar U.S. occupation of Japan and absorption of Asian peripheries into the capitalist world system is obscured as a drama of bourgeois marital and familial unions, as an introduction to bourgeois values and "modernization."

What is striking, or not-so-striking, is a total absence of Koreans in a film about the Korean War. In this cinematic imagining of the U.S.-Asia relation as a family melodrama, the modernist myth of inclusivity comes full circle, literally obliterating the other into the reified object of a few obscure "bridges" to be destroyed and subsumed for the fulfillment of a telos. In this sense, the "bridges" of the film symbolize three dimensions of the imperial space (Figure 6). First, the "bridge" is the control bridge of the navy carrier from which the "imperial eye" of Admiral Tarrant presides and manages the American nation-empire. His radio code name is "Jehovah," confirming not simply

his “patriarchal authority” as Rick Worland suggests (364), but more significantly his “all-seeing” imperial aspiration. Second, the “bridges” at Toko-ri as a stage setting are symbolic of metonymic reduction of the other in the construction of the imperial subject. Complex historical circumstances leading to the Korean War as well as the atrocities of war are subsumed into a convenient image of “enemy bridges,” a monolithic and dehumanizing construction of the other. Finally, there are “real” bridges such as the one in No Gun Ri where hundreds of civilian refugees – mostly women, children, and old men were killed by U.S. forces in July 1950⁶² or the ones in North Gyeongsang Province jammed with civilian refugees over whom U.S. warplanes strafed under the command of the U.S. Eighth Army in Korea to stop all civilian refugees from crossing the lines because there *might* be hiding “enemies” in ambush.⁶³ These “military” targets of U.S. bombing raids included North Korean cities such as Pyongyang, Sinuiju and Wonsan completely leveling them “off the map” or those “strategic bridges” often meant irrigation dams that provided water for 75% of the North’s food production.⁶⁴ In reaching beyond the national boundaries and positioning America in relation to others in the integrated global space, the American Cold War subject seeks “himself,” the mythic home of national oneness and historical fulfillment. But such re-presentation/repetition of the “home” in the cultural time-space of the Hollywood Korean War film is predicated upon the “un-homely” subterranean space of Korea, as the “uncanny” bridges in unfamiliar mountainous terrains of Korea where over three million people were killed out

⁶² See Hanley, et al., *The Bridge at No Gun Ri*.

⁶³ Kim Dong-choon, “Forgotten War” 530.

⁶⁴ Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun* 292-96.

of then 30 million population,⁶⁵ or as the bridges at No Gun Ri where civilian refugees were massacred by the American military.

Battle Hymn, another melodrama set in Korea, was directed by Douglas Sirk, a favorite with film critics in the “anti-realist” tradition of seventies neo-Marxism. He is acclaimed as using melodrama in order to disclose the contradictions of bourgeois ideology, the “discrepancy of seeming and being” (Elsaesser 68), through distancing devices, irony, parody, *mise-en-scène*, and other stylistic excesses.⁶⁶ Largely ignored as a “failure” among his oeuvre, *Battle Hymn* is a melodramatic war film based on the true story of Colonel Dean Hess, who was both a chaplain and a flyer during the Korean War and airlifted hundreds of Korean War orphans to safety. Sirk was apparently attracted to the story because of the potential ambiguity in the character of Dean Hess, both a bomber and a savior, who escaped into patriotism as a way to redeem himself from the guilt of having bombed an orphanage in Germany during World War II, but the outcome was a sentimental melodrama without any hint of distancing, irony, or alienation.⁶⁷ As a result, the film ends up portraying the U.S. Cold War imaginary in conventional terms of melodrama, hardly distinguishable from those of typical Hollywood movies such as *The Bridges at Toko-Ri*. Historical complexities of U.S. Cold War politics in East Asia are obscured as familial relations of reciprocity and Korea is represented as the object of the hero’s sympathy only to be obliterated in the spectacle of sentimentality.

⁶⁵ Halliday and Cumings 200.

⁶⁶ For a discussion of Douglas Sirk’s significance in the history of the Hollywood family melodrama, see Schatz, “The Family Melodrama,” *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1981) 221-60.

⁶⁷ The director gives two reasons for the failure to bring out a “split” character; one because Col. Hess himself was constantly on the set supervising every scene and two because Rock Hudson was miscast for the role as his “straight goodness of heart and uncomplicated directness” made him unfitting for a split character. See Sirk 122-27.

Like Harry Brubaker, Dean Hess (Rock Hudson) is also a World War II veteran and a bomber pilot, but he comes to Korea out of his own volition. Another Cold War bourgeois traveler, an innocent family man, and a faithful pastor, he decides to go back to war as an escape from his guilt of having killed 37 children on a bombing raid over Germany. His guilt, a “debt” to those he killed in the previous war, is then the central motif of his saving children in the present one, and it is his guilt-debt, the “central tragedy and scandal” of his failure to reciprocate, that is, to make payment for his sin, which provides the basis for his “claim” upon the orphans he “saves” (Pratt 97). Recast as a spiritual journey of an American bourgeois subject’s self-redemption, the myth of reciprocity is enacted in the film, equating the hero’s “debt-guilt” with his right to claim ownership and self-redemption. In this self-dramatization, the Korean War orphans, playing themselves in the film, are no more than stylistic props of melodrama, providing a spectacle to solicit sympathy from the audience by digging garbage cans, picking breadcrumbs on the dirt, trudging in a long line of refugees for a possible safe haven, or performing “Arirang,” a traditional folk song and dancing, for their “benevolent” white father. As a spectacle, the orphans are turned spectral, their suffering becomes no more than a reified object of the hero’s sympathy, their subjectivity is brought about only as a mirror of the white male subject, and the historical specificities of the Korean War are lost in the convenient resolution of an emotional/ moral catharsis.

The sentimental narrative of reciprocity further dramatizes the imperialist myth of integration, equating the relations of domination and subjugation with affective-familial relations of equality. The U.S.-Korea relationship is presented as a reciprocal companionship of military-political and spiritual partners. Colonel Hess’s primary

mission in Korea is to train a detail of Korean pilots in American aircraft and tactics thereby “launch” Air Force of the Republic of Korea, marking the “originary” moment of the Korean military-nation coming into being and maturation under the “tutelage” of American institutions. It is an apt illustration of Cold War governmentality displacing the cooptation of the Third World into the tripartite world system as a linear progress from premodern adolescence to modernized maturity. The hierarchy implicit in the logic of modernization theory is nevertheless represented as a relation of anti-imperial reciprocity: at the newly established air force “headquarter,” the Stars and Stripes is flown side by side with the South Korean national flag (Figure 5). Another image of reciprocity can be found in the sublimated, rather than consummated, relationship between Dean Hess and Ms. Yang. Yang is a Korean woman – or rather an Indian-Korean woman played by an Indian-American actress, Anna Kashfi – who takes care of the orphans for the hero, “a virgin mother” of the white protagonist’s surrogate children (Chung Hye Seung 106). She is also a figure of the “nurturing native,” who tends to the suffering American out of “pity, spontaneous kindness, or erotic passion” (Pratt 96): at the end of her “spiritual” concubinage, the non-American dies an early death, conveniently removed and sublimated for a spiritual consummation. The last and lasting image of the film is a close shot of “twin pine trees” she told him about, “mirroring each other” and growing “out of the graves of two lovers who could not have each other in this life” (Figure 5). And the American hero is of course reabsorbed by his American family.

The liberal vision of sentimental reciprocity is, needlessly to say, premised upon the Cold War politics of integration of the global peripheries into the metaphoric adoptive family. The family metaphor is central to the film’s conceptualization of American

politics in Korea/Asia. Comparable to the Brubakers, Dean Hess and his wife Mary represent the ideal American family and the imagined national home. The couple is portrayed as devoted and faithful to each other, gazing at his wife's picture tenderly or reading her husband's letter in tears, whose heterosexual union is completed as the representative American nuclear family with Mary's long-awaited pregnancy. Set against this model bourgeois family, three types of alternative families are recognizable in the film as possible configurations of U.S.-Korea relationship. One is an interracial adoptive family with an American father, a native mother, and a native son. In a familial scene where Hess and Ms. Yang bathe Chu, one of the orphans and their surrogate son, Chu suddenly points at Hess and calls him, "*abeoji*" or "father" in Korean, which Yang translates for him, and then he does the same to Yang, calling her "*eomma*" or "mom," which she shyly and self-consciously leaves untranslated. This familial union is unrecognizable not only because of anti-miscegenation sentiment but also because Korea is not quite conceivable as a conjugal partner of domestic equality and thus relegated to native concubinage, whether through prostitution in military camp towns or sublimated as a platonic relationship in this case. Another form of family depicts Korea as a dysfunctional household with Ms. Yang as a sacrificial virgin mother, Lu Wan (Philip Ahn), an old man who helps with the orphans, as an effeminate incapable father, and their war-weary starving children. This malfunctioning family of Korea is supposed to be taken under the symbolic parentage of the "benevolent" white couple in the third option of an adoptive-imperial family of America. In the final scene, Dean Hess visits the orphanage he helped to establish in Jeju-do with his pregnant wife Mary. The entire entourage of orphans, whom he has supposedly airlifted and "saved," run outside the

orphanage along with Lu Wan, give a grateful deep bow to the couple, and sing “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” for them. Out of the crowd, Chu races to his surrogate father who lifts him up and puts his military cap on the child while Mary looks at them with an approving smile.

The metaphoric projection of the U.S.-Asia relationship in terms of sentimental reciprocity and “benevolent” adoption shares the root with the American Cold War national imaginary – the Cold War liberal-masculinist desire for expiation, national foundation, and historical legitimacy through a symbolic gesture of interracial male bonding. Hess exemplifies the bourgeois global subject that proposes the imperial expansion as a reciprocal relation of “seeing and being seen,” as Pratt says in another context, between Western and native cultures while simultaneously anchoring European ideologies of “humanism, egalitarianism, and critical relativism” in a sense of Western “authenticity, power, and legitimacy” (84). Particularly, he positions himself as “being seen” by racial as well as cultural others, eliciting not only absolution of his guilt but also historical immunity and endorsement of his planetary project. Maples (James Edwards), an African-American pilot under his command, accidentally bombs a truck full of civilian refugees. As Hess tries to console him in agony similar to his own, it is rather Maples who solaces and redeems Hess from his guilt by saying:

“Sir, it’s the way of things, I guess. I figure it’s all God’s making and will. [...] I’ve come to the conclusion that God and all his reasons are invisible to the eyes of man. So I guess we have to be satisfied if he even gives us light enough to take our next step, do our next chore.”

Securing absolution and recognition from America’s racial other, Hess also builds a male bond with the imperial other, Lu Wan. An exotic and pristine elderly man in the Korean

traditional gentleman's robe, he is a carver of ivory statues for a living and a migrant philosopher-savant, who ultimately endorses Hess's planetary project of Enlightenment and modernization:

“Yes, war is evil. [...] In times like these, can a man of good conscience ask others, ‘Protect me. Kill for me. But do not ask me to stain my hands’? What must one do when a choice between two evils is all that is offered? To accept the lesser sometimes can be our only choice. In order to save, at times we must destroy, and in destruction, create new life.”

Out of the desire for expiation from the history of slavery, racial discrimination, and imperialist conquests, the American Cold War global subject escapes from the concrete realm of Cold War political conditions to the affective-sentimental space of melodrama. Thus, Hess writes to Mary: “Perhaps, through the agony of war I have finally done what I never before was able to do. In reaching beyond myself, I have found myself.” In reaching beyond himself, however, he obscures those he wished to reach into the object of his own sympathy in a sentimental drama of self-salvation, and as a result, finds only himself in the mirror of the other.

Combining generic conventions of the World War II combat film and family melodrama, the Hollywood Korean War film functioned as a critical cultural site which the American Cold War politics of governmentality was enacted and deployed as the vernacular imaginary of Hollywood cinema. In this cinematic terrain, the foreign policy imperative to “win” the Third World over the Soviet Union was translated in terms of the American nationalist global imaginary, proposing the United States as the “benevolent” liberator of the newly emergent nations while furnishing them with the planetary vision of progress or the “modernization theory.” The rationale of integration was interpreted as the sentimental melodrama featuring Cold War global subjects engaged in the symbolic

economy of “reciprocity” with respect to their foreign encounters, thereby displacing the violent reduction of the imperial others for the narcissistic recuperation of American white men as the national-global subjects. Both Hollywood Korean War films, *The Bridges at Toko-ri* and enact the Cold War integrationist logic through the sentimental melodrama of “adoptive” family while ultimately attempting to reclaim Cold War national-global subjectivity for American white male protagonists. What the narcissistic mirror reflects, however, is only the imaginary self untenable in the historical realm of reality, which returns to the present as the ghostly presence of memories, as those civilians massacred during the Korean War, as numerous civilian victims of crimes committed by the U.S. military stationed in Korea,⁶⁸ as the haunting return of North Korea as a member of the self-annihilating global nuclear club, and as hundreds of thousands of Korean overseas adoptees literally embodying the “inconvenient truth” of history.⁶⁹ The genuine national-global subjects would locate themselves in “their real conditions of existence” (Althusser 36), in the complex intersections of (inter)national histories and societies converging at the present transnational juncture of time-space.

⁶⁸ The two most recent and notorious incidents include the brutal murder of Yun Geum-i, a service worker in the U.S. military camp town of Dongducheon in 1992 and the death of two middle-school girls, Mi-seon and Hyo-sun, by a U.S. military armored vehicle on June 13, 2002. Refer to the following newspaper articles from the *Hankyoreh*:

<http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/167792.html>

<http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/293188.html>

⁶⁹ About 100,000 out of 150,000 South Korean children adopted overseas between 1955 and 1998 were sent to American families (Eleana Kim 63-64). About 2000 children continue to be adopted overseas each year between 1995 and 2006. Refer to the following article from Pressian.com:

<http://www.pressian.com/scripts/section/article.asp?article_num=60070508105455&s_menu=%BB%E7%C8%B8>



Figure 5. Images of “Reciprocity”

The Brubakers with a Japanese family at the bathhouse in *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* (above, Paramount, 1955), the two national flags side by side at the ROK air force training camp in *Battle Hymn* (middle, Universal, 1957), and the two pine trees near “Orphans Home of Korea” in Cheju-do, Ms. Yang’s hometown in *Battle Hymn* (below).



Figure 6. Three Dimensions of the “Bridges”
Admiral Tarrant on his bridge in *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* (above),
the bombing of the “bridges at Toko-ri” as portrayed in the film (middle), and
the No Gun Ri bridge (below, photo by *Ohmynews*, 2006,
http://www.ohmynews.com/articleview/article_view.asp?at_code=373443)

**V. Becoming “Modern” in the Aftermath of the Korean War:
Gendered Nationalism in 1950s South Korean Films,
Hell Flower (1958) and *The Stray Bullet* (1961)**

A contradictory duality often characterizes the American society during the 1950s: it was a time of affluence simultaneously confounded with anxiety, complacency with ambiguity, and conformism with dissent. The same period in South Korea (hereafter Korea) could be also dubbed as an age of contradictions, albeit of different kinds: it was a decade torn between tradition and modernity, poverty and consumerism, dejection and expectation. The Korean people were living a different Cold War, struggling to come to terms with a history ruptured between legacies of Confucian tradition and a sudden influx of Western modernity while trying to rebuild the nation out of the remains of the civil war (1950-53) and Japanese colonialism (1910-45). The recent war not just destroyed infrastructural foundations for livelihood, but as a proxy war for the global ideological standoff fought at the cost of fratricidal tragedies, it also left Koreans with indelible psychological scars while at the same time determining the political, social, and cultural contours of the Korean society for decades to come. The fifties in Korea was a period of lethargy, apathy and insensibility: scenes of misery and poverty filled the streets with maimed war veterans, war widows, war orphans, refugees and vagrants. At the same time, it was a gilded age of capitalist consumerism: consumer goods overflowed the streets of Seoul, black markets flourished with goods stolen from U.S. military bases and smuggled from Hong Kong or Japan, and people abandoned traditional Confucian morality to scramble for material gains and pragmatic values associated with Western

modernity.⁷⁰ In the midst of such tumultuous historical changes and social confusions, I wonder how Koreans imagined themselves in relation to contemporary world history and Cold War geopolitics, to North Korea and the effects of the fratricidal war, to the U.S. and the Western values of modernity and capitalism it introduced. In order to examine these dynamics, I turn to the 1950s Korean popular cultural sites with the film as the specific medium of the contemporary imagination.

