

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: **THE GHOST AS GHOST: COMPULSORY RATIONALISM AND ASIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE, POST-1965**

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Since the early 1980s, scholarship across disciplines has employed the “ghostly” as critical lens for understanding the upheavals of modernity. The ghost stands metaphorically for the lasting trace of what has been erased, whether bodies or histories. The ghost always *stands for something*, rather than the ghost simply *is*—a conception in keeping with dominant Western rationalism. But such a reading practice threatens the very sort of violent erasure it means to redress, uncovering lost histories at the expense of non-Western and “minority” ways of knowing. What about the ghost as ghost? What about the array of non-rational knowledges out of which the ghostly frequently emerges? This project seeks to transform the application of the ghostly as scholarly lens, bringing to bear Foucault’s notion of “popular” knowledges and drawing from Asian American studies and critical mixed race studies frameworks. Its timeline begins with the 1965 Immigration Act and

traces across the 1970s-1990s rise of multiculturalism and the 1980s-2000s rise of the Multiracial Movement. For field of analysis, the project turns to Asian American literature and its rich evocations of the ghostly and compulsory rationalism, in particular Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men*, Amy Tan's *The Hundred Secret Senses*, Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman*, Lan Cao's *Monkey Bridge*, Heinz Insu Fenkl's *Memories of My Ghost Brother*, Shawna Yang Ryan's *Water Ghosts*, and Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being*. It outlines a new reading strategy, a new means of conceiving of both Asian American literature and existing "spectral" scholarship as cultural productions. It also addresses a dimension of American history and lived reality that scholarship to date has not only ignored but actively suppressed. And insofar as the reach of "spectral" scholarship extends well beyond Asian American communities and Asian American studies—across an interdisciplinary net of subjects, a cross-cultural set of histories—this project is a necessary corrective with a wide scope of consequence for scholarly practice more generally. What it offers is an alternative approach, an alternative vision, reaching for a progressive politics of the ghostly.

**THE GHOST AS GHOST: COMPULSORY RATIONALISM AND ASIAN
AMERICAN LITERATURE, POST-1965**

By

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Figures.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Schoolyard Exorcisms: Rationalist Interpellation and the Multicultural Academy.....	28
Chapter 2: Women’s Stories: The Gendered Supernatural.....	85
Chapter 3: Beyond Possessive Individualism: Mixed Race and a Progressive Politics of the Ghostly.....	123
Conclusion.....	201
Bibliography.....	212

List of Figures

Fig. 1, from Kip Fulbeck's <i>Part Asian, 100% Hapa</i> , 2006.....	171
Fig. 2, "Issei," by Laura Kina. 30 x 45, canvas, 2011.....	190
Fig. 3, "Nisei," by Laura Kina. 30 x 45, canvas, 2012.....	190
Fig. 4, "Sansei," by Laura Kina. 30 x 45, canvas, 2012.....	191
Fig. 5, "Yonsei," by Laura Kina. 30 x 45, canvas, 2012.....	191
Fig. 6, "Gonsei," by Laura Kina. 30 x 45, canvas, 2012.....	192

Introduction

In 1949 a young girl in rural Tay-Ninh, Vietnam, watched a severed leg walk. It was daytime and she was at home, perched on a bed in the master bedroom, rubbing her mother's back. The leg was just a lower leg, ending at the knee, but without any blood at the point of division. As if still attached to a whole body, it walked in natural motion across the length of the adjoining sitting room. It made no noise. The girl, who would immigrate to the U.S. in 1966, long before the end of the Vietnam/American War and the mass exodus of Vietnamese and other Southeast Asian refugees from the region, was my mother.

"It was really there," she would say of the leg, years afterwards.

*

My interest has always been in my mother's insistent "really" as much as the ghostly leg. To append it to the story is to acknowledge the cognitive leap the story requires of the American listener; or viewed from another vantage point, it signals the incommensurability of the "thing" she meant to describe and the English word "ghost." Ghost connotes the unreal, the imaginary, the stuff of hoaxes or psychological projection. *Ma*, the Vietnamese (not-quite) equivalent, carries none of these suggestions. In the Vietnam of my mother's childhood, it was uncommon for *ma* to visit—but perfectly possible. When my mother rolled my grandmother over, alerting her to the just-departed leg, the response she received was neutral: the *ma*

was probably someone drowned by French colonials in the well outside; my mother could sleep in her sister's bed that night if she were still scared. In the U.S. of the late 20th century, the same story would elicit immediate disbelief, always requiring an accompanying "really." My mother could import it, but the American context would refigure it radically.

At present no scholarly model for properly understanding this form of refiguration exists. Ghost stories have a long and rich history in America, both as oral tradition and in the space of American letters. One can locate my mother's account in a broad literary field that includes the gothic supernaturalism of Edgar Allen Poe, the ghost stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry James, and, more immediately, the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first-century resurgence of the literary supernatural highlighted by Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Over the last few decades, the ghostly has also gained considerable scholarly purchase, both as subject of analysis and even more prominently as critical lens, in literary studies, history, sociology, cultural studies, film and visual studies, postcolonial studies, and beyond, headlined by Avery Gordon's *Ghostly Matters: Haunting the Sociological Imagination*.¹

¹ Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997). Gordon points to prior work on the ghostly by a number of critical luminaries, including Horkheimer and Adorno (quoted in Gordon, 19) and Derrida (quoted in Gordon, 184). Jeffrey Weinstock's Introduction to *Spectral America: Phantoms and the National Imagination* (Madison: The U of Wisconsin P, 2004) includes a helpful and extensive bibliography of "spectral scholarship."

All of the various works of what I would call “spectral scholarship,” however broadly one defines the “field” or mode of analysis, share a basic precept: the ghost *is something*. The ghost is agent, or the ghost is construct. The ghost is a history pushed down and away but refusing to remain absent.² The ghost is a way of mourning the violence of modernity.³ The ghost is the lasting trace of Marxist thought.⁴ Never simply the ghost *is*; it always exists in terms of some metaphorical relation. Such a model fails to address the fundamental problem of my mother’s story—in fact the model itself perpetuates the problem. How can *ma*, and a system of knowledge in which they exist, be reconciled with a reading strategy that definitively eschews what Gordon calls “premodern superstition”⁵ in favor of metaphorical understandings? What does it mean to read any form of haunting solely in metaphorical terms, particularly for those who experience it otherwise, diffuse communities of ghostly knowers? And what productive avenues does such a practice foreclose?

This project begins with these questions and ultimately seeks to transform the application of the “ghostly” as scholarly lens. Joining *ma* in the twentieth and early twenty-first century American space are numerous conceptions of the “supernatural” that figure it as perfectly possible: the ghost *as ghost*. That they are “premodern,” or

² The reading Gordon advances, or part of the reading she advances, in *Ghostly Matters*. More on this reading later in the Introduction and in Chapter 1.

³ Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, “On The Theory of Ghosts,” *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (trans. John Cumming, New York: Continuum, 1944).

⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (Trans. Peggy Kamuf, New York: Routledge, 1994).

⁵ *Ghostly Matters*, 7.

vestiges of the premodern, seems precisely a reason to attend to them; after all, how they have survived and been altered by modernity potentially teaches us as much about modernity and postmodernity as it does about these lasting conceptions. That they are ineluctably *raced* and *race-ing*, emerging from immigrant and “minority” communities, always tied to racialized bodies—inextricably part, for instance, of what it means to be “Native American,” what it means to be “Asian”—makes the study of the ghostly a study of race as defining and being defined by the competition of rational and non-rational knowledges. To correct for a dominant reading practice that has systematically ignored the ghostly in its wide field of consequence, I imagine a different approach, one I will outline shortly.

First I should make clear that I do not deny wholesale the value of the spectral reading strategy. When Gordon characterizes the ghost as “crucible of political mediation and historical memory,”⁶ she illustrates the uniquely productive function of the ghost as metaphor as we inherit the legion bloody legacies of modernity. History is a story that lies, we now all agree. But to fully understand the reality of flawed narration, we need a language for describing what is erased, as well as the traces that sometimes remain. And as Gordon’s invocation of the political suggests, we must account for the power relations in play, the “whos” and “whys” of narration; control of discourse is no series of bloodless projects. Enter the ghost, a readily available metaphorical domain, offering an evocative means of picturing the violence of modernity and its imperfect erasures. The severed leg my mother witnessed readily becomes a trace of French colonialism, a graphic means of conceptualizing the

⁶ *Ghostly Matters*, 18.

Vietnamese bodies *and* histories erased by the colonial regime. To Gordon this kind of lasting presence “is a constituent element of modern social life”⁷—only she calls the presence “haunting,” and we recognize immediately what she means. As William Faulkner famously exhorted, “The past is never dead. It’s not even past”⁸—history is a living presence, here all around us. Haunting does Faulkner’s metaphor one better, the ghost intensifying that metaphorical work, loading cultural productions and scholarship with a seething mystique and charge: what was repressed always remains, *reminding constantly of the conditions of its repression*. The symbolic ghost gives a name to the unnamed and a name to their erasure, a necessary language for thinking through our contemporary condition.

“Subjugated knowledges,”⁹ Michel Foucault writes, “are those blocs of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematizing theory.” Gordon’s concern with imperfectly erased histories flows naturally out of such a formulation—Gordon cites Foucault directly, in fact. But Foucault stresses that he means “two things” by subjugated knowledges, and he goes on to delineate the second variety:

⁷ *Ghostly Matters*, 7.

⁸ Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (New York: Random House, 1950).

⁹ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980, 82). I adopt Foucault’s framing and make use of his language—“subjugated knowledge,” “popular knowledge,” “official knowledge”—to describe the ghostly and the rational throughout the dissertation; a religious studies approach might make an analogous inquiry substituting “knowledge” for “belief.”

a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity.¹⁰

The *required* level of cognition or scientificity: one is reminded that subjugated knowledges always exist in relation to a subjugating knowledge. Whether histories or popular/folk knowledges, subjugated knowledges are always managed and deprived by an official knowledge regime that establishes its dominion and claims to universality precisely by way of this subjugation, by way of articulating, continually, what it is not and what must be vanquished. By discounting “premodern superstition,” by discounting literal conceptions of the supernatural, a move repeated at least implicitly by virtually all other spectral scholars, Gordon forecloses the potential viabilities of the popular knowledges Foucault outlines. Conducted systematically, spectral scholarship threatens to enact the very sort of violent erasure it means to redress, uncovering lost histories at the expense of other vital ways of knowing. And the allure of this approach is such that it makes invisible the epistemic violence it conducts against communities of ghostly knowers.

BELOVED

Nowhere has this dynamic been at once more starkly visible and invisible than in the popular and critical reception of Morrison’s *Beloved*. It is difficult to overstate the novel’s prominence as cultural touchstone: winner of the 1988 Pulitzer Prize and the 1988 *Publisher’s Weekly* Frederic G. Melcher Book Award, ranked in a 2006 *New York Times* survey of writers and literary critics as the best work of American fiction

¹⁰ *Power/Knowledge*, 82.

of the past 25 years,¹¹ subject of a massive and ever-growing body of literary criticism,¹² the book that with little question launched Morrison to the 1993 Nobel Prize for Literature, the book that earned her a 2012 Presidential Medal of Freedom. As Gordon puts it, *Beloved*'s "monumental importance goes well beyond, although clearly through the very medium of, its literary achievements...the full weight of Morrison's contribution will rest on the exceptional premise of the book"¹³: that is, its engagement with Slavery with a capitol S, specifically its engagement via the ghostly. The novel's titular character Beloved is ghost as readily available metaphor, stand-in for Slavery as historical phenomenon that remains with us today, a way to understand its lasting presence, how something "dead" can continue to "live" and

¹¹ "What Is the Best Work of American Fiction of the Last 25 Years?" *The New York Times* 21 May 2006. accessed 20 Feb. 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/21/books/fiction-25-years.html?ex=1305864000&en=d3f9cc78ce4c00b7&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss&_r=0

¹² Gordon supplies a fairly extensive scholarly literature review for *Beloved*; a sampling of that bibliography includes a special issue of *Modern Fiction Studies* 39:3-4 (Fall-Winter): 1994; a special section of *Cultural Critique* 24 (Spring): 1993; Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Kwame Anthony Appiah, eds., *Toni Morrison: Critical Perspectives Past and Present* (New York: Amistad, 1993); and Barbara Hill Rigney, "'A Story to Pass On': Ghosts and the Significance of History in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," *Haunting the House of Fiction: Feminist Perspectives on Ghost Stories by American Women*, eds. Lynette Carpenter and Wendy Kolmar (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1991, 229-35). For a selection of more recent work, published post-*Ghostly Matters*, see Justine Tally, *Toni Morrison's Beloved: Origins* (New York, Routledge, 2009); Melanie Anderson, *Spectrality in the Novels of Toni Morrison* (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 2013); and Valerie Smith, *Toni Morrison: Writing the Moral Imagination* (Malden: Wiley, 2012).

¹³ *Ghostly Matters*, 139.

shape the present and future, “haunting the post-Civil War and by allegorical reference the post-civil rights era.”¹⁴

The vast majority of *Beloved* criticism adopts some variation of this approach, whether explicitly or implicitly. Made almost entirely invisible is *Beloved* as simply a ghost—and a body of ghostly knowledge that would understand her as simply a ghost. Gordon devotes an entire chapter of *Ghostly Matters* to *Beloved*, a work she regards as “one of the most significant contributions to the understanding of haunting,”¹⁵ in the process summoning up ghostly knowledge only to summarily vanquish it:

The significance of ghosts and particularly spirit work in African-American culture and letters no doubt owes some of its origin to their respected place in African life and thought, “a consciousness implicated,” as Robinson puts it, “in what Amos Tutuola so many generations later would name the ‘bush of ghosts.’”¹⁶ But above and beyond the African inheritance, it is not so difficult to see that any people who are not graciously permitted to amend the past, or control the often barely visible structuring forces of everyday life...is bound to develop a sophisticated consciousness of ghostly haunts and is bound to call for an “official inquiry” into them.¹⁷

Consider Gordon’s language here: *above and beyond the African heritage*—not in addition to. Reading becomes an either/or proposition, her vision of the ghostly not

¹⁴ *Ghostly Matters*, 168. In Chapter 1 I argue that Kingston’s *Woman Warrior* is a cultural touchstone—reputedly the most taught text in modern American university education, per the Modern Language Association—for analogous reasons, for the ghost it offers as productive, portable metaphor.

¹⁵ *Ghostly Matters*, 139.

¹⁶ Gordon cites Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (London: Zed Books, 1983, 245) and recommends also Barbara Christian, “Fixing Methodologies: *Beloved*” (*Cultural Critique* 24 (Spring): 5-15). Nigerian novelist Amos Tutuola’s *Bush of Ghosts* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954) draws heavily upon West African Yoruba myths and folk-tales.

¹⁷ *Ghostly Matters*, 151.

supplementary, not syncretic, but competitive. She invokes the rich contextual surround of African popular knowledge out of which Beloved as ghost “no doubt” derives, and by means of which Beloved might surely be understood more fully,¹⁸ only to casually deprivilege it. Popular knowledge is but a point of contrast, the “below” in relation to which her conception of haunting can be the “above.” *Low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity.* She never returns to “the African inheritance,” nor to African American popular knowledge, what she calls “spirit work in African-American culture and letters.”

Once again, to advance a particular conception of haunting—“the ghost, heterogeneously but cooperatively, as metaphor, as salve, as a fundamental epistemology for living in the vortex of North America”¹⁹—Gordon distances it from any “premodern superstition.” As much as Gordon’s reading positions itself as critique of rationality (a critique I will examine at length in Chapter 1), it can only mount so radical an assault. As spectral scholarship draws upon the non-rational, it counterbalances by grounding itself in the safely rational, finding its opportunity to do so in the rationalist rejection of the unacceptably non-rational. Which just so happens, not so coincidentally, to be the stuff of African and African American cultural traditions, here, and elsewhere indigenous, Latino, Latin American, and Asian, Asian diasporic, and Asian American cultural traditions—making such a rejection difficult not to see as racially inflected, even as Gordon’s project, like much

¹⁸ For scholarship that does conduct this work, see K. Zauditu-Selassie, *African Spiritual Traditions in the Novels of Toni Morrison* (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2009).

¹⁹ *Ghostly Matters*, 151.

of spectral scholarship, bills itself as anti-racist and conducts admittedly valuable anti-racist work.

I am not interested in providing another reading of *Beloved* per se. I introduce the novel and its reception as an opportunity to examine the mechanics of spectral scholarship and begin to historicize the ascendance of a particular way of reading and applying the ghostly. But offering such an alternate reading of *Beloved* turns out to be unnecessary: a recent Asian American novel, Shawna Yang Ryan's *Water Ghosts*, provides, as rewriting of *Beloved*, its own alternate reading, one that forges a helpful pathway for my project. Published in 2009, *Water Ghosts* announces itself as rewriting from its outset, opening with an epigraph from Morrison's 1993 Nobel Prize acceptance speech. It borrows *Beloved*'s central conceit, its own three "water ghosts" "returning" just as *Beloved* returns, its central ghost, Ming Wai, attaching herself to "former" husband Richard Fong just as *Beloved* attaches herself to "former" mother Sethe. In place of Slavery, *Water Ghosts* offers the history of Chinese immigrant bachelorhood in America, and the humming absence of Chinese women.²⁰ But *Water Ghosts* also crucially makes visible the very tension Gordon-ian readings of *Beloved* enact and simultaneously hide from view. *Water Ghosts* shows us the competition of ghostly and rationalist knowledges, shows us, via the characters Uncle Happy and Poppy See, rationalism working to delegitimize popular knowledge

²⁰ Legally excluded by means of the 1875 Page Act, which created a class of Chinese wives "left behind" in China and a vast, invisible class of Chinese female sex workers smuggled into America. See the full text of the Act archived here: <http://library.uwb.edu/guides/USimmigration/18%20stat%20477.pdf>. See also George Anthony Peffer, *If They Don't Bring Their Women Here: Chinese Female Immigration Before Exclusion* (Champaign: U of Illinois P, 1999).

carried from China to America. Late in the novel, Uncle Happy, Chinese immigrant and one-time ghostly knower himself, tells Poppy

It's all superstition. I stopped burning dead money forty years ago. These dates—they stick in my mind: Ghost Month, Tomb Sweeping Day. I try to forget them, but the memory pops up. Things I used to do. But do I believe in them? There are no ghosts. There is no such thing, little Poppy. No ghosts—only our regrets (229-30).

Only there *are* ghosts in the space of the novel, unquestionably. Thus we see that, as natural(izing) part of his process of assimilation, Uncle Happy has adopted American rationalism, including its imperative to police the ghostly. *Water Ghosts* not only gives us the ghost as ghost, and the outlines of a popular knowledge by which to apprehend it, but also foregrounds the quintessentially American context, what I would call compulsory rationalism, that would render that ghost impossible.

Beloved ends with Beloved disappearing. Here is Gordon's gloss:

What is to be done? First the ghost that haunts 124 Bluestone Road in 1873 will have to be evicted...The second task involves confronting the trauma of the Middle Passage, confronting what reaches down deep beneath the waters or beneath the symbolics of emancipation, free labor, free citizen.²¹

If Beloved herself is forced confrontation with the lasting trace of Slavery, her ultimate disappearance is allegorical opportunity to engage the Middle Passage as fundamental rupture in American history, and in the very idea of America—the Middle Passage as “decisive episode,” writes Gordon, “that establishes the amnesiac conditions of American freedom.”²² In other words, the exorcism of the ghost carries

²¹ *Ghostly Matters*, 168.

²² *Ghostly Matters*, 169.

an irresistible symbolic potentiality, and responsibility, for our work as American scholars, scholars of America.

But in *Water Ghosts*, the ghost never leaves. Whereas Sethe breaks free at last of Beloved's grip, Ming Wai kills Richard and takes his place. *Water Ghosts* ends with the ghost, and if that narrative turn carries inviting allegorical possibilities about gendered immigration and assimilation in Chinese American history, it also insists that we deal, at last, with the ghost as ghost. It denies the possibility of total immersion in the potentiality and responsibility Gordon outlines. Here in the space of Asian American literature is the opening of another possibility for reading the ghostly.

ASIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE, A "SHADOW HISTORY"

Water Ghosts is just one novel in a great corpus of Asian American literary works that engage the ghostly. Across the landscape of Asian American literature appears the supernatural of every stripe: ghosts, spirits, demons, karma, and shamanism, including clairvoyance and other modes of extrasensory perception and superhuman capabilities. But this is not fantasy literature or speculative fiction,²³ freed from sociohistorical contexts, set in some parallel universe or distant future, freed from much of what we accept as the governing rules and codes of contemporary reality.

The dominant epistemology of the United States, scientific rationalism, still holds

²³ Asian American speculative fiction is a fast-growing "genre." See Charles Yu, *How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe* (New York: Pantheon, 2010); E. Lily Yu, "The Cartographer Wasps and the Anarchist Bees," *Clarkesworld* (accessed 24 Feb. 2014, http://clarkesworldmagazine.com/yl_04_11/); and Ken Liu, "Algorithms for Love," *Strange Horizons* (accessed 24 Feb. 2014, <http://www.strangehorizons.com/2004/20040712/algorithms.shtml>).

sway—prominently. Almost always accompanying the ghostly in Asian American literature is the tension of disbelief, not in the space of readerly reception but anticipated and dramatized within the narratives themselves. It manifests in various forms, including, frequently, the kind of “collision”²⁴ we see in *Water Ghosts*, where popular knowledge butts uncomfortably against compulsory rationalism to sometimes violent consequences. The drama of my mother’s story takes center stage.

This is a necessary corrective, it turns out, this vein of Asian American literature. My mother arrived in the U.S. early for a Vietnamese, in 1966. Ghostly knowledge would make its way to America by means of multiple waves of Southeast Asian refugees and immigrants between the mid-1970s and the 1990s.²⁵ Anne Fadiman’s popular nonfiction work *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures* examines Hmong immigrant spiritual practice, including ghostly knowledge in particular, in tension with the American medical system in Merced, California, in the mid-1980s. Jean M.

²⁴ I borrow this language from Stephanie Smallwood’s essay “Commodified Freedom: Interrogating the Limits of Anti-Slavery Ideology in the Early Republic” (*Journal of the Early Republic* 24(Summer 2004): 289–98). Smallwood writes of commodification competing with and silencing other systems of representation; I see an analogous dynamic at play between supernatural and rationalist ways of knowing. Smallwood too notes a debt to Foucault, though in her case to *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970). Anne Fadiman’s *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1998) also usefully employs the term “collision.”

²⁵ Heonik Kwon’s *After the Massacre: Commemoration and Consolation in Ha My and My Lai* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2006) and *Ghosts of War in Vietnam* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008) provide an extensive survey of ghostly knowledge in Vietnam, particularly revolving around the ghosts resulting from Vietnam/American War deaths. Almost no work has been done, however, to examine this body of knowledge as carried by Vietnamese refugees fleeing the region post-War.

Langford's *Consoling Ghosts: Stories of Medicine and Mourning from Southeast Asians in Exile* focuses on ghostly knowledge in Hmong, Laotian, and Cambodian refugee/immigrant communities in the U.S.²⁶ Jonathan H.X. Lee and Kathleen M. Nadeau have recently edited a series of titles on Asian American folklore, which include explorations of the Asian American ghostly.²⁷ But these are lone examples, some of the few in existence;²⁸ work expressly on ghostly popular knowledge in Asian American communities is limited, our picture of the ghostly in contemporary communities hazy at best, much like our picture of the ghostly, for that matter, in early 20th and late 19th century immigrant enclaves²⁹ such as the one imagined in

²⁶ Langford's study is also one of the only that, like mine, distinguishes between literal and metaphorical understandings of ghosts.

²⁷ Jonathan H.X. Lee and Kathleen M. Nadeau, eds., *Amerasia Journal* (39.2 (Asian American Folklore: Passages and Practices, 2013)); Jonathan H.X. Lee and Kathleen M. Nadeau, eds., *Encyclopedia of Asian American Folklore and Folklife* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010); Jonathan H.X. Lee and Kathleen M. Nadeau, eds., *Asian American Identities and Practices: Folkloric Expressions in Everyday Life* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).

²⁸ Asian American religious studies pays relatively little attention to shamanic practice and "ghost belief" in Asian American communities (perhaps in an effort to distance itself from Asian religious studies, sometimes charged with Orientalism and exoticization). Among the major recent Asian American religious studies anthologies, one finds almost no work on the ghostly: David K. Yoo, ed., *New Spiritual Homes: Religion and Asian Americans* (Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1999); Jung Ha Kim and Pyong Gap Min, eds., *Religions in Asian America: Building Faith Communities* (Lanham: AltaMira, 2001); Jane Iwamura and Paul Spickard, eds., *Revealing the Sacred in Asian and Pacific America* (London: Routledge, 2003); and Tony Carnes and Fenggang Yang, eds., *Asian American Religions: The Making and Remaking of Borders and Boundaries* (New York: NYU Press, 2004). But as aforementioned, one does find a promising recent attention to the ghostly by way of Asian American "folkloric" studies.

²⁹ For the introduction of Chinese healing practices into 19th-century American life, including some measure of ghostly knowledge, see Linda L. Barnes, *Needles, Herbs, Gods, and Ghosts: China, Healing, and the West to 1848* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2005).

Water Ghosts. What little we do know historically has never been held up together, never considered collectively as a sort of tradition across ethnic communities, regions, and histories—certainly not a tradition defined *by the fact of being under siege*. I would call this a vital “shadow history” of Asian America. It is a hidden history of epistemic violence, the largely ignored or erased struggles of assimilation in terms of compulsory rationalism—how Asian Americans have been made into (partially) acceptable cultural citizens by way of stripping away investments in unacceptable non-rational knowledges. Asian American literature alone gives us the strands of this shadow history, providing what American history, Asian American studies, and religious studies do not.

Asian American studies in particular can be singled out as troublingly adopting the dominant heuristics of academia writ large. Troublingly because of the field’s origins and putative mission: as numerous scholars have documented, Asian American studies was born in the student protests of the 1960s amidst demands for representation in the classroom and university governance more generally.³⁰ As field of study and critical practice, Asian American studies emerged to challenge an academy not simply blind to the histories and material realities of Asians in America but active in keeping those histories and realities invisible. The mission statement of the Association for Asian American Studies (AAAS), excerpted below, codifies these aims, though, notably, with the political charge largely defused:

³⁰ For histories of the origins of Asian American studies, see Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu, eds., *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 2001).

The Association for Asian American Studies was founded in 1979 for the purpose of advancing the highest professional standard of excellence in teaching and research in the field of Asian American Studies; promoting better understanding and closer ties between and among various [ethnic] sub-components within Asian American Studies...The organization advocates and represents the interests and welfare of Asian American Studies and Asian Americans. AAAS is also founded for the purpose of educating American society about the history and aspirations of Asian American ethnic minorities.³¹

Via the formation of this (nominally depoliticized) mission, via the formation of an official Association, via the inception and development of academic units—Asian American studies programs, departments, and centers at colleges and universities across the country—Asian American studies’ relationship to the academy has necessarily shifted over time. Mark Chiang among others has examined the institutionalization of the field, and how this institutionalization has shaped the (in)coherence of any political agenda.³² I would argue that part and parcel of this institutionalization has been a perhaps osmotic absorption of a rationalist stance vis a vis the ghostly. Across Asian American studies one finds an uncritical adoption of the spectral scholarly approach³³ and an endemic inattention to the “shadow history”

³¹ <http://aaastudies.org/content/index.php/about-aaas/about-aaas>

³² Chiang, *The Cultural Capital of Asian American Studies: Autonomy and Representation in the University* (New York: NYU Press, 2009).

³³ Consider, for instance, this CFP for a special issue of *Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies*, “Phantom Asian America,” and its consistently metaphorical framing of the ghostly: “‘Phantom Asian America’ invites essays that probe into histories, literatures and other modes of cultural expression to reflect on the making and meaning of Asian America. We invoke the image of the ‘phantom’ to highlight not only the instability and permeability of Asian America but also the haunting power and affecting forces of Asian American experiences. Issues of concern may include: Is Asian America a ‘phantom’ entity?...With what strategies could we excavate the “phantom histories”—histories repressed and untold—about Asian America?” See also the following recent Asian American studies monographs, each of which adopts a spectral scholarly approach: Josephine Nock-Hee Park,

sketched out above—a great distance, in this particular regard, between the lived realities of Asian American communities³⁴ and the scholarship and teaching taking place in the academy. In the process Asian American studies has become complicit with the larger rationalist project to deprivilege the knowledge systems of the very Asian American communities it means to represent and for whom it means to advocate. The field participates, if blindly, if by failure of action, in the violent management of knowledge production by and about Asian Americans.

Thus my project is an important and necessary intervention in Asian American studies. It makes an immediate contribution to Asian American literary studies, building a reading strategy through which to interpret Asian American literature anew, offering a fresh means of conceiving of that body as cultural production, settling it within a heretofore ignored set of sociocultural/epistemological contexts. My project also addresses a dimension of Asian American history and lived reality that scholarship to date has not only ignored but actively suppressed, showing the mechanics and consequences of that suppression. And insofar as the reach of spectral scholarship extends well beyond Asian American communities and Asian American studies—across an interdisciplinary net of subjects, a cross-cultural set of histories—

Apparitions of Asia: Modernist Form and Asian American Poetics (New York: Oxford UP, 2008); Glen M. Mimura, *Ghostlife of Third Cinema: Asian American Film and Video* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2009); and Juliana Chang, *Inhuman Citizenship: Traumatic Enjoyment and Asian American Literature* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2012).

³⁴ This is not to suggest some uniform embrace of popular ghostly knowledge within Asian American communities; the literary texts I examine in the course of the dissertation often picture epistemic tensions emerging within communities. Nonetheless there is certainly popular ghostly knowledge circulating in Asian American communities, a reality Asian American studies almost uniformly fails to engage.

my project is a necessary corrective with a wide scope of consequence for scholarly practice more generally. What it offers is an alternative approach, an alternative vision, reaching for a progressive politics of the ghostly.

MAGICAL REALIST CRITIQUE?

Before continuing, it seems prudent to first take a lateral step and address another contemporary model for understanding the supernatural, magical realist criticism. Coined as a literary mode in the mid-twentieth century, by now a fairly standard designation, magical realism has been infrequently “claimed” by U.S. authors and infrequently applied to their works by literary studies.³⁵ Magical realism’s relatively limited foothold in the U.S. aside, as critical approach it does share some key suppositions with my proposed interpretive framework, so it is necessary to distinguish between the two and establish why the former is an insufficient corrective/supplement to spectral scholarship.

What magical realist criticism offers is a productive framing of the literary supernatural as a challenge to dominant Western conceptions of the real. According to Stephen Slemon, magical realism “carries a residuum of resistance toward the imperial center and to its totalizing systems of generic classification.”³⁶ Avoiding a pat, rational explanation of the supernatural, casting it as neither false nor imagined,

³⁵ Prominent Asian American author Karen Tei Yamashita’s work is sometimes labeled magical realist, and does shall the hallmarks of that literary “mode.” See in particular her novels *Through the Arc of the Rain Forest* (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1990) and *Tropic of Orange* (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1997).

³⁶ Slemon, “Magic Realism as Postcolonial Discourse,” *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* (Eds. Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, Duke UP: Durham, 1995, 408).

the magical realist narrative puts accepted notions of the real in question. This is roughly how my refigured notion of the ghostly challenges popular conceptions of the supernatural as well. At the heart of both my reading and magical realist criticism is a concern with the tension over what is accounted real and unreal. But as Slemon's mention of *generic* classification suggests, for magical realist criticism the focus is first and foremost on literary modes, and then, by extension, on the governing epistemologies out of which literary modes emerge. In fact I import the term "epistemologies" here; a good deal of magical realist criticism never concerns itself with epistemology per se, preferring instead to remain on the level of narratological dynamics, or perhaps the apprehension of these dynamics by the reader. The matter of the supernatural as manifestation of popular knowledges very rarely enters into play.

Nor does magical realist criticism address the collision of popular knowledges and official discourse—perhaps because the magical realist text itself, by standard definition, "combines realism and the fantastic so that the marvelous seems to grow organically within the ordinary, blurring the distinction between them."³⁷ We find the magical and the real suspended, neither one privileged over the other—a clear departure from how the dominant culture typically weighs the two. Thus the tension is staged not *within* the magical realist text but between the text and the Western reader's received notions of reality, an effect, according to Wendy Faris, that constitutes one of the five defining characteristics of the literary mode. Locating the tension in this fashion opens a number of narrative and critical channels; my concern

³⁷ Wendy Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative* (Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 2004, 1).

is that it also screens over the “reallys,” draws attention away from epistemic collisions and what emerges from these collisions. In magical realist criticism, the Western Conception of the Real, capitol C, comes into focus as object of scrutiny, but at the expense of conceptions of the real in lower-case, the regular, day-to-day instantiations and their interactions with regular, day-to-day instantiations of the unreal.

A final shortcoming is the failure to consider the matter of metaphorical interpretation. Though magical realist criticism consistently frames the supernatural in terms of the rational and non-rational, it also features occasional slippage between literal and metaphorical readings of the supernatural,³⁸ and without any accompanying consideration of how a metaphorical reading is itself a product of Western scientific rationalism and, therefore, also potentially totalizing. For these reasons, magical realist criticism does not constitute a suitable model for the refiguration of the ghostly. Another model is necessary.

