UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Digesting the Empire: Embodying Life beyond Militarized Circulations across the Pacific Ocean

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

in

Literature with a Specialization in Critical Gender Studies

by

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2022

The Dissertation of Sang Eun Eunice Lee is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

University of California San Diego

2022

DEDICATION

For my family

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the course of this dissertation, I received incredible help, guidance and support from so many, and I would like to express my deepest gratitude.

I completed my doctoral studies, including the bulk of my dissertation writing, as an Asian settler on Kumeyaay land (San Diego), with research stays in Dakota and Anishinaabe land (Minneapolis, St. Paul and Austin). I thank them for their stewardship of the lands I stayed on.

I thank my co-advisors Shelley Streeby and Erin Suzuki for their incredible guidance throughout my doctoral studies and this dissertation research. Thank you, Shelley, for always advocating for me, and for your generosity with your time and feedback. Our conversations inspired me to move forward with my research and hone my methodology, and I learned so much about mentorship from you. Thank you, Erin, for your amazing support from the very first day at UC San Diego all the way to the very end, and for the smallest details in my research to the biggest professional decisions. I would not be here without your guidance.

I thank my incredible committee members I cannot seem to stop talking about! Thank you, Yến Lê Espiritu, for our invigorating conversations and crucial professional feedback, and for inviting me into the community you've built. Thank you, Ari Heinrich, for your support and friendship. You helped me stay my course during some of the most challenging times during my studies, and your advice helped me carve out my own space. Thank you, Sara Johnson, for teaching me everything I know about being a researcher and a teacher, and for advocating for me in and out of the university when I needed it the most. You made the impossible possible so many times. Thank you, Jin-Kyung Lee, for offering critical feedback

and kind encouragement from my first quarter onwards throughout the development of my research.

The intellectual and professional community at UC San Diego provided so much nourishment for the fledgling researcher and teacher. In my home department of Literature, I learned a great deal and received much help from Dennis Childs, Fatima El-Tayeb, Joo Ok Kim, Andrea Mendoza, Daisuke Miyao, Hoang Nguyen, Sal Nicolazzo, Rosaura Sánchez, Brandon Som, Ameeth Vijay, Katie Walkiewicz and Yingjin Zhang. I also thank Sara Kaplan, Simeon Man, Wendy Matsumura, Paul Pickowicz, Amanda Solomon Amorao, Megan Strom, and Danny Widener for my time with them. I learned from and alongside Kevan Aguilar, Laala Al-Jaber, Keva Bui, Amie Campos, Thomas Chan, Jing Chen, Inga Diederich, Zach Hill, Young Oh Jung, Weiyue Kan, Esther Kim, Jungyoung Kim, Ben Kletzer, Matthew Moore, Riley Taitingfong, Samantha de Vera, Marina Vlahaki, Chuchu Wang, Xiaojiao Wang, Shannon Welch, and Matthew Wills.

I dedicate this dissertation to my family. *Ŏmma, appa*—Hae Jung Cha and Sung Woo Lee—and my brother and best friend, Sang Jun Lee, I would not be here without you. Thank you, *halmŏni* and *harabŏji*, Jae Won Lee, Kyung Woon Cha, Jong Lee and Keun Hee Kim for teaching me where I come from and where I belong. I love you more than words can express, Thomas, my partner, lover, reader, supporter and companion for life.

This dissertation was funded by University of California Humanities Research Institute's White Scholarship in Medicine and Humanities, UC Speculative Futures Research Grant, Transnational Korean Studies, the Institute of Arts and Humanities, and UC San Diego Literature Department.

Chapter 2, in part, is under review for publication. Dissertation author is the sole author for the publication.

Chapter 3, in full, is under review for publication. Dissertation author is the sole author for the publication.

Chapter 4, in part, is currently being prepared for submission for publication. Dissertation author is the sole author for the publication.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Digesting the Empire: Embodying Life beyond Militarized Circulations across the Pacific Ocean

by

Sang Eun Eunice Lee

Doctor of Philosophy in Literature with a Specialization in Critical Gender Studies

University of California San Diego, 2022

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This dissertation, *Digesting the Empire: Embodying Life beyond Militarized Circulations across the Pacific Ocean,* argues that peoples and communities in and around the Pacific Ocean both physically and metaphorically digest circulated waste materials to survive beyond the dispossession and slow violence of the US empire and its military in the modern

era. Focusing on two matters—meatpacking byproducts and radioactive materials—I trace the ideological foundation for imperial expansion and its incommensurability with indigenous and diasporic communities' worldviews and ways of life. I argue, on one hand, that scientific discourses, such as military reports and medical studies, pathologize racialized and gendered bodies as disposable and fragmentable parts. On the other hand, literary and cultural texts of survival discursively digest and resist the empire's pollutant matters. They conceptualize a broader and more entangled sense of the "body" by imagining a future different from current forms of imperial exploitation, displacement and dispossession. Through the concept of digestion—which I theorize as the constant interactions that fold the environment into the body and resist clear demarcations of the body from its surroundings—I explore the links between knowledge, the body and the surrounding environment.

This dissertation asserts that the body's everyday acts of eating and absorbing form the basis of its knowledge and selfhood, just as visible and invisible particles constantly become a part of the body. I focus on the works of transnational Asian and Pacific Islander writers and poets such as Grace M Cho, April Naoko Heck, Craig Santos Perez and Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, and visual media such as South Korea's *Reply 1988*, alongside radiation experimentation reports and public health reports on obesity. I argue the US empire's ideology expressed through its military, medical and public health findings is incommensurable with people's conceptions of themselves and their future.

INTRODUCTION

Digesting the Empire

> "Exposure routes include: direct exposure to the source, source fragments or a damaged facility; external exposure from deposited contamination and contaminated skin and clothes; external exposure and internal contamination from the plume of dispersed radioactive substances; inhalation of resuspended material; inadvertent ingestion of contamination; and ingestion of contaminated food and water.[1]

"Direct exposure," "external exposure from … contaminated skin and clothes," "inhalation," "ingestion of contamination," and "ingestion of contaminated food and water." A report by the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP), an international organization dedicated to providing quantifiable standards for protections against radiation, enumerates different ways through which people can be exposed to radiation in the event of a radiological attack. The guideline confirms the damages of nuclear weapons as one of both moment of the blast and the lasting impact of fallout; not only will the immediate and direct presence of radiation affect the body, but radiation, as a form of contamination with a longer temporality, will also enter the body through the air it breathes, the food it eats and the water it drinks. Broadcasted through documented and televised blasts of nuclear weapons, this longer temporality of radiation as a form of contamination created enduring cultural and social images of fear and fascination with radiation during and after the Cold War, ranging from Godzilla originating from the irradiated Pacific Ocean[2] and *The Twilight Zone*'s imagination of irradiated

[1] J Valentin, editor. "ICRP 96 Protecting People against Radiation Exposure in the Event of a Radiological Attack." *International Commission for Radiological Protection* 35, no. 1 (2005): 5.
[2] Godzilla and its long-standing franchise provide rich grounds for various discussions of Cold War science, Asian American racialization, fear and anxiety towards imperialism and nuclearization. See Erin Suzuki, "Beasts from the Deep." *Journal of Asian American Studies* 20, no. 1 (2017): 11-25; Yufang Cho, "Remembering Lucky Dragon, Re-Membering Bikini:

landscapes,[3] to widespread fears against foodstuffs from Fukushima prefecture and neighboring areas since the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant disaster in 2011.[4] The devastations of nuclear weapons and radiation, as results of Cold War era development in science and technology spearheaded by empires like the United States, reminded people of their entanglements with their surroundings. Unlike other forms of bombs that focused on the moment of the blast, nuclear weapons in both scientific research and cultural imaginations focused on the lasting impact of radiation on human and nonhuman bodies and the surrounding environment. Challenging the conceptualization of the body as an organism with a clear boundary, radiation as contamination established the body as porous and vulnerable to invisible particles in its environment, and ultimately tethered to the surrounding material reality.

As exemplified by the ICRP's report, the use of language in scientific literature on radiological protection—as well as cultural texts on the fear and anxiety towards radiation—focuses on unidirectional terms such as "exposure" and "ingestion" to establish a porous body vulnerable to its surroundings. At the same time, the reports differential use of "external exposure" and "internal contamination," alongside its emphasis on the body's outer boundaries, such as skin and clothes, suggest the body as porous yet distinct from the environment. It suggests a certain separation between the body and its place, even as it notes the everyday and

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Worlding the Anthropocene through Transpacific Nuclear Modernity." *Cultural Studies* 33, no. 1 (2018): 122-146; Chon Noriega, "Godzilla and the Japanese Nightmare: When Them! Is U.S." *Hibakusha Cinema: Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Nuclear Image in Japanese Film.* Mick Broderick, ed. London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1996.

[3] *The Twilight Zone*, 33b, "Shelter Skelter," directed by Martha Coolidge. May 21, 1987, CBS.

[4] For an in-depth discussion of public concern and citizen science against government propaganda and cultural discrediting of mothers as citizen scientists in post-Fukushima Japan, see Aya Hirata Kimura, *Radiation Brain Moms and Citizen Scientists: The Gender Politics of Food Contamination after Fukushima.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

mundane, yet vital acts that allows the body to be a body. Despite the conceptual distance, the body must breathe, drink, and eat, all of which must come from the surrounding environment.

This research focuses on the concept of digestion to stay with this conflict between the appearance of the body as a contained system and the body as interrelated to its surroundings. Noting the ways in which top-down statements and descriptions of the impact of material changes brought on by the US empire clash against bottom-up narratives of the mundane acts of survival of those who experience these changes, the research explores these differing perceptions of the body through its everyday acts of being through digestion. Even as they tell the horrors of nuclear weapons, survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and their kin refuse to remain as mere victims of "exposure" and "ingestion," or an object and victim of violence, and instead articulate their interrelation to the surrounding material reality by reclaiming the everyday acts of survival as actions that establish their subjecthood. Instead of "ingestion" they speak of "eating" and "drinking" that reinforces them as the subject of these actions. For instance, in his multi-genre exploration of his Japanese roots, writer Brandon Shimoda collects testimonials of hibakushas who survived the bombing. He transcribes the testimonial of Asao Aratani, who was thirteen years old at the time, writing:

> One of my classmates gave water to several victims, all of them died soon after saying Thank you…We tried to escape deadly exposure to the sunshine, which increased our pain…They tried to cool themselves by the rain, they drank the rain."[5]

If water was the conduit for radiation for those who "died soon after saying Thank you," rainwater also provided sustenance for those who survived. To note the contrast between "ingestion" through contaminated water, and drinking as an act of survival, and to underscore the

[5] Brandon Shimoda*, The Grave on the Wall.* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2019):109; ellipses in the original.

porous and tethered body that both acts invoke, I center on the term digestion to unravel the entangled web of the US's imperial reach.

This dissertation, *Digesting the Empire: Embodying Life beyond Militarized Circulations across the Pacific Ocean*, argues that peoples and communities in and around the Pacific Ocean both physically and metaphorically digest circulated waste materials to survive beyond the dispossession and slow violence of the US empire and its military in the modern era. With the aim of exploring different aspects of digestion, this research is organized into two interconnected parts: Part One begins with the most literal meaning of digestion through bodies that digest meatpacking (by)products, and Part Two notes the expansive understanding of the porous body through the digestion of radiation. Throughout these parts, I trace the ideological foundation for imperial expansion and its incommensurability with indigenous and diasporic communities' worldviews and ways of life.

I argue, on one hand, that scientific discourses, such as military reports and medical studies, pathologize racialized and gendered bodies as disposable and fragmentable parts. On the other hand, literary and cultural texts of survival discursively digest and resist the empire's pollutant matters. They conceptualize a broader and more entangled sense of the "body" by imagining a future different from current forms of imperial exploitation, displacement and dispossession.

Through the concept of digestion—which I theorize as the constant interactions that fold the environment into the body and resist clear demarcations of the body from its surroundings—I explore the links between knowledge, the body and the surrounding environment. I conceive the body as a becoming rather than a being; rather than a stable being with clearly circumscribed boundaries set against the surroundings—air, land, and water—it is a becoming that exists

through constant interactions. Sensory perceptions and material embodiments through digestion constitute the knowing body and being. Homing in on the body's mundane acts of becoming—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, breathing, drinking and eating—as the basis for its knowledge and selfhood, just as the visible and invisible particles of matter enter the boundaries of the body and constitute it from within, my theorization of digestion highlights that knowing is always and already embodied and placed, and that the environment fundamentally contributes to the embodied becoming's constitution and determines the knowledge it creates. In the face of environmental degradation and climate change that drastically shift the environment as we know it, digestion reminds us that these crises not only threaten ways of life, but the very conception of life itself.

Methodologically, this dissertation bridges disparate literatures, languages, genres, regions, and theoretical frameworks. Each chapter pairs analyses of military, medical and public health reports with analyses on literary and cultural texts on digestion in order to uncover the inherent incommensurabilities between imperial ideology and indigenous and diasporic worldviews and highlight how differing uses of language and metaphors constructs specific bodies. Even within literary and cultural texts, each chapter draws from different genres of writing, such as poetry and memoir, and visual text, such as a television show, photographs and artworks, while it engages with texts written in or incorporating different languages to varying degrees, such as Korean, Japanese, and Marshallese.

The aim of bridging speaks to the dissertation's engagement with the developing field of (Trans)Pacific Studies, and the ongoing cross-disciplinary aims of Asian American Studies and Asian Studies. Though earlier scholarship in Transpacific Studies has focused on the Pacific Rim in their attempts to examine Asian diaspora, recent scholarship in the field calls to attention the

ways in which the Pacific Basin spaces are figured as an ellipsis.[6] I follow the circulation of matter and examine multilingual sources both in and around the Pacific Ocean to explore the intimate connections that the continental US forms with Pacific communities like Guam, and the Marshall Islands, and with East Asia, such as South Korea and Japan. My research then expands these connections to examine the linkages between East Asia, Asian diaspora, and the Pacific Islands to explore the possibilities of solidarity against the US empire, and to grapple with the Pacific Ocean more fully as a place of being. Centering on the digestion of matter, I resist the separations of Area Studies and language-focused literatures to build and strengthen the ties between Pacific Rim and Pacific Basin peoples and communities.

Similarly, my interdisciplinary aim and methodology follows suit with exciting developments in the field of American Studies that reject continental primacy and highlight moments of traffic, transit, and travels. Tracing the production and circulation of imperial matters this dissertation displaces the US empire's stable geopolitical boundary and continental exceptionalism, and instead locates the US empire through circulations, exchanges and movements between continents, archipelagos, islands and atolls through and against water, and through an exchange of vital energy and biopolitical value within its currents.[7] Highlighting movements as the primary way of perceiving the individual body and the larger empire more

[6] For a more detailed discussion of the interventions, see Erin Suzuki, *Ocean Passages: Navigating Pacific Islander and Asian American Literatures.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2021; Erin Suzuki and Aimee Bahng, "The Transpacific Subject in Asian American Culture." *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. For a discussion of the development of the field, see Nguyen, Viet, and Janet Hoskins, "Introduction." *Transpacific Studies: Critical Perspectives on an Emerging Field.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press (2013): 1- 38.

[7] Much of this exciting developing discussion in the field of American Studies is crucially and succinctly articulated in Brian Russell Roberts and Michelle Ann Stephens, *Archipelagic American Studies.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2017.

expansively, this dissertation insists that the US empire exists in the exchanges with and between marginalized shore spaces, overcoming and sometimes outright ignoring the political and disciplinary divisions of region and areas.[8] As such, my project spans through and around the Pacific, from the Pacific Ocean itself, to pacific communities, such as the Marshall Islands and Guam, and what is conventionally understood as East Asia, such as South Korea and Japan. With this expansive cartography, I underscore the intimacies not only between the United States and its imperial peripheries, but also between liminal populations of the empire. In doing so, I reveal how the organizing imperial logic of the United States creates a larger hierarchical structure of deferred inclusion to those that are outside the purview of the fully human.

"I Eat Therefore I SPAM": Theorizing Digestion

To explore the multifaceted ways in which the concept of digestion expands and intervenes into the existing understandings of the body and its surrounding environment in various disciplines, I introduce a witty line from Chamorro poet Craig Santos Perez: "I eat therefore I SPAM."[9] One of the poet's many visitations to the complicated connection between Chamorro bodies and a canned ham from Austin, Minnesota, Spam, the poem explores the United States' settler colonial control of Guam through an intricate process of dispossession

[8] I owe much of my conception of these exchanges, not only in circulation of tangible products, but also in particulate matters as well as invisible life forces and energy to brilliant works of Vanessa Agard-Jones, "Bodies in the System," *Small Axe* 17, no. 3 (2013): 182-192; Kalindi Vora, *Life Support: Biocapital and the New History of Outsourced Labor.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015.

[9] Craig Santos Perez, "Spam's Carbon Footprint, 2016, and: Ode to Soy Sauce & Fina'denen.'" *Prairie Schooner* 90, no 4 (2016): 12. The line also appeared a year later in "from the legends of juan malo (a malologue) (the birth of SPAM)" from the poet's collection, *From Unincorporated Territory [lukao]*. Richmond, CA: Omnidawn, 2017.

through the gut.[10] As a way into my theorization of digestion, the line provides ample opportunities to bring out what the term entails and its disciplinary significance.

The literal meaning for digestion starts with the operative verb of the line "eat." Per digestion's most immediate definition, the body puts food into its system and sustains it. On one hand, this act of eating, and the food that it invokes shares focus with works that connect foods with processes of racialization and identity formations.[11] At the same time, moving beyond the cultural entanglements of food and its impact on identity formation, my conceptualization of digestion shares literary and feminist scholar Kyla Wazana Tompkins' call to expand the focus beyond the material object of food, to the act of eating itself.[12] In my work, rather than simply focusing on the site of the mouth, or other orifices, I center on the concept of digestion to invoke the body and the process of its formation in its entirety, as physical digestion involves the entire body, from the mouth down to the specific cells that receive the nutrients that enter. Food, as matter from the environment outside the body, enters the body, and becomes the very building blocks of the body as its cells age and regenerate. In this sense, digestion is a process through which the material reality folds into the body and blurs the boundary between the outside and the inside, just as digestion is a process that links individual body parts to the larger body as a whole, to the material reality of the surrounding environment, and finally to the structures of production

[10] For the poet's other explorations of the canned ham include: "Spam's Carbon Footprint, 2010" "The Zen of Spam" "from the legends of juan malo (a malologue) (the birth of SPAM)."
[11] Much of these discussions appear in Asian American Food Studies. See Wenying Xu, *Eating Identities: Reading Food in Asian American Literature.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007; Robert Ji-Song Ku, *Dubious Gastronomy: The Cultural Politics of Eating Asian in the USA.* New York City: New York University Press, 2013; Anita Mannur, *Culinary Fictions: Food in South Asian Diaspora.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009.
[12] Kyla Wazana Tompkins, *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century.* New York City: New York University Press, 2012.

that facilitated and established the surrounding material reality.[13] In a similar vein, digestion brings the matter that is outside into the body and makes it a part of the inside.

Transcorporeality, Metabolism and Feminist Science Studies

Digestion as dissolving of the boundary of the outside and the inside shares its critical aim with several key concepts explored by notable discussions on Science, Technology and Medicine Studies by scholars who intervene into the field through a feminist and/or postcolonial lens in particular. Most notable are transcorporeality and metabolism, both of which similarly explore the breaching of boundaries and placedness of the body. At the same time, they highlight different aspects of the entangled body, and open different discussions. Here I will discuss both terms to note their conversation with the concept of digestion, and to underscore the avenues that digestion uniquely opens.

Believing that "the Anthropocene is no time to set things straight,"[14] Stacy Alaimo argues that transcorporeality destabilizes the Anthropocene and the anthropocentric worldview. She avoids straight-edged conceptualizations, instead opting to "[dwell] in the dissolve, where

[13] This understanding of digestion shares this expansive understanding of the body with Karen Barad's theorization of "intra-activity," or what she describes as constructing the being through exchanges; and Alaimo's theorization on transcorporeality, or what she describes as "[dwelling] in the dissolve,"; as well as Hannah Landecker's expansion on the concept of "metabolism" that considers food as, "a conditioning environment that shapes the activity of the genome and the physiology of the body." See Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2007; Stacy Alaimo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016; Hannah Landecker, "Food as Exposure: Nutritional Epigenetics and the New Metabolism." *Biosocieties* 6, no. 2 (2011): 167-194.

[14] Stacy Alaimo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016): 1

fundamental boundaries have begun to come undone, unraveled by unknown futures,"[15] to demonstrate the complex queer connections in the Anthropocene. Her central concept, transcorporeality, embodies this "[dwelling] in the dissolve." Drawing from Donna Haraway, Alaimo explains that "transcorporeality originates with a recognition of the self as solidly located and denies the splitting of subject and object: the subject, the knower, is never separate from the world that she seeks to know."[16] Through transcorporeality, she emphasizes the constructedness of the body through Haraway's understanding of "situatedness." She argues, "Although the recognition of trans-corporeality begins with human bodies in their environments, tracing substantial interchanges reveals the permeability of the human, dissolving the outline of the subject."[17] Here, she also draws from the works of Karen Barad, who proposes a radical reorientation of matter and being through "intra-activity" rather than interactivity.[18] Without a definite boundary of being, Barad demonstrates that there can be no "inter-" but only "intra-." Following Barad, the body is not simply situated in a given environment; rather it is constructed by the exchanges with—or "meeting'—the environment. In this sense, just as Haraway's cyborg is "about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities,"[19] transcorporeality poses a body that crosses into the environment and in which the environment crosses back into it.

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[15] Stacy Alaimo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016): 2

[16] Stacy Alaimo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016): 7.

[17] Stacy Alaimo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016): 112.

[18] Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglements of Matter and Meaning.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

[19] Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature.* (New York: Routledge, 1991): 154.

Alaimo further defines transcorporeality as "a new materialist and posthumanist sense of the human as perpetually interconnected with the flows of substances and the agencies of environments."[20] By viewing bodies as constructed by flows that dissolve the division between the subject and the object, rather than as contained beings, bodies become inextricably bound to flows "of material agencies across regions, environments, animal bodies, and human bodies—even as global capitalism and the medical-industrial complex reassert a more convenient ideology of solidly bounded, individual consumers and benign, discrete products."[21] While Alaimo simply notes the irony between these two perspectives, I use the concept of digestion to explore this very tension between the perspective of a body of flow and of a contained body. Transcorporeality, with the suffix "-ity," denotes the state of being transcorporeal, or, as Alaimo describes, becoming a body of flow. On the other hand, digestion, follows the process of becoming transcorporeal, the physical and ideological transformation from a stable, "convenient" conceptualization of the body of an individual into understanding the body as one of flows. Focusing on the transition, I argue that the ideology of a body as "a solidly bounded, individual consumer" is more than "convenient"; it is necessary to expand the interest of the empire because it creates individualized consumer bodies and subjectivities that must bear responsibility for the choices that were made for them. By focusing on digestion, a process through which the dissolve between subject and object occurs, I draw attention to the mundane yet specific ways in which this dissolve occurs. Drawing attention to this dissolve between subject and object, in turn, pushes back against the reification of the body as a bounded, discrete, and governable subject.

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[20] Stacy Alaimo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016): 112.
[21] Stacy Alaimo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016): 112

In 2011, Hannah Landecker intervened into existing scholarship on metabolism and proposed understanding food as a form of exposure. If the "old" understanding of metabolism was the chemical conversion of food into energy, Landecker argued that the "new" understanding of metabolism considered food as "a conditioning environment that shapes the activity of the genome and the physiology of the body."[22] As an environment, food became a form of molecular exposure, and cells sites "of integration of transcription signals and other dynamic proteinaceous activities."[23] As a site of DNA replication, transcription and translation—the process of replicating DNA, transcribing to RNA and translating transcribed DNA to protein synthesis—the cell challenges body-based understandings of metabolism as a system, and proposes a cellular-level understanding of food, digestion, and the ways in which food affects the genetic makeup of the body. She argues for "food as a miasma of biologically active molecules in which genomes are immersed, determining and disturbing the physiology of metabolic regulation with each new person that comes into the food world"[24] Drawing from the perspectives of epigenetics and molecular biology, Landecker makes a similar impact as the one Karen Barad draws from physics; by dissolving boundaries, scholars can more clearly see and understand how cells, molecules, and matter figure into bodies, and how bodies are stabilized into humans.

My understanding of digestion is deeply rooted in Landecker's understanding of "food as exposure," and metabolism as the dissolve between the environment and body. By focusing on

[22] Hannah Landecker, "Food as Exposure: Nutritional Epigenetics and the New Metabolism." *BioSocieties* 6, no. 2 (2011): 167.
[23] Hannah Landecker, "Food as Exposure: Nutritional Epigenetics and the New Metabolism." *BioSocieties* 6, no. 2 (2011): 169.
[24] Hannah Landecker, "Food as Exposure: Nutritional Epigenetics and the New Metabolism." *BioSocieties* 6, no. 2 (2011): 170.

the process of breaking down and incorporating food molecules, digestion challenges the stable notion of the body as a contained unit and rediscovers the being as the transitional act of becoming.[25] I also emphasize the concept of survival, or the continuation of existence, to show how digestion as a process continues life. While the theoretical workings of digestion share roots with Landecker and other works on metabolism that followed,[26] I use the term digestion to bring together the literal, the metaphoric, the figurative, the physical, the social, and the cultural.[27]

Unlike concepts such as transcorporeality and metabolism, my conceptualization of digestion opens the possibility to examine the physical and literary, as well as their intimate links more clearly. In the Oxford English Dictionary, entries for "digestion" as a noun include definitions that move beyond the physiological process. Digestion is understood both as "The physiological process whereby the nutritive part of the food consumed is, in the stomach and intestines, rendered fit to be assimilated by the system" and "The action of digesting, or obtaining mental nourishment from (books, etc.)."[28][29] In this sense, the term itself exists between both the literal and the figurative, just as the digestion of Spam processes both the exposure from physiological molecules as well as Spam as a metaphor in the poetry of Craig Santos Perez. If the bodies process 96g of total fat including 240mg of cholesterol, 4.7g of sodium, 6g of

[25] Metabolism as a concept also opens up the possibility of exploring the workings of the individual body with the flow of capital, sharing its conceptual work with the Marxist notion of Metabolic Rift. Though existing scholarship explores the concept of metabolic rift with agriculture and food production, but its linkages to the individual body's metabolism is understudied.
[26] See Hannah Landecker, John Dupré and Maureen O'Malley and Harris Solomon.
[27] Thank you Ari Heinrich, for his insightful comment that in many languages digestion is "post-metaphor."
[28] "digestion, n.". *OED Online*. March 2019. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/52588 (accessed April 25, 2019).
[29] Curiously enough, for the entry for the verb, "digest," specific definition for physiological digestion of foods comes fourth, after its common metaphorical uses.

carbohydrates and 42g of protein, it also processes the United States empire as a fist full of militarism and settler colonialism, and heavy doses of immigration, "American Dream," and industrial farming on stolen land all mashed into a can.[30] As both a physiological and metaphorical process, with both uses firmly established in common parlance,[3132] digestion is a term that intervenes into the usual structure of metaphor that has the original and the derivative—in this case, digesting food and digesting knowledge—and merges the physical with the figurative, and, more expansively, physical matter with semiotic systems. Thinking through digestion provides a new way to examine the body as constructed in scientific, technological, and medical writing and as explicated in literary and cultural texts.

Metaphorical Digestion

Digestion as a metaphor brings to focus the ways in which literary and cultural products provide a glimpse into the ways in which people and communities in and around the Pacific Ocean digest changes as they physically digest imperial matters. Colloquial uses of the term digestion mark an understanding of knowledge or information new and foreign to the thinking body. As such, digestion as a metaphorical process goes in tandem with its physical process, including physical changes that result from the metabolic process of digestion, such as obesity

[30] "SPAM classic." *Spam.com*. N/A. Hormel Foods, LLC. https://www.spam.com/varieties/spam-classic (accessed April 27, 2019).

[31] For instance, Oxford English Dictionary's word frequency band system based on the Google Ngram Viewer classifies "digestion" in Band 5, a category for "words which occur between 1 and 10 times per million words in typical modern English usage." It states that "most words which would be seen as distinctively educated, while not being abstruse, technical, or jargon, are found in this band." ("Key to Frequency." *OED Online*. N/A. Oxford University Press. https://public.oed.com/how-to-use-the-oed/key-to-frequency/ (accessed May 6. 2019).)

[32] It is also significant to note that the term digestion is also used both literally and figuratively in other languages as well, including, but not limited to Korean, Japanese and Chinese.

and genetic changes in adiposity. As a metaphorical and cultural process that makes sense of changes that ensure survival and establish selfhood, digestion demonstrates the gradual and subtle, yet unmistakably violent changes that the US imposes on the living bodies and minds in and around the Pacific even in the face of vocal opposition; at the same time, it also highlights how these bodies, lives and communities contend with changes enforced upon them by the US and survive.

As a metaphor, digestion engages what Chamorro poet Craig Santos Perez calls "gastrocolonialism," or colonial dispossession through the gut, and highlights how certain foods are used for dispossession, and how people make sense of the forces of colonial control.[33] For instance, Asian American scholar Parama Roy understands colonial policing and control through the alimentary tracts that decides who eats what with whom, and who starves, and elucidates the process through which the colonial state forces its subjects into liminal and marginalized conditions by controlling foodways.[34]

Digestion as a metaphor draws structural connections between two different concepts. Metaphorical understanding of digestion, in particular, in a colloquial expression like "I need to digest the news," draws direct structural connections between the body's process of making food a part of the body, and the process of making change, or new information a part of the being, be it the material, social, cultural or political being. As is the case with extended metaphors, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue that metaphors also build an entire structure of concepts based

[33] Craig Santos Perez, "Facing Hawai'i's Future." *Kenyon Review.* July 10, 2013. https://kenyonreview.org/2013/07/facing-hawai%CA%BBi%CA%BBs-future-book-review/
[34] Parama Roy, *Alimentary Tracts: Appetites, Aversions and the Postcolonial*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

on the initial analogous relationship.[35] They note that once the analogous relationship between food and change is established, the relationship builds its own structure of concepts that have lasting implications for how they are understood.

In this sense, digestion shares its approach with Feminist Science Studies scholar Elizabeth Wilson's study of "the alliances of internal organs and minded states" in her exploration of melancholia as "entanglements of affects, ideations, nerves, agitation, sociality, pills and synaptic biochemistry."[36] Wilson focuses on the ways in which organs factor into the mind to reconcile feminist antagonism towards biological physicality, echoing Asian American scholar Rachel Lee's inquiry into the tension between physicality and the social construction of race and ethnicity in Asian American texts and performances.[37] Digestion puts together the anatomical real of the stomach with the realm of invisible metaphors and figurative understandings of the world.