Volatility distinguished the long 1950s, spanning from 1945 to the early 1960s, both in the geopolitical arena and in the post-liberation Korean society. After World War II, the emergent Cold War world order began replacing European imperialist hegemony: former European colonies were disintegrating into newly independent states of Egypt, India, Pakistan, Burma, Ceylon, and Nepal in the British Commonwealth while French Indochina and Dutch Indonesia were swept into full-scale revolutionary turmoil. With the “loss” of China and the “shock” of the Korean War, the Cold War hardened into a war between the two “camps” competing for hegemony over the emerging “Third World” in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, leading the United States to interfere throughout the 1950s with nationalist movements in Iran, Guatemala, and Vietnam, with the Suez crisis and the Cuban Revolution.⁷¹ What postwar history had in store for Korea was not much different from the familiar stories of most Third World countries: the initial revolutionary exuberance quickly subsided into disillusionment as the Korean people’s anticipation for an independent nation became mired in domestic and international politics of conflicting interests, plunging into escalating violence and ultimately war. As soon as Korea became

⁷⁰ Chung Sung-ho 11-58.

⁷¹ LaFeber 50, 145-91.

“liberated” from Imperial Japan in August 1945, it fell into another foreign hand which divided the peninsula by the 38th parallel and intervened in domestic political affairs ignoring the declaration of Korean People’s Republic by nationalist leaders, putting instead into power the conservative, pro-American and pro-Japanese Korean Democratic Party, restoring the colonial bureaucratic apparatus such as the police, and thereby rousing widespread discontent among people. The intervening years until the full-scale war witnessed a chain of violent clashes between revolutionary efforts and counter-revolutionary forces: from Autumn Harvest uprisings in October 1946 to Jeju and Yeosu-Suncheon rebellions in defiance of the separate election of May 1948 in the South alone, to ensuing guerrilla warfare in the Jiri Mountains from November 1948 until early 1950, to the eventual breakout of war in June 1950. The war lasted for three years without fully coming to a closure while leaving decisive and enduring impacts on all aspects of Korean society.⁷² For Korea, the fifties marked not simply a transitional period from the traditional system to the modern capitalist mode of production; it constituted an originary decade of “Korean modernity” conditioned by the political dynamics of war and division.⁷³

The concept of modernity, stemming from the Western Enlightenment tradition, came to be elaborated into an academic “theory of modernization” during the Cold War. The modernization theory, in other words, was a product of the Cold War – a brand of managerial knowledge on which American social scientists collaborated to provide the U.S. with politically relevant knowledge about the world and the ways to manage it. It

⁷² Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun* 185-298.

⁷³ Dong-choon Kim, *The Shadow of Modernity* 90.

was not only a political tool but also an “ideology”: it was a foreign policy strategy to win the Cold War – “a war waged to capture the ‘hearts and minds’ of peoples” in the Third World and simultaneously a cognitive framework of American national identity that articulated U.S. development initiatives as “altruistic, visionary attempts” to share the economic and political benefits of the “enlightened and benevolent West” (Latham 7-9). In response to the fifties revolutionary challenges in the emerging countries, the modernization theory was formulated and deployed as specific foreign policy programs during the Kennedy administration.⁷⁴ “Korean modernity” emerged in these complex international dynamics of the fifties. For one thing, it was a process of incorporating Korea into the Cold War three-tier world system according to the universal developmental timeline with the U.S. at the apogee of modernity. For another, Korean modernity or the embrace of modernization by Koreans was promoted by the poignant particularities of contemporary Korean political conditions and social instabilities resulting from war, division, colonial legacies, and neo-colonial influences. The rationale of modernization along with anti-Communism was fiercely adopted as *the* ideology by dominant political elites whose post-liberation seizure of power was plagued by a legitimacy crisis. Upon the two ideological pillars of the Cold War – modernization and anti-Communism, Korean modernity was formed during the fifties under the Rhee regime and consolidated into the across-the-board modernization movement of the Park Chung-hee regime during the sixties and seventies.

As such, an examination of the 1950s’ Korean culture will help contextualize

⁷⁴ The modernization theory was translated into the Kennedy administration’s foreign policy programs such as the Alliance for Progress in Latin America, the Peace Corps, and the Strategic Hamlet Program in Vietnam. See Latham.

American Cold War cultural histories from a transnational perspective. As Amy Kaplan argues, the domestic and the foreign are inseparable: they converge at the “borderlands” reciprocally shaping domestic social relations in response to international power struggles and vice versa.⁷⁵ Korea is one of America’s crucial foreign sites through which domestic social relations of gender, race, ethnicity, and class are negotiated, and conversely, U.S. Cold War cultural discourses spill over national boundaries to be reinforced and recast in foreign loci such as Korea. In bringing the fifties Korean popular imaginary into a comparative perspective, the film seems an especially appropriate medium considering particular historical circumstances of the Korean film industry. The latter half of the 1950s, often dubbed as “a boom period” or “a revival period” for Korean cinema, witnessed a remarkable growth marking the film as one of the most important media of postwar popular imagination; also, the immediacy of visual representation characteristic of the genre made the film an apt medium to convey lived social realities of the time.⁷⁶ In this vein, this chapter examines Korean films from the fifties and early sixties in order to explore the ways in which popular imaginaries were enacted, probed, and recast in the emergent yet divided nation in relation to the history caught in-between tradition and modernity by paying close analytical attention to two films in particular, *Hell Flower* (*Jiokhwa*, Sin Sang-ok 1958) and *The Stray Bullet* (*Obaltan*, Yu Hyeon-mok 1961). Before delving into the films themselves, however, I would like to contextualize these products of culture within the political, social, and cultural conditions of the Korean 1950s.

⁷⁵ Kaplan, “Left Alone with America” 3-21.

⁷⁶ Lee Young-il 111-17.

1. The Making of Korean Modernity in the 1950s

In the modern world defined as totality or as a world-system of interconnected economic and social relations, *all* members of this system are part of the same history and geography, thus all deemed to be modern. All too often, however, many of them experience modernity as a spatialized hierarchy of temporality which positions them as not-yet-modern on the “natural” evolutionary path towards “modernization,” signifying in substance “Westernization” or “Americanization.” An alternative view proposes that there are many “discontinuities” created in both different historical contingencies and geographical zones; there are “different modern times and different modern spaces in a world of multiple modernities” (Taylor 12).⁷⁷ The fifties Korean society was one poignant example of both time and space intersecting to create discontinuities in the formation of a particular modernity. Korean modernity was constructed in the spatio-temporal (dis)juncture between the accumulated time of Korean history and the influence of the expanded global space, between tradition and the West.⁷⁸ A contradictory duality informed the Korean response to this particular time-space intersection: simultaneous rejection and emulation characterized Koreans’ attitudes towards Western modernity while self-negating hatred and intense attachment tormented the Korean people in their relation to tradition.⁷⁹ And it was through gendered politics of modern nation-building that they attempted to resolve such contradictions inherent in the modernity of Korea.

⁷⁷ About who is modern and whose modernity, or “multiple modernities,” see Taylor 4-12.

⁷⁸ Kim Gyeong-il 170.

⁷⁹ Kim Jae-hui 28-33.

The postwar fifties was a formative period of modern Korea in all its aspects: it emerged as a modern nation-state out of the dynamics of the internecine war, the Cold War interstate system, and the volatile Rhee regime; the war also reconfigured social classes accelerating the transformation of the feudal agrarian economic system into the modern industrial mode of production; and in the social vacuum left by the devastating war, American cultural influences introduced capitalist values of money and sexuality, which in contestation with traditional Confucian morals laid a general framework of modern Korean culture.

The Korean War functioned as a decisive historical turning point in building modern Korea as “an imagined political community” (Anderson 6) by providing nationalism and anti-Communism as two primary ideologies in the construction of national subjects or *gukmin*. The war was indeed a great equalizer and blender: it uprooted, relocated, and intermixed millions of people who as “equals” of impoverishment came to contact with each other from diverse localities as “fellow-travelers” or as same nationals.⁸⁰ The war not only fostered a sense of horizontal comradeship among people but also provided a ground for the precarious Rhee regime to mobilize nationalism as a political propaganda. Rhee resorted to the nationalist ethos to claim legitimacy of his regime by disseminating *Ilminjuui* or “One Peoplism” as the state ideology and “inventing” selective past/tradition through the promotion of Dangun as the “father” of the Korean people, adoption of Dangi or the Dangun calendar, designation of Gaecheonjeol as the anniversary of Dangun’s accession, and canonization of anti-colonial

⁸⁰ The number of people who moved from the North to the South alone was about five million. Chung Sung-ho 29.

nationalist leaders as national heroes.⁸¹ Modern Korea was, however, not simply another modern imagined community built upon the newly discovered sense of national collectivism. It was most of all a Cold War security state identifying itself as part of the “free” world in opposition to the Communist bloc: anti-Communism was essentially synonymous with liberal democracy which in turn the United States presumably embodied. In other words, the triple ideology of anti-Communism, liberalism, and pro-Americanism functioned as “civil religion”⁸² providing a visceral window to the Cold War world and constituting the content of modern Korean nationalism or the national identity with which the Korean people were interpellated to identify as national subjects. Specific state apparatuses were mobilized in the formation of the national subject: the military and school. It was the universal conscription system, promulgated in 1949, along with the compulsory elementary education system that laid the groundwork for the production of *gukmin* paving the road to the sweeping mass mobilization for the “Modernization of the Fatherland” during the repressive autocratic regime of Park Chung-hee.⁸³ Korean modernity in this sense might be characterized as “militarized modernity” in that the modern nation was constructed as an anti-Communist polity by disciplinary as well as coercive state violence of the compulsory school and military systems.⁸⁴ The modernity of Korea was then built upon the legacies of the Korean War

⁸¹ Shin Gi-wook 23.

⁸² King In-chul 222-41.

⁸³ Kang In-chul 204-7.

⁸⁴ Moon Seungsook 2-27. She traces the “militarized” legacies of Korean modernity from the early reformist equation of modernity with economic-military might of the West in the notion of *dongdoseogi* (Eastern way, Western technology) to the colonial state’s disciplinary apparatus such as the integration of individuals into the totality of the state (*kokutai* or the national body) and the “conversion system” (*jeonhyangjedo*) to the neo-colonial anti-Communist state under the U.S. Army military government in Korea (USAMG 1945-48) continued by the Rhee regime

and the ensuing Cold War garrison state, consolidating the North/South division into a left/right ideological confrontation and facilitating the routinization of state violence.

The armed conflict also marked an end to the revolutionary class struggles dating from the post-liberation period by dismantling the traditional agrarian class system into a modern industrial base structure subordinate to the U.S.-hegemonic world system. It was both land reform and U.S. aid that fundamentally reshaped the postwar economic structure. Pressed by North Korea's land redistribution to small farmers which had a big demonstration effect on the South, the Rhee regime was forced to implement land reform in 1949 and 1952 making crucial impacts on the social structure. Land reform undermined the material basis of traditional landed aristocracy foreclosing possible resistances to industrial reforms; and it transformed hierarchal rural society into a modern state of independent small farmers and mass-educated industrial workers, both of them constituting the vast pool of "free" labor force.⁸⁵ Moreover, U.S. aid in alliance with corrupt state bureaucracy and dependent capitalists helped form a modern developmental state. The majority of foreign aid – 85 percent of \$2.3 billion in aid from 1953 to 1961 – came from the United States accounting for over 10 percent of the South Korean GNP in the late 1950s. U.S. aid had its deleterious consequences: it came with ideological baggage that fed corruption and bureaucracy. The Rhee regime manipulated aid distribution to fill key political positions with personal ties while fostering the nexus of corruption between the state bureaucrats and capitalists through graft, thereby begetting a

(1948-60) and consolidated into the modern hegemonic form through the Korean War to the full-blown militarization and regimentalization of society under the Park regime. The militarized legacy of Korean modernity was reasserted with the involvement in the Vietnam War (1965-73) culminating with the Gwangju massacre in May 1980.

⁸⁵ Lie 5-18; Gong Je-uk 74-78.

new class of dependent capitalists, a precursor of monopoly conglomerates or *jaebeol*.⁸⁶ It was the government's appropriation of forfeited lands and aid for the sake of bureaucratic capitalism that brought about not only the collapse of landed aristocracy but also the disintegration of small farmers and other agrarian working people triggering their migration into urban ghettos.⁸⁷ In short, it was the Korean War and the consolidation of the Cold War security state in the South that facilitated a radical restructuring of class and economic systems: land reform and foreign aid were two products of the contemporary historical circumstances, which the Rhee regime under the protection of Cold War rationale appropriated to build a monopoly capitalist system upon the fertile ground of the corrupt politics-capital liaison and the exploitation of the depoliticized and dispossessed agrarian-working class.

Postwar radical changes in the composition of population entailed as much radical impacts upon overall social relations from collective consciousness of the Koreans to their familial-social structures to cultural formations during the 1950s. The culture of the fifties developed under such historical circumstances as the ideological ossification of the Cold War and rampant materialism fed by postwar social anarchy as well as the influence of Western capitalist culture introduced by the U.S. military. The traumatic war that left the South with 1.3 million casualties and 2.4 million refugees shook up the mindset of the Korean people: with devastating memories of mutual violence and deepening hatred of each other, they internalized the Cold War Manichean ideology and naturalized the division as part of the universal "good-evil" confrontation; and the internalization of the

⁸⁶ Lie 19-42.

⁸⁷ Gong Je-uk 105.

Cold War in turn rigidified public spirit and justified the use of anti-democratic state violence as necessary part of liberal democracy. For one thing, the intellectual climate of the fifties seemed dominated by the Cold War binary worldview. According to a study that examined a highbrow magazine of the 1950s *Sasanggye* or *The Realm of Ideas*, Korean intellectuals espoused the Cold War two-camp worldview and advocated the importance of political-military “might” for the maintenance of peace and collective security. They internalized the Cold War ideology to the extent that they approached the Korean War from the inter-national dynamics of politics and diplomacy while virtually ignoring domestic political conditions and ideological factors. Also, they faithfully followed the American point of view by identifying Communism with totalitarianism and dismissing the neutral Third World as a pawn for Communist expansionism.⁸⁸ Moreover, the internalization of the Cold War entailed the ubiquity of confrontation in everyday life, which the precarious regime in a perpetual crisis of legitimacy appropriated to deploy state violence against its “internal enemies.”⁸⁹ In other words, the Cold War outside was brought home in everyday life and utilized to rationalize state violence as inevitable for the defense of democracy.

At the same time, the trauma of war and violence intensified with poverty, social anarchy and dejection rendering postwar society another battleground in which any sense of public responsibility was superseded by blatant pursuits of material gain and individual survival by any means available.⁹⁰ Unlike the traditional agrarian society where wealth was generally synonymous with one’s class and inherited in the form of landownership,

⁸⁸ Namgung Gon 126-46.

⁸⁹ Kim Dong-choon, *The Shadow of Modernity* 16-32.