RECITATIF

In 1983 Toni Morrison published “Recitatif,”³⁹ the only short story she has ever published, one she would later call a “failed experiment.”⁴⁰ The title is allusion to a

³⁸ See, for example, P. Gabrielle Foreman’s “Past-On Stories: History and the Magically Real, Morrison and Allende on Call,” *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* (Eds. Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, Duke UP: Durham, 1995) and Stephen M. Hart’s “Magical Realism in the Americas: Politicised Ghosts in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *The House of Spirits*, and *Beloved*,” *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* (Eds. Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, Duke UP: Durham, 1995).

³⁹ Collected in *Confirmation: An Anthology of African American Women*, Amiri Baraka and Amina Baraka, eds. (New York: Morrow, 1983).

particular style of musical declamation, episodic and existing between song and ordinary speech; accordingly “Recitatif” is structured into five encounters between two characters, Twyla and Roberta, each episode branching to engage different avenues of these same two characters’ lives. As *Beloved* is important reference point for my project, I borrow too from “Recitatif,” taking its basic approach as my own. In the three chapters that follow, I engage a set of key Asian American literary works repeatedly, returning to them as “Recitatif” returns to Twyla and Roberta—returning from different vectors in different chapters, addressing the same works to pursue different scholarly investments, ones I will outline shortly. These texts include the canonical (Maxine Hong Kingston’s *Woman Warrior* and *China Men*), the problematic (Amy Tan’s *The Hundred Secret Senses*), and the indeterminate (outside what is normally considered Asian American literature—Heinz Insu Fenkl’s *Memories of My Ghost Brother* and Ruth Ozeki’s *A Tale for the Time Being*), as well as a sampling of other works, including Nora Okja Keller’s *Comfort Woman*, Lan Cao’s *Monkey Bridge*, and Shawna Yang Ryan’s *Water Ghosts*.⁴¹

My project is to read the ghost as ghost. This means eschewing the dominant metaphorical reading practice to which so much contemporary scholarship defaults and, drawing upon Foucault-ian, Asian American studies, and critical mixed race

⁴⁰ Morrison, *Playing the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992, preface).

⁴¹ There are a number of prominent, provocative literary works exploring the ghostly by South Asian American authors, including Michael Ondaatje’s *Anil’s Ghost*, Rakesh Satyal’s *Blue Boy*, Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide*, Shilpa Agarwal’s *Haunting Bombay*, and Bharati Mukherjee’s “The Management of Grief.” I address none of these in the course of my project only because they are less generative for my particular avenues of scholarly investment—though I do reference several in the dissertation’s conclusion.

studies frameworks, examining the literal movement of ghosts across Asian American literature. It means attending carefully to the popular knowledges out of which the ghostly arises, according to which the ghost can in fact be literal, can be meaningful in ways rationalism will not allow. It means illuminating a few small rooms in this shadow history of Asian America, then peering deep into the shade cast over them—and what casts that shade. If unlike other bodies of ethnic or “minority” literature, Asian American literature persistently plumbs the ghostly as recurring site of tension in American history and lived experience, my work is to trace how and when and why the ghostly circulates. At once it is to consider rationalist machinery as institutional structure, to consider the ghostly in terms of State-engineered *space*: where we are made into rationalist subjects, through what public offices and programs and mechanisms; where, accordingly, ghostly knowledge can circulate, privately and publicly; and finally where popular and official knowledges come into contact, and to what consequences. All of this, of course, is raced work: the ghostly and the rational are always tied up in projects to define “Asian-ness” and whiteness. Hence my dissertation is a reexamination of immigration and assimilation, racial identity formation and racial discourse, as not simply epistemological work but as vying expressly between the ghostly and the rational.

My timeline begins with the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Celler Act. Abolishing the national origins quota system in place since the 1920s, the Act threw open the nation’s doors to new waves of immigration, in particular new populations of Asian immigrants, dramatically changing the face of Asian America and America more generally. We find sporadic works of Asian

American literature earlier, in the early and mid-20th century,⁴² and some literary histories will include a smattering of 19th century works as well,⁴³ but “Asian American” only became a popular identity category in the late 1960s;⁴⁴ Asian American literature began its boom proper in the 1970s, with most ghostly Asian American literature appearing after that time. If the ghostly was always already here,⁴⁵ it became hyper-visible post-1965, not least by means of the publication and later “canonization” of Maxine Hong Kingston’s *Woman Warrior*. Unsurprisingly the 1965 Immigration Act heralded not only a massive influx of bodies but a national anxiety about that influx: how to manage these new populations, their cultural practices, their radically different ways of knowing? I am particularly interested in

⁴² Canonical pre-1965 works include Sui Sin Far’s *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings*, Carlos Bulosan’s *America Is In the Heart*, John Okada’s *No-No Boy*, Toshio Mori’s *Yokohama, California*, and Younghill Kang’s *East Goes West*. Other less well-known early 20th century works include Nagahara Shoson’s *Lament in the Night*, H.T. Tsiang’s *The Hanging on Union Square*, and Winnifred Eaton’s *The Heart of Hyacinth*.

⁴³ See Elaine H. Kim, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1984).

⁴⁴ First coined, reputedly, in the formation of the group “Asian American Political Alliance” by University of California, Berkeley graduate student Yuji Ichioka in 1968. See <http://aam1968.blogspot.com/2008/01/asian-american-political-alliance-1968.html>. Mark Chiang argues that “Asian American literature” can only come into being when “Asian American” becomes a socially recognized category of identity. See the chapter “The Political Economy of Minority Literature,” *The Cultural Capital of Asian American Studies: Autonomy and Representation in the University* (New York: NYU Press, 2009).

⁴⁵ By way of Chinese and Filipino immigrants arriving as early as the 1700s. There is also, of course, a long tradition of American literary ghost stories (see works by Edgar Allen Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry James), as well as a long oral tradition of ghost stories (see for instance Judith Richardson, *Possessions: The History and Uses of Haunting in the Hudson Valley* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2005)).

Asian American literary representations of the ghostly as not only products of immigration, written by immigrants and children of immigrants about immigrant communities, but also as attempts to manage the ghostly—or marshalled as attempts to manage the ghostly. I read the ghostly specifically in relation to two collective responses to the changing racial demographics of the nation, the rise of multiculturalism in the 1970s through the 1990s and the rise of the Multiracial Movement in the late 80s, 90s, and early 2000s.

She entered the country in 1966 carrying ghost stories like a sheaf of papers under her arm. I am, of course, my mother's son, inheritor of her history, inheritor of her ghostly experience and ghostly knowledge. My approach to this project, like my investment in it, cannot but be informed by personal history. So I thread strands of our shared narrative into each of the chapters of the dissertation, both as points of departure and as anchors in popular knowledge and lived reality. I also approach the project as not only a scholar of Asian American literature but an editor: since 2009 I have directed the Washington, D.C.-based arts nonprofit The Asian American Literary Review (AALR), serving as co-editor-in-chief of its biannual literary journal by the same name, publishing several of the writers whose work is addressed in this project, corresponding with each of them (save Nora Okja Keller), in many cases expressly with regards to the ghostly. From 2012 to present, I have overseen development of the Mixed Race Initiative, AALR's global digital education initiative on mixed race—at the heart of which was a special journal issue, "Mixed Race in a Box," work from which I draw upon in Chapter 3. Editing "Mixed Race in a Box" and participating in the education program importantly shaped my understanding of

mixed race representation, “community,” and scholarship, just as editing AALR over the years has shaped my understanding of Asian American literature, literary production, publishing, authorship, and reception. Accordingly this project engages Asian American literary texts as cultural productions with social lives, considering the climates out of which and into which they emerge, considering reception histories and market forces and the literary canon, considering how these works actively participate in national discourses of race and the ghostly.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter 1, “Schoolyard Exorcisms: Rationalist Interpellation and the Multicultural Academy,” begins with *Woman Warrior*, the ur-text of Asian American literature and a central point in the rise of multiculturalism in the academy. Its depiction of the To Keung School of Midwifery is a critical opening point in two senses, I argue. It is the first of many representational linkages we find in Asian American literature between the ghostly and the School as rationalist institution. Moving from *Woman Warrior* to *Memories of My Ghost Brother*, from *Monkey Bridge* to *The Hundred Secret Senses*, drawing upon Althusser’s theorization of ideological state apparatuses, I trace a sustained literary exploration of the School working to create good rationalist subjects and police the circulation of ghostly knowledge. The To Keung School also points us off the page to the academy of the 1970s to 1990s, to multiculturalism as an attempt to manage immigration and the dangers of the ghostly. Here I turn to Avery Gordon’s *Ghostly Matters* and situate spectral scholarship as outgrowth of multiculturalism—spectral scholarship as extension of the School as interpellating

institution. I end with a reading of *Water Ghosts*, theorizing epistemic tension in terms of both space—domestic and public, national and transnational—and time, sketching out a working model of the reach and mechanics of the dominant rationalist knowledge regime.

Chapter 2, “Women’s Stories: The Gendered Supernatural,” uses Kingston’s second novel, *China Men*, as frame, examining the ghostly narrative as “woman’s way of knowing” and epistemological collision as gendered enterprise. Whenever the supernatural appears in Asian American literature, it is women who espouse popular knowledges, frequently mothers; men consistently counter with official knowledge—discounting at once the possibility of the supernatural *and* women’s claim to knowledge. But as *Comfort Woman* and *Monkey Bridge* illustrate, the woman as supernatural knower is not without power. Taking the ghost as ghost: what avenues does that open for women, and in particular, for women authors? My argument enters a dialogue about the gendered supernatural first opened by Lynette Carpenter and Wendy Kolmar’s *Haunting the House of Fiction: Feminist Perspectives on Ghosts Stories by American Women*. By introducing popular knowledge as a crucial field of context, I broaden the terms of debate and open new avenues for apprehending both gender construction and discourses of the ghostly.

Chapter 3, “Beyond Possessive Individualism: Mixed Race and a Progressive Politics of the Ghostly,” considers the rise of the Multiracial Movement and the crossing of mixed race and the ghostly. Like a number of other contemporary novels, *Memories of My Ghost Brother* and *Comfort Woman* plot the ghostly into bildungsroman form as a means to resolve it as epistemological problem; they also

each map mixed race onto the ghostly, using mixed race identity formation as a way to rethink ghostly knowing, and vice versa. I contextualize these moves in terms of the “possessive individualism” of the Multiracial Movement. Drawing upon critical mixed race studies and the work of scholar Michele Elam in particular, I argue the limitations and dangers of such a framing, then look to more recent aesthetic crossings of mixed race and the ghostly—as offered in *Water Ghosts, A Tale for the Time Being*, and an untitled portrait-text series by artist Laura Kina—for new models of ghostly and mixed race representation, new conceptions of what progressive politics of mixed race and the ghostly might look like.

Chapter 1

Schoolyard Exorcisms: Rationalist Interpellation and the Multicultural Academy

She came to the U.S. in 1966. In the thick of the War, one year after the passage of the Hart-Celler Act. Most Vietnamese would arrive later, post-Fall of Saigon, as refugees. My mother arrived as an exchange student, on scholarship to pursue a PhD in molecular biology at the University of Kansas. Everything is here. Immigration radically rewriting the face of America. Ghost stories carried like a sheaf of papers. And the School as gateway to America.

*

Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* has become, per Modern Language Association reports, the most commonly taught text in modern university education. A reason, perhaps *the* reason, is the book was visibly and provocatively Asian American at a time when academia was clamoring to diversify the canon⁴⁶ and needed, precisely, a *Woman Warrior* to fill its all-your-food-groups dinner plate. But

⁴⁶ For considerations of canonicity and multiculturalism, see Paul Lauter, *Canons and Contexts* (New York: Oxford UP, 1991) and David Palumbo-Liu, ed., *The Ethnic Canon: Histories, Institutions, and Interventions* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1995).

there is another reason, or rather a reason within that reason, and it points us to what I would argue is the pivotal place of the ghostly in the changing academy of the 1970s to the present.

Like Beloved of *Beloved*, the No-Name woman of *Woman Warrior* gave us haunting as metaphor, neatly portable, eminently poignant, and decidedly *raced*. A way to manage, in other words, the instability of the shifting canon, and more broadly, the multiculturalism⁴⁷ that would refigure everything from university curricula to campus infrastructure to “Why Attend State U?” marketing copy. The founding ghost of Asian American letters, the No-Name Woman haunts not only “Maxine,” the book’s narrator, not only “Maxine Hong Kingston” the author-persona, and not only the tremendous corpus of Kingston scholarship⁴⁸ that has emerged, but a vast circuit of “multicultural” discourse.

The No-Name Woman has no name, we know, because her town has carefully excised her from collective memory. She exists as a brief story, told only in private, and never with a mention of her actual name. Having committed the unforgivable

⁴⁷ Admittedly this is a slippery phenomenon, with a catalogue of criticism devoted to it. I will draw extensively from *Mapping Multiculturalism*, eds. Avery Gordon and Christopher Newfield (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996). For an incisive examination of the multiculturalist reshaping of the academy, see David Lloyd, “Foundations of Diversity: Thinking the University in a Time of Multiculturalism,” *Culture and the Problem of the Disciplines* (ed. John Carlos Rowe, New York: Columbia UP, 1998).

⁴⁸ For just a small sampling, see King Kok Cheung’s *Articulate Silences: Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Joy Kogawa* (New York: Cornell UP, 1993); Laura Trombley’s *Critical Essays on Maxine Hong Kingston* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1998); Sau-Ling Cynthia Wong’s *Maxine Hong Kingston’s The Woman Warrior: A Casebook* (New York: Oxford UP, 1999); and Edelma D. Huntley’s *Maxine Hong Kingston: A Critical Companion* (Connecticut: Greenwood, 2000).

sin of extramarital sex with some unknown townsman, she is terrorized by the townspeople the night of her due date, her home destroyed, the family livestock massacred. Shortly afterwards she drowns herself and her newborn in a well. Maxine receives this story as a scripted warning from her mother, carried to the U.S. as both a parcel of immigration and an inheritance. Maxine in turn passes the story along to readers, though not as warning. In her retelling the story is transgressive recuperation of the No-Name woman's story and, most crucially, a context with which to shade the outlines of Maxine's own story: a ghost she offers us as a lens, in other words. The No-Name Woman "haunts" in the sense of what her narrative, erased and now partially restored, has to tell every listener/reader about the broader terrains of immigration, gender and gendered history, transnational misogynies, ethnic subjectivity, cultural memory, and on and on. Like *Beloved*, only appearing twelve years earlier, the No-Name Woman is a vitally generative, eminently portable, and enduringly useful means of re-envisioning an erased *racial* past. She is a Gordonian ghost, in other words, and the scholarship devoted to her, a kind of Morrison-ian rememory.

An invisible line runs from the publication of her story to the subsequent publication of reams of spectral scholarship—not at all limited to engaging Maxine Hong Kingston's oeuvre, or Morrison's—for which "haunted" and "haunting," "ghostly" and "spectral," become commonplace. Commonplace as central working metaphors; commonplace as scholarly currency, standard marketing language in

titles across humanities disciplines and beyond.⁴⁹ These “ghostly” markers function as the No-Name Woman functions in *Woman Warrior*, imbuing the work of restoration, the work of scholarly discourse as séance, with both sorrow and outrage. Drawing the ghost back into the world becomes moral work. But it is also potentially totalizing work. The ghost as utilitarian metaphor has erased any inkling of the ghost as supernatural phenomenon, and this, as much as the multipurpose tool it provides, is its contribution to academia’s management of the “multicultural”: erasure of a dangerous threat.

We need look no farther than chapter 3 of *Woman Warrior* to find that very threat, embodied in the form of another sort of ghost, a ghost *as ghost*—not a ghost as metaphor. From it springs the possibility of a very different genealogy, particularly because the ghost is paired with a counterpart, the great rationalist machinery that would exorcize the ghost to define itself, again and again. First the ghost: shortly after Maxine’s mother begins her scholarly career at the To Keung School of Midwifery, in order to establish her bona fides with classmates, she agrees to sleep in a room believed to be haunted, where she finds that

Cringes of fear seized her soles as something alive, rumbling, climbed the foot of her bed. It rolled over her and landed bodily on her chest. There it sat. It breathed airlessly, pressing her, sapping her. “Oh, no. A Sitting Ghost,” she thought. She pushed against the creature to lever herself out from underneath it, but it absorbed this energy and got heavier (68-9).

⁴⁹ For a fairly comprehensive bibliography of recent titles, see the Introduction of *Spectral America: Phantoms and the National Imagination* (Ed. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, Madison: The U of Wisconsin P, 2004, 3-17).

The moment is studiously free of metaphor, free of any hint of psychological projection or suggestion of dream space; instead the narration emphasizes presence, corporeality. Prefacing the encounter is the frame of “proof”: the chapter opens with Maxine’s mother’s diploma from medical school, complete with its rich array of seals and stamps, the provenance and import of each detailed painstakingly. In fact the chapter devotes several pages to the assorted scrolls and official approvals. The lady and the school doth protest too much, perhaps? Why take such pains to authenticate her medical degree, her claims to knowledge? The implication is anxiety, and with the No-Name Woman’s story fresh in mind, and To Keung, after all, a women’s college in the early 20th century, we might think it a gendered anxiety. Just another boundary-marker for women.

But the chapter soon gives us the Sitting Ghost and proceeds to dramatize another sort of anxiety entirely, to do not with gender but what lies beyond the rational. The To Keung School’s project is not simply to teach medical theory and practice to women; it is—it must be—to overwrite traditional Chinese conceptions of medicine and health and death with modern replacements. “You will bring science to the villages,” says one of the To Keung teachers, with twinned notes of pride and shame, reminding her students and the reader alike that science has not yet been embraced in the villages of rural early 20th century China. The scrolls and seals and stamps bespeak the tremendous difficulty of that overwriting project; they bespeak the enduring staying power, and the threat, of popular, non-rational knowledges operating even *right in the midst of* the To Keung School, the very knowledges through which Maxine’s mother and her classmates “see” and understand the Sitting Ghost. The

anxiety opening the chapter is an anxiety to affirm modern-ness, to perpetually demonstrate mastery of Western rationalist knowledge and reject, or at least nominally reject, non-Western, non-rationalist knowledges. What the school means to conduct, class after class, seal after stamp, graduate after graduate, is a continual exorcism of the ghostly that confirms its own non-ghostliness. That is, by way of continual delegitimation of its “opposite,” the school, the rationalist machine, legitimates itself and by extension the network of Chinese State institutions of which it is a part and a symbol.

In other words, *Woman Warrior* is positioning the School as Althusserian Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). The School is the (would-be) means of interpellating not just Maxine’s mother and her classmates as subjects but all of the townspeople in the broad network of villages and communities to which these new graduates administer health care—for the purposes of shoring up the hold of the State. To Keung is no lone institution but one of many, part of a vast network that stretches well beyond the terrain of *Woman Warrior*. Just as the No-Name Woman as productive metaphor “haunts” Asian American literary scholarship and beyond, so the School as ISA appears all across the landscape of Asian American literary production, a broadly imagined geographical terrain.

Following *Woman Warrior*’s cue, this chapter traces the School as crucial ISA, in all of its many interactions with the ghostly and “bad” subjects, across that landscape. Via examinations of *Woman Warrior*, *Memories of My Ghost Brother*, *Monkey Bridge*, *The Hundred Secret Senses*, and *Water Ghosts*, the chapter tracks how the School stages and regulates collisions between knowledge regimes, as well as the

emergence of popular knowledges within and beyond official rationalist machinery. The chapter culminates in an examination of “spectral” scholarship as the discursive extension of the School, reading, against the “ghosts as ghosts” of Asian American literature, select portions of an emblematic scholarly work, Gordon’s *Ghostly Matters*. What my reading offers is a critical re-understanding of the uncritically accepted rise of the ghostly in academia—why that rise has happened, and for what purposes and to what consequences. The broad scholarly deployment of the ghostly lens has been and continues to be a means of managing the “multicultural,” a way to at once celebrate sanctioned forms of difference and undermine other, more radical forms, all the while consolidating a rationalist claim to knowledge. By means of the ghost as ghost we might recognize and unsettle this totality.

A NOTE ON THE ALTHUSSERIAN ISA

Althusser first introduced his notion of the Ideological State Apparatus in the 1970 essay “‘Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d’État (Notes pour une recherche),” and as the Marxist philosopher Etienne Balibar would write in an obituary-cum-reflection for Althusser in 2009, “the times have changed: neither the family, nor philosophy, teaching, politics, nor community are what they were thirty years ago.”⁵⁰ The French École changed, and Marxist theory evolved, and Althusser’s famous formulation fell out of favor, though one still finds the ISA in use sporadically today as critical

⁵⁰ Balibar, “Althusser and the Rue D’ulm,” trans. David Fernbach, *New Left Review* (58 (July-Aug 2009), 107).

framing.⁵¹ There are other avenues for conceiving of State exertions of power through structural bodies—Foucault-ian governmentality,⁵² for instance. But I turn back to the Althusser-ian ISA because of its express focus on the School, on education as subject-formation, on interpellation as process for understanding education vis a vis State-regulation. I make use of it as framing device throughout the chapter to gather together and make structural claims about the various representations of schools across ghostly Asian American literary work. Althusser's notion of "good" and "bad" subjects I also find particularly useful—as impossible categories but also as self-identificatory spaces: the ghostly knower embraces ghostly knowledge in relation to State power, in refusal of State pressure to reject and police ghostly knowledge and embrace rationalist knowledge.

AMERASIAN EDUCATION

I believed I would learn something about my father's world at the American school. I believed there was something mysterious about the pale-skinned children with the yellow hair and the blue and green eyes, whose tongues were more suited than mine to their slippery English words.⁵³

⁵¹ For instance Richard D. Wolff, "Ideological State Apparatuses, Consumerism, and U.S. Capitalism: Lessons for the Left," *Rethinking Marxism* (17.2(2005): 223-35); J.C. Myers, "On Her Majesty's Ideological State Apparatus: Indirect Rule and Empire," *New Political Science* (27.2(2005): 147-160); and B. Wright and M. Roberts, "Reproducing 'Really Useful' Workers: Children's Television as an Ideological State Apparatus," *Rethinking Marxism* (25.4(2013): 566-91).

⁵² See Michel Foucault, Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality (with Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault)* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991); for governmentality in relation to education specifically, see Richard Edwards, "Mobilizing Lifelong Learning: Governmentality in Educational Processes," *Journal of Education Policy* (17.3 (May-June 2002): 353-66).

⁵³ Heinz Insu Fenkl, *Memories of My Ghost Brother* (New York: Plume, 1997, 92).

So appears the School for the first time in *Memories of My Ghost Brother*, Heinz Insu Fenkl's 1996 autobiography-cum-novel. The setting is post-war Korea, bounded on one side by histories of Japanese colonization, on the other by ongoing American military occupation. The School is a secondary school for the children of American GIs, many of them Amerasian and raised off-base by Korean mothers—and so in need of education in all things American, from language to foodways to allegiance. As its name announces, the American School, like To Keung and virtually every other School in Asian American literature, is an interpellative space; it produces, or rather it nominally means to produce, proper national subjects. (Nominally because the very students learning to be American, in the standard paradox of the colonial classroom, are irrevocably non-quite-American, even to, or especially to, their American GI fathers.) Enrolled at his father's behest, young Insu, or Heinz, hopes the American school might be a means to make sense of his "father's world," meaning not America the place but Heinz Sr.'s American worldview, one that seemingly accounts for their uneasy relationship. What makes their respective worldviews incommensurable, it turns out, is ghosts.

Already we have a popular knowledge frame for understanding ghosts—*Memories* takes care we not dismiss them as figments of Insu's childhood imagination. Five pages in, the book introduces its first ghost, one equal parts No-Name Woman and Sitting Ghost. The Japanese Colonel who haunts Insu's home is an easy symbol for Japanese colonization, and stories of the Colonel's participation in that colonial violence abound in the neighboring community. Like No-Name Woman, the Colonel

is a potential means of revivifying forgotten histories of violence, useful for both communal memory and the imaginative play of its children. But on the other hand, as Insu describes him, the Colonel appears on numerous occasions as a literal figure, denuded of any historic freight, like the Sitting Ghost refusing any easy stretching across wide allegorical skeins. To Insu the Colonel is no symbol, he is simply a presence.

The Colonel is also a counterpoint to the newly circulating Christian discourse that would brand traditional Korean belief superstition. That discourse arrives very shortly after the first mention of the Colonel, courtesy of Mr. Hwang, the property owner, who is Christian and refuses to hire a traditional Korean mudang to perform an exorcism. It also circulates by means of the American school, hence Insu's enrollment: Heinz Sr. recognizes the School's potential to repair the damage his son has suffered in a Korean home full of "barbarism and pagan ceremonies" (239). "It's time for you to go to school," Heinz Sr. tells six-year-old Insu. "You don't want to grow up a heathen, do you?" (65). Heathen, he means, by way of visions of the Japanese Colonel, by way of the lavish ghost stories he knows Insu's Korean uncle Hyongbu tells him.

In the American school Insu does, as expected, learn English and a broad ensemble of American cultural practices; in Sunday school he learns the rudiments of his father's Christianity. But interpellation never takes. He remains a bad subject, a heathen in the broadest connotations of the term; to Heinz Sr. and his military cohort, Insu is not simply pagan but uncivilized, and strange, lacking an acceptable value

system and the all-important gloss of normalcy. Late in the book, Insu speaks to this subjectivity directly:

My father's religion wallowed in stories and pictures of tragedy and suffering, but it could not heal what happened every day outside the gates of the U.S. Army post. And so I could not worship his God or the murdered son—I believed in ghosts and ancestors and portentous dreams of serpents and dragons because those were the things I could touch in my world" (241).

The things he could touch in his world: the lasting presence of the Japanese Colonel right in his courtyard; the regular circulation of popular supernatural knowledge throughout his surrounding community. Christian belief Insu rejects because of the immediacy of competing alternatives, alternatives more adequately suited to healing “what happened every day outside the gates of the U.S Army post”—a push and pull of institutionalized prostitution and husband-seeking. Tied up in his rejection of both Christianity and Western rationalism is a recognition of the racialized, gendered, and sexualized violence of the American military presence in Korea. What has brought Insu's own parents together is a system of social relations between American GIs and young Korean women that Insu, even as a young child, recognizes as fundamentally uneven and insupportable. What undergirds this system is the basic American GI regard for Korean women, an abiding scorn for their primitivity, their adherence to “heathen” superstition—something else young Insu recognizes. After lovelorn Gannan hangs herself, Insu takes her former GI boyfriend a scrap of her dress burned in a funerary ritual, and the GI responds with revulsion; “his fear,” Insu reflects, “made me very happy” (30). The remaining scrap will allow Gannan's ghost to find and punish the GI, Insu hopes. A rejection of the sex industry not only aligns with a

rejection of Christianity and rationalism; it comes via an embrace of popular ghostly knowledge.

When Asian Americanist critique first came into focus in the late-1960s and early 70s, it was closely aligned with anti-Vietnam War protest energies,⁵⁴ and since then Asian American studies has always been at least nominally attentive to American wars in Asia—how they have shaped patterns of Asian immigration, how they have shaped racialization of Asians already living in America.⁵⁵ To this triangulation of war, immigration, and racialization, *Memories* adds the ghost and popular knowledge in the form of the ghost story. So commonplace in Asian American literature, the ghost story has long been a staple of Asian American lived realities as well. But strangely Asian Americanist critique has had an uneasy relationship with the popular supernatural knowledges very much alive and circulating in actual Asian American communities today, not to mention historically, not to mention in Asia and Asian

⁵⁴ For a survey of early incarnations of Asian American studies, including its relation to antiwar protest, see various selections from Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu, eds., *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 2001). See also Mark Chiang, *The Cultural Capital of Asian American Studies: Autonomy and Representation in the University* (New York: NYU Press, 2009).

⁵⁵ Scholars Cathy Schlund-Vials and Sue-Je Gage have written extensively about war and militarization, including, prominently, the Amerasian legacies of American military aggression in Southeast Asia and Korea. This is crucially important new work, identifying the “frontiers” of American empire and the long shadows of war for Asian American communities and Asian American studies. See, among other titles, Schlund-Vials, *War, Genocide, and Justice: Cambodian American Memory Work* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2012); Gage, “The Amerasian Problem: Blood, Duty, and Race” (*International Relations* 21.1 (2007): 86-102); and Soojin Pate, “Genealogies of Korean Adoption: American Empire, Militarization, and Yellow Desire” (PhD Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2011) and *From Orphan to Adoptee: U.S. Empire and Genealogies of Korean Adoption* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2014).

diasporas. To date few works of Asian American scholarship have considered possible “literal” readings of the ghostly; as I discuss in Chapter 2, only Tina Chen’s *Double Agency* offers a glimmer of recognition of the possibilities. Other works ignore the omnipresence of ghosts or adopt a spectral scholarly approach to apprehending them. According to its own advance billing, Asian American studies ostensibly interrogates an academy not simply blind to the histories and material realities of Asians in America but active in keeping those histories and realities invisible. Yet at once Asian American studies uncritically adopts a rationalist stance towards the supernatural, in the process deprivileging the knowledge systems of the Asian American communities it purports to engage, represent, and provide a measure of social justice. Asian American studies participates importantly, if blindly and unwittingly, in the violent management of knowledge production by and about Asian Americans.

Critical consciousness, or lack of critical consciousness, is a key point here. In *Memories* Insu can express a wild ambivalence about his father for, among other reasons, his position as magistrate on the far outposts of American empire. Insu can articulate, albeit briefly, a critique of American empire via an explicit implication of its military base-side sex industry. But save for in the rather obliquely rendered moment quoted above, Insu never directly indicts a Western system of knowledge as part and parcel of American empire. For the same reasons, he never directs any critical energies towards the School his father would employ as civilizing, rationalist machine.

Much of his description of the American school is devoted to language instruction. A teacher insists, “We don’t speak Korean, understand?” (98) and classmates threaten to “tell on you for talking gook-talk” (103). The Principal visits the classroom and levies the same warning, and teachers eavesdrop studiously for any Korean whispering. An analogue for the Western treatment of ghosts emerges: this is colonial overwriting, erasure, epistemic violence. But in the case of the ghostly, the violence we cannot see. There is no clear counterpart to “We don’t speak Korean,” no direct lesson here that “We don’t believe in ghosts.” Insu never directly blames a rationalist education for its erasure of the non-rational because the function is so natural it has become invisible. In this sense, the School stands-in for a larger social and epistemological operation, by which Western rationalism so thoroughly dominates that it precludes even the possibility of implicating it as hegemonic.

What Insu does indict, or come closer to indicting, is another institution, the nearby Apollo Club. A nightclub with strip shows and the latest American drink specials, it is one more instance of the lineup at the edge of the military base, only gentrified—and haunted by the ghosts of a maid and her baby, who both drowned in a well just outside the club. The club’s ownership paves over the well, throws a grand opening ceremony, makes loads of money. But inexplicable violence plagues the club and its patrons, and “each time I passed the Apollo Club,” Insu later reflects,

I became very uneasy. I thought, at first, that it was fear and sadness, that I was afraid of my memories and the ghosts that might dwell there now, that my sadness was for the Apollo Club; but then I realized that my fear was of the Apollo Club and my sadness was for the ghosts of the dead (201).

The Apollo Club represents forgetting, a forced forgetting of both the deceased *and* their ghosts. Local businessman Mr. Paek stops mentioning the drowning, and “he never spoke of the baby’s ghost again” (201). Should we lean towards a limited spectral scholarly reading, focusing perhaps on the woman’s red scarf as lasting “ghostly” trace of the violence of sex commerce, or perhaps even panning back to the broad-scale violent erasure of Korean women by U.S. military occupation, *Memories* refuses to let the ghost be pushed so easily into metaphor. Like the Japanese Colonel, she appears directly to Insu. Upon reflection he is not afraid of her; he is saddened by her tragedy, and sad for her, and afraid of the forgetting the club would enforce. He is afraid partly because the club would erase the memory of a woman not unlike Gannan, or his mother, or legion other Korean women made invisible by way of hyper-visible sexual objectification. But he is also afraid because the club would tell him that what he knows he has seen, that what he knows to be true and possible, is not true, not possible. It would take ghostly knowledge away from him.