Embodied Knowledge

To return to the quote, "I eat therefore I SPAM," poet Craig Santos Perez echoes the merger of body and knowledge, intervening into Cartesian dualism through the play on the phrase "I think therefore I am." In this witty and cheeky intervention into René Descartes's inquiry, *cogito ergo sum*, the poet departs from the mind-body dualism of Western philosophy

[35] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Metaphors *We Live By.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.
[36] Elizabeth Wilson, *Gut Feminism.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015): 1.
[37] Rachel Lee, *The Exquisite Corpse of Asian America: Biopolitics, Biosociality, and Posthuman Ecologies.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.

and science, and reinforces the ontology of embodied being, or as Native Hawaiian scholar Manulani Aluli Meyer puts it, "Our mind is our body. Our body is our mind."[38] She writes,

> Body is the central space in which knowing is embedded. It was not merely a passing idea but basic to all interviews. Our body holds truth, our body invigorates knowing, our body helps us become who we are. This was not simply a metaphoric discussion of union with sensation and conceptualization. Our thinking body is not separated from our feeling mind. Our mind is our body. Our body is our mind.[39]

In Meyer's understanding of Hawaiian epistemology, the body is the site of truth, knowing and becoming. She outright rejects the mind-body split in European epistemology and argues that the body plays a constitutive role in understanding selfhood. The warning that it is "not simply a metaphoric discussion" similarly rejects the division between mind and matter; for Meyer, the body, through its physicality and materiality, constitutes knowing and becoming. Without the body, there can be no selfhood. Similarly, the physical process of digestion constitutes a particular body that creates a particular knowledge, while its metaphorical understanding closely ties it to the being. As an embodiment of the material reality of the environment, the body is the one that experiences, and produces knowledge. As such the knowledge that the body produces cannot be separated from the body as "objective" knowledge. Digestion insists that knowledge is always produced by the body as a whole, a body that is connected to its material reality.

Heralded as the first modern philosopher whose thoughts opened the Scientific Revolution, Descartes epitomizes European science based on reason. Stemming from Aristotle,

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[38] Manulani Aluli Meyer, "Indigenous and Authentic: Hawaiian Epistemology and the Triangulation of Meaning," in *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies.* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2014): 224.
[39] Manulani Aluli Meyer, "Indigenous and Authentic: Hawaiian Epistemology and the Triangulation of Meaning," in *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2014): 224.

Descartes' ontological statement, "I think therefore I am," reflects the European privileging of the reasoning mind as the bedrock of rationalism.[40] Descartes believed in the division, or a split, between "matter, of which the essential property is that it is spatially extended; and mind, of which the essential property is that it thinks."[41] Descartes believed that the body, as matter, was a machine that followed its own set of rules, and that the mind occasionally interacted and influenced the body. This anthropocentric privileging of the mind establishes the being as a thinking being, separated from the body as matter. Descartes' statement then establishes the thinking mind as the agent of reason, which can understand the intricate laws of matter, and the body, as well as other matter as objects of study. This dualism, or the mind-body split, establishes a fundamental assumption of European science: the body as matter.

Through the intervention into the Cartesian question, Perez rejects mind-body dualism. For the poet, it is not the thinking (*cogito)* mind that affirms being, but it is the eating self that affirms being. Unlike thinking, "eating" in "I eat therefore I SPAM," privileges the body as the site of being. Rather than the Cartesian perception of the body as a machine that follows its own set of laws, Perez sees the body as one that continues through the conscious act of eating, and in this specific case, eating Spam. This fusion of the mind and body reflects what Meyer emphasizes through a discussion of "na'au." She writes, "intelligence and knowledge were embedded at the core of our bodies—the stomach or na'au."[42] Specifically locating the site of knowing as the stomach, she similarly identifies the body as one with the mind. The act of

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[40] Howard Robinson, "Dualism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/dualism/>.
[41] Howard Robinson, "Dualism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/dualism/>.
[42] Manulani Aluli Meyer, "Indigenous and Authentic: Hawaiian Epistemology and the Triangulation of Meaning," in *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2014): 224.

eating, then is not only a physically nourishing act, but also an act of knowing and being, in which the sustained life of self is tethered to the continued survival of the body. Similarly, Kanaka Maoli scholar Katrina-Ann Kapa'anaokalaokeola Nakoa Oliveira describes na‘au as, “an innate sense and knowledge base with which Kanaka are born,” and states that, “the sense ability of na’au honors [Kanaka Maoli] intestines as the center from which our instincts and feelings emanate.”[43] Here, the gut isn’t simply an organ that processes foods. As one that plays a crucial part in the continuous process of constituting a body, na‘au is also the seat of knowledge, rather than the brain or head. Like na‘au, what digestion emphasizes is the body as an embodiment between the physical body and the surrounding environment, and that particular embodiment producing uniquely embodied knowledges.[44]

I trace similar focus on embodiment of knowing in Feminist Science and Technology Studies as well. To bring to the fore the ways in which concepts of the body and matter figure

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[43] Katrina-Ann R. Kapā‘anaokalāokeola Nākoa Oliveira, “Ka Wai Ola: The Life-Sustaining Water of Kanaka Knowledge.” in *Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Methodologies: Mo‘olelo and Metaphor*. Katrina-Ann R. Kapā‘anaokalāokeola Nākoa Oliveira and Erin Kahunawaika‘ala Wright, editors. (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2016): 80.

[44] Similarly, Native Hawaiian scholar Karen Amimoto Ingersoll discusses “seascape epistemology,” to note the ways in which “oceanic literacy” comes through the body. According to Ingersoll, “oceanic literacy” is “a spatial engagement, a performed pattern that represents anew, a kinesthetically and visually documented event in the Hawaiian sea.” She derives her theoretical discussions around this “seascape epistemology” from her embodied experiences and knowledge as a surfer. She writes, “Kanaka surfers don’t just slide into states of remembrance in the sea; there is also a creative dipping, shifting, quivering, and cleansing. These sensations link the mind and body to a deep identity moored in a sense of belonging, a very powerful concept for human beings. Understanding oneself as related to the world focuses an acute spiritual awareness” (108). As Meyer notes that it is not a “metaphoric discussion of union with sensation and conceptualization,” Ingersoll observes that the sensation of the body connects the mind and body, as well as the surrounding environment. For both Ingersoll and Meyer, being does not exist alone in unmoored mind, untethered from the body. Instead, the mind exists with and through the body, and the body exists with and through the surroundings. It is a becoming built on relations and connections, not one of separation and isolation. See Karen Amimoto Ingersoll, *Waves of Knowing: A Seascape Epistemology*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

into digestion, I begin with Donna Haraway's boundary-crossing figure of the cyborg. Haraway rejects purity through stable categorization of beings as a product of the illusion of objectivity. She argues that the "view of infinite vision is an illusion, a god trick" because vision is limited to its specific body.[45] Haraway concludes that "Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see."[46] In this figuration of situated knowledges, the boundary between the subject and the object—the knower and the knowledge—creates the illusion of infinite vision that presumes an objective, knowing body. If situated knowledges refer specifically to knowledge production and sight, Haraway's figure of the cyborg embodies transgressions. In her words, "A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. Social reality is lived social relations, our most important political construction, a world-changing fiction."[47] Haraway's cyborg exists to break binaries, such as cybernetics and organism, machines and organism, and reality and fiction. Even as a boundary-crossing figure—or perhaps because it is a boundary crossing figure—however, the cyborg reinforces bifurcation as a world order. The world that Haraway draws through the cyborg is one that is consisted of binaries, of 1's and 0's.

New materialist approaches seek to maintain the spirit of the cyborg but do away with the binary view of the world.[48] Jane Bennet challenges the binary model through the concept of

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[45] Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 582.
[46] Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 583.
[47] Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature.* (New York: Routledge, 1991): 149.
[48] Similarly, Feminist Material Disability Studies also note the co-constitutive entanglement of the mind and the body. Margaret Price draws the term "bodymind" from trauma studies to denote the ways in which "mental and physical processes not only affect each other but also give rise to

vitality, or "the capacity of things—edibles, commodities, storms, metals—not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own."[49] By focusing on the agency of matter, she aims "to dissipate the onto-theological binaries of life/matter, human/animal, will/determination, and organic/inorganic using arguments and other rhetorical means to induce in human bodies an aesthetic-affective openness to material vitality"[50] While Bennet's work informs my understanding of matter as an acting subject, it still leaves the category of the human somewhat intact. In *Animacies*, Mel Chen continues the discussion through the lens of animacies. Also breaking from the binary model, Chen instead proposes a transitional hierarchy to move away from "binary systems of difference, including dynamism/stasis, life/death, subject/object, speech/nonspeech, human/animal, natural body/cyborg."[51] By moving away from a binary model, and incorporating linguistic understandings of being, Chen analyzes the ways in which language exerts a hierarchical model of being. In so doing, Chen also rejects a stable category of the human and instead exposes the biopolitical racial hierarchy that attempts to order different human bodies as more or less human in ways that preserves the category of the Human. I borrow these destabilizations of the human as a stable category to show that the construction of the human qua human, the Western Man, depends on the construction of specific types of bodies,

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each other." She defines the term as "a sociopolitically constituted and material entity that emerges through both structural (power- and violence-laden) contexts and also individual (specific) experience." See Margaret Price, "The Bodymind Problem and the Possibilities of Pain." *Hypatia* 30.1, 2015: 268-279.

[49] Jane Bennet, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009): viii.

[50] Jane Bennet, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009): x.

[51] Mel Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012): 3.

both of the "human" and of the "other" that defines the human. The human is not only created through a distinction between subject and object, but also through the mythical purity of some bodies vis-à-vis the material and linguistically-induced impurity of others.

Foregrounding peoples' and communities' physical and metaphorical digestion of imperial matter and ensuing changes allows this dissertation to decenter the body that privileges anthropocentrism and universality of Man, and instead focus on the differential fabrication and construction of the raced body through material embodiments. Black feminist scholar Sylvia Wynter argues that the Western conceptualization of Man is overrepresented as the human itself. The conflation of Man as human, then, hides the uneven distribution of resources and access. She writes, "all our present struggles with respect to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, struggles over the environment, global warming, severe climate change, the sharply unequal distribution of the earth resources … these are all different facets of the central ethnoclass Man vs. Human struggle."[52] According to Wynter, "the central ethnoclass of Man" derives from the "degodding" process that secularizes the pure/impure divide in the Christian religion into Man and Savage. Colonial encounters of land dispossession and the enslavement of Africans come together to create the other that stabilizes the European settler colonists as the category of Man. She argues that this categorization creates the divide by overrepresenting the white settler ethnoclass of Man as Human, while the divide creates the whole array of human struggles. I similarly locate the entangled issues surrounding the creation, militarized circulation, and consumption of Spam as one that stems from, and in turn buttresses, the divide between the Man and the Human.

[52] Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the coloniality of being/power/truth/freedom: Towards the human, after man, its overrepresentation—an argument." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 260-261

While Wynter focuses on the creation of the category through analyzing how the logic of the Christian religion persists through the "degodding" process, Asian American scholar Lisa Lowe reaches similar conclusions through an analysis of colonial exchanges. In *Intimacies of Four Continents,* Lowe "investigates the often obscured connections between the emergence of European liberalism, settler colonialism in the Americas, the transatlantic African slave trade, and the East Indies and China trades in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries"[53] to reveal what she terms "the economy of affirmation."[54] According to Lowe, "this economy civilizes and develops freedoms for 'man' in modern Europe and North America, while relegating others to geographical and temporal spaces that are constituted as backward, uncivilized, and unfree."[55] In exploring the making of modern liberalism, Lowe focuses on the intimate connections between "man" in Europe and North America and "others" in liminal spaces. For Lowe, the freedom of "man" depends on the unfreedom of "others," under the larger narrative of the liberal promise of individual effort and struggle. Building on her influential theorization, I analyze how the empire makes the "other" and the ways in which various "others" pursue the liberal promise and negotiate the "economy of affirmation" with and against each other.

Noting the process through which Man as Human is fabricated and stabilized, this dissertation locates race as an ongoing project embedded within different processes, ranging from manufacturing and circulating waste and byproducts as products, to labeling and categorizing bodies marked by material embodiment of such imperial matters. Conceiving the

[53] Lisa Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015): 1.
[54] Lisa Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015): 3.
[55] Lisa Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015): 3.

Pacific Ocean through movements helps uncover the ways in which these processes construct specific irradiated or meat (by)product-consuming bodies through racialization, and how this construction of racial form demonstrates the use of race as a technology of defining the universal Man as Human. An analysis of this form offers a chance to destabilize the biological category of the human from its fungible and liminal not-quite-human non-white boundaries. As Asian American literary scholar Michelle Huang reminds us that "dividing practices of epistemology delineates worlds, cut (white, male) humans from (non-white, female, queer, disabled, animal) nonhumans, and disarticulate humans from their environments." She continues, stating "New Materialist understandings about the contingency of human form are productive not because they move us 'beyond' race (they don't, and never will), but because they make visible how race is always embedded within the production of the cultural forms used to fabricate the human," and to understand race not as something in raced peoples, but between the divide.[56] Conceptualizing digestion and theorizing Spam as a (by)product similarly rejects the universal human, and shows how deeply race inflects and is produced by the processes of creating matter in circulation that constitutes people's bodies and their mundane everyday lives. As such, the links between body parts and the surrounding environment through digestion, and the production of marginality through the process of manufacturing and circulating meatpacking (by)products functions as the race as form, and as technology.[57]

As expressed through poet Craig Santos Perez's line "I eat therefore I SPAM," digestion shines light into the mundane, yet critical ways in which the empire fabricates the category of Man as Human, or those whose humanity deserves protection and recognition above those that

[56] Michelle Huang, "Rematerializations of Race." *Lateral* 6, no. 1. (2017a)
[57] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, "Race and/as Technology; or, How to Do Things to Race." *Camera Obscura* 24, no. 1 (2009)

lie outside of the boundary of the human, as well as the ways in which peoples and communities refuse such liminality and survive beyond the slow death. As an everyday physical act, digestion shows the constant state of change through which the outside becomes and comes to constitute the inside and dissolves the boundary. As a metaphor, digestion not only closes the gap between physical matter and its referent, but also underscores the ways in which peoples and communities in and around the ocean make sense of imperial matters and ensuing changes by mapping it onto existing sets of knowledge. The resulting body of digestion refuses to remain as matter separate from the mind or the knowledge that the mind creates, and instead weaves them into a singular, yet immensely expanded being. Within this expanded state of being, this dissertation seeks the cartography of resistance and possibility of solidarity. Though the currents that link different peoples and communities are uneven and often treacherous, expansive and shared senses of being provide the potential for imagining a future outside of the empire.

Chapter Breakdown

The main focus of the dissertation and its organizing concept is digestion. Matters in circulation—meat products, and radiation—serve as case studies that illuminate specific aspects of digestion. As such the first two chapters of the dissertation establish digestion as physical and metaphorical processes through meatpacking (by)products of the United States empire, and chapters 3 and 4 explore kinship and the generational impact of digestion through an analysis of radiation. In each chapter, I pair analyses of top-down "official" documentations, such as military, medical and public health reports with analyses on various literary and cultural texts on digestion in order to uncover their inherent incommensurabilities between imperial ideology and

indigenous and diasporic worldviews and highlight how differing uses of language and metaphors constructs specific bodies.

As the first deep dive into digestion, Chapter 1, "What Goes in the Mouth: Digestion of Militarized Meatpacking (By)Products in Craig Santos Perez's Gastropoetry," centers on the circulation of undesirable byproducts of the meatpacking industry to explore narratives of post-contact loss of indigeneity in public health records alongside its reclamation in Chamorro poet Craig Santos Perez's poetry. I argue that public health records from the World Health Organization set forth a narrative of indigeneity as the irrevocable loss of foodways that are untainted by modernity. This theorization replicates the settler colonial myth of the disappearing and disappeared indigenous people and translates the loss of indigeneity in bodies and food cultures. Rejecting the logic of irrecoverable loss of innocence and the subsequent disappearance of the authentic indigenous body, Perez instead reclaims the bodies that digest imperial meat products as those that embody their surrounding environment and survive beyond the slow violence of the empire. After a discussion of his poetry, I conclude the chapter by highlighting the uneven power dynamics within the larger imperial and subimperial formations, in particular, between South Korea and Guam.

Chapter 2, "Stomaching the Can: Digesting Waste and Imperial Meatpacking (By)products in *Reply 1988* and Grace M. Cho," brings together South Korean television show, *Reply 1988,* and Asian American writer Grace M. Cho's "Eating Military Base Stew" to examine how peoples in and around the Pacific Ocean both physically and metaphorically digest imperial matters like Spam and *budaejjigae*, or South Korean military base stew. I theorize Spam and *budaejjigae* as (by)products of the empire, or layers of processes that create waste before repackaging and circulating this waste as products to dispossess marginalized bodies. Examining

(by)products as a racial form, this chapter argues that peoples demonstrate acts of digestion—some assimilative and some divergent—of imperial matter to survive and imagine life by conforming to or rejecting the existing imperial order

In chapter 3, titled "Living through Atomization: Runit Dome, Radioactive Matter and Poetry of Digestion," I center on the US's nuclear weapons detonations in the Marshall Islands and Marshallese poet Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner's poetic digestion of radiation. Analyzing the US military's radiological clean up reports, I demonstrate that the US as an empire stretches its influence in and around the ocean through an ontology of isolation that imagines the ocean, land, and bodies as separate from one another. In contrast to this imperial rupture of social relations, the poetry of Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner presents poetics of digestion that foreground a relational being—a being constituted through kinship relations with the community, ocean, and islands. In so doing, the poet rejects the divisive imperial ideology of the US. Through her poetry, she not only brings to light the devastations that US imperialism and militarism brought onto the bodies, lands, and the ocean of the Marshall Islands, but also pushes forward an undeniable sense of relations and survival.

Finally in Chapter 4, titled "'the emperor's hand': Imperial Dosimetry, Standard Man and Atomic Etchings on the Body," I de-aggregate racialized radiation sufferings from the metaphorically assembled body of the white male "Standard Man" of post-1945 radiation dosimetry. The science of radiation dosimetry underwent a drastic change since the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, from one focused on medical and laboratory use of radiation to one of large-scale exposure based on atomic bomb detonations. This chapter intervenes into this history through Asian American poet April Naoko Heck's tracing of the bomb and the halflife of radiation in the body, memory, and life through the matrilineal history of her *hibakusha* great-

grandmother. Bringing together the history of the science of radiation dosimetry with embodiments of the idealized model minority "good life," this chapter examines the limits of the irradiated body and life of the model minority in the ruins of nuclear weapons detonations as well as the irradiated body's subversive potential to push back against the normative constructions of the heteronormative good life and the healthy body.

CHAPTER 1

"What Goes in the Mouth: Digestion of Militarized Meatpacking (By)Products in Craig Santos Perez's Gastropoetry"

"Eight pounds of SPAM die in a Chamorro stomach each year, which is more per capita than any other ethno-intestinal tract in the world. Guam is an acronym for 'Give US American Meat."[58] So states the narrator in Chamorro poet Craig Santos Perez's poem, **"**from the legends of juan malo (a malologue) (the birth of SPAM)." The poem comes as a part of the poet's sustained engagement with Hormel Foods' canned meat product, Spam, and the larger issue of what he calls gastrocolonialism, in which he dives into the United States empire's dispossession of indigenous Chamorro bodies and lands through their gut. Stating that "Gastrocolonialism is structural force feeding,"[59] Perez notes the ways in which the United States empire creates structures of colonial control through slow violence. He specifically notes how the US controls the manufacturing, circulation and promotion of certain food products in marginal and marginalized spaces in the empire, such as an unincorporated territory like Guam. Just as Asian American literary scholar Parama Roy underscores the conditions of eating as acts of colonial control that shape and police the subjects,[60] Perez notes how the US empire and its military circulate food products from its center to its liminal spaces as a way to establish and consolidate colonial and imperial control over Guam.

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[58] Craig Santos Perez, "From the legends of juan malo (a malologue) (the birth of SPAM)." From Unincorporated Territory [lukao]. Omnidawn, 2017.
[59] Craig Santos Perez, "Facing Hawai'i's Future." *Kenyon Review.* July 10, 2013. https://kenyonreview.org/2013/07/facing-hawai%CA%BBi%CA%BBs-future-book-review/
[60] Parama Roy, *Alimentary Tracts: Appetites, Aversions, and the Postcolonial.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Yet, Perez's engagement with Spam does not simply portray Chamorro people as victims; instead, he brings to light how they survive beyond the slow death and resist the everyday mundane moments of colonial control to imagine life in the future. In this call for resistance and resilience beyond colonial and imperial control in his Spam poems, the poet moves beyond the oppressive binary relationship between Guam, an unincorporated territory, and parts of continental US as the imperial center. Breaking from the binary between the center and periphery, he calls for solidarity with other liminal spaces of the empire as destinations of (by)products and as those who share the experience of the US empire and its military's dispossession of bodies, lands and waters.

Examining his food poem, "Birth of Spam" in *From Unincorporated Territory [Hacha],* I unravel various human and nonhuman entanglements embedded within the process of manufacturing, circulating and selling spam. I further theorize the poem's digestion of Spam a s a form of what I call divergent digestion, or digestion that exposes the seams of the existing imperial order and as a process that attempts to imagine a different way of life outside of the hierarchical valuation of life and matter. I further note the possibility of building solidarity across the marginal spaces of the empire that define its center, as well as the fault lines within that threaten this revolutionary potential for solidarity.

Digesting Spam, Digesting Dispossession

Craig Santos Perez's Spam poems present examples of divergent digestion in which the poet refuses the logic of loss of innocence and wholeness in the larger dispossessing narrative of the "disappearing native." He instead claims an expansive understanding of indigeneity that is

fundamentally incommensurable to the logic of "disappearing native" and gestures towards a divergent digestion that seeks to continue its struggle against the gastrocolonialism of the US empire.

The US empire's settler colonial dispossession of indigenous populations takes on different forms, ranging from outright killings and erasures to structural erasure and deferred promises of decolonization and liberation. An underlying imperial ideology that undergirds different colonial and racial projects of erasure is the concept of imaginary wholeness, or the assumption of theoretical completeness that performs the role of a standard against which indiegnous populations fall short. The pre-European contact spatial, temporal, and physical land, body and water marks the original, untainted whole, against which post-contact indigeneity falls short. For instance, Kanaka Maoli scholar J. Kēhaulani Kauanui explores the divisive imperial logic through the idea of blood quantum, that defined "native Hawaiians" as people with "at least one-half blood quantum of individuals inhabiting the Hawaiian Islands prior to 1778," and notes that blood quantum's understanding of "native hawaiians" as fractions of the imaginary entirety that exists in a pre-1778 past, the year that British colonial navigator James Cook arrived on Hawai'i.[61]

Similarly, Native Hawaiian scholar Maile Arvin notes the ways in which whiteness functions as a force to dispossess Polynesia and Polynesians as "feminized possessions of whiteness" that "never have the power to claim the property of whiteness for themselves."[62] She argues that the white settler colonial scientific discourse on racializing Polynesia focused on

[61] J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008): 2.
[62] Maile Arvin. *Possessing Polynesians: The Science of Settler Colonial Whiteness in Hawai'i and Oceania.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019): 3.

"Polynesians' proximity to whiteness" against the blackness that is assigned to another indigenous population of the Pacific Ocean, Melanesians. This "proximity" to whiteness eased white anxieties surrounding dispossession of Polynesian lands, while it also marked the distinction between claiming property and being property.[63]

Public health reports similarly emphasize the distance between possessive whiteness and its wholeness, and post-contact indigenous bodies as the recipients of food circulations. The World Health Organization (WHO)'s report titled, "Diet, Food Supply and Obesity in the Pacific published in 2003, for instance, highlights the concept of distance—the physical distance between imperial centers and Pacific Islands, and the gap between pre-contact and post-contact indigenous Pacific Islanders—in examining dietary practices and public health concerns.

[63] Also examining the relationship between whiteness in asserting possession and Aboriginal sovereignty, Goenpul scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson notes whiteness as the defining marker of possession, be it in owning property, becoming propertyless, or being property. See Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty.* University of Minnesota Press, 2015.

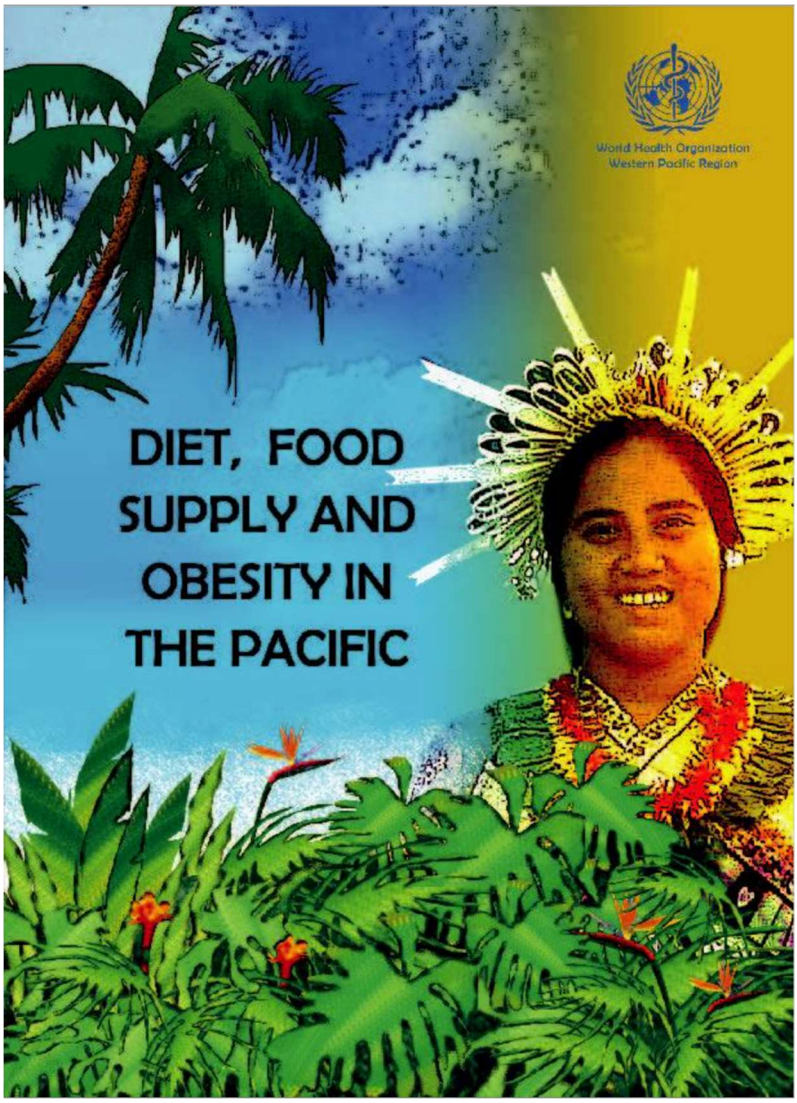

Figure 1.1: Cover page of WHO's *Diet Food Supply and Obesity in the Pacific*

Like a number of other reports, the WHO's 2003 report highlights physical distance as a defining factor in Pacific Islands. It states, "The Pacific Island countries are on the geographic fringe. They are remote, isolated and fragmented."[64] Terms such as "geographic fringe," and "remote" reveal the underlying assumptions regarding the conceptual source of distance as the imperial center, in which Pacific Island spaces and people are racialized through the binary distinction between center and periphery. Establishing the Pacific Islands as "fringe" and

[64] World Health Organization, "Diet, Food Supply and Obesity in the Pacific." (2003): 42-43.

"remote" requires the viewer's perspective to lie with the primacy of continents, in which the imperial center becomes the focal point of a report that examines dietary health and wellness of Pacific Island peoples and communities.

This concept of physical distance builds onto stereotypes of pre-European contact indigenous Pacific populations as "maintaining a delicate (ecological) balance,"[65] echoing extinction narratives and rhetoric. Just as the delicate ecological balance describes precarity for endangered species in the Pacific, such as the Micronesian Kingfisher, the report depicts indigenous peoples as victims of endangerment who depend on the "delicate (ecological) balance" for their survival and livelihood. Rather than highlighting the survival and resilience of people in continuing life from pre-contact to post-contact, the report undermines indigenous peoples' agency as displayed through their survival by portraying l them as victims.

In this contrast between pre-contact and post-contact indigenous populations lies another iteration of distance. Laying the context for dietary practices and health issues, the report draws singularly from early European seafaring navigators and colonizers to offer a description of post-contact indigenous peoples. It states, "Descriptions given by the early European explorers provide evidence. The French explorer Louis de Bougainville recorded that the Tahitians were almost godlike and lived in an environment overflowing with natural abundance: 'I never saw men better made' and 'I thought I was transported into the garden of Eden.'"[66] Drawing from the description that Tahitians were "godlike" and referencing the biblical origin point of paradise, "the garden of Eden", the report invokes the image of a paradise lost, and a loss of innocence that

[65] World Health Organization, "Diet, Food Supply and Obesity in the Pacific." (2003): 43.
[66] World Health Organization, "Diet, Food Supply and Obesity in the Pacific." (2003): 7.

creates an unbridgeable distance between the paradise and its loss, and consequently, between the "godlike" people of said paradise, and obese and ailing populations since its loss.

Similarly, drawing from other navigators, such as Ferdinand Magellan and Pedro Fernandes de Queirós, the report continues:

> A very good description of the physique of Pacific island people comes from Houghton, who gives accounts from the chronicles of Magellan (1521) and Quiros (1606) and many other later European explorers for inhabitants of most of the Pacific islands (15). The author shows that the descriptions given by the early explorers of Pacific people are remarkably consistent – "of a singularly tall, muscular and well-proportioned people" (15:31). As the islands enlarged, particularly in Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, so the people appeared shorter and less robust. For these islands also the coastal people were described as "stocky" contrasting with "more gracile" for people living inland.[67]

Drawing from such anthropological and colonial-minded records that focused on physical descriptions as a way of racializing and categorizing people alongside flora and fauna, the report further highlights the taxonomic features of pre-contact indigenous peoples of the Pacific as tethered to the land types of their residence, ranging from "stocky" to "gracile." The term "gracile" supports the Linnean-esque anthropological and medical perspectives that these European navigators and colonizers had. "Gracile" has been in use since the 1500s, with entries in the 16th and 17th centuries appearing in medical texts, like William Clever's *The Flower of Phisicke* (1590) and encyclopedic texts of categorizing life and matter, such as Richard Tomlinson's translation of Jean de Renou's *Medicinal Materials* (1657).[68] The term also frequently appears as a specific name or epithet for various species in their Latin name of taxonomy and phylogeny, as is the case in *ctenochasma gracile*, or a Jurassic pterosaur, and

[67] World Health Organization, "Diet, Food Supply and Obesity in the Pacific." (2003): 7.
[68] "gracile, adj.". *OED Online.* March 2022. Oxford University Press. https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/80386?redirectedFrom=gracile& (accessed April 5, 2022).

melampodium gracile, a flowering plant. A more colloquial and widespread use of the term, including the misinterpretation of "gracile" as "gracefully slender" did not come until the 19th century.

Such emphasis on distance, both the assumed physical distance that places Pacific Islands as "far" and "remote," as well as the conceptual distance between the "gracile" pre-contact indigenous populations and obese post-contact peoples, reflects what Linda Tuhiwai Smith states as "research through imperial eye."[69] She writes,

> One of the concepts through which Western ideas about the individual and community, about time and space, knowledge and research, imperialism and colonialism can be drawn together is the concept of distance. The individual can be distanced, or separated, from the physical environment, the community. Through the controls over time and space the individual can also operate at a distance from the universe. Both imperial and colonial rule were systems of wule which stretched from the centre outwards to places which were far and distant. Distance again separated the individuals in power from the subjects they governed.[70]

According to Smith, distance not only is the founding principle that discerns the governing and the governed in a colonial state, but it is also foundational in characterizing research through imperial eyes. She continues, "In research the concept of distance is most important as it implies neutrality and objectivity on behalf of the researcher."[71] Here, the physical distance between the imperial center and its periphery in the Pacific Ocean, be it from the perspectives of 16th, 17th and 18th navigators and colonizers, or from the viewpoints of the researchers and writers in WHO writing of the people in the Pacific, collapses with the conceptual distance between pre-

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[69] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples.* (London: Zed Books, 1999): 56.
[70] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples.* (London: Zed Books, 1999): 55.
[71] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples.* (London: Zed Books, 1999): 56.

contact and post-contact indigenous bodies to pave the foundation for the scientific and medical credibility of the linear historical narrative and public health reports of obesity and non-communicable diseases in the Pacific. Without this distance, the report loses its claim to objectivity and neutrality and thus its credibility.