⁹⁰ Chung Sung-ho 32-38.

postwar Korea was for the first time in history “egalitarian” in a sense that the war and land reform leveled off the hierarchical class system opening up for everyone, in theory at least, chances for the accumulation of wealth and upward mobility. In reality, however, wealth generated from confiscated lands and foreign aid was monopolized by the new elite class of corrupt bureaucrats and dependent capitalists, who set the cultural tone of the fifties in terms of ostentatious and vulgar materialism. Moreover, the breakdown and reconstitution of familial-social relations in the aftermath of the war impelled ordinary people to scramble after the egoistic pursuit of individual advancement and material gain. With people dead, missing, or separated during the war,⁹¹ the family became delinquent as a social unit for survival and education; and people came to distrust any and everyone beyond their immediate families out of the traumatic memories of mutual violence during the war. In particular, the breakup of the traditional family meant increased economic responsibilities for women, who entered the public sphere in large numbers for work and for social life: women took up 38% of the workforce in 1950 and sexually assertive socialites or “free women” became a great vogue in the fifties.⁹² The assertive presence of “free woman” or *jayubuin* was at the same time a product of the Cold War partly emanating from the culture of prostitution in U.S. military camp towns: military prostitution was one of the public sectors for postwar working women and 27% of military prostitutes or “UN madams” were war widows.⁹³

Thus, Korean modernity was a particular and contingent outcome of these

⁹¹ There were about 1.4 million people separated from their families and 300,000 war widows in 1952. Chung Sung-ho 50-51.

⁹² Chung Sung-ho 51-52.

⁹³ Kim Gyeong-il 138-39.

complex time-space dynamics between histories and social conditions intersecting in the specific site of postwar Korea. It was a particular modernity characterized by contradictions: it was first and foremost (neo-)colonial modernity that was simultaneously forced upon while voluntarily embraced by the Koreans; at the same time, the dual stance toward modernity inflected Koreans' attitudes towards their historical tradition with a similar contradictory duality of (dis)identification. In other words, the contradictory duality was resulted from the (neo-)colonial deprivation of national sovereignty and imposition of modern, that is, Orientalist subjectivity. The transfer from Japanese colonial to American neo-colonial modernities, which began in 1945 and completed with the Korean War, facilitated not only the willing embrace of the Western modernity of technology but also the internalization of Orientalism. The repulsion against Japanese-imposed modernity inversely reduced resistance to American-induced modernity, and pro-Americanism consolidated through the Korean War entailed the identification with the Western point of view, that is, Orientalist objectification of the Koreans themselves.⁹⁴ From the self-Orientalizing perspective, tradition became a premodern legacy to be despised, discarded, and overcome.

In this sense, Korean modernity originated from the 1950s with the transfer from colonial to neo-colonial modernities and the formation of the modern subject as simultaneously the subject of the nation and capitalist consumption. It meant the possibility of possessing and consuming the goods hitherto allowed only as the object of a fetishistic gaze under colonial modernity, but neo-colonial modernity came with its own

⁹⁴ Regarding (neo-)colonial modernity and the internalization of Orientalism, see Kim Jae-hui 28-33.

baggage. Korean modernity entailed more than the fetishistic “thingness” of colonial modernity; it was embroiled with the U.S. politics of symbolic capital accumulated through the Korean War and economic aid, paving the way for the U.S. political-economic hegemony over Korea.⁹⁵ Caught in dual colonial modernities, the self-marginalizing identification with hypermasculine U.S. modernity entailed the feminization of the non-Western and non-modern, be it tradition or simply women, which instantly glared back with the internal fissure between the Korean nationalist desire for re-masculinization and the self-consciousness of its own feminization with the neo-colonial turn of history. In short, the interpellation of the subject involves repression; and the self-alienating identification in the formation of the modern subject came with complex symptoms of internal ruptures and self-contradictions. In the particular case of Korean modernity, the discourse of “gendered nationalism” was deployed to resolve, or rather to project and displace the contradictions inherent in the formation of the national subject for the modern capitalist nation-state under the dual legacies of colonial modernities.

2. Modernity, Nation, and Gender in South Korean “Golden Age” Cinema

The postwar 1950s marked “a boom period” in the South Korean film industry, laying the groundwork for so-called “Golden Age” cinema spanning from the mid-1950s to the 1960s. The number of film productions increased from six in 1953 to 15 in 1955 to 111 in 1959 as the movie-going became the primary form of popular entertainment and people flocked toward the cinema as a way to escape from war-torn realities. The postwar

⁹⁵ Choi Chungmoo, “Sorcery and Modernity” 86-92.

boom was enabled largely by three factors: the government 1954 legislation of admission tax exemption on domestic films, the record-breaking box office hit of *Chunhyang Story* (*Chunhyang-jeon*, Yi Gyu-hwan 1955) showcasing the potential profitability of local productions, and the significant increase of experienced film crew who received practical training during the wartime by making documentary newsreels under the U.S. Army 502nd military unit as well as the Republic of Korea Ministry of Defense.⁹⁶ At the same time, the boom was a cultural phenomenon ushered in by the Korean War and the subsequent formation of Korean modernity. A total of 170 foreign films were imported into Korea during the wartime, of which over 50% were Hollywood melodramas, westerns and comedies, shaping the cultural taste of Korean audiences.⁹⁷ The popular enthusiasm about foreign films was spurred up by the contemporary formation of Korean modernity: the United States was regarded as the representative of Western modernity and American culture, especially Hollywood film, was emulated as an emblem of refinement and education.⁹⁸ Under these circumstances, the local film market flourished and came to be firmly established by 1958. As film production attracted large investments, however, it simultaneously attracted speculative investments for quick returns thus encouraging production of popular, profitable, and often low-quality genre films such as melodramas, comedies, and historical dramas.⁹⁹ As a result, the unprecedented boom raised a sense of “crisis” within the Korean film community, kindling up a debate on “Korean realism” as an alternative way to safeguard the status of

⁹⁶ Yi Hyo-in, et al. 30-92; Lee Young-il 99-142. Sin Sang-ok and Han Hyeong-mo were but two among the directors and engineers who worked with the military during the war.

⁹⁷ Yi Hyo-in, et al. 55-59.

⁹⁸ Yun Jin-hwa 92-95.

⁹⁹ More than 70% of films produced during the boom period were melodramas. Lee Young-il 116-17. See also Yi Hyo-in, et al. 66-92.

film as “art” in opposition to the capitalist logic of commercial viability.

In its ambivalent stance toward the commercial success of the Korean film industry, the debate on Korean realism was reminiscent of the discourse of Korean modernity: the enthusiasm about the cinema as the embodiment of Western modernity was tempered with a cautionary discourse of tradition identified as realism. The discourse of Korean realism was rooted in the tradition of socialist-nationalist realism of a leftist art organization KAPF (Korea Artista Proleta Federacio) from the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁰⁰ The 1950s version of realism, however, was stripped of the proletarian perspective and redefined instead in terms of Italian neo-realism, obviously reflecting the contemporary ideological turn toward Cold War anti-Communism as well as existentialist liberal humanism. Neo-realism loomed particularly large in the postwar Korean film scene. It seemed to show possible ways to turn war-torn realities into art despite limited availability of production materials as it is a cinematic mode for representing effects of war on everyday lives of ordinary people by using on-location shooting outside the expensive studio system and focusing on the lower-class milieu.¹⁰¹ Moreover, neo-realism was seized upon as a third way beyond socialist realism and Hollywood commercialism – an alternative that could simultaneously satisfy the desire for aesthetic achievement and allow universal humanism as a passive venue for social critique under

¹⁰⁰ Kim So-yeon 19-26..

¹⁰¹ Neo-realist cinema developed in Italy between the mid-1940s and the mid-1950s, dealing with the aftermaths of fascism and war on ordinary peoples lives faced with poverty, unemployment and other social insecurities. According to Cesare Zavattini, neo-realism aimed to bring the audience to reflect upon “reality precisely as it is” by presenting “every hour of the day, every place, every person” in a manner which discloses “the collective elements which continually shape them” (68-69). To achieve these effects, neo-realist cinema insisted on location shooting outside the studio system, preferred deep-focus long-takes rather than close-ups, cast minor or non-professional actors, and focused on the lower-class social conditions.

contemporary political censorship.¹⁰² Korean realism, in short, was constructed as a liberal compromise, which very much like Cold War liberalism in the U.S. depoliticized the radical critical tradition of socialist realism into abstract universal humanism. Importantly, such humanist realism was often translated onto the screen through the patriarchal discourse of gendered nationalism. In other words, humanity of the male subject was redeemed by dis-identifying with the ideology of the modern state, but in the process he regressed into narcissistic self-alienation while projecting/displacing the repressive ideology onto female characters as collusive agents of Western modernity.¹⁰³

In claiming realism as a higher form of “art” over and against popular genres such as melodrama, critics simply collapsed realism with national-social consciousness without carefully defining formal characteristics of a realist mode, thereby arbitrarily upholding films dealing with national-social problems as “realist” while disparaging the others as sentimental, therefore, lower-quality products of mass culture.¹⁰⁴ Among the films hailed as continuing the tradition of realism included *Hurrah for Freedom* (*Jayumanse*, Choe In-gyu 1946), *Evil Night* (*Akya*, Sin Sang-ok 1952), *Pia Valley* (*Piagol*, Yi Gang-cheon 1955), *Hell Flower*, *Housemaid* (*Hanyeo*, Kim Gi-yeong 1960), *The Coachman* (*Mabu*, Kang Dae-jin 1960), *Mr. Park* (*Bakseobang*, Kang Dae-jin 1961), *The Stray Bullet* and so on. However, these films cannot be readily categorized under the rubric of realism as they employ not only (neo-)realist style but also a diversity of genres and formalistic features from melodrama to the film noir gangster genre, from modernist expressionism to classical Hollywood realism. Besides, the boundary between realism

¹⁰² Kim So-yeon 26-41.

¹⁰³ Yi Yu-ran 1-10.

¹⁰⁴ Jeong Yeong-gwon 16-21.

and “non-realist” melodrama seems porous to say the least. For one thing, the melodramatic imagination is in definition premised upon the “real” and the “ordinary” rendered interesting through “heightened dramatic utterance and gesture” (Brooks 14). For another, Korean Golden Age melodrama was particularly rooted in the social conditions of the time, the privileged terrain of realism. According to Nancy Abelmann and Kathleen McHugh, Korean melodrama can even be considered as “the most efficacious mode of realism”:

[The South Korean] film industry had no need to *dramatize* private life so as to render it interesting and thereby to allegorize and “resolve” social contradictions. Rather, the South Korean variant of melodrama, with its plot reversals, cataclysmic coincidences, and seismic narrative compressions, seemed uniquely suited to rendering the nation’s dramatic history and compressed modernity in the second half of the twentieth century. That life in mid-twentieth-century Korea has been dramatic is lost on few observers of South Korean postwar history. Thus, instead of maintaining generic boundaries between the realistic and the melodramatic, between lived experience and fictional narrative, South Korean cinema construes melodrama as the most efficacious mode of realism. (4)

The generic crossover between realism and melodrama, so to speak, was resulted from particular cultural imaginaries inextricably interwoven with such historical conditions as war, modernization, and the oxymoronic nation-building upon divided national identity. And it was by means of a national allegory of gender that the contradictory, that is, divided national imaginary was articulated in the films of Korean realism/melodrama.

Thus, the debate on Korean realism emerged in the discursive continuum of Korean modernity: the construction of the modern nation is articulated as the national allegory of gender which attempts to re-masculinize the nationalist subject/national cinema of realism at the expense of the female other/feminized genre of melodrama. In

this dual terrain of Korean modernity/realism, gendered nationalism is deployed as a discursive strategy to resolve contradictions, namely, the ambivalent stance toward modernity/tradition, and ultimately to build a modern capitalist nation. On the screen, Western modernity is often represented as the spectacle of the woman's body that simultaneously fascinates and threatens to emasculate the (male) audience, and this contradictory desire/anxiety is resolved through "fetishistic scopophilia" by turning the object of pleasure/unpleasure into a reassuring rather than dangerous fetish object (Mulvey 840). At the same time, the woman's body functions as a receptacle of "uncontaminated," that is, patriarchal tradition or as a national metaphor disciplined by the "ideology of chastity": the "promiscuous" woman constructs Korean men as "the victims of the emasculation of the Korean nation" while the ideology of chastity grants them "spiritual superiority and masculine integrity," i.e., "homonational (or homosocial) identity."¹⁰⁵ Patriarchy becomes often intensified in the postcolonial nation as it seeks to construct national identity upon familial-cultural heritage, to de-colonize colonial legacies by re-masculinizing the feminized nation, or to emulate the technologies of colonial government.¹⁰⁶ The paradox here explains the paradox of Korean modernity: the "postcolonial" project of re-masculinizing national identity reproduces the (neo-)colonial logic, and the recuperated humanity of nationalist men becomes jeopardized as it is claimed at the expense of the humanity of their women. In a dialectical turn of history, however, the fetishized and chastised/integrated other emerges at the same time as the new subject of modern Korea.

¹⁰⁵ Choi Chungmoo, "Nationalism and Construction of Gender in Korea" 12-14.

¹⁰⁶ Yang Hyeon-a 58.

As such, Korean Golden Age films, whether classified under the rubric of realism or that of melodrama, provide a critical cultural site that illustrates the discursive process of gendered nationalism in the making of Korean modernity. The films acclaimed as representative of Korean realism reveal limitations in their formalistic as well as ideological claims of representing reality while melodramas often bring their characteristic moments of excessive sentimentality to poignant illuminations of contemporary society. For instance, *Pia Valley* has been acclaimed as an excellent work of “anti-Communist humanism” and included in the canon of “nationalist realism” along with *Hell Flower* and *The Stray Bullet*, but it also showcases inconsistencies in the discourse of Korean realism: for one thing, the film does not so much represent “reality as it is” according to neo-realist tenets as it meticulously employs techniques of modernist montage; for another, the claim of “humanism” does not necessarily satisfy the requirements of realism nor does it automatically constitute “art” therefore not a pro-Communist political propaganda the film was suspected of.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, both *Hell Flower* and *The Stray Bullet* have been critically hailed as masterpieces of Korean realism while they are in fact formalistically hybrid, interweaving neo-realist portrayals of postwar Seoul with stylistic spectacles from modernism, expressionism, the Hollywood action-gangster genre as well as melodrama. If these films represent realities of the postwar Korean society, they do so from the perspective of existential humanism by focusing on inner dilemmas of the individual trapped in a chaotic social environment or through the national allegory of gender in a melodramatic setting: both films feature

¹⁰⁷ For a discussion of *Pia Valley* as an example of the discourse of Korean realism, see Kim So-yeon 42-59.

two brothers torn between modernity and tradition and involved in tumultuous relationships with various women who are fetishized as the embodiment of Western modernity and/or chastised to be integrated into the tradition of patriarchy.