Why not express—or even feel—this fear with regards to the American school, which would also deny his “heathen” grasp of reality? An important and powerful shunting is at work. The tension the School produces cannot simply dissipate, but neither can it find direct expression. Instead it spills over and manifests in response to a surrogate, the Apollo Club. Why? The School’s educational and social project sets it beyond easily articulable critique in a way the night club’s recreational service does not. If the School putatively highlights its colonial frame by naming itself the “American school,” the frame ultimately fades from view, and the School’s engagement with heathen-ness arrives not as a forceful imposition of culture, not as

an aggressive replacement or erasure, but as a gentle lifting out and away. Schooling might be a little unpleasant in practice, with clumsy teaching or vicious classmates, but in theory it is unassailable, and this is one of its core lessons, the mythology of its own righteousness. By contrast the club is invasive, too directly tied to the sex industry, too overtly rewriting social space, an easy scapegoat to draw attention away from the School. The School needs this other institutional outpost to set the boundary line of acceptability when it comes to colonial power—the club rests directly on the divide, visibly and alluringly semi-acceptable, always carrying the whiff of the unacceptable and always in danger of becoming wholly unacceptable—so that the School can set itself firmly, and invisibly, on the inside. The club’s hyper-visibility as colonial appendage makes possible the School’s invisibility; via the club the School distances the ongoing consolidation of what counts as knowledge from other colonial exertions of power. And seemingly uncoupled from power, Schooling becomes natural, and unassailable, while its contrapositive, popular knowledge circulation, becomes unnatural, and therefore eminently assailable.

THE GREAT MILESTONE

Another contextual frame is worth engaging here, that of educational level—in the case of *Memories*, elementary education. We might understand Insu’s inability to mount a direct, robust critique of the School in terms of the American school’s function as elementary school in particular. I introduce *level* as analytic because it allows us to conceptualize the School, from pre-K to elementary school, from middle

school to high school, from college to graduate school, *as a progression*. It allows us to analyze interpellation as sequence, as cumulative, developmental process.

That process is far from symmetrical, however. If the Western educational progression is discontinuous, shaped importantly by market forces, punctuated by key gaps (from elementary to middle school, from high school to college, etc.) and key milestones (graduations, standardized tests, etc.), then interpellation must to some degree be discontinuous, shaped by market forces, and punctuated by key gaps and key milestones as well. Lan Cao's *Monkey Bridge* provides a helpful example.

A mother-and-daughter story with a central epistolary thread, the novel charts daughter Mai's uneasy process of grappling with mother Thanh's troubled cultural identity, including, especially, Thanh's divergent ways of knowing. Both Thanh and Mai are Vietnamese refugees living in a Vietnamese American ethnic enclave in Northern Virginia, but Mai, young at the time of exile and exodus, remembers relatively little about a motherland left behind. She views emerging semblances of Vietnamese American culture and community with skepticism, most lasting traces of Vietnamese cultural practice as vestigial and backwards. Thanh, on the other hand, maintains a complex series of investments in her family's vexed cultural and political lives in Vietnam. Popular knowledge in the form of supernatural karma remains the dominant lens through which she views not only her past but Mai's future.

Amplifying the tension between mother and daughter is a looming educational milestone, one Mai and Thanh alike recognize as *the* definitive American milestone:

getting into college.⁵⁶ By structuring its action in terms of this milestone, setting the entrance into college as the endpoint towards which it builds, the novel makes a seemingly unusual linkage. How are we to understand Mai and Thanh's wranglings with war and cultural dissonance (and the ghostly) in terms of this great American rite of passage? Here is interpellation: forcible, State-sponsored subject-formation is what bridges the personal and the institutional, what draws School and "culture" into dynamic relation.

Such a bridge comes into view most clearly via Mai's admissions interview at Mount Holyoke College midway through the novel. For Mai the interview is an all-important performance, an act of embodying what Mai and her aunt and uncle imagine to be the ideal college candidate. Just what constitutes this ideal brings us squarely to multiculturalism. The late 20th century academic institution must be "multicultural"—perpetually in quotations marks because the term was and remains contested, with no stable singular definition—in makeup and outlook, hence its incoming student bodies must always be as well. Would-be students must display a brand of cultural identity that confirms the institution's commitment to inclusion and plurality. This is common if tacit knowledge. Just prior to the interview, Mai's Aunt Mary gives her niece a single nugget of advice, "be yourself," a platitude to which Mai instinctively responds with skepticism. "Be yourself" in Mai's case assumes a "you" defined by immigrant/refugee/racial subjecthood, one set implicitly against an alternate possibility of *not* being yourself. For immigrants and ethnic Americans, not

⁵⁶ Especially within the popular mythology of America as middle-class utopia. For research on Asian Americans and the educational system, see Xue Lan, Ed Rong, and Russell Ed Endo, eds., *Asian American Education: Identities, Racial Issues, and Languages* (Charlotte: Information Age Publishing, 2011).

being yourself has historically meant invisibility, or having a circumscribed racial identity imposed upon you, or performing some circumscribed version to satisfy expectations—or some combination of the three. Multiculturalism ostensibly corrects for these histories of exclusion, discrimination, and underrepresentation, offering ample and prominent opportunities for cultural self-expression. In keeping with this mandate, or rather to capitalize upon it, Aunt Mary would have Mai proudly present an “authentic” cultural self.

The problem with such an approach, Mai reflects, is that “Aunt Mary couldn’t possibly understand that immigration represents unlimited possibilities for rebirth, reinvention, and other fancy euphemisms for half-truths and outright lies” (124). “Be yourself,” like the multiculturalism from which it emerges, means something quite different for the whites who encourage it than it does for the people of color asked to perform it, who necessarily have their own distinct investments and expectations, who endure their own distinct consequences for participation—a dichotomy that may threaten to make Mai a “bad” subject but ultimately does not. Shortly into the interview, Mai thinks to herself that she has “concocted a habit of silence where Vietnam was concerned, but suddenly, as I sat there looking at a woman I’d never before seen, I felt an urge to reveal something palpable” (127). Her performance may not be what Aunt Mary or her interviewer have in mind, but she performs nonetheless.

As for what Aunt Mary cannot possibly understand—immigration representing unlimited possibilities for rebirth, reinvention, or lies—one might read this assessment in a number of ways. The most immediately available is as loosely veiled

critique of Thanh. Her letters include key omissions and even outright lies, ones she identifies herself in a later letter. But at the time of the Mount Holyoke interview, Mai has not yet read far enough through the letters to reach this admission; she only suspects her mother's accounts of the past are less than truthful. So perhaps Mai's assessment is, in fact, critique of the immigrant condition writ large, not so much of what one immigrant chooses as what is forced upon immigrants broadly. There is a horizon of belonging above which immigrants can never ascend, Mai has begun to learn; immigrants cannot become fully American any more than the working poor can become upper-class, though both are promised the opportunity. Immigration represents unlimited possibilities for lies because any claims to belonging are necessarily doomed to be half- or untruths. Aunt Mary cannot understand this reality because she is neither an immigrant nor a class-striving have-not.

Each of these readings, however, screens out (and must screen out) karma, so central to Thanh and the novel. There is a third avenue of interpretation available, one that draws the first two together and restores karma to its central position. For Thanh, belonging—or not belonging—has everything to do with her inability to tell the truth, or tell a particular kind of truth, when it comes to what counts as the real. Popular knowledge, fundamental to the basic condition of so many immigrants, particularly Asian immigrants, becomes a set of lies once it enters American space. Weighed according to American rational standards, Thanh's notion of karma cannot be truth, and the horizon of immigrant belonging is defined by what does and does not count as truth as surely as by national origin and appearance. How much Mai intuits such a dynamic is unclear, however, and perhaps the novel's key point of generative

ambiguity. Throughout the novel she oscillates between a singular reading of her mother and a broader (if dispassionate) reading of the immigrant condition; in only a few moments does she come close to joining the two, offering readers a glimpse of a ghostly critique of rationalism as linked to managing race and immigration. But the moments are fleeting, and always the critique recedes.

“So you come from Vietnam, Mai?” (125), the interviewer asks—her second question. “You’ve done a remarkable job adjusting” (127), she declares shortly afterwards, a near-automatic declaration, knowing next to nothing about Mai and having no sense of her ongoing inner turmoil. Later the interviewer echoes the sentiment, saying, “You’ve pulled everything together here,” then adding, “It’s not a bad place to be, I don’t think, once you get the hang of it” (129). This is a scripted, self-congratulatory compact: you, candidate of color, are to be valued for your difference and ability to perform and subsume that difference; I, School functionary, am to be valued for acknowledging and appreciating your difference; the School (and America) is to be valued for making possible this system of relations. Celebratory multiculturalism at its simplest—with rationalism closely implicated. A moment later, noting that Mai plans to become a doctor, the interviewer reveals that she herself was a premed student at Mount Holyoke; currently she works in a health center, conducting admissions interviews on the side to “pitch in” as a “happy alum” (130). *The To Keung School graduates bring science to the villages of China*. In like fashion the interviewer extends the interpellative chain, working, *voluntarily*, as gatekeeper and model. She is modeling good subjecthood, carrying the lessons of the School into community spaces, with the express purpose of beginning the School’s

interpellative work before would-be students are even accepted. Mai does not miss the suggestion: I can become a Mount Holyoke student too; I can become a premed student too; in the interviewer I can see myself, or rather in her performed professional/student subjecthood, I recognize a subjecthood I can aspire to perform. The physical sciences are a critical part of that recognition. Her entrance to Mount Holyoke should be smoothed, if not secured outright, Mai believes, by her fluency in the language of the sciences—a language she knows to set against the Vietnamese folk stories and popular knowledge inherited from her mother. To properly imitate the interviewer/alumnus, Mai must not only embrace the physical sciences, she must also reject their opposites, much as she must perform one kind of cultural expression while/through denying another.

For Mai the lesson of the interview takes. Not long afterwards, she observes her mother and other Vietnamese Americans and thinks, “On certain occasions, I could adopt the anthropologist’s eye and develop an academic interest in the familiar. I could step back and watch with a degree of detachment the habits and manners of Little Saigon” (146). She has not even been accepted to Mount Holyoke yet, let alone begun her college education, and already an “academic interest” can produce in her a “degree of detachment.” Via the rationalist lens of anthropology, she can render her mother and community anew and set herself apart from both. We might distinguish such a move carefully from the modes of interpellation we see operating in *Woman Warrior* and *Memories*—both in kind and in result. Far from what we typically understand as the pedagogical process, the operation of classroom space, or any of a number of sets of School relations and exchanges, this is simply the *promise* of

college as interpellative. Profoundly interpellative, upon reflection: as a milestone, getting into college trumps all graduations, trumps all exams, certifications, and diploma ceremonies, so it is not terribly surprising that greater interpellative energies swirl around it. The promise of college is just that, promise, unconfirmed and unconfirmable until that acceptance/rejection letter arrives, and therein lies the charge—the promise of acceptance hanging in the balance alongside the threat of rejection. Rejection could feasibly open into a broad range of possibilities, but it comes to mean the failure to write oneself into the Western (and immigrant) progress narrative. Together, the threat of rejection and the promise of acceptance exert enough interpellative power to kickstart the process of rewriting epistemological orientation. The Schools of *Woman Warrior* and *Memories* do not produce good subjects. The promise of college in *Monkey Bridge* does.

By novel's end, Mai has jettisoned karma and embraced science, including in the form of psychoanalysis. Thanh's letters may have raised for her, and for readers, the possibility of popular knowledge as guiding framework. But the final short chapter opens with this line: "It wasn't until years later that I learned there was a name for what my mother was—a depressive, someone not with supernatural ears but ears that heard voices of despair urging her on" (255). Years later, she says; during college, she means. The novel ends on the very night before college will begin, and its ultimate image is of a college brochure on her bedroom desk, gleaming in the lamplight, set against the glow of the moon outside, layered over her official acceptance letter. Years later, with her mother's letters offering one possible frame of

understanding, she chooses another, the psychological explanation, made available expressly via education: *she learned the name depressive*.

This is coda, this verdict from the future. Interpellation crests just prior to college education, right on the cusp of college matriculation, the cusp of all-important *entry*, which calls to mind another entry crisis—that of immigration. Student matriculation mirrors immigration in terms of both influx of “new” bodies and their management. The School, like the nation, must continually justify and define itself at its boundaries—by who it allows in, and why, and how that admission changes (or consolidates, as it were) what it produces in the way of an institutional/national/racial subject. For the modern School, like the nation, strict exclusion is no longer a possibility, not when each espouse a rhetoric of inclusion, egalitarianism, and plurality; nor, for the same reason, are discrimination or underrepresentation acceptable. So the question becomes not who is allowed in but how—under what terms, via what interpellative processes, producing what kinds of subjects?

COLLEGE EDUCATION AND INTERPELLATION?

Since the release of her 1989 debut novel *The Joy Luck Club*, Amy Tan has been perennially accused of essentializing and exoticizing Asian Americans, of pandering to an international readership all too ready to consume a circumscribed notion of Asian American-ness. At once best-selling and loathed, Tan’s oeuvre sits neatly at the dividing line of multiculturalism, a narrative version of Aunt Mary’s “be yourself,” a cultural performance that colleges desire and those expected to

(re)perform it often revile.⁵⁷ I will refrain from rehearsing the particulars of *Joy Luck Club*'s characterizations and cultural aesthetics, or of the many lambastings the novel has received, but one might say—and only partly in jest—that when the college interviewer in *Monkey Bridge* looks at Mai, she sees one of Amy Tan's characters superimposed over her. Conversely for Mai the interview is an exercise in reaching for but never quite grasping *Joy Luck Club*'s idealized Asian American-ness. Meanwhile Amy Tan the author-personae has “been herself” for years now on the literary circuit and become a bona fide star.⁵⁸

All of which is to note the complex circulation of Asian American literary representation and production within multiculturalism—the mixture of expectation and appropriation and response. *Monkey Bridge* stages multiculturalism in action, and critiques it, but if we are to examine and make use of that critique, we must recognize that the critique takes up a multicultural landscape in which Amy Tan's work and “Amy Tan” herself (the crafted authorial persona) have *already* driven stakes. Maybe *Monkey Bridge* is implicitly engaging *Joy Luck Club* and its tremendous net of influence; maybe not. That literary works emerge into large fields

⁵⁷ Two fairly recent works on the model minority myth are Rosalind S. Chou and Joe R. Feagin's *The Myth of the Model Minority: Asian Americans Facing Racism* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2008) and *Model Minority Myth Revisited: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Demystifying Asian American Educational Experiences*, Guofang Li and Lihshing Wang, eds. (Charlotte: Information Age Publishing, 2008).

⁵⁸ Her credentials: putting aside for a moment her sales figures and the fact that her work has been translated into thirty-five languages, she serves, according to the official Amy Tan website, as “lead rhythm dominatrix, backup singer, and second tambourine with the literary garage band, the Rock Bottom Reminders, whose members include Kathi Kamen Goldmark, Stephen King, Dave Barry, Matt Groening, Greg Iles, Mitch Albom, Roy Blount Jr, Ridley Pearson, Sam Barry and Scott Turow.” <http://www.amytanauthor.com/>

of representation already aware of other representations is nothing novel, but I mean something other than paying attention to skeins of allusion, or to the anxiety of influence, as traditionally conceived. I mean to address, in particular, representational grappling with representation itself: Asian American literatures vying (in many cases against one another) for how “Asian American” might be understood in relation to multiculturalism—and not simply in the collective consciousness but the very machinery of interpellation.

It is a different matter for Amy Tan to write about ghosts than, say, for Heinz Insu Fenkl, or rather it should be a different matter for scholars to analyze Amy Tan’s work about ghosts than it is to analyze Heinz Insu Fenkl’s. Paying attention to the Author raises a thorny set of complications, but we cannot ignore Amy Tan and the gravitational pull of her constructed public persona any more than we can say *Beloved* and *Woman Warrior* are just two books. Both novels are events, formative and reverberating, and we cannot separate the novels as texts from the novels as events. *Beloved* and *Woman Warrior* are approachable and understandable only in terms of their rich reception histories and prominent places in the culture wars of multiculturalism—and vice versa. How these “fictions”—text and author—have been taken up, how they have participated in the interpellation I am tracking, whether working with or against or both, cannot and should not be held off in the distance as we attend to the ghost and the School on the page.

How, then, has Amy Tan handled the ghostly in her literary adventures in exoticization? How, given the ways her work has aligned with official multicultural narratives, might we use that work to reexamine interpellation vis a vis rationalism

and the ghostly? As it turns out, Tan's novel *The Hundred Secret Senses*—itself a national bestseller—traces the same patterns I have already outlined in *Woman Warrior*, *Memories*, and *Monkey Bridge*. *Hundred Senses* sets the ghostly against the School, and rationalism against popular knowledge, with a central drama the drama of choosing between supposedly binary opposites.

Relatively early in the novel, narrator and main character Olivia Laguni traces her shifting relationship with the ghostly from childhood through adulthood. When she is eight, Olivia encounters a ghost—"I knew she was a ghost" (50), she tells us, her certainty suggesting actuality, but also alluding to the ghost stories her half-sister Kwan has told her nightly. Have the stories performed a sort of hypnotic suggestion, guiding Olivia to see a ghost where none exists? Or does the ghost simply confirm what Kwan has told her? Olivia stops seeing ghosts before starting junior high, and by the time of college, she and her friends are cynically cataloguing the inconsistencies and hypocrisies of organized religion. "Most of our friends," she explains, "believed there was nothing after death" (52). The conversation arises following the funeral of a friend killed in the Vietnam War; Olivia's boyfriend Simon reverses course, insisting that "Nobody will ever forget Eric. And if there's a paradise, that's where he is right now" (53). Olivia finds she secretly shares the conviction, or rather at the time she shared it, and now, much later, as narrator looking back, she wonders how those "feelings" disappeared. Good question—the question: how do we make sense of her fluctuating relationship to the ghostly and popular knowledge? How does she know for certain she has seen a ghost, then later question if any afterlife exists, then still later come back around to suspect it does?

By what means is she pushed through these epistemological transitions? The plausible answer is the School, two levels of which form the steps of Olivia's progression story: she believed one thing "by the time of junior high school," another "by the time of college." But the connections between belief and School are circumstantial, any suggestions of interpellation cloudy at best. Whereas *Memories* also offers little direct connection between the ghostly and the School, it does imagine each extensively and juxtapose the two consistently. *Hundred Senses* traces Olivia's progression over the course of four short pages, and never returns to the School substantively after that.

The novel does continue to explore Olivia's fraught relationship with the ghostly, however. As Olivia moves at once back through "memory"—Kwan's stories—and forward via a trip to China with Kwan and Simon, we see her advance from a staunch rejection of the ghostly toward a begrudging tolerance and eventual acceptance. But this process is largely uncoupled from State power in the form of the School or otherwise. When *Hundred Senses* alights on college in the aforementioned "progression" passage, it seemingly offers to fill a gap in the educational chronology I have been sketching: from elementary school to high school to college to graduate school, with *Memories* covering the first level, *Monkey Bridge* the second, and *Woman Warrior* the last, leaving only college unimagined. What does university interpellation vis a vis ghosts look like? Olivia cannot, or perhaps "Amy Tan" will not, say. *Hundred Senses* introduces this possibility only to abandon it.

Instead the ghostly appears via two equally fantastical narratives that carry the novel into the territory of magical realism. As I mention in the dissertation's

introduction, what fundamentally differentiates magical realism from the engagement with the supernatural I am theorizing is the nature of the “blend” between real and unreal. Nowhere to be found in magical realism are popular knowledge and official knowledge, least of all vying against one another to explain the ghostly. So we have a fantastical narrative that is saved from becoming pure fantasy by the presence of elements we recognize as real, quotidian, unfantastical; there is perhaps some intrinsic tension between real and unreal, but never does the narrative directly foreground questions of epistemology and the power inherent to claims to knowledge. In magical realism these concerns are ancillary at best, pushed down far beneath the grain. In *Memories, Monkey Bridge, Woman Warrior*, and a host of other Asian American literary works, on the other hand, questions of epistemology and power crack the narrative surface, bubbling into transactions and even dialogue.

Hundred Senses does stage popular knowledge in the form of Kwan’s ghost stories in the opening portions of the novel. Olivia informs us Kwan is telling ghost stories; rather than the full contents of the stories themselves, we get the fact of them, their emergence, how and when they compete with official narratives. But this approach is limited to the first 28 pages of the novel, and then the mode of narration shifts; we receive the stories directly, as entire chapters (of Kwan’s past life as a one-eyed girl in nineteenth century, Taiping Rebellion-era China), and the stories cease to operate as popular knowledge. I read them this way not as an evaluation of their authenticity in relation to some traditional “ideal” of Chinese or Chinese American ghost knowledge. My point is that we no longer see the fact of them, their circulation, their *operation as knowledge in relation to other bodies of knowledge*. Any whiffs of

tension or power are gone; the stories are stories without epistemological stakes, or to be precise, with just one: does Olivia believe them? The drama of epistemological competition is narrowed to the personal.

In the novel's present action, the same dynamic unfolds. We follow Olivia to China, towed along with Simon by the force of Kwan's personality. The ghostly appears in the form of an underground cave housing an ancient Chinese village. "You go inside," explains Kwan, "never come back...Except as ghost" (272). The three do eventually need to descend into this supernatural cave to reckon with one another, and themselves, and their relationships to culture and knowledge—which one might label a somewhat unfairly reductive summary but for the fact it is the very register of language used to market not only *Hundred Senses* but all of Amy Tan's oeuvre. The novel ends neatly, with a blend of tragedy and romantic reconciliation, and Olivia alive to all "hundred senses."

So what we have is a sustained imaginative reckoning with the ghostly absent any real tension, featuring just a few hiccups of compulsory rationalism. Unless one considers the absence of epistemic tension as itself a blanket of compulsory rationalism, that is. *Hundred Senses* stages a few collisions between the ghostly and the School, but never imagined pointedly, never explored at length. *Hundred Senses* shows us the School, and interpellation, only to suggest that neither is the real story. The real story is the fantastic, wrapped up in the sentimental. The ghostly can emerge safely here because Amy Tan's version of the ghostly poses no direct threat to rationalism. Fantasy is easily dismissed as fantasy, not a competing alternative to rationalism, and *Hundred Senses* pulls the stakes of competition and power out

entirely; the production and operation of knowledge it pulls from view entirely. The personal occludes the structural. The novel is Olivia's and only Olivia's romantic, tragic, fantastic saga; it does not gesture outwards to a larger condition, one in which a series of institutions exert power over *everyone* gathered under the vast infrastructures of the State. Rather than critiquing interpellation, *Hundred Senses* safeguards it.

MULTICULTURALISM AND/AS RATIONALIST INTERPELLATION

To loop back to multiculturalism, consider again Mai's interview in *Monkey Bridge*. The relationship between multiculturalism and rationalist interpellation is not simply a parallel relationship, one of hazy overlap, of simultaneity. As in *Monkey Bridge*, interpellation and multiculturalism are inextricably tied to one another; they necessarily depend upon one another. When Mai is asked to play out a particular brand of "Vietnamese-ness" while hiding another, she is becoming the proper college candidate (and good subject) expressly in terms of what counts as knowledge. *Hundred Senses* as a document is a fuller expression of this same motion—only without Mai's interiority to make visible what is being hidden, what clearly privileged. And whereas *Monkey Bridge*, through Mai's interiority, through its illustration of epistemic tension, works against rationalist interpellation, *Hundred Senses* by occluding epistemic tension confirms multiculturalist expectations and safeguards and reproduces rationalist interpellation. As I argue in the opening of the chapter, rationalist interpellation *is a primary function of multiculturalism*, or viewed

another way, *it is a means of managing the host of contradictions and tensions multiculturalism encompasses.*

I am working towards a critical examination of Avery Gordon's *Ghostly Matters*, the ur-work of spectral scholarship—the breadth and depth of scholarly influence of which is considerable—in the interests of drawing solid lines between academia, the State, and multiculturalism. But in my approach to *Ghostly Matters*, I would first have us pause at a collection published one year earlier, in 1996, and begun as far back as 1992, edited by Christopher Newfield and Gordon herself: *Mapping Multiculturalism*. Via this book, Gordon and a slew of prominent scholars, including titans of Asian American studies Lisa Lowe and Renee Tajima, began to gather and hone prevailing critiques of multiculturalism. I say “began,” past tense, to date the book and its labor as decidedly *before* Gordon's magnum opus *Ghostly Matters*, an ordering helpful for illuminating the project and tremendous impact of *Ghostly Matters*.

Mapping Multiculturalism opens by placing itself immediately in the eye of the storm, at what it diagnoses as the height of the crisis of multiculturalism. As Gordon and Newfield explain, since resurfacing in the late 1980s, multiculturalism was at once widely contested and uncritically embraced. (It goes nearly without saying that by the time I am writing, in 2013, multiculturalism remains, despite the unrelenting critical onslaught it has received from various corners, a vital educational buzzword across the country, one of the central learning outcomes expected of all students of all levels, and as *Monkey Bridge* chronicles, a key lens for evaluating potential incoming college students.) If by the early '90s scholars recognized multiculturalism as

referring to “the life of various ethnic groups, racial diversity, gender differences, international issues, non-Western culture, cross-cultural methodologies, sexual preference, and the physically challenged” (Gaff 32, quoted in Gordon and Newfield 7), they also understood it to reflect “mainstream American irresolution” (Gordon and Newfield 7) about negotiating these valences of difference. It had not, in other words, “escaped the conflicts within the [post-civil rights white racial] consensus it attempts to revise” (Gordon and Newfield 8).

Of the core unanswered questions multiculturalism invoked, Gordon and Newfield identify the following as the last, and culminating, question: “Is cultural knowledge intrinsic to or outside of social relations and political life?” (7). This is the closest the collection takes us to the supernatural or compulsory rationalism, and that is if we are assuming “cultural knowledge” stands in for “popular knowledge.” There is also the perplexing ambiguity of the question itself, whether it calls for a descriptive (“cultural knowledge *is* outside of”) or prescriptive (“cultural knowledge *should be* outside of”) answer.

Mapping Multiculturalism never mentions the ghostly in the sense Gordon will take it up in *Ghostly Matters* either. What it does is sketch out a landscape of friction and inertia that makes her reading-to-come necessary. “These essays,” write Gordon and Newfield in the introduction’s concluding sentence, “explore the contradictory and powerful meanings of the concept of multiculturalism and reject its terms altogether when that becomes necessary” (15). So not absolute, this rejection of terms—just completed when necessary. Multiculturalism as concept is contradictory and powerful and, as is only fitting, gets examined in the course of the collection by

scholars from a disparate range of disciplines, not to mention of a disparate range of cultural backgrounds. An outgrowth of a 1992 University of California, Santa Barbara conference, *Mapping Multiculturalism* reads quite like a conference, generative and synergistic in places without reaching overmuch for a tight coherence. It is an exploration, an act of mapping, and, pardon the pun, a project of latitude: with freedom to move sideways, rather than definitively forward. It eschews a conclusion in favor of an annotated bibliography, so that by its rather abrupt end the collection is “haunted” by the question of “what next?”—a question it seemingly does not want to venture to answer.

For Gordon the answer is *Ghostly Matters*, which she must have been deeply involved in researching and writing while she was editing *Mapping Multiculturalism* (the “Contributors” section of the latter notes that the former is “forthcoming from the University of Minnesota Press” (473), the same press to publish *Mapping Multiculturalism*). I am not attempting an intellectual biography here, but it seems impossible that Gordon could have compartmentalized the two projects and had no sparks jumping across the divide. Given their chronological sequence of publication, we might view *Ghostly Matters* as what *Mapping Multiculturalism* points toward, *Mapping Multiculturalism* as a context out of which *Ghostly Matters* blooms.

Ghostly Matters establishes its exigence by way of the gaping dearth of language to describe the contemporary condition—by way of the limitations of existing scholarly models to make sense of the world in all of its complexity, including the ubiquity of unseen power relations. Meanwhile multiculturalism was and is a seemingly infinite terrain of contradictions and obfuscations, of competing discourses

on race and culture, always, as Gordon and *Mapping Multiculturalism*'s many contributors would have it, linked to power. How could *Ghostly Matters* not be a means to fill some of the gaps *Mapping Multiculturalism* illuminates, not be a way to conceptualize some of multiculturalism's many absences and lasting traces? How could *Ghostly Matters* possibly insulate itself from the pressures leveled by multiculturalism and/or by some of *Mapping Multiculturalism*'s various reframings? Ten years later, Gordon would post on her own website that "it was Marxism's ongoing trivialization of the problem of racism and the larger mistake in comprehension this entailed, that more than anything defined the way I parted company in *Ghostly Matters*."⁵⁹ And then there is *Beloved*, at the heart of the canon wars and at the heart of *Ghostly Matters*, published ten years before Gordon's book, time enough to inspire, famously, a thousand dissertations and a thousand more scholarly articles—none of which evidently satisfied Gordon enough to make unnecessary her own extended reading. The corpus of *Beloved* scholarship must have stretched out before Gordon not simply as a testament to *Beloved*'s great allure but as a living embodiment of multiculturalism, of its multifarious energies and tensions, its various approaches and investments and pressures. Spectral scholarship did not begin with *Ghostly Matters*; it just began to *matter* with *Ghostly Matters*, a book appearing, if we listen to Gordon herself, right amidst the crisis of multiculturalism.

I would replace "appearing amidst" with "responding to."

⁵⁹ "Who's there?: some answers to questions about ghostly matters" (2007), accessed 6 May 2013. <http://www.averygordon.net/writing-haunting/whos-there/>.

SPECTRAL SCHOLARSHIP AND THE EVOLUTION OF COMPULSORY RATIONALISM

Our turn to *Ghostly Matters* is a return to the School. Scholarship is the School's discursive extension, the mobile agent of interpellation of both students as subjects and teachers/scholars as State agents. Read this way, *Ghostly Matters*' popularity is a study in the pathways and modes of interpellation. It also lays bare the degree to which its "subjects" are already rationally interpellated. If many scholars have historically positioned themselves in antagonistic relationship with the academy, casting themselves as engaged in the continual work of critiquing the School, making visible its rigidity, its oversights, its under- and misrepresentations, its suspect relationship(s) to corporate and State power, these same scholars and teachers have been and remain under the sway of compulsory rationalism. In this one sense, they are good State subjects and agents, interpellated and interpellating. This may seem obvious, and without stakes. How can one reasonably compare uncritically accepting spectral scholarship with, say, turning a blind eye to discriminatory university hiring practices? Paying attention to spectral scholarship in relation to both the literal ghosts of Asian American literature and the rise of multiculturalism allows us to see how the rationalist project connects to race and culture *and power*. We come to see how this project works actively to deprivilege popular knowledges emerging from "minority" communities, bolstering racial and cultural hierarchies, enacting both epistemic and cultural violence—implicating what might seem to be innocuous scholarly knowledge production, reception, and circulation. Finally, we come to see how the rationalist project has evolved over time, shifting in relation to multiculturalism and the

“problem” of a pluralist, immigrant-rich society. The old machinery no longer works. Enter the new technology.

Ghostly Matters is that technology. It is the ur-text of spectral scholarship, both in the sense of being “first” and in the sense of influence. Not “first” as in first to use the ghost as metaphor, or even first to use it as metaphor specifically for understanding the traces of racial and cultural violence. The ghost as scholarly metaphor has a long and rich genealogy, and its usage in relation to race and culture dates at very least as far back as the explosions of *Woman Warrior* and *Beloved* scholarship in the ‘80s and early ‘90s. *Ghostly Matters* was just the first to popularize the ghost as metaphorical tool. Just as *Woman Warrior* and *Beloved* popularized the ghost as racial/cultural metaphor in literature, so *Ghostly Matters* announced its broad utility in scholarship, building the justificatory scaffolding for widespread and diversified usage, making a masterful case for its exigence and scholarly sex appeal.

As the University of Minnesota Press webpage for *Ghostly Matters*’ second printing announces, the book “has advanced the way we look at the complex intersections of race, gender, and class.”⁶⁰ For marketing copy, this is considerable understatement. *Ghostly Matters* has given scholars across disciplines a new vocabulary, changing how they approach race, class, and gender, yes, but also how they view and value the bounds of rational inquiry. The book is exhaustively cited

⁶⁰ “*Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination.*” *University of Minnesota Press*. accessed 6 May 2013. <http://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/ghostly-matters>

and applied—and in the true indicator of influence, often “used” without direct citation, without conscious recognition of *Ghostly Matters* as a “source,” by scholars influenced by scholars influenced by the book. A proper index of its influence might simply take the form of a bibliography of post-1996 works of scholarship with “ghost” or “haunting” or “spectral” in their titles.

The basic project of *Ghostly Matters* I have more or less outlined in rudimentary form already, but a careful tour through the book’s introduction, with a close reading of some of its precise language, is in order. What kinds of epistemological shifts is it calling for? How does it go about its interpellative work? “To study social life,” Gordon begins, “one must confront the ghostly aspects of it. This confrontation requires (or produces) a fundamental change in the way we know and make knowledge” (7). A fundamental change: *Ghostly Matters* offers up the new by way of surveying, and critiquing, the existing, and the existing here is traditional sociology, with all of its (over)investments in the rational. This would seem to be in keeping with my readings of the ghostly and compulsory rationalism, or at least in the same theoretical vicinity. But to Gordon the “ghostly aspects” of life are decidedly *not* the kinds of ghosts or supernatural phenomena we have been examining in Asian American literature. Gordon makes clear she is uninterested in “pre-modern superstition” (7), the “occult” (8), or “parapsychology” (8)—and with these three surgical cuts, she is mostly done with the kind of ghostliness that transfixed 19th century America,⁶¹ continues to animate various ethnic American communities

⁶¹ For surveys of 19th century supernatural fiction, see *The Haunted Dusk: American Supernatural Fiction, 1820-1920*, Howard Kerr, John W. Crowley, and Charles L. Crow, eds. (Athens: The U of Georgia P, 1983) and Howard Kerr’s *Mediums, and*

today,⁶² and appears throughout Asian American literature. In a book about ghosts, the ghost as ghost is quickly shown the door.