The report's emphasis on distance, and subsequent characterization of the Pacific Islands as "fringe," "remote," "isolated" and "fragmented" also reflects what Tong'an scholar Epeli Hau'ofa critiques through his expansive and inclusive theorization of Oceania. In his essay "Our Sea of Islands," Hau'ofa criticizes the colonial perspective that views the Pacific as "islands in a far sea," or the viewpoint that "emphasizes dry surfaces in a vast ocean far from the centers of power."[72] He continues with its implications and states, "Focusing in this way stresses the smallness and remoteness of the islands.…Continental men, namely Europeans, on entering the Pacific after crossing huge expanses of ocean, introduced the view of 'islands in a far sea.' From this perspective the islands are tiny, isolated dots in a vast ocean."[73] Opposing such a reductive view of the Pacific, Hau'ofa presents a different way of orienting in the Pacific, or "a sea of islands," by invoking the perspectives of his ancestors, and calls for "a more holistic perspective in which things are seen in the totality of their relationships."[74]

Answering this call is Santos Perez's Spam poems of divergent digestion that present the full extent of the United States empire's dispossession of indigenous Chamorro bodies through

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[72] Epeli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands." *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics and the Identity in the New Pacific*. Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson, editors. (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1999): 152.
[73] Epeli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands." *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics and the Identity in the New Pacific*. Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson, editors. (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1999): 152-153.
[74] Epeli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands." *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics and the Identity in the New Pacific*. Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson, editors. (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1999): 152.

their gut, but also rejects the myth of the "disappearing native" and indigenous peoples at risk of extinction. Refusing extinction and disappearance, he seeks interspecies and intercommunal solidarity across marginalized communities in the peripheries of the empire, including other Pacific Islander communities, diasporic Asian and Asian communities.

Digesting Gastrocolonialism

To begin with, the poem "from the legends of juan malo (a malologue) (the birth of SPAM)" by Craig Santos Perez is an overwhelming account of gastrocolonialism expressed through an imperial matter, Spam. In a series of compact and impactful sentences in short bursts, the poem breathlessly narrates the intimate ways in which Hormel Foods' Spam has permeated the lives of Chamorro people. At the same time, Perez divergently digests imperial matters to imagine radical solidarity against the US empire and its dispossession through the gut.

The narrator states, "Our guttural love of Spam was born in 1944, when the shiny cans were berthed from aircraft carriers. This fateful day is commemorated as 'The Feast Day of the Immaculate Consumption.'"[75] 1944 refers to the year of the Liberation Day which marks the end of short-lived Japanese colonization of the island during World War II and the return of Guam to the US empire's control. Noting that the "gutteral love" began in 1944, as such, establishes the stage for both the complexity of liberation narratives and Chamorro positionality within overlapping Japanese and US empires.[76] Understanding the moment of Liberation Day through drastic changes in foodways, the transference of power signaled the switch from dire starvation

[75] Craig Santos Perez, "From the legends of juan malo (a malologue) (the birth of SPAM)." *From Unincorporated Territory [lukao].* (Richmond, CA: Omnidawn, 2017): 59.
[76] See Vincente M. Diaz, "Deliberating "Liberation Day": Identity, History, Memory, and War in Guam," Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s), Edited by T. Fujitani, Geoffrey M. White, Lisa Yoneyama. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001.

to an abundance of nutrient-lacking food stuffs. Under imperial Japan's control, which was, in turn, beleaguered by the US military during the Pacific Theatre, Chamorros suffered from a lack of food, as any form of sustenance was routed for the Japanese military, with indigenous populations killed or left to die from lack of food and undertaking energy-intensive labors and death marches. Since "Liberation" or subjugation to the US's imperial rule, the US empire and its military circulated addictive processed foods high in fat and sugar that lack necessary nutrients. The poem's reference to "The Feast of the Immaculate Conception" also echoes colonial control that predates Japanese occupation, or the colonial governance of the Spanish empire that colonized the islands and often violently spread Catholicism.

The poem's reference to empire and militarism continues through the depiction of Spam cans as agents of dispossession. The narrator proclaims, "Our guttural love of SPAM was born in 1944, when the shiny cans were berthed from aircraft carriers. This fateful day is commemorated as 'The Feast Day of the Immaculate Consumption.'"[77] The homophones "berth" and "birth" establish aircraft carriers, or the US empire's war machines, as a mothering vessel that begets "shiny cans" of imperial matter and deploy them as agents of dispossession. Reference to the "immaculate conception" through the "immaculate consumption" draws parallels between colonial dispossession of indigenous peoples through Catholicism under the Spanish empire and gastrocolonialism under the US empire. If Catholicism and Catholic saints celebrated on "The Feast Day of the Immaculate Consumption" represents the spiritual avenues through which colonialism sought to erase indigeneity and take possession of the minds and bodies of colonial

[77] Craig Santos Perez, "From the legends of juan malo (a malologue) (the birth of SPAM)." *From Unincorporated Territory [lukao].* (Richmond, CA: Omnidawn, 2017): 59.

subjects, the narrator suggests, Spam represents the cultural and physical ways in which colonialism and imperialism dispossesses Chamorro bodies.

Yet, the poem refuses to portray Chamorro peoples as utterly helpless victims, and the poet instead reclaims Chamorro bodies from colonial dispossession through divergent digestion. For instance, as Chamorro scholar Vicente M. Diaz argues, the history of Catholicism among Chamorros is both as a tool of colonial conquest and dispossession, and a reminder of Chamorro adaptation and resilience that survive through and beyond Spanish colonialism.[78] Despite the devastating effects of gastrocolonialism, Perez notes indigenous survival through the very agent of dispossession, their gut. If Spam is "born" in Minnesota as noted in the very opening of the poem, and "birthed" through aircraft carriers, the narrator states that "eight pounds of Spam die in a Chamorro stomach each year, which is more per capita than any other ethno-intestinal tract in the world"[79] This brief depiction of the "life" and "death" of Spam, a culinary product manufactured and circulated through the networks of US imperialism and militarism, sets up a circular reproduction of recognizing dispossession through the gut and reclaiming possession through divergent digestion of a particular meatpacking (by)product, Spam.

On one hand, Spam, as a catalyst for, and the symbol of "slow death" through gastrocolonialism,[80] travels from the heart of the US meatpacking industry, Minnesota, to "attack" the health and well-being of Chamorro bodies through their gut. Instead of becoming passive victims of imperial violence and dispossession, however, the indigenous Chamorro

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[78] Vicente M. Diaz, *Repositioning the Missionary: Rewriting the Histories of Colonialism, Native Catholicism, and Indigeneity in Guam.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010.
[79] Craig Santos Perez, "From the legends of juan malo (a malologue) (the birth of SPAM)." *From Unincorporated Territory [lukao].* (Richmond, CA: Omnidawn, 2017): 59.
[80] See Rob Nixon, *Slow Death and the Environmentalism of the Poor.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011.

bodies in this poem refuse to be killed, and instead "kill" Spam in their "ethno-intestinal tract[s]."[81] Here, the agent of dispossession, the gut, becomes the very weapons through which Chamorro bodies reclaim possession.

Also reclaiming possession of their bodies, the narrator notes the ways in which divergent digestion counters a complex relationship Chamorro people have with the US empire. He states, "Sadly, military recruiters are now worried that young Chamorros have become too obese to enlist in the armed forces."[82] On one hand, the poem draws parallels with other methods of imperial dispossession of Chamorro people, military recruitment and soldiering through active targeting and advertising, the settler colonial occupation of Guam by the US military that covers over a third of the entire island, and through fostering a culture of military enlistment.[83] Just as the poem draws attention to the divergent digestion that struggles to fight against the empire by killing the imperial matter in the gut, the narrator notes the complex ways in which digestion of gastrocolonialism opposes another method of the US's dispossession of Chamorro bodies even as it struggles against disease and illness that stem from or are exacerbated by uneven foodways. Divergent digestion of physical matter, in this way, leads to non-normative body formations with attached medical baggage, while the poet notes how digestion and the resulting body can potentially function as a form of refusal towards the active recruitment of Chamorro people as soldiers for the US empire.[84]

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[81] Craig Santos Perez, "From the legends of juan malo (a malologue) (the birth of SPAM)." *From Unincorporated Territory [lukao].* (Richmond, CA: Omnidawn, 2017): 59.
[82] Craig Santos Perez, "From the legends of juan malo (a malologue) (the birth of SPAM)." *From Unincorporated Territory [lukao].* (Richmond, CA: Omnidawn, 2017): 59.
[83] See Setsu Shigematsu and Keith Camacho, editors, *Militarized Currents: Toward a Decolonized Future in Asia and the Pacific*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.
[84] Here, I gesture towards literature on understanding medical diagnosis of obesity as a marker of a non-normative, and often racialized body. While the uneven foodways in liminal spaces of empire leads to noncommunicable diseases like diabetes and cardiovascular disease with little

Reading Santos Perez's Spam poem itself as a form of metaphorical digestions of Spam elucidates the ways in which the poet makes sense of the slow violence brought on by the US empire as a form of divergence from the existing order, rather than assimilating into it. If the example of *Reply 1988* in the previous chapter shows the ways in which the South Korean conglomerate CJ Group demonstrates an assimilative digestion as a willing subimperial participant in the existing imperial order, Perez's Spam poem refuses neither the slow death nor the assimilation into the order. It refuses the binary division between the imperial center and periphery by calling for solidarity across liminal and marginalized bodies and communities in the empire.

For one, the narrator bridges the gap between human and nonhuman bodies and communities in the production, circulation and consumption of meatpacking (by)products like Spam. He states,

> At the Spam factory, nearly 20,000 hogs are slaughtered every day. More than 1,000 severed pig heads slide down the conveyor belt every hour. Undocumented migrants slice ears, clip snouts, chisel cheeks, scoop eyes, carve tongues, and scrape mouths #everythingbutthesqueal. Every three seconds, a compressed-air hose blasts pig brains from a denuded skull into a barrel. Rosy mist, strawberry milkshake, Pepto-Bismol. Google: 'the SPAM factory's dirty little secret'[85]

On one hand, the lines of the poem seem to be limited to depictions of the violent killings and butchering of hogs, whose bodies are carved into ears, snouts, cheeks, eyes, tongues, mouths, brains and skulls in service of human consumption. The mechanized nature of meat processing,

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medical support in the islands (such as access to dialysis centers), obesity is a condition, not a disease that has nebulous ties to medical discourse. Later iterations of the chapter will include a section on obesity itself, including other Pacific Island writers who write specifically about obesity, such as Samoan writer Sia Figiel.

[85] Craig Santos Perez, "From the legends of juan malo (a malologue) (the birth of SPAM)." *From Unincorporated Territory [lukao].* (Richmond, CA: Omnidawn, 2017): 59-60.

such as severed heads sliding down the conveyor belt, and a compressed-air hose that blasts every three seconds, seems to create a sterile and efficient—"#everythingbutthesqueal"—system, in which the factory appears as an industrial space devoid of and freed from human sacrifice and labor.

However, rather than using a passive sentence structure that can effectively hide those who hold the carving knife—as would be the case in "ears are sliced, snouts are clipped, cheeks are chiseled and so on"—the narrator bluntly inserts "undocumented migrants" as the subject of the sentence. The rest of the sentence that begins with the two words, "undocumented migrants," maintains the quick-paced two-word structures of hog parts. In breathless snapshots of fragmented parts of the whole, the narrator notes that "undocumented migrants slice ears, clip snouts, chisel cheeks, scoop eyes, carve tongues, and scrape mouths." The flashing repetition of two-word snapshots that draws a parallel between undocumented migrants and hog parts reflects the theoretically fragmented bodies of migrant workers, whose hands or bodies, as representation of their labor, remain in demand within the border, while their lives and livelihood is separated from their labor as undesirable parts of them.[86] Like the hogs that they labor to fragment into parts, undocumented workers in the meatpacking industry—many of whom are Pacific Islanders

[86] Much of the experiences of undocumented migrant workers that Perez describes here echo other writings on borderlands and border living, such as Gloria Anzaldúa's seminal work *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza.* On Mexican farm workers, she writes, "Living in a no-man's-borderland, caught between being treated as criminals and being able to eat, between resistance and deportation, the illegal refugees are some of the poorest and the most exploited of any people in the U.S. It is illegal for Mexicans to work without green cards. But big farming combines, farm bosses and smugglers who bring them in make money off the "wetbacks'" labor—they don't have to pay federal minimum wages, or ensure adequate housing or sanitary conditions"(12); "Como una mula,/ she shifts 150 pounds of cotton onto her back./ It's either las labores/ or feet soaking in cold puddles en bodegas/ cutting washing weighing packaging/ broccoli spears carrots cabbages in 12 hours / double shift the roar of machines inside her head" (118). Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza.* San Francisco: Aunt Lute Publishing, 1987 (2012).

themselves as well— inside the borders of the continental US experience similar fragmentation that breaks apart the wholeness, the link between the life and the body in service of the empire and its production. Rather than delineating the division between those who hold the knife, and the bodies that are cut open, then, the violent acts of pig slaughtering and butchering in this poem blur the boundary between the hog and the worker.[87] Both exist as fragmented parts of the whole and are co-opted by the imperial center.

If the meter and repetition in this poetic digestion highlight the links between the fragmented hogs and the fragmented bodies of migrant workers, the imagery of pig brains denotes the physical digestion that merges the laboring bodies together with fragmented animal parts. To return to the quote, the poet follows up with a description of the industrialized butchering process, or "a compressed-air hose [blasting] pig brains from a denuded skull into a barrel" with a series of developing imagery: "Rosy mist," "strawberry milkshake," and "Pepto-Bismol." If the initial description leaves little to the imagination, the series of images, like a strawberry milkshake and Pepto-Bismol, invokes distinct and direct memories of everyday foods and medicine. The link between the two, between the parts of animal butchering made invisible to everyday consumers, like the brain, and seemingly innocent everyday pink objects, like a strawberry milkshake, gestures towards the gruesome details of hog slaughtering that the following directive calls for.

[87] Here the racial project of undocumented or otherwise marginalized workers in service of the hegemony of Man shares its liminality with the Animal Other. A number of scholars have noted the parallel between racism and speciesism. See Aph Ko and Syl Ko. *Aphro-ism: Essays on Pop Culture, Feminism, and Black Veganism from Two Sisters.* Brooklyn, NY: Lantern Publishing & Media, 2020; Breeze Harper, ed. *Sistah Vegan: Black Female Vegans Speak on Food, Identity, Health and Society.* Lantern Books, 2010; Jennifer Polish. "Decolonizing Veganism: On Resisting Vegan Whiteness and Racism." *Critical Perspectives on Veganism.* Castricano, J., Simonsen, R. R., ed. Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

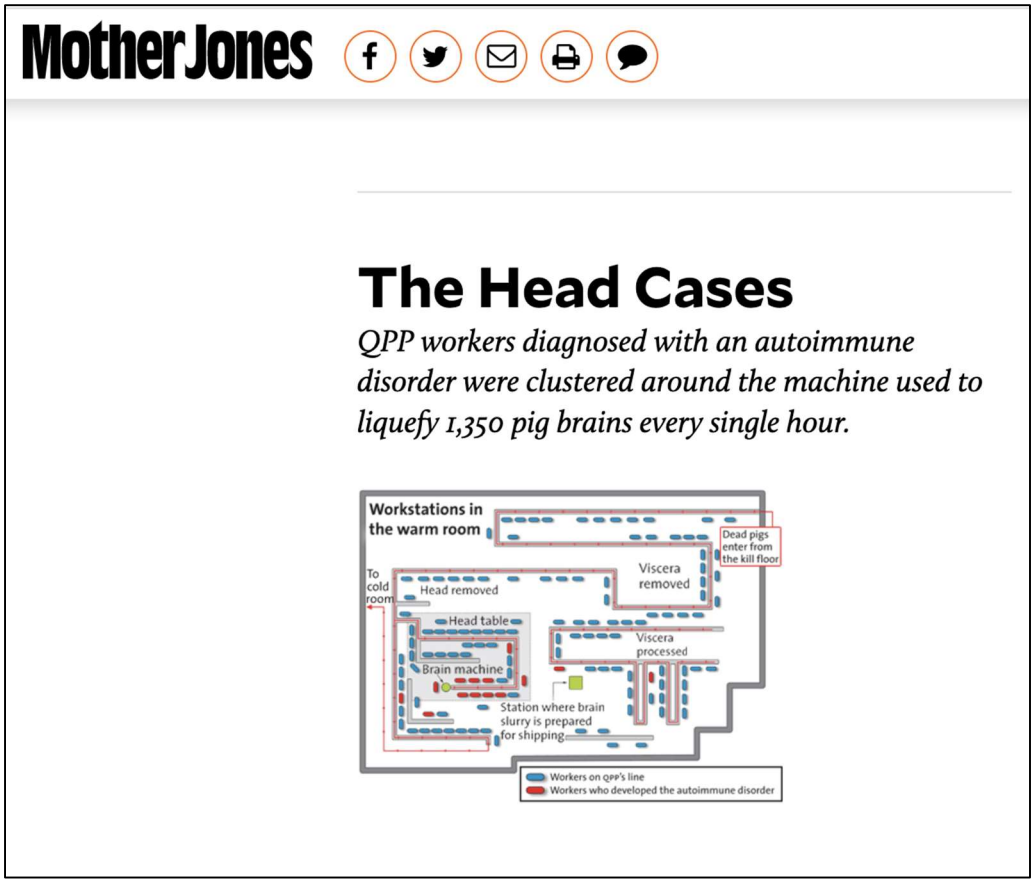

Figure 1.2 Kill floor and illness occurrence diagram from the *Mother Jones* article

Without clearly explaining the link, the narrator assigns a directive, "Google: 'the SPAM factory's dirty little secret.'" Departing from the text of the poem and googling the phrase directs the reader/audience to an investigative article in *Mother Jones* that brings together the sterilized gore of meat processing plants with the US empire's racial project of undocumented migrant laborers as marginal populations.[88] Alongside instances of mistreatment of the workers that

[88] The *Mother Jones* article itself also similarly draws a parallel between parts of the hogs and the workers through the analytic of trash and discard. The article states, "Days later, on the Monday morning after the long Fourth of July weekend, Angeles was told to report to human resources, where she was informed that there was a problem with her identification. Angeles, who'd been working under another name, knew she was about to be fired…. 'I feel thrown away,' she said, finally. 'Like a piece of trash. Before, I worked hard and willingly for QPP, but after I got sick and needed restrictions and told them I was in pain, they threw me away like trash and were done with me.'"

range from dehumanizing working conditions at the Hormel factory and union-busting to speeding up the assembly line and endangering the workers, the exposé reports on the narrator's unwritten link between pig brains and images of pink matters. The article describes a scene with the "Brain Machine" at a Hormel factory, stating, "On the other side, Garcia inserted the metal nozzle of a 90-pounds-per-square-inch compressed-air hose and blasted the pigs' brains into a pink slurry. One head every three seconds. A high-pressure burst, a fine rosy mist, and the slosh of brains slipping through a drain hole into a catch bucket. (Some workers say the goo looked like Pepto-Bismol; others describe it as more like a lumpy strawberry milkshake.)"[89] The innocuous images of pink matters that parallel blasted pig brain—rosy mist, Pepto-Bismol and strawberry milkshake—appear in the report as a description of the "Head Table" at the factory. These images in the article link the lives of the pigs with the lives of the migrant workers through the violence of industrialized hog butchering, as the article exposes that inhaling hog brains led to serious health consequences for the undocumented migrant workers who operated the "Brain Machines," in the form of "demyelinating polyradiculoneuropathy," that "Inhaling aerosolized brains had caused [the worker's] body to produce antibodies, but because porcine and human neurological cells are so similar, the antibodies began destroying Garcia's own nerves, as well."[90] Just as the repetition of two-word images in Perez's poem ties the undocumented worker with fragmented hog parts, the article notes not only the ways in which the physical matter of hog brains enter into the bodies of the undocumented worker, but also the striking similarity

[89] Genoways, Ted. "The Spam Factory's Dirty Secret." *Mother Jones.* 2011. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2011/06/hormel-spam-pig-brains-disease/
[90] Genoways, Ted. "The Spam Factory's Dirty Secret." *Mother Jones.* 2011. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2011/06/hormel-spam-pig-brains-disease/

between "porcine and human neurological cells" that draws direct links between the hogs and humans that share the "cut-and-kill floor."

Directly linking the source materials, like the *Mother Jones* article, within his documentary poetry, or docupoetry, Perez highlights the need to cross the boundaries of genre and media to form radical connections between disparate efforts to expose the seams of the US empire. His poetic digestion of documents and documentations, like the *Mother Jones* article, transforms the existing texts into vibrant threads with which to weave the poem. Perez digests the text of the detailed descriptions of the "Brain Machine" into a series of images of pink matters, "Rosy mist, strawberry milkshake, Pepto-Bismol." Similarly, the source text for his short bursts of images of fragmented workers and hogs is the following section in the article:

> *Workers slice* off the *ears*, *clip* the *snouts, chisel* the *cheek* meat. They *scoop* out the *eyes, carve* out the *tongue*, *and scrape* the palate meat from the roofs of *mouths.* Because, famously, all parts of a pig are edible ("*everything but the squeal,*" wisdom goes), nothing is wasted. A woman next to Garcia would carve meat off the back of each head before letting the *denuded skull* slide down the conveyor and through an opening in a plexiglass shield.[91]

Here, Perez presents layers of digestion of imperial matter. For one, the workers on the factory floor ingest the imperial matter of meatpacking (by)products, in this case, hog brains exported as thickeners for stir-fry, and digest it to continue life beyond the slow death. In another layer, the investigative article itself is a form of metaphorical digestion of the material reality of the US empire, that "used text and image to describe a social condition to invoke sympathy if not political action in middle-class readers."[92] As an investigative journalist, Ted Genoways gathers

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[91] Genoways, Ted. "The Spam Factory's Dirty Secret." Mother Jones. 2011. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2011/06/hormel-spam-pig-brains-disease/, emphasis mine.

[92] Susan Briante as quoted in Joseph Harrington, "The Politics of Docupoetry" in *The News from Poems: Essays on the 21st-Century American Poetry of Engagement.* Jeffrey Gray and Ann Keniston, ed. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016.

top-down "official" documentations such as incident reports and official statements from Hormel Foods, and Quality Pork Processors Inc., or Hormel Foods' meatpacking factory in its birthplace and headquarters, Austin, Minnesota, as well as medical reports and doctor's notes from the Mayo Clinic a mere 40-something miles away. At the same time, he documents the bottom-up accounts through interviews and testimonies from undocumented workers in the margins of the empire. The resulting article, as a form of an exposé, functions as Genoway's digestion of top-down and bottom-up documentations as one who shared the space, and as one immersed in factory farm spaces in the continental US that eventually overflowed the purview of this article and into his book, *The Chain: Farm, Factory, and the Fate of Our Food.*

In yet another layer of digestion, Perez takes in Genoway's article and digests his digestion of documentation in the form of docupoetry. Writing on a number of twenty-first-century documentary poetry, including several works by Perez, literary historian Joseph Harrington notes that docupoetry implicitly questions the status of both poetry and documents," and that "The new docupoetry embodies this contradiction: it narrates history at the same time that the form of the narrative makes us aware of how we construct, perceive and interpret history."[93] On one hand, Perez's poems that draw directly from historical documentations from overlapping Spanish, Japanese and US empires rightly questions the status of historical documents, alongside poetry as a form itself, and raises awareness about the constructed nature of history and varying interpretations of it. However, rather than questioning the constructed nature of Genoway's article, Perez's poetic digestion of Genoway's article seeks to build solidarity by bringing together disparate entities and narratives that construct the margins of the

[93] Joseph Harrington, "'The Politics of Docupoetry' in The News from Poems: Essays on the 21st-Century American Poetry of Engagement. Jeffrey Gray and Ann Keniston, ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016): 67.

empire. Like the margins that circumscribe the borders and boundaries of a text, Perez's digestion brings marginalized bodies, lives and spaces that may or may not explicitly discuss the US as a settler colonial empire, and dismantles a monolithic and coherent narrative of the empire as layers of oppression and dispossession. In this sense, he draws connections between the fragmented bodies of 12,000 hogs on the conveyor belt, undocumented workers on the factory floor and an investigative reporter on factory farms, and expands this web of links into Chamorro people who eat cans of Spam circulated in the Pacific through the US military.

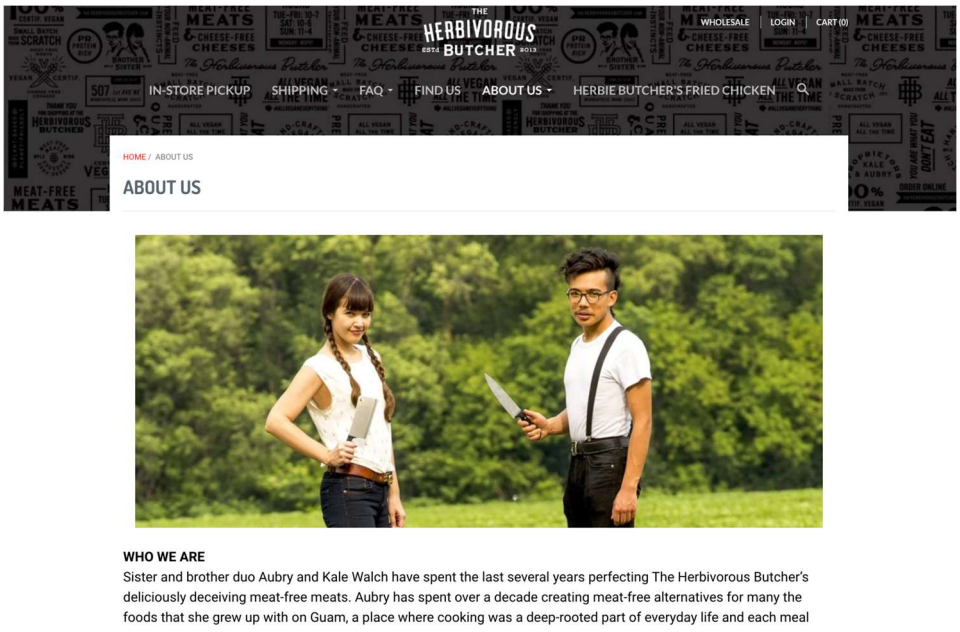

Figure 1.3: the Herbivorous Butcher founding siblings[94]

Perez further weaves references from liminal spaces of imperialism in and out of the US into the poem in its later parts. Taking Jamaican artist Bob Marley's song "Guava Jelly" into his own exploration of Spam, he substitutes "guava" into "Spam" and writes, "Oh baby, here I am, come rub up on my belly like SPAM jelly," and links his discussion of Spam and US

[94] The Herbivorous Butcher. "About Us." *Theherbivorousbutcher.com.* https://www.theherbivorousbutcher.com/pages/about-us

imperialism into larger discussions of colonization and liberation in other marginalized parts of the empire, like Jamaica.[95] He continues and notes that his favorite part of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* is the scene in which "the tractor driver is on lunch break near a tenant house eating a SPAM sandwich." He also highlights the brother-and-sister owners of The Herbivorous Butcher,[96] "The siblings migrated to Minnesota, where they opened the world's first 'vegan butcher shop' and sold meatless meats at farmers markets and pop-up culinary events."[97] The body of the poet himself that physically digests imperial matters like Spam metaphorically digests documents and documentations of the US empire alongside other metaphorical digestions of such texts to explore the possibility of building solidarity in the periphery.

Conclusion

In his online blog article also titled "I Eat Therefore I SPAM," Craig Santos Perez highlights, "SPAM is also popular in Hawaii, the Philippines, Okinawa, South Korea, the Northern Marianas, the Federated States of Micronesia, and all places with a history of U.S. military presence."[98] In his mapping of the US empire by repurposing its own cartographic technologies of dispossession, the poet draws a throughline through different spaces in and around the Pacific Ocean both during and after the Cold-War-era Area Studies divide to call Indigenous, Asian, and Asian diasporic peoples and communities to act against the

[95] See Jason Toynbee. *Bob Marley: Herald of a Postcolonial World?* Polity Press, 2007; Gregory Stephens. *On Racial Frontiers: The New Culture of Frederick Douglass, Ralph Ellison, and Bob Marley.* Cambridge University Press, 1999.
[96] The Herbivorous Butcher. "About Us." *Theherbivorousbutcher.com.* https://www.theherbivorousbutcher.com/pages/about-us
[97] Craig Santos Perez, "From the legends of juan malo (a malologue) (the birth of SPAM)." *From Unincorporated Territory [lukao].* (Richmond, CA: Omnidawn, 2017): 60.
[98] Craig Santos Perez, "I eat therefore I SPAM." *Kenyon Review.* February 21, 2013.

gastrocolonialism of the US empire and imagine a different future. At the same time, the poet also notes the difficulty of creating a smooth narrative of solidarity against the US empire and its military, as he painstakingly notes the violent histories of Japanese occupation of Guam.

Current relationship between East Asian subempires like Japan and South Korea and indigenous lands in the Pacific exemplifies the uneven dynamics between the two under the larger overarching umbrella of US imperialism and militarism.[99] Just as Hawai'i circumscribed the continent's middle-class imagination of the "good life" through hula and tourism, and as such everyday imagery of the kingdom enabled settler colonial and military absorption of indigenous lands,[100] Guam experiences layered dispossession through the military and the tourism industry. The US military physically occupies over a third of the island, and limits indigenous traditional and cultural practices, as well as efforts towards environmental protection.[101] As a large-scale military base, Guam also frequently becomes a target of proxy aggression, as is the case with recurring North Korean threats of missile attacks. At the same time, South Koreans and Japanese make up roughly 90% of all tourists to Guam in a given year, and their attitudes towards Guam often mimic US middle-class's consumption of Hawai'i as a apolitical and feminized tropical paradise.

Unsurprisingly, South Korean and Japanese blogs and guidebooks undermine the possibility of strengthening the cartography of solidarity against US imperialism and militarism.

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[99] See Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics.* Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2014; Teresia K. Teaiwa, "Bikinis and other S/Pacific N/oceans." *The Contemporary Pacific* 6, no. 1 (1994): 87-109.
[100] See Adria L. Imada, *Aloha America: Hula Circuits through the US Empire.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.
[101] See Olivia Quintanilla. *Inafa' maolek Restoring Balance through Resilience, Resistance, and Coral Reefs: A Study of Pacific Island Climate Justice and the Right to Nature.* Doctoral Dissertation. University of California, San Diego, 2020.

Rather than invoking a sense of shared oppression and possibility of resistance, Spam frequently appears as a "must-try" food in Guam in South Korean narratives of tourist consumption of the island, and it appears as a recommended *omiyage*, or a gift to bring back to friends and relatives for Japanese tourists.[102] In this sense Guam appears as a substitutable and interchangeable destination of subimperial desire for assimilation that mimics the position of Hawai'i, and a challenge to transpacific solidarity that holds the potential to imagine otherwise.

[102] https://guam1.net/resutaurant/spam.html; https://ameblo.jp/miemj2929/entry-12577342822.html; https://enjoy-guam.net/gift-spam/; https://4travel.jp/magazine/shopping/00065; https://love-super-travel.net/guam-etc/guam/42303/; https://guam-bu.com/resipi-spam-omusubi/.