While such films of Korean realism heavily rely on melodramatic narratives to represent reality, other films highlight melodramatic extravagance to delve into diverse aspects of contemporary society. *Madame Freedom* (Jayubuin, Han Hyeong-mo 1956), one of the most popular and representative melodramas of the boom period, deals with the familiar clash between tradition and modernity by dramatizing the phenomenon of “après-guerre” or postwar sexually assertive “free” women.¹⁰⁸ The narrative features a college professor’s wife, who advances into the public sphere as a salesperson in a “Western goods store” and becomes involved in an extramarital affair; she is displayed as the object of visual pleasure embodying the spectacles of modernity from Western goods to dance halls to “free love” only to be scrutinized under the ideology of chastity and ultimately re-integrated into the patriarchal family system. Other films similarly employ the figure of “free woman” as the central allegory of nation under siege of modern forces epitomized as war widows, military prostitutes (*yanggongju* or literally “Western princess”), and other working women in the public sphere. *Hell Flower* and *The Stray Bullet* portray female protagonists as military prostitutes allegorizing the submission of the nation to the influences of modernity while *A War Widow* (*Mimangin*, Park Nam-ok 1955) and *The Houseguest and My Mother* (*Sarangbang Sonningwa Eomeoni*, Sin Sang-ok 1961) approach the modernity-tradition conflict through the question of woman’s sexual desire under the burden of traditional mores. *A War Widow*, directed by the first

¹⁰⁸ Park Jin-ho 11-24.

female director of Korean cinema, places the female protagonist's desire prior to her social role as a widow and mother of a little girl. *The Houseguest and My Mother*, on the other hand, apparently reaffirms the traditional ideology of chastity by denying the love between a widow and a bachelor boarder in her house, but at the same time it implicitly leaves open the question of woman's sexual subjectivity by ending the story with a hopeful tone of the widow's tenacious spirit for life as well as the male guest's promise to return, not to mention the more explicit suggestion in consummating a parallel love affair between the widow's housemaid and an egg peddler. As this very cursory introduction illustrates and the following close analyses of *Hell Flower* and *The Stray Bullet* will hopefully corroborate, the 1950s Korean cinema was actively engaged in the making of Korean modernity collaborating through the discourse of Korean realism and the visual interpretation of gendered nationalism.

2.1 *Hell Flower* (1958)

Hell Flower is one of early films by Sin Sang-ok, one of the most successful filmmakers from the 1950s until mid-1970s when his production company was forcefully closed by the Park Chung-hee regime and he was abducted to North Korea along with his wife and the lead actress in many of his films, Choe Eun-hui. Among his oeuvre comprehending a variety of genres from melodrama to historical drama, his early works, notably his 1952 directorial debut film *Evil Night* and 1958 *Hell Flower*, have been acclaimed as a "touchstone for Korean realism" (qtd. in Yi Hyo-in, et al. 33). He was apparently "shocked" by such Italian films as Vittorio De Sica's *The Bicycle Thief* (1948) and Roberto Rossellini's *Rome, Open City* (1945) that he experimented with neo-realist

techniques by inserting newsreel footages and documentary scenes into his feature films. *Hell Flower* opens with documentary scenes of streets around Seoul Station and a nearby U.S. military camp town or *gijichon*, presumably the area surrounding U.S. Army Yongsan Garrison, and it includes a lengthy footage of real dance party scenes inside a U.S. military camp, which Sin's crew clandestinely filmed.¹⁰⁹ However, the film is primarily built on a melodramatic plot of a love triangle spiced with the Hollywood gangster action scenes of chasing cars, scampering across the top of the moving train, gunfighting, and homicidal stabbing. As a generic grab bag, the film offers above all a cinematic testimony to the nature and constitution of Korean realism as a hasty compound of Western film genres reflecting the jumbled influxes of (neo-)colonial modernities. Most of all, it tells a story of love and desire as the national allegory of gender demonstrating the discursive making of Korean modernity: the narrative concerns a love triangle between Sonya, a military prostitute and femme fatale impersonating spectacles of modernity, and two brothers, Yeong-sik and Dong-sik, representing a raw desire for Western modernity and nostalgic longing for mythic uncorrupted tradition respectively.

Hell Flower opens with documentary location shots of Namdaemun (South Gate) and Seoul Station followed by street scenes around Yongsan Garrison, establishing the fictional space of the film within the specific geographic place of Seoul in the postwar period. The opening sequence immediately juxtaposes two shots: the first frontal shot of South Gate with cars, buses, trucks, and bicycles crisscrossing in front of it follows the

¹⁰⁹ Refer to the Korean Movie Database website:
<http://www.kmdb.or.kr/vod/vod_basic.asp?nation=K&p_dataid=00367&mul_id=964&file_id=2959>

second frame of towering Seoul Station with a crowd of bustling people at the station square as Dong-sik walks toward the camera apparently having just arrived at the metropolis. The first thing that greets him is a group of scamps that snatch his bag and beat him up for trying to help a passerby whose bag they have just stolen. Having been introduced as a city of lawlessness, greed and violence, Seoul is further portrayed as a place where signs of modernization coexist in disarray with seamy realities: the busy main street between South Gate and Seoul Station is filled not only with all types of automobiles but also with people pulling carts high with stacked drums, riding bicycles, or carrying A-frame back racks, and a brief dialogue amongst a group of back-rack carriers confirms that these are hard times with rampant materialism, crime and corruption. This portrait of central Seoul is then juxtaposed with scenes from its back alleys: streets of Yongsan Garrison¹¹⁰ are introduced in a panoramic sequence of American soldiers in uniform lounging around stores with English signboards, chatting or

¹¹⁰ From the geographical proximity to South Gate and Seoul Station where Dong-sik runs into Yeong-sik and Sonya by chance, Yongsan is the implicit location of the camp town in the film. The on-location shooting, however, seems to have been taken in the ASCOM city of Bupyeong-Incheon, about one hour's drive southwest of Seoul. ASCOM was the U.S. military support depot, taken over from the supply depot for the Imperial Japanese Army in 1945.

Refer to the following quote for detail: "The Camp Market complex had its beginnings in the mid-1930s when the Japanese built a large supply depot and arsenal at Bupyong-Dong, Inchon City, to support their troops in Manchuria. Most of the permanent buildings date from that year. In 1945, after the Japanese surrendered to end World War II, the Army Support Command Korea was established at the former Japanese depot. It was at this time that the area of Camp Grant, Camp Market, Camp Tyler and Camp Hayes acquired the acronym ASCOM. In July, 1950, the invading North Korean Army overran the area and, from then until 1951, ASCOM changed hands several times as fighting swept up and down the peninsula. In the spring of 1951, United Nations Command Forces retook the area permanently. The US Marine Support Command for Korea and the Inchon Replacement Center were the first major tenants at ASCOM after the Korean War. Because there were no other major depots in the northern area of the Republic and the transportation network between this area and Pusan on the southeast coast was very limited at that time, stockpiling of supplies and equipment and the expansion of a tremendous logistical complex at ASCOM were inevitable."

<<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/camp-market.htm>>

bargaining over invisible merchandise with Koreans from various walks of life from dressed-up young women to a white-haired old woman on a walking stick.

These three sites of South Gate, Seoul Station, and Yongsan Garrison represent a symbolic history of Korea in which the relic of feudal tradition vies with the monuments of dual colonial modernities. These structures are located along the main street stretching from the “center” of Seoul southward to the Han River, the gateway “to” as well as “from” the world outside. The cityscape of Seoul was completely transformed by Japanese imperial planners who dismantled the castle walls around South Gate to build an urban avenue for its imperial army to reach from the Han River to the Kyeongbokgung Palace, the political heart of the Joseon dynasty. South of South Gate along this colonial road stands Seoul Station, the railroad station built by Imperial Japan. It is of course the time-honored epitome of modernization, but more specifically, it illustrates a process of imperial modernization transforming to colonial modernization: Seoul Station was modeled after Tokyo Station, which imitated Amsterdam Station in the Netherlands. Moreover, Seoul Station became a symbol of industrial modernization during the Park regime: it functioned as a literal gateway to the city for displaced rural migrants entering into urban ghettos as cheap labor force. Finally, past the station and further down southward is Yongsan Garrison, the site of the headquarters for the United States Army in Korea and originally the site of the headquarters for the Imperial Japanese Army.¹¹¹ In this sense, the opening sequence of *Hell Flower* employs the neo-realist technique of

¹¹¹ For the geography of colonialism to neo-colonialism in the cityscape of Seoul, see Hong Seong-tae 121-35.

documenting the particular place and time, but it quickly moves on to the narrative terrain of melodrama as the national allegory.

Hell Flower weaves a national allegory of modern Korea from the melodramatic plot of a love triangle between Sonya and two brothers, Yeong-sik and Dong-sik, illustrating the ways in which the discursive project of Korean modernity operates upon the ideology of gendered nationalism. The older brother Yeong-sik represents the “victimized” male subject of the plundered/feminized nation while Dong-sik the younger one functions as the epitome of cherished tradition and the anointed heir to carry on the disrupted national history. Yeong-sik is a big brother of a group of Korean men who are basically thieves and pimps: they steal goods from the U.S. military base to sell at the black market while their women use their bodies to conspire with them. Although he is a criminal, he is nevertheless presented as a man of integrity. He commits his crimes out of his love for his brother and his “wife” Sonya: he is protective of Dong-sik, insisting that he should go home to their widowed mother while he proposes Sonya to marry him properly and have a “normal” life in his hometown after he makes big money out of his final scheme of robbery. He comes forth as the ultimate victim of betrayal as Sonya seduces Dong-sik as well as tips off the military police about the robbery, and his victimhood is simultaneously turned into a heroic self-sacrifice by having him die as a result of betrayal but not before he fatally stabs to punish Sonya thus liberating Dong-sik from the hands of “hell flower.” In this way, Yeong-sik represents Korean men’s desire for national subjectivity/masculinity by presenting themselves as victims of their unfaithful, promiscuous women while simultaneously claiming their integrity of intention to build a “normal,” that is, heteronormative family-nation.

Dong-sik in his turn complements and completes the national imaginary of Korean men. Unlike his brother, Dong-sik is soft-spoken and contemplative embodying the fragile yet valuable tradition; he comes to rescue his fallen brother and take him back home to their mother, to the nostalgic hometown with the “scent of ripe corns,” that is, the mythic prelapsarian garden of national innocence and historical coherence. He is also presented as the legitimate heir to the troubled nation: in the black-and-white family photograph he carries, he is shown in military uniform connoting that he has fought during the war to defend national “purity” or his “mother” standing at the center in traditional white dress while Yeong-sik is attired in a Western suit signifying his pursuit of Western modernity for the sake of the family, albeit in an unlawful way. As the one who has defended and maintained national tradition, Dong-sik is anointed as the legitimate heir to the nation, but it is Yeong-sik that makes this inheritance possible by literally rescuing his younger brother from drowning when they were children and ultimately sacrificing himself so that Dong-sik can continue the nation-building project by marrying Judy, a repentant thus redeemed prostitute, and starting the “normal” patriarchal family in their uncorrupted hometown.

As such, the recuperation of nationalist masculinity turns out mediated by the discursive regulation of women’s bodies: women are either disciplined by the ideology of chastity or disposed to secure the masculine “homosocial/homonational” bonding. Penitent Judy becomes “saved” and integrated into patriarchy: she is a war orphan thus a victim of historical circumstances in the first place, who also conforms to the patriarchal system by aspiring to marry and have a “proper” life. By contrast, Sonya does not seem to have qualms about using her body for money; rather, she seems to flaunt her sexuality

and revel in the glitz of Western clothes and fancy paraphernalia. She is covered with signs of U.S. modernity: constantly chewing gum, shrugging her shoulders, and displaying her body in revealing Western dress or in swimsuit. Besides, she appears to have no sense of guilt in seducing her brother-in-law and betraying her husband over to the police. In short, she is the consummate femme fatale that fills the dark screen as the fetish object for the pleasure of male spectators while her phallic presence poses a simultaneous threat of castration, therefore to be destroyed. Thus, the discourse of Korean modernity comes down to a project of narcissistic remasculinization of modern Korea through its reductive claim of masculinist national subjectivity at the expense of Korean women. Yeong-sik and Dong-sik bond in brotherhood over Sonya's dead body while Dong-sik borrows Judy's womb for national procreation. In a dialectical turn of event, however, the abused and disposed woman's body returns to haunt the spectator's memory. Sonya is a "liminal" figure: she is simultaneously a victim and victimizer, and embodies both a fascination with Western modernity and a nostalgic longing for tradition. Her disciplined/destroyed body on the screen lives on as the overwhelming subject of sexuality in the spectator's memory, producing a point of "excess" beyond the disciplinary surface of the text.¹¹²

Nevertheless, these claims of sexual subjectivity as well as nationalist masculinity are immediately faced with internal contradictions that turn out inextricably intertwined with specific historical conditions. Sonya's inverse status as the new subject of sexuality and consumption intimates the concurrent birth of the modern subject disciplined within the circuit of capitalist exchange while the nationalist attempt for remasculinization is

¹¹² See Ju Yu-sin 34-45 for the discussion of Sonya as a liminal character.

rigged up with discursive as well as historical contradictions: the logic of self-remasculinization reproduces the same colonialist technique of feminizing and obliterating the other, which instantly calls attention to the neo-colonial reality of contemporary Korea and concomitant feminization of Korean men themselves. Thus, contradictions in the discourse of Korean modernity boil down to the historical conditions of (neo-)colonial modernity, which *Hell Flower* effectively visualizes in a central sequence of inter-cutting triple scenes: a documentary dance party sequence within a U.S. garrison inter-cut with Yeong-sik's men stealing U.S. military supplies out of the base while Sonya is seducing Dong-sik at the very moment. The party scene depicts Korean women as prostitutes and exotic dancers, as spectacles displayed for the pleasure of American men in uniform signifying the feminization/colonization of Korea, to state the obvious, while Korean men are attempting to recuperate their masculinity by "stealing" from their colonizers and at the same time by laying blame on their own women for selling out the nation. Moreover, this tripartite sequence symbolically illustrates the intersection between the historical conditions and Korean cinema, disclosing the contradictory politics of gendered nationalism not only in the nation-building project but also in the discourse of Korean realism. Just as the project of national remasculinization is implicitly undercut by the scenes suggesting the feminization of the nation/Korean men, the masculinist privileging of realism is embroiled in this generic hybrid of documentary neo-realism of the party scene, the action shot of the theft, and the melodramatic make-out between Sonya and Dong-sik.

The intersecting historical legacies of war, division, and modernization are poignantly highlighted in the final train robbery sequence leading to a catastrophic

denouement. The train is of course the traditional signifier of industrialization ever moving forward on the already determined railway track representing the Enlightenment notion of history as a linear progress. In the film, significantly, the train full of U.S. goods runs right through the 38th parallel, at which point Yeong-sik awaits the approaching train by hiding behind a stone tablet marking the 38th latitude and jumps onto the train to join his men on the rooftop (Figure 7). Yeong-sik and his men attempt to hijack the path of modernization by detaching cargo trains from the running locomotive, but end up failing as their truck with unloaded goods from the train capsizes in the vortex of gunfight against the military police. Yeong-sik suffering gunshot runs into a swamp where he kills Sonya and reconciles with Dong-sik in his last breath. Thus, the narrative attributes to the postwar historical conditions as well as the alleged “betrayal” of Korean women for the failure of Korean men’s attempt to appropriate the process of modernization and thereby to reclaim masculinity. In other words, the surface structure of the text suggests that the inroad of Western modernization has been made upon the legacies of war and division, illuminating the neo-colonial determination of Korean modernity, but it is fundamentally to blame “promiscuous” Korean women like Sonya. As a result of the dialectical hybridization of film genres, however, *Hell Flower* simultaneously brings to the surface not only the conditions of historical reality but also the unconscious of masculinist nationalism, that is, the confluence of gendered nationalism and neo-colonial modernization in the project of Korean modernity.