Gordon means the ghost as “crucible for political mediation and historical memory” (18), the ghost, in other words, as metaphorical lens. Even this slightest of departures from the rational is dangerously far to stray from sociology proper, however, a distance she must acknowledge. “Ghosts,” Gordon writes,

are a somewhat unusual topic of inquiry for a social analyst (much less a degreed sociologist). It may seem foreign and alien, marginal to the field that conventionally counts as living social reality, the field we observe, measure, and interpret, the field that takes the measure of us as much as we take the measure of it” (7).

There is much to unpack here. The emphasis on “degreed sociologist” suggests how much she, like all other degreed sociologists, feels she wears a mantle of responsibility, a forced allegiance to certain topics of inquiry, or as she frames it slightly earlier, to knowing and making knowledge in certain ways, an allegiance conferred by the degree itself, by the institutional recognition—reminiscent of Maxine’s mother’s scroll and seals. “We observe, measure, and interpret”—a quick nod to Science. Gordon is freighted with expectations but chafes not at the fact of the freighting but the terms, which are flexible: ghosts may “seem foreign and alien,

Spirit-Rappers, and Roaring Radicals: Spiritualism in American Literature, 1850-1900 (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1972).

⁶² See David K. Yoo’s *New Spiritual Homes: Religion and Asian Americans* (Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1999) for a survey; see Anne Fadiman’s *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1997) for a sustained account of Hmong American supernatural practice in tension with the American medical system.

marginal to the field,” but as Gordon will go on to explain, they are not, and a degreed sociologist can and should attend to them as part of her work.

Unspoken: if ghosts are not foreign, alien, and marginal, what are? Ghosts as ghosts.

Consider this back cover blurb by scholar Judith Stacey: “Imagine the intellectual chutzpah of trying to convince sociologists to believe in and commune with ghosts!” More compulsory grappling with rationality—but Stacey recodes it as daring.⁶³ On the University of Minnesota Press website, a George Lipsitz blurb describes *Ghostly Matters* as “stunningly original and provocatively imaginative”⁶⁴—another validating recoding of the unacceptably non-rational. What might be mistakenly confused with the “pre-modern” is instead placed on the far end of the civilizational spectrum—*original, imaginative, stunning, provocative*. This is progress Lipsitz is describing, glossed with bravery. There is an implicit political dimension as well. *Ghostly Matters* is being positioned—or in the sense that these are blurbs it wraps around itself, positioning itself—as “left,” ostensibly following in Foucault’s radical intellectual counter-tradition. The sociological project is over-conservative, overly invested in the limiting methodologies of Science and rationality, whereas *Ghostly Matters* is intellectually pioneering, morally imperative, and, in its particular examinations, culturally pluralist. As is so often the case with “leftist” declarations, though, *Ghostly Matters* actually represents what we might call the “center,” and

⁶³ We might also pause at the descriptor “chutzpah,” by which Stacey is *culturing* Gordon’s supposed break with traditional sociology. Effectively Stacey performs/projects an acceptable, surface version of culture in the act of validating the broad-scale deprivileging of another.

⁶⁴ <http://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/ghostly-matters>

setting itself as “left” effectively makes invisible an actual “left” in the form of popular knowledges, circumscribing the epistemological conversation to center and right of center. *Ghostly Matters* takes up the real dangers posed to rationalism by popular knowledges and shunts them away, off-stage.

Similar claiming of the “non-rational” continues throughout the book. Progressing through *Ghostly Matters*’ introduction, I am continually struck by how Gordon describes what the book is up to, the central problem it tackles, her process: it is as if she is describing not her project but mine. But she is not; she is preemptively erasing my project by appropriating the ghostly. Here she describes her first encounters with (her versions of) the ghostly:

[G]hostly things kept cropping up and...The persistent and troubling ghosts in the house highlighted the limitations of many of our prevalent modes of inquiry and the assumptions they make about the social world, the people who inhabit these worlds, and what is required to study them...Haunted and, I admit, sometimes desperate, sociology certainly—but also the human sciences at large—seemed to provide few tools for understanding how social institutions are haunted, for capturing enchantment in a disenchanted world (8).

It could be a description of the exclusion of ghosts as ghosts, the exclusion of supernatural phenomena taken seriously, the ways in which Science and the School enforce these exclusions, precisely what I have been tracking across Asian American literature—but in her hands the description is of an exclusion of something else entirely.

And here is her corrective: “It is a case of the difference it makes to start with the marginal, with what we normally exclude or banish, or, more commonly, with what we never even notice” (24-25). She could be borrowing from any work of Asian American or postcolonial studies, what with their foundational concerns with

marginalization, exclusion, invisibility; she could be borrowing language from my own Introduction. But borrow is not quite right, because what Gordon conducts is neither reproduction nor re-placement; it is parody, if the parody were to supplant the original, make the original disappear, and claim radical originality for itself. A doppelganger, then.

In a 2007 talk in Berlin, Gordon invoked the very same passage of Foucault's *Power/Knowledge* I reference in my Introduction:

[It] was something that Foucault called subjugated knowledge that more accurately described what I was aiming at.

For Foucault, subjugated knowledge names, on the one hand, what official knowledge represses within its own terms, institutions and archives. And on the other hand, it also referred to “disqualified,” marginalized, fugitive knowledge from below and from outside of the institutions of official knowledge production.⁶⁵

As she claims the ghostly, so she claims subjugated knowledge as well, tying each to each and both tightly to the hull of *Ghostly Matters*. In the process she sheds popular knowledge from the conceptual space of “subjugated knowledge”—in fact she borrows all of Foucault's language save for his terms “popular knowledge” and “folk knowledge,” the two, as it happens, of greatest interest to my project. “Disqualified, marginalized, fugitive, below and outside the institutions of official knowledge production”: these descriptors fit Gordon's notion of the ghostly because they focus on what is enacted upon a body of knowledge to make it ghostly. “Popular” and “folk” by contrast evoke the peoples and communities out of which certain knowledges emerge and amongst which they circulate. They suggest a knowledge that is ghostly by virtue of what it describes—ghosts—and not any official erasures or

⁶⁵ “‘Who's there?’”

traces. They hint at what Gordon must dismiss, the pre-modern, the superstitious. Only when they are taken out of view can Gordon lay claim to the rhetorical force of “subjugation,” mapping the term’s inherent outrage onto her own reading, drawing the moral imprimatur of Foucault’s push for “de-subjugation” onto her own call for action.

And so eventually we get the prospective endpoint of Gordon’s reading strategy, what attending to ghosts gives us, why we need to employ her reading. “If Haunting,” Gordon writes,

is a constitutive feature of social life, then we will need to be able to describe, analyze, and bring to life that aspect of social life, to be less fearful of animation. We ought to do this not only because it is more exact, but also because to the extent that we want our writing to change minds, to convince others that what we know is important and ought to matter, we need to be more in touch with the nature of how ‘the pieces of a world...littered all over a sociological landscape’⁶⁶ affect people (22).

Once again, she seemingly summons up what my reading of the *ghost as ghost* might offer—a more exact picture of contemporary social life, the possibility of “changing minds”—but usurps it, substituting in place her own version of the ghostly. I should reiterate that this replacement is in and of itself a perfectly valid, vitally generative reading strategy. Illuminating erased histories and how they come to be erased and the traces that remain is important and valuable work. The fact that *Ghostly Matters* is broadly admired and adopted and adapted is a testament to its generativity, its fruitfulness, and finally, its moral and moralizing sheen, its mixture of sorrow and outrage, compulsory affective responses to pair with its compulsory rationalism. We

⁶⁶ Smith, Dorothy E. *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987), 99.

must, yes, come eventually to its rationalism—that central quality is inescapable and should be impossible to ignore in a book nominally critiquing rationalism. None of the book’s aforementioned other qualities, however much trumpeted, separate it from its compulsive rationality and interpellative insistence. They simply cover over the epistemic violence conducted in the name of, and on behalf of, rationalism.⁶⁷

Ghostly Matters’ introduction ends with the heady call to “conjure otherwise” (28). This echoes an earlier phrasing, “imagine otherwise” (5), and perhaps too Gordon’s notion of *changing minds*. Each is code for interpellation, the fashioning of a new (necessarily rationalist) subject as part and parcel of fashioning a new sociology, itself necessary in order to engage a richer and more complex social life. “[W]e are part of the story, for better or worse,” writes Gordon, a few pages earlier. “[T]he ghost must speak to me in some way...How then can our critical language display a reflexive concern not only with the objects of our investigations but also with the ones who investigate?” (24). The objects of investigations must be linked to the investigators. “Otherwise” refers to both, always in relation to one another, always animated by the fiction of change—“otherwise,” newness—a supposedly radical opening of perspective when, in actuality, a baseline of compulsory rationality remains constant, and popular ghostly knowledge remains constantly excluded.

In 2003 Kandice Chuh published *imagine otherwise: on Asian Americanist critique*, with its opening epigraph the “imagine otherwise” passage from *Ghostly Matters*. Here in the afterlife of “otherwise” is the stamp of *Ghostly Matters*’

⁶⁷ Reminiscent of Patricia Hill Collins’ “politics of containment,” whereby the hyper-visibility of certain iconic black women, singly, was used to render invisible the oppression of black women in general. See *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1998).

influence, the evidence of its interpellative insistence. This is not to say compulsory rationalism fundamentally underpins Chuh's "subjectless discourse" argument, which, it bears reminding, has been tremendously influential in Asian American studies, offering an entire reorientation of the field. But neither does Chuh take Gordon's argument to task, either, particularly not as that argument uncomfortably abuts ghostly Asian American literatures and ghostly Asian American lived realities. Chuh "means this title [*imagine otherwise*], this idea, to inscribe Asian American literatures as epistemological projects engaged in a politics of knowledge" (x), and if in other senses the book does conduct such an inscription, on the matter of compulsory rationalism vis a vis knowledge politics the inscribing pen runs dry. *imagine otherwise* cannot and should not be taken to task for borrowing from *Ghostly Matters* or for taking up epistemological considerations other than rationalism—but it does point to the failure of Asian American studies writ large to grapple with Asian American ghostly popular knowledge and the problem of compulsory rationalism. *Ghostly Matters* cannot be held responsible for that failure, or arguably even implicated in it, but if we take that failure as concerning and itself worthy of critical attention, then Gordon's book becomes an important touchstone and landmark.

As Gordon explained in her 2007 Berlin talk, when *Ghostly Matters*

was conceived and written, in the humanities and social studies, there was an optimism that the older institutional edifices were crumbling, that new knowledge and modes of knowledge production were possible, and—in some circles—that these would be led and crafted by the people who had long been excluded from the citadels of the university. It was this specific context, really the 1970s and 80s, which is over, that produced in *Ghostly Matters* the invitation to sociology to find a better purpose.

The reflection harkens implicitly back to *Ghostly Matters*' precursor, *Mapping Multiculturalism*, and recalls the second book's roots in the first, and its roots in the broad landscape of multiculturalism. *Ghostly Matters* was conceived in the spirit of turning over knowledge production to those long excluded, Gordon explains—people of color, women, the disabled, and on. It is expressly a racial/cultural project, and its critical reception too must be understood in terms of the same pressures of race and culture. *Ghostly Matters* means to open up new possibilities of representation and visibility and access to power, and in fact it does so by restoring erased histories, and more broadly by opening up such an avenue of possibility for a whole generation of scholars across disciplines. But these advances, these “otherwises,” come precisely at the expense of non-rational forms of knowledge and knowledge production. The ghost as ghost is shown the door, and with it, any peoples who insist upon its existence, including many of those *Ghostly Matters* purportedly intends to liberate.

I would argue this “collateral damage” is actually a chief function of the ghost as lens, not at all ancillary to the new scholarly avenues it opens. Or rather this is how the ghost as lens is marshalled, deployed, and received as discursive agent of the School. That *Ghostly Matters*, like multiculturalism, masks its exclusions by posing a seemingly radical critique and clothing itself in claims of social justice—just as the School masks its interpellative function—is no accident.

That the allure of the ghostly lens threatens to make invisible popular knowledges, and that this function happens to coincide with School- and State-mandated rationalism, and that *Ghostly Matters* appears precisely when it does—no accidents there either. Throughout the chapter I have been illuminating a structure linking

racialization, “radical critique,” popular knowledge circulation, and rationalist interpellation. What I have gestured toward but not yet articulated is how to locate this structure of relations historically: the particular conditions that make this structure possible, the conditions from which the structure draws, the conditions to which the structure importantly contributes. I am painting in necessarily broad strokes as I attempt to pull in multiculturalism, as I attempt to identify connections between a vast structure and a sprawling (and discontinuous) historical phenomenon, but I hope to have at least fingered the starting points for deeper future examinations.

LITERATURE AS...

In 1975 *Woman Warrior*'s No-Name Woman and in 1987 *Beloved*'s Beloved offered up the same ghostly lens that *Ghostly Matters* would ultimately advance in 1997. I return to this simple timeline to anchor our historicizing. *Ghostly Matters* was not simply responding to the problem of rising racial/cultural demands in tension with lasting under-representation; it was also responding to already existing “minority” engagements with this landscape, responding directly to *Beloved*, in passing to *Woman Warrior*.⁶⁸

Woman Warrior's No-Name Woman arrived accompanied by the Sitting Ghost, insistently supernatural, stubbornly clunky as metaphorical lens. Around this time Morrison was already penning supernatural fiction: her 1977 novel *Song of Solomon* draws its central motif of flight from a common African American myth, one

⁶⁸ In a sort of literature review of the ghostly to date circa 1997, Gordon notes that “Maxine Hong Kingston (1977) is mapping the trans-Pacific travel of ghostly ancestors and their incessant demands on the living” (6).

Morrison has threaded through several other of her novels and referenced directly in interviews.⁶⁹ In a 1983 interview Morrison decried Eurocentric approaches to her work, insisting that her novels deal in representations out of “the black cosmology” (McKay 425) and must be understood with those contexts in mind. Her plea, she explains,

is for some pioneering work to be done in literary criticism, not just for my work, but for all sorts of people’s work, and now that the literature [of people of color in the U.S.] exists, there can be that kind of criticism (McKay 426).

What counts as “black cosmology,” what counts as “pioneering work” that draws responsibly from cultural contexts, is naturally up for debate, and nowhere does Morrison explicitly single out rationalism as an imposed frame, or popular supernatural knowledge as a crucial context. But she is undeniably asking that we open up what counts as “knowledge” and what counts as “responsible” when it comes to apprehending racial and cultural representations.

Woman Warrior, *Beloved*, *Song of Solomon*, and various other works of 1970s and 1980s ethnic supernatural fiction, posed potential threats to rationalist order, offering possibilities for knowledge and meaning-making that do not have to (only) be understood metaphorically, do not have to be approached by means of (or used to reify) existing rationalist order. These threats must have seemed particularly acute because of the visibility of their literary vehicles (*Song of Solomon*, while no *Beloved* or *Woman Warrior*, was a national bestseller, a National Book Critics Circle Award winner, an Oprah’s Book Club selection, and widely taught in high school and

⁶⁹ See for instance Cecil Brown’s “Interview with Toni Morrison,” *The Massachusetts Review*, 36.3 (Autumn 1995): 455-473.

university classrooms). And what arguably made these three works so visible—the demand for new and greater racial and cultural representation, the shifting canon, the rise of multiculturalism—would have only amplified the threats the novels posed. The threats had a built-in audience.

So like all of the various threats posed by “minority” communities to late 20th century social order, whether in terms of racial hierarchies, crime and the judicial system, voting and political representation, and on and on, the threats to rationalism had to be managed. Cue *Ghostly Matters* and spectral scholarship. Though Gordon cites other motivating factors, the threat to rationalist order unquestionably opened a need for what *Ghostly Matters* enacted. When *Ghostly Matters* appropriated the ghostly, it assumed control of how the ghostly might be understood and how it might (safely) pose a critique to rationalism.⁷⁰

The book did so within academia and academic discourse, that is to say—but meanwhile literature continued its work unimpeded.⁷¹ If anything, we find more ghost as ghost representations in Asian American literature exploding after 1997,⁷²

⁷⁰ Kandice Chuh has written of “the failure of U.S. multiculturalism to allow for the complexity of ‘ethnic literatures,’ which are effectively coded as transparent, self-evident expressions” (*imagine otherwise*, 18); I would frame *Ghostly Matters* as actively enacting this failure, or rather enforcing a simplification.

⁷¹ How and how much compulsory rationalism extends beyond academia are good questions. How much does interpellation actually take, and how do processes of academic interpellation relate to, for instance, interpellation occurring in other spaces, and to popular representations of the ghostly? How much does rationalist interpellation actually touch Asian American popular knowers not enrolled in academia? I look to literary representations as a starting point, but there is much broader work to be done.

⁷² *Memories of My Ghost Brother*, *Monkey Bridge*, and *Comfort Woman* all appeared in 1997; a partial list of post-1997 supernatural Asian American literature includes “The Management of Grief” (1999), *Anil’s Ghost* (2000), *The Hell Screens* (2000),

these works speaking back not to *Ghostly Matters* or spectral scholarship but the diffuse forces spectral scholarship articulates. As I have illustrated over the course of this chapter, Asian American literatures make visible what popular discourse and spectral scholarship make invisible. They show us how, where, when, and why interpellation takes place; they show us how, where, when, and why popular knowledges circulate. If spectral scholarship is interpellative, supernatural Asian American literatures are frequently counter-interpellative, troubling or undoing the work of compulsory rationalism, working to make bad subjects by modeling bad subjects and undermining the ethical possibility of the good subject. Maxine's mother, Insu's uncle, Thanh, Kwan: all as popular knowers/teachers are quintessentially bad subjects who work to reproduce popular ghostly knowledge and question official rationalism. Maxine, Insu, Mai, and Olivia form a different class, neither good nor bad subjects but perched in between, on the interpellative cusp, themselves the sites of knowledge system collision and competition. Each of their stories is a bildungsroman, with coming of age aligned with coming to supernatural knowledge (which I address at length in Chapter 3).

Of particular interest are the wheres of popular knowledge. Supernatural Asian American literatures provide a cartography of unofficial knowledge production and circulation—the seams of empire. Most commonly the ghost *appears and is known* within domestic, private space: within the grids of State Apparatuses but beneath or

“Western Music” (2000), *Edinburgh* (2002), *The Vine of Desire* (2002), *Shadow Theatre* (2002), *The Gangster We Are All Looking For* (2003), *The Fifth Book of Peace* (2004), *Queen of Dreams* (2004) *The Hungry Tide* (2005), “Letters from a Japanese Crematorium” (2008), *Picking Bones from Ash* (2009), *Haunting Bombay* (2009), *Blue Boy* (2009), and *Water Ghosts* (2009).

otherwise free from their policing agents and discourses. Certainly we see compulsory rationalism exerting pressure within these spaces—Mai comes home with “homework”—but we can differentiate this kind of “internalized” policing, Foucaultian discipline, from Kwan being subjected to electric shock treatment for voicing ghost knowledge inside a psychiatric institution. The shock treatment and singed hair are run-of-the-mill Amy Tan sensationalism, but across Asian American literatures there are consequences for expressing popular ghostly knowledge within State institutions, if usually somewhat less dire than Tan would imagine. But then again in many cases there are no consequences; policing is uneven, and the reach of the School is never absolute. We see bad subjects and faulty attempts at interpellation. Remember the *Sitting Ghost*: it exists right in the midst of State machinery, and so too does the popular knowledge that explains it. Nothing from the To Keung School curriculum can tell the midwives-in-training how to handle the *Sitting Ghost*, but Maxine’s mother can, and does. In the years to come, despite the To Keung School’s mission to replace superstition with Science, the midwives will bring not only official rationalist knowledge but illicit popular knowledge to the villages. Interpellation, like State control, is an impossible project, a process of perpetual failure.

ON THE WATERFRONT: A CONCLUSION OF SORTS

So that the ante is clear, Shawna Yang Ryan’s *Water Ghosts*, as I note in the Introduction, opens with an epigraph from Toni Morrison’s Nobel lecture. There is

no School in the space of the novel,⁷³ which may make it seem an odd fit here, particular as conclusion. There are three ghosts—three ghosts as ghosts—who arrive in the U.S. by boat in 1928. Once on land, in the small town of Locke, California, they have humanity projected onto them by an immigrant Chinese laborer community unwilling to see them as ghosts; only a few of Locke’s overwhelmingly male residents (and one woman, Poppy) “suspect” the ghosts’ true nature. This is a testament to two things: one, the men’s longing for women—the vast majority of immigrant Chinese men have been rendered eternal bachelors by the 1875 Page Act,⁷⁴ which barred all Chinese women other than the wives of merchants entry to the country; and two, the strength of the dominant rationalist knowledge regime, according to which ghosts cannot exist. This strength despite the fact that there is no School or other functional ISA in Locke, only a church with apparently limited interpellative purchase. Compulsory rationalism certainly exists, but in early 1900s northern California, at least in this ethnic enclave, it has not yet become concretely institutionalized.

The three women “become” ghosts again in the novel’s climax, when Locke floods and all institutional order, and even Locke itself, temporarily ceases to exist. Only

⁷³ The absence of a School in *Water Ghosts* has a curious resonance with the historical case of Mamie Tape, who was immortalized via *Tape v Hurley* of 1884, an important precursor to *Brown v Board of Education*, whereby the California Supreme Court determined that segregation of schools by way of race—Mamie Tape was excluded from the Spring Valley School in San Francisco because of her Chinese ancestry—is unconstitutional. What *Tape v Hurley* and *Water Ghosts* together suggest is that the School was *not* always envisioned as a vehicle for Chinese assimilation by way of education (or interpellation by way of education); the relationship of immigrant, School, and State has shifted dramatically over time.

⁷⁴ Full text of the Page Act archived at <http://library.uwb.edu/guides/USimmigration/18%20stat%20477.pdf>

the rupture of place makes ghosts possible; or perhaps only ghosts make possible the rupture of place. The flood is the boat arrival come full circle, and points to another crucial “where,” a key geography in which popular knowledges, and ghosts, circulate: water.

Water is un-institutional and un-institutionalizable. It represents the geographic *trans* of transnational, the space across which transnational traffic moves—in the case of *Water Ghosts*, the Pacific Ocean the three women/ghosts must have traversed to arrive in Locke. Land is where power is exerted, where schools are built, how citizenship is traditionally defined; out on the open sea is where interpellation cannot reach, where contestation of State power flares. Open water is what the State must define itself against, perhaps as much as it defines itself against other States: the absence of governance and the prospect of un-governability bring governance most clearly and pressingly into focus. Or viewed another way, the State has always had to understand itself in relation to immigrants *defined not only by their national origins but by their nationless-ness*. Open water promises a field of always arriving immigrants who become, in transit, ungoverned/un-interpellated and potentially un-governable/un-interpellatable.

Water Ghosts' three ghosts arrive in Locke on the Sacramento River, linked to the Pacific Ocean by San Francisco Bay. The flood at novel's climax flows out of the Sacramento. Water of course exists not only between nations but within them: rivers, lakes, floods—all are irruptions of the ungovernable within governed space. This calls to mind again the lasting immigrant condition: immigration begins “outside” but does not necessarily end once “inside.” Try as they might to assimilate,

many immigrants remain immigrants in the eyes of the State and body politic, irrevocably different and, by means of that difference—difference supposedly marking a refusal/inability to assimilate—un-governable. In particular Asian immigrants and Asian Americans have been branded “perpetual foreigners” by way of legal and social exclusions and racialization.⁷⁵ *Water Ghosts*’ linkage of popular knowledge to immigration by way of water suggests a cloud of anxiety enveloping all three, so that anxiety over one might be connected to or expressed by anxiety over another. Similarly, management of race/culture, immigration, and popular knowledge are interconnected projects: policing knowledge production *is* policing race/culture *is* policing immigration/national boundaries/national self-definition. Thinking spatially attunes us to this interconnectivity, drawing race/culture and knowledge production into a conversation about borders and the evolving conception of the nation.

In keeping with a historicizing impulse, we might also think temporally and consider the “when” of popular knowledge, which gets us to this interconnectivity as surely as the “where.” *Water Ghosts* is also helpful here. As a rewriting of *Beloved*, *Woman Warrior*, and *China Men* (also by Maxine Hong Kingston, published in 1977), it conducts important work to draw the four books, and the ghostly, into historical dialogue. *Water Ghosts* is fairly transparent in its engagements with each earlier novel. Although it never references histories of slavery or Reconstruction, its central plot device mirrors *Beloved*’s, with its three central ghosts “returning” much as *Beloved* returns, and its parasitic relationship between ghost Ming Wai and

⁷⁵ The seminal history of the struggles of Asians in America is Ronald Takaki’s *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1989).

“former” husband Richard Fong closely modeling the parasitic relationship between ghost Beloved and “former” mother Sethe. Add to these borrowings *Water Ghosts*’s aforementioned opening epigraph from Morrison’s Nobel lecture, which signals the novel’s intentions to explore the ghostly expressly in terms of gender—much as *Beloved* has. Of course *Woman Warrior* famously conducts its own crossings of ghosts, gender, and race, and *Water Ghosts* draws in particular from the earlier book’s adaptation of Chinese supernatural folklore. Like *Woman Warrior* it parodies traditional forms to imagine a hybridized Chinese American subjecthood. What happens to knowledge systems, both books wonder, during and after immigration? *Water Ghosts* even has its own nameless drowned woman ghost, a clear homage to *Woman Warrior*’s No-Name Woman. Finally *Water Ghosts* rewrites *China Men* by borrowing its historical terrain, including the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and 1875 Page Act. As Kingston’s division of Chinese American history into two distinct works suggests, there are two separate Chinese American stories, one of men (*China Men*) and one of women (*Woman Warrior*), made distinct by the forcible and gendered legal exclusion of the Page Act. *China Men*’s Ah Goong wonders “what a man was for, what he had to have a penis for” (144), without women, and *Water Ghosts* stretches those questions into a full novel about masculinity, sexuality, isolation—and ghosts.

Water Ghosts is also very much a book of and about 2000s America. It is available allegory for the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina,⁷⁶ for ongoing transnational sex trafficking, for ongoing popular supernatural knowledge circulation in

⁷⁶ Signaled by its choice of language when Locke is flooded: “the levees break” (230).

communities across America. It also summons up the histories of Southeast Asian boat people, refugees (including many of my family members) who began their exodus post-Fall of Saigon, in 1975, continuing all the way into the '90s, many hundreds of thousands dying anonymously at sea, like the three women ghosts of *Water Ghosts*. But the survivors' story is a story of now, too, of peoples still assimilating, or not assimilating, the very peoples rocked by Katrina and later the Gulf Oil spill *precisely because of* the economic and social conditions in which they found themselves, as refugees, in poverty-line New Orleans and Biloxi. Several stories in one: these are also peoples who see ghosts as ghosts.

These various interpretive possibilities, or contextual frameworks, might all land in dialogue together. *Water Ghosts*' rewriting project invites us to make two separate sets of historical leaps: one back to the late 1800s and early 1900s, when *Beloved* and *China Men* and (portions of) *Woman Warrior* are set; another to the 1970s and '80s, when those books were published. This last is perhaps the most difficult connection to make, but also the most crucial. Connecting distant past and present moment tells us histories of racialization and popular knowledge circulation must be viewed in a long continuum—which is a sort of platitude. But factoring in the near past as well gives us something more than just one more point in the continuum. Between 1971 and 2004, nearly 18 million immigrants arrived in the U.S., about 7.3 million of them born in Asia, radically rewriting America.⁷⁷ Again, these are broad strokes, but multiculturalism was, among many other things, a means of grappling with that ongoing upheaval, of registering it, filtering it, managing it, harvesting it for this or

⁷⁷ Statistical Abstract of the U.S., 2004, Table 8. accessed 13 May 2013. www.census.gov/prod/www/statistical-abstract-04.html.

that agenda. What would it mean to put turn-of-the-century immigration in conversation with post-1965 immigration and multiculturalism? Perhaps something like Michelle Alexander's linkage of slavery to Jim Crow to what she calls the "new Jim Crow," the War on Drugs and the post-1980 American legal system, which incarcerates and thus manages blacks in far greater numbers than slavery ever did; the fog clears to reveal an evolving racial caste system.⁷⁸ What I would illuminate is an evolving machinery. Distant waves of immigration, more recent waves, multiculturalism, *Ghostly Matters* and spectral scholarship, the School as ISA, compulsory rationalism in other forms: these are like slavery, Jim Crow, and the War on Drugs—separate islands until drawn sensibly together. Paying attention to Asian American literatures and their ghosts as ghosts can produce this same kind of drawing together. The fog clears and we see a vast management system producing hyper-visibility and invisibility at once, that is itself hyper-visible and invisible at once—positively "ghostly"—and always evolving to maintain power relations and keep itself hidden from view.

⁷⁸ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2012).

Chapter 2

Women's Stories: The Gendered Supernatural

Give me money, he says in the dream. \$100,000. More. Everything. We've been attending Tibetan Buddhist prayer sessions in a lonely house in suburban northern Virginia for several months now. I'm sixteen. The dreams are my mother's, though he visits mine, once, too. He's a rimpoche, the leader of this particular Buddhist sect. Mind-control, says my uncle. Not uncommon. They visit your dreams and take over your mind. Sometimes they use ghosts. Take all your money. Shades of Jane Eyre, Wide Sargasso Sea, Bertha Mason, the Madwoman in the Attic: when my mother recounts the dreams, along with my uncle's prescriptions, my father says she needs psychiatric care. Visits in dreams, demands for money? Madness. Psychiatric care—but not for my uncle, not for any of the male purveyors of ghost stories. Just my mother.

A woman's story.

I saw him, I heard him, she insists. He was in my dream.

And in her childhood, a severed ghostly leg walked back and forth.

*

Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men*, somewhat lesser known than *Woman Warrior*, though it won a National Book Award in 1981, is less overtly a meditation on the

supernatural than its predecessor, and as its title suggests, sets out to tell story of Chinese immigrant men, not women. Still it has the incisive first word on the intersection of women and the ghostly.⁷⁹ Early on in the novel, we learn that the narrator's father, BaBa, "became susceptible to the stories men told, which were not fabrications like the fairy tales and ghost stories told by women" (41). The charge frames the first arrival of Chinese immigrant women to America. As the novel details, various Chinese exclusion acts shaped historical immigration patterns, the 1875 Page Act⁸⁰ in particular allowing Chinese men but not women to enter the U.S. But in this moment of transition, when Chinese women first enjoy legal entry, it is the very "China Men" who maintain the exclusion. Their rationale is rationality itself, a specifically Western rationality, set against the "fabrications" of Chinese folk knowledge—which the husbands classify, tellingly, as *women's knowledge*. To emigrate, the wives must first pursue Western educations, supplanting non-Western non-rationality with Western rationality, women's stories with men's. The proviso illustrates the degree to which an emergent Chinese American masculinity finds a wellspring of authority in scientific rationalism. At once it illustrates the degree to which the scientific rationalist project exerts its authority on domestic relations,

⁷⁹ *Woman Warrior* certainly features women as ghostly knowers, and the passage of ghostly knowledge between mother and daughter, and madness as a charge leveled at women knowers. I choose *China Men* as frame because of its representation of "women's knowledge" in the context of male claims to knowledge—the novel's active foregrounding of how and when and where knowledge is gendered *as process*.

⁸⁰ Full text of the Page Act archived at <http://library.uwb.edu/guides/USimmigration/18%20stat%20477.pdf>

specifically marital relations. Supernatural knowledge circulation, like knowledge circulation more generally, is a fundamentally gendered enterprise.

The feminization of supernatural knowledge recurs throughout Asian American literature; *China Men* merely sets the opening frame. And whenever the supernatural appears, it is predominantly women who espouse ghostly explanations, and in many texts, mothers. Men—Asian, Asian American, white—consistently counter with official knowledge. The question is how examining such a consistent overlap between the ghostly and gender can enrich readings of both. This chapter explores the gendering of scientific rationalist and ghostly knowledge, with a particular focus, following the cue of *China Men*, on the epistemic tensions between husbands and wives, the vying for claims to knowledge within the ultimate gendered and gendering Institution—marriage.

As outlined in the dissertation's Introduction, I borrow from Foucault's *Power/Knowledge* the term "popular knowledge," a variant of his "subjugated knowledge." What modernity has suppressed, criticism must restore—meaning erased histories *and* disqualified "folk" knowledges, or popular knowledges. Local and unofficial, popular knowledges are always in tension with an official knowledge that claims universality. Scientific rationalism and supernatural knowledge operate according to such a dynamic, the former official, the latter popular.

And if scientific rationalism is overwhelmingly dominant in the contemporary U.S., the supernatural knower is not without power. For Asian American women, claiming popular supernatural knowledge can be an assertion of authority. Taking the ghost as ghost—what avenues does such an understanding open? The question holds

not simply for women characters, but for women narrators and authors of Asian American literature as well. Thus my argument enters a critical dialogue first opened by Lynnette Carpenter and Wendy Kolmar's *Haunting the House of Fiction: Feminist Perspectives on Ghost Stories by American Women*. Through close readings of Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman* and Lan Cao's *Monkey Bridge*, I broaden the terms of the dialogue, introducing popular knowledge as a necessary field of context, considering the circulation of supernatural and rationalist knowledges beyond American borders, and opening new avenues for apprehending both gender construction and discourses of the ghostly.