CHAPTER 2

"Stomaching the Can": Digesting Waste and Imperial Meatpacking (By)products in *Reply 1988* and Grace M. Cho

Figure 2.1: *budaejjigae* from Eric Kim's *Korean American.* (Photo Credit: Jenny Huang)[103]

1. Make the sauce: In a small dish, stir together the garlic, gochugaru, gochujang, soup soy sauce, and sugar.
2. Make the stew: In a large, wide pot, neatly arrange—in groups—the Korean radish, onion, Spam, sausages, bacon, kimchi, jalapeño, daepa, and the prepared sauce. Add 4 cups of water, set over high heat, and bring to a boil. Turn the heat down to medium-low and gently boil until the bacon and any raw sausage is cooked through, 15–20 minutes.

[103] Eric Kim, *Korean American: Food that Tastes Like Home.* New York: Random House, 2021.

3. Add the ramyun noodles and let cook according to package directions. Remove from the heat and blanket the slice of cheese over the cooked noodles. Serve the budae jjigae immediately with white rice.

In a much-anticipated cookbook of 2022, *Korean American: Food That Tastes Like Home*, New York Times staff-writer Eric Kim develops various recipes for popular Korean dishes across regions. One dish he includes in the "stew" section is *budaejjigae*, and he proceeds to describe it as the following: "budae jjigae or 'army base stew,' is as an amped-up kimchi jjigae—a bubbling hodgepodge of ingredients like kimchi, Spam, hot dogs, noodles, and American cheese, a cultural by-product of leftover military rations after the Korean War."[104] As his inclusion of *budaejjigae* between two very traditional, and quintessentially "Korean" fares—"A Very Good Kimchi Jjigae" and "Doenjang Jjigae with Silken Tofu and Raw Zucchini"—offers a glimpse into the role *budaejjigae* plays in anchoring the "Korean American."

Another Korean American, sociologist and writer Grace M. Cho, similarly corroborates *budaejjigae* as "a kind of cultural icon circulating among Korean diasporic artists in the United States, who regarded it as both a culinary travesty and an iconic symbol of U.S. imperialism."[105] If Kim describes the war-time origin of the dish merely as "leftover military rations after the Korean War," Cho collects oral histories of survivors and unpacks what this "leftovers" meant. She writes, "They recalled waiting in long lines outside the mess halls to buy bags of 'leftovers,' though some of them referred to the bags plainly as 'garbage.' They'd say things like, 'Americans have the best food and throw it away, and then Koreans buy that garbage,' their voices filled with humiliation, resentment, and gratitude all at once."[106]

[104] Kim, Eric. *Korean American: Food that Tastes Like Home.* Random House, 2021.
[105] Grace M. Cho, "Eating Military Base Stew," *Contexts* 13, no. 3 (2014): 38.
[106] Cho, Grace M. "Eating Military Base Stew," *Contexts* 13, no. 3 (2014): 39.

In this chapter, I stay with the contradictions of *budaejjigae*—food and garbage, and wasteful excess and wasting bodies—to examine Asian American racialization not through racialized or racially tinted bodies and their phenotype, but in the structures that mark certain matters as waste or food, and in the form that allows certain communities to call the matter their own. Building on the multiple definitions of digestion I have discussed in the Introduction, I find how people and communities in the aftermath of the Korean War contend with imperial matters caught in the structure of waste production, such as *budaejjigae* and canned meat products like Spam, and survive beyond slow death. To reiterate, digestion as a literal process denotes the body's ability to not simply ingest, but actively digest imperial food matter and continue to survive. Similarly, digestion as a metaphorical process calls attention to making sense of the forces of material reality by drawing connections to existing understandings of the world. As a way to overcome the top-down imperial and colonial control, metaphorical digestion brings to the surface the attitudes and desires of those marked as imperial subjects.

Identifying differing paths, I highlight assimilative digestion of meatpacking (by)products as imperial matter through an episode of a South Korean television series titled, *Reply 1988,* and explore its stakes through a Korean American writer and scholar Grace M. Cho's "Eating Military Base Stew." Through *Reply 1988,* I theorize what I term assimilative digestion, or digestion that seeks to remain in and reinforce the capitalist order and hierarchical power structure of the empire. On the other hand, through Cho's article "Eating Military Base Stew," I demonstrate the stakes of assimilative digestion, and highlight Cho's gestures towards imagining otherwise. Bringing together an East Asian visual cultural product, *Reply 1988*, and a Korean diasporic writer's digestion of imperial food matter, I trace the production and circulation of Spam through the US military to displace the US empire's stable geopolitical boundary and

continental exceptionalism, and instead understand the US empire through circulations, exchanges, and movements between continents, archipelagos, islands and atolls through and against water, and through an exchange of vital energy and biopolitical value within its currents.[107] In this sense, the continent exists in the exchanges with and between marginalized shore spaces. Following the circulation of various meatpacking (by)products in and around the Pacific Ocean exposes how the empire creates new forms of marginality by bringing together multiple marginal spaces and bodies in service of the imperial center. In this chapter, I explore the ways in which (by)products like Spam and budaejjigae as imperial matter connect marginal parts of the butchered animal other to marginalized peoples of the empire from laborers on the kill line to consumers in the marginalized spaces of the empire. Understanding this process of producing marginality in a can together with peoples and communities' survival through divergent and assimilative digestion gives room for more precisely examining the empire, as well as the resistance and responses of people who digest imperial matter.

(by)product of the Empire

To understand digestion and the divide that it blurs, I theorize meatpacking (by)products that bring to light the organizing logic of the US empire across the Pacific Ocean, such as turkey tails, mutton flaps, and Spam. These "cheap" meats reveal the organizing value structure that encompasses the parts in varying degrees of animacies, from the less marketable body parts of butchered animals, to racialized bodies as the consumers and as the workers in

[107] Brian Russell Roberts and Michelle Ann Stephens, *Archipelagic American Studies.* Duke University Press, 2017.

slaughterhouses.[108] In this sense, the "other," or the "byproduct" of the factory farms and meatpacking plants in the "heart of the US" in the Midwest is redesignated as consumable products. This redesignation of byproducts as products is, in turn, foundational in the creation of marginality within the animal other and the racialized marginal other as laborers and consumers of these products. Finally, this marginality is what defines the Human at the apex of the hierarchical chain process of accumulation. Processes such as racialization and gendering, or the process of creating a value system based on anthropocentrism, ultimately makes it possible for the imperial center and the Human to accumulate capital and value drawn from the life forces of marginal bodies and spaces.[109]

For instance, turkey tails capture both the structures of consumable meat-production and hierarchical valuation of lives in the US settler colonial empire. Turkey tail refers to the fatty gland that a turkey's tail feathers are attached to. But the US's quintessential thanksgiving bird that lands on the table in the US every holiday season does not have its tail gland attached to the bird, making the turkey tails a byproduct of turkey slaughtering. Moreover, the turkey the US consumes today was not simply domesticated in the Americas. Rather, it was exported to Europe

[108] Mel Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect.* Duke University Press, 2012; Bill Winders and Elizabeth Ransom. *Global Meat: Social and Environmental Consequences of the Expanding Meat Industry.* MIT Press, 2019; Alex Blanchette, *Porkopolis: American Animality, Standardized Life, and the Factory Farm.* Duke University Press, 2020; K J Donham. "Community and occupational health concerns in pork production: A review." *Journal of Animal Science* 88, no. 13 (2010): 102-111; Ted Genoways. *The Chain: Farm, Factory, and the Fate of Our Food.* HarperCollins Publishers, 2014; Carrie Freshour. "Cheap Meat and Cheap Work in the U.S. Poultry Industry: Race, Gender, and Immigration in Corporate Strategies to Shape Labor." *Global Meat: Social and Environmental Consequences of the Expanding Meat Industry.* MIT Press, 2019.

[109] I think alongside Kalindi Vora's theorization of the flow of vital energy in her examination of physical and emotional labor of call center workers and surrogate mothers. See Kalindi Vora, *Life Support: Biocapital and the New History of Outsourced Labor.* University Of Minnesota Press, 2015.

following European contact and eventually re-imported in the US for mass production.[110] Throughout this process, various breeds of the bird were homogenized as they were selectively bred for its breast size, the most desirable part of the bird. These byproducts are marketed and circulated as products in the Pacific, in particular in places such as Samoa.[111] In other words, the byproducts, or the undesired parts of the bird are turned into a marketable product to dispossess specifically racialized bodies in the liminal spaces of the empire.

[110] A W Brant. "A brief history of the turkey." *World's Poultry Science Journal* 54 (1998): https://doi.org/10.1079/WPS19980027.

[111] There are a number of articles and studies dedicated to the effects of imperial foodways in Pacific Islands, including Samoa. I aim to incorporate these literatures into understanding narratives of the "obesity epidemic" in the Pacific as well. See Seiden et al, "Long-term trends in food availability, food prices, and obesity in Samoa." *American Journal of Human Biology* 24, no 3 (2012): 286-295. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajhb.22237; Singer, Merrill. "Following the turkey tails: neoliberal globalization and the political ecology of health." *Journal of Political Ecology* 21, no. 1 (2014): https://doi.org/10.2458/v21i1.21145; Thow et al. "Food supply, nutrition and trade policy: reversal of an import ban on turkey tails." 95, no. 10 (2017): 723-725. doi: 10.2471/BLT.17.192468;

Figure 2.2: Hormel Foods' Spam Museum, family history section.[112]

Similar to poultry farms, the meatpacking industry in continental US creates layers of marginality in its production of meat, and its (by)products. Cheap racialized laborers from Asia, the Americas and Oceania are exposed to waste and danger as they produce cheap meats by butchering and fragmenting the animal other.[113] The US imperial and military structure then circulates and sells them to racialized and disposable populations in various margins of the empire, be it racialized communities in and outside the geopolitical control of the US empire,

[112] Photo taken by the author on Mar 30, 2018 at the Hormel Museum.
[113] Casey, Joan, et al. "Industrial Food Animal Production and Community Health." *Current Environmental Health Reports* 2, no. 3 (2015): 259-71; Hansen Arve and Karen Lykke Syse. *Changing Meat Cultures: Food Practices, Global Capitalism and the Consumption of Animals.* Rowman & Littlefield, 2021.

such as Hawai'i, Guam, South Korea, Okinawa, and the Philippines.[114] All the while, biocapital value flows into the center of Hormel Foods, as exemplified by the proudly repeated stories of George A. Hormel, the "good immigrant" from Germany who has achieved the "American Dream."[115] The material realities of these meatpacking (by)products provide an entry into understanding the divisive hierarchical system with the universal Human at the helm that creates, sorts, circulates, and stores waste, and maintains the hierarchy of imperial power through such ordering.

Hope in a Can: Assimilative Digestion in *Reply 1988*

A middle-aged mother with curly hair typical for a middle-aged Korean woman, an *ajumma*, rummages through the cupboards looking for something. The goofy father of the family wanders into the kitchen and asks her what she is looking for. With her eyebrows furrowed, she responds: "I'm going to make fried rice for the kids tomorrow morning. I want to prepare for it tonight. Ugh where did the ham go? I bought it today and I know I put it somewhere." "What ham is it?" He asks. "It's something the Americans eat. I only buy it sometimes because it's so expensive." She pauses and gives him an accusatory sideway glance, and asks, "Did you eat it?" He protests. "How can I eat it when I don't even know what it is!"[116]

[114] Deborah Gewertz and Frederick Errington. *Cheap Meat: Flap Food Nations in the Pacific Islands.* University of California Press, 2010.
[115] Hormelfoods125.com, "Our Founder—George A. Hormel"; the Spam Museum in Austin, MN similarly tells the narrative of the Hormel family as a story of the American Dream, and highlights the immigrant background alongside concepts such as innovation and diligence.
[116] *Reply 1988*. "Memory." Episode 10. Direction by Won-ho Shin. Written by Woo-jeong Lee. TvN, Dec 5, 2015.

After his protest, the scene cuts to a close-up of the very can of Spam in question. It is in possession of someone, though the audience cannot see it right away. The Spam can itself is a thing of the past; unlike the contemporary pull-top can, the can in the scene is old-school, and it requires the opener to roll away a strip of the metal on the side. The camera switches angles and captures a man in a blue tracksuit, Jung-bong, who intently watches the can as he rolls away the metal strip. He has an intense look of concentration that belies the very casual act of opening a can of Spam. When he pulls away the metal lid, the shot reveals the pink flesh that has been hiding in the colorful Spam can. Without hesitation, Jung-bong scoops the canned pink meat with a metal spoon and devours it. He lets out a short orgasmic sigh that is quickly drowned by a comical music score.

Figure 2.3: still from *Reply 1988*[117]

[117] *Reply 1988*. "Memory." Episode 10. Direction by Won-ho Shin. Written by Woo-jeong Lee. TvN, Dec 5, 2015.

Figure 2.4: still from *Reply 1988*[118]

This scene of "Spam thief" comes from a South Korean television drama, *Reply 1988*[119], a television series that focuses on the wholesome lives of five families living in a neighborhood called Ssangmundong in the northern part of Seoul in the late 1980s. It tells the story of the teenaged children of the families and their interrelated lives against the nostalgic backdrop of Seoul in the past. Produced by CJ Entertainment & Media, the television series heavily features various food products that the larger parent company, the CJ Group produces.[120] One such product is Spam, one of the products that fueled the growth of the company from a smaller food company called Cheil Jedang (CJ) into the major conglomerate called the CJ Group in the contemporary era.

Since the introduction of the canned ham to the war-torn starving people as the overflow and waste material from the US military during and immediately after the Korean War, US's Hormel Foods signed a license agreement for the production of Spam with CJ Cheil Jedang in

[118] *Reply 1988*. "Memory." Episode 10. Direction by Won-ho Shin. Written by Woo-jeong Lee. TvN, Dec 5, 2015.
[119] *Reply 1988*. "Memory." Episode 10. Direction by Won-ho Shin. Written by Woo-jeong Lee. TvN, Dec 5, 2015.
[120] CJ Cheil Jedang, "History." Cj.co.kr. https://www.cj.co.kr/en/about/cj-cheiljedang/history.

1985. Shortly afterwards in 1987, CJ Group officially began its production and sale of Spam for the domestic population and used it as a stepping stone for increasing its international reach.[121] In this chapter, I connect the nostalgic portrayal of Spam in the episode "Memory" in *Reply 1988* to the process by which CJ Group capitalized on nostalgia for its domestic sales and to increase its international market presence through cultural exportations of the drama itself. I analyze the economically symbiotic relationship between a meatpacking (by)product, Spam, and *Reply 1988* as a case study to unveil how assimilative digestion reaffirms and solidifies the oppressive capitalist order of colonialism and imperialism without exploring the possibilities of imagining life outside of the order. Here, my argument is two-fold. First, I argue that this capitalization of nostalgia for the audience of 2015 is predicated on the erasure of the violent past of US imperialism during the Cold War and its hot manifestation, the Korean War. Second, I argue that the advertisement campaign that the CJ Group ran in 2015 requires this erasure of the past to legitimize its own subimperial participation in the imperial logic that re-propagates the imperial slow violence.

Reply 1988 aired between November 2015 and January 2016, riding on the auspicious wind of nostalgia in popular media in South Korea at the time. Enormously popular as a family drama, the series was a part of the slew of shows and films in the 2010s that depicted South Korea and its economic heyday in the 1990s until the financial market crash of 1997. For instance, the film that marked the beginning of marketing nostalgia, *Architecture 101* (2012) is set roughly around 1996, while the two other shows of the *Reply* series, *Reply 1997* (2012) and

[121] Cheil Jedang was initially founded as a manufacturing wing for the conglomerate Samsung Group in August 1953, roughly a month after the end of the Korean War.

Reply 1994 (2013) are set in 1997 and 1994 respectively.[122] Discussing these cultural products of nostalgia, film critic Namung Hŏ and columnist Yunhyŏng Han argue that contemporary economic difficulties account for their popularity.[123] They claim that these nostalgic films capitalize on the memories of the affluence of the pre-1997 economic crisis, providing a much-desired distraction from the recession and resulting complex political situation.

Taking place in Seoul between 1988 and 1989, *Reply* 1988 similarly capitalizes on the nostalgia surrounding the opulence and optimism of the late 1980s and 1990s. The latter half of the 80s and 90s were a time of development, when many South Koreans who could still vividly remember the ravages of the Korean War found themselves benefiting from the vast wealth of the growing economy and South Korea's increasing global presence. As an example of such focus, the opening sequence of the television drama heavily features archival clips of the opening ceremony of the 1988 Seoul Olympics, from the recognizable "hoop boy" to the carrying and lighting of the torch. This emphasis on the Olympics reflects Korea's historical memory of the games: an undeniable marker of the nation's economic development, and its entry into the league of developed nations.

This positive economic outlook began with and continued after the Olympics Games. Published in 1988, an article titled, "The Influence of 88 Seoul Olympics on South Korean Economy," links the games with economic growth and lays out an optimistic prediction for the coming decades that the South Korean economy will benefit from its increased global presence,

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[122] For *Reply 1997*, despite its supposed focus on 1997, the year of the Asian financial crisis, the show bypasses any discussion of the crisis and its impact on the middle-class family by focusing on the earlier part of the year, and by telling the post-crisis moments in brief flashbacks.
[123] Kyŏngŭn Pak and hyein I, "'90 nyŏndae' wae yŏlgwanghanŭn'ga 'kalsurong p'akp'ak'an hyŏnshil, munhwayungsŏngshidaerŭl ch'uŏk.'" Kyŏnghyangshinmun, January 22, 2015. Accessed October 11, 2018.
http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_news/khan_art_view.html?art_id=201501122133515

and increased exports.[124] This heavy focus on export-based economic growth as captured in the public opinion and historical memory of the Olympic Games functioned as a key driving factor for the development of cultural products and political aims as well. In *Race to the Swift: State and Finance in Korean Industrialization,* for instance, Jung-en Woo corroborates the prediction made in 1988 and probes the political implications of the significant changes made in the 80s. She writes, "it was global capitalism that won over national capitalism, and economics that took command over politics, so that by 1990, [South] Korea found itself not only with a more liberal and open market but its political counterpart, a state that is less interventionist, and often halted by the growing power of the monied class."[125] I underscore here that such pathways towards economic liberalization before 1990 function as the key background for a drama dedicated to invoking nostalgia to spur consumption of consumer products of the past, and its international aim in marketing the products promoted on screen.

Taking place in a climate of economic liberalization that emphasizes economic development and minimizes state control, *Reply 1988* frequently highlights the influx of new consumer products and the fictional characters' on-screen consumption of them. The scene of "Spam Thief" similarly capitalizes on product placement advertising tactic, and hones in on the conspicuous consumption of a foreign food product, Hormel Foods' Spam through its comedic scenes. To return to the scene described in the beginning of this section, the short dialogue between the mother, Mi-ran Ra, and the father, Sung-kyun Kim, establishes the canned ham in the space of an upper-middle class family's kitchen cupboard. Out of the five families in *Reply*

[124] Kian Pak, Ch'ŏl Im, Mun'gŏn Chŏng, and Ch'anggyu Hwang, "88 Sŏurollimp'ing uri kyŏngjee ŏttŏn yŏnghyangŭl mich'yŏnna." *Kyŏngyŏnggwa Maak'et'ing* 238 (1988): 25-36. Accessed Oct. 11, 2018.
[125] Jung-en Woo, *Race to the Swift: State and Finance in Korean Industrialization*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

1988, the Kims are the most wealthy, with a large house that serves as the main house to a smaller flat that houses another family, the Sungs. The Kims' big house demonstrates the transition to the Western-style kitchen that wealthier families were making, moving away from wood and charcoal burning cooking apparatus called *agungi* and an open cold-water faucet on the ground that the Sungs have.[126] Instead, the Sungs sport a Western-style standing kitchen with a gas stove, dual-faucet with sinks, and upper and lower cabinets. Taking place in this Western-style kitchen, their conversation further establishes the canned ham as a positive object of nostalgia that harkens back to the opulence of the past. In their dialogue, they note that Spam is "something the Americans eat," and as something "expensive," rather than a product that brings up painful memories of a war that happened within their presumed lifetimes.[127] In this portrayal, Spam is distilled from the memories of war and post-war violence and struggles, just as what Mi-ran calls "the Americans" are distilled from the military, even though for average Koreans their in-person interactions with a US person would have been with US soldiers.[128] Moreover, 1988 marked the end of the military rule in South Korea, with local movements against US military bases beginning to gain traction by late 1980s.[129] Mi-ran's ellipsis of the military in her use of the word "Americans" on one hand offers a glimpse into the militarization of the everyday,

[126] Traditional Korean houses, *hanok*, uses wood-burning stove in the kitchen to warm the floors. With the floors as the main source of heating, much of the daily life in the house was carried out while sitting on the floor, with seat cushions instead of chairs, and low tables for those sitting on the ground. With Western style architecture in the post-war period, Korean lifestyles changed, starting with the newly-built high-rises that were modeled after apartments in the West and featured standing kitchens.

[127] They are portrayed as a couple in their 50s, which would mean that they were a part of the baby boomer generation that were old enough to remember the realities of war, as elementary-school-aged children.

[128] The location of the fictional neighborhood, Ssangmundong in the northern part of the capital, similarly neighbors several US military camps and training sites.

[129] Seungsook Moon, "Protesting the Expansion of US Military Bases in Pyeongtaek: A Local Movement in South Korea." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 111, no. 4 (2012): 865-876.

mundane acts of eating in 1980s South Korea. At the same time, it attests to the show's attempt to disentangle the memories of war and the US military's occupation of the fictional city space, and to create a nostalgic vision of the past without the violence of war.[130]

Yet, memories of war spill over the boundaries. While *Reply 1988* ostensibly detaches Spam from the violence of the Korean War in the episode "Memory," it invokes acts of hunger and secrecy that recall the very realities of war that it tries to distance from. In the scene that "reveals" the whereabouts of the Spam can in question, Jung-bong is hunched over the can, as he intently and steadfastly unrolls the strip of metal that encloses the meat. The camera captures the Spam can over the blurred smudge of his tracksuit, assuming the surreptitious gaze of an onlooker. Instead of taking the time to cut it and cook it to enhance its flavors, he grabs the spoon in a determined fist, scoops up the pink flesh, and eats it cold. The urgency, and the noise of satisfaction he lets out immediately after putting the ham into his mouth, harkens back to the surreptitious acts of eating during and after the war that simply focused on putting the food in the mouth and satiating hunger before the food is taken away.[131] This spillage invokes the multilayered metaphorical digestion of meatpacking (by)products of the US empire, like Spam,

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[130] In this ellipsis in facilitating nostalgia, the television series providings an interesting counterpoint to what Jin-Kyung Lee calls "subimperial time travel." She states, "as Koreans (both the implied audiences asvirtual travelers and the producers and crew who are actual travelers in the program) marvel at their own estranged past, recently experienced and even more recently forgotten. Through this virtual time travel, the program is able to produce South Korea as a modern subempire while simultaneously producing the developing Asian nations portrayed in the program as "nonmodern." Jin-Kyung Lee, "Visualizing and Invisibilizing the Subempire: Labor, Humanitarianism, and Popular Culture across South Korea and Southeast and South Asia." *The Journal of Korean Studies* 23, no 1 (2018): 95-109 (101).

[131] For testimonies from the Korean War, see National Archive of Korea. *Han'gukchŏnjaeng chŭngŏn'gwa charyo. 한국전쟁 증언과 자료* (http://theme.archives.go.kr/viewer/common/archWebViewer.do?singleData=Y&archiveId=0004251087); and Richard Peters and Xiaobing Li, *Voices from the Korean War: Personal Stodies of American, Korean, and Chinese Soldiers.* University Press of Kentucky, 2014.

for Koreans: smuggling out food waste, and sometimes food products that included Spam from the American G.I.s and eating them during after the Korean war in 1950s; purchasing South-Korean licensed and manufactured Spam in 1980s; and purchasing and gifting Spam in 2010s South Korea, with Spam as a product of nostalgia.

Putting war in an ellipsis made marketing nostalgia possible. Riding on the explosive popularity of Reply 1988, the CJ Group ran television advertisement series with clips from the drama in 2015. An example of which, called "footage advertisement," was a fifteen-second ad that took the footage of Jung-bong from Reply 1988 and concludes the commercial with a scene in which he presents a gift box set of Spam to his family.[132] Along with the television ad, the CJ Group launched the "*Paeksŏrhaem* 88 edition" which featured other processed meat products it makes and placed it in other nostalgic products. For instance, it featured the metal lunchboxes that largely went out of fashion since schools turned away from heating stoves to centralized heating in the 1990s, and mother-of-pearl furniture that were immensely popular among the post-war generation. Bringing its entertainment and food sectors together, the CJ Group maximized the advertising reach and effect, as the ad ran in tandem with the family drama, specifically focusing the exposure on the New Year gifting season.

[132] Creative Solution Team. "스팸-응답하라 1988 풋티지 광고 [Sŭp'aem-ŭngdap'ara 1988 p'utt'iji kwanggo]," YouTube Video, 00:15, Jan 31, 2016, https://youtu.be/9-nZgH4xfEI.

Figure 2.5: Paeksŏrhaem 88 Edition advertisement[133]

This capitalization of nostalgia reached beyond Spam as well. Several news outlets and journal articles grouped Spam product placement and advertising tactics along with other

[133] 진중언, "1980 년대 '추억팔이'열풍…22 년 전 단종된 맥주까지 다시 나와." *조선비즈.* Nov 30, 2015.[Chin Chungŏn, "1980nyŏndae 'ch'uŏkp'ario yŏlp'ung...22nyŏn chŏn tanjongdoen maekchukkaji tashi nawa." Chosun Biz. Nov. 30, 2015.] https://biz.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2015/11/30/2015113002343.html

products placed in the show, such as the carbonated beverage Milkis and Ghana Chocolate.[134] On the basis of the erased past of the Korean War, this advertisement series functions as an assimilative digestion of Spam in the consciousness of Koreans in the 2010s. Once again removed from the show which itself elides the meat's history, Spam here appears as a product of the affluent and economically optimistic past of 1988 and is packaged and consumed as nostalgia. This removal from the history of oppression, in turn, elides South Korea's position as a willing supporter of the US empire, as demonstrated through the CJ Groups purchasing of Spam licensing and producing its own version of a meatpacking (by)product. This participation and support for the hierarchy of imperial foodways paves the foundation for South Korea to transition from the victims of violence during Japanese colonialism and US occupation during and after the hot manifestation of a Cold War, to a subempire that perpetuates the violence of capitalism and keeps the imperial hierarchy intact.

The U.S. empire and its military presence vouchsafed South Korea as a developing nation worthy of foreign investment. CJ Group strengthened and developed in this climate. In 2013, CJ Group launched Bibigo, an international franchise with the ostensible aim of "globalizing Korean food."[135] Under the brand, the group continues to branch out, shifting manufacturing to Southeast Asian countries and reaffirming South Korea's stance as a subempire, or "a lower-level empire that depends on the larger structure of imperialism."[136] Describing South Korea as a

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[134] 진승현. "드라마의 성공 전략과 흥행 요인 분석 연구: 케이블채널 '응답하라 1988' 중심으로." 영상기술연구 25 (2016): 65-81 [Seung-Hyun Jin, "An Analysis of Strategy for Success and a Cause of a Box Office Big Hit: Based on Cable TV 'Reply 1988'." Yŏngsanggisuryŏn'gu 25 (2016): 65-81]

[135] Unknown. "CJ Bibigo Receives Presidential Citation," CJ News, May 23, 2016 [accessed: Oct 11, 2018], http://english.cj.net/cj_now/view.asp?bs_seq=13469&schBsTp=1&schTxt=

[136] Kuan-Hsing Chen and Yiman Wang. "The Imperialist Eye: The Cultural Imaginary of a Subempire and a Nation-State." *Positions: East Asia cultures critique* 8, no. 1 (2000): 9-76.

subempire in the context of the "service economies," Jin-kyung Lee states, "Occupying the position of subempire entails performing a series of surrogate labors for the empire. South Korea 'develops' peripheral nations, including North Korea, by 'technology transfer,' by disciplining the labor force in the offshore locations as subcontracting firms for the United States and other core economies, and by creating a consumer population with 'made in Korea' products."[137]

Even in an economic climate that overwhelmingly privileges exports such as South Korea's, Bibigo is noteworthy for its "global" aim. It comes with the strong support for hallyu, or the Korean wave, in which South Korea attempts to brand nationality as an emblem of culture. As South Korean drama heralded hallyu in the 2000s, CJ Group's partnership with Reply 1988 not only reinforces the commercialization and capitalization of nostalgia in domestic sales, but also serves as the basis for its export-based global economic presence. The rhetorical digestion of Spam in *Reply 1988* functions as an assimilative one, which reinforces the existing capitalistic order that is firmly based on previous colonialisms and imperialisms. In turn, this propels the South Korean transition from the victims of capitalist dispossession to the perpetrators of it. If Korea was a victim of colonialisms and imperialisms in the past, *Reply 1988's* digestion flips the table. With the painful past ostensibly erased in Jung-bong's consumption of the militarized food, Spam, many parts of the South Korean state and its economy proceeds from the victim of empire to a willing participant in the structure of dispossession. Caught in the desire to climb the ladder of the imperial structure, the contemporary South Korean industry further produces its own brand of canned ham and purposely circulates the dangerous food to certain bodies in the domestic and global markets. In such a world, the future can only be imagined as one of

[137] Jin-Kyung Lee, *Service Economies: Militarism, Sex Work, and Migrant Labor in South Korea.* University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

assimilation, with the deferred promise of liberal humanness, not of divergence from the imperial structure.

War in a Bowl in Grace M. Cho's "Eating Military Base Stew"

If the episode "memory" from *Reply 1988* and related global expansion of CJ Group through foods and entertainment provide a case study of an assimilative digestion, "Eating Military Base Stew" by Korean American sociologist and writer Grace M. Cho lays bare the stakes of this assimilation into the imperial order, and gestures towards a divergent digestion of militarized foods like Spam that seeks to continue its struggle against the gastrocolonialism of the US empire.

Divergent digestion speculates differently. Rather than taking comfort in the smooth ellipsis that continues to fail to contain the memories of war and violence, divergent digestion reminds us of the stakes of assimilation and doggedly returns to question the imperial order of formulating waste that racializes and genders bodies into marginal parts in service of the empire. It reminds us of the shadowy spectral figures in the margins that are foundational to the making of the Human at the helm, and the layers of waste that turn human and nonhuman bodies into (by)products. To divergently digest is not to deny the physical changes that occur as a result of slow violence, but to recognize the ongoing colonial and imperial dispossessions, and survive differently.

In the short article published a year before *Reply 1988* in 2014, Grace M Cho unpacks her own family history through a particular Korean dish, as she draws physical and metaphorical connections between her mother, *budaejjigae*, and herself. A dish that can be directly translated as army-base stew, *budaejjigae* uses meatpacking (by)products like Spam and sausages as one of

its main ingredients. With striking illustrations that mix images of war with foods, she begins the article by placing the dish within its post-Korean War context. She writes,

> The [US military] bases became destinations for hungry Koreans, who scavenged or purchased the remnants. As some survivors recalled, this food was not exactly palatable; it was often a melange of various food scraps mixed with inedible things, such as cigarette butts. They recalled that though the food was sometimes disgusting, it kept them alive. Some people would sort through the scraps and find a perfectly intact pink slab of jellied ham and put it in a stew. What the Americans didn't finish, Koreans used to make the first iterations of budae jjigae.[138]

Unlike the smooth, detached nostalgia for Spam and the time of economic comfort and opulence that the canned ham represents in *Reply 1988,* Cho's description of the dish makes clear the intimate ways in which the dish—and by extension the people and makers and consumers of the dish—are defined and racialized through the rhetorical process of designating something as waste. As "remnants" and "scraps" of imperial and militarized occupation of South Korea with "inedible things" in the mix, budaejjigae not only begins by consuming waste, but as defined through the rhetorical process creating waste from matter, as waste matter on wasted lands and from wasteful peoples in the specific context of the Korean War.