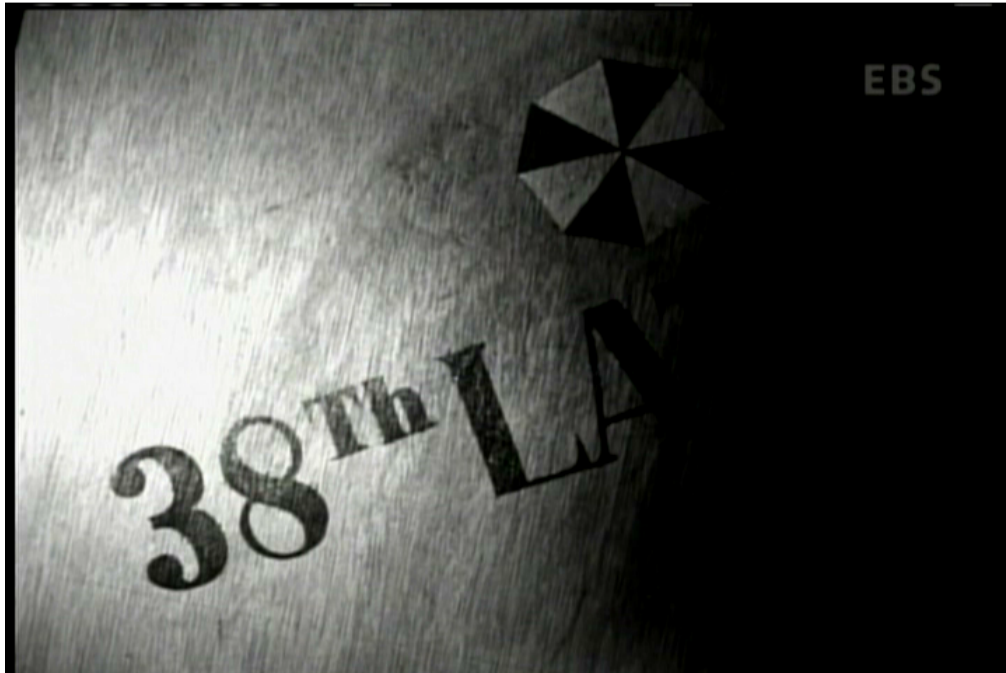


Figure 7. Yeong-sik is about to jump onto the moving train from hiding behind a stone tablet marking the 38th latitude. *Hell Flower* (1958)

2.2 *The Stray Bullet* (1961)

Critically hailed as *the* canonical film of Korean realism,¹¹³ Yu Hyeon-mok's *The Stray Bullet* has been acclaimed for its realist social criticism and its stylistic innovations. The film was produced during the short-lived Second Republic following the Student Uprising on April 19, 1960 until Park Chung-hee took power through a coup d'état on May 16, 1961. During the one-year span, film censorship was self-regulated by a Civilian Film Ethics Committee, which was to be replaced by a repressive Motion Picture Law in 1962 under the military regime.¹¹⁴ Yu's critical stance toward postwar social reality was made possible by the easing of political censorship during this period, and the military government's later ban also helped add an aura to the film as the epitome of realism.¹¹⁵ The privileged status of *The Stray Bullet* in the Korean film history, however, has been reassessed since the 1990s. It is argued, for example, that the film cannot be included in the tradition of realism because it represents not so much postwar reality per se as the individual in existential anguish therefore giving "reality effect" at best.¹¹⁶ Others argue that the film is nevertheless a social realist representation of the contemporary Korean society in that the protagonist's existential anguish is rooted in his social relations rather than floating in a vacuum of abstraction.¹¹⁷ The film employs a variety of styles from neo-realism to expressionism to Hollywood realism and portrays social problems as

¹¹³ In a survey in November 1999 by a local magazine *Monthly Chosun*, *The Stray Bullet* came out on top with 48 out of 101 votes by film critics and scholars. *Chosunilbo* (19 Nov. 1999), online, Internet, 7 May 2005.

¹¹⁴ Lee Young-il 141-48.

¹¹⁵ The Park regime banned the film for allegedly depicting Korean War veterans negatively as well as for being implicitly pro-North Korea by insisting that the refrain "Let's go!" by Cheol-ho's mother implies to "go home to North Korea." *Kyunghyangshinmun* (11 Nov. 2004), online, Internet, 7 May 2005.

¹¹⁶ Jo Yun-ju 46.

¹¹⁷ Jeong Yeong-gwon 22.

existential dilemmas. Nevertheless, it may well be included in the oeuvre of Korean realism because for one thing the formalistic technique of montage is part of epistemological realism suitable to represent individual perceptions of reality and for another existential humanism was an epistemological aspect of contemporary social reality. Most interesting, however, is that the debate seems to illustrate discursive workings of Korean realism in that the project of (cinematic/national) remasculinization ends up with regressive narcissism by resorting to universal humanism as well as gendered nationalism.

Adapted from Yi Beom-seon's 1959 short story "Obaltan" ("an aimless bullet"), *The Stray Bullet* offers an allegory of postwar Korea woven through a dysfunctional family that fled North Korea during the war and settled at a shantytown called "Liberation Village" in Seoul. As the head of the household, Cheol-ho always works or "walks" in order to support his large family. He works in a public accountant's office, but since his meager income is barely enough for family subsistence, he walks home to save trolley fare and cannot afford to have his rotten teeth pulled. His younger brother Yeong-ho is an unemployed Korean War veteran who dreams of quick money and ends in an attempted bank robbery. Cheol-ho's pregnant wife suffers from malnutrition and dies during the delivery of their second child; his sister Myeong-suk, despaired of the broken betrothal to a maimed war veteran Kyeong-sik, prostitutes herself to American GIs; and his youngest brother Min-ho, unable to pay for schooling, works as a newspaper boy. In the background, his insane and bedridden mother shouts by fits "Let's go!" in a jarring voice of the spectral past constantly haunting the family. This family-nation allegory is further woven into the national allegory of gender, in which the conflict between tradition

and modernity is represented by two brothers, Cheol-ho and Yeong-ho, in relations to several female characters around them. Cheol-ho is portrayed as a man of conscience and integrity agonizing over the clashes between ethical responsibilities and capitalist values of Western culture; in contrast, Yeong-ho is willing to adopt modern values and to breach law if necessary for upward mobility. They are set in opposition to female characters such as their sister Myeong-suk and Yeong-ho's romantic interests Seol-hui and Mi-ri: these women are represented as conduits of Western cultural and capitalist penetration, bringing shame and destruction to the male characters. Also, Cheol-ho's mother and daughter function as two burdens of history weighing heavily upon the two brothers: the mother is the deranged remnant of tradition derailed by war and division; the five-year-old daughter represents a burgeoning sign of capitalist consumerism demanding her father and uncle to buy her a nylon dress and new shoes and to take her to the Hwashin Department Store.

Yu employs these allegorical characters to provide a mosaic of contemporary social collectivity as ordinary people engaged in mundane struggles for survival. In doing so, he utilizes a variety of formalistic apparatuses as a means to bring social realities to the textual surface; similarly to *Hell Flower*, however, the represented realities are inflected by the epistemological limitation of existential humanism as well as the masculinist ideology of gendered nationalism. As a representative work of Korean realism, the film is a grab bag of film genres offering the audience a formalistic feast: neo-realist portraits of streets around the city provide valuable documentation of contemporary Seoul; frequent sound and visual montages are effective in delving into the psychological and symbolic domains of characters and social conditions; and the use of

Hollywood genres such as criminal action and melodrama indicates another dimension of contemporary reality embroiled in the impacts of war, division, and Western modernity. Effects of these formalistic devices are, however, compromised by epistemological and ideological refraction, illustrating once again discursive workings of Korean realism in collaboration with the nationalist project of remasculinization. Nevertheless, it is important to understand formalistic aspects since the form functions as the prominent medium of meaning in this film.

In one of the seminal scenes, for example, where Cheol-ho and Yeong-ho debate on the value of ethical duties, the central concern of the story is symbolically enacted not only in its thematic reflection on the individual relation to social collectivity but also in its formalistic composition of the scene. In a manner characteristic of neo-realism, the sequence is shot as a deep-focused long-take. Within a single frame, Cheol-ho and Yeong-ho at the background are vertically juxtaposed with the sick mother lying in the foreground, visually representing the chasm between the aged parent of the past and her children of the present. Moreover, Cheol-ho and Yeong-ho are set in a compartmentalized frame-within-the-frame, accentuating the sense of entrapment and claustrophobia, while their elusive gazes never meet just like their failed communications (Figure 8). Crammed within a single frame, each character's personal life is presented as inextricably intertwined as much as they are inexorably alienated from each other. Whereas the use of close-ups with out-of-focused backgrounds zeros in on the individual psychological problem, this neo-realist/expressionist composition emphasizes the surroundings, bringing to consciousness the historical-societal contexts or making "a synthesis within analysis" (Zavattini 71) of the collective elements crystallized in this particular episode.



Figure 8. Yeong-ho at the background, Cheol-ho in the middle and their sick mother in the foreground (above). Yeong-ho at the bottom of the staircase about to go up to Seol-hui's place while a blind man is passing by (below). *The Stray Bullet* (1961)

The mother, a historical ruin of ideological conflicts, is distanced from her sons, who in turn epitomize political clashes and ethical confusions in the present society. In addition, this scene is inter-cut with a shot of Myeong-suk, in which she has just arrived home from “work” as a military prostitute and sorrowfully overhears her brothers’ conversation from outside. Her presence complicates the conflicts inside the house/nation with the geopolitical-sexual economy between the U.S. and Korea. In such complex ways, these sequences – the depth-focused shot with the mother, Cheol-ho and Yeong-ho inter-cut with the shot of Myeong-suk – exemplify the formal as well as thematic concern of the film itself.

Furthermore, the film heavily relies on montage as a way to bring out to the surface of particular scenes historical connotations and psychological depths. Montage is by definition “an idea that arises from the collision of independent shots” (Eisenstein 49): it is an editing technique that juxtaposes disparate shots to create a conceptual synthesis out of conflicting elements. Usually, it includes the conflict generated not only between colliding shots through editing but also within the shot by the use of mise-en-scene and framing, manipulating the conflicts of planes, volumes, spatial depths, lighting or sound.¹¹⁸ In other words, montage is used to bring to consciousness the historical contexts hidden in particular stories or scenes by deliberately exaggerating and manipulating editing components of the film. The previously discussed scene could be an example of montage as well: it exaggerates the volume and spatial depth to visualize the emotional distance between them, resulting in the dynamic effect of understanding the depth of their alienation in the broader societal context beyond the space of the film.

¹¹⁸ Eisenstein 49-63.

Examples of montage are too numerous to recount all of them here, but some include montages of visual setting, lighting, and sound. Yeong-ho, for instance, is consistently framed behind obstructing structures such as bars, columns, staircases, or birdcages, accentuating his social entrapment and foreboding his eventual incarceration. The conflict of light is used to picture an ambiguous and ominous consequence of Western influence: in a scene introducing Yeong-ho with Mi-ri, the frame is vertically divided into black-and-white halves, in which Yeong-ho is set in bright daylight in stark contrast to Mi-ri in a black dress standing in the dark shadow. Montage is employed in sound effects as well: emotionally charged scenes are collided with jarring background noises, often the loud mechanical sound of the whistling train, rather than blended with stirring musical notes, thereby impelling the audience to ruminate on the scene rather than absorbed into it. In a much-discussed scene, Myeong-suk sitting next to an American GI in a military jeep is framed within a trolley window in the deep-focused background while Cheol-ho and two other passengers inside the trolley stare at them in the foreground. The background sound of *pansori* (Korean traditional music) blends with jazz music from the trolley radio, signaling the conflict between Western modernity and tradition.¹¹⁹

Particularly interesting is the montage of horizontal and vertical images, which not only visualizes pervasive conflicts among the characters, between individuals and social forces, and within the arena of political economy itself, but also manifests the film's historical vision arising out of the collision between synchronic and diachronic coexistence of discrete components. Throughout the film, horizontal images are overlaid with vertical movements, emphasizing differential yet interrelated individual/social

¹¹⁹ For further analyses of formalistic techniques, see Lee Hyang-jin 118-124.

conditions simultaneously dynamized by a dialectical leap into history. Horizontal images impart a sense of claustrophobia, a social space in which characters are imprisoned and destined to hopelessly repeat daily routines. These images are then set in contrast to vertical overlays, emphasizing the characters' attempt to escape from the rubble of realities and historical ruins. Introduced with the close-up of his legs, Cheol-ho is portrayed as "walking" throughout the film: plodding home from work then back to work and rambling to the police station, to the hospital, and around the city, he continuously moves in horizontal spaces of the screen. Yeong-ho is also circumscribed by spatial constrictions: he runs in his desperate flight for freedom from one ghastly scene to another of dire social conditions.¹²⁰ These horizontal images are contrasted with visual allusions to vertical motion using stage props and sets, low camera angles, and the movements of actors. Especially, Yeong-ho and Seol-hui are associated with vertical imagery: Seol-hui's place on the rooftop with forty-four steps is a strong visual symbol of both characters' aspiration for upward mobility. In another symbolic scene, Yeong-ho comes to visit Seol-hui and climbs the heavy iron staircases cramming the frame all the way to the top while a blind man is fumbling his way with a walking stick at the bottom: Yeong-ho's upward desire, whether for social mobility, romantic fulfillment, or redemption from hopeless reality, is collided with the blind man tied to the horizontal space and diminished to a dwarfish size by a long shot (Figure 8). As such, the montage of horizontal with vertical dynamics seems to make a formalistic intervention by bringing

¹²⁰ In another noticeable sequence where he reunites with Seol-hui since they first met during the war, the two walk "across" railroad tracks as if attempting to cross the vertically separating force of history towards personal happiness. Also, the sick mother functions as a fixed image of horizontal reality: she is a constant reminder of the inescapable present, lying horizontally on the floor either in the foreground or in the background of deep-focused shots, vertically dividing her from other characters.

individual scenes to consciousness of historical legacies intersecting with social conditions.

In addition to these compositional collisions within a shot, montage can be effectively employed in editing separate shots into a dynamic synthesis of emotions and ideas. The sequences of Yeong-ho's running away from the police and Cheol-ho's simultaneous roaming around the streets of Seoul are illustrative of emotional and intellectual dynamization. In these scenes, the two protagonists' abysmal falls are collaged with a long series of shots on multi-faceted sides of the city, eliciting the associative links between their personal problems and the surrounding societal ills. Yeong-ho's aspiration for happiness is blown flat like the shot of a punctured balloon, signaling also his commitment of robbery. The camera then follows Yeong-ho's flight in a shocking panorama of shadowy urban undersides from narrow back-alleys to a dark underground aqueduct under construction where he runs into a dead mother with a crying baby on the back, who may have committed suicide by strangling herself, then out into a group of laborers in strike, finally inside an abandoned factory into his arrest. Associated with the societal malaise of destitution, despair, labor exploitation, and other conflicts, Yeong-ho's desperate runaway is "dynamized" through a series of associations into new understandings about societal contexts. Moreover, Yeong-ho's montage sequence is juxtaposed with Cheol-ho's own wandering through the streets of Seoul, bringing the two antithetic sides of the city into collision. Leaving behind Yeong-ho at the police station and his dead wife at the hospital mortuary, Cheol-ho rambles aimlessly on the well-paved streets lined with stores and offices in soaring concrete buildings. Shot from his point of view, the orderly aspects of the city are associated in contrast to Cheol-ho's despondent

psychology while at the same time producing emotional and intellectual dynamization of its surface appearance of cleanliness, abundance, and prosperity in clash with the repressed seamy side of the city associated with Yeong-ho.¹²¹ As a result of such profuse use of montage, the film conveys a new idea from the collision of disparate elements, that is, a renewed awareness of societal circumstances inseparably intertwined with the individual life stricken with confusion, entrapment, alienation, and despondency.