COMFORT WOMAN

Comfort Woman follows in the tradition of *As I Lay Dying* and *Absalom, Absalom!*, two of Faulkner's famous point-of-view experiments. Like Faulkner's novels, Keller's alternates perspective by chapter, switching back and forth between the narratives of mother Akiko and daughter Beccah. To critic Brian McHale, the perspective shifts in *Absalom, Absalom!* foreground epistemological questions—who knows what, and when?⁸¹ *Comfort Woman*'s insertion of the supernatural into this

⁸¹ McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (New York: Methuen, 1987). McHale draws a rough distinction between modernist and postmodernist works by way of epistemology and ontology; for McHale epistemological exploration is the hallmark of modernist fiction, ontological exploration the hallmark of postmodernist—not at all, of course, a widely accepted theorization of their distinction. I reference it here because *Comfort Woman*, via its ghosts and shamanism, becomes an ontological exploration as well, raising the question, one well worth pressing but not one I press in the course of the dissertation, of how to situate the ghostly in relation to postmodernism, by McHale's definition and more broadly. For an examination of Asian American literature more generally in relation to avant poetics, see Timothy

formal frame forces readers to consider not only what knowledge emerges when, and who knows it, but what *kinds* of knowledge. Popular knowledge informs Akiko's account, official knowledge Beccah's: Beccah invests herself in standard American social and psychological definitions of what counts as real, according to which spirits are figments of the imagination, her mother's practices the stuff of mental illness. She inherits such a rationalist investment largely from her minister father. In the opening pages of the novel, Beccah describes him as someone who would "spirit her away" (2), establishing a none-too-subtle contrast between "spirit" as Korean ghost and "spirit" as concrete action. Following her father's lead, Beccah renders "spirit" rational. The ghost/spirit no longer *is*; instead it exists only in terms of a metaphorical relation.

By resisting her mother's teachings, Beccah effectively performs the expectations of her deceased father. His rejection of Korean shamanism as American husband and father shapes her struggle as Asian American daughter. Like her father, Beccah draws upon the established, official knowledge regime to hold in place a system of gender relations she sees operating everywhere but in her own home. A proper American daughter, his fathering demands, must resist any body of knowledge that threatens the authority of the American father, whether the literal father in domestic space or abiding patriarchy in the public domain.

What of the Korean American mother, the supernatural knower herself? To understand Akiko's positioning in the novel, I turn to Tina Chen's *Double Agency: Acts of Impersonation in Asian American Literature and Culture*. In her chapter on

Yu, *Race and the Avant-Garde: Experimental and Asian American Poetry Since 1965* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009).

Keller's novel, Chen claims that "*Comfort Woman* offers to us the most elaborate articulation of the ghostly as a form of knowing the world and remembering the injustices of the past" (150). This concluding line perches her reading on the threshold of spectral scholarship. The ghostly as form of "remembering the past" is a distinctly Gordon-ian understanding, and Chen even invokes Avery Gordon directly at one point, acknowledging the debt her study owes to Gordon's *Ghostly Matters*. But the chapter balances its metaphorical reading of the ghostly with careful reference to studies of Korean shamanism, the popular knowledge *Comfort Woman* offers up for understanding its ghosts. As Chen explains, the chapter "focuses on the unique ways in which Keller draws on Korean shamanistic rituals in order to contextualize and respond to the injustices Akiko suffers as a former comfort woman" (116). This is a valuable framing, shamanism as *response*, one upon which I will draw heavily in a later section of the chapter.

But I also argue that Akiko's supernatural knowledge should be understood as part and parcel of her suffering as comfort woman, a reading Chen only glosses. It is not simply a survival mechanism, a framework for rethinking the experience, a response, *after*. Supernatural knowledge plays a vital role *prior to and during* the trauma as well. It is ostensible justification for the injustices enacted against her, a fundamental part of what must be violently suppressed, in Korea as well as the U.S. A thread runs from why she is "volunteered" as a comfort woman⁸² to her relationships with her husband, Beccah, and segments of the Hawaiian community.

⁸² For historical, testimonial documentation of the practice, see Yoshiaki Yoshimi, *Comfort Women* (Suzanne O'Brien, trans., New York: Columbia UP, 2002). For a

The Japanese soldiers kill Induk, Akiko's predecessor, when she refuses her assigned colonial identity. "I am Korea, I am a woman...I am a daughter, I am a sister" (20), Induk announces just prior to her murder. The criteria by which comfort women are selected in the first place is precisely what the soldiers attempt to suppress—some idea of fundamental "Korean-ness." According to the Japanese, Akiko recalls, Koreans are perfectly suited for colonization based on their affinity for language. A Japanese doctor, nonchalantly performing an abortion on Akiko, explains that certain "evolutionary" traits predispose Korean women to service at recreation camps. Korean shamanism has yet to take center stage in the novel; in this moment it becomes clear that scientific rationalism occupies that space, embodied by a Japanese man trained in Western medicine spouting a bastardized version of eugenics. Western science, or Western pseudo-science, provides an easy validation of the colonial project, including misogynist violence in the forms of rape and forcible abortion. That eugenics as body of knowledge is radically incompatible with shamanism the novel does little to emphasize directly; neither the doctor nor the soldiers ever expressly finger Korean shamanism for erasure. But historical and scholarly accounts insist that the Japanese were acutely conscious of Korean shamanism as a potential threat to colonization. As Wi Jo Kang has explained, the Japanese government viewed various indigenous religions, including shamanism, as "disturbers of the peace, misguiders of the people, strong adherers to Korean

scholarly study, see C. Sarah Soh, *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2009).

tradition, and opposers to the new orders established by Japanese administration.”⁸³

Why does *Comfort Woman* neglect to highlight this reality? Perhaps the de-emphasis is for purposes of contrast. In the novel’s imagining, the more visible, and by suggestion more prominent, effort to discredit supernatural knowledge occurs elsewhere.

Enter Rick, Akiko’s eventual American husband. Upon first meeting her at a Korean mission, Rick tells her he has heard about women “sent north of the Yalu,” a delicate euphemism for her recent history at the recreation camps. He immediately casts her in the role of victim, acknowledging her near-biblical tribulations, a gesture on the novel’s part to the historical American tendency, both popular and scholarly, to freeze the comfort woman in a position of victimhood.⁸⁴ But Rick also blames Akiko for her condition, calling for her confession, insisting God will love the “greater debtor,” the “fallen woman.” Her sin is her very victimhood, being a Korean woman in colonial time and space. The solution is religious conversion. As Akiko’s various allusions make clear, she views the process as another form of colonization, both in terms of sexual violation and enforced erasure of cultural identity. Rick’s every advance summons memories of Japanese soldiers.

Shamanism remains stage left, however. When Akiko and Rick travel to the U.S., visiting the home of his just-deceased mother, Akiko finds herself paralyzed by the woman’s ghost. Meanwhile Rick, unaware of the ghost, exhorts Akiko to help him

⁸³ Kang, *Religion and Politics in Korea Under the Japanese Rule* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1987, 72).

⁸⁴ See a special forum of *the Journal of Asian American Studies* devoted to the problematic representation of comfort women: *Journal of Asian American Studies* 6.1 (2003). *Double Agency* also touches upon this subject.

clean the house: “Wife, be subject to your husband, as sayeth the Lord...A good wife will turn a house into a home” (112). Two very different systems of knowledge compete to explain the same moment. According to Akiko’s shamanism, the ghost is not only possible but urgent; according to Rick’s Catholicism, wedded to scientific rationalism, the ghost is an impossibility, never subject to the faintest consideration, and the only matter at hand is putting a house in order. Rick’s attempted enforcement of gender roles settles within this uneven collision, though he is unaware the collision is even taking place; Akiko gives him no indication she sees the ghost.⁸⁵ The moment passes without resolution—save for readers. We can view the moment as a set-piece, a snapshot of epistemic tension, and of how scientific rationalism works to buttress a husband’s masculine authority, shamanism to undermine it.

A direct collision occurs soon afterwards. Akiko informs Rick that their baby will be a boy, basing her assertion on a *tae mong*, or first birth dream, with its images of “fire and dragon and sun...all yang” (116). Rick’s response: “he had not heard such superstitious nonsense since leaving Korea. Didn’t he teach me to leave all that behind, to give it up for the Lord?” (116). Once again he draws upon Western tradition to maintain a dominant position. As husband, teacher, and agent of her conversion, he shapes for her what counts as knowledge, what as nonsense. Korean popular knowledge, weighed by the criteria of his Western frameworks, becomes

⁸⁵ One of her many strategic silences. For theorizations of silence, see King-Kok Cheung, *Articulate Silences: Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa* (New York: Cornell UP, 1993) and Patti Duncan, *Tell this Silence: Asian American Women Writers and the Politics of Speech* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2004). Duncan examines silence in *Comfort Woman* in particular.

nonsense, invalid. His authority to define reproduction and parental union re-solidifies. But *Comfort Woman* quickly destabilizes such an easy, one-way relationship. Catholicism and scientific rationalism also dictate to Rick the role he must play as husband and father: "Underneath words of disapproval," Akiko notes, "I read the pleasure and pride in his eyes" (116). Rick can only express his desire for a male heir indirectly, perhaps unconsciously. So great is his need to discount the non-rational, it supercedes his considerable desire for patrilineage. If husbands invoke Western knowledge regimes for the purposes of control, those regimes check that control at points, shaping how it might exert itself. Shortly thereafter the novel complicates the picture further, implicating Korean popular knowledge as well. Akiko gives birth to Beccah in the month of the dog, portending strength and fierceness. If Beccah were born in Korea to a Korean father, Akiko muses, the Korean father-in-law would insist upon a name to counter her birth signs. A woman cannot be dominant. Ensure by whatever means available.

For much of the novel Beccah works under this guiding rubric. Too little versed in Korean popular knowledge to understand its potentials, she turns to scientific rationalism. Not by default: as aforementioned, she inherits this investment from her father, and eventually finds it strengthened by her Hawaiian schoolmates. That her school emerges as a key space for knowledge circulation is no surprise; of course Beccah would learn there what counts as knowledge and what does not. The surprise is perhaps the violence of the demarcation, and the gendered nature of the violence. Leveling the charge of madness is a defensive maneuver, a means of policing any threats to scientific rationalist order. Beccah's frequent labeling of her mother as

“crazy” echoes her classmates’ assessment.⁸⁶ It also shares an epistemological orientation. Both parties recognize the radical unacceptability of shamanism, its violation of official standards—of what is real, what is verifiable, what is sane. Psychology provides the vehicle for their denunciation. Labeling Akiko “crazy” on the basis of her supernatural knowledge is a step beyond Rick classifying that knowledge as “nonsense”; “crazy” puts Akiko on the social margins and threatens possible legal disenfranchisement. A mentally unstable mother is unfit and might lose her child to a state ward; a mentally unstable woman might herself be institutionalized.

The schoolchildren’s second insult completes the circuit. In addition to “crazy,” they call Akiko “bag lady,” part insult, part classifier that sets her firmly outside of society. She is without home, friends, or family, stripped metaphorically of Beccah. No longer a mother, she remains a woman, a “bag lady,” as opposed to a gender-neutral “bum” or “hobo.” Akiko’s is a decidedly female madness, a failure to adhere to patriarchal conventions of knowledge. The violent charge that marks her as outsider insists upon her femininity, sets up its category of outside, unacceptable

⁸⁶ In *Double Agency*, Tina Chen outlines a “sorority” of fictional madwomen: Mari in Hisaye Yamamoto’s “The Legend of Miss Sasagawara,” Rosa in Cynthia Ozick’s *The Shawl*, and Sethe in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, “all of whom perform acts deemed ‘mad’ by society but whose actions actually call into question the ‘madness’ of the situations—Japanese internment, the Holocaust, and slavery—in which they find themselves” (212). For more on madwomen, see Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s seminal book *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979). See also Foucault’s foundational deliberations on madness in *Madness & Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Random House, 1965) and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon, 1977).

knowing expressly in terms of femininity. As for Beccah, she never verbalizes this second insult, but she literalizes its suggestion. When the vice principal interrupts the commotion, Akiko asks for her daughter, but Beccah disappears, slipping away from the gathered crowd, so that Akiko seemingly has no daughter, and in the eyes of the crowd, is no mother. Beccah is not simply disassociating herself from an improper mother, she is joining the chorus call of impropriety, effectively transforming Akiko into the daughterless bag lady. Only by performing in this fashion can she reaffirm patriarchal and rationalist orders and relocate herself comfortably within them.

Beccah's performance is a familiar one. Like her father before her, and the Japanese soldiers before him, Beccah performs a "colonial" duty. Undoubtedly colonization takes vastly different forms at different points in the novel, but each instance is colonization nonetheless. What defines them so in the logic of *Comfort Woman* is a shared commitment to erasure of identity, specifically Korean cultural identity. In each case the violence is gendered, enacted against Akiko precisely because she is a Korean woman. In each case the colonizer commits violence to uphold a fundamentally patriarchal order. And in each case the violence, ostensibly intended to transform Akiko into the proper "colonial" subject, highlights her difference, marking her as the "bad" subject, specifically the bad female subject, unable to be colonized. Scientific rationalist knowledge plays two essential roles: as rationale for domination, and then as central element of what is to be Akiko's "new" identity. Korean shamanism it codes as nonsense, as the stuff of madness, and therefore as eminently erasable.

Chen's chapter in *Double Agency* ultimately holds up shamanism as a means of rethinking the comfort woman experience. I would extend this reading, following the lead of *Comfort Woman* itself—beyond shamanism to ghostly popular knowledge more generally, and beyond comfort women to ghostly knowers more generally. Perhaps Akiko as ghostly knower cannot be separated from Akiko as comfort woman, and perhaps Beccah as ghostly knower cannot be separated from her position as daughter of a comfort woman. But what of Auntie Reno, and the string of Hawaiian customers who visit Akiko for fortune telling and spirit communion? Presumably none are former comfort women, but they too must negotiate the Hawaiian school system, with its aggressive enforcement of scientific rationalism, as well as the various other spaces in which official knowledge circulates. Akiko's dilemma is not their dilemma, not in a historical sense, nor in a psychological sense. But as ghostly knowers, all face a similar colonizing pressure—and in popular knowledge have a means of negotiating that pressure.

MONKEY BRIDGE

Like *Comfort Woman*, *Monkey Bridge*⁸⁷ offers the narrative of a daughter grappling with her mother's ghostly knowledge. Both novels dramatize a common trope in

⁸⁷ *Monkey Bridge* was at its time of publication—and remains today—one of the most prominent works of Vietnamese American fiction, still a relatively small body of work. *Watermark: Vietnamese American Poetry & Prose* (eds. Barbara Tran, Monique T.D. Truong, Truong Khoi Luu, and Christian Langworthy, New York: Asian American Writers' Workshop, 1998) was an influential early anthology of Vietnamese American literature. See also Renny Christopher, ed., *The Viet Nam War/the American War: Images and Representations in Euro-American and Vietnamese Exile Narratives* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1995) and Michele Janette, ed., *My Viet: Vietnamese American Literature in English, 1962-Present*

Asian American supernatural fiction, the process of “coming to knowledge,” which I examine at length in Chapter Three. The structural similarities extend to narration as well: *Monkey Bridge*’s movement between daughter Mai’s narration and mother Thanh’s letters effectively raises the same questions as the more formalized narrative shifts of *Comfort Woman*. Who knows what, and when—and what *kinds* of knowledge?

By the second chapter we learn that Thanh, like her Vietnamese father before her, is a ghostly knower. Mai is decidedly not, characterizing the Northern Virginia home she shares with her mother as “a phantom world that could no longer offer comfort or sanctuary” (32). Thanh’s letters, introduced in chapter four, detail firsthand her supernatural understanding of the world. They also reveal that her immigration to the U.S. is the *second* wrenching transition of her life, an understanding crucial to the novel’s treatment of the supernatural. Thanh’s first “immigration” is not, as one might expect, her childhood move from a rice-farming village to a Catholic Boarding School. Connecting these two migrations would summon up a grander historical linkage, between French colonialism and American imperialism. In fact the novel offers up that linkage earlier, during one of Mai’s flashbacks. She recalls her since-deceased father speaking of the Vietnam War, particularly the U.S. decision to side with the colonially minded French against the fiercely anti-colonial Vietnamese. The ascendant imperial power aligns with the former colonial power, and by extension the

(Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 2011). For a recent provisional bibliography of Vietnamese American literature, see Monique Truong, “Editing Watermark,” *Local/Express: Asian American Arts and Community—90s NYC* (eds. Curtis Chin, Terry Hong, and Parag Rajendra Khandhar, Washington, DC: The Asian American Literary Review, 2014).

legacy of the one aligns with that of the other. Should Thanh complete the bridge, the lasting French influence in Vietnam becomes a lens through which to understand the lasting American legacy, not only for Vietnamese but for the Vietnamese immigrant in America.

But Thanh works against this framing, and against the ostensible framer, her husband Binh. Her time in the Providence Boarding School was pleasant, she makes clear, more synthesis than colonization. It is her wedding that marks, as she puts it, “the beginning of my emigration, years before my second one, to the United States” (185). She likens crossing the Pacific Ocean to crossing the Mekong River; she characterizes marriage as exile, separation from every familiar face, custom, and tradition. As surely as her move to the U.S., her marriage tears her from the rice fields of her childhood, the peasant’s agrarian life and culture, the “heart and soul” of her homeland.⁸⁸

Such a linkage calls to mind two immediate suggestions. The first is that marriage is every bit as violent as international migration. What the novel invokes regarding the latter—loss of language and culture, alienation, discrimination—it maps onto the former. Thanh asks her daughter, and the novel asks readers, to understand marriage as radically transformative in ways that are often isolating and damaging. The second suggestion, of greater relevance to my argument, flows in reverse: immigration and assimilation, like marriage, are gendered affairs. Like her marriage, Thanh’s

⁸⁸ For a recent feminist reading of Vietnamese diaspora and transnationality, see Lan P. Duong, *Treacherous Subjects: Gender, Culture, and Trans-Vietnamese Feminism* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2012). For another exploration of the gendered migration of Southeast Asian women, see Isabelle Thuy Pelaud, Lan Duong, Mariam B. Lam, and Kathy L. Nguyen, eds., *Troubling Borders: An Anthology of Art and Literature by Southeast Asian Women in the Diaspora* (Seattle: U of Washington P, 2013).

transition to the U.S. occurs not by her choosing but as a result of a network of patriarchal machinations. If she marries by choice, out of love rather than by arrangement, her father and uncle still *give* her away. The patriarchs of both families dictate every detail of the matrimonial proceedings, down to the confirmation of the bride's virginity. Thanh gives up her name, both surname and first name, and post-wedding, she effectively becomes a dutiful servant, a wife crafted according to some combination of her husband's whims and his family's conceptions of traditional, patriarchal Vietnamese custom. Her immigration and assimilation to the U.S. follow a similar pattern, effectively arranged by her husband, her father, and Michael, an American soldier. Each one she identifies as a representative figure: her husband of the "third force," aligned with neither the North nor South Vietnamese governments; Michael of the American military, or perhaps a more conscientious, open-minded faction of the American military; and her father, at first, of the Vietnamese peasantry, and later, in the central turn of the novel, of the Viet Cong. The military and political maneuvering of the three stand in for the larger military and political developments of the period, definitively masculine in nature. Men determine the course of the War; they also determine the aftermath, which we might read as "giving away the bride." That is, Binh's relationship with Michael enables Thanh and Mai's escape; the Vietnamese patriarch gives his womenfolk to the American patriarch, passing responsibility—including possession—from one set of male hands to another.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Isabelle Thuy Pelaud offers an extensive feminist reading of *Monkey Bridge* in *This is All I Choose to Tell: History and Hybridity in Vietnamese American Literature* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2010), the first-ever comprehensive study of Vietnamese American literature. For other works of Vietnamese American studies, see Nhi T. Lieu, *The American Dream in Vietnamese* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2011);

At the core of this analogy is the matter of Vietnamese popular knowledge. Both Thanh's marriage and transition to the U.S. render her karmic understanding invalid. She discovers the morning after the wedding that Binh is "an avid student of astronomy, which was his way of studying the science of the stars in a way directly rebellious of and opposite from what he considered the superstitious ways of astrology" (189). Science trumps "superstition"; a husband's knowing trumps a wife's. In one fell swoop he levels what for Thanh is a foundational knowledge, passed down to her by her father, shared by the peasantry, accepted by a nation. As if to literalize the finality of these assumptions, Binh has chopped down the trees surrounding the house, the better to see the stars by telescope. For a farmer's daughter invested in the earth and its flora, the metaphorical resonance is unmistakable.

Binh is a modern man, he repeatedly insists, and Thanh comes to realize that by "modern man" he means a carefully calculated synthesis of modernity and traditional masculinity. He can impose his modern knowledge—political philosophy and scientific rationalism—not simply because of its inherent validity but because he claims authority as a husband. It is this particular revelation that Thanh proffers to Mai as a light to shine back upon their shared experience in the U.S. Again and again, her letter highlights the parallels between marriage and immigration to the U.S.

Kieu-Linh Caroline Valverde, *Transnationalizing Viet Nam: Community, Culture, and Politics in the Diaspora* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2013); and Karin Aguilar-San Juan, *Little Saigons: Staying Vietnamese in America* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2009). For a recent overview of the state of the emerging field of Southeast Asian American studies, see *Positions: Asia Critique* 20.3 (Summer 2012, "Southeast Asian American Studies"), eds. Fiona I. B. Ngô, Mimi Thi Nguyen, and Mariam B. Lam.

The struggles of immigration and assimilation, she asserts, must be understood in terms of gender and the ghostly.

Consider the mother-daughter confrontation of an apartment manager in Falls Church, Virginia, over relocating to a better apartment. Mai pleads with her mother not to mention curses and counter-curses, saying “please, Ma. He’ll think I’m crazy” (21). As in *Comfort Woman*, the charge of madness is policing maneuver, warning off unofficial knowledge. Only in this case the daughter levels it upon herself, laying bare the true concern—guilt by association, or rather guilt by inheritance. Implicitly Mai claims she is not crazy, not a ghostly knower, while affirming scientific rationalism and her place as a good daughter within its system. As for the manager, he quips, “What’s Madame Nhu here saying?” (21). The allusion is layered. Tran Le Xuan, commonly known as Madame Nhu, was the unofficial First Lady of South Vietnam from 1955 to 1963. When President Diem and her husband, Diem’s brother, were assassinated in 1963, she was famously forced into exile. Thus we can contextualize the reference in terms of Madame Nhu’s international visibility: for a large portion of post-War era Americans, she would be the first, and perhaps only, Vietnamese woman to come to mind. But the manager delivers the allusion with a smirk, in seemingly derisory fashion, suggesting a richer field of inference. Referring to Thanh as a deposed exile suggests she is without power, dependent upon the asylum of a benevolent nation; it casts her as foreign, a Vietnamese exile rather than a Vietnamese American. Should Mai miss the suggestion, he follows with another allusion, this one nakedly Orientalist and misogynist—“Mamasan.” The Vietnamese American woman becomes an Asian prostitute, the manager a G.I.

Beneath this undercurrent of national, racial, and sexual tension is the deepest current, epistemological in nature. The reason Thanh wants to change apartments is that their current apartment is cursed—a reason Mai refuses to communicate to the manager. Mai assumes he will think she is crazy, and the novel gives no reason to assume she is wrong. Scientific rationalism and popular knowledge collide in this moment, with scientific rationalism so thoroughly dominating the collision that popular knowledge cannot be voiced publicly. The revelation of Thanh's letter points directly to this moment: it must be understood in terms of her marital "immigration." Again she requests a move—an "immigration" to a new apartment—that requires male sanction. Her way of knowing cannot be a criterion that shapes the move. As before, a male figure decides on the basis of national, gender, and sexual assumptions that fit acceptably within a scientific rationalist framework. Official knowledge and masculine authority converge to sanction control over both female movement and knowledge.

Mai too is trapped within this dynamic. Fairly early in the novel, she characterizes her mother's "new strategy for our battles in America...[as]...deftly turning our differences into a war of East and West. It was a tactic as smooth and sleek as hot wax on tender skin" (61). The simile of hot wax suggests the obvious critique of artificiality, the wax merely a covering, but one that still burns the flesh beneath it. Perhaps the assessment rings true—to a point. Thanh does compare Vietnam and America directly in her letters, but she is far too keen, far too fastidious an observer, to make sweeping generalizations about East and West. The charge smacks instead of Mai's own simplifying impulses; she willfully misinterprets her mother's claims,

setting up an East-West dichotomy as a straw man she can easily topple. For her part, she prefers to frame mother-daughter tensions solely in personal terms, frequently citing her mother's choices to cling to Vietnamese culture. Never does she consider the mounting evidence that scientific rationalism is a widespread project, one that shapes every person and space she encounters.

Like Beccah in *Comfort Woman*, Mai as daughter provides a graphic illustration of her mother's dilemma. Not only does Mai discount ghostly knowledge, for the most part she discounts it uncritically, without even realizing she discounts it, let alone the consequences of that "decision." She recalls at one point that her mother always edited her father's philosophy papers, submitting them to the "flawless logic" of her mind. Later Mai concludes that "no expenditure of logic" (151) could alter her mother's misjudgment. So whether she acknowledges her mother's obvious capabilities or faults her for her karmic understanding, Mai cannot help but draw upon the basic vocabulary of scientific rationalism, "logic." As Thanh indicates in her letters, her attempts *as a mother* to pass along Vietnamese popular knowledge run firmly into Mai's conceptions of what it means to be an *American daughter*. Mai's performance of American femininity necessarily involves a rejection of ghostly knowledge.

Only late in her narrative, after reading several of her mother's letters, does Mai begin to reassess her framework of understanding:

Somewhere, in some unknown place beyond the Newtonian space of force, mass, and acceleration, my mother used to say, our ancestors continued to look over us, living out their existence simultaneously through their, and our, lives" (167-8).

She goes on to express a pointed desire for this way of knowing, but her basic description here already implies the shift. Instead of deriding a simplified East-West dichotomy, she faithfully recounts her mother's conception: the possibility of the supernatural exists not in the East but in an unknown place, "beyond"—marginal. By contrast the center, occupied by physical science, the study of "force and mass," is a Newtonian space, definitively male. It is not idyllic. For the first time, Mai recognizes that "the luxury of seamless, unsuperstitious order, after all, did not come without a price" (212). The price is estrangement of mother and daughter, the surface tension of the novel. The price is estrangement of daughter from history and culture, the underlying tension of the novel. And the hidden price, the deepest current of the novel, is epistemological. The luxury of a seamless, unsuperstitious order means absolute adherence to a definitively patriarchal, rationalist system of knowledge.

Yet Thanh ultimately refuses to offer Vietnamese popular knowledge as a viable alternative. Though she is acutely aware of the price of rationalist order, and though she pushes karmic understanding throughout Mai's childhood and early adulthood, at novel's end she willfully de-romanticizes Vietnamese popular knowledge. She chooses in her final letter to jettison the fiction of Baba Quan as idealized figure, man of the people, loving husband and father. Whereas an earlier letter paints him as a symbol of traditional masculinity, more family-oriented and less oppressive than Binh's modern man, the final letter reveals a divergent reality. Baba Quan is Viet Cong, and one who formerly prostituted his wife, Mai's grandmother, to Uncle Khan. In Thanh's conception, the former revelation makes him a political villain to both her local Vietnamese American community, staunchly anti-Communist, and to the U.S. at

large, still smarting from a failed War. The latter makes him an ethical villain, a husband violently, sexually domineering to a degree Binh never approaches. The “new” Baba Quan undermines the opposition she draws between traditional and modern masculinity, as well as her celebration of traditional masculinity.

Supernatural knowledge cannot avoid implication. In an earlier letter, when Thanh tells of her wedding, she carefully notes her father’s absence during the astrological determination of the ceremony’s time and date. Uncle Khan and Binh’s father, along with a hired astrologer, scan the astrological charts; Baba Quan somehow skirts the proceedings, and throughout the remainder of the wedding, he is an outsider, an onlooker. As supernatural knower, he does not participate in what Thanh casts as the quintessential model of male-directed “migration,” from woman to wife. Binh and his family perhaps pay lip service to Vietnamese popular knowledge by employing the astrologer; or perhaps they subvert it, using it for their purposes to facilitate Binh’s version of a modern union. But Baba Quan, the ghostly knower, stands at a remove.

Only he does not, not according to the final letter. All along he has followed a particular political vision, scheming and plotting. Whether we view his ghostly knowledge as buttressing that vision, or that vision as a natural outgrowth of his karmic understanding, he inextricably allies the two. The results are forced prostitution of his wife, murder of Uncle Khan, military victory over the U.S.—all unacceptable outcomes to Vietnamese Americans and Americans alike. No longer a heroic figure, no longer an ideal man, Baba Quan is suddenly damaging to Thanh’s not-so-implicit argument. Her critique of scientific rationalism as patriarchal tool

points again and again to the invalidation of ghostly knowledge. But what if ghostly knowledge too is a tool of patriarchal control? The critique still holds, but the easy binary opposition between tradition and modernity, an opposition on which she builds the critique, collapses.

New questions emerge. The reasons Thanh lied are clear: the surface reason, to avoid shame; the unspoken reason, to advance a critique of male-conducted “immigration,” the collusion of patriarchy and scientific rationalism. But why has she chosen now to reveal the truth about Baba Quan? What does her lying suggest about how she, as opposed to her father, makes use of ghostly knowledge? And what authority does claiming ghostly knowledge provide her?

CLAIMING AUTHORITY AS GHOSTLY KNOWER

Monkey Bridge's conclusion resolves these various questions. How one reads that conclusion, however, hinges upon Thanh's position as letter writer, and to understand her use of supernatural knowledge *as an author* in particular, one must consider that usage in the context of her other claims to authority. Motherly authority comes to mind most immediately. *Monkey Bridge*, like *Comfort Woman*, is as much a mother's story as it is a daughter's. Both Thanh and Akiko claim authority as mothers precisely by means of, and on the basis of, ghostly knowledge. Motherly responsibility is providing a supernatural understanding of a world more complex than scientific rationalism defines it—or as Thanh puts it, “to release [Mai] into a world whose secret workings she refuses to recognize is something a mother can never do” (56). The threat of a dominating official knowledge makes necessary the

mother's role as teacher-guide. The father cannot and will not play such a role. Thanh and Akiko claim motherly authority in order to supercede fathers not only unprepared to properly raise daughters, but willfully antagonistic to a brand of child-rearing founded on "women's stories." Neither Mai nor Beccah is a ghostly knower precisely in the fashion of her mother, but neither is a strict rationalist in the fashion of her father. Each mother exerts a measure of guiding influence that only grows over the course of each novel. Thanh and Akiko succeed in exerting control, both over their daughters and their own self-definitions as mothers.

That they must do so returns us to Tina Chen's insightful argument about shamanism *as response*. According to Chen,

Keller's use of shamanistic lore in *Comfort Woman* rearticulates the central concerns of the comfort woman experience in ways that signify on multiple levels. The systematic, gender-based oppression of Korean comfort women occupies an inverted relationship to the fact that *mansin* are predominantly women. Due to the possibility of understanding the shaman role for women as a potentially empowering role, one that allows women access to both public and private domains and to resist patriarchal codes of female behavior in Korean society, Keller's resituation of the comfort woman experience within the context of Korean shamanism foregrounds the importance of seeing female oppression as a social condition that can be resisted (135).

By dramatizing Akiko's revelation—that shamanism offers a crucial means of rearticulating her experience—the novel offers it to readers. As shamanism becomes a means of self-determination for Akiko, it becomes the interpretive lens through which to reevaluate the comfort woman experience for readers. Again, I would expand this formulation in scope. In Chen's careful treatment, the comfort woman experience is more than sexual and cultural violation at the hands of Japanese soldiers. It extends to the long-time failure of Japanese history to record this

violation; it extends to the ways in which the comfort woman has become hyper-visible, an object of American popular and scholarly discourse, frozen in the position of victim. Shamanism is particularly valuable as interpretive lens, then, because it inclines us to reevaluate the original violation without repeating the violations of historical erasure or “theoretical colonization.”