Metis scholar Max Liboiron states, "Waste and wasting includes social, economic, political, cultural, and material systems that shape materials, practices, infrastructures, and norms."[139] Theorizing through meatpacking (by)products similarly calls attention to the process of waste-creation. Rather than leaving waste as an intact category or waste as a stable label for a particular flesh matter, theorizing through (by)products highlights the process through which a

[138] Cho, Grace M. "Eating Military Base Stew," Contexts 13, no. 3 (2014)
[139] Max Liboiron, "The what and the why of Discard Studies." *Discard Studies blog.* https://discardstudies.com/2018/09/01/the-what-and-the-why-of-discard-studies/

byproduct of butchering creates a product.[140] The process, through the final outcome of the process is one of manufacturing a marketable "product," reveals a larger "systems, structures, and cultures of waste and wasting."[141]

Waste matter of pig butchering undergoes a process of product manufacturing in a can. The can circulates across the Pacific Ocean with the US military to its bases. "Hungry Koreans" and "survivors" during and after the Korean War consumed the *waste* of the military base, as their arable lands were *wasted* from the countless bombings and repeated processes of overtaking occupation during the war.[142] As their hunger provided the impetus for and justification for consuming waste despite the feelings of visceral abjection, such as disgust, the act of consuming waste, in turn, racialized them as cheap and unhygienic waste through the violence of war that devastated the land into wastelands.[143] As people with the everyday mundane struggles with hunger from the war-torn lands, post-war Koreans found sustenance from the wastefulness of the US military bases and the soldiers that created the waste products they could "scavenge or purchase," Cho writes.[144] Wastefulness of the military base, then turns byproducts of their day-to-day sustenance, or the activity of keeping of their vital energy in the extrajudicial heterotopia

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[140] Though Discard Studies scholar Max Liboiron states that they "use the term 'discard studies' instead of 'waste studies' to ensure that the categories of what is systematically left out, devalued, left behind, ruined, and externalized are left open" as "Waste studies tend to focus on trash, rubbish, and recyclables," I use the term "waste" here to access multiple meanings of waste, wasting and wasted. Max Liboiron, "The what and the why of Discard Studies." Discard Studies blog. https://discardstudies.com/2018/09/01/the-what-and-the-why-of-discard-studies/

[141] Max Liboiron, "The what and the why of Discard Studies." *Discard Studies blog.* https://discardstudies.com/2018/09/01/the-what-and-the-why-of-discard-studies/

[142] During the course of the Korean War, most of the lands changed hands between the United States- and United Nations-backed South Korea and the Soviet Union- and China-backed North Korea multiple times in the volatility of war.

[143] Max Liboiron and Josh Lepawsky, *Discard Studies: Wasting, Systems, and Power*. MIT Press, 2022.

[144] Grace M. Cho, "Eating Military Base Stew," *Contexts* 13, no. 3 (2014): 39

of the US military base in US-occupied post-war South Korea, into products that they sell to the people on wasted lands. Just as the byproducts of the meatpacking industry functions as a racial form in its hazardous production process with racialized laborers and its devastation of the bodies of their racialized consumers,[145] budaejjigae as Cho recounts functions as another racial form in which the layers of the rhetorical and conceptual process of creating waste racializes the peoples consuming waste-as-product, or the (by)product of the US empire as those on the lower rung of the racial hierarchy of the empire with the Human at its helm.

This discursive process of waste as racialization similarly recurs in the lives of people lying outside the heteronormative family formations as byproducts from the height of US occupation. Cho reflects on her mother, writing that she was "considered a 'Yankee Whore' and shunned from Korean society" because she worked at a bar at a U.S. base.[146] The process of occupying South Korea creates what Jin-Kyung Lee terms "service economies," in which the gendered bodies of service work, be it sex or otherwise, remain as byproducts once their serviceability expires.[147] As such, Cho sees her mother in the laboring body of a former sex worker in the wasted lands of former and continuing camptown who "aged out of the profession and had little possibility of reintegrating into 'normal' Korean society,"[148] and wondered "if she, like my mother, was mentally ill."[149] The woman whose "aged out" body parallels Cho's

[145] Colleen Lye, *America's Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, 1893-1945*. Princeton University Press, 2004.
[146] Grace M. Cho, "Eating Military Base Stew," *Contexts* 13, no. 3 (2014): 39; Bruce Cumings, *Korean War: A History.* Penguin Random House, 2010.
[147] Jin-Kyung Lee, *Service Economies: Militarism, Sex Work, and Migrant Labor in South Korea.* University of Minnesota Press, 2010.
[148] Grace M. Cho, "Eating Military Base Stew," *Contexts* 13, no. 3 (2014): 42.
[149] Grace M. Cho, "Eating Military Base Stew," *Contexts* 13, no. 3 (2014): 43.

reflection of her own mother who suffered from mental illness, as a testament to their racialized and gendered experiences in the margins of the empire in service of the empire.[150]

In another article titled "Diaspora of Camptown," Grace Cho theorizes these fleeting figures of women-mother-sex worker through the figure of *yanggongju,* or "Western princess," that derogatorily refers to women in any romantic or sexual relationship with US servicemen.[151] Highlighting the ambivalence of assimilation through *yanggongju,* Cho writes, "the *yanggongju* is a figure that is both central and spectral in a Korean diaspora constituted by the double trauma of war and the failure to remember it." She continues, "the women who are sex workers, companions, and wives for U.S. military personnel occupy an ambivalent position, however, in that while they enact the fantasy of the American dream through the most intimate encounters of sex and marriage, the trauma that the yanggongju embodies and transmits also disrupts this fantasy."[152] On one hand, by forming familial and intimate ties with US servicemen in South Korea and largely consisting the Korean diaspora into continental US and elsewhere, *yanggongju* fully embodies both the process of assimilation and assimilative desires towards the US empire. At the same time, just as violence insists through the ellipsis in meatpacking (by)products like Spam, *yanggongju* makes clear the stakes of assimilation, or eliding trauma of war that made possible such intimate connections in the first place. Cho's invoking of mental illness, which she explores more fully in her memoir that expands many themes of the article, *Tastes Like War,* functions as an exploration of the lasting impact of the trauma of war and the violence of

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[150] In her later book-length metaphorical digestion of the foods that she shared with her mother, *Tastes Like War*, Cho expands on her mother's gendered and racialized experiences in South Korea and in the United States, and its intimate connections to her schizophrenia.
[151] Grace M. Cho, "Diaspora of Camptown: The Forgotten War's Monstrous Family." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 34, no 1 (2006): 310.
[152] Grace M. Cho, "Diaspora of Camptown: The Forgotten War's Monstrous Family." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 34, no 1 (2006): 310.

racialization and othering that seeps through the external markers of assimilation, through Western clothes, hair, and makeup.

Invoking formations of waste overlap in layers in conceiving of *budaejjigae* as a (by)product, gendered bodies as (by)products of empire similarly recur in other illegible and illegitimate bodies and spaces in the geopolitical and metaphorical margins of the US empire. Seeing her mother in the fleeting images of other women in South Korean service economies throughout her trip, Cho writes about Spam smuggling through her "two friends in brooklyn who had grown up in South Korea during the 1970s and '80s."[153] In this collective memory of the Korean diaspora "one night over burgers and beer," the three friends recall together the shadowy spectral figures of the empire persisting in their diasporic memory. Cho writes,

> One friend spoke of a smuggler who made clandestine deliveries to her mother before the days when Spam was available in stores. The other friend's mother was a smuggler herself. She'd go to the base and meet with 'a woman in heavy makeup' and return with bags full of American food products, which she then resold in Busan's wealthiest neighborhoods. Listening to them speak, I realized that my own mother could have been one of the suppliers for the illegal distribution of Spam. Though she never admitted as much, my mother was 'a woman in heavy makeup' and one of those Korean girls who had PX privileges, by virtue of being married to my American father.[154]

Those comprising the black markets are those in the service economies, those whose femininity and sexuality—and "heavy makeup"—lie outside of the normative family construction and defined through their reproductive relations with the troops on military bases, as the derogatory term *yanggongju* denotes. In these clandestine bodies and spaces, Cho locates her mother in the fleeting spectral images of women in history and in hearsay, and notes that she would have been the very woman outside the heteronormative construction of post-war generations of family in

[153] Grace M. Cho, "Eating Military Base Stew," *Contexts* 13, no. 3 (2014): 42.
[154] Grace M. Cho, "Eating Military Base Stew," *Contexts* 13, no. 3 (2014): 42.

South Korea, and one of the "suppliers for the illegal distribution of Spam." Cho locates her mother in the transitory byproducts of US occupation of South Korea in the immediate post-war generation, and in South Korea's transition from the victim of war between empires as a hot manifestation of the Cold War, into a subempire that performs "surrogate labors" for the US empire with its own subimperial aims.

In this liminal space between women as a part of normative post-war families and byproducts of US occupation, and between consuming Spam as "a ham that Americans eat," and as objects of smuggling and waste matter in circulation, *Reply 1988* and "Eating Military Base Stew" converge. For one, the ellipsis in *Reply 1988*'s depiction of Spam recurs in Cho's discussion of her mother's reluctance to make and eat *budaejjigae.* She reasons, "Maybe because my mother once worked at a military base, it was too close to home, or maybe, as part of the earliest wave of Korean immigrants to the United States, my mother had internalized an American view of Spam as poor person's meat. My guess is that she wanted to dissociate from the meat's stigmas, both Korean and American, so Spam never once made its way into our house."[155] Even in Cho's mother's rejection of Spam, however, the rhetorical process of creating racialized difference through (by)products persists. Cho recognizes *budaejjigae* deconstructed and reconstructed in her mother's favorite meal, as she writes, "[mother's] version of a quick meal was ramen noodle soup with ketchup, scallions and sliced hotdogs. If one considers the basic components of budaejjigae—broth, noodles, Korean vegetables, American processed meat and other food products—I realize now that this was my mother's simplified rendition of budaejjigae, using the ingredients that were available in a rural American town with a Korean

[155] Grace M. Cho, "Eating Military Base Stew," *Contexts* 13, no. 3 (2014): 40.

population of three."[156] Just as the violence of war seep through the ellipsis of *Reply 1988*'s sterilizing of post-Korean War South Korea, the layers of waste that racialized post-war Koreans in the margins of the US empire and the liminal spaces and bodies around the US military bases persist even in her distance from Spam.

Similarly, the two texts convene through the boundaries of heteronormative family formations, as the (by)products of empire, and liminal gendered bodies in service of the empire come together to create the space that functions as the margins for the normative society that is circumscribed by, and safely protected by the existence of margins. Middle class families such as Miran and Sungkyun, who purchased Spam to make fried rice for their teenage children, require the margins of society not only as standards to define the middle class life against, but also as the very providers who made possible the history of smuggling imperial matters in the form of meatpacking (by)products like Spam in the black market in the margins of US military bases, as serviced through the "women in heavy makeup" who perform sexual, emotional and physical labors for US occupation.

Cho locates her and her mother's racialization through Spam and *budaejjigae* as imperial matters, and physically and metaphorically digests meatpacking (by)products like Spam and its violent history as a part of her being. As Cho eats and digests budaejjigae, whether her mother's deconstructed and reconstructed rendition in the US's Pacific Northwest, or during her visits to the porous boundary between the military base and the civilian town in South Korea, she digests the food as layers of waste. The dish itself came from the waste of the relative wastefulness of the US military base, to sustain the wasted bodies of post-war Koreans, who were unable to find

[156] Grace M. Cho, "Eating Military Base Stew," *Contexts* 13, no. 3 (2014): 40.

sustenance from the lands that were wasted by bombings and war.[157] Invoking this larger system of creating wasted things, bodies, lands and waters, Cho draws physical and metaphorical connections between her own body, her mother's body and consuming waste: her own in the form of her mixed-race un-belonging in the clear-cut categorization of the US: her mother's as a hypersexualized body in service of the US military and its servicemen that is considered socially wasted and unacceptable in the larger South Korean society: and finally the waste that Cho, her mother and countless others consumed as sustenance to survive the post-Korean War wasteland. In this metaphorical digestion of imperial matter and the rhetorical construction of (by)products, Cho rejects the clear break and erasure of the entanglements that turns Spam, and *budaejjigae* into marketable products.[158] Instead, they are suspended as ambivalent (by)products, as constant reminders of waste and wasting as a racial form in the larger system of imperialism and militarism, and as constant reminders of the stakes of assimilative digestion into the multicultural US, and lastly, to open up the possibility for digesting otherwise, towards divergent digestion of imperial matter that keeps memories and material embodiments intact in the surviving bodies.

[157] As Discard Studies scholars, such as Max Liboiron and Settler Colonial scholars, such as Traci Voyles, especially in her discussion of "wastelanding," as they remind us, waste does not exist as an object, just as food here but functions as an analytic of understanding the larger system that shapes the environment and enables the process of creating waste as racial form. See Max Liboiron, *Pollution is Colonialism.* Duke University Press, 2021; Traci Voyles, *Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country.* University of Minnesota Press, 2015.

[158] It is also interesting to note that *budaejjigae* as a dish itself also makes a transition from discard to a product, in the manner of assimilative digestion for South Korea as a subempire. Like Spam that is distilled from the memories of the Korean War, *budaejjigae* today is marketed to the younger generation and to international tourists to Korea in many franchise operations. As a part of the global aim for franchising efforts, *budaejjigae* is exported in large-scale corporate operations, such as the Nolbu brand *budaejjigae* that is now owned by international financial and investment firm, Morgan Stanley.

Conclusion: Assimilation, Divergence and Digestion

Fans of *Reply 1988* often endearingly called the overall plot of the show the "husband search." Staying with the show's frequent use of time jumps that refuses to reveal the characters' romantic engagements, they focus on one of the main female characters, Duk-sun, and simmer down the plot to speculations regarding which neighborhood boy she ends up marrying and having children with. This heteronormative rite of matrimony and assumed progeny also reflect the assimilative digestion that characterize the collaboration between *Reply 1988* and Spam. Instead of building anew and differently from the ashes of an imperial war, the victims of war become willing participants of the capitalism undergirding imperialism and reproduce the imperial logic. Just as the fans of the show took for granted the conclusion of the show as one of stable reproduction of the heteronormative institutions of the middle-class family, and the romantic engagement to be with someone familiar, someone from the childhood in the tiny five-family street of their neighborhood, Spam production and consumption surrounding the show reproduced capitalist and imperial structures of power without questioning its subject production, or imagining what possibilities may lie outside of the familiar landscape. In this lack of questioning, and lack of speculating differently, *Reply 1988* digests the trauma of war by assimilating to the existing system and putting the past in ellipsis. Assimilative digestion, however, is doomed to a perpetual deferment. As willing participation into subimperial margins in service of the empire, it remains trapped, taking surreptitious spoonfuls of peptobismol-colored promise of becoming Human.

If the first two chapters of this dissertation focused on a specific imperial matter, meatpacking (by)products like Spam and *budaejjigae*, the next two chapters center on another militarized imperial matter, radiation. They share their roots in the same processes of turning

waste into a marketable, or experimentable object. Spam and *budaejjigae* demonstrate the process through which the undesirable parts of the animal other is repackaged by marginalized migrant laborers from South of the border or from or across the Pacific Ocean to be aggressively marketed to racialized peoples in the empire's or the subempire's margins.

Radiation, similarly is a waste matter, a byproduct of nuclear weapons detonations and testing in the Pacific Ocean, ostensibly as an undesirable one.[159] However, the US empire and its military's countless memos and reports tell a different story. Radiation as the longer temporality of the nuclear weapons was used as the object of human and nonhuman experimentation that similarly circumscribed the boundaries of Man as Human, of those who deserve protection, and those whose lives and bodies are demanded for that very protection.[160] Linking these two matters together though the processes of (by)products, this dissertation continue to explore digestion not only through its more immediate meaning, consuming and making sense of food products, but also through a metaphorical understanding of digestion as an expansive understanding of the body and being. As such, Chapters 3 and 4 will build on the examinations of digestion as both physical and metaphorical processes that began in Chapters 1 and 2, and explore the ways in which digesting another form of non-food matter reveals the underlying imperial and settler colonial logic of the US, its military, as well as narratives and formulations of Cold War science heralded by overlapping imperial interests.

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[159] The US empire and its military maintained that irradiation of the Marshall Islands, for instance, was an undesirable outcome of the nuclear weapons testing, and a similar argument pervades narratives regarding Daigo Fukuryu Maru, or the Japanese fishing boat that experienced the fallout from Bravo Testing as well.

[160] For an example of a declassified report on human radiation testing, see Conard, Robert. *Fallout: The Experiences of a Medical Team in the Care of a Marshallese Population Accidently Exposed to Fallout Radiation.* Brookhaven National Laboratory under contract no DE-Ac02-76CH00016 with the United States Department of Energy. (1992)

Acknowledgement

Chapter 2, in part, is under review for publication. Dissertation author is the sole author for the publication.

CHAPTER 3

Living through Atomization: Runit Dome, Radioactive Matter, and Poetry of Digestion

Even after
a nuclear blast

life

continues to unfurl

its leaves

—Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, "Dome Poem Part II: Of Islands and Elders"

Figure 3.1: Runit Dome and its sibling crater[161]

[161] Adam Wernick, "Seawater is infiltrating a nuclear waste dump on a remote Pacific atoll," *The World,* February 19, 2018, accessed May 10, 2020. https://www.pri.org/stories/2018-02-19/seawater-infiltrating-nuclear-waste-dump-remote-pacific-atoll

In a view from above, a mosaiced gray disk lies amidst green low-lying vegetation. Over 377-feet in diameter, the strange concrete disrupts the beach's smooth stretch of sandy greenery, not unlike an unidentified flying object that has made a furtive landing. In the surrounding ocean lies a blue hole, nearly identical in size and shape to the dome, like a sibling. They are, indeed from the same series of nuclear weapons that the United States detonated in the Marshall Islands between June 30, 1946 and August 18, 1958, which included Castle Bravo, a hydrogen bomb approximately a thousand times more devastating than the bomb Little Boy that destroyed Hiroshima.[162] Situated in the Runit Island as a part of the Enewetak Atoll, the disk and the hole function as a visual reminder of the ways in which these detonations permanently altered the environment and its residents.

Runit Dome sits atop another bomb-made crater that contains radioactive waste gathered and deposited during the US military's "clean up" efforts between 1972 and 1980, including plutonium-239, plutonium fragments, and metric tons of contaminated soil and debris.[163] Nicknamed "the Tomb," the dome represents the US's presumption and pronouncement that the radioactive waste and its nuclear weapons testing are dead and in the past. At the same time, the gaping blue crater in the nearby lagoon asserts otherwise. Lagoon bed still pulverized and filled with ocean water, the crater doggedly reminds us that the detonations and their fallout became a part of the ocean in flux. Via the deadly containment of Runit Dome, and the open ocean connections in the lagoon crater, I bring into focus the incommensurability between the imperial

[162] Walsh, Julianne and Hilda Heine. *Etto nān raan kein: A Marshall Islands History.* (Bess Press, 2012): 298.
[163] Defense Nuclear Agency. The Radiological Cleanup of Enewetak Atoll. (Washington, D.C., 1981): 246.

tactic of atomization of the United States and the poetry of digestion by Marshallese poet and activist Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner.

Unsurprisingly, the Runit Dome cannot effectively contain waste materials and radioactivity within the crater. Radioactive materials such as contaminated groundwater steadily seep through and permeate the soil and eventually flow into the ocean that connects not only the islands but the atolls and ultimately other landmasses.[164] Worse yet, the rising sea level, another environmental threat that the Marshallese face, continues to threaten to collapse the flimsy "solution" that the US has put forth.[165] In the face of this inexorable and invisible violence, Marshallese poet Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner articulates a relational ontology incommensurable to the US-American imperial ideology of what I call "atomization," or the ideology of reducing, separating, isolating and destroying lands and bodies to serve its expansionist agenda. Instead, she sets forth a poetics of digestion that rejects atomization through a relational ontology based on kinship relations with the lands, waters and other affected peoples and communities in and around the Pacific Ocean.

US nuclear weapons detonations, cleanup efforts, and tribunals in the Marshall Islands relied on this "atomizing" rhetoric of fragmentation and isolation. By theorizing "atomization" I access the multiple definitions of "atomize."[166] *To reduce to an atom or atoms.* Through Cold War military science, weapons operate on an atomic level, through atomic fusion and fission.[167]

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[164] Rust, Susanna and Carolyn Cole, "High radiation levels found in giant clams near US nuclear dump in Marshall Islands." The Los Angeles Times, May 28, 2019. Accessed May 3, 2020.
[165] Rust, Susanne. "How the US betrayed the Marshall Islands, kindling the next nuclear disaster." The Los Angeles Times, November 10, 2019. Accessed April 15, 2020.
[166] "Atomize, v.". OED Online. March 2020. Oxford University Press. https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/12584 (accessed May 06, 2020).
[167] This shift of focus to the atom reflects what Robert Malzec notes as the influence of the military on science. He writes, "The military influence on the twentieth-century shift from classical to molecular biology, for instance, erased the focus on changing contextual relations

To isolate or separate. The US rhetorically constructs bomb targets by atomizing atolls and atoll chains into separate and contained islands in which nuclear detonations can ostensibly be "controlled" for experimentation. *To fragment by weakening connections between individuals or social groups.* By atomizing Marshallese people into individual bodies, and further into organs, the US empire and military once again create a laboratory space within the body and minimize its cleanup and compensation responsibilities. Lastly, *to damage or destroy with an atomic weapon.* I argue that the US atomized ocean, lands and people through the blast that atomized the coral reef, seabeds and islands, and through fallout that half-live into eternity. From 1946 to 1962, US military and scientific agencies constructed the "Pacific Proving Ground," and legitimized experiments with nuclear weaponry by atomizing the islands, local communities, and Marshallese bodies. The US deployed the tactic of atomization again from the 1970s to 1990s to justify radiological cleanup methods by fragmenting lands, and minimize compensatory responsibility by fragmenting bodies.

By atomizing lands and bodies, the US facilitates nuclear weapons detonations and minimizes its responsibilities for radioactive cleanup and victim compensations. This imperial ideology of atomization fragments lands into contained zones for experimentation, fractures communities into individuals, and fragments bodies into organs that become yet another testing ground for investigations of and experimentations with radioactive materials.[168] As a Cold War

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and ecological interactions, replacing it with a mode of intelligibility that isolated and targeted discrete elements, treating them as separate from any and all ecosystemic interplay for purposes of mastering "inherent" traits (which led to the discovery of DNA, making genetic engineering and genetically modified crops a possibility)." See Robert Malzec, *Militarizing the Environment: Climate Change and the Security State.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015): 15.

[168] Here I think alongside scholars who highlight rhetorical construction of Marshallese islands as isolated, controlled space. Elizabeth DeLoughrey notes the theoretical isolation of the Marshall Islands in establishing a space of experimentation, while Aimee Bahng connects "the Cold War productions of the trust territory, the living laboratory, and the ecosystem" under

technology, atomization makes its stakes clear. From above, rhetorically separating lands and bodies into disconnected and therefore malleable parts, atomization creates manageable units—be it body parts, bodies, islands, or atolls—for the military to control. With ties and relations severed, and connections to one another separated, lands and bodies are conceptually prepared for the military and the empire to displace and dispossess. This ideological foundation paves the way for establishing and expanding extrajudicial spaces through military bases in and out of direct geopolitical control of the US empire, from spaces like Guam, to Okinawa, South Korea and the Philippines, and for surveilling and accumulating and exchanging intelligence and scientific knowledge gathered through these experimentation that ultimately establishes the US as a security state.[169] From below, this separation seeks to foreclose the possibilities of solidarity across these conceptually separated lands and bodies. By separating them into distant and disparate communities, an imperial ideology of atomization sectionalizes lands and bodies to prevent their linkages and relations from begetting the imagining of a future outside of US militarism and imperialism.

Rejecting this ideology of atomization, poet Jetñil-Kijiner presents the Marshallese being as one of connections, relations and embodiments, as a part of a woven basket through her poetry collection *Iep Jāltok: Poems from a Marshallese Daughter*. Jetñil-Kijiner overcomes the

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enclosure to underscore the process of transforming the environment into property (p. 48). See Elizabeth DeLoughrey, "The Myth of Isolates: Ecosystem Ecologies in the Nuclear Pacific." *Cultural Geographies* 20, no. 2 (2013): 167-184; Aimee Bahng, "The Pacific Proving Grounds and the Proliferation of Settler Environmentalism." *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 11, no. 2 (2020): 45-73.

[169] For specific studies, see Annmaria M. Shimabuku, *Alegal: Biopolitics and the Unintelligibility of Okinawan Life.* New York City: Fordham University Press, 2018; Michael Bevacqua and Manuel Cruz. "The Banality of American Empire: The Curious Case of Guam, USA." *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 11, no. 1 (2020): 127- 149; Neel Ahuja, *Bioinsecurities: Disease Interventions, Empire and the Government of Species.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

atomization that the empire and its military impose on the people and lands by reconnecting them to the relational web of being. She actively resists the US's construction of them as experimentable and expendable beings, and reasserts Marshallese "survivance" beyond the US's slow violence.[170] Through her poetry, Jetñil-Kijiner asserts an "active sense of presence" through which Marshallese people not only live into the uncertain irradiated future, but claim an active sense of self in relation to their community and relations.[171] In understanding this "active sense of self" through Jetñil-Kijiner's poetry, I theorize through the concept of digestion to note how peoples and communities in and around the Pacific Ocean imagine life beyond the irradiation, or the slow death of the empire by physically and metaphorically digesting the imperial matter of radiation. If the physical digestion of irradiated food matter in the aftermath of nuclear weapons detonations allowed them to survive beyond the bombings, the metaphorical digestion of bombings and fallout connected the rhetorical and ideological violence of atomization to the poet's existing sense of self as a relational being.[172]

I argue that the poetry of Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner presents poetics of this digestion by foregrounding the relational being—a being constituted through kinship relations with ancestors,

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[170] As Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor explains, "survivance is an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name." See Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance.* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999): vii.

[171] Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance.* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999): vii.

[172] My theorization of physical and metaphorical digestion answers the call set forth by literary, cultural and feminist scholar Kyla Wazana Tompkins's call to expand the focus beyond the material object of food, to the act of eating itself. In my work, rather than simply focusing on the site of the mouth, or other orifices, I center on the concept of digestion to invoke the body in its entirety. Similarly, Asian American literary scholar Parama Roy reminds us that colonial institutions police and control the body through the alimentary tracts and determine who eats what with whom, and who starves. I think through Roy's work to understand the violence embedded within the conditions of eating, alongside the cultural entanglements that define foods. See Kyla Wazana Tompkins, *Racial Indigestion*; and Parama Roy, *Alimentary Tracts.*

progeny, community, the ocean and islands. In so doing, the poet rejects the divisive imperial ideology of atomized bodies, communities, and lands. The poet refuses to be atomized. She instead "digests" the imperial changes that began with nuclear detonations by creating a sense of self that exists through social relations that spill over the boundaries of the individual and the island and proffer an "intertwining of art and theory."[173] Through her poetry she not only brings to light the devastations that US imperialism and militarism brought onto the bodies, lands and the ocean of the Marshall Islands, but also emphasizes an undeniable sense of relations and survival, of "unfurling" life even after the nuclear blast, as the epigraph shows.

If atomization is the logic of imperial exploitation, Jetnil-Kijiner shows that digestion is a process of potential resistance. My analysis of the poet's "digestion" contrasts the dangerous ingestion of radiation and radioactive materials to the metaphorical "digestion" that signals an understanding of a new subject, or information, or overcoming foreignness of something to make it one's own.[174] The key distinction between ingestion and digestion lies in the presence of will and action; if ingestion or exposure denotes the body as a passive receptacle of material reality, digestion functions as a willful, determined act of embodiment and survival. Atomization follows the perspective of the body as that of ingestion, as a passive object of imperial knowledge production through radiation studies. Digestion, however, defies this passive formation and calls

[173] Marsh, Selina Tusitala. "Theory 'versus' Pacific Island Writing: Toward a Tama'ita'i Criticism in the works of Three Pacific Island Women Poets." Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific. Edited by Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson. (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1999): 352.

[174] Feminist science studies and New Materialism bring crucial critical engagements with embodiments and assemblages. See Donna Haraway, Simians, Cyborgs, and Women for an earlier feminist science studies intervention with assemblages. For later scholars challenging the binary model set forth in Haraway to incorporate a discussion of matter more specifically, see Karen Barad's *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, Jane Bennet's *Vibrant Matter*, Hannah Landecker's "Food as Exposure," and Stacy Alaimo's *Exposed*.

attention to the active ways in which beings digest changes by forming relations. Foregrounding the relational being, various bodily parts are intimately connected and co-constituted by one another to highlight the potential of relation-building as a form of body-making, in which an individual body is constituted through its relation to others.[175] This sense of being stands in stark opposition to the imperial ontology predicated on clear boundaries and definable individualism that supports US imperial and military expansion into the Pacific during and after the Cold War. I therefore refer to digestion as both a physical process and rhetorical and cultural process that incorporates changes into the body-as-being in order to survive and to establish selfhood into the future. Together "digestion" and "atomization" operate as analytics to unpack the ways in which imperial forces inexorably enact change even in the face of vocal opposition, while also highlighting how people survive and resist beyond its slow violence.[176]

By highlighting the incommensurability between the US's imperial ideology and the Marshallese ontology, I argue that the Marshallese people, and to a larger extent, other affected Pacific basin and rim bodies digest, not simply ingest or withstand the exposure of US imperialism and militarism by directly subverting its imperial tactics. I further argue that the

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[175] As digestion emphasizes the relations and connections that establish the self and the body, I find it crucial to note here my own relations and connections to the writing. As an East Asian settler in the United States, and as a diasporic subject of overlapping empires, I theorize the US empire and its military as mediated through my own embodied lived experiences and my own digestion of imperial matter. However, my writing on Marshallese sense of self is strictly in the capacity of an ally and supporter against US militarism and imperialism in and around the Pacific Ocean.

[176] By "slow violence,' I use here South African scholar Rob Nixon's wording to describe the everyday realities of communities of the other: the indigenous other, the settler colonial other, the imperial subject, the racialized other, and the global other, just to name a few. While scholars and activists wrote specific instances of slow violence without naming it as such, Nixon defines "slow violence" as "violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all" (2). See Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011.

future that the poet envisions stands in direct opposition to the imperial and militarized future the US attempts to bring forth in the Pacific. Not only does the poet reject the present state of their socio-historical reality under the US Empire, but she also provincializes and historicizes its foundational conception of both the human and the natural world. She ultimately rejects the US empire and its attempt to naturalize its power and ideology through atomization by calling attention to the artificiality of its *raison d'etre* and building relations to envision vastly different horizons of possibility and futurity.