Notwithstanding all the formalistic apparatuses to convey “reality,” the film reveals limitations in the existentialist mode of understanding and representing specific historical conditions. As discussed earlier in this chapter, existentialism was the representative epistemology of postwar Korea, constituting the ideological basis of Korean realism which upheld neo-realism as the primary mode of film art to represent “reality” and advocate “humanity.” Reflecting the vague and somewhat abstract nature of Korean realism, *The Stray Bullet* remains ambivalent about denoting specific historical contexts and instead glosses them over as universal human conditions. In doing so, it presents the male protagonist primarily as the individual caught in existential dilemmas whose humanity becomes redeemed at the expense of other, especially, female characters. Cheol-ho is portrayed as a conscientious and hardworking patriarch who is nevertheless unable to support his family and is despaired of absurd reality as well as his own inability. In the original short story version, he imagines himself to be a primitive man who is reduced to scavenge “intestines” dumped by other hunters of bears, boars,

¹²¹ For a detailed analysis of the use of montage in the two street sequences involving Yeong-ho and Cheol-ho, see Cho Hyen-il 256-60.

roebucks, pheasants, or rabbits.¹²² Imagined in terms of the evolutionary human civilization, he pities himself as the selected out of the law of nature and left to feed on the refuse of victors. Besides, he is presented as striving to maintain human dignity and abide by conscience, ethics, customs, and laws as he endures the pain from his rotten teeth, signifying whether historical legacies, present realities, or absurdity of general human condition. Thus identifying himself as a victim and thereby disidentifying with the interpellation of the state apparatus, he reclaims his humanity and escapes from all the responsibilities he has been pondering upon while leaving the specific questions of history and reality undisclosed.¹²³ In this sense, formalistic achievements of the film even seem to obfuscate reality, rendering the claim of Korean realism as a critical intervention with contemporary society suspended in an excess of style.

Moreover, the “existential” alienation of Cheol-ho turns out resulted from his sense of lost patriarchal authority, illuminating the discursive collusion of Korean realism with the ideology of gendered nationalism. Like *Hell Flower*, *The Stray Bullet* blames for the feminization of Korean men the “promiscuous” female protagonists as the domestic agents of U.S. modernity. As Chungmoo Choi informs, the United States established its political economic hegemony over Korea by means of the gift economy, thereby fostering a sense of indebtedness and colonization of consciousness in the psyche of Koreans while translating the political economy into the sexual economy of “a gendered and sexualized relationship” between the colonizer and the colonized, not only “in the metaphorical sense” but also “at the level of corporeality, which institutes military sexual services”

¹²² Yi Beom-seon 128.

¹²³ For an analysis of *The Stray Bullet* in terms of existentialism, see Yi Yu-ran 11-29.

(“Nationalism and Construction of Gender in Korea” 12). The figure of a military prostitute or *yanggongju* is “a signifier of modernity” that functions not only as “an allegory of the (neo)colonized nation” but also as “a symptom of Korean male trauma” because “she bears the traces and thus is a reminder of the infiltration and domination of American masculinity in South Korea” (Chung Hye Seung, “Toward a Strategic Korean Cinephilia” 138).

In the film, women function as the metaphor for the colonization/feminization of Korea both in psychological and corporeal senses. Whereas Myeong-suk as a military prostitute symbolizes the selling out of the feminized nation in a “corporeal” or territorial sense, Mi-ri and Seol-hui emblemize the colonization of consciousness resulted from the penetration of U.S. culture. Moreover, as *après-guerre* or “free women” working in the public space, Mi-ri and Seol-hui along with Myeong-suk not just symbolize the colonization of the nation but also function as the sexualized other upon whom Korean men project and exorcise their trauma of emasculation. Mi-ri is a rising film star in the budding Korean cinema and a local emissary of Hollywood: attired in a Western-style black dress and high-heeled shoes, she appears daring and imposing, a phallic woman that demands Yeong-ho to get a job if he wants to see her again. She represents an influx of capitalist values: she recommends Yeong-ho for a part in a movie because his wound from the war would give dramatic credibility to the character, thus helping the movie sell better. Seol-hui is associated with virginal whiteness and feminine sexuality, incarnating for Yeong-ho a promise for a happy marriage and a middle-class life in a “first-class house” with “a name plate big as a chessboard.” Like Mi-ri, however, she is a new woman of Western modernity, eagerly accumulating symbolic capital of the English

language and college education as well as being outspoken about her sexual desire for Yeong-ho, thus she has to be punished by death. It is Myeong-suk who plays the role of penitent Maria Magdalena and becomes integrated into the order of patriarchy: in a religiously-charged shot, her saddened face overlooking her newborn nephew (Cheol-ho's newborn baby) is juxtaposed with a cross framed by window bars while a glow of light is cast upon her head from behind.

Having saved the masculinity/humanity of Cheol-ho at the disposal of female characters according to the ideology of chastity, the film proceeds to embrace the imperative of modernization, grafting the Western modernity of technology upon the preserved tradition of patriarchy while repressing the concomitant modernity of liberation, democracy, and civil society. In the last scene inside a cab, Cheol-ho talks to himself in half unconscious due to a hemorrhage from the wounds left by the pulled teeth:

I've too many roles to fulfill. As a son, a husband, father, older brother, a clerk in an accountant office. It's all too much. Yes, maybe you're right – a stray bullet, let loose by the creator. It's true I don't know where I'm headed. But I know I must go, now, somewhere.¹²⁴

And the camera pans outside the cab into the busy night of the city, bustling with continuing daily lives of people selling newspapers or going somewhere in bicycles, cars, trolleys, or trucks, with bright headlights on in all directions and in the mechanical yet lively din of a modern city. As such, *The Stray Bullet* seems indeed an epitome of Korean realism: the ambivalence toward Western modernity vis-à-vis tradition is displaced upon the sexualized female others and resolved by disciplining/integrating them into the

¹²⁴ The translation is borrowed from Marshall R. Pihl's translation of Yi's short story. See Yi 154.

project of modernization for the remasculinized nation. All the spectacles of formalistic devices to represent “reality” come down to the reality of Korean men trapped in existential dilemmas while the “real” conditions of postwar Korean society are brought to consciousness through the formulaic melodrama based on gendered nationalism featuring treacherous women and victimized men.

“Nation is a product of social and historical construction, especially as the result of contentious politics, both within and without, in historically embedded and structurally contingent contexts” (Shin Gi-wook 8). Modern Korea, as a particular formation among multiple modernities, was constructed in the 1950s intersections of the Cold War geopolitics with the specific national legacies of colonialism, the Korean War, division, and contentious domestic politics of nation building. As a representative medium of popular imaginary during the postwar fifties and early sixties, Korean cinema functioned as a critical cultural terrain in which contradictions of Korean modernity were negotiated by the discursive deployment of gendered nationalism. In critically acclaimed films of Korean realism, particularly in *Hell Flower* and *The Stray Bullet*, Korean men propose themselves as coherent/masculine subjects of modern Korea imagined as a horizontal community of brotherhood; while in the process they attempt to resolve the contradictions inherent in the (neo-)colonial nature of Korean modernity – the colonization/feminization of the nation/nationalist men – by fetishizing, chastising, and ultimately integrating the female other into the order of modern patriarchy. In other words, modern Korea has been built on the ambivalent critical terrain of Korean modernity by simultaneously (dis)claiming the (dis)continuity of tradition/modernity:

Korean men disidentify with nation/tradition as well as with Western modernity only to reclaim the teleological continuity of national history in the linear temporal path from tradition to modernity. However, the imaginary economy of resolution simply sutures the rupture of history to the developmentalist time of modernization, thereby neglecting and jeopardizing the genuine spirit of modernity – the realization of the modernity of liberation, democracy, and civil society.

VI. From Nostalgia to the End of History:

The Manchurian Candidate Then and Now

With the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, an “official” closure of a historical era was marked with a declaration that not only the Cold War but History itself came to an end. History as a single linear progress, proclaimed Francis Fukuyama, reached its final stage with the demise of Communism, implicitly affirming “the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism” and “an unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism” (3). In claiming liberal capitalism as the only viable system to continue history, however, he reveals logical paradoxes in his apocalyptic triumphalism: for one thing he displaces the philosophical concept of Hegelian “End of History” as the self-realization of the Absolute Idea with the concrete event in the social-historical realm, for another he pronounces History as over only to reassert that history continues with the allegedly legitimate liberal capitalist system. Interestingly, a similar contradictory desire characterized the American Cold War cultural climate of the 1950s. In the midst of the intensifying Red Scare from the Hollywood Ten (1947-48) to Alger Hiss (1948-50) to the Rosenbergs (1951-53), from McCarthyism (1950-54) to the Korean War (1950-53), post-World War II America witnessed a radical break with the more progressive past decades of the Popular Front and New Deal liberalism. Cold War liberals, disillusioned with the fascist world war and the totalitarian turn of Soviet Communism, revolted against mass politics of any kind labeling the public space as “totalitarian” and any political stance as “pathological” while taking refuge in psychological registers as a private sanctuary of

imagination and individual freedom.¹²⁵ The past era of “ideology” was declared as defunct and a new age of “vital center” was hailed to coalesce both the right and the left into the liberal capitalist system.¹²⁶ Cold War liberal centrism was then premised upon contradictory impulses similar to those of the post-Cold War “End of History” thesis: it substituted psychology for social reality and it claimed historical continuity by simultaneously proclaiming a radical discontinuity with the past.

As such, selective amnesia or a paradox of forgetting to remember seems to inform both the Cold War and post-Cold War debates on historicity and historiography. History is a contradictory site where as Walter Benjamin famously defined, “There is no document of civilization that is not at the same time a document of barbarism” (256). It is constituted by what Shoshana Felman calls “a double silence,” that is, “the silence of ‘the tradition of the oppressed,’ who are by definition deprived of voice and whose story (or whose narrative perspective) is always systematically reduced to silence” and “the silence of official history – the victor’s history – with respect to the tradition of the oppressed” (213). History, in other words, is found on what it excludes both by what is told and by what is silenced, by the official history of rational causality and progress and by repressed memories of discontinuities and traumatic interruptions, by the “presence of

¹²⁵ Regarding psychologizing effects of Cold War liberalism, see Pease 155-98. In constructing a “Cold War mentality” as well as a “Cultural Imaginary” under the rubric of an American literary “canon,” Cold War liberals transported politically charged materials into the realm of a cultural pre-conscious. Unable to be translated into civic liberties and stored instead within the cultural pre-conscious for preservation, “these displaced representations, these residual political energies,” remained “unrelated to the Realpolitik of the Cold War era” (184).

¹²⁶ See Schlesinger. His book, *The Vital Center*, was a manifestation of emerging postwar “new liberalism.” It strongly renounced the socialist radicalism of the thirties and reconfigured its political standpoint towards the “center.” In conflating and repudiating Fascism and Communism as totalitarianism of extreme far rights and lefts, it switched its rhetoric from socialist realism/naturalism to moral/psychologism.

images” and by “the absence of images” (Sturken 690). As such, I wonder what specific memories of “barbarism” vie with those of “civilization” for a space in the mausoleum of Cold War history, what stories are represented and what absent presences these representations might entail. As a way to engage with these questions, this chapter examines two cultural products from each historical period: John Frankenheimer’s 1962 film *The Manchurian Candidate* and Jonathan Demme’s 2004 remake of it. Whereas the original film is set against the Korean War in the atmosphere of the McCarthyite Red Scare, the remade version spans from the 1991 Gulf War into the current war on terrorism against the backdrop of post-Cold War transnational capitalism. Set against specific historical events, both films make critical commentaries on particular social-political circumstances and deal with the subject of (un)making memories.

All the historical references notwithstanding, however, these films are not so much concerned with time and history per se as charged with a nostalgic longing for a lost place in a lost time: home. According to Fredric Jameson, nostalgia films are symptomatic of postmodern society “incapable of dealing with time and history” and living out instead our own mental images of the past: unlike historical films that strive to represent and critique the past, they aim to recreate “the feel and shape” of the past, thereby to gratify a nostalgic desire to relive that older period (133-35). Nostalgia, literally meaning “homesickness,” presupposes an absence that generates a desire for desire, a longing for an idealized past that seems to offer a sense of home and security set against a degraded present. In the Western epistemological tradition, nostalgia is regarded as a symptom of “ontological homelessness” (Frow 135), a fundamental condition of human alienation due to human beings’ consciousness of their distance from their

material environment and of their finite condition as beings. The nostalgic paradigm encompasses from millenarianism to Western colonialism, from the Abrahamic religious belief in “the Fall of humanity from union with God” to white colonial settler societies’ nostalgic longing for the “motherland,” an idealized “home” with a Utopian dimension that is “free from the conflicts of multiculturalism, political pluralism and ethnic conflict” (Turner 150, 154). Unable to deal with history, then, nostalgia films spatialize time into floating images of *nostos* in the timeless eternal present of the cinematic space. The idea of home is conjured as “the place of safety to which we return” (Frow 135), but the desire to return home is an ambivalent site in which the familiar returns with the unfamiliar.

In this vein, both versions of *The Manchurian Candidate* may be read as nostalgia films. The historical events of the Korean War and the Gulf War, which provide narrative origins for the films, are mentioned only briefly in the opening and immediately forgotten as if the ensuing plot developments are non sequiturs. The two places of war float as images, all too familiar pop images coined through movies, televisions, and other media representations: Korea as the sexualized/feminized Asian other in the images of U.S. camptown military prostitutes or *gijichon yanggongju* and the Middle East as the vilified “enemy” embodied as mysterious Arab women in black hijabs and tattooed veils on their faces against the inferno-like backdrop of burning oil fields in the vast deserts. Moreover, the films are political thrillers about particular historical phenomena such as the anti-Communist panic in the early 1950s and the current politics of fear in the “borderless

world” of transnational capitalism.¹²⁷ But their critical commentaries on social condition seem “contained” within the eternal present of the perfectly managed diegetic space: in collapsing and ridiculing both McCarthyism and Communism, the earlier film’s anti-ideology ends up reinvigorating the ideology of anti-Communism; and the latter version’s critique of postmodern social administration reinforces the same regulative logic of fear as a means to manage the borderless world for political and corporational interests. In effect, specific histories from Korea to Iraq become silenced while simultaneously represented through all too familiar popular clichés and media images of Red Queens, Yellow Perils and “fanatic” suicide bombers. And where histories are vacated fills nostalgia for home, for the mythic Virgin Land of the American national imaginary. But the millenarian dream of utopia is haunted by the anxiety about doom as the desire for home stumbles upon repressed un-homely presences, upon the paradoxical impulse to remember by forgetting.

1. Longing for Home beyond the Cold War and *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962)

In post-World War II America, Hollywood played a vital role as a popular interpreter of U.S. foreign policy by translating the U.S. global imaginaries into affective, thereby accessible terms for the American people to live and practice in everyday realities. In particular, Cold War politics of “containment” was translated into a vernacular structure of feeling as “fear” in the cinematic time-space of film noir. In its signature dark and anxiety-filled portrayals of contemporary America as charged with a

¹²⁷ Transnational corporations are no longer tied to the nation of origin, but mobile to regions with cheap labor forces, low tax, low civil rights, etc., prompting a global division of labor among denationalized and “flexible” individuals. See Miyoshi 726-51.

sense of fear, whether it was about existential angst, unstable social conditions, the Bomb, or Communism, postwar film noir offered a crucial cultural narrative about the Cold War imaginary of containing a myriad of real or perceived threats. The well-established descriptions of the social contexts of noir recount transformations in all sectors of postwar society, converting from the wartime economy to a peacetime economy while redefining various normative social criteria from gender, race, class to masculinity to patriarchy with returning veterans trying to readjust to work and family, working women unwilling to yield their wartime jobs and go back to home and hearth, and returning African-American and other minority soldiers challenging the continuing legacies of racial segregation.¹²⁸ The famous free-floating anxiety of noir was embedded in such volatile social conditions, which film noir interpreted onto the screen as a sense of fear about disintegrating boundaries, thereby advocating the necessity of a “bulwark” – the principal metaphor of the Cold War – to differentiate “us” from “them” and to contain the other.