At this point, holding Thanh up beside Akiko becomes helpful. What of the countless other Asian, Asian immigrant, and Asian American women facing analogous if not similar erasure and objectification? At the end of the passage quoted above, Chen points to female oppression writ large, but only as a gesture, doing little else to move beyond the comfort woman. Understanding shamanism as a form of ghostly popular knowledge, and considering it alongside other forms of ghostly popular knowledge, enables us to do so. Identifying the feminization of ghostly knowledge enables us to understand female oppression as systemic, built into the basic codes of Western rationalism. And the American space is of particular importance: Akiko is not simply bound by “patriarchal codes of female behavior in Korean society”; she is also bound by matching codes in the U.S., as are Beccah, Thanh, and Mai. In both *Comfort Woman* and *Monkey Bridge*, the claim to authority as ghostly woman knower only fully emerges within the U.S., during the process of assimilation. Akiko and Thanh are subject to various forms of oppression prior to immigration, and are certainly in contact with Western rationalist ways of knowing prior to immigration, but only begin to claim authority as ghostly knowers in the U.S.—a crucially important way of re-understanding immigration and assimilation, we might note. This is no coincidence. The American space—via the school system,

as well as various other state institutions, as explored in Chapter One—forces a critical consciousness which other spaces may only encourage. Beset constantly by the pressures of rationalist order, the Asian American supernatural knower comes to see the rejection of popular knowledge not as incident but fixed routine. She can “look outward,” seeing the circulation of scientific rationalist knowledge outside the U.S. and across the histories of colonialism and modernity as part of a larger project; she can begin to fashion a claim to knowledge with an intimate and comprehensive understanding of what she fashions it against. The process culminates in what we might term their ultimate claim to authority, authorship.⁹⁰

GHOSTLY AUTHORSHIP

The vast majority of narrators of Asian American ghostly literature are in fact women. A provisional list, beyond the aforementioned four of *Comfort Woman* and *Monkey Bridge*, includes the loose stand-ins for Maxine Hong Kingston in *Woman Warrior*, *China Men*, and *The Fifth Book of Peace*; Olivia of *The Hundred Secret Senses*; Mrs. Bhava of “The Management of Grief”; the unnamed narrator *The Gangster We Are All Looking For*; and Satomi of *Picking Bones from Ash* (2009). A full list is considerably longer—and we might add to it the actual authors themselves,

⁹⁰ Though I do not draw upon either work here, the foundational treatises on authorship are, of course, Roland Barthes, “Death of the Author,” *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977. 142-8) and Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?” *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory* (Eds. Vassilis Lambropoulos and David Neal Miller. Albany: SUNY Press, 1987. 124-42). For an examination of male authorship in particular, see David Wyatt, *Prodigal Sons: A Study in Authorship and Authority* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980).

including but not limited to Nora Okja Keller, Lan Cao, Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, Bharati Mukherjee, lê thi diem thúy, and Marie Mutsuki Mockett, all women.

Why the consistent pattern? What does ghostly authorship provide to Asian American women?⁹¹ These questions settle my analysis within a larger dialogue. Lynette Carpenter and Wendy Kolmar's *Haunting the House of Fiction* first posed similar questions regarding American women's ghost stories in 1983. Unearthing a scattered history of supernatural works by women writers, Carpenter and Kolmar argue for a female ghost story tradition, one defined distinctly in opposition to the dominant male tradition. Men's ghost stories—prominent in the 19th century, shaped by popular debates over reason and unreason, science and spirituality, the natural and the supernatural—are decidedly “dualistic,” Carpenter and Kolmar conclude. Always the stories work to affirm one pole by discounting the other. Women's ghost stories, by contrast, frame the natural and supernatural within a continuum of possibility. Boundaries between real and unreal relax, sometimes dissolve; cultural traditions other than white European find expression. A means to challenge the “valorization of reason,” women's ghost stories imagine alternate possibilities.

Seminal and productive, these formulations are nonetheless vague. *Haunting the House of Fiction* only outlines in brief the key terms of a vast dialogue. If its

⁹¹ There are a number of helpful meditations on Asian American women's authorship, including: Asian Women United of California, ed., *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writings By and About Asian American Women* (New York: Beacon Press, 1989); Elaine H. Kim, Lilia V. Villanueva, and Asian Women United of California, eds., *Making More Waves: New Writing by Asian American Women* (New York: Beacon Press, 1997); Phillipa Kafka, *(Un)doing the Missionary Position: Gender Asymmetry in Contemporary Asian American Women's Writing* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997); and Leslie Bow, *Betrayal and Other Acts of Subversion: Feminism, Sexual Politics, Asian American Women's Literature* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001).

introduction references “cultural traditions” and “rationality,” it makes no explicit or implicit reference to a Foucaultian conception of subjugated knowledges—which to be fair, was coined only a decade earlier. Carpenter and Kolmar acknowledge the epistemological challenge the woman’s ghost story poses, but gloss over Western rationalism as an institutionalized, omnipresent project.⁹² Questions of female ghostly authorship want fuller answers. The dialogue about the gendered ghostly needs at once more precision and greater scope. It must hone in on the popular knowledges through which the supernatural is frequently understood; it must examine popular knowledges as they interact with scientific rationalist knowledge—Thanh’s astrology set against Binh’s astronomy; Akiko in the Hawaiian schoolyard, labeled crazy. The dialogue must also move beyond a limited spatial and historical American frame. Only four of *Haunting the House of Fiction*’s twelve essays address fiction of the late twentieth century—when American supernatural literature, Asian

⁹² They also advance what amounts to a white feminist reading of women’s ghost stories—though the collection does address fiction by women of color, with criticism by women of color scholars—neglecting to foreground race and differentiate between contexts and ramifications for women of color versus white women writing ghostly narratives. Though I do not pursue this avenue here, it is well worth settling ghostly women’s knowledge in a larger discussion of Women of Color feminism, some central works of which include: Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press, 2nd ed., 1984); Barbara Christian, *Black Feminist Criticism: Perspectives on Black Women Writers* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1985); Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987); bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Boston: South End Press, 2nd ed., 2000); Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham: Duke UP, 2003); Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Langhorne: Crossing Press, 2007); and Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2009). If Anzaldúa’s and Minh-Ha’s works begin to articulate feminism vis a vis spirituality, more focused considerations of ghostly knowledge as “women’s knowledge” and ghostly authorship offer valuable new avenues of inquiry for Women of Color feminism, I would venture.

American supernatural literature in particular, blossoms. None of its essays tracks the crossing of gender and the ghostly beyond American borders, where the international spread of modernity has much to teach us about the ghostly “at home.”

A final consideration is the matter of spectral scholarship. Certainly *Haunting the House of Fiction* cannot be expected to anticipate the rise of spectral scholarship, the practice of understanding the ghostly strictly as a metaphorical lens, essentially ubiquitous by the early 2000s. Published in 1983, the collection predates the vast majority of spectral scholarship, so it seems less than fair to ask that it take up the spectral scholarly turn as a crucial interpretive question. But one cannot help but note that certain of its collected works fit the spectral scholarly mold. Consider its penultimate essay, “‘A Story to Pass On’: Ghosts and the Significance of History in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*,” which assumes the Gordonian “ghost as history” posture fifteen years before the publication of *Ghostly Matters*.

My analysis offers a corrective. *Monkey Bridge* and *Comfort Woman*, works of ghostly fiction by Asian American women *about* the production of ghostly narratives by Asian American women, shade in the gaps of the dialogue. As I have argued, both highlight the collision of popular and scientific rationalist knowledges; both track these collisions internationally. Two concerns remain. In what sense is ghostly authorship a claim of authority for Asian American women? And how does the spectral scholarly turn fit into the dialogue about the gendered ghostly? The answers, it turns out, are intimately related.

Both Thanh’s letters and Akiko’s narrative picture the “insurrection of subjugated knowledges” in the dual Foucault-ian sense. That is, they dramatize the rise of erased

histories (Akiko's comfort woman experience in *Comfort Woman*, Baba Quan as wife-prostituting Viet Cong in *Monkey Bridge*) as well as discounted popular ghostly knowledges (Korean shamanism in *Comfort Woman*, Vietnamese karmic understanding in *Monkey Bridge*). The danger of spectral scholarship, as I explain in the dissertation's Introduction and further explore in Chapter 1, is that it takes up only the first half of Foucault's pairing, and does so in a fashion that suppresses the second. Spectral scholarship uses the ghostly as a means of understanding erased histories, the traces of which still "haunt" the present. The practice requires a metaphorical framing of the ghostly—a clear departure from the literal framing of many popular ghostly knowledges, Thanh's and Akiko's included. Moreover, spectral scholarship frequently disavows a "premodern" understanding of the ghostly in the process of articulating its own approach; the attempt to resurrect erased histories finds itself upon the suppression of popular knowledges.

The move is a common one. In 1987, when Morrison's *Beloved* imagined *Beloved* as literal apparition *and* symbol of the history of slavery, the novel drew upon a collective understanding that the U.S. has always been haunted by the ghost of Slavery. Lay readers and academics alike continue to applaud the novel's powerful evocation of that symbolic ghost. *Beloved* did not invent the metaphor, only capitalized on it, dramatized it in heady, incisive fashion. Similarly spectral scholars, in developing the ghostly as scholarly tool, did not invent the mode of analysis so much as sharpen its edge.

Comfort Woman and *Monkey Bridge* both address this rendering, particularly as it relates to the subjugation of popular knowledges. Thanh and Akiko delay the

revelation of key histories to their daughters, providing them only in the “final chapters” of their narratives, Akiko in the tapes she records for Beccah, Thanh in her final letter to Mai. The two women effectively erase these histories—but of course they do not act alone. Akiko’s refusal to provide her history to Beccah must be considered alongside, for instance, the long-time official Japanese refusal to acknowledge the history of Korean comfort women. This alignment is not to somehow absolve Akiko of responsibility for the erasure, but to point out that her decision exists within a network of engagements of that history, Japanese and American, with which Akiko is acutely familiar. Rick forbids her to tell Beccah: “Think of how she would feel,” he implores, “knowing her mother was a prostitute...I ask you to protect our daughter, with your silence, from that shame” (196). Erasing the history protects Beccah not from the “shame” but from Rick’s (mis)casting of that history.

Restoring it is the desired culmination of a calculated plan. Using a narrative, specifically a ghostly-inflected narrative, to shape the ultimate disclosure, she is able to exert control over how her daughter will come to understand that erased history. Throughout the novel, Akiko demonstrates the power as narrator to frame collisions between ways of knowing, to show us when, where, and how they collide, and to what effect. When Rick does not realize she is grappling with his mother’s ghost, for instance, it is a reality most Western readers *could not* realize—scientific rationalism prevents the very possibility of recognizing its collisions with other knowledges. In order to grasp her comfort woman experience, Beccah, and we readers, must first gain a working knowledge not only of Korean shamanism but the systematic nature of the

scientific rationalist project to discredit it. The proper resurrection of an erased history becomes possible by means of popular knowledge *and* a reconsideration of official knowledge—a pairing spectral scholarship cannot provide, works actively against.

As for Thanh, she justifies her decision to erase history by reference to the local Vietnamese American community, which vilifies the Viet Cong and the prevailing Communist regime. Mainstream America too vilifies the Viet Cong, or perhaps the Vietnamese more generally, unable to draw a clear distinction between North and South. As the apartment manager's "Madame Nhu" reference suggests, "foreign" is the defining Vietnamese characteristic. Thus local and national conceptions combine to strip the Viet Cong soldier of humanity, and one way to read Thanh's erasure, and revision, of her father's history is as a preemptive refusal of this dehumanization on political grounds. She can only celebrate his humanity by fudging his backstory. Yet her ultimate revelation must overturn this careful celebration and affirm the vilification she so feared. So why make it? How are we to understand this choice? And why make it at this particular juncture?

Narration is a more vexed endeavor for Thanh than Akiko, and Thanh's ultimate disclosure is less a culmination than a concession. She has not, like Akiko, worked steadily towards this revelation, all the while developing popular knowledge as a necessary interpretive framework. In fact, rereading Thanh's letters with her ultimate disclosure in mind, we can track her "misuse" of popular knowledge: in service of a revisionist history, it obscures rather than clarifies. In the initial telling, Uncle Khan adopts Thanh because his wife dreams of a new daughter with Thanh's face. The

dream is not open for interpretation; it supplies an obvious message, accepted by all parties in the community, that “had to be heeded” (176). In the collective understanding of the village, the adoption is a product of ancestral karma. A poor farming family has given birth to Thanh and raised her, but she “belonged truly” to the rich landowning family. Throughout the tale, then, popular knowledge sanctions movements we later learn are fictions. Thanh employs popular knowledge specifically to nurture a class-striving fantasy—that a peasant girl can become gentry, that the transformation is both seamless and preordained. The usage works in reverse as well, supporting a class-dominant fantasy—that wealth and class status are preordained, the product not of exploitation but karma; that the wealthy might claim the authority not only to disburse properties but reshape families. A rich husband assumes both the right and the means to repair faulty biology. When his wife repeatedly miscarries, he replaces the unborn children with a live daughter, appropriating both the dream and the child for his own purposes, affirming his patriarchal position within his immediate family and in the larger village community.

Thus Thanh’s deployment of popular knowledge marks a radical departure from Akiko’s model. In a lone moment, *Comfort Woman* hints that popular knowledge can be wielded for less than savory ends—Akiko reflects that a hypothetical Korean father-in-law might use it to short-circuit female strength. *Monkey Bridge* develops this possibility of “mis-use” to the point of an inverse formulation. If *Comfort Woman* asserts that popular knowledge is necessary for proper understanding of history, *Monkey Bridge* proposes that popular knowledge cannot emerge at the expense of history. A “false” popular knowledge—not a literal interpretation of a

supernatural occurrence, but invention entirely—is no more viable than a false history. We need full, unadulterated history, the suggestion goes, as a frame for understanding popular knowledge. Otherwise the erased histories always threaten to unmoor popular knowledge, to reveal its separation from and its unfaithfulness to actual material existence. This is particularly true for karmic understanding, according to which karma functions as a fundamental causal principle: what happens, or will happen, is always a product of the past. Encoded into Vietnamese popular knowledge itself is a prohibition against historical erasure.

Once she makes her disclosure, Thanh tries desperately to suture her narrative and its suddenly transparent aims together. She entreats Mai to accept a number of seemingly divergent possibilities: Baba Quan as Viet Cong and less-than-noble husband; Baba Quan as flawed human, but human nonetheless; and karmic understanding as viable. Mothering is her ostensible suture:

This is how your mother loves you, Mai...Motherhood is the same in every language. It touches you, exaggerates your capacity to love, and makes you do things that are wholly unordinary. It calls for a suspension of the self in a way that is almost religious, spiritual. The true division in this world, I believe, is not the division founded on tribe, nationality, or religion, but the division between those of us who are mothers and those who aren't (252-3).

At once she justifies her erasure as a mother's act, gathers popular knowledge under the aegis of mothering, and claims that mothering supercedes all other distinctions. It is a poignant, eloquent, but messy binding. Does it work? Can it work? Can Mai possibly accept the entire package of offerings—the resurrected history, her mother's erasure, popular knowledge as viable, and her mother's earlier project, a critique of scientific rationalism?

Mai accepts the first two offerings, the resurrected history and the fact of her mother's erasure. But she does so at the cost of popular knowledge. Immediately following the close of her mother's letter, Mai explains that "it wasn't until years later that I learned there was a name for what my mother was—a depressive, someone not with supernatural ears but ears that heard voices of despair urging her on" (255). She rejects the possibility of ghostly knowledge, embracing instead the language of psychology, branding her mother a "depressive." At novel's end, she prepares to leave for college—an escape, she has already explained, from her mother's "phantom world." She returns definitively to her early embrace of rationalism. The resurrection of erased history comes at the expense of popular knowledge. Thanh cannot restore both; the authority she assumed as a ghostly author has evaporated.

But Lan Cao, as ghostly author, can dramatize this turn. Thanh's ultimate failure as author-narrator becomes the novel's imaginative success—Lan Cao's imaginative success. Her narrative can pass along possibilities Thanh's does not. *Monkey Bridge* holds up the resurrection of history and popular knowledge at once. It exposes the workings of the scientific rationalist project, the collisions between popular and official knowledge; it illustrates the dangers of romanticizing ghostly knowledge, the pitfalls of ghostly authorship. And Cao, like Nora Okja Keller, crafts her narrative precisely as an Asian American woman writing about Asian American women. Each author assumes the authority not only to imagine her way into a life but to reframe a series of discourses: the comfort woman experience, colonization, modernity, immigration and assimilation—each reframed in terms of the crossing of gender and the ghostly.

CODA

Maxine Hong Kingston, via *China Men*, claims a similar authority. The title signals Kingston's project baldly: having written of Chinese and Chinese American women in *Woman Warrior*, she now claims the authority to tell the story of the Chinese immigrant and Chinese American men popularly rendered into "Chinamen," rescuing their humanity, restoring them as China Men—a Chinese American woman author (re)defining Chinese American masculinity. Fourteen years after the publication of the book, Frank Chin would level his infamous critique of Kingston's work in "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake," the opening essay of *The Big Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature*. By now the argument is well known, commonly regarded as a central fissure in Asian American literary history. Chin takes Kingston, along with David Henry Hwang and Amy Tan, to task for the twin failings of inauthenticity and misrepresentation of Chinese American masculinity. By "inauthenticity" Chin means the supposed perversion of traditional Chinese myths, or what for our purposes might be called a particular stream of Chinese popular knowledge. Thus the debate, cast in various ways over the years, must also be viewed in terms of gendered claims to ghostly authorship: who has the authority to author/circulate Chinese popular knowledge? Certainly no one who assaults the already beleaguered offices of Chinese American masculinity, Chin makes clear. And no one who wrests the terms of the ghostly out of properly masculine, coded as "authentic," definitional frameworks. Asian American literary studies grappled with the fissure for a decade,

then left it behind as a footnote in Asian American literary history,⁹³ but it is well worth excavating the fissure and reconsidering it. When we read the ghost as ghost, pay attention to popular knowledge as crucial context, and examine ghostly knowledge as “women’s knowledge”—not to mention looking back through the filter of reams of Asian American women’s ghostly fiction published between 1991 and today—the fissure’s tensions over authenticity and gender have an entirely new set of reverberations.

Kingston has said of *China Men* that she intended it as a sort of extension of William Carlos Williams’ *In the American Grain*, which was “the right way to write about American history...poetically and, it seems to me, truly” (quoted in Pfaff 26). Reception of *Woman Warrior* convinced her that an American audience would not be familiar with Chinese American history, so she must supply it, and supply it “truly.” Which meant providing ghostly knowledge as a necessary interpretive framework—like *Woman Warrior*, *China Men* is shot through and through with ghosts—a choice that anticipates Akiko’s in *Comfort Woman*, as well as Chin’s critique. Ghost stories, *China Men*’s narrator explains, are “women’s stories,” subject to control precisely on the grounds of gender. In penning the moment, Kingston recognized the ghostly as crucial space for contestation, a ground for denying and claiming gendered authority. If that realization had already begun to emerge in *Woman Warrior*, perhaps the critical energies that swarmed the book post-publication helped to firm up that

⁹³ For a representative response to the fissure, see Sau-Ling Cynthia Wong, ed., *Maxine Hong Kingston’s The Woman Warrior: A Casebook* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), including in particular King-Kok Cheung’s essay “The Woman Warrior versus the Chinaman Pacific: Must a Chinese American Critic Choose between Feminism and Heroism?”

realization and ultimately give it fuller life in *China Men*. Together the two books changed what a ghost story might be, and what it might do for the woman teller, her narrator, herself.

Chapter 3

Beyond Possessive Individualism: Mixed Race and a Progressive Politics of the Ghostly

As a grad student at the University of Kansas, she meets my father, a salt-of-the-earth New Jerseyean pursuing a PhD in Zoology. My father is fiercely anti-religious, or perhaps religiously scientific, a family legacy as much as my mother's ghostly inheritance. If my mother sees ghosts, my father looks askance at any systems of non-rational knowledge. What are you looking to sell? he has been trained to ask.

For two and a half decades of marriage my parents don't discuss this divide openly. Only when my mother begins having visions—of the Buddhist rimpoche who invades her dreams—does any real tension emerge.

The question of how to understand the dreams falls in part on their only child, a “biracial” child, a young teenager at the time: me. My mother confides in me. My father confides in me. Both expect responses. A choice—between two seemingly irreconcilable systems of knowledge, at once between two suddenly competing sets of family histories, two competing sets of cultural heritages, two competing “racial” identities—beckons. But that choice is no lone choice but the culmination of a long series of choices, stretching back across my adolescence and childhood. Whom will I believe, and what are the stakes—for all three of us, and beyond—of what I choose?

*

The bildungsroman form is a common denominator of a large and still-growing number of ghostly Asian American literary works.⁹⁴ A seemingly perfect fit: ghosts and coming of age stories are a perfectly (un)natural pairing. The Asian American subject-citizen grows into complex personhood at least partly by way of coming to understand what is natural, what un/supernatural, what real, what unreal. How better to stage and explore and (work to) resolve the necessary tensions between two divergent systems of knowledge—ghostly and non-ghostly, non-rationalist and rationalist—than in a story of subject formation? As the Asian American comes of age, that coming of age must be, as Patricia Chu has theorized,⁹⁵ a multiplicitous engagement with the process of assimilation, and that assimilation must have an epistemological dimension. The Asian American child finds herself confronted by ghosts and ghostly knowledge at the same time as she is enveloped in rationalist machinery; or she does not find herself confronted by ghosts and ghostly knowledge

⁹⁴ A provisional list of works we might classify as Asian American supernatural bildungsroman, in which the supernatural figures prominently or at least saliently in a coming of age narrative: five I address in the course of the dissertation—*Woman Warrior*, *Comfort Woman*, *Memories of My Ghost Brother*, *Monkey Bridge*, and *The Hundred Secret Senses*—as well as Marie Mutsuki Mockett’s *Picking Bones from Ash* (2009), Rakesh Satyal’s *Blue Boy* (2009), Shilpa Agarwal’s *Haunting Bombay* (2009), Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* (2005), Michael Ondaatje’s *Anil’s Ghost* (2000), Deann Borshay Liem’s film *First Person Plural* (2000), lê thi diem thúy’s *The Gangster We Are All Looking For* (2003), Nora Okja Keller’s *Fox Girl* (2002), Genny Lim’s play *Bitter Cane* (1989), and Fredrick Cloyd’s *Dream of the Water Children: A Black Pacific Memory Journal through a Postwar Black-Japanese Mother/Son Relationship* (2014).

⁹⁵ Chu, Patricia. *Assimilating Asians: Gendered Strategies of Authorship in Asian America* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2000). Asian American texts do the work, Chu writes, of “contesting, subverting, and complicating the predominant models for assimilation” (4).

precisely because of the efficacy of that rationalist machinery. How does she work through the two bodies of knowledge, their collisions and incommensurabilities and, in rare cases, their harmonies? Which does she choose to embrace, or which combinations of the two does she fashion, and how are these choices figured as part of her personal maturation? Perhaps most importantly, how is her ultimate epistemological position a resolution, or an attempted resolution, of epistemic tensions between rationalist and non-rationalist knowledge regimes? Again and again, Asian American authors impose the generic form of the bildungsroman to work through the same sets of questions.

As with any bildungsroman, the child is stand-in, her singular coming of age story a means of working out broader social tensions. Ghostly knowledge, as I outline in Chapter 1, is a threat—to an entire social order structurally constituted and reconstituted by a rationalist knowledge regime. The educational system, Science, Psychology, the psychological industry: each of these, as Asian American literature persistently illustrates, is an actively interpellating institution, constantly working to shore up the dominion of rationalist knowledge and an idea of national progress founded upon that dominion. They are also policing institutions that perpetually create “good” subjects as policewo/men. Ghostly knowledge becomes a threat to the ghostly knower herself, as well as to any communal circuits of ghostly knowing—challenges to rationalist order must be addressed and erased. At stake in the singular coming of age story, then, is how we understand a vast sociocultural landscape and how Asian American communities fit into that landscape—or do not fit and are made to fit by way of sustained campaigns of epistemic violence. Hence every Asian

American supernatural bildungsroman is an attempt to grapple with what I call in the dissertation's Introduction a "shadow history of Asian America," the largely ignored or erased struggles of assimilation in terms of compulsory rationalism and the circulation of popular ghostly knowledge in Asian American communities across ethnicities, regions, and periods. That shadow history is at once a secret history of America writ large, as well as a transnational, cross-hemispheric history of migration, the movement and policing of knowledge in a global frame.

I would turn our attention to the usage of the "ghostly bildung" in particular as it crosses another literary deployment: that of mixed race. Just as mixed race Asian American peoples appear ubiquitously within and beyond actual Asian American communities throughout the United States,⁹⁶ so mixed race characters appear ubiquitously throughout Asian American literature—but as more than simply representations of a supposedly vast and rapidly growing "demographic" of peoples. They often become a kind of literary device or technology: the mixed body/identity as proving ground for cultural collisions and tensions, *including the epistemological*. In mixed race coming of age stories in particular, we find a vital analytic, both delimiting and productive, for apprehending the ghostly.

There is precedent for this critical crossing. In 2001, editors Teresa Williams-León and Cynthia L. Nakashima published the collection *The Sum of Our Parts*:

⁹⁶ According to the 2010 Census, Asians remain the fastest growing racial group (up by 43 percent) in the U.S., and 2.6 million of 17.3 million Asians in American identify as Asian plus one or more other races. See U.S. Census Bureau, "2010 Census Shows America's Diversity," March 24, 2011, http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/2010_census/cb11-cn125html.

Mixed Heritage Asian Americans, a seminal work on mixed race Asian Americans.⁹⁷

Though the collection seemingly has nothing to say about the ghostly or the bildungsroman, Nakashima's own essay, "Servants of Culture: The Symbolic Role of Mixed-Race Asians in American Discourse," examines how the national body politic has historically used the mixed figure as a way of working out collective concerns about race. The singular mixed body becomes a functional symbol, her story a national allegory—which of course echoes the bildungsroman, traditionally conceived and received as a way of working through social tensions. And Nakashima expressly calls the mixed body a "supernatural" body.⁹⁸

The work of this chapter is to formalize the linkage between the mixed figure, the bildungsroman, and the ghostly in the interests of opening new approaches to the ghostly and the problem of epistemic violence. Such a project flows naturally in the

⁹⁷ Teresa Williams-León and Cynthia L. Nakashima, eds., *Sum of Our Parts: Mixed Heritage Asian Americans* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2001). On Williams-León and Nakashima's usage of "mixed heritage" as opposed to "mixed race," and my deployment throughout this chapter of the latter: "mixed heritage" has become a viable and frequently preferred alternative to "mixed race" as a means of referring to peoples of mixed parentage, peoples commonly understood as "racial mixtures"—preferred because "mixed race" potentially reifies the notion of race as biological and implicitly reproduces the very system of taxonomy and hierarchy, fundamentally racist, that it means to critique. The emergent field of Critical Mixed Race Studies, which I examine later in the chapter, navigates this issue by appending "critical" as prefix, holding race in question, signaling the anti-racist nature of its work. I use "mixed" and "mixed race" throughout the chapter in the way Kandice Chuh employs "Asian American": as subjectless discourse, as critique rather than descriptor.

⁹⁸ "Servants of Culture," *Sum of Our Parts*, 39. Another prominent crossing of the ghostly and mixed race is Gloria Anzaldúa's notion of "spiritual mestizaje," mentioned briefly in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), explored at fuller length in Theresa Delgadillo's *Spiritual Mestizaje: Religion, Gender, Race, and Nation in Contemporary Chicana Narrative* (Durham: Duke UP, 2011). In Delgadillo's hands, however, the "spiritual" of spiritual mestizaje bears relatively little resemblance to the ghostly; Delgadillo draws heavily upon a religious studies framework.

opposite direction as well, offering critical mixed race studies important new epistemological frameworks for considering race and mixed race. Appearing in 2001, *Sum of Our Parts* was a notably visible point in a larger scholarly swell, the emergence of mixed race studies as an interdisciplinary field, itself an outgrowth of an even larger swell stretching well beyond the academy: the “Multiracial Movement,” social, artistic, political, and commercial in nature, a swell I will track later in this chapter as a crucial context for re-understanding both mixed race discourses and the ghostly.

In American space, the ghostly has always intertwined with race. Ghostly knowledge has always been *raced* knowledge, always tied to immigrant bodies, and one cannot properly study race or immigration without acknowledging realities of racial mixing. Mixed race in the form of both peoples and discourses has always potentially disrupted systems of knowledge, most immediately linear histories and biological constructions of race and racial “purity.” Like ghostly knowledge, the fact and study of “racial mixing” destabilize official narratives that would insist upon rigid grids of classification and limited metrics of what counts as knowledge. In Asian American literature we find the ghostly and mixed race immediately in tandem in a number of works, a sort of micro-genre, several works of which I will examine here, opening with Heinz Insu Fenkl’s *Memories of My Ghost Brother* and Nora Okja Keller’s *Comfort Woman*. In these texts mixedness becomes a direct conceptual framework for working through—a vehicle for the negotiation of, even as the very site of negotiation of—the larger tensions of knowledge production vis-à-vis “cultural/racial allegiance.”

But these two texts offer a particular kind of understanding of mixedness, one I locate, drawing heavily upon the work of critical mixed race studies doyen Michele Elam, in relation to multiracial organizing of the late 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Signal later works—such as Shawna Yang Ryan’s *Water Ghosts* and Ruth Ozeki’s *A Tale for the Time Being*, as well as a recent untitled painting-text series by visual artist Laura Kina—also pair mixedness and the ghostly, but abandon the bildung form and its particular contraction of mixedness. So what can this collection of texts tell us about race construction in relation to epistemic collision, tension, and violence? What do their constructions of mixed race attempt to resolve, and how? And in their contradictions and inherent impossibilities, what limitations of Asian American literary and Asian American studies frames do they make clear?

In turn the ghostly opens much for Critical Mixed Race Studies; if this emerging field attends carefully to knowledge production in terms of legal and social constructions of race,⁹⁹ it has never completed the gesture of Nakashima’s framing, of the mixed body as “supernatural”; it has never considered mixedness as a site of collision and contention for rational and non-rational knowledges. It has never considered the mixed body as crucible for the dilemma of assimilation expressly in terms of non/rational knowledge production—what counts as natural, what supernatural, in terms of what counts as cultural citizenship and what does not. In these senses mixedness becomes a new way of conceptualizing migratory and nationalist histories, as well as colonial and war histories, not only in terms of

⁹⁹ For an overview of the field, see the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Critical Mixed Race Studies* (Vol. 1, Issue 1, 2014, http://escholarship.org/uc/ucsb_soc_jcmrs). For a comprehensive bibliography of scholarly (and other) publications on mixed race, see www.mixedracestudies.org.

intimate encounters and their bodily “products” but as a constellation of vying points for an expressly rationalist imperial knowledge enterprise. In the process of heeding Elam’s call for a “progressive politics of mixed race,”¹⁰⁰ we find an important pathway toward a progressive politics of the ghostly, the articulation of which in turn advances a new critical dimension of approaching mixed race.

GHOSTLY BILDUNG

Memories of My Ghost Brother and *Comfort Woman*, two mid-1990s books, one an autobiography-cum-novel, the other a novel, both authored by mixed Korean Americans born in Korea, take up the mixed race child as legacy of American occupation of Korea—in *Memories*, a military occupation, in *Comfort Woman*, a missionary one. Both books importantly intertwine mixedness and the ghostly, specifically along a central character’s coming of age narrative, but we can parse mixedness and ghostly as distinct developmental threads, isolating a ghostly bildung and a mixed bildung—well worth articulating independently in the interests of tracking how and where and why the texts intertwine them. What follows is articulation of the two in brief, in admittedly broad strokes, to quickly establish their basic structures and key elements (leaving in both cases much to be potentially examined).

First, the ghostly bildung. In both *Memories* and *Comfort Woman*, we follow a narrator from early childhood through early adulthood, with epistemic tension between non-rational and rational knowledges at the heart of the coming of age story.

¹⁰⁰ Outlined in her *Souls of Mixed Folks: Race, Politics, and Aesthetics in the New Millennium* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2011).

In each book, that tension is resolved by story's end—resolved *as* story's end. The ultimate resolution of epistemic tension is what the ghostly bildung formula means to model. Tellingly each text begins with the ghostly; what will be book-length processes of grappling with the ghostly begin not with official knowledge, not with a rationalist framing of the ghost (as metaphor, or as figment of the imagination, psychological projection), but a popular framing of the ghost as ghost.

In the opening pages of *Memories*, Insu tells us of the stories of the ghost of a Japanese colonel who haunts his home, and then, two short pages later, that “Sometimes...I would see the ghost of the Japanese Colonel standing quietly under the trees, gazing at me with his sad and lonely eyes” (7). *Comfort Woman* also opens with ghostly knowledge, Beccah dropping readers immediately into the disorienting world of her relationship with her mother, its every contour—her mother's mental health, her mother's career as fortune teller/medium, her father's death and commemoration—thoroughly shaped by spiritual practice and stories of “Saja the Death Messenger and Induk the Birth Grandmother” (5). In the novel's second chapter, mother Akiko assumes the role as narrator and tells of leaving “my spirit behind at the recreation camp” (15), how during her forced sexual slavery under Japanese occupation of Korea another woman's spirit entered her body: “The corpse the soldiers brought back from the woods wasn't Induk. It was Akiko 41; it was me” (21).

Our bildung narrators Insu and Beccah know and accept to be true what their mothers have taught them, and in Insu's case, what his extended family as well has taught him. This is the familial traffic of ghostly knowledge, and we see it modeled

and remodeled throughout the early portions of both books. The mother (and in *Memories*, also the uncle and cousins) establishes ghostly knowledge as the means by which the child might navigate a daily life necessarily populated by ghosts. Though both books eventually frame ghostly knowledge as marginal and perpetually marginalized, in their coming of age narratives, ghostly knowledge arrives first, and matter-of-factly, naturalized, without serious, direct challenge.