Metaphorical Digestion against Atomization

Through a poetics of digestion, poet Jetñil-Kijiner defines the human not as an atomizable individual, but as a part of a sociohistorically and spatiotemporally specific set of relations. Similar to Native Hawaiian concepts of 'ohana and mo'okū'auhau, and Māori concept of whakapapa,[177] relations, connections and genealogies constitute the being in Jetñil-Kijiner's

[177] Native Hawaiian concept of 'ohana and, according to Kānaka Maoli scholar J. Kēhaulani Kauanui provides an expansive, inclusive sense of indigenous identity, being and community against the US that attempts to limit sovereignty claims of indigenous people. She explains, "Social acceptance varies for Kānaka Maoli depending on the context, but among most Hawaiians anyone of Kānaka Maoli ancestry is typically accepted as Hawaiian, regardless of racial appearance or blood quantum, because of a persistent cultural emphasis on genealogy, kinship, and ancestry" (14). She further explains, "Hawaiians identify themselves through their 'ohana—extended families—affiliations and island locations. And Hawaiians use genealogical relationships to establish a collective identity through the social nexus of 'ohana" (40). Māori understanding of Whakapapa similarly invokes a relational being that overflows the settler colonial and imperial understanding of genealogy. New Zealander anthropologist Anne Salmond describes Whakapapa as "a way of being based on complex networks that encompass all forms of life, interlinked and co-emergent, might assist in exploring relational ways of understanding the interactions between people and the land, other life forms, waterways and the ocean" (3). Whakapapa as genealogy, then does not limit to simple hierarchical lineage; instead, it functions as a methodology through which "all forms of life" are constituted. See Kauanui, J. Kēhaulani *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2008; and Salmond, Anne. *Tears of Rangi: Experiments across Worlds.* Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2017.

poetry as well. The poet expresses these constitutive relations through her central motif of a basket in her poetry collection, *Iep Jāltok: Poems from a Marshallese Daughter.* Opening the collection are two epigraphs, a dictionary entry for "iep jāltok"—"'a basket whose opening is facing the speaker.' Said of female children. She represents a basket whose contents are made available to her relatives. Also refers to the matrilineal society of the Marshallese"—and the statement, "My mother once told me girls represent wealth for their families./ 'Girls continue the lineage.'"[178] Bringing basket-weaving and matrilineage together, the poet lays bare the very constitution of being, as one defined through generational kinship relations as well as with the larger fabric of the society.

Starting from the vantage point of this existing woven sense of being, the poet digests not only irradiated materials, but imperial worldviews that are fundamentally incommensurable to her own. In the various modes of digestion evident in Jetñil-Kijiner's poetry I demonstrate that digestion functions both as a physical connection to the surroundings as well as a rhetorical mapping of relations and connections. Specifically, I argue that her ontology of relations and embodiment are incommensurable to the ontology of US imperialism and militarism and precludes the impossibility of reparations.

Iep Jaltok is divided into four parts—"Iep Jaltok," "History Project," "Lessons from Hawai'i" and "Tell Them"—that moves from Marshallese legends, and settler colonial and imperial conquests of the land and ocean to Marshallese diaspora and a public address of the global issues that plague the Marshallese people and their spaces. While they appear as separate parts, they inevitably build on one another; historical moments of violence bleed into

[178] Jetñil-Kijiner, Kathy. *Iep Jaltok: Poems from a Marshallese Daughter.* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2017): 2-3.

contemporary imperial expansion and frame the environmental challenges such as the rising sea level that the Marshall Islands struggle against. "History Project" in this sense, is hardly limited to history. The four poems in the section inform the ontological incommensurability that continues to widen the chasm between the lived and embodied experiences and the US's justifications of imperialisms and militarisms. At the same time, these poems evince how the Marshallese digested imperialisms and militarisms and continue their survivance beyond slow death by weaving a basket of relations and connections as the foundation of being.

The poem "The Letter B Is for" demonstrates linguistic digestion of imperial devastation and continued Marshallese survival through the form of a dictionary entry. As a short dictionary entry, complete with a pronunciation guide and an example sentence, the poem demonstrates the ways in which the Marshallese language digests nuclear detonations by reorganizing it into the existing body of language. As metabolic digestion breaks apart foods to absorb and rearrange into the existing order of the body, the sample phrase, "Kobaaṃ ke?/ Are you contaminated/ with radioactive fallout?" breaks down the signifier of the bomb—from blast to fallout—and reassembles it within the lived embodied experiences of the speaker.[179] "Baaṃ" as the poet notes, functions beyond the one-to-one equivalent meaning of translating the English word, "bomb," to a Marshallese adaptation, "baaṃ." Digested through the body's experiences of detonations and radiation, the Marshallese word "baaṃ" gains a specific, embodied meaning of radioactive fallout, while the English use of the word "bomb" primarily denotes and is limited to an explosion. With its new entanglements through the Marshallese body, the bomb is no longer simply an explosion. The poet emphasizes that Marshallese people, as target victims of human

[179] Jetñil-Kijiner, Kathy. *Iep Jaltok: Poems from a Marshallese Daughter.* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2017): 19.

radiation testing, primarily experienced the bomb through the lasting impact of radiation, rather than through its blast or utility, as the US military ostensibly claimed to have intended. As such, "baaṃ" functions as a contamination, with an elongated temporality of radiation that the original blast-focused signifier "bomb" cannot capture. "Bomb" is absorbed into the speaker and the existing Marshallese language order, to specifically denote "contamination with radioactive fallout" through the word "baaṃ." Reattaching "bomb" to the existing body and its embodied experiences, the poem linguistically and discursively digests the foreign materials of US imperialism and militarism within detonations. For instance, US-American anthropologist Holly Barker states, "The Marshallese create their own radiation language to convey their experiences resulting from the testing program that the U.S. government's language and politics will not accommodate. Through the radiation language, Marshallese convey notions of blame, powerlessness, and injury that speakers of English, such as U.S. government representatives, are not privy to."[180] Denying the one-to-one translation of "bomb" into "baaṃ," the poem displays an awareness of the presence of radioactivity within the islands and relocates it within the body of the person in the present, rather than confining its discussion to the moment of the blast. Chewed up and swallowed, the word "bomb" reconnects to the existing body of Marshallese language and becomes a part of the language that recognizes and resists US imperialism and militarism.

Jetñil-Kijiner digests the experience of the bomb further by using the title to extend the temporality of the bomb and draw another layer of connection and kinship relations with Marshallese children born into irradiated bodies and oceanscapes and landscapes under the US's

[180] Barker, Holly. *Bravo for the Marshallese: Regaining Control in a Post-Nuclear, Post-Colonial World.* (Thomson Wadsworth, 2004): 83.

imperial reach. While the poem itself draws from the form of a dictionary entry, the title recalls a children's language-learning book. Referencing common cliched exercises like "The letter A is for Apple," the poet frames the digested dictionary entry as a tool for teaching US imperialism and militarism to Marshallese children. First, the format "the letter __ is for" underscores the dominant position the English language occupies as a historical language of settler colonization, imperial expansion and oppression through the British empire, and its offspring settler colonial and imperial states such as the US, Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. The poet's use of the phrase underscores how far the colonial states spread their cultural imaginary. It taps into the imagery of countless children born in settler colonial and imperial spaces who pick up an English alphabet book to learn English as their additional language even as they learn their own mother tongue. It taps into the linguistic hierarchy that the English language creates, putting the burden of communication on those who are racialized non-native English speakers. It taps into the history of oppression and erasure that the English language facilitated.[181] More specific to the Marshall Islands, it taps into the uneven power relations between the Marshall Islands and the US, under the Compact of Free Association (COFA) that imbues the English language with political and economic values. At the same time, the poet invokes children to expand the meaning of "baaṃ" to a generation of Marshallese who did not experience the detonations, but still embody lasting radiation through their and their mothers' bodies as well as irradiated oceanscapes and landscapes. The poem underscores the burden of teaching about radioactive fallout and the lived experiences of radiation to young children who must make sense of the

[181] For a discussion of the erasure of Native Hawaiian language and subsequent myth of lack of resistance, and reclamation of Native Hawaiian resistance to the US empire, see Noenoe Silva's *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

radiation-induced diseases and sufferings of the body, like the poet's niece Bianca. Just as it extends the temporality of the blast into the eternal half-life of radiation, "baaṃ" extends the limited temporality of the affected generation delineated in reparation documents of the Nuclear Claims Tribunal to those in the future generations who did not live to experience the detonations.

"Baaṃ" also echoes the ways in which embodied knowledge of the detonations and fallout across generations functions as a node in the relational being. For instance in a history textbook, *Etto ñan raan kein: A Marshall Islands History*, the authors Julianne Walsh and Hilda Heine encourage sharing of embodied knowledge in its US protectorate and nuclear detonations chapter, stating "ask your relatives to tell you memories they have or stories they have heard about the bomb testing."[182] While the US, through its myth of separation and containment, only recognizes the suffering bodies that were physically present at the time of nuclear weapons detonations between 1946 - 1958,[183] the poet invokes larger connections and relations of suffering bodies beyond the small temporal frame. She digests "baaṃ" by drawing connections and kinship relations across larger temporalities, spaces and bodies, including those in the future, those who are yet to inhabit an irradiated body. "The Letter B is for__" thus calls attention to a mode of being that is intimately connected to past, present, and future, while retaining its ties to other people and the environment around oneself.

[182] Walsh, Julianne and Hilda Heine. *Etto ñan raan kein: A Marshall Islands History*. (Bess Press, 2012): 327.

[183] The Nuclear Claims Tribunal has two requirements; "The claimant must simply provide proof of residency in the Marshall Islands during the years of nuclear testing (1946 to 1958) and have one of the listed compensable diseases." See "Hearing before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources United States Senate One Hundred Ninth Congress First Session on Effects of the US Nuclear Testing Program in the Marshall Islands." Washington: US Government Printing Office, 2005. (Senate Hearing 109-178).

This metaphorical digestion that establishes the relational being in "The Letter B is for__" rejects atomization that separates each islet, island and atoll from its ontological relations and connections to each other and to its inhabitants. Opening the discussion of US reports of atom bomb detonations in the Marshall Islands, for instance, is often a table of the names for each island in the atoll. Claiming that "native names of most of the islands in the Enewetak Atoll are difficult for English-speaking people to pronounce and spell," the US renamed the islands with common English-language male and female names in alphabetical order and used them as primary referent names for islands in "nearly all documents and maps made subsequent to 1952."[184] These English-language names disentangle the islands from the existing linguistic, historical and cultural entanglements with indigenous residents, and from its situatedness against the US's imperial expansion. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Porou, Tuhourangi) notes the violence of renaming, stating that "Renaming the land was probably as powerful ideologically as changing the land… This newly named land became increasingly disconnected from the songs and chants used by indigenous peoples to trace their histories, to bring forth spiritual elements or to carry out the simplest of ceremonies."[185] Untethered from their original entanglements, the code names instead create a friction-less space that floats from the situated landscape and normalizes US military occupation of the space. Called as pseudonyms with no attachments, the lands are rendered empty and ripe for experimentations; to the countless US troops, personnel from US-based labs, firms and companies, the lands exist as spaces of experiments without previous Marshallese histories, narratives and entanglements. Similarly, the

[184] *Enewetak Radiological Survey*, vol 1 (NVO-140). United States Atomic Energy Commission Nevada Operations Office. (1973):3.
[185] Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999): 51.

informal first names of each island rhetorically signify them as generic, contained bodies ready for experimentation, rather than as connected islands in an atoll chain. These lands are imagined as separable individual bodies, existing in the white settler colonial and heteropatriarchal US cultural imagination and severed from the intimate ontological bonds that the indigenous inhabitants have with the land.

Building Relations from below

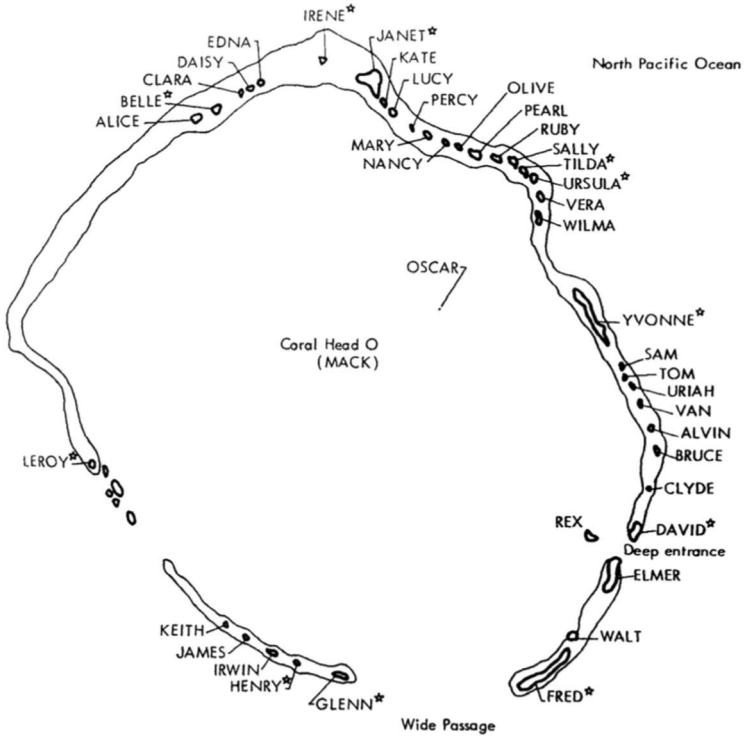

Figure 3.2: map of Enewetak showing English names for islands[186]

The atomizing and renaming of the islands further erased local histories and the relations that the people and atolls shared with one another. Rejecting the atolls as a part of the two chains that consist of the Marshall Islands, the US figures each atoll as a contained space, separate from

[186] *Enewetak Radiological Survey*, vol 1 (NVO-140). United States Atomic Energy Commission Nevada Operations Office. (1973), 133.

the rest of the atolls, communities and people, and from their own history, memory, and a sense of self. For instance, a report claims that Enewetak Atoll "had relatively little contact with other people prior to the European era" and that "the language and culture became differentiated from those of other Marshall Islanders, and the people no longer identified themselves with the others."[187] The erasure of indigenous maritime history that Diaz and DeLoughrey mention, then, not only promotes the myth of remoteness, as a place that non-American and European explorers cannot travel to, but also seeks to undermine the connections and relationships that each atoll shares with other atolls. Holly M. Barker, a US-based anthropologist working for the Marshall Islands embassy, observes the contrary. She instead notes uniformity in the Marshallese language across the Marshall Islands, stating "Because of their navigational prowess, which is known throughout the Pacific region, the Marshallese historically navigated and traveled between the atolls and islands. This ability to routinely move across long distances was, undoubtedly, a factor in establishing a uniformity in the language."[188] Her supporting claims on vowel variations between each atoll chain demonstrate the close connections and relationships each atoll shared with other atolls. The US Defense Nuclear Agency report's claim that there weas "relatively little contact with other people prior to the European era," then, serves as the rhetorical basis for severing the close connections that Enewetak Atoll shares with other atolls and supports the US's interest in rhetorically shaping the atolls as separated, contained spaces without history prior to European and American navigation. Along with further erasing Marshallese maritime history and mobility, the myth atomizes Enewetak Atoll as a separate, contained space for experimentation,

[187] Defense Nuclear Agency. *The Radiological Cleanup of Enewetak Atoll.* (Washington, D.C., 1981): 21.
[188] Barker, Holly. *Bravo for the Marshallese: Regaining Control in a Post-Nuclear, Post-Colonial World.* (Thomson Wadsworth, 2004): 11.

and minimizes the US's responsibility in the devastating impact of nuclear detonations by limiting the scope to the geographical and temporal space and people of Enewetak Atoll.

The last poem of the "History Project" section, "Fishbone Hair" depicts both physical digestion of radiation and rhetorical digestion of its lasting impacts. The poem highlights eating as a mode of ingesting radiation and digests the radiation from US nuclear detonations by weaving individualized cases into the basket of Marshallese ontology. I argue that the poet demonstrates the ontology of connections and relations through the poem by depicting a child who does not exist as a separate, contained and atomized individual reduced to her ailing body parts. Rather, the poet portrays Bianca as existing through intimate connections across spaces, bodies and temporalities, and through digestion, brings people together into a body of resistance.

In the aftermath of nuclear weapons detonations, the US atomizes the body through the myth of separation and containment. Analyzing the impact of radiation, the imperial rhetoric atomizes the body into fragmented objects of study. In this discursive process, the Marshallese people are reduced to bodies, and the bodies are further reduced to irradiated parts or organs. Radiation, in this sense, does not evoke the body as a whole; instead, it latches onto specific organs and parts that are already legible in the imperial archive of irradiated body parts. For instance, the Nuclear Claims Tribunal, radiation compensation divides the impact of radiation into recognized body parts or organs. To be eligible for compensation by the Nuclear Claims Tribunal, the claimant must "provide proof of residency in the Marshall Islands during the years of nuclear testing and have one of the listed compensable diseases or presumed illnesses."[189] The

[189] Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, "Hearing before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources United States Senate One Hundred Ninth Congress First Session on Effects of US Nuclear Testing Program in the Marshall Islands." US Government Printing Office, 2005; These requirements are not the norm in radiation exposure compensation, especially under Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA). Other populations exposed to radiation in other

diseases on this list do not exist in the scale of the body as a whole. Rather, they exist within the rhetorical boundaries of a specific body part: "Cancer of the lung;" "Cancer of the thyroid;" "Cancer of the breast;" "Cancer of the esophagus;" and "Cancer of the stomach."[190] The body, in this divisive vision, is not legible to the US as a whole. It is only made legible as an abstract extension of a single organ or as a combination of diseased body parts. Like a shape sorting cube, suffering can only enter the box of protection if it fits. In order to validate its suffering, the body needs to fit into an imperial narrative of suffering. Suffering that is yet to be recognized by the imperial archive, or cannot be recognized by the archive exists solely as the burden on the body as a whole, marked uncompensable and illegible.

Atomizing the body into disentangled parts, imperial ideologies of the US invoke the white male as the universal figure of man, as Chapter 4 further investigates. Separable and containable, the parts lose their existing entanglements as a social and entangled body. Without the entanglements that signal a specific constitution of the body, it is rendered as interchangeable as indistinguishable flesh in service of the universal white man. As such the flesh can function as the sacrifice, whose experiences can contribute to "the peace of the world and the security of free

parts within the domain of the US, such as continental US, have a complex eligibility based on occupation, residency states and counties, and exposure level, along with the list of recognized diseases. It is also important to note that a significant portion of the workers and downwinders are Native Americans. For a discussion of uranium mining on Native American communities and land, see Voyles, Traci. *Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015. For a summary of RECA policy and requirements, see Szymendera, Scott. "The Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA): Compensation Related to Exposure to Radiation from Atomic Weapons Testing and Uranium Mining. *Congressional Research Service* (R43956). June 11, 2019.

[190] Lum, Thomas, Kenneth Thomas, Stephen Redhead, David Bearden, Mark Holt and Salvatore Lazzari. "Republic of the Marshall Islands Changed Circumstances Petition to Congress." Order Code RL32811. CRS Report for Congress. May 16, 2005.

men everywhere," yet cannot be a part of the very universality it contributes to.[191] On the scale of the body, this "overrepresentation of Man," figures the white male body as the universal standard for understanding the effects of radiation exposure, even though the archived bodies and sufferings belong to the racialized and gendered Other who lived through nuclear detonations and radiation exposures.[192] For instance, the Radiological Survey of Enewetak Atoll bases its impact study on the International Commission of Radiological Protection (ICRP) dosimetric model of "human" inhalation of radioactive materials. As ICRP reports reflects on its own past research in 1990, "Since the model used in ICRP Publication 30 was developed specifically for occupational exposures of reference Caucasian males, it lacks the flexibility to be applied with confidence to other members of the world's population."[193] As the ICRP report admits, the original impact studies and reparation surveys that the US conducted used the white male body as the normative universal body of "Man." Herein lies the foundational paradox; while the white male is overrepresented in the "Man" as the norm of the universal human, the racialized other—from Japanese to Marshallese—are atomized as experimentable parts for nuclear weapons detonations and human radiation experiments.

In a stark departure from the narrative of the Nuclear Claims Tribunal and its compensation criteria that carves up the body into diseased organs within a specific temporal frame of bomb detonations, the poet-narrator in "Fishbone Hair" presents Bianca as one of an expansive body of relations and connections. The poet-narrator does not mention the medical

[191] Defense Nuclear Agency. *The Radiological Cleanup of Enewetak Atoll.* (Washington, D.C., 1981): v.
[192] Wynter, Sylvia. "Unsettling the coloniality of being/power/truth/freedom: Tow257-ards the human, after man, its overrepresentation—an argument." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 162.
[193] International Commission for Radiological Protection. *Annals of the ICRP 24* (1994): 4.

name—leukemia—of Bianca's suffering. Instead, she describes it as "a war/ raging inside Bianca's six year old bones/ white cells had staked their flag/ they conquered the territory of her tiny body."[194] For one, the suffering is not named as cancer, localized in the bone marrow, but it impacts the whole of "her tiny body." For the poet-narrator, Bianca's suffering cannot be contained by the term "Leukemia" and its $125,000-compensation as outlined in the Tribunal.[195] More expansively, the poet-narrator presents Biana through the young girl's kinship relations as a daughter and a niece. As such, her suffering overflows the physical confines of Bianca's body, and submerges Bianca's mother, one "who stashed away Bianca's locks in ziplock bags," and the poet-narrator, who "felt/ as bald/ and bleak/ as Bianca's skull."[196] Seen this way, suffering—unaccounted for in any of the US reports or compensation logs—is one that cannot be contained by organs of the body, one that cannot compete against one another in its degrees. It is one that devastates a body and those around it, moving through kinship relations and connections.

In stark opposition to the Tribunal residency requirement of the US empire, the poet-narrator further digests suffering as an expansive body of connections across time and space. In stark opposition to the compensation criteria of residency in the Marshall Islands between 1946 and 1959, the poet-narrator resists the static temporal frame by drawing relations between the fishermen with first-hand experiences of the detonations and Bianca. For instance, Bianca's death sentence, "she had/ six months/ to live" seamlessly connects with "That's what the doctors told the fishermen/ over 50 years ago/ when they were out at sea/ just miles/ away from Bikini/

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[194] Jetñil-Kijiner, Kathy. *Iep Jaltok: Poems from a Marshallese Daughter*. (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2017): 25.
[195] Lum, Thomas, Kenneth Thomas, Stephen Redhead, David Bearden, Mark Holt and Salvatore Lazzari. "Republic of the Marshall Islands Changed Circumstances Petition to Congress." Order Code RL32811. CRS Report for Congress. May 16, 2005, 41.
[196] Jetñil-Kijiner, Kathy. *Iep Jaltok: Poems from a Marshallese Daughter.* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2017): 24-26.

the day the sun/ exploded/ split open/ and rained ash/ on the fishermen's clothes."[197] Through the overlapping words of doctors, Bianca's death draws a direct connection to the Marshallese fishermen who bore witness to, and experienced immediate radiation sickness via fallout, the very people who "dusted the ash/ out of their hair/ reeled in their fish."[198] Just as radiation persists in the Marshall Islands, Bianca's uncompensatable leukemia does not exist in isolation for the poet-narrator. She presents Bianca's suffering body as one of relations, not simply with those who share direct familial relations, but those across time with whom she shares kin.

Similarly, fish signal the intimate relations of embodied lands and oceans and across species and less animate beings in the poem. Fish share the experiences of the detonations themselves that occurred in the lagoons, as well as the fallout in the form of ash as the fishermen did, who "dusted the ash/ out of their hair/ reeled in their fish."[199] Like human bodies on land and in the ocean, fish experienced and survived through the effects of radiation in the ocean. As a form of marine life, fish demonstrate lives immersed in irradiated ocean, also digesting radiation from other marine lives, like plankton. The intimacies merge across temporalities, as the fish is reeled out of water by fishermen near Bikini, and eaten by Bianca, who "loved/to eat fish/ she ate it raw ate it fried ate it whole."[200] Eating and digesting, Bianca comes to digest the materiality of living with radiation across the temporal divide and makes kin with the ocean and its marine lives as well as her ancestors, self and her aunt poet-narrator who share the suffering being. In

[197] Jetñil-Kijiner, Kathy. *Iep Jaltok: Poems from a Marshallese Daughter*. (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2017): 28-29.
[198] Jetñil-Kijiner, Kathy. *Iep Jaltok: Poems from a Marshallese Daughter*. (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2017): 29.
[199] Jetñil-Kijiner, Kathy. *Iep Jaltok: Poems from a Marshallese Daughter*. (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2017): 29.
[200] Jetñil-Kijiner, Kathy. *Iep Jaltok: Poems from a Marshallese Daughter*. (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2017): 27.

this sense, the figure of the fish in the poem echoes the dynamic relational geography that the US-American scholar Elizabeth DeLoughrey draws from Barbadian poet and scholar Kamau Brathwaite's notion of "tidalectics." DeLoughrey explains that "tidalectics" is "a methodological tool that foregrounds how a dynamic model of geography can elucidate island history and cultural production, providing the framework for exploring the complex and shifting entanglements between sea and land, diaspora and indigeneity, and routes and roots."[201] The relations that the poet-narrator draws between humans and fish on land and in the ocean function as a similar relational understanding of dynamic being, establishing the geography and ecology of atolls as one of dynamic relations. The intimate ways in which the ocean coexists with land in the atolls—with atolls consisting of corals—appears in the digestion of fish. The dietary dependency on fish, and Bianca's love of the most common source of food in the Marshall Islands, impart the marine animal with a relational mode of understanding space, as well as the digesting being.

To return to the poet-narrator's description of Bianca's bodily suffering, the description further expands kin to land. The poet-narrator states, "white cells had staked their flag/ they conquered the territory of her tiny body/ they saw it as their destiny/ they said it was manifested."[202] Rhetorically digesting the effects of radiation on Bianca's tiny body, the poet-narrator connects the body of her niece ravaged by "white cells" with the settler colonial and imperial expansion of whiteness under Manifest Destiny. Nineteenth century continental US expansion across land attacks Bianca's body, claiming her body as land. Irradiated lands that

[201] DeLoughrey, Elizabeth. "The Myth of Isolates: Ecosystem Ecologies in the Nuclear Pacific." *Cultural Geographies* 20, no. 2, (2012): 2.
[202] Jetñil-Kijiner, Kathy. *Iep Jaltok: Poems from a Marshallese Daughter*. (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2017): 25.

Bianca, her mother, and the fishermen live on exist across spatial and temporal divides and makes kin with Native American suffering as well as with all lands that fell victim to US aggression, including the Marshall Islands. As a relational being, Bianca radiates from the confines of her bone marrow, as the Tribunal would have claimed, and asserts her being across time, space, species and animacies.

Further, Jetñil-Kijiner's ontology of relation reflects Hau'ofa's call for a sea of islands and further draws a kinship network of Oceania. The poet-narrator weaves a Chamorro legend into the poem and draws relations between Bianca and the women of Guåhan (also imperially called Guam), and more expansively, between the Marshall Islands and Guåhan. In doing so, she builds a relation of resistance against US imperialism and militarism, as Guåhan is an unincorporated US territory that lost a third of its land to the US military. This relationality expands the being into a web of relations, map of resistance and a sea of islands. As such Bianca, a Marshallese girl who died from leukemia doesn't exist as an isolated, contained being. She exists through her relations. She exists as the poet's kin, the progeny of fishermen who experienced acute radiation sickness, and in relation to other Pacific Island peoples and communities. Stepping out of the poem as well, Jetñil-Kijiner's poetry and anti-nuclear activism continue to build and expand the relations around Bianca. For instance, she regularly performs in Japan and participates in international anti-nuclear conferences, often performing this very poem, "Fishbone Hair." Against the ruling logic of distance, isolation and containment, the poet's niece continues to exist. Just as the Marshallese people continue to harvest and digest the irradiated fish and breadfruit, and continue to survive, an ontology of relation digests imperial changes by continuing to build connections. The body is not simply a contained body. It exists in connection with your kin, your people, and your larger community.

This continued existence resists the lack of future that the ruling logic of the US empire and military forces onto the people not simply through radiation, but also through climate change and rising sea levels. Against these forms of what Rob Nixon calls slow violence, Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner tells the story of people who continue to survive through building relations and connections. Of people who digest the waste materials of the empire that they're forcefully fed, and survive. Finally, this survival separates the future the US empire and military strive for, and the futurity that the poet envisions. The US empire and military sees a future of conquering separated, contained lands and further creating and continuing the hierarchical and uneven distribution of imperial and militarized matter at the expense of toxic and disappearing lands and people. The poet, however, rejects the very premise of the US empire. She rejects containment and reaches out, making connections and relations. She rejects disappearance, and instead continues to survive and be. She depicts being as one of relations not only with the irradiated past and present, but with the future in which Marshallese people will continue to survive and assert their survivance.

Conclusion: Runit Writes Back

Figure 3.3: Photograph of writings on the Runit Dome[203]

"Nuclear Waste. Property of the USA. Please Return to Sender." A spray-painted message appeared on the Runit Dome surface in 2018. According to American investigative journalist Suzanne Rust, who reported the incident, the US Department of Energy "paid a contractor to scrub off the offending message after getting permission from the mayor of Enewetak Atoll," while it is "doing nothing to prevent the radioactive waste from leaking out of it."[204] Although Rust and Barker, whom Rust interviews, note the US's reaction as "ironic," I find it well-aligned with the US's atomization of the space as distant, separated and contained. The act of spending money to send a contractor to erase the message acts as a way of reinforcing its imperial ideology of atomization, of separation and isolation, as a way of pretending that the

[203] Suzanne Rust, "US won't clean up Marshall Islands nuclear waste dome but wants it free of anti-US graffiti." The Los Angeles Times, November 14, 2019. Accessed April 2, 2020.
[204] Rust, Susanne. "US won't clean up Marshall Islands nuclear waste dome but wants it free of anti-US graffiti." *The Los Angeles Times*, November 14, 2019. Accessed April 2, 2020.

connections and relations do not exist, as a way of denying its responsibility, and as a way of maintaining the space as one of US's authority and architecture of power and hegemony. After the US military filled the Cactus crater with radioactive materials and poured concrete over it on the islet of Runit, and after that concrete solidified and the US signed the Compact of Free Association, the process was supposed to be complete. The dome, as a visual break, was to be a break, silently waiting to be "environmentally innocuous" and ultimately forgotten.

After all, the US military's focus on the cleanup efforts in the Enewetak Atoll continues to atomize the lands and assume a straight temporality for radioactive waste. The final stage of cleanup was termed "Crater Entombment," a process "by which contaminated soil and debris would be entombed by sealing the cracks in the crater, mixing the plutonium-contaminated soil with cement to form a slurry, and pumping the slurry into the crater around the contaminated debris, thereby encasing all the radioactive materials in a solid mass."[205] As terms such as "sealing," "encasing," and "solid mass," suggest, the final step of pouring concrete over radioactive waste was meant to be a form of containment, or separation of target materials from its surroundings. As the use of the term "entombment" and later, "crypt" suggest, the US Atomic Energy Commission and the US military signal this step to be the death of radioactive waste through which the US can perpetually defer responsibility for radioactive materials and irradiation into oblivion. This conceptualization of life and matter as linear, as having a definite point of death, echoes its myth of containment for islands that draws an imaginary boundary around the ecosystem of a given island to test its subjects. This exists in stark contrast to how the "death" of radioactive materials is evaluated, however; it is measured in a number of half-lives

[205] Defense Nuclear Agency. The Radiological Cleanup of Enewetak Atoll. Washington, D.C., 1981, 93.

until they radiodecay enough to be "environmentally innocuous." In other words, radioactive materials do not die. They continue into theoretical eternity through half-lives.