The anxiety of noir was, in a sense, a cinematic expression of “a primal anxiety over borders and boundaries that manifests itself in specific fears and phobias of race, sex, maternity, and national origin” (Oliver and Trigo, xiv). Behind this anxiety was the desire for home as a coherent, secure, and wholesome space. Indeed, in the midst of postwar volatility, the wartime and the home front came to form “a re-membered idyllic national time-space of phenomenological integrity and plenitude,” a “lost time and place of national purpose, cohesion, and fulfillment” (Sobchack 133). In other words, the home was a structuring mechanism of the cinematic re-presentations of un-homely urban

¹²⁸ Schatz 89-110.

spaces of postwar film noir.¹²⁹ Thus, film noir functioned as an interpretive cultural realm of the late forties and fifties, translating and displacing anxieties over borders and boundaries into affective terms of a fear of the unfamiliar and a longing for home, often finding its quintessential expressions in the battlefield of Korea or the home front during and after the war. The containment ideology was rendered as a fear of otherness, be it Communists, racial-ethnic minorities, women, or homosexuals, while the home front continued to occupy the imagination of the filmgoing audiences, feeding them with the national imaginary of the U.S. as a bounded nation-family and a coherent subject of history.

The Manchurian Candidate (John Frankenheimer, MGM, 1962), set in post-Korean War America, offers a noirish time-space for contemporary American anxieties about porous social boundaries. The film is apparently a psychological dramatization of American POWs' "brainwashing scare"¹³⁰ during the Korean War, but it is primarily

¹²⁹ Drawing on Bakhtin's concept of "chronotope," Sobchack defines a cinematic time-space of film noir as "lounge time": "I designate the life-world (both cultural and narrative) spatialized from nightclubs, cocktail lounges, bars, anonymous hotel or motel rooms, boardinghouses, cheap roadhouses, and diners as constituting the temporalization of what I call *lounge time*. The spatiotemporal structures and smaller chronotopic unity (or motifs) like the cocktail lounges or the hotel room that constitute lounge time emerge in their historical coherence as threats to the traditional function, continuity, and contiguity, and security of domestic space and time. They substitute for and fragment into 'broken' status the nurturant functions of another and more felicitous chronotope discussed earlier: the home" (156-157).

¹³⁰ Fear of Communist brainwashing during the Korean War remained prevalent throughout the fifties. Captured American soldiers delivered radio speeches consisting of North Korean propaganda as early as July 9, 1950 just four days after United Nations forces began military action in Korea. One out of ten American prisoners of war were believed to have collaborated with their captors and twenty-one Americans defected to China. According to Charles S. Young, the brainwashing scare and the popular attention put on American POWs were due in part to the Korean stalemate that dragged on through armistice talks for the greater part of the war's three-year duration. Since there was no distinct winner to dictate the repatriation of POWs, the issue of POWs, usually an endnote appurtenant to conclusive conflicts, became the main sticking point during the process of negotiations. In search for a "substitute victory," U.S. introduced "voluntary repatriation" which argued for individual prisoners to choose between

intended as a double-edged criticism about both “extremes,” McCarthyite anti-Communists and Communist sympathizers. But some critics find that the film “eschews politics, reveling in an ‘anti-ideology’” by collapsing the two opposed ideologies (Carrhuthers 84). Bosley Crowther points out that the Communist operatives loom out of proportion to their counterpart, the McCarthyite senator, and as a result, a “chance of balanced satire and ironic point” in the “subtle equating of these two firebrands” is “lost.” For Michael Paul Rogin, “far from mocking the mentality it displays,” the film “aims to reawaken a lethargic nation to the Communist menace” (252). As such, the film seems premised upon the contradictory desire to remember by forgetting, to claim historical legitimacy of the Cold War social condition in fifties’ America by silencing while simultaneously representing contemporary events from the Korean War to McCarthyism. Stock images of Red Queens and Yellow Perils, lifted from historical contexts, dominate the noirish diegetic time-space of the film and stir up anxieties about the unfamiliar other allegedly infiltrating through porous borders and boundaries. The anxieties over social relations are represented mainly as a crisis of masculinity, a feminist menace, and an infiltration of foreignness into the national body politic embodied in mythic white masculinity of the American national imaginary.

The Manchurian Candidate, apparently a story of the Lost Patrol which becomes ambushed in Manchuria and brainwashed by Chinese psychiatrists during the Korean

repatriation and asylum, believing that a large number of defections among enemy POWs would demonstrate the superiority of the West. In this context, the issues of collaboration and defection among American POWs attracted popular attention along with the alleged Communist “brainwashing” technique to indoctrinate the prisoners. See Louis Menand, “Brainwashed,” *The New Yorker* (15 Sep. 2003), online, Internet, 10 May 2005; Charles S. Young, “Missing Action: POW Films, Brainwashing and the Korean War, 1954-1968,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 18.1 (1998), online, Internet, 14 May 2005.

War, is in fact a cinematic enactment of the contemporary cultural anxiety about American national identity. The film projects Cold War America as a nation in crisis, in which American (Cold War liberal) sons strive to reclaim the nation supposedly derailed due to absent fathers as well as threatening others. Raymond Shaw (Laurence Harvey), who has been brainwashed in Manchuria into an assassin, is the weak-kneed son with two opposing father figures, Senator Iselin (James Gregory), his step-father and a McCarthy-esque figure, and Senator Jordan (John McGiver), his fiancée Jocie's father. Senator Iselin is the "bad" father who brings the nation "down low," but he is more of a joke whose idiocy is blamed on the ultimate mastermind, Mrs. Iselin (Angela Lansbury), Raymond's overwhelming mother and a Communist spy. Opposed to him is Senator Jordan, the "good" father as well as the good nurturing mother filling the gap left by Raymond's phallic mother. Raymond kills his good father under hypnosis, but regains his consciousness in the end and assassinates his bad father along with his mother.

Summarized in this way, the film turns out a Freudian drama of Oedipal complex, in which Cold War liberal sons struggle to obtain national-historical subjectivity, but ends up regressing to narcissism by splitting the idealized self-image from the intervening principle of reality, the "good" father from the "bad." In interpreting E. T. A. Hoffmann's story "The Sand-Man" as a case of narcissism, Sigmund Freud proposes that the "repetition compulsion" or the splitting of oneself into a double, as into the soul and body, is the human instinct to deny death and preserve oneself. Nathaniel's narcissism or the inborn instinct for self-preservation is manifest in his love for Olympia, the automaton and the "double" of his ego. Olympia is Nathaniel's "ideal ego," a narcissistic construction of the idealized and projected image of himself, which functions as a

mediator between his desires and the laws of the Father, between his objects of love – the “good” father and his betrothed Clara – and the disturber of his love – the “bad” father(s) Coppelius and Coppola, the “sand-man.” In Nathaniel’s case, his narcissistic love, the Oedipal desire for mother, and his castration anxiety induced from the interruption by the father are split into two father-imagoes, the “good” nurturing father and the “bad” intervening one. And his death-wish against the bad father is expressed in the death of the good father. In refusing to recognize external restrictions or reality and fleeing instead into a narcissistic substitution, an imaginary construction in the psychic realm, Nathaniel ultimately breaks down and plunges into death in madness. Thus, Freud defines “the uncanny” as an “unfamiliar” [*unheimlich*] sensation resulted from an involuntary repetition of something “familiar” [*heimlich*] long alienated in the mind through the process of repression.

As Olympia, a lifeless machine, embodies Nathaniel’s narcissistic desire, the figure of Raymond is a neutral mechanism, upon which Cold War intellectuals displace their castration anxiety, that is, their contradictory claim of legitimacy as the national subject entrusted to continue American history by simultaneously denying the legacies of the more politically committed past. Raymond is no more than a projected self-image of Cold War liberals: intended to mediate between desires/political energies and external restrictions/political commitments, he is a “neutral” figure that mechanically repeats a given task and cannot remember his own doing, therefore cannot have any guilt or conscience. As such, he epitomizes the paradox of Cold War politics that celebrates individual freedom only to escape from freedom, history, and ethico-political responsibilities. Moreover, disguised as a “priest” in the last assassination scene,

Raymond evokes the image of a “prophet, messiah, and martyr” (Krajewski 222), and in killing the Iselins representative of ideological extremes, he is projected as a self-sacrificial mediator that redeems the derailed nation. Through his heroic self-sacrificial act, as it were, he claims his right to inherit the nation, his legitimacy as the national-historical subject. Problematically, however, he attempts to reclaim history by repressing the past: narcissism entails repression, which is destined to return as the uncanny.

As in Nathaniel’s split father images, Raymond’s desires and the castration anxiety are projected into two opposing figurations of “good” and “bad” fathers. Senator Jordan is the “good” father, the national father figure portrayed in the symbolic image of an American eagle. Interestingly, he is also represented as a good nurturing mother: he dies spilling white milk from his breast or from a milk carton he happens to hold near his chest when Raymond shoots him. Opposed to the good father is the ridiculous bad father, Senator Iselin, who has hijacked the legitimate heritage of the national tradition and smeared with his farcical idiocy as he is symbolically depicted in contrast to the images of the good national father, Abraham Lincoln. Noticeably, the bad father is just a pathetic clown of the demonic mother and the good father takes the place of the nurturing mother replacing the overpowering presence of the phallic bad mother. Curiously, American national history is imagined as continuing through a patrilineal reproductive mechanism, an androgenetic system in which fathers beget sons from Lincoln to Jordan to Raymond without the participation of mothers. Raymond’s flight into the narcissistic ideal ego away from the burden of reality then amounts to the nostalgic desire for a lost national home, for that mythic land of “purity” and “innocence” promised for “American Adams.”

Nostalgia for the mythological homeland, however, entails the return of the unfamiliar manifested in foreign bodies of sexualized and racialized otherness.

In *The Manchurian Candidate*, feminine sexuality is taken up as the primary locus of otherness to displace anxieties about national identity and to stage the crisis of masculinity against the noir convention of the femme fatale. The femme fatale in the film noir is a fetish object devised as a defense against the threat of castration.¹³¹ As a phallus substitute, her “phallic” presence denies man of his possible castration while simultaneously her sex appeal shores up his masculinity protecting him from the possibility of castration. In the film, the femme fatale is split into two female characters, Mrs. Iselin and Jocie, embodying the phallic mother and virginal/seductive female sexuality, respectively. Mrs. Iselin is an ultimate embodiment of Philip Wylie’s vituperative “Momism,” “the end of a long line of frustrated wives with weak-kneed husbands and smothered sons” (Doherty 31). She is the puppet-master behind both far-rights and far-lefts, manipulating Senator Iselin to initiate the infamous McCarthyite red-bait while using her own son Raymond as a hypnotized Communist assassin.¹³² A venomous presence behind both ideological extremes, she is Momism incarnate, the phallic femme fatale upon whose body the Manichean politics of the Cold War are

¹³¹ According to Oliver and Trigo, fetishism is a “dual denial-recognition” of the castration anxiety in that man substitutes a fetish for the missing maternal phallus in order to both “deny” and “protect” his possibility of castration (xxviii).

¹³² She feeds her husband with shifting numbers of alleged Communists within Defense Department, 207 to 104 to 275, finally settling with 57 from a Heinz tomato ketchup bottle; she instigates the red scare by producing “reality” out of staged media images and sensationalized speeches as symbolically portrayed in the press conference sequence where she gazes at the broadcast images on the TV monitors, beyond which the Senator is acting out his McCarthy lines. Her phallic dominance is also to blame for her “unlovable” and socially dysfunctional son, Raymond: identified with the face cards, “the queen of diamonds,” she is the trigger mechanism that sets Raymond into action as a hypnotized Communist assassin – “the parent fish” that inflicts “most mortal of all psychic injuries” upon her son.

displaced and conveniently denounced. Jocie, on the other hand, embodies virginal female sexuality reassuring Raymond's masculine virility: blond, feminine, and stripped half-naked to use her blouse as a tourniquet on Raymond's snake-bitten leg, she exuberates with sex appeal giving a boost to Raymond's stifled masculinity. Moreover, her virginal sexuality is interchangeable with Mrs. Iselin's phallic image to complete the femme fatale: in the costume party, Mrs. Iselin is dressed as maidenly Little Bo Peep while Jocie appears in an alluring outfit – a black cape, leotards, and a gigantic queen of diamonds strapped to her torso; and she takes over Raymond where Mrs. Iselin leaves off after hypnotizing him and revealing herself as his secret “American operator.” As fetish objects to shear off the fear of castration, both Mrs. Iselin and Jocie represent the sexualized locus of Cold War politics of paradox: the female body upon which Communism is displaced, the private domain which is politicized and thereby dissolved, and the source of “personal influence” depoliticizing politics (Rogin 245).

In addition to the sexualized female bodies, Cold War political anxieties are also displaced onto racialized bodies. Yen Lo (Khig Dhiagh), the Chinese psychiatrist in charge of brainwashing the American patrol, is associated with Pavlov and Fu Manchu and portrayed in the stereotypical image of a “corrupt” and “duplicitous” “Oriental.” Another Asian character is Chunjin (Henry Silva), a North Korean interpreter and Communist spy who traps the patrol into a Russian ambush, a “treacherous” and “double-dealing” Asian “gook” who also fulfills the feminized role of model minority: “I am tailor and mender. I am cook. I drive car. I'm cleaner and scrubber. I fix everything. I take message. I sleep at house of my cousin.” Yellow faces of Yen and Chunjin are particularly significant when compared with Allen Melvin, a black character whose

nightmare of the brainwashing scene features the entire cast of black women, presumably reflecting a “black consciousness,” in contrast to Major Marco’s (Frank Sinatra) dream sequence. As Matthew Frye Jacobson and Gaspar González point out, “loving *blacks*” was an important trade-off for demonizing “Orientals,” balancing out the demands of civil rights movement from *Brown v. Board of Education* to the Montgomery bus boycott on the one hand, and the Cold War business of dealing with the “loss” of China as well as anti-colonial wars of Korea and Vietnam on the other: “Yen proves the importance of race in deciphering international enmities, while Melvin demonstrates that America is not racist” (124). In this way, racialized bodies are deployed to displace and depoliticize politics, to silence the voice of the racialized other in the appearance of representing it, and thereby to preserve the idealized vision of the homeland as non-racist and democratic.

As such, Cold War anxieties over shifting social relations are displaced onto sexualized, racialized, and foreign bodies on the dark fear-filled screen of film noir only to invoke the mythic homeland as embodied in the white heterosexual couple, Marco and Rosie (Janet Leigh). Rosie, in particular, is the epitome of the nation itself and central to the process of shoring up the national imaginary. In the train sequence, Rosie approaches troubled Marco and lights a cigarette for him, literally recuperating his imperiled phallus. They together summon the spirits of American tradition by geography and by history, mustering from Maryland to Delaware to Columbus, Ohio, and introducing Rosie as “one of the original Chinese workmen who laid the track on this stretch,” obviously signifying the temporal and spatial continuity of American history. Moreover, her full name is “Eugenie Rose,” reminiscent of a “eugenic rose,” “fragile” white heritage fortified by the

sturdy frontier spirit of “brown soap and beer.” Then Rosie urges Marco to “remember” her address and phone number – “El Dorado-59970. Can you remember that?” – as if she is trying to replace Marco’s confused mind with a freshly conjured memory of “the Land of Gold.” Few critics find the role of Rosie convincing in her relationship to Marco and relevant to the overall thematic concern of the film. It appears, however, that she epitomizes American tradition – the symbolic national goddess on the pedestal or the Statue of Liberty? – upon which the narrative itself is structured; she is a central pull around which Cold War liberals such as Marco gravitate in an attempt to reclaim the American historical tradition.

In other words, symbolizing America located in that nostalgic time-space, Rosie brings the narrative of the film “home” where she is entrusted to lay a new Cold War national foundation by forming a heterosexual nuclear family with Marco. Such a mythic recuperation of America is, however, premised upon the paradoxical (dis)claim of history and the concomitant desire to wipe out dissenting voices under the pretense of representing them. Both Rosie and Marco are characterized as “orphans” severed from the sickened parents of the recent past, but at the same time they are conferred a “pedigree” as legitimate descendents of American history and tradition. Also, the film is fundamentally invested in reconstituting America by re-inventing a patrilineage of mythic white manhood from Lincoln to Jordan to Raymond to Marco; as a result, it reduces Rosie into a functional womb to produce sons, accounting for Rosie’s somewhat bewildering and apparently irrelevant presence in the narrative.