Only later does a serious challenge arrive in the form of a “dissenting” father. In *Comfort Woman*, Beccah fantasizes about her father “burning with his blue eyes the Korean ghosts and demons that fed off our lives” (2). The fantasy appears early in the novel but at an intermediate point in the course of Beccah’s development, when she is ten years old, five years after her father’s death. In the fantasy Beccah’s father is an “angel” holding the “Bible he always carried with him” (2), establishing a firm opposition between angel and ghost, between a Judeo-Christian framework and one of Korean spiritualism. If there is no sense yet which system of knowledge is official, which popular, something the novel does not make overtly clear until later (by way of the School, as I explore in Chapter 1), Beccah’s newly budding indecision between the two systems *is* clear. As she comes to see Judeo-Christianity as an alternative to ghostly knowledge, she desires the latter’s erasure—burning—by way of that alternative. Her father will “save” Beccah and her mother, a conversion both religious and epistemological, but the conversion will not manifest by some process of proving the ghostly to be unreal. If for Beccah the two systems are suddenly in direct competition, and if she suddenly favors her father’s Judeo-Christian system, Judeo-Christianity *does not invalidate* the ghostly; at this point in her reckoning, it

would simply burn the ghostly away, remove not false knowledge but Korean ghosts that do, her phrasing suggests, in fact exist.

That the ghosts are identifiably “Korean,” and that what would burn them away are her father’s “blue eyes”—along the lines of the “Japanese-ness” of the ghost of the Japanese Colonel in *Memories*—signals how inextricably race is coded into epistemology. The rational and non-rational must always be identifiably raced. The tensions of racial mixing and the hybrid child in particular are only subtly operating here, though. “Blue eyes” unquestionably connote whiteness; however, they bespeak a mixed *bildung* only insofar as Beccah as mixed daughter and narrator is noticing them (and by way of them her father’s whiteness), and noticing her own phenotypical difference from her father as symbolized by that eye color, as well as her father’s racially inflected (“blue-eyed,” read: white) gaze upon that difference. More on this mixed coming of age narrative momentarily.

For Beccah it is a moment of indecision but not full “conversion.” It is a gestural, incomplete-able fantasy, her father ultimately opening “his eyes not on the demons but on me” (2). What would vanquish the Korean ghosts and demons would also vanquish her; her ghostly knowing is, she fears, inescapable. Her father’s Judeo-Christianity beckons as desirable possibility, but one she cannot, and is perhaps unable to, fully realize or even embrace. Insu too is presented this precarious choice between systems by way of his father, Heinz Sr., who as I chronicle in Chapter 1 decides that Insu, at age six, will be enrolled in Sunday school—so as not to become a “heathen.” Heinz Sr. lets on that he knows full well about the ghost stories uncle Hyongbu is telling Insu, revealing his paternal anxieties and framing the ghost stories

as necessarily in competition with his worldview. They are a threat, something Sunday school will not only counterbalance but render “heathen,” identify and firmly categorize as primitive, less-than, uncivilized. Insu never openly embraces or rejects this judgment; his internal process of weighing competing systems never manifests as openly as Beccah’s. Beccah not only recounts Akiko’s ghost stories and the responses they elicit, she also vividly chronicles her own painful interior wrangling with the stories and their public consequences. “At ten,” she writes, “despite all the people coming to hear [Akiko’s fortune telling and spirit communion], I was still afraid that someone would hear my mother’s craziness and lock her up. It wasn’t until I reached high school that I actually started hoping that that would happen” (12). The ghostly knower becomes rational knower becomes rationalist policewoman, or at least police sympathizer. By contrast if Insu worries how his father regards Hyongbu or his cousins, or if he comes to question their stories or perhaps resent them in the fashion Beccah resents Akiko’s, he never lets on via interior narration, not in the early and middle portions of the book. The physical action he describes, however—his movement between home and the American military base and school—puts him at a suggestive metaphorical place of indecision between systems. He dotingly follows Heinz Sr. to the American military base, begrudgingly attends school, and obediently reads all of the Western literature and American periodicals his father prescribes. But Insu also continues seeing the ghost of the Japanese Colonel, and later that of his cousin, Gannan, and he continues absorbing ghost stories from his Uncle Hyongbu, never openly questioning any of this ghostly experience or knowledge.

For both Beccah and Insu, indecision culminates in a climactic working through and resolution. In *Memories*' last two chapters, Insu re-narrates his adolescence, writing back into it from the remove of adulthood, at last unveiling the interior world of his youthful indecision, outlining its tensions and stakes. He remembers church services in which "the priest made the Jesus stories into riddles, but [the priest] was not as clever as Hyongbu, and his ploys did not fool me" (240). He enumerates what he learned of Christianity by way of Bible study and visits to a range of Christian services—but that still, "the American religion I could not understand" (240). At every turn, he reflects, Christianity is confusing, rigid, rife with seeming contradictions, whereas Korean spiritual knowledge is flexible and syncretic, more suited to the complexities of the Korean cultural moment—especially one so transformed by the invasive presence of the American military. *My father's religion wallowed in stories and pictures of tragedy and suffering, but it could not heal what happened every day outside the gates of the U.S. Army post. And so I could not worship his God or the murdered son—I believed in ghosts and ancestors and portentous dreams of serpents and dragons because those were the things I could touch in my world.* At book's end, Insu embraces his position as ghostly knower. Narratively speaking, that embrace coincides, importantly, with the news that Insu and his family will move to America.

Beccah's climactic "decision" comes via the audiotape her mother bequeaths her as final inheritance. The tape seems at first to be of only "senseless wails"—matching Akiko's ghostly knowledge, also seemingly senseless at first pass. With closer attention Beccah realizes the wailing is in fact singing, mirroring Beccah's

dawning (re)appreciation of ghostly knowledge as sensible, rather than sense-less. What the singing narrates is Akiko's history as a shamaness, which Beccah already largely knows, but as growing out of her history as comfort woman, which Beccah does not. In particular, Akiko's revelation about cultural genocide—that “the Japanese believe they have destroyed an entire generation of Koreans. That we are all dead and have taken the horrible truth with us” (194)—recasts ghostly knowledge in a new light. Shamanism becomes a means of cultural survival, not just a *kind* of knowledge but a channel, the only means of passing knowledge across the divide of life and death, past a systematic practice of erasing language and histories and peoples. To this Japanese practice of erasure Beccah links her father's practice of erasure, remembering a moment from her early childhood she had apparently repressed, of her father beseeching Akiko to keep secret her time as a sexual slave. Using, we notice, the same language he uses to denounce and erase her “pagan” spiritual practices. Beccah also begins to see her own ways of looking at her mother as a kind of attempted erasure; she begins to see her own policing in the context of a rationalist police State. When the noise of Akiko's tape, played at full volume, draws complaints from neighbors, first the apartment manager knocks on Beccah's door, then Sanford Dingman, Beccah's sometime lover: “‘I'm speaking to my mother,’ I told Sanford through the cracks. ‘Your mother is dead,’ Sanford said, speaking to me as I had spoken to my mother, as if she were unstable. Dangerous” (198). Beccah *is* dangerous; she is embracing a threatening position as ghostly knower with full recognition of the threat she poses. If at one time she shared Sanford's gaze, now she is cognizant of that gaze and its consequences, recognizing ghostly knowledge as a

channel around rationalist erasure: “‘Goodbye,’ I told him. ‘My mother is calling me’” (198). Communion with her mother, the “madness” Sanford would ostensibly save her from, is not only the would-be object of erasure but the means by which to overwrite that erasure, and the lens by which that erasure comes into focus as just that, as attempted erasure. Like Insu, she ultimately comes to see her choice as choice—whereas before this point, rationalist knowledge and Judeo-Christianity had naturalized themselves as the only systems of knowledge, removing the possibility of choice at all for Beccah. Like Insu, she concludes her story not simply by choosing ghostly knowledge but by narrating this choice in a context of epistemic competition.

The bildungsroman, Lisa Lowe writes, is

the primary form for narrating the development of the individual from youthful innocence to civilized maturity, the telos of which is the reconciliation of the individual with the social order. The novel of formation has a special status among the works selected for a canon, for it elicits the reader’s identification with the bildung narrative of ethical formation, itself a narrative of the individual’s relinquishing of particularity and difference through identification with an idealized ‘national’ form of subjectivity (98).

Lowe’s is a useful framing, particularly with regards to how Beccah’s and Insu’s coming of age stories represent “reconciliation with the social order” and how this reconciliation might be a model of “ethical formation” vis a vis ghostly knowledge. In both *Memories* and *Comfort Woman*, reconciliation operates along a spectrum of assimilation, specifically assimilation to the dominant American knowledge regimes, scientific rationalism and Judeo-Christianity. But in each text reconciliation is not a case of successful assimilation, or as I frame it in Chapter 1, successful interpellation into “good subjecthood.” Instead we find a model of reconciliation closer to Patricia Chu’s theorization of an “Asian American bildung,” wherein Lowe’s “identification

with an idealized ‘national’ form of subjectivity” is replaced by dis-identification.

Subjectivities in the Asian American bildung, Chu writes,

are characterized by the emergence of a critical ethnic intelligence that deploys and interrogates traditional narratives of Americanization. In this literature, I argue, one proves one’s Americanness by showing one’s ability to question the idea of America, thereby fundamentally altering that idea for everyone else (7).

Chu’s Asian American bildung is an inversion, then: the very idealized national form of subjectivity the traditional bildung protagonist comes to accept is precisely what the Asian American bildung protagonist questions, and by extension, what it means the reader to question. Similarly, in the ghostly bildung, rather than embrace official knowledge (the backbone of an idealized national subjectivity), the protagonist questions that knowledge and thereby alters what counts as knowledge for “everyone else,” both the characters around her in the space of the text and the readers of her narrative. I hesitate to say the protagonist “proves her Americanness” by questioning the “idea of knowledge in America.” Instead I would venture she models a new kind of reconciliation, a vision of alternate epistemological orientation that provides a fuller and truer understanding of the idea of America, one in which epistemic violence comes clearly into view.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ It is worth examining the ghostly bildung form as it relates to the rise of multiculturalism I examine in Chapter 1. The movement from a traditional bildung narrative (wherein the immigrant relinquishes difference) to Chu’s vision of the Asian American bildung (immigrant questions national narrative, opens up how we understand it) seemingly mirrors a larger shift, from a patriarchal, Eurocentric to “multiculti” canon. But as I argue in chapter 1, the differences the new canon embraces must be manageable ones and enable the erasure of the unmanageable—in particular, ones that pose a dangerous challenge to existing order, i.e. ghostly knowledge. So the ghostly bildung would have a very different relationship than the Asian American bildung to multiculturalism.

Importantly, the ghostly bildung protagonist is typically second or 1.5 generation,¹⁰² making her reconciliation very different from that of a first-generation immigrant. Akiko and Insu's mother, never as children surrounded by the apparatuses of rationalist knowledge (the American School or the Christian Church), come of age *before* ever having scientific rationalism and Judeo-Christianity foisted upon them; Akiko is saved by American missionaries as a young adult, after her sexual slavery. They reject rationalism and Judeo-Christianity outright and never waver in their investments in popular ghostly knowledge. Conversely a third or fourth-generation immigrant, though never pictured in either *Memories* or *Comfort Woman*, might come of age ensconced within the American educational system and with little direct access to ghostly knowledge—perfect opposites to Akiko and Insu's mother, rejecting popular knowledge outright and never seriously wavering in their investments in official knowledge systems. Insu and Beccah can waver because they are exposed to both and forcibly pushed to choose between them throughout the formative spans of their childhoods and adolescences. The ghostly bildung protagonist must be perched between systems, coming of age in a space and time where both systems vie for purchase: the ghostly bildung's reconciliation must occur at that precise developmental-assimilatory moment of indecision. Which is not of

¹⁰² To provide a quick sampling from a range of ghostly bildung: Insu, 1.5; Beccah, second; Maxine of *Woman Warrior*, second; Mai of *Monkey Bridge*, 1.5; Olivia of *The Hundred Secret Senses*, second; Piya of *The Hungry Tide*, second; Anil of *Anil's Ghost*, 1.5; Deann of *First Person Plural*, 1.5; and the unnamed narrator-protagonist of *The Gangster We Are All Looking For*, 1.5. Also, it is worth noting that the 1965 Immigration Act that so radically changed the demographic face of America and Asian America changed generational makeup in particular; whereas prior to the Act, the majority of Asians in America were second generation or later, after the Act, first generation Asians immigrants became the majority.

course to suggest that a first-generation immigrant cannot embrace official knowledge, or that a third-or-beyond generation immigrant cannot embrace popular knowledge, or that the second or 1.5 generation immigrant alone grapples with epistemological indecision. The ghostly bildung simply identifies the second or 1.5 generation immigrant as a particularly viable and visible site of these tensions, her process of reconciliation meant to stand in for a broader field of reconciliation, not limited by generation.

Reconciliation requires that the ghostly bildung protagonist model an evolving relationship with the rationalist gaze. It is not enough to embrace ghostly knowledge; the protagonist must come to understand (and model for the reader) what it is to be gazed upon as a ghostly knower, an understanding that is equal parts being gazed upon, becoming the rationalist gazer herself, and ultimately rejecting that gaze. For example: Beccah witnesses the scorn her mother receives for her ghostly knowing and receives a share of that scorn herself; she in turn looks at her mother with scorn, viewing her mother as crazy; she sees Sanford looking at her and recognizes his gaze as the very gaze she leveled upon Akiko. What we have at last is a *return* to ghostly knowing with a full understanding of the arena in which it operates, Beccah having become at one point complicit in the mechanics of rationalist dominance, a participant in rationalist policing, and now aware of that complicity, that participation, an awareness vital to her final embrace of ghostly knowledge and her position as ghostly knower. Through her process we see the seductiveness of the rationalist enterprise, the sway of compulsory rationalism, how it not only compels strict adherence to rationalist doctrine but also compels rationalist policing, including

even violent policing within families. Hence reconciliation cannot mean blind acceptance of rationalist knowledge—Beccah has already modeled acceptance and its injurious consequences. Nor can it mean blind acceptance of ghostly knowledge, without awareness of the consequences of rationalist dominion. Reconciliation must mean documentation of those very consequences, that State-sponsored violence, making legible the ways in which popular knowledge is invalidated, cultural practice erased. Reconciliation must mean a dawning consciousness of the ways in which we as citizen-knowers necessarily participate in these erasures. It must mean refiguring the “threat” of ghostly knowledge, from sign of failed assimilation and possible “madness” to space of cultural preservation and necessary corrective to the hegemony of the official knowledge regime.

MIXED BILDUNG

So where does mixedness come into play? The second- or 1.5-generation immigrant stands in for a broader field of immigrants, not limited by generation—but what about race? Can an Asian American protagonist’s coming of age story elicit identification across cultural and racial lines? This is an unanswerable question,¹⁰³ seemingly the

¹⁰³ Though Min Hyung Song, in *The Children of 1965: On Writing, and Not Writing, as an Asian American* (Durham: Duke UP, 2013), notes Asian American literature’s frequent “emphasis on accessibility to a general audience and on exploring interethnic encounters” (82); he also writes of “a logic that has long guided U.S. media representations of Asians and Asian Americans alike: narratives about Asian and Asian American characters cannot be of interest to consumers lest they show how such characters can be connected in some way with characters that they are already habituated to care about—namely, white characters” (81-2). See also Stephen Hong Sohn’s work expressly on Asian American cultural productions in which the author’s ethnic/racial identity does not match that of the narrator, opening up, he argues, a “flexible aesthetic canvas” (Sohn, *Racial Asymmetries: Asian*

province of a publishing house marketing wing, but effectively the question the ghostly bildung asks itself as project. The second- or 1.5-generation immigrant was always already a cultural hybrid, a mix of immigrant and American cultures, more assimilated than her parents, not quite as assimilated as her children will be.¹⁰⁴ She is the perfect site of a kind of indecision, as aforementioned, her coming of age story the perfect model for working out cultural, including epistemological, tensions. But she is not a racial hybrid—however culturally hybrid, she remains racially fixed, inescapably Asian, Other. Unless she is mixed race.

The mixed race second- or 1.5-generation immigrant *is* perched between racial categories and identities and viewed, as I will explore shortly, as able to choose and/or able to bridge. This makes mixed race especially useful as a literary device, when knowledge is not only tagged as cultural but also racial. If official knowledge is a fundamental part of what it means to be culturally American, and popular knowledge frequently an element of Asian American cultures, official knowledge is also importantly tied up in the *racial* construction of whiteness, and popular

American Fiction Worlds, New York: NYU Press, 2013). Conversely, on the politics of a white author “ventriloquizing” an Asian American point of view, see Monique T.D. Truong, “The Reception of Robert Olen Butler’s *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain*: Ventriloquism and the Pulitzer Prize,” *The Vietnam Forum* 16 (Fall 1997): 75-94). Avery Gordon considers the position of the white reader vis a vis *Beloved* in *Ghostly Matters*, 188-90.

¹⁰⁴ For scholarship on second-generation Asian Americans, see Vivian S. Louie’s *Compelled to Excel: Immigration, Education, and Opportunity among Chinese Americans* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2004); Nazli Kibria’s *Becoming Asian American: Second-Generation Chinese and Korean American Identities* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2003); and Carolyn Chen and Russell Jeong, eds., *Sustaining Faith Traditions: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion among the Latino and Asian American Second Generation* (New York: NYU Press, 2012).

knowledge tied up importantly in the *racial* construction of “Asian-ness”—more on this, also, shortly. Thus the mixed race body, viewed as always in racial tension, potentially “literalizes” the tensions between raced knowledges. As the mixed race protagonist’s coming of age story works for some reconciliation of racial identity, it is also potentially working for some reconciliation of raced knowledge systems. “Choosing” official knowledge is not only stand-in for but essential part of choosing whiteness; “choosing” popular knowledge is not necessarily essential part of choosing “Asian-ness,” but the racialization of Asian Americans and the racialization of popular knowledge are linked processes; and “bridging” knowledges might be understood in relation to bridging racial identities. Then, again, there is the matter of readerly identification. Because in the popular imagination the mixed race figure is always “half white,”¹⁰⁵ she becomes a potential means of eliciting a wider field of readerly identification (that is, from a predominantly white readership), her construction or deconstruction of whiteness a broad and inviting narrative of ethical formation.¹⁰⁶ Before examining these dynamics in detail, however, we might look to the basic mixed bildung¹⁰⁷ formula—loosely untethered from the ghostly bildung

¹⁰⁵ As Christine C. Iijima Hall and Trude I. Cooke Turner have documented, early conceptions, popular and scholarly, of mixed race focused on “majority-minority biracials.” See Hall and Cook, “The Diversity of Biracial Individuals: Asian-White and Asian-Minority Biracial Identity,” *Sum of Our Parts*, 81-92.

¹⁰⁶ For an exploration of the shifting appeal of the mixed race figure in the mainstream white imagination, see Nakashima’s “Servants of Culture,” *Sum of Our Parts*, 35-48.

¹⁰⁷ A provisional list of other works that might be considered Asian American mixed bildung: Winnifred Eaton’s *The Heart of Hyacinth* (1902), *Me: A Book of Remembrance* (1915), and *Marion: The Story of an Artist’s Model* (1916); Amy Tan’s *The Hundred Secret Senses* (1995); Sigrid Nunez’s *A Feather on the Breath of God* (1995); Kathleen Tyau’s *A Little Too Much is Enough* (1996); Linda Watanabe

formula—at work in *Memories* and *Comfort Woman*. How do the two plot mixed race identity formation as a coming of age narrative? What is the reconciliation this bildung attempts, and how do the two works map that “racial” reconciliation onto the epistemological reconciliation outlined above?

In the opening pages of their respective narratives, Insu and Beccah both reveal they are of mixed Korean and white parentage. This is a particular avenue into mixedness, this focus on parentage, we should note—as opposed to an open declaration of mixedness, some celebration of mixed identity, or dilemmas of choosing, or externally imposed categorizations, or any number of other possible manifestations. Early awareness in both texts is limited. Insu’s is the more subtle revelation, coming indirectly, by way of an offhand mention of some puppets his grandmother “had sent from the German country” (11). Accompanying the mention is no consideration of how the puppets or his German grandmother situate him in relation to his Korean family and community—how his mixedness might set him apart, might shift his relations with family and community. He models just a flicker of awareness, from several degrees of remove, awareness not of himself as mixed or even of his father as German but of his father’s mother as “from the German country.” Beccah signals her mixedness somewhat more directly, setting her father’s

McFerrin’s *Namako: Sea Cucumber* (1998); Kien Nguyen’s *The Unwanted* (2001); Brian Ascalon Roley’s *American Son* (2001); Kip Fulbeck’s *Paper Bullets: A Fictional Autobiography* (2001); Alexander Chee’s *Edinburgh* (2002); May-lee Chai’s *Hapa Girl: A Memoir* (2008); Brian Leung’s *Lost Men* (2008); Marie Mutsuki Mockett’s *Picking Bones from Ash* (2009); Neela Vaswani’s *You Have Given Me a Country: A Memoir* (2010); Noriko Nakada’s *Through Eyes Like Mine* (2010); Nina Revoyr’s *Wingshooters* (2011); L. Tam Holland’s *The Counterfeit Family Tree of Vee Crawford-Wong* (2013); Paula J. Freedman’s *My Basmati Bat Mitzvah* (2013); Fredrick Cloyd’s *Dream of the Water Children: A Black Pacific Memory Journal through a Postwar Black-Japanese Mother/Son Relationship* (2014).

whiteness immediately against her mother's Korean-ness, and in the aforementioned fantasy of her father's blue eyes, highlighting her own perceived Korean-ness. Like the Korean ghosts, she is the object of his white gaze. In keeping with this awareness/anxiety of Korean-ness, she dots descriptions of her home life with her mother in Hawai'i with various totems of Korean culture, the card game *hatto*, *Cambison* ointment, the condiment *mu kimchee*, and then the various threads of ghostly knowledge. By all indications, Beccah is culturally Korean American and racially Asian, just as Insu, living in Korea, with his mother and extended Korean family, appears culturally Korean and racially Asian.

That *Memories* opens with Beccah's "blue eye" fantasy suggests her narratorial desire to mark tension from the outset, to frame her coming of age story in terms of racial anxiety. But again, she is careful to note that she experiences the fantasy as a ten year old, not a five year old. As a young child, Beccah's only apparent grappling with mixed identity comes via the argument between her parents about Akiko's secret history as a comfort woman; and while Beccah's racial identity formation might easily be read in terms of this parental push and pull, again, this is a memory Beccah represses and only recalls/reveals at the end of her narrative. The moment is a function of her early racial development chiefly by way of its forced forgetting; it is not something Beccah is capable of engaging until she is much older, after her mother dies. The fact of its repression and later recovery are as salient as the moment itself—a realization communicated not by any commentary by Beccah but by the narrative structuring, how Beccah is choosing to tell her story, itself. If the mixed *bildung* chronicles the movement from limited awareness into fuller awareness and

anxiety, then, it is also chronicling narratorial grappling with how to document and frame that awareness.

As for Insu, before he ever mentions his father or marks his own mixedness outright, he describes seeing his cousin crying and asking her, “*Nuna*, is it because of your yellow-haired boyfriend? Did he say he didn’t want to marry you?” (10). In the course of *Memories*, we will come to find this the standard dynamic of the interracial relationship between white male GI and Korean young woman: on her part, desire for marriage and access to money and security, and on his, hesitation to marry, interest primarily in sex, and willingness to see intimacy as disposable. These sets of conflicting needs result in, among other things, anguish on the part of the Korean young woman. Frequently chief witness to this anguish is the Amerasian child, often the primary, and sometimes sole, source of empathy for the young woman, forced to shoulder the emotional labor of sensitivity and care that many other Koreans and certainly white GI-partners are unwilling or unable to proffer. Surely this labor, and this intimate witness of racial power dynamics, shapes the Amerasian child’s own racial identity formation. But early on in *Memories*, though Insu clearly already knows what to expect from relationships between Korean women and “yellow-haired” GIs, neither he as child protagonist nor he as adult narrator nor we as readers are yet ready to analyze how those dynamics shape his own sense of racial subjectivity. He has not yet indicated to us that he himself is the product of such a union, or that his parents’ relationship bears many but not all of the hallmarks of his cousin’s. The moment is merely a marker of pre-consciousness, and of a narratorial desire to document that pre-consciousness.

Movement into fuller awareness of mixedness occurs in later childhood for both Insu and Beccah. Insu's increased awareness coincides with a number of developments: Heinz Sr. returning home from his tour of duty and taking Insu semi-regularly to the military base; Insu attending a school largely populated by other Amerasian boys (never, curiously, by any Amerasian girls, though Insu never explains this reality). Heinz Sr. embarks on a steady, fairly uniform campaign to mold Insu in his own image of white masculinity. The American School and the American military base also inculcate a fairly synchronous brand of white American-ness. But Heinz Sr.'s fathering and the school and military base are perhaps of lesser interest to Insu as narrator than his experiences with his Amerasian classmates, to which he devotes several chapters of *Memories*, quite a bit more space than he gives over to the base visits or his schooling itself or even his father. Of the latter we get fragments and snippets of memory; of the former, we get full adventure narratives. "The gang," he comes to call his micro-community of Amerasian boys, thrown together because each has a Korean mother and American GI father (some white, some black). Each is acutely conscious of the racial difference between mothers and fathers (and between black and white fathers), as well as of their difference from white students at the American school, and from Korean children who attend other schools. The gang communicates easily with Korean shopowners and vendors and elders, the local community, "there to break up fights and tell us to be quiet, to say it was time to go home, to have a look at us if we happened to get hurt" (138)—in other words, to treat the gang as part of the community. At once the gang is also able to communicate with GIs in English, and though the GIs sometimes call them "Korean

bastards,” they also sometimes know the fathers of the boys, and do not treat them precisely as they would monoracial Korean boys, especially, for instance, when Insu visits the American base with Heinz Sr. They move easily between spaces, the Amerasian boys, seen very differently in different contexts, performing and having imposed upon them a nuanced range of racial identities. At once they form a “gang,” a group, Amerasians, a racial and perhaps cultural identity category of their own.

As for Beccah, her grappling with mixedness shifts from anxiety to romanticization. Her terrifying “blue eyes” fantasy gives way to an origin story, of how her parents first met, which she urges her mother to recount repeatedly. “When I asked for stories about her past,” Beccah explains, “they were about me, starting from my conception” (26). That is, she wants the narrative of Akiko’s cultural and racial difference—her past—funneled into a neat explanation of Beccah’s birth: Akiko’s difference engineered to explain her own. And if Beccah’s difference is to be palatable, socially manageable, so must Akiko’s. Thus Akiko was a famous singer in Korea, the story goes, and when Beccah’s father first heard her sing, he fell in love, a narrative upon which Beccah founds her own nascent “singing career.” She wants to believe an identity as a singer is inheritable, a safe proxy for inherited race and culture—race and culture transmuted into “talent,” and talent that sparks interracial romance, as opposed to evoking discrimination, resulting in social alienation. Reimagined as singing, race and culture become an expressive, performative bridge, Akiko and Beccah as racial/cultural *subjects acting*, not racial/cultural *objects being acted upon*. For Beccah “singing” is the means in particular to enact three key reconciliations: between her parents’ racial/cultural difference; between her

racial/cultural difference from each of her parents; and between her racial/cultural difference from her classmates in multiethnic, multiracial, multicultural Hawai'i.

But of course the romanticization collapses under its own weight. Beccah is a poor singer—a reflection of the impossibility of the three reconciliations listed above?—and she comes to recognize her mother's story as a rough adaptation of *The Sound of Music*. A fictionalized, sanitized version of racial and cultural identity cannot form a stable base for one's own racial identity formation, Beccah seemingly intuits. So Akiko replaces the singing story with another, this one closer to the "truth," one actually intimating Rick's missionary work. Beccah as narrator, looking back, has alternate memories of how she received this new narrative, whether she challenged it or, more likely, "said nothing...[fearing] my own words might break the spell of normalcy" (32). Even or perhaps especially in its origin stories, mixed identity is a construction, a spell of normalcy, Beccah is realizing, always an attempted reconciliation, always satisfying and unsatisfying at once.

Having raised these tensions, the mixed bildung does reconcile them, however. In the final stage of the mixed bildung, the mixed protagonist does come to a resolution of her mixed identity. She is able to envision a "bothness," a hybrid position characterized by an ability to inhabit both "Asian-ness" and whiteness, whether moving between spaces and shifting racial performance accordingly or, alternately, occupying a mixed race identity that is "Asian" and white and neither one at once. Most importantly, this mixed identity is founded upon a critical consciousness of "Asian-ness," whiteness, and mixedness as racial constructions always built and imposed within a grid of differential power relations.

Beccah and Insu both reach this resolution of mixed identity as adults looking back, specifically as narrators describing and making sense of their experiences. They come of age, reaching a reconciliation, expressly by way of narration. As she listens to her mother's tape, Beccah finally returns to the memory she has repressed, of her parents arguing about Akiko's past as a comfort woman, a past vital not only to Beccah's ultimate understanding of Akiko's shamanism, and Beccah's own relationship to ghostly knowledge, as explored earlier, but vital to Beccah's understanding of Akiko as racialized subject. If throughout the course of the novel we as readers have witnessed the myriad contortions through which Soon Hyo becomes Akiko becomes Hawai'i-based Asian immigrant wife and mother, here a few of these contortions are at last laid bare for Beccah. Akiko's cultural subjectivity is quite a bit more complex than the "singing" or missionary narratives with which Beccah has grown up. The reason for these simplifications brings Beccah, and us, to a dominant dimension of Akiko's racialized identity: what it means to be racially "Asian" is forcibly circumscribed by whiteness, by what dominant white discourse allows and proscribes. In this memory in particular, Beccah's father proscribes a complexly transnational identity that would implicate both Japanese and American imperialism and misogyny. If such an identity made Akiko an eminent candidate for being "saved" by Rick, henceforth her racial identity cannot contain those troubling multitudes. His whiteness, which he would pass as inheritance to Beccah, requires a sanitized version of her "Asian-ness."

Recognizing this dynamic is crucial to how Beccah understands her own racial identity, both as inheritor of her mother's histories and her father's domineering and

as mixed race Korean American woman subject to a number of the same forces that pressed down upon Akiko (and, for that matter, Rick). The moment also represents a key narratorial choice, to save this revelation for late in her story (when, by contrast, Beccah has already shown a willingness in the opening chapter to violate a fixed chronological frame and insert moments out of temporal “order”). Beccah arrives at *and* communicates a new understanding of the construction of race by revealing this linked four-fold repression: her father’s forcible erasure of Akiko’s past; Akiko’s seeming complicity in this erasure; Beccah’s forgetting as young protagonist; and Beccah’s delayed release of information as narrator. This final repression is perhaps most curious and least easily comprehensible, other than as for the sake of dramatic climax. Why else not release this information sooner in the narrative? How could this narratorial choice possibly relate to racial identity?

Upon reflection, Beccah waits to “tell” the reader the story of the repressed memory exactly in the way Akiko waits to tell Beccah the story of her past as comfort woman. Timing and context matter. When Beccah first has her period, Akiko calls Beccah’s school to say Beccah will not be attending that day because she is going to the doctor, which is a lie; she explains to Beccah, “I only told them something they could understand” (189). She has told Beccah the “singing” story and the missionary story throughout her childhood because these are narratives Beccah can understand; as Beccah comes to realize, her mother “waited for me to tell her I was ready to hear what she had to say” (191). And Beccah is only ready to learn about Akiko’s past as comfort woman when she is an adult, after Akiko has died, when her mother can relay her story via tape, a kind of self-narration, the mode Beccah herself will need to

adopt to grapple with history and erasure and racial identity. Akiko's revelation cannot come through dialogue; it must be as inheritance, a gift upon dying, and it must model for Beccah the act of self-construction within and against an imposed racial construction. Importantly it must come only after Beccah begins approaching a critical consciousness of that imposed racial construction, having already inhabited white discourse, having already leveled the white gaze upon her mother.

So in an analogous move, Beccah waits until the end of her story to reveal her repressed memory, waits to show us the moment of her remembering her father imposing a fixed identity upon her mother, the moment of recognition of her own embrace of whiteness in her father's, and of his in hers. She has waited until we as readers are "ready": until we have the necessary context to understand the memory and its repression. We must first have witnessed her process, her movement through indecision, her investments in her mother's origin stories, her participation in the construction of this tight-fitting and limited racial identity for her mother—and therefore for herself. We must first learn of her mother's tape and see, once again, identity as act of performative construction, one we are always participating in, even as it is also at the same time imposed upon us—so that we can understand Beccah's own narration as construction of identity, as pivotal and culminating part of her developmental process.