Just as radioactive matter defies the empire's wishes to be contained and eventually forgotten, Runit wrote back with spray cans. Like other subjects of imperialism, from impoverished persons of color in major continental US urban centers to Native Hawaiians using graffiti to explore and assert their indigeneity and sovereignty in the documentary *Mele Murals*, Runit wrote back to the US by turning its own possessive logic of property on its head.[206] Understanding graffiti as writing acts that "inscribe the protagonist onto the land as a right off place and self-determination,"[207] Bruno David and Meredith Wilson conclude that the rock-art in Wardaman Aboriginal country demonstrates that

> place marking is about the occupation of space as one's own. It represents resistance to (the possibility of) exclusion and the affirmation of emplacement within an institutionalized landscape. Such institutionalization (or social normalization) of life creates the existence of an (excluded) Other. Inscribed places are thus sites of resistance against marginalization as the excluded Other.[208]

As the rock-art inscribes the site as one of resistance, the message proclaims that the US takes its own property back, by the same settler colonial and imperial possessive logic that rhetorically reconstructed the space for nuclear weapons detonations and human radiation experimentations.

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[206] See Bruno David and Meredith Wilson, "Spaces of Resistance: Graffiti and Indigenous Place Markings in the Early European Contact Period of Northern Australia," in *Inscribed Landscapes: Marking and Making Place*, edited by Bruno David and Meredith Wilson. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002; and documentary *Mele Murals* (dir. Tadashi Nakamura, 2016).
[207] David, Bruno and Meredith Wilson, "Spaces of Resistance: Graffiti and Indigenous Place Markings in the Early European Contact Period of Northern Australia," in Inscribed Landscapes: Marking and Making Place, edited by Bruno David and Meredith Wilson. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002): 43.
[208] David, Bruno and Meredith Wilson, "Spaces of Resistance: Graffiti and Indigenous Place Markings in the Early European Contact Period of Northern Australia," in Inscribed Landscapes: Marking and Making Place, edited by Bruno David and Meredith Wilson. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002): 58.

The message disrupts the architectural demonstration of power of the dome and reclaims the space as one of protest, and of resistance. It rejects the myth of distance and disconnection as a visual evidence of continued Marshallese presence and maritime travels on the atolls and its islands. Written from a pedestrian perspective, it speaks to an aerial view, the all-seeing drone-eye-view of the US. It forms relations between past testings, attempted "clean up," and continued radiation contamination into the present moment. And it invokes a future, in which the US will be made to take back what is their property: not simply radioactive materials, since the US lacks claim to any lands as a settler colonial and imperial state, but their "property" and the devastation it has unleashed on the ocean and land, and on human and non-human beings.

Acknowledgement

Chapter 3, in full, is under review for publication. Dissertation author is the sole author for the publication.

CHAPTER 4

"the emperor's hand": Nuclear Family, Standard Man and Atomic Etchings on the Body

> I collected bones from charnel houses; and disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame. … The dissecting room and the slaughter house furnished many of my materials; and often did my human nature turn with loathing from my occupation, whilst, still urged on by an eagerness which perpetually increased, I brought my work near to a conclusion.
>
> - Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

where is the body

no record of the body

where is the body

the body is the record

what is the body

the emperor's hand

what is the body

the body is the question

- April Naoko Heck, *A Nuclear Family*

How tall is the average man?" I answered/ with all I knew, my own height, "Four feet tall."[209] In "The Leaf Book," Japanese American poet April Naoko Heck recounts third-grader "I"'s experience with schools in the US. Throughout her preparation for the entrance test to the "gifted program," "I" struggles, as she attempts to reconcile her own embodied knowledge of the world with standardized knowledge that the school promotes. Like Linneaus and his taxonomy, "I" dutifully collects, and sorts the trees based on their leaves with the help of her nuclear family, her father and mother. "I," however, claims that she "knows" "the wrong kinds of love: scarlet

[209] April Naoko Heck, *A Nuclear Family*. (Fayetteville, AR: UpSet Press, 2014): 32.

oak, white oak, black oak, laurel and pin,/ memorized by size and color, lobe and vein."[210] This way of "knowing" comes from rote memorization of identifiers for categorization, in which the intimate knowledge of another being—in this case, a tree—comes from a standardized and normalized part of the whole—like a leaf, as a standardized representation of the whole, or a synecdoche. This memorization as a way of knowing contrasts another type of knowledge in the poem, the height of the average man. Instead of regurgitating what she memorized like she did for the trees, "I" instead answers with a different way of knowing, or the intimate knowledge that comes from her own body. "I," as a young child, answers, "Four feet tall."

The tension between standardized knowledge—the height of average man—and embodied knowledge—the changing height of an elementary school kid, forms the throughline in the poem "The Leaf Book," as well as the poetry collection, *A Nuclear Family.* In the collection, she contrasts the standardized knowledge of the atomic bomb and its afterlife with her own embodied knowledge through kinship relations, through her mother who was "a nugget. Boygirl. Silken bean" in utero "When the bomb struck twenty miles away," and through mothers of mothers.[211] In her collection, the Pacific War of World War II or the atomic bombs do not appear as singular, monolithic accounts. Instead, they appear in the words and on the bodies of those who experienced it, and among those with whom they share kinship relations.

The same question, "How tall is the average man," yields a very different answer for the International Commission on Radiation Protection (ICRP), an international agency that collects data from radiation exposures and produces standardized knowledge about radiation's impact under the name of protection. The "standard man" as he was called in 1949 at the Chalk River

[210] April Naoko Heck, *A Nuclear Family*. (Fayetteville, AR: UpSet Press, 2014): 33.
[211] April Naoko Heck, *A Nuclear Family*. (Fayetteville, AR: UpSet Press, 2014): 25.

Conference on Permissible Dose, or the "reference man" as he was subsequently labeled as, is 170 centimeters tall.[212] He is "between 20-30 years of age, weighing 70 kgs … and lives in a climate with an average temperature of from 10-degree Celsius to 20 degree Celsius. He is Caucasian and is a Western European or North American in habitat and custom."[213] ICRP's 499-page publication on reference man specifies him even further, from the overall quantity of blood (5200 ml)[214] and the weight of his liver (1800 g)[215], down to the thickness of the "horny layer of his" skin on his scrotum (9 um)[216]. What the publication reveals is that he is a datafied body paradoxically (re)produced through death, pieced together from medical inspections and severed organs and parts of autopsied bodies. In fact, in order to weigh lungs without blood in the tissue, the Report notes the following technique of "[using] lungs from cadavers, perfus[ing] them with saline to wash out the blood, blott[ing] the tissue, and remov[ing] the large airways and vessels."[217] As such, 5200 ml of blood does not run through contiguous vessels, or interconnected organs of the Standard Man. The digestive tract does not seamlessly transition from the "mouth, tongue, salivary glands, pharynx, tonsillar ring, and gastrointestinal tract as well as the liver, gall bladder, and pancreas" as the report enumerates.[218] Instead, each organ is

[212] International Commission on Radiological Protection. *ICRP Publication 23: Report of the Task Group on Reference Man.* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1975): 2.
[213] International Commission on Radiological Protection. ICRP Publication 23: *Report of the Task Group on Reference Man.* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1975): 4.
[214] International Commission on Radiological Protection. *ICRP Publication 23: Report of the Task Group on Reference Man.* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1975): 32.
[215] International Commission on Radiological Protection. *ICRP Publication 23: Report of the Task Group on Reference Man.* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1975): 146.
[216] International Commission on Radiological Protection. *ICRP Publication 23: Report of the Task Group on Reference Man.* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1975): 48.
[217] International Commission on Radiological Protection. *ICRP Publication 23: Report of the Task Group on Reference Man.* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1975): 160.
[218] International Commission on Radiological Protection. *ICRP Publication 23: Report of the Task Group on Reference Man.* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1975): 122.

measured and weighed as dissected and detached organs, with the 70 g of tongue, 85 g of three pairs of salivary glands, 4 g of palatine tonsils and so on.

Reducing body parts to standardized weight, volume and composition, the "Report of the Task Group on Reference Man" stitches together fragments of anonymous cadavers to galvanize it into a white man who eats, breathes, and follows a standardized pattern of modern labor. The Standard Man subsumes and devours countless bodies, both literally and figuratively carved and fragmented into parts. Numerous bodies as a part of the Standard Man do not remain in their entirety; skins are split, blood is drained and sinews are cut. Yet he is presented as a seamless being with a wholly functioning body with a "standard" life and functions as the standard for permissible doses of radiation. As the standard dummy, he freely glides through places, from a scientific research lab and a medical clinic to the epicenter of an atomic bomb without the specific situatedness that ties a body to a place, or the imperial structures that make certain people be at the epicenter in the first place. An assembled, datafied object instead, he moves from an empire to another as data, contained and detached from the countless bodies with their own lives from which he was measured. Moving with and through him, the magnitude of radiation damage travels as data, detached from the racialized and gendered bodies that mined, transported, manufactured and detonated atomic weapons, the non-white, non-male, and non-European and North American residents.

In this chapter, I place ICRP's Standard Man with April Naoko Heck's *A Nuclear Family,* a poetic digestion of the afterlife of the bombing of Hiroshima. I argue that juxtaposing April Naoko Heck's poetry and scientific reports on the Standard Man reveal incommensurable visions of the body, and the construction of being. Heck presents a body that is contiguous through kinship, a body that digests the violent changes brought forth by the atomic bombs that

the United States dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and folds the environment into the body to continue surviving. The being, as such, exists within the body and produces knowledges situated in the very body it inhabits, merging the body, being, and knowledge into one. The Standard Man, in contrast, presents a body stitched together from an imperial archive of death, from nameless and faceless cadavers often from invisibilized, liminal spaces of empires, to the racialized bodies of those who are exposed, made to labore and bombed. He produces and is produced by knowledges abstracted from the body, severing the ties among the body, the being and the knowledge it produces. The process of standardization and abstraction, of dissecting flesh, balancing against metal weights, and reducing flesh to numerical values, compile the imperial archive in which empires come together to collect body parts and galvanize the Man. In so doing, I discover the workings of the imperial Cold-War archive as one of contained and abstracted knowledge production based on racialized bodies, and the ways in which these detached, ahistorical figurations of scientific knowledge frictionlessly glide across imperial boundaries to circulate across the Pacific Ocean.

The Imperial Archive of Death: The International Commission on Radiation Protection (ICRP)

To understand how empires collaborated to build an archive of body parts, I begin with the development of ICRP from a small-scale committee focused on Europe and the US that protected medical workers to an international organization that continues to collect data on the effects of radiation on human bodies, non-human beings and the environment. Minted as the International X-ray and Radium Protection Committee (IXRPC) at the second meeting of the International Congress of Radiology (ICR) in Stockholm in 1928, the organization began with an aim to provide recommendations for X-ray and radium workers in medical and research

institutions. The commission published its first eponymously titled report, "International Recommendations for X-Ray and Radium Protection," in Stockholm in 1929. The three-and-a-half-page report targets research laboratories to provide guidelines against "over-exposure to X-rays and radium" by measures such as limiting working hours and X-ray department locations and containing "radium tubes or applicators … [in] separate lead blocks in the safe, giving a thickness of protective wall amounting to 5 cm of lead per 100 milligrams of radium element."[219]

The report demonstrates its original target audience and aims by limiting the scope of the report to laboratory and medical technicians, and by including guidelines in three European languages: English, German and French. Specific directions for handling, working and storage exclusively focus on laboratory and medical practice spaces and mostly white and male European scientists and X-ray technicians, while excluding freight transportation and mine workers often othered through class formations, racialization and colonization. For instance, since initial mining of insufficient deposits in Bohemia, northern Portugal and Cornwall, European scientists sourced most of the minerals containing radium, such as pitchblende, from its African colonies. French mining engineer, Jean Dreyfus established a station in Madagascar with Henri de Rothschild's funding, and extracted radium-containing minerals from mines in Madagascar to deliver to scientists such as Marie Curie in France from 1912.[220] The main source began to shift to Shinkolobwe, Congo, under violent Belgian rule when rich deposits were discovered in 1915.[221] Europe and, later, the United States, continued to extract uranium from

[219] International Recommendations for X-Ray and Radium Protection. July 27, 1928. (Stockholm: Kungl. Boktryckeriet, P. A. Norstedt & Söner): 64.
[220] Donald D. Hogarth, "Madame Curie, Baron de Rothschild, Professor Lacroix and the Madagascar Experiment." *Earth Sciences History* 29, no. 2 (2010): 332-333.
[221] Donald D. Hogarth, "Madame Curie, Baron de Rothschild, Professor Lacroix and the Madagascar Experiment." *Earth Sciences History* 29, no. 2 (2010): 341.

Shinkolobwe for their nuclear weapons program, funding experiments such as the Manhattan project that later directly connected to bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

With the lasting impact of the Second World War and the US's bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with atomic weapons, IXRPC developed into a full-fledged hierarchical international organization issuing protection guidelines not only for laboratory and medical technicians, but also for the general public, and later, for the environment. Before the Second World War, IXRPC was a small-scale committee of roughly 9 members[222] that "was not active between the ICRs and met for just 1 day at the ICRs in Paris in 1931, Zurich in 1924, and Chicago in 1937."[223] In the first ICR meeting after the war in London in 1950, however, IXRPC excised the term "X-ray" from its name, and took on the current name, the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP). The move away from X-ray in the name reflects the Commission's ambition in becoming an international authority in providing guidelines for the post-war drive for radiation research, experiments and application, as well as the indelible impact of the US's bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the ensuing radiation contamination. Reflecting the multifaceted way the Commission imagined their presence, the Commission expanded to six sub-committees: permissible dose for external radiation; permissible dose for internal radiation; protection against X rays generated at potentials up to 2 million volts; protection against X rays above 2 million volts, and β rays and γ rays; protection

[222] Members were mostly European, with one Dr. Taylor from the US. It is also significant to note that only two were medical doctors. The members' names, nationality, and in some cases affiliation are as follows: Dr. R. Ledoux-Lebard (France), Chairman; Dr. G. W. C. Kaye (National Physical Laboratory, England), Honorary Secretary; Prof. R. Bar (Switzerland); Dr. H. Behnken (Physikalisch-Technische Reichsanstalt, Germany); Dr. Sievert (Sweden); Dr. I. Solomon (Service d'Etalonnage de l'Hôpital St. Antoine, Paris); Prof. F. Tank (Switzerland); Dr. L. S. Taylor (National Bureau of Standards, U.S.A.), Dr. E. Pugno-Vanoni (Italy).
[223] RH Clarke, and J Valentin. "The History of ICRP and the Evolution of Its Policies." ICRP Publication 109 (2009): 78.

against heavy particles, including neutrons and protons; and disposal of radioactive wastes and handling of radioisotopes.[224] The expansion into permissible doses for external and internal radiation reflect both the interest in the impact of extended radiation exposure, and the abundance of data the Commission could collect from the racialized victims of the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Another key change since the Second World War is the Commission's hierarchical establishment. If the previous iteration of IXRPC gathered only as an addendum every few years without representation at the national level, ICRP established a nation-based hierarchical organization, much like that of the United Nations. The 1951 report following the first post-war meeting states that the ICRP "recommend that all interested countries establish, each for itself, a central national committee to deal with problems of radiation protection—such a central committee to have sub-committees matching those of the International Commission on Radiological Protection as closely as their circumstances permit," and that "direct communication on technical matters may be conducted between the corresponding national and international sub-committees."[225] Such nation-specific establishment of authority in the Commission further upholds the post-war top-down imperial power structures that amplify the voices of those who have the support from already-established empires, and silence those who do not. Members are indeed entirely from current and former colonial and imperial states, such as Great Britain, the United States, France, Canada, Germany and Sweden, and most are from states

[224] RH Clarke, and J Valentin. "The History of ICRP and the Evolution of Its Policies." ICRP Publication 109 (2009): 79.
[225] International Commission on Radiological Protection. *Recommendations of the International Commission on Radiological Protection* 24, no. 277 (1951): 4.

that have developed and detonated nuclear weapons in the margins of the empire as part of testing and experimentation.

If the IXPRC were, to an extent, a self-serving committee in which radiation researchers and technicians came together for the protection of the self and excluded the invisibilized others, the ICRP similarly served the imperial state and those that the empire deems fully human. The leadership and state-based member organization of the ICRP, then produces a hierarchical structure between two groups: those who detonate and those who are detonated on. The state-affiliated researchers, scientists and technicians, as those the empire imagines as fully human, detonate the atomic weapons, gather the impact of violence, and provide guidelines back to those who detonate. On the other hand, those who are detonated on, as marginalized and racialized not-quite-human subjects of the empire, are abstracted into fragmented organs and data of violence, and are filed into the imperial archive.

As part of the aim of "public" protection, radiation research in and out of the ICRP focused on protecting the detonators, or white residents of North America and Europe like the Standard Man. In the 1950s, for instance, the United States carried out nuclear weapons testing in the geographical and political margins of its empire, such as Nevada and the Pacific Islands, and exposed countless racialized bodies to the devastating violence of radiation. The US in the 1950s saw a heightened bomb-preparedness awareness campaign. The Federal Civil Defense Administration (FDCA) funded and released the civil defense film *Duck and Cover*, instructing school children to duck and find cover in the event of a nuclear bomb detonation, and schools performed bomb drills in which schoolchildren crouched under a desk.

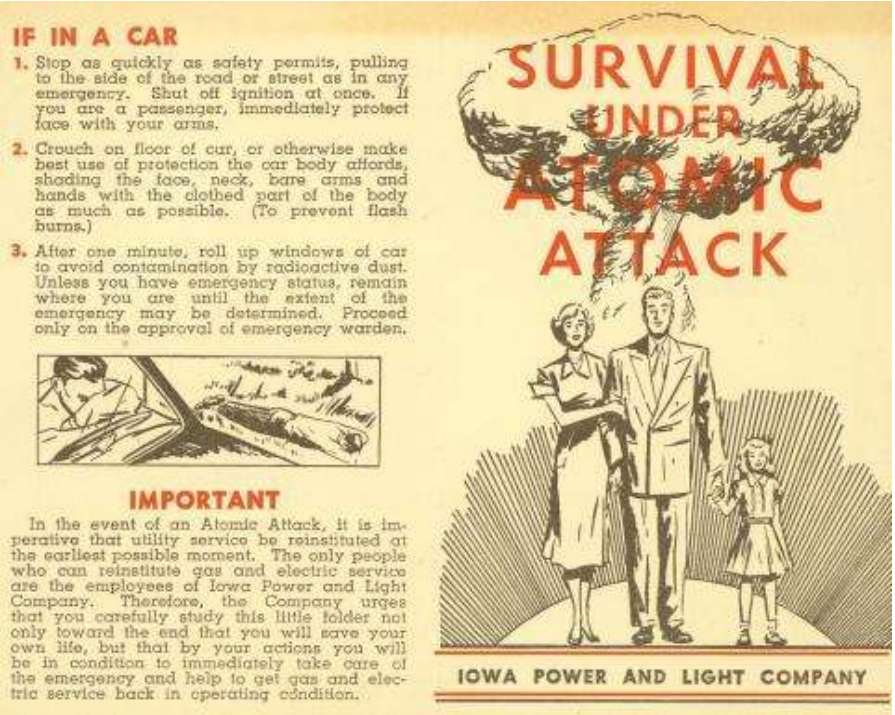

Figure 4.1: Last page of Survival under Atomic Attack, Boston Booklet[226]

Similarly, FDCA also funded and released *Survival Under Atomic Attack* in 1950, with a film and a booklet that instructed residents of the US of the ways to survive an atomic bomb. The booklet clearly demonstrates the ways in which the empire devours datafied lives in Hiroshima and Nagasaki to produce protection for the fully human members of the US empire. It informs its readers that, "In the city of Hiroshima, slightly over half the people who were a mile from the atomic explosion are still alive. At Nagasaki, almost 70 percent of the people a mile from the bomb lived to tell their experiences."[227] The border between fully human, or the detonator, and not-quite-human, or the detonated on, then, serves to demarcate the edges of lives and bodies deserving protection as well. Public normative radiation protection shields those who commit the

[226] Iowa Power and Light Company. *Survival Under Atomic Attack.* (1951): 1. (https://ameshistory.org/sites/default/files/styles/large/public/civil_defense_atomic_attack1.jpg?itok=YErJ3Z7U)
[227] Iowa Power and Light Company. *Survival Under Atomic Attack.* (1951): 4.

act of detonating by detonating on the other, and thereby demarcates the edges of the public as the normative.

Figure 4.2: *Duck and Cover* cartoon still

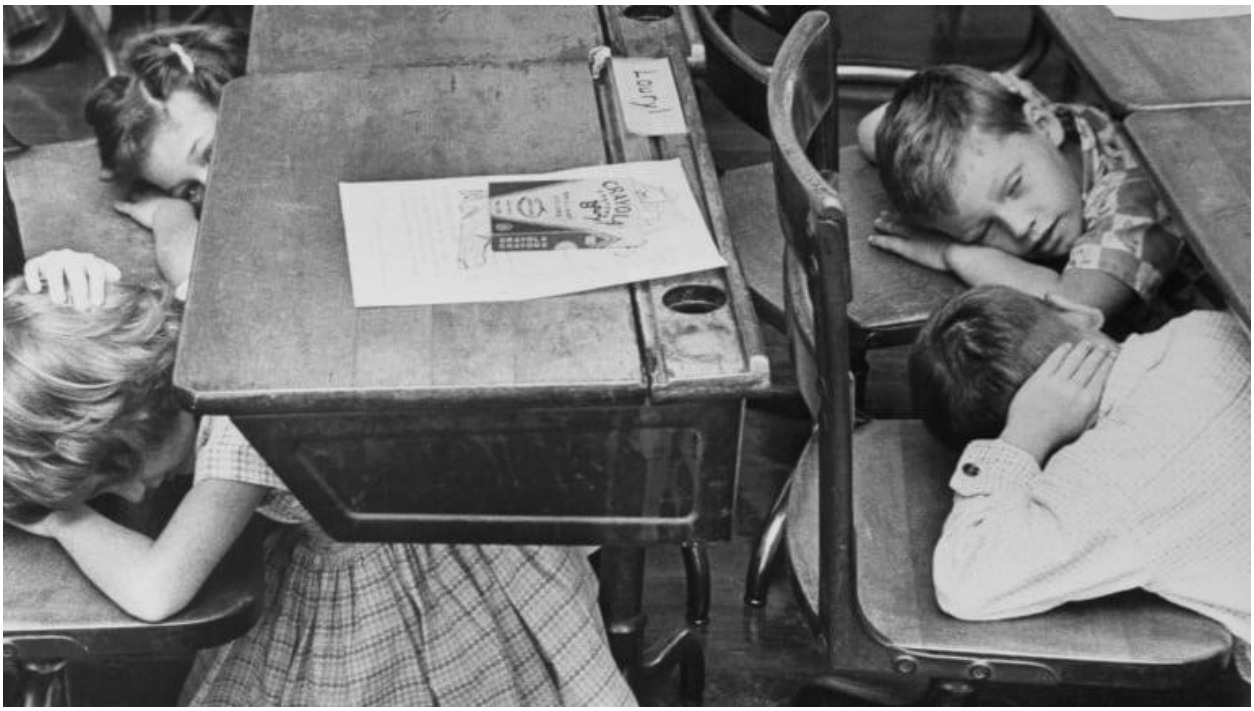

Figure 4.3: School children during a Duck and Cover drill

The Standard Man embodies this unidirectional protection fueled by fragmented and datafied bodies. As the reference of permissible radiation dose, the Man becomes the standard through whom radiation violence is measured. Initially developed through the Permissible Doses Conference held at Chalk River, Ontario in September 1949, the Standard Man reappears on the first post-war ICRP publication in 1951 as the sum total of body parts in neat, rounded numbers. Literally and figuratively carved and fragmented, the body enters into the files of the imperial archive as neatly rounded numbers of parts. Nourished by the datafied dead bodies, the imperial archive stitches together body parts and galvanizes a seamless Standard Man who performs "normal activity in a temperate zone," drinks 2.5 litres of water in total in a day and sweats out half a litre and pisses out another 1.5 litre. [228]

[228] International Commission on Radiological Protection. *International recommendations on radiological protection.* Revised by the International Commission on Radiological Protection at the Sixth International Congress of Radiology, London, 1950. (1951): 53.

APPENDIX I

STANDARD MAN

(*a*) *Mass of organs*

Organs	*Grammes*
Muscles	30,000
Skeleton, Bones	7,000
Red marrow	1,500
Yellow marrow	1,500
Blood	5,000
Gastro-intestinal tract	2,000
Lungs	1,000
Liver	1,700
Kidney	300
Spleen	150
Pancreas	70
Thyroid	20
Testes	40
Heart	300
Lymphoid tissue	700
Brain	1,500
Spinal cord	30
Bladder	150
Salivary glands	50
Eyes	30
Teeth	20
Prostate	20
Adrenals	20
Thymus	10
Skin and subcutaneous tissues	8,500
Other tissues and organs not separately defined	8,390
Total body weight	70,000

Figure 4.4: table from ICRP's Standard Man[229]

Echoing the fragmentation of organs and body parts, the Standard Man lives a life that is only tenuously tied to the datafied, stitched-up body. The data of 2.5 litres of water that he drinks, the half a litre he sweats and 1.5 litres that he pisses cannot come from his bodiless body. It only exists as data, as theoretical piss from the theoretical water he drinks, based on measured

[229] International Commission on Radiological Protection. International recommendations on radiological protection. Revised by the International Commission on Radiological Protection at the Sixth International Congress of Radiology, London, 1950. (1951): 53.

input and output gathered from those who perform "a normal activity in a temperate zone."[230] The theoretical bodily water, then bears no connection to the theoretical body of the Standard Man, but comes from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).[231] The 1.5 litres of piss is an abstraction of multiple others' that bears no ties to the 10 grams of urethra.[232] Instead, the authority of the ICRP reports stitches the waste matter of a living body onto the assembled body of the Standard Man and galvanizes the organs.

Similarly, the ICRP reports animate the Standard Man to perform daily activities by inscribing data onto the mashed-up body of the Standard Man. He spends 8 hours at work, and 16 hours not at work in 1951.[233] His 8-hour workday follows the guidelines defined in the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) in 1938. His work hours, as such, bear little ties to the very body that performs the labor in that duration of time. Instead, he is an animation of the desire of the industry and the state to juggle maximum labor output and protection for a specifically classed, raced and gendered group of people. For instance, the FLSA guidelines excluded certain types of labor and industries, such as farm work, because an 8-hour workday will not benefit the industry or the owners of the operations in these industries. As such, the labor as animation is imposed onto the assembled bodies of the Standard Man, yet it remains detached from the body. The body does not labor; it is the labor that animates and moves the dead body parts. Issued by the FAO,

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[230] International Commission on Radiological Protection. International recommendations on radiological protection. Revised by the International Commission on Radiological Protection at the Sixth International Congress of Radiology, London, 1950. (1951): 53.
[231] International Commission on Radiological Protection. *ICRP Publication 23: Report of the Task Group on Reference Man.* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1975): 338.
[232] International Commission on Radiological Protection. *ICRP Publication 23: Report of the Task Group on Reference Man.* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1975): 181.
[233] International Commission on Radiological Protection. International recommendations on radiological protection. Revised by the International Commission on Radiological Protection at the Sixth International Congress of Radiology, London, 1950. (1951): 53.

this animation of the Standard Man establishes the standards for normativity as outlined in the imperial center with little exposure to radiation, and as the normative working life under the system of capitalism that ironically claims to deserve protection from radiation.

By 1975, his 16 "not at work" hours are further neatly divided into two sets of 8 hours. First 8 hours of nonoccupational activities of 1 hour of "washing, dressing etc at 3 kcal/min," 1.5 hours of "walking at about 6 km/h at 5.3 kcal/min," 4 hours of "sitting activities at 1.54 kcal/min," and 1.5 hours of active recreations and/or domestic work at 5.2 kcal/min."[234] For the remaining 8 hours of his 24-hour day, he "[rests] in bed at BMR," or "Basal metabolic rate, the minimal rate of heat production in a fasting, supine individual in a room temperature of about 20°C."[235] Issued by the Food and Agriculture Organization, this animation of the Standard Man bears no inherent ties to the very body it animates. Instead, the 8 hours of "light working activities: mostly standing" are added onto the assembled body, severing any ties between the body and the work it produces.

This artificiality of the working body is even more pronounced in the discussion of the FAO Woman that appears underneath the man's table in the 1975 report. Like her male counterpart, she spends 8 hours performing "light working activities in the home or in industry."[236] In place of the Standard Man's 1.5 hours of "active recreations and/or domestic work," she performs 1 hour of "active recreation and/or heavier domestic work."[237] Whether she

[234] International Commission on Radiological Protection. *ICRP Publication 23: Report of the Task Group on Reference Man.* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1975): 339.
[235] International Commission on Radiological Protection. *ICRP Publication 23: Report of the Task Group on Reference Man.* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1975): 339.
[236] International Commission on Radiological Protection. *ICRP Publication 23: Report of the Task Group on Reference Man.* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1975): 339.
[237] International Commission on Radiological Protection. *ICRP Publication 23: Report of the Task Group on Reference Man.* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1975): 339.

performs domestic or public labor, she works for the designated 8 hours like her male counterpart. And be it domestic or public labor, her work must be made legible to the standardized 8-hour workday per FLSA as well.[238]

The Standard Man, with assembled body parts and animation through logic of machinic efficiency, embodies what black feminist scholar Sylvia Wynter describes as the "overrepresentation of Man." She argues that "the present ethnoclass (i.e. Western Bourgeois) conception of the human, Man, … overrepresents itself as it were the human itself."[239] She establishes "Man" as produced by creating different "genres" of human, be it on the basis of race, gender or violence. As a product, it comes to assume universality in (over)representing the category of the human, while erasing and silencing the actual bodies that do not conform to universality.

At the same time, ICRP continues its efforts to fill the gaps of the Standard Man by attaching other standardized bodies. For instance, since Japan's inclusion into the ICRP and its developing discussions of radiation protection in the 1970s, the organization included publications on similarly standardized Japanese Standard Man. According to Alexander Weheliye, "In recasting the human sciences, Wynter's commitment lies with disfiguring their real object, Man, through the incorporation of the colonial and racialist histories of the modern incantations of the human."[240] Exposing the seams of the datafied and stitched-up body of the Standard Man, then, shares Wynter's aim of unfolding the colonial and racialist histories of the

[238] For discussions, see, Linder, Marc. "Farm Workers and the Fair Labor Standards Act: Racial Discrimination in the New Deal." *Texas Law Review* 65, no. 7 (June 1987): 1335-1393.
[239] Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 260.
[240] Alexander Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human.* (Duke University Press, 2014): 21.

human, alongside the continuing impact subimperial formations have in strengthening this universality through assimilation and incorporation.