Thus, home is the structuring logic behind the densely packed noirish anxieties of this Cold War film. The mythic homeland with a millenarian overtone informs the

narrative backbone, conjured to national remembrance through selective amnesia or cultural brainwashing. Ironically, the film concludes with a self-referential brainwashing sequence, a self-conscious re-enactment of brainwashing or willful forgetting in order to remember. Marco, who is the mouthpiece of the film's politics and the gaze with which the spectator is to identify, attempts to erase and reinstall memories to Raymond: "You are to forget everything that happened at the senator's house. Do you understand, Raymond? You'll only remember it when I tell you so." He wants to "unwire" Raymond with a forceful rhetoric as if he is casting a spell to exorcise "those uniquely American symptoms, guilt and fear": "It's over! The links, their beautifully conditioned links are smashed. They're smashed as of now because we say so. [...] That's an order." The claim to historicity falters upon the contradictory denial of historical complexities in resorting instead to a psychic realm as the locus of national memory.

Significantly, throughout this process of eliding and rewriting memories, the Korean War is reduced to the palimpsest of an "official" Cold War history while the conditions and consequences of the war are completely obliterated from this filmic space of representation. The nostalgic home/homeland that Marco and Rosie are commissioned to reestablish is in fact built upon the dark subterranean "un-homely" space – a makeshift bar in a Manchurian battlefield of the Korean War where Marco's platoon is shown reveling with Korean military prostitutes in the beginning sequence of the film.¹³³ As Jacobson and González astutely point out, the opening sequence can be located in the literary tradition of the "captivity narrative," which "reverses" the historical encounter

¹³³ Following Sobchack's definition of "lounge time" in film noir, the Korean War can be included as one such chronotope of American Cold War imperialism as well.

“casting the intruder as natural resident, the natural resident as invader”: “The opening sequence establishes the United States as invited, cheerfully entertained, very much belonging and at home – ‘naturally’ (which is to say, *sexually*) matched to Korea” (116). Is this a déjà vu of the American national imaginary in which the memory of nation-founding and empire-building violence is elided in order to preserve the mythology of the Virgin Land? In this sense, Korea constitutes a site of “an imperial unconscious of national identity” through which the construction of “a coherent American identity” is represented (Kaplan, “Left Alone” 5). The “home” of the American national-global imaginary is thus repeated in the cinematic time-space of the Korean War, bringing with it the long repressed “un-homely” to the surface.

2. An “Excess” of History in Post-Cold War Hyperreality and the Return of *The Manchurian Candidate* (2004)

As a post-historical mode of processing the past, nostalgia banishes the real outside history, thereby celebrating an endless present as given, as always already existing and eternal. It informs the Cold War paradoxical (dis)claim of history in silencing by simultaneously representing the historical condition of the early fifties, upholding in effect the Cold War security state as necessary and normative. The remake of *The Manchurian Candidate* (Jonathan Demme, Paramount, 2004) reveals a similar nostalgic impulse: like the original, the new version comes short of bringing the past as lived realities into a historical perspective of now. In recreating postmodern reality as “simulation” controlled by ubiquitous technologies of regulation, the film is itself trapped within the simulated space uprooted from reality. As a result, it is unable to bring a

concrete past event together with one in the present, generating a creative collision for a new awareness and a possibility to intervene. Indeed, in the postmodern chronotope of the film, history seems to come to a stop as the particular historical referent such as Iraq or war on terrorism is rendered “hyperreal” and “simulated,” as the self-referential copy of a copy, as the schizophrenic’s floating image disconnected from the syntax of the historical context.¹³⁴

Jonathan Demme’s *The Manchurian Candidate* resorts to nostalgia as a way to escape from the all-pervasive postmodern simulacrum of U.S. society. Set in the 1991 Gulf War, a U.S. patrol is ambushed in Kuwait and brainwashed by a Manchurian Global, a multinational conglomerate modeled on Enron or Halliburton. Now, hi-tech brain implants and subcutaneous chips replace the Pavlovian conditioned reflex to brainwash or rather remote control the subject. Raymond Shaw (Liev Schreiber) is “groomed to be the first fully owned and operated vice-president in the U.S.” by his power-greedy demagogue mother in alliance with the all-powerful Manchurian Global. Ben Marco (Denzel Washington), like the original figure, pursues to disentangle the rewired brain

¹³⁴ Jean Baudrillard argues that history in our time has disappeared into the “hyperreality” of “simulation” because the “real” ceases to exist as the reference point of meaning and turns instead into an “effect” of signs and images, floating in an eternal present without a sense of time, past, present, memory, history (145-54). For Fredric Jameson, this loss of the referent and history is symptomatic of the postmodern experience of space and time, characterized in “pastiche” and “schizophrenia” respectively, in which “reality” is transformed into “images” and “time” is fragmented into “a series of perpetual presents” (141). Upon the disappearance of the unique subject with private styles, one is left only with “dead styles” to imitate, imprisoned in the self-referential aesthetic, in the past. As a result, cultural production can “no longer look directly out of its eyes at the real world for the referent” but “must, as in Plato’s cave, trace its mental images of the world on its confining walls” (135). Similarly, a signifier loses its signified and turns into “an image” in schizophrenia. Since the schizophrenic does not know language articulation, he does not know “temporal continuity” and experiences each signifier as isolated and disconnected without a coherent context, thus condemned to “an undifferentiated vision of the world in the present” (137).

circuits, but turns out another pawn of the grand mind-control scheme. In 2004, Communism is no longer a formidable foe, nor is ideology a divisive political agenda. Indeed, history seems to have come to a halt in the exhaustive media barrage clogging the screen, evaporating into the technological perfection of brainwashing, into the thickness of the referent itself. Inescapable from the perfect simulated world of its own creation, the film falls back on an ambiguous aspiration for *nostos*, a return to that familiar place of safety, to that lost origin.

Nostalgia, the longing for home as the space of safety, is premised upon a profound sense of insecurity as indicated in the Freudian concept of the uncanny. Especially, the idea of “homeland security” in the post-9/11 U.S. works by generating a sense of radical insecurity, a home in which “every facet of civilian life is subject to terrorist attack,” “a home in a continual state of emergency” (Kaplan 90). *The Manchurian Candidate* imagines the home/homeland in 2004 as this space of radical insecurity permeated not only by terrorist threats lurking everywhere but also by invasive media and technology, by the hyperreal simulation of excessive informational and technological sophistication. The film is supersaturated with “examples of the actual mind-control technology,” “the twenty-four-hour, 360-degree yammer of cable news shows and talk-radio programs.”¹³⁵ The ambient soundtrack is thick with TV commentaries and generalized warnings that “body bags are coming in from all over the world.” This sense of “homeland insecurity” is further intensified by “invasive” technology literally drilling into the brain. The platoon members are inculcated with manufactured memories, with memory chips implanted, wires and I.V. tubes snaking

¹³⁵ Klawans (Online).

upward like the Medusa's head, while watching animated Raymond Shaw hero footage on a plasma screen, constantly repeating and memorizing their scripts. The pervasive infiltration comes to completion with the technological perfection of the genomic project. The evil scientist Dr. Noyle tells us: "We really can reinvent ourselves by the remapping of the human genome, [...] broaden the very parameters of memory, to offset the ravages of dementia, [...] literally freeing them from the burden of their past." And Marco's scientist friend Delp (Bruno Ganz) confirms: "we've all been brainwashed. [...] Religion, advertising, television, politics. We accept what's normal because we're told it's normal and we crave normalcy."

Indeed, *The Manchurian Candidate* exists in such a perfect diegetic space of its own that its critical stance towards contemporary U.S. politics gets diffused into the hyperspace of simulation where it loses the gravitational force of all meaning, of the real and history. In this hyperreal space, charged with the media onslaught of exhaustive information and literally controlled from a distance by "telematic power," everyone is "a living satellite" orbiting in the quotidian universe of the simulation (Baudrillard 147-48). In this light, even Melvin's nightmare seems precalculated as a clue for Marco and so is his notebook, fat with scribbles, drawings, newspaper clippings, and photographs – the bastion of individual memory. Likewise, Marco's odyssey for the truth of his memory turns out preprogrammed as well to follow his troubled dreams, encounter Melvin, and finally decode the conspiracy. It appears that he fails his assassination mission not because he somehow regains his consciousness but because he is induced by Raymond's ambiguous and rather sentimental determination of self-sacrifice. Even Marco's verbal decoration of Raymond with the Medal of Honor in the last sequence eerily echoes the

voice of Dr. Noyle hypnotizing Marco to recommend it. Is Marco consciously recognizing Raymond's heroism or is he acting out again his given role? In this schizophrenic space of eternal present where a stroke of computer-generated imagery can easily erase and alter one's identity by literally "whitening" Marco's black identity, no one seems capable to retain his or her identity over time and make commitment to history. No wonder that a dubious nostalgic flight seems the only logical resolution out of the completely closed and technologically perfected simulation.

In this cinematic chronotope where the depth of history is flattened into the eternal present of cybernetic images and pre-scripted actions, the structuring undercurrent reveals a nostalgic desire for that homely space of a mythic origin, the "Virgin Land" of primordial "purity" populated by radically "innocent" American Adams. As a structuring absence, however, nostalgia also attests to the constructed nature of that "homeland" in the American national imaginary and the concomitant anxieties about America's nationness, its national identity. These anxieties are dramatized here in a similar fashion to the original version – as anxieties about national borders and boundaries. Whereas the earlier film envisioned America in the white male body, the current rendition entrusts the nation to the interracial male bodies of both Raymond Shaw and Ben Marco, reflecting our post-civil rights movement era. But their masculinity as the national symbolic continues to be imagined as threatened by the sexualized female other, as literally "invaded" and manipulated by Raymond's demonic mother, Senator Eleanor Shaw (Meryl Streep). She is no longer just a puppeteer behind the scene, but amplified into a symbolic phallus of planetary proportions now wielding political power herself and thereby threatening to castrate America's sons. She is to blame for a putative crisis of

national masculinity as evinced by absent fathers in both conservative and liberal traditions: Eleanor's father reminiscent of the masculine frontiersman is dead, so is Raymond's liberal father, and Senator Jordan (Jon Voigt), the good father in Frankenheimer's version, is less impressive here and ultimately killed by Raymond.

Moreover, the interracial incorporation of the national symbolic is a testimony of not so much racial integration in American society as a symptomatic desire to subsume racial others into the white masculine national imaginary. Rosie, the epitome of the mythic American tradition in the original rendition, is no longer an embodiment of America, but reduced to a supporting role as a black female FBI agent helping Marco sort out his tangled memories. Also, Marco is not quite a conscious problem-solving agent and ultimate heir to the American nation. Although he plays the leading role to untangle twisted memories and save the mired nation, it turns out that he himself is part of the grand scheme, a mere tool whose programmed memory is *supposed* to leak in order to have him unravel the plot and ultimately serve as assassin. Rather, it is Raymond who seems the only figure to regain his consciousness and save the nation by willingly entering martyrdom. Although duped and manipulated by infiltrating foreign power, he somehow retains his consciousness once he finds out the deceptive design, sheds tears of sympathy for Marco's ultimate fate, and knowingly sacrifices himself by inducing Marco to shoot him and his mother. As such, Raymond's heroic white male body is in the final instance reinserted as the only legitimate symbolic body of the American nation, sacrificed in building and correcting the derailed nation. Marco, by contrast, carries out the actual deeds unconsciously and initiated by Raymond, but he becomes deprived of his self identity: he is literally whitened and obliterated into the official discourse of white

men's history.

In fact, the structure of *The Manchurian Candidate* resembles a linear modern-day odyssey from the state of fall in the hellish battlefield of Kuwait to the water as the mythical origin of beings. The film begins with the desert scene with burning oil wells against the night sky and ends with Marco revisiting the brainwashing site by the ocean under the azure sky whose ruins of white stone walls and scaffolding structures is strangely reminiscent of an ancient Greek village. It is towards the water that Marco "remembers" himself running to escape from the brainwashing, thinking "if I can just get to the water, everything will be okay." It is into the water that he washes away the picture of his lost platoon along with Raymond's Medal of Honor. And the camera pans out backward with the aerial shot of Marco staring at the uncertain horizon until nothing but water can be seen on the screen. Unable to penetrate into the closed system of simulation, it is left only with the nostalgic longing for an imagined beginning, the desire to return to the uncorrupt origin and begin anew from the "ground zero."

The term "Ground Zero," as Amy Kaplan traces its genealogy, both "evokes and eclipses the prior historical reference," "using it as a yardstick of terror [...] while at the same time consigning the prior reference to historical amnesia" (84). Evoked to characterize the horror of 9/11, the expression Ground Zero is used as an analogy to Pearl Harbor, eclipsing its original historical referent – the atom bomb strikes on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Underlying this double working of history is "an oft-told story of America's fall from innocence," of America as "not guilty" and "naively trusting," of American exceptionalism (Kaplan 83). Then, is this desire for a new beginning predicated upon the desire to wipe out all the traumatic memories of American national

history? Is this nostalgia, this impulse to restore the lost “origin,” this craving for “normalcy” simultaneously a symptom of what is elided and washed away by the water? Despite its intended critical intervention into the current state of society, *The Manchurian Candidate* settles with an escapist desire for an ur-historical beginning, simultaneously evoking while eclipsing prior historical references from the current war on terrorism to the Gulf War, from Vietnam to Korea. In it, reality is indeed inseparable from simulation, saturated with omnipresent technologies of government from the state to transnational corporations, from the media to literal brain implants. In effect, the film ends up reconfirming that our social space is thoroughly seeped with this “telematic” power of neo-liberal rationality, that it is inescapable, thus unchangeable and eternal.

Thus, the Cold War and post-Cold War disclaim of history as discontinuous harbors the paradoxical desire to remember by forgetting, to reclaim a national history of purity and innocence by repressing the violent memories of others, whose absent presences return to haunt into the new century. North Korea, the product of the Cold War, is blatantly evoked into the forefront of world attention as a nuclear-power-aspiring megalomaniac, but the Korean War, from which stems the complex history of North Korean nuclear developments, is eclipsed into selective amnesia under the convenient epithet of a “forgotten” war. The Afghan and Iraq Wars were followed by the permanent state of emergency against terrorism while vilified media images of Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein silence the historical context that they are in fact products of U.S. Cold War political maneuvers in the Middle East, that 9/11 was a “blowback” of the 1979 CIA covert operation of arming Afghan freedom fighters [*mujahideen*] to wage a proxy war

against the Soviet Union.¹³⁶ As a barometer of terror, the post-Cold War “axes of evil”¹³⁷ in North Korea and the Middle East function as a rationalizing basis for deploying the state of emergency thereby reducing the social into the realm of individual responsibility and “disposing” the population deemed “excessive” and outside the juridical and territorial definition of sovereignty. Such as it is, the double silence of the Cold War past in these cultural productions should be served as a reminder that it is imperative to excavate the eclipsed sites of history. The absent presence of silenced historical realities should be brought into our “moment of danger” so as to reawaken ourselves to the “pile of debris” hurled by the storm of history (Benjamin 255, 258).

¹³⁶ Chalmers Johnson introduces the term “blowback” as CIA “shorthand for the unintended consequences of covert operations” overseas (xii). On the blowback in relation to 9/11, see his introduction to the second edition of his book (xii-xiv).

¹³⁷ President George W. Bush’s State of the Union Address delivered on January 29, 2002.

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