In stark contrast to the white, North American or European specifications of the original Standard Man, the imperial archive establishes dosimetry by collecting instances of radiation violence on the fungible populations in the margins of the empire: peoples of color, often in non-US and non-European locations. While the immediate post-war reports rarely mention Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a source of their data on radiation exposure,[241] a more recent ICRP report published in 2017 on the "Ethical Foundations of the System of Radiological Protection" is more forthcoming with the sources of their data on radiation violence. It states, "Radiation epidemiology relies on statistical analyses of observed effects on large populations (of people, animals and even plants) that have been exposed to radiation. For effects of radiation exposure on humans, the gold standard today is the work being done by the Radiation Effects Research Foundation with survivors of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki."[242] It elaborates further by noting the US's bombing of the Marshall Islands, stating "the 1950s saw a growing societal concern about the effects of exposure to radiation, not only to workers but also to the public and patients. This was fueled by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 and the aftermath: the nuclear weapons testing after World War II caused global contamination, as well as highly publicized events such as the serious contamination of the population of the Marshall Islands, and the Japanese tuna fishing boat The Lucky Dragon No. 5, exposed to fallout from a US atomic bomb test in 1954."[243]

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[241] In fact, the 1951 ICRP report does not mention Hiroshima and Nagasaki at all.
[242] International Commission on Radiological Protection. "Ethical Foundations of the System of Radiological Protection. ICRP Publication 138." *Ann. ICRP* 47, no. 1 (2018): 5.
[243] International Commission on Radiological Protection. "Ethical Foundations of the System of Radiological Protection. ICRP Publication 138." *Ann. ICRP* 47, no. 1 (2018): 23.

The report narrates the events merely as background historical information that fueled societal concern in the 1950s, and merely as a contributing force in a shift in the system of radiation protection recommendation.[244] Yet, these bombings and exposures contribute to the "golden standard" for effects of radiation on humans, within which countless lives and bodies are fragmented, datafied and devoured by the imperial archive of radiation. The US's—and other empires', namely Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union—detonations of nuclear weapons, then, create data on what bombs and radiation can do to lands, waters, and human and non-human bodies. In selecting subjects, the empire configures lands by distancing, racializing and gendering lands, waters and bodies in order to circumscribe them as suitable for devastating experimentations. The empire selects "wastelands" that are "far away" from what matters, the imperial center in which the Standard Man resides. Traci Voyles notes, "colonial epistemologies do not just look on deserts as wastelands but that wastelands of many kinds are constituted through racial and spatial politics that render certain bodies and landscapes pollutable."[245] This reductive theorization of lands, as noted in Chapter 3, serves also as the foundation for the imperial archive.

Other subjects of human radiation experimentations are similarly racialized and marginalized. Prisoners in the US, or "literally captive population" were "chosen to bear risks to which no other group of experimental subjects had been exposed or has been exposed since."[246]

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[244] While the shift itself is not a crucial point here, a number of ICRP publications consider the key shift in the development of the ICRP recommendations as having a threshold for radiation effects to focusing on stochastic effects that do not have a threshold for effects.
[245] Traci Voyles, *Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015): 10.
[246] Advisory Committee on Human Radiation, "Final Report: Executive Summary and Guide to Final Report, Experiments" DOE/EH--96001171 (Pittsburg, PA: US Government Printing Office, 1994): 28.

Similarly, the US Public Health Service (PHS) conducted experiments on uranium miners, including Navajo miners, without their informed consent, in violation of the Nuremberg Code. Radiation experimentation on uranium miners extends the workings of another PHS experimentation, the Tuskegee syphilis experimentation on black men. As such, the "golden standard" is not a standard for radiation violence on universal man; it is a standard built from racialized, gendered, marginalized and invisibilized beings that could be bombed, sacrificed, experimented on, fragmented and datafied into the belly of the imperial archive, in service of the Standard Man, the 70 kg white man who resides in North America or Europe.

Fragmenting cadavers to assemble the body of the Standard Man, animating the body through datafied activity and movements from the Food and Agriculture Organization, the ICRP reports embody an imperial archive built on deaths. The imperial archive assembles the Standard Man, not as those vulnerable to nuclear weapons manufacturing or detonations, but after the image of those who develop and detonate nuclear weapons. Dosimetry, on the other hand, draws from those who suffered weapons detonations, be it in the form of direct bombing on "Japanese [who] must have a master"[247] or bomb "testing" on indigenous lands. As such an incommensurable equation arises; dosimetry applies datafied effects of the bomb, gathered from whole bodies of those who suffered, onto the bodies of the Standard Man, a decidedly different figure from those who suffered the blasts and exposures. It ignores particular race-, class- and gender-based vulnerabilities that establish the victims of the bombs as targets. Instead, it diverts the aim of protection to the overrepresented Man as a stand in for a representation of a universal public.

[247] National Research Council. Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission General Report. (Washington D.C.: 1947): 8.

A Nuclear Family

In the opening pages of the poetry collections lies a drawing of three overlapping ovals with a black mass in the middle. It resembles common stylized drawings of Bohr's model of an atom,[248] or perhaps the symbol for the Atomic Energy Commission, with three electron orbits circling around a nucleus. The figure is suspended mid-air, perhaps falling, rising, or perhaps simply existing. Beneath lies a tumbled mess of lines, like an overgrown grass field. This opening drawing for April Naoko Heck's *A Nuclear Family* echoes the poet's vignette-like explorations of her own life being marked by the atom bombs that the United States dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Like the atom that insists on its presence over the leaves of grass below, the atomic bombs persist through the bodies and beings of those who experienced them, continuing to their kin. The figure is suspended mid-air, neither rising or falling. Its suspension in time and space exists in a precarious moment of calm, in which a single atom exists without merging with another hydrogen isotope, or without its nucleus splitting into two.[249] With the potential to explode, the figure remains suspended, symbolized electrons calmly orbiting around a common nucleus, like the daily lives of family members orbiting around the common core. The grass beneath, too, simply oscillates in the invisible wind, caught in the movement of the sway, yet to be burned off in *pika,* or blinding brilliant light. The leaves of grass remain, together. The atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki similarly remain as an undeniable presence in the poems. However, the bombs rarely appear as a uniform figure, and the poet-narrator's

[248] Bohr's model depicts the atom in concentric circles, but stylized versions depict the atom with overlapping oval lines to indicate the three-dimensional nature of the orbits.
[249] Nuclear weapons take on two forms, fusion and fission. Fusion refers to the uniting of light elements, like hydrogen, and fission refers to the splitting of heavy elements.

grandmother appears as a survivor, rather than a victim. Like the steady orbit around the nuclear in the drawing, the poet-narrator's family members continue their lives around a common nucleus. Though the violence of the atomic bombs "burned into the skin,"[250] those who with first-hand experiences of the bombs refused to remain as passive victims on whom empires tested and quantified dosimetry. Instead, the poet-narrator tells tales of her kin as they continue to contend with empires and their projects of racialization and make way into their complicated lives.

If dosimetry datafies and abstracts the afterlife of nuclear weapons detonations and radiation contamination in non-white spaces into quantifiable theoretical violence on the body of the youthful and white Standard Man, April Naoko Heck's poetry collection, *A Nuclear Family,* embodies the complex literal and figurative fallout from atomic bombing of Hiroshima through the intimate stories about her family. In an accompanying essay to "Evening Will Come," a 2015 Volta journal issue on Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, she explains her lineage. She writes, "My great-grandmother on my mother's side is a hibakusha, a survivor of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. I was born in Tokyo and lived in Japan until I was almost seven[…]"[251] Along with her contribution to "Evening Will Come," her poetry collection, *A Nuclear Family* approaches the bombing and its literal and figurative fallout through her family. Consisting of five sections, the collection begins with the poet's great-grandmother on "Early August, 1945" near Hiroshima, and concludes with the narrator's experience with writing a 9/11 poem on "9/11/11" and "9/12/11" on an unnamed—but perhaps Canadian—"wide beach." In the span of time a few years shy of six decades, Heck interweaves the ways in which the nuclear bomb lives in the

[250] April Naoko Heck, *A Nuclear Family*. (Fayetteville, AR: UpSet Press, 2014): 21
[251] April Naoko Heck, "Essay: Dispatch from Hiroshima." *The Volta Blog.* August 7, 2015. (https://thevoltablog.wordpress.com/category/april-naoko-heck/)

bodies and lives of her kin and her own, as descendant of hibakusha. The irradiated body she portrays is far from the Standard Man, or the datafied body parts of the imperial archive, and the knowledge the poet and narrators of various poems create stem directly from the irradiated body, in contrast to the incommensurable equation that the imperial archive and the Standard Man create.

The propelling connection in the poetry collection is matrilineal kinship that folds the "I" into my mother who dutifully writes down English names to plants, into her mother who refused to clean her daughter's house when she married a *gaijin,* and into her mother who headed over to Hiroshima under the emperor's commands. Yet, there are also snippets of fathers, including the poet-narrator's father who worked at a nuclear power plant and her great-grandfather who was "lost in the Pacific War."[252] If the matrilineal focus highlights the bodily markings of trauma, snippets of fathers demonstrate the gendered nature of victimhood during World War II that seeks to divest and expand the concept of family into the larger concept of nationalism and loyalty to the imperial throne.[253]

Beginning the collection with a clash of two empires, the Japanese empire and the US empire, Heck orients individual identifications not through nationalities (and nationalisms) that divide and define empires, but through individual struggles and personal connections that

[252] April Naoko Heck, *A Nuclear Family*. (Fayetteville, AR: UpSet Press, 2014): 76.
[253] For scholarship on the narratives of the national body in place of the individual body, and narratives of familial ties, in particular paternalistic ties, between the emperor and the people, see Weiner, Michael. "Discourses of Race, Nation and Empire in Pre-1945 Japan." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 18, no 3 (1995): 433-456; Wilson, Sandra. "Family or State?: Nation, War, and Gender in Japan, 1937-45." *Critical Asian Studies* 38, no 2 (2006): 209-238; Ruszel, Julian Brook. "The Fall of the Family-State and Rise of the Enterprise Society: Family as Ideology and Site of Conservative Power in Modern Japan." *The Arbutus Review* 10, no. 2 (2019); Kitagawa, Joseph. "The Japanese Kokutai (National Community) History and Myth." *History of Religions* 13, no. 3 (1973).

transgress the boundaries of nations. The opening poem, "Early August, 1945" presents her matrilineal kins in tense individual relationships with the emperor-god, Hirohito. With the dedication, "for Obaasan, my great-grandmother," the poem centers on Obaasan who "lives with her daughter" who is "pregnant with her first child, [poet-narrator's] mother."[254] Upon receiving a letter that requests that each household volunteer one person to Hiroshima, the family is tense. While "the son-in-law rips the letter in half," Obaasan "pastes the words together/ with a smear of soft rice" and "elects herself to go."[255] This short vignette of receiving "the emperor's command" weighs the intimate ties the family shares with one another against the empire that exploits its subjects to realize its desires. Echoing the power imbalance and conflicting identities, the poet-narrator recounts the moment in a speculative vignette. The poet-narrator, caught between echoes of the Japan empire and the US empire, assumes an intimate understanding of the focal point of the poem, Obaasan. Through the matrilineal kinship relations, the great-granddaughter can identify with the great-grandmother whom she has never met, and speculate the intimate moments of Obaasan despite their differing allegiance to the Japanese empire. Despite the empire's divisive violence, kinship remains and continues, across generations and through daughters and daughters of daughters.

Reflecting the opening poem's depiction of the contentious relationship the subject has with its empire, "Notes on the Pacific War" focuses on the emperor-god of the Japanese empire, Hirohito, to depict the violent ways empires establish and sustain themselves through their fungible subjects. The poem rejects textbook historical accounts of the Pacific War that overrepresents the masculinist military leaders as all of those in the empire, while datafying and

[254] April Naoko Heck, *A Nuclear Family*. (Fayetteville, AR: UpSet Press, 2014): 13.
[255] April Naoko Heck, *A Nuclear Family*. (Fayetteville, AR: UpSet Press, 2014): 13.

reducing the lives of troops, civilians and those in between into mere numbers. Rather than presenting a simple equation in which emperor Hirohito represents imperial Japan against the US, the poet-narrator equates Hirohito with varied objects, histories and speculations to bring to the surface the imperial desires that the two enemies, the Japanese empire and the US empire share. Each line contains "Hirohito" as the grammatical subject, functioning both as the subject of equivalence—"Hirohito is"—and as the subjective doer—"Hirohito says" and "Hirohito makes"—with the exception of the concluding line, which presents Obaasan as the grammatical subject. The repetition in structure highlights the very multiplicity of peoples, objects and things that equate or do not equate to Hirohito.

Body and record

Echoing the imperial archive's collection of anonymous body parts for dosimetry, "Battle at Biak, New Guinea" notes the ways in which the imperial archive contends with the body of its subjects through the disappearing body in the Japanese imperial military. The poem depicts her great-grandfather's presence and subsequent death and loss of his body in the Battle at Biak, a battle between the Japanese imperial military and the military of the US empire. Fighting starvation, alongside incoming US troops, "he fell, somewhere/ he fell, fattened the jungle with his pride."[256] The poem continues:

where is the body
where is the body
what is the body
what is the body

no record of the body
the body is the record
the emperor's hand

[256] April Naoko Heck, *A Nuclear Family*. (Fayetteville, AR: UpSet Press, 2014): 63.

the body is the question[257]

The question of what and where of the body is each followed by a fragment and a full sentence. The body is one of records, and the body is the record. Records of particular bodies, like the anonymized bodies in the imperial archive of radiation dosimetry, do not exist. Instead the body is a part of the fragmented imperial record, in which it is anonymized as an individual, nameless infantryman who commits *harikiri* with "a knife, no a pistol" or "a pistol … no, a knife."[258] Yet the fragmented response, "no record of the body" does not satisfy the poet-narrator. She repeats her question, "where is the body," and produces a complete sentence as her answer, "the body is the record." Rather than accepting the imperial archive's anonymization of the lives and bodies, she claims that the body itself serves as the record, regardless of the imperial archive's desire to datafy individual infantryman's life into a casualty number. Instead the body itself, and its kin, become the record that lives on.

If the *where* of the body nudged towards the imperial archive through erasure, the *what* of the body directly invokes the hand of the emperor, or a fragment of the divine personification of the empire. Read as a synecdoche to the question of the body, a theoretically amputated hand functions as a stand-in for the entirety of the body of the emperor. Similarly, understood as a metonymy, the hand, a mere body part, comes to represent the entirety of imperial power, echoing the Standard Man, in which body parts were assembled together to form the imperial body that deserves protection. The double fragmentation—fragmentation of the body into a hand as a contained part, and the noun clause as a sentence fragment—attempts to reduce the what of the body, or the essence of the body that makes a body a body, into a broken part. Again

[257] April Naoko Heck, *A Nuclear Family*. (Fayetteville, AR: UpSet Press, 2014): 64.
[258] April Naoko Heck, *A Nuclear Family*. (Fayetteville, AR: UpSet Press, 2014): 63.

dissatisfied with this fragment, the poet-narrator asks yet again, “what is the body,” and produces another sentence complete with a subject and a verb, “the body is the question.” Instead of limiting the scope of the body to a mere body part, the response in the form of a question opens up the essence of the body as an unknown, and presents an invitation to inquire. Like a question mark drawn over the silhouette of a body, the question offers the body not as a mere definable, datafied value, but as undefined, and perhaps indefinable record that overflows the imperial archive.

Atomic Etchings and the Knowledge-Producing Body

The collection explores the malleable body-as-question through connecting irradiated bodies with their kins, and their collective survival. Instead of presenting a survival that firmly adheres to national narratives of resilience and continued loyalty, the poet-narrator presents survival as multifaceted, intrinsically transgressive acts that enfolds the environment and its matter into the body. Survival, in the collection, rejects the neat categorization and standardization that the Standard Man strives towards, and presents the muddled acts that cross national boundaries, social norms, as well as boundaries of matter. As such, the body is hardly stable with clearly circumscribed boundaries; instead, it overflows, eats, and digests to become an assembled being that crosses boundary of normativity.

A prose poem, “How We Survived the War,” weaves together incomplete and transgressive actions together as acts of survival. Connected with commas, the acts of survival that “we” commit in the poem contradict one another and refuse to adhere to the boundaries of social norm as outlined in the normative construction of a middle-class “nuclear family.”

> we held up our hands, we waved our handkerchiefs like flags, we let our orphans babble and cry on straw mats, we stepped across the flattened neighborhoods, the

> fragmented, the smashed, we tiptoed over bones of neighbors, umbrella spines, scorched radish gardens, we flashe dour scars, we turned our porcelain bellies up like fish, like prey in the *kuma*'s teeth, we prayed, we stayed, we dragged our twisted tricycles behind us, we set up school desks where the school used to be, our babies smiled for the newsman's camera, we didn't believe in the sincerity of red canna flowers blooming too soon, we did not bow, we bowed, we had no sweet azuki cakes, no milk candy, we heard wind blow through hulls of streetcars like hollowed carp, we wore long sleeves, we let them fall over our fingertips, we dug in the river sand with our one good hand, we mistrusted the river's mirror surface, we eloped with the enemy, we forgot, we bore babies pink-white as rabbit ears, we strapped them on our backs, our mothers disowned us, we tried new recipes, we tasted applesauce, we let our husbands love us, we waited up when they drank late in corner bars, we stayed home, we learned to drive, we rubbed cocoa butter on stretch marks, we felt safe, we visited national parks, we fed the deer, the tame animals.[259]

The "we" in the poem commits actions that do not conform to one another, and instead suggests numerous body parts—"we held up our hands, we waved our handkerchiefs like flags...we dug in the river sand with our one good hand," or outright contradict one another—"we did not bow, we bowed." As a collective, "we" form contradictory relations with "our orphans," "our babies," "our mothers," as well as "our husbands," rather than identifying with a single nuclear family as the basic unit of family in the US empire. "We" continue to survive through transgressive acts—"we eloped with the enemy, we forgot, we bore babies pink-white as rabbit ears"—as well as through digesting foods marked by the effects of the war, as "we tried new recipes, we tasted applesauce." Despite the contradictory nature of these acts, the doers of these acts of survival continue to be a part of a collective "we." Even though "we" reject the boundaries that form the collective, such as surrendering to the enemy by waving a white handkerchief, eloping with the enemy and bearing children with them, as acts of survival, these transgressive acts do not break apart the collective. Instead, "we" continues to live and survive, and nurture their babies and kin beyond the nuclear family. The effects of the war, the main effect of which shapes and modifies

[259] April Naoko Heck, *A Nuclear Family*. (Fayetteville, AR: UpSet Press, 2014): 30.

the main subject of the collection, "a nuclear family," then continues through the surviving body that insists on the collective identity, all the while breaking apart the oppositional definitions that define it as a "we" against "the enemy" to "sweet azuki cakes" against "applesauce."

In "Conversation with my Mother," the experiences of the war come to fold into the body as a visual atomic etchings: fabric burned onto the skin. In the poem, the narrator has a conversation with her mother about the effects of the bomb that hibakusha "obaasan" experienced. The narrator focuses on clothes to understand the hibakusha's body. The narrator asks a series of questions that prompts her mother to note how the material on the body becomes a part of the body through *pika*. She asks, "how much fabric was left?," "If the fabric was in shreds, she was almost naked?," "What did the pattern of fabric look like?," "Was it plain? Was it the fabric's texture, not pattern, that showed on her skin?"[260] To the last question, her mother responds, "No, the fabric was patterned, and the pattern burned into her skin."[261] Just as the bodies come to digest the changes that came as a result of the bombs that changed their bodies, from eating post-war foods to bearing "pink-white babies," the bombs themselves left etchings on the body. Matter, from fabric to nutrients, left their marks in the body on their skins and on their kin, as visual reminders of transgressed boundaries between body and matter, between self and enemy.

[260] April Naoko Heck, *A Nuclear Family*. (Fayetteville, AR: UpSet Press, 2014): 21.
[261] April Naoko Heck, *A Nuclear Family*. (Fayetteville, AR: UpSet Press, 2014): 21.

Figure 4.5: photograph of a woman whose kimono burned onto her skin (Photo Credit: Gonichi Kimura)[262]

In Heck's poetry, it is the body of transgression—not the seemingly continuous and standardized body of Standard Man—that produces knowledge. Rather than learning the

[262] Gonichi Kimura, *Kimono Pattern Burned into Skin,* Photograph, Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum Archive, August 15, 1945. https://hpmm-db.jp/list/detail/?cate=photo_en&search_type=detail&data_id=42521

quantifiable data of the war, in the forms of number of casualties and the impact radius, the narrator learns about the bombs from a direct conversation with her mother, who learned from her own obaasan. Unlike the imperial knowledge that datafies and quantifies the violence of the bombs in order to protect its Standard Man, the knowledge of the bombs for the poem's narrator comes directly from the knowledge-producing body of her obaasan, who bore the nuclear etchings of the bomb on her very body. The knowledge also transfers through bodies connected through body-to-body contact and kinship relations. Hibakusha obaasan's embodied knowledge is transferred to her own daughter and granddaughter, who digested their mother/grandmother's knowledge through their own bodies, and transferred it to her daughter. For the survivor and their kin, the knowledge does not exist external to the body; it is the central building block of the very body that bears children and continues to survive.

Surviving imperial violence, the racialized and gendered hibakusha body and their kin in Heck's poetry challenge the normative constructions of the body, life and family, that the Standard Man simply assumes. It challenges the ideals of normative life that the Standard Man lives as one worthy of protection from radiation and unfair labor practices, and ideals of the "nuclear family" as the model of assimilation. Instead, it exposes its limits through the very bodies that compose the edge of normativity that deserve protection. Heck shows that it is this body of transgression, and not the seemingly continuous and standardized body of Standard Man in a normative nuclear family, that produces specifically embodied knowledge and survives.

Conclusion

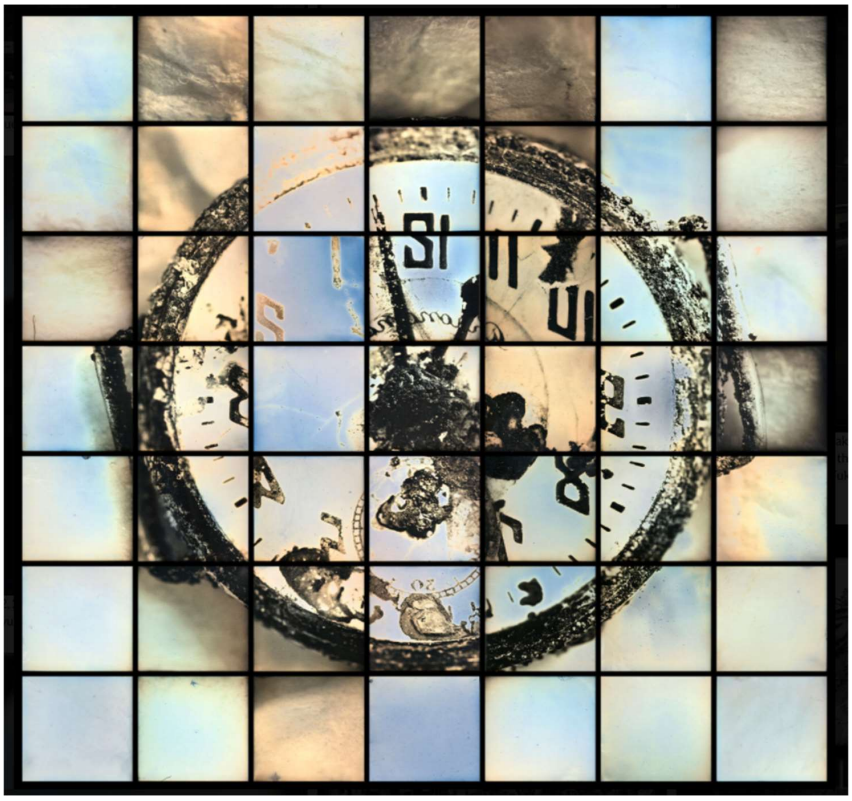

Figure 4.6: Takashi Arai, "A Maquette for a Multiple Monument for the Wristwatch Dug Up from Ueno-machi, Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum"

A watch bears the black clouds of the bomb in the middle of its face. Its edges are rusted and tattered, and its straps missing, perhaps from the force of the blast, perhaps from the passage of time, or perhaps from the elements. The watch's time, however, has stopped. In "A Maquette for a Multiple Monument for the Wristwatch Dug Up from Ueno-machi, Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum" Japanese photographer Takashi Arai creates his own "Micro-monuments" through daguerreotype images depicting the impact of nuclear weapons on an everyday object, such as a wristwatch dug up under a bridge. It is no singular monolithic monument. Instead, multiple monuments come together to reflect each tiny section of the watch as well as sections of the space that the watch occupies. Each daguerreotype plate holds more than the space of the watch.

It holds the arrested time of the bombing, the passage of time since then, as well as the time of exposure necessarily in embedding the image onto the mirror plates for daguerreotype photography. Each plate is exposed for a set amount of time, and the next plate is exposed once again in succession, like generations that come after one. Moreover, the damage of the blast evident on the watch begs the question: what happened to the wearer? The absent presence of the wearer doggedly haunts the images, connecting the viewer across the time and the space of the image to the wearer who bore witness to the blast. Yet, the image refuses to recreate the wearer, and their presence is only invoked through absence. The multiplicity of images and monuments, similarly, resist a monolithic remembrance and commemoration of the past that confine the injury from the bombs to the realm of the past. Instead, "A Maquette" presents the raw edges of memory, time, and the bomb to create a set of intimate monuments that signal passage through arrest, and presence through absence.

At the same time, other works in his *Exposed in a Hundred Suns* project, creates absence through presence. It includes daguerreotype works on Daigo Fukuryu Maru, ranging from the portrait of Matashichi Oishi, a former crew member, to the Multiple Monument for Daigo Fukuryumaru (Lucky Dragon 5) series that employs similar methods as "A Maquette" for the preserved boat as the object. Even though Daigo Fukuryumaru experienced the US empire and its military's detonation of nuclear weapons on Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands, Marshallese experiences appear only as an absence in the presence of the Multiple Monuments. In capturing the multiple monuments of nuclear weapons and "[lingering] on the surface of things," the very "nuances related to our memory and emotion" become bound by the boundaries of the nation. Larger (trans)pacific cartography of resistance against imperialism and militarism, towards ideals of "peace" and "antiwar" that the photographer also notes, then, faces the task of overcoming the

tumultuous wake of specific race- and nation-based bodies in their path towards recognition and inclusion within the existing order.[263]

Acknowledgement

Chapter 4, in part, is currently being prepared for submission for publication. Dissertation author is the sole author for the publication.

[263] Takashi Arai. ”Exposed in a Hundred Suns.” *Takashiarai.com.* https://takashiarai.com/exposed-in-a-hundred-suns/#

APPENDIX/TAILBONE

> Appendix, formally vermiform appendix, in anatomy, a vestigial hollow tube that is closed at one end and is attached at the other end to the cecum, a pouchlike beginning of the large intestine into which the small intestine empties its contents. It is not clear whether the appendix serves any useful purpose in humans. Suspected functions include housing and cultivating beneficial gut flora that can repopulate the digestive system following an illness that wipes out normal populations of these flora; providing a site for the production of endocrine cells in the fetus that produce molecules important in regulating homeostasis; and serving a possible role in immune function during the first three decades of life by exposing leukocytes (white blood cells) to antigens in the gastrointestinal tract, thereby stimulating antibody production that may help modulate immune reactions in the gut. While the specific functions of the human appendix remain unclear, there is general agreement among scientists that the appendix is gradually disappearing from the human species over evolutionary time. Blockage of the appendix can lead to appendicitis, a painful and potentially dangerous inflammation.[264]
>
> In the sixth week of gestation, the human embryo possesses a tail, complete with several vertebrae. In the next couple weeks of development, however, the tail disappears, and over time the vertebrae fuse to form the coccyx, or tailbone, in the adult. Humans and their ape relatives are distinguished from other groups of primates in part by their taillessness, though it is unclear why apes lost their tails. On rare occasion, a human infant is born with a vestigial tail. In modern medical literature, such tails lack vertebrae and typically are harmless, though some are associated with spina bifida (failure of the vertebrae to completely enclose the spinal cord). Tails in human infants typically are removed through surgery without complication.[265]

Though I do not recall the first time I had Spam (I must have been too young to remember), it was probably at my grandma's place. She had left what is now North Korea during the Korean War as a 15-year-old girl, and married my grandfather who was also from a northern province. Even as a kid, I knew that the food she cooked was markedly different from the food

[264] Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "appendix." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, November 8, 2021. https://www.britannica.com/science/appendix.
[265] Rogers, Kara. "7 Vestigial Features of the Human Body." Encyclopedia Britannica, No Date. https://www.britannica.com/list/7-vestigial-features-of-the-human-body.

on my dad's side. (I do not recall ever eating Spam at my paternal grandparent's place.) My grandparents on my mom's side ate food "northern style," with a spicy topping for *dduk guk*, a traditional dish for the New Year, or going out for Pyongyang-style *naeng myun*, or cold noodles and fist-sized dumplings on special days.

When she watched my brother and me for my parents, she made us quick lunches. Spam, thinly sliced and pan-fried crispy, with rice she always soaked for a few hours before cooking, and a plate of julienned potatoes and carrots stir-fried in ketchup and *gochujang*. That's how I remember eating Spam, in my earlier memories, lying on a small plate on top of a crocheted tablecloth. I enjoyed spending time with my grandparents, with grandma and her Spam, and with grandpa who made us black bean cup noodles.

In middle school, I ate *budae jjigae* for the first time when I went over to a friend's house. Perhaps feeling much like Grace Cho's mother who did not eat *budae jjigae,* my parents and my grandparents called the stew *ggoolggool-e jook*, or pig's porridge, and never made it at home. It was both familiar and so different, cubes of Spam transforming the familiar taste of *kimchi* stew.

In my sophomore year in college, I met a neighbor from Hawai'i who introduced me to a Spam musubi. It was at its most crude form, microwaved spam on microwaved rice, as our dorm did not have a kitchenette. We did not keep in touch, but Spam musubi stayed with me. I still ate Spam the old way, thinly sliced with rice and a fried egg, but since then, I at times took out the dried seaweed and furikake to make myself a Spam musubi.

When I started my doctoral program a few years ago, I continued to run into Spam and Spam-eating or Spam-hating people. My first-year roommate from Ohio made a face and said, "Can't believe you can eat that." An undergraduate student from Oakland shared that he grew up

on Spam, and after hearing about my research, learned the intimate ties he had to US militarism, with an Oakland-native GI father, and Filippina mother. I met my partner in graduate school who ate Spam in thick pan-fried slices over rice and fried eggs with maggi sauce. After my qualifying exam, my amazing advisor brought Spam musubis to celebrate.

This dissertation project perhaps has been simmering with my countless serendipitous meetings with Spam over the years, as I shared my meals with peoples dispossessed and displaced from US imperialism and militarism. It helped me understand my grandfather, displaced during the Korean War and who never met his family other than his father again until he passed in 2016, and my only fight with him about the US military bases in South Korea. Middle school me could not comprehend how he could possibly *want* the US military to stay, but the adult me knows that his experiences of survival made him who he was.

What these serendipitous meetings with Spam also taught me—a highly educated Asian settler in the United States—is also the uneven currents that brought these disparate places and peoples together. Spam appeared in conversations about factory farm workers in the Midwest, and the invisibilized labor of migrant laborers, many of whom are from Pacific Islands. I met Spam again in Guåhan (Guam), as I, alongside hundreds of South Korean and Japanese tourists, poured out of the Antonio B. Won Pat International Airport. Though not a tourist, I had the same privilege of walking around Tumon, driving in a rented car and eating at restaurants, partaking in the tourist economy. Though not an Asian settler in Guahan, I had the privilege of visiting as a Korean and enjoyed the convenience of the infrastructure from Asian settlers, just as I had privilege as an Asian settler in the continental United States, and as a part of the overrepresented East Asian population in higher education.

So I follow my gut, the Spam-eating gut that digested my grandma's food from northern provinces of Korea, my friend's mom's *budae jjigae* and countless Spam musubis. I follow what my gut tells me about the foods we eat and we are made to eat, and about the difficult path against imperialism and militarism that must bring together such different peoples to imagine a future that is yet to exist.

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