Insu's is a similar process. He delays engaging the titular "memories of his ghost brother" until the final chapter of the book, which shares the title with the book proper. Heinz Sr. and Insu's mother have kept the existence of Insu's half-brother Kuristo from Insu throughout his young life, but when Insu tells his father about a

dream he has of Kuristo, Heinz Sr. says, “Kuristo—what does that sound like to you?...It’s Christ. Jesus Christ. He saved us all, and you just saw him like he was your brother” (258). An erasure atop an erasure, or an insistent if unconvincing re-erasure—but why reveal this moment so late in the going? When earlier in the narrative, Insu as narrator has already jumped far into the future, already showed us himself as adult looking back, showed willingness, like Beccah’s, to break with temporal order? Once again we have multiple-fold repression: Heinz Sr. forcing Insu’s mother to send Kuristo away as a young child; afterwards Heinz Sr. erasing Kuristo’s memory, insisting he never be spoken of; Insu’s mother (and the rest of the family) complying with this insistence; Insu forgetting, and then suspecting but also doubting, that he has a brother; and finally Insu learning for certain he does have a brother but, as narrator, delaying release of this information to readers. So what do these various repressions have to do with race and Insu’s mixed identity formation?

Heinz Sr. sends Kuristo away because he is not Heinz Sr.’s son but the son of another white GI. Throughout *Memories* is the tension of comparison—how much the relationship that produces Insu bears similarities (or does not) to the other interracial relationships Insu sees around him, including, most charged and damning, the relationship between Gannan and a white GI that results in Gannan’s suicide. Always, for Insu, is the tacit question of how much the relationship between his parents is or is not like *what happened every day outside the gates of the U.S. Army post*—systemic relations between American GIs and Korean sex workers and/or marriage-seekers. Heinz Sr. must confront these comparisons as well. Kuristo’s banishment might on the surface seem like Heinz Sr. simply not wanting to care for

another man's son. But we might also see it as a function of Heinz Sr.'s discomfort with systemic relations between American GIs and Korean women, and by extension, whiteness' difficult work to reconcile (or mask) its internal contradictions.

Interracial relations, Heinz Sr. cannot help but know, are defined by power, by conditions that compel unregulated sex work and enable various forms of exploitation, defined by abuse and misogyny and exoticization, by longing and desperation, by poverty and despair and suicide—and, inextricably, by race. “Yellow hairs” represent Hollywood, represent escape from poverty and sex work or black market work to an American future. (Black GIs have a very different relationship with Korean women). Whiteness is money and security and possibility, defined by and against a subordinate “Asian-ness.” Heinz Sr. knows he participates in these interracial relations insofar as his relationship with Insu's mother appears to be just one more instance of those relations. That it comes right on the heels of another interracial relationship—that Heinz Sr. is seemingly “next in line” after Kuristo's father, seemingly one in a long succession of white GIs throughout Korea—makes it all the more difficult for Heinz Sr. to distance himself from troubling moral implications. Responsibility for Kuristo as stepfather is symbolically akin to “responsibility” for the larger system of relations. Banishing Kuristo makes possible the myth of exceptionalism: makes possible the notion that Heinz Sr.'s relationship with Insu's mother is different, and Heinz Sr. himself different, morally upright. To be fair, his relationship with Insu's mother *is* different than Gannan's relationship with the unnamed white GI and *is* different than the relationships between Korean sex workers and white GIs: Heinz Sr. is never abusive, never manipulative or deceitful,

never implicitly or explicitly promising a future he never intends to provide in exchange for sex. But he conducts a relationship with a Korean woman as a white GI within a system that inescapably privileges white GIs with status, mobility, money, legal recourse and relative immunity: power. He never critiques that system or acknowledges his complicity in its existence; instead he faithfully espouses discourses of white superiority and Asian inferiority. He can do so while witnessing *what happened every day outside the gates of the U.S. Army post* and still feel righteous because he believes himself to be different, unconsciously believes in a white ideal to which one can aspire. In his imagination whiteness and “Asian-ness” can remain static, fixed, oppositional identities even as he works continually to construct a vision of whiteness. So long as he maintains a myth of exceptionalism, he can self-justify his tremendous power and privilege within a fundamentally inequitable system.

Before Insu can begin to understand Kuristo’s absence, and how this erasure relates to his sense of himself as Amerasian child, he must come to understand this relationship his father has to whiteness; we as readers must too. We must also first witness Gannan’s suicide, the realities of the military base, and the “gang” of Amerasians Insu joins. All of this context is necessary for us to understand, through Insu’s eyes, what has happened to Kuristo, itself necessary for understanding the resolution of Insu’s mixed identity. Like Beccah, he delays release of information until we are ready—and to illustrate that in the act of narration, through control of his own story and racial construction, he can erase, like his father and mother and family, but also restore and create.

The critical race consciousness that Beccah and Insu reach is the mixed *bildung*'s final stage of development. Both (re)embrace the cultural traditions of their mothers, but as fuller histories, restored, with, importantly, an understanding of how and why and by means of whose participation/complicity they were repressed. Beccah and Insu are ultimately critical of their fathers—but this critical position is distinct from their mothers', from that of other Asians and Asian Americans, in that Beccah and Insu come to this critical position expressly by way of inhabiting whiteness in addition to “Asian-ness,” by moving in white space not as “Asian” other but as white, even if that whiteness is primarily projected onto them by their fathers. This represents a very different form of participation in whiteness and white discourse than what we see, if to limited degrees in *Memories* and *Comfort Woman*, by monoracial Asians and Asian Americans. The power of whiteness as construction of course requires participation by non-whites, requires Akiko and Insu's mother and Auntie Reno and Gannan and various other characters to yield to its demands and slot readily into its hierarchies. But acquiescing to or even desiring whiteness is not the same as inhabiting it; none of the aforementioned characters can ever transcend racialized non-white identities—because of phenotype, because of non-white parentage. Hypodescence, the most popular manifestation of which is the “one drop rule,” has historically defined black-white racial mixing in America, rendering a person in America with “one drop” of “black blood” black.¹⁰⁸ But for Amerasians and mixed

¹⁰⁸ For a long view of the one-drop rule, see Winthrop D. Jordan's “Historical Origins of the One-Drop Racial Rule in the United States,” *Journal of Critical Mixed Race Studies* (Volume 1, Number 1). 89-132. We also see the one drop-rule operating in *Memories*, in Korea, where mixed black and Korean children are defined primarily by their blackness.

Asian Americans, *hyperdescence* is a viable avenue, in Beccah's and Insu's cases particularly because of their fathers' express desire to draw their mixed children into whiteness. Beccah and Insu can and do occupy whiteness for key developmental periods of their coming of age stories, which transforms how they understand whiteness, "Asian-ness," the constructedness of race, and their own abilities to perform and construct race. At books' ends they occupy a mixedness constituted by critical self-construction through narration.

Reconciliation in the mixed *bildung* is neither choosing whiteness nor "Asian-ness" nor some hybrid of the two—not even the "third space" mixed race community of Insu's Amerasian "gang," able to navigate but only dimly aware of the racial realities of American-occupied Korea. Reconciliation must mean a full consciousness of the linked construction of whiteness and "Asian-ness," including especially how the mixed child is not only product of those constructions but participant in their continual recreation. It must mean choosing a mixedness that is not simply fluid negotiation of racial categories, nor a bridge between them, but a critical position that continually calls into question those categories and the power relations they instantiate.

THE INTERSECTION OF GHOSTLY AND MIXED BILDUNG

So with mixed and ghostly *bildung* roughly plotted, where do the two meet, and to what ends? What does crossing the mixed *bildung* with the ghostly *bildung* mean to resolve on a larger social scale? Or more precisely, how is the mixed coming of age story useful for completing the work of the ghostly coming of age story?

As I have plotted the two narrative arcs, their three rough stages match up temporally; major developments in the two run perfectly parallel. To recap, the first stages of each occur in early childhood: the ghostly protagonist's default acceptance of ghostly knowledge corresponds with the mixed protagonist's default non-white identity (with limited awareness of mixedness). The second stages, of indecision, occur in later childhood and run through adolescence. Here the protagonist begins to be identified, and to self-identify at points, as white; at the same time, she begins to question ghostly knowledge and explore the possibilities of official knowledge. The third and final stages of the ghostly and mixed bildung take place in adulthood. Resolution of mixed identity occurs at the same time as resolution of epistemological orientation; coming to a critical race consciousness corresponds with coming to a critical consciousness of knowledge production and circulation.

These correspondences are not simply circumstantial. Ghostly and mixed coming of age stories are both products, we might recall, of *inheritance*: the ghostly protagonist inherits ghostly knowledge from her mother/parents; the mixed protagonist inherits racial identity by fact of parentage and by way of parenting. Or put another way, the ghostly and mixed bildung are both *legacies*, and legacies of the same condition: immigration. Each coming of age story is a way of thinking through, and attempting to resolve, immigration as problem. Ghostly and mixed bildung correspond at each key stage of development because they result from and work to make sense of the same condition.

They also mutually inform one another. As I referenced earlier, official knowledge *is* a feature of whiteness, and ghostly knowledge *is both projected and*

employed as a feature of “Asian-ness,” meaning the mixed protagonist’s grappling with ghostly knowledge is always a grappling with racial identity as well. Beccah’s opening fantasy is of Korean ghosts burned away by her father’s blue eyes, which turn at last upon her: she is lumped in with the Korean ghosts. Because she is a ghostly knower? Or because she is “Korean”? In her fears, and in her father’s blue-eyed gaze, the two are reciprocally constitutive. Beccah sees her mixedness in terms of a “Korean-ness” defined by the ghostly—as her father, and in a different fashion, her mother, have taught her to do. Similarly Akiko’s shamanism only becomes fully comprehensible in relation to Rick’s construction of whiteness: ghostly knowledge is Akiko’s means of asserting/preserving a Korean cultural identity in the face of Rick’s imposed construction of “Asian-ness,” which she links to the wartime-imposed Japanese construction of “Korean-ness.” Rick seeks to consolidate a comfortable white identity for himself—and for Beccah—by erasing Akiko’s ghostly knowing and her uncomfortable history as a comfort woman. She refuses his linked visions of whiteness and “Asian-ness” through shamanic practice and narration, through construction of a cultural identity based upon ghostly knowledge and the preservation and restoration of traumatic histories. Beccah reaches her ultimate mixed identity specifically by coming to understand her mother’s process, by coming to understand how she can, like both her mother and father, use ghostly knowledge as a building block of racial identity construction. For her, just as for Insu, coming to critical race consciousness requires coming to critical epistemological consciousness.

One can certainly identify ghostly *bildung* without mixed protagonists (see most of the titles in footnote 102), just as one can identify mixed *bildung* without the ghostly

(see most of the titles in footnote 107). The two coming of age stories are certainly separable, if the ghostly and race more generally are not. *Memories* and *Comfort Woman* combine them, and we might see the combination as a mapping of mixed race onto ghostly knowledge that illustrates how race and the ghostly are always already imbricated. The mixed-ghostly bildung illustrates that the twinned problems of race and epistemic tension are actually tessellated problems, or perhaps a single, woven problem—and that in the coming of age story of the mixed ghostly knower, we find the model of a potential solution. We see how the protagonist might enact a resolution of one problem that is a resolution of the other, and the beginnings of a resolution to the larger condition of immigration; how the larger social order, and the notion of national progress, might be productively refigured in terms of knowledge and race, or rather raced knowledge.

Such a model would seem to offer something like a progressive politics of the ghostly. But as Michele Elam warns us, mixed race representations are “never innocent: they are always motivated and shaped by the needs for certain kinds of stories that tropes of mixed race enable” (159).

THE MULTIRACIAL MOVEMENT AND “CRITICAL” MIXED RACE STUDIES

I raised earlier the idea of appeal across racial boundaries for readerships—that a mixed race protagonist potentially speaks (and can be marketed) to a wider range of audiences than a monoracial Asian American one. What this gestures towards is

“mixed race” itself as commodity,¹⁰⁹ or more accurately, as full-fledged economy. Elam among other scholars has documented the explosion, starting in the 1990s, of all things mixed race in the popular American consciousness, from political advocacy to summer camps and festivals to art and literature to educational materials and support groups to blogs and podcasts—all of this despite the fact that “data collected since the 2000 Census suggest that the number of people self-identifying as more than one race is actually declining.”¹¹⁰ The explosion, in other words, cannot be too tightly tethered to the “actual” demographics of mixed peoples, whether rising or falling or remaining stable in numbers. Elam notes scholars Kim M. Williams’ and Kimberly McClain DaCosta’s characterization of “the impression of an expanding cross-country mixed race constituency...[as part] political desire and market invention.”¹¹¹ Mixed race representation as political desire and market invention: we have *needs for certain kinds of stories that tropes of mixed race enable*.

As prominent, major-publishing house, mid-90s publications, *Memories* and *Comfort Woman* unavoidably participated in this mixed race economy, whether

¹⁰⁹ A 2003 *New York Times* article infamously celebrated the rising use of multiracial people in advertising campaigns. See Ruth La Ferla, “Generation E.A.: Ethnically Ambiguous,” *The New York Times* (28 Dec. 2003, accessed 4 Feb. 2014, www.nytimes.com/2003/12/28/style/generation-ea-ethnically-ambiguous.html)

¹¹⁰ *Souls of Mixed Folks*, 6. See the first page of the Population Estimates Program sponsored by the U.S. Census Bureau at http://factfinder.census.gov/home/en/official_estimates_2008.html (accessed 23 January 2014).

¹¹¹ *Souls of Mixed Folks*, 6. See DaCosta, *Making Multiracials: State, Family, and Market in the Redrawing of the Color Line* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2007) and Williams, *Mark One or More: Civil Rights in Multiracial America* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2006).

nurtured by the market desire Elam alludes to or stimulating it or both.¹¹² More specifically the two texts echoed the boom in materials outlining and putatively providing support for the particular “trauma” of mixed race childhood experience, a boom, writes Elam, that “tends, in effect, to produce the type of population characteristics that it proposes to analyze...[reinforcing] the idea that mixed race people are a distinct population in need of support” (10). In other words, *Memories* and *Comfort Woman*, like the vast emergent body of educational curricula and parenting manuals devoted to mixed race children, were perhaps as *prescriptive* as *descriptive*, not simply identifying but *creating* the problem of mixed race identity to which they offer solutions.

“Creation” acts were taking place in all shapes and sizes at the time. DaCosta’s *Making Multiracials: State, Family, and Market in the Redrawing of the Color Line* helpfully outlines the rise of the Multiracial Movement and the birth of a popular multiracial identity. In 1997 the U.S. Census Bureau famously changed the census form to allow individuals, starting with the 2000 census, to “mark one or more” racial categories. But the concerted push for census change by “multiracial activists,” beginning with 1993 hearings by the U.S. House Subcommittee on Census, Statistics, and Postal Personnel, was predated by at least five years, according to DaCosta, by the formation of some sixty or more independent social support organizations in locations across the country. The Biracial Family Network, based in Chicago, was

¹¹² Both were published by Penguin; both were marketed and received as works engaging mixed race. *Comfort Woman*, one of the *Los Angeles Times*’ Best Books of the Year in 1997, was lauded in a *Newsweek* review (blurb on the rear cover of the novel) as “skillfully [mingling] the Asian past and the American present.” A *San Francisco Review of Books* blurb describes *Memories* as “a compelling and poetic portrait of the Amerasian experience.”

founded in 1980; I-Pride, based in San Francisco, formed in 1979; prominent national organizations AMEA (The Association for Multiethnic Americans), Project Race, and MAVIN would follow in the late 80s, early 90s, and early 2000s, respectively. The census change brought multiracial identity officially into being, and firmly into public consciousness, but community organizing, as well as mixed race representation in the form of cultural production and corporate marketing, was already well underway.

Officially *back* into being, one should say—the 2000 census was far from the first official survey of mixed peoples in America. As DaCosta notes, mixed populations were officially recorded at various points in the antebellum South.¹¹³ Beyond governmental documentation, Frederick Douglass was expounding upon mixed identity in his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* in 1845.¹¹⁴ Numerous American literary authors were imaginatively grappling with mixedness throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, with Edward Reuter venturing some of the first (if overtly racist) mixed race scholarship with his *The Mulatto in the United States* in 1918.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ *Making Multiracials*, 4.

¹¹⁴ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (New York: Signet, 1968).

¹¹⁵ *Mixed Race Literature*, edited by Jonathan Brennan (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2002), traces a host of “mixed race literary traditions” back across American literary history and Anglophone literary history more generally, with a little attention to Francophone literary history as well for good measure. Its Introduction also helpfully catalogues a range of scholarship addressing literary representations of mixed race. Elam’s *Souls of Mixed Folks* includes a section on the “canonizing” of mixed race literature, pages 42-51. Nakashima’s “Servants of Culture” examines a selection of early 20th century representations of “Eurasians.” Greg Carter’s *The United States of the United Races: A Utopian History of Racial Mixing* (New York: NYU Press, 2013) excavates an “optimist tradition” of understanding racial mixing in the United States, pointing back as far as Hector St. John de Crevecoeur’s *Letters of an American Farmer* in the 1780s. Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe’s *Mixed Race Studies: A*

There are rich traditions of engaging mixedness in African American studies, Latino studies, and Native American studies stretching back decades before the 1980s.¹¹⁶

The Multiracial Movement's myth of "newness" required a certain level of historical amnesia.

Mixed race scholarship, much of it also somewhat historically amnesiac, would become its own sizable plume in the popular eruption of all things mixed race in the 1990s and 2000s. "Both an academic field and a commercial industry," Michele Elam labels it, and "especially active in canonizing certain normative models of mixed race as a uniquely post-civil rights identity and experience" (xiv). Willfully blind, in other words, to a longer view of mixedness as experience, identity, and public construction; blind to how contemporary work on mixed race relates to prior work; and blind to how contemporary work might be situated in relation to racial politics more broadly—the rise, for instance, of post-racialism.¹¹⁷ Elam's *Souls of Mixed Folks* fits into a counter-tradition, or what might be labeled a "second wave" of mixed race studies, self-differentiating via the addition of the prefix "critical." The first Critical Mixed Race Studies conference would be held in 2010,¹¹⁸ and the first

Reader (London: Routledge, 2004) traces the existence of scholarly studies of mixed race across disciplines back at least several hundred years.

¹¹⁶ For partial genealogies, see Brennan's *Mixed Race Literature* and Elam's *Souls of Mixed Folks*.

¹¹⁷ Elam's *Souls of Mixed Folks* points out this blindness and begins to sketch out some of these connections.

¹¹⁸ At DePaul University. Information on the 2010 and 2012 Critical Mixed Race Studies conferences is available at <http://las.depaul.edu/aas/About/CMRSConference/index.asp>. The official website for Critical Mixed Race Studies is <http://criticalmixedracestudies.org/>. "Emerging Paradigms in Critical Mixed Race Studies" (G. Reginald Daniel, Laura Kina, Wei

issue of its official publication, the *Journal of Critical Mixed Race Studies* (of which Elam is an editorial review board member), would appear in early 2014. “Critical,” the editors of the *Journal of Critical Mixed Race Studies* explain, means “to indicate both a new direction and to bring together the various tributaries of the field in a new light, one that is recursive and self-reflexive.”¹¹⁹ Though the editors are careful to clarify that the usage of “critical” does not mean to paint all previous mixed race scholarship as “uncritical,” Critical Mixed Race Studies does inevitably define itself in relation to uncritical—i.e., potentially limiting and/or racist—deployments of “mixed race” and “multiracial,” many formative examples of which emerged in representations and scholarship produced during the Multiracial Movement.

Journal of Critical Mixed Race Studies editor-in-chief G. Reginald Daniel stresses

that neither a multiracial identity nor multiracial individuals should be viewed as the final solution to racism and racial inequality, despite the fact that “many of us believe that multiraciality, when based on egalitarian premises, that is to say, “critical multiraciality,” has the potential not only to interrogate the essentialized conception of biological race and racial categories but also serve as an addition to the arsenal of tools in the antiracist struggle.”¹²⁰

Ming Dariotis, and Camilla Fojas, *Journal of Critical Mixed Race Studies*, Vol. 1 Issue 1, 2014, <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/2db5652b>, accessed 1 February 2014) provides a brief history of the formation of Critical Mixed Race Studies proper and critical mixed race studies more generally. A history of the *Journal of Critical Mixed Race Studies* can be found at http://escholarship.org/uc/search?entity=ucsb_soc_jcmrs;view=aimandscope.

¹¹⁹ “Emerging Paradigms in Critical Mixed Race Studies,” *Journal of Critical Mixed Race Studies*, 7.

¹²⁰ Laura Kina and Wei Ming Dariotis, eds., *War Baby/Love Child: Mixed Race Asian American Art* (Seattle: U of Washington P, 2013, xv). Kina and Dariotis co-organized the first CMRS conference; they also both serve on the editorial board for the *Journal of Critical Mixed Race Studies*.

A critique of popular multiracial identity, Daniel's formulation is a useful segue back to *Memories*, *Comfort Woman*, and the mixed-ghostly bildung, which each uncomfortably straddle the poles of a "critical-uncritical" binary. Is the mixed bildung a species of "critical multiraciality" or "critical mixed race," with the potential to "interrogate" racial essentialisms and conduct antiracist work? In its modeling of critical race consciousness and the constructedness of race, including mixed identity, and its deployment of these to undermine inequitable social relations based upon deeply racist representational frameworks, *yes*. But also *no*: in its appropriation of the bildung form, however it might transgress the traditional bildung function, the mixed bildung necessarily figures the mixed protagonist and the ultimate determination of her mixed identity as "final solution to racism and racial inequality." Even as it works against racial essentialism, the mixed bildung potentially reifies it.

In *Souls of Mixed Folks*, Michele Elam directly theorizes her own notion of the mixed race bildungsroman, in which

the challenge to the implied indexical relation between the novel and modernity differs from either the traditional European or the ethnic bildungsroman...correspondence between the novel and modernity is actually magnified: the mixed race protagonist is represented as modernity itself. Unlike the protagonist in either the European or the indigenous bildungsroman, the protagonist in the mixed race bildungsroman is often represented as not requiring social education—he or she is already modern. In fact, the idea that the racially mixed individual is a modernizing agent of a new multicultural world order is often an explicit theme in these works (126).

Such a description applies fairly neatly to *Memories* and *Comfort Woman* and matches with the framework of the mixed-ghostly bildung I have been building. Insu and Beccah's coming of age stories chronicle their processes of being "modernized"—made modern as in made rational, but ultimately made modern as in

transformed in (mixed) racial identity. At once the two characters are certainly also “modernizing agent[s] of a new multicultural world order,” not least by means of their work as narrators, actively taking control of their stories, eliciting readerly identification and modeling change. As in Daniel’s formulation, the mixed protagonist becomes solution to the problem of race. Or in yet another parallel framing, which Nakashima outlines in “Servants of Culture,” the mixed figure is

much less the subject of honest inquiry than a functional representative of a social issue. This becomes especially true and increasingly necessary when the population finds that its racial/ethnic meanings and boundaries are in crisis because of social, political, and/or economic changes, such as increased international contact, changing racial demographics, or a rising outmarriage rate (36).

Nakashima’s essay traces this basic symbolic pattern across American history (and across a range of cultural productions), from the “tragic mulatto” archetype to the “tragic Eurasian of the ‘Yellow Peril’” to the “Super-Eurasian of the 1980s” to the Tiger Woods-ian “‘Cablinasian’ in a ‘Color-Blind’ America.” *Memories* and *Comfort Woman* can thus be situated in a much larger continuum of symbolic mixed race representation, across and beyond Asian American literary production, across and beyond literary production (to also include popular fiction, visual art, and commercial advertising), back, if we borrow Nakashima’s framing, at least as far as the symbolic “tragic mulatta” characters common in abolitionist literature.¹²¹ In its work on the ghostly, then, the mixed-ghostly bildung effectively replicates a reductive, racist formula in operation across much of American history. We have

¹²¹ Regarding the changing visibility and usage of the “tragic mulatta,” Nakashima cites A.S. Elfenbein’s *Women on the Color Line: Evolving Stereotypes and the Writings of George Washington Cable, Grace King, Kate Chopin* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1989).

needs—transhistorical needs—for certain kinds of stories that tropes of mixed race enable.

But the mixed-ghostly bildung also has a decidedly Multiracial Movement character. In 1992, as part of the collection *Racially Mixed People in America*,¹²² Maria P.P. Root published “A Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People,” a document that would become much-beloved by groups throughout the Multiracial Movement, adopted officially as a motto, Michele Elam notes, by the Web organization Intermix, unofficially as a charter for many advocacy organizations.¹²³ To excerpt just a small selection of the Bill:

I have the right
To identify myself differently than strangers expect me to identify
To identify myself differently than how my parents identify me
To identify myself differently than my brothers and sisters
To identify myself differently in different situations

While Root is often considered a pioneer of critical mixed race studies,¹²⁴ Elam characterizes “A Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People” in terms of a “rhetoric of possessive individualism,”¹²⁵ pointing out that the Bill

re-enshrines a model of identity that many in the United States find both irresistible and incontrovertible because it dovetails with many of the nation’s self-evident truths, most especially the mandate for self-invention and the agonistic relation of self to society. But because the manifesto is such an ode to free choice, it omits mention of any structural,

¹²² Maria P.P. Root, ed., *Racially Mixed People in America* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1992).

¹²³ *Souls of Mixed Folks*, 211, endnote 32.

¹²⁴ See Rainier Spencer’s “‘Only the News They Want to Print’: Mainstream Media and Critical Mixed-Race Studies,” *Journal of Critical Mixed Race Studies*, 162-3.

¹²⁵ *Souls of Mixed Folks*, 13.

social, or historical constraints that might inhibit the choices qua rights for some people and not others; nor does it consider the political implications or accountabilities of racial identification.¹²⁶

The critique could easily be of the mixed-ghostly bildung, which too depends upon a rhetoric of possessive individualism—not a reconciliation with the larger social order but an ultimate insistence upon singular self-determination that critiques and shifts the larger social order. Although the mixed-ghostly bildung does make visible structural and historical constraints to racial (and mixed racial) identification, including epistemological orientation, it figures these as roadblocks to be surmounted, part and parcel of building critical race consciousness and mixed identity, not ultimately impediments to these endpoints. And if the mixed-ghostly bildung does picture the stakes—“the political implications or accountabilities”—of racial identification, by placing mixed identity as culmination of coming of age, it settles those stakes in the developmental past, rather than in the ongoing present and/or future. Beccah’s and Insu’s coming of age stories are, at last, paeans to “self-invention and the agonistic relation of self to society.” By stories’ ends, Beccah and Insu are each *claiming the right to identify differently* as, in and of itself, a worthy resolution.

This same rhetoric of possessive individualism would find its most popular and enduring expression in the early 2000s in the form of mixed race portraiture, a genre that remains prevalent today, one important to examine as analog and context for the mixed-ghostly bildung. The hallmark work of the genre is Kip Fulbeck’s Hapa

¹²⁶ *Souls of Mixed Folks*, 11.

Project,¹²⁷ a series of ostensibly transgressive photographic portraits of “hapas,”¹²⁸ defined by Fulbeck as people of “mixed ethnic heritage with partial roots in Asian and/or Pacific Islander ancestry.”¹²⁹ First launched in 2001, the Hapa Project developed into a travelling exhibition that debuted at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles in 2006, toured to various museums across the country, and resulted in the offshoot book project *Part Asian, 100% Hapa*.¹³⁰ The Hapa Project was profiled on CNN, MTV, PBS, and NPR; selections from it were included in the American Anthropological Association-sponsored exhibition *Race: Are We So Different?*, which enjoyed its own multiple-year tour of museums, including, most prominently, the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., the most visited natural history museum in the world.¹³¹ Without even taking into account its widespread co-optation by advertisers, the mixed race portrait has had

¹²⁷ Some others, helpfully catalogued in “Beyond the Face,” include photographer Natalie Maya Willer and researcher Macia Yumi Lise’s “hafu: half Japanese” project, 2008-present (<http://www.hafujapanese.org/>); Richard Milnes’ *Mix-d: uk: A Look at Mixed-Race Identities* (UK: Pelican Press, 2008); and Mike Tauber’s *Blended Nation* (2009). Kip Fulbeck’s follow-up book project, also of mixed race portraiture, was *Mixed: Portraits of Multiracial Kids* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2010).

¹²⁸ For a primer on the complicated and controversial history of the term “hapa,” see Wei Ming Dariotis’ essay “Hapa: The Word of Power,” *MAViN Mixed Heritage Center*, http://www.mixedheritagecenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1259&Itemid=34, accessed 4 Feb. 2014.

¹²⁹ See the official Hapa Project website, <http://seaweedproductions.com/the-hapa-project/>.

¹³⁰ Kip Fulbeck, *Part Asian, 100% Hapa* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2006).

¹³¹ Per <http://newsdesk.si.edu/factsheets/national-museum-natural-history>. According to Smithsonian records, 7.38 million people visited the museum in 2012.

undeniable appeal and given a tremendous new visibility to mixed race Asian Americans in particular.



What am I?
I am exactly the same
as every other person in 2500●

japanese, french, chinese, sioux, swedish

Fig. 1. from Kip Fulbeck's *Part Asian, 100% Hapa*, San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2006.

Fig. 1, a portrait included in both the Hapa Project travelling exhibition and *Part Asian, 100% Hapa*—the cover image of the book—conveys the same sentiment as Root's Bill: the right to self-expression, the right to self-identification. Just as the

Bill refuses imposed parameters of identification, the portrait means to subvert the eugenicist-cum-anthropological gaze¹³²; whereas the racial portrait has historically intended to catalog peoples, and thereby reinforce dominant racial hierarchies, Fulbeck's portraits parody and subvert that impulse, refusing any easy taxonomies. At bottom, Fig. 1 does offer a list of ethnicities—"japanese, french, chinese, sioux, swedish"—but seemingly for purposes of contrast. The list is foil for the self-identification hand-written above it, suggesting how open-ended that statement is, the statement in turn suggesting how limited and limiting ethnic categories can be. The subject of the portrait here, as throughout the Hapa Project, can identify as s/he "pleases," within or beyond racial or other modes of identity. In this case, the subject chooses to identify by way of inverting a question commonly posed to mixed race peoples: "What are you?" He leads with an answer, preempting the always about-to-be-posed question, seizing an opportunity for self-determination: "I am exactly the same as every other person in 2500." This is refusal to supply or confirm the taxonomies listed below the portrait; at once it summons up a horizon the Multiracial Movement is always reaching towards, of infinite mixedness, a future society in which everyone is mixed (and, by suggested extension, all racial tensions are resolved). It also echoes the act of self-narration by Insu and Beccah in the mixed-ghostly bildung.

¹³² For an elaboration on this reading, see Laura Kina and Wei Ming Dariotis, "Chapter 1: Miscegenating Discourses," *War Baby/Love Child*, 9. For scholarly work on early racial portraiture, see Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2005). For an interview with Fulbeck by Kina and Dariotis, see "100% Hapa: An Interview with Kip Fulbeck," *War Baby/Love Child*, 149-153. For a retrospective on the Hapa Project, see Fulbeck's "The Hapa Project—10 years after," *The Asian American Literary Review*, vol. 4 issue 2 (Mixed Race in a Box), Fall 2013, 1-22.

In “Beyond the Face: A Pedagogical Primer for Mixed-Race Art & Social Engagement,” Michele Elam, Laura Kina, Jeff Chang, and Ellen Oh argue that documentary work along the lines of Fulbeck’s,

which comprises much of the first wave of contemporary mixed race representation...has been necessary to make visible and give testimony to multiracial individuals and communities and their experiences. But one of the dangers in these genres is their often singular emphasis on the face and body as the site of racial disclosure. Casual discourse on these images and narratives about being “mixed” has uncritically revived antiquated positivist notions of race (1/2 black, 1/4 white, etc.).¹³³

In other words, the focus on the face and body draws us away from the ecologies around mixed peoples, the larger sociohistorical surround that must remain in view if we are to understand the mechanics and consequences of racialization and racism. And the portrait’s putatively transgressive work is in and of itself a danger; that promise of transgression locks the mixed figure into symbolic role, much like the bildung narrative does: “To the extent,” write Elam et al., “the iconic mixed face has become metonymic of social change and racial progress, it potentially, misleadingly, suggests the abatement of racial inequity and social injustice.”¹³⁴ Once again, echoing G. Reginald Daniel, we have the mixed race figure as solution, the mixed face as end-point functioning in the same fashion as the bildung’s culminating reconciliation. In working against racist indexing, the portrait, like the mixed-ghostly

¹³³ Michele Elam, Laura Kina, Jeff Chang, and Ellen Oh, “Beyond the Face: A Pedagogical Primer for Mixed-Race Art & Social Engagement,” *The Asian American Literary Review*, vol. 4 issue 2 (Mixed Race in a Box), Fall 2013, 121. For more visual studies work on mixed race, see *War Baby/Love Child*; LeiLani Nishime, *Undercover Asian: Multiracial Asian Americans in Visual Culture* (Champaign: U of Illinois P, 2013); and Mary Beltrán and Camilla Fojas, eds., *Mixed Race Hollywood* (New York: NYU Press, 2008).

¹³⁴ “Beyond the Face,” 132.

bildung, runs the risk of promising some utopian end to racism and even race itself, particularly, in the case of the portrait, by articulating a possessive individualism that leaves little room for attention to larger structural, social, and/or historical contexts. Add to this tally a failure to consider differential access to this kind of self-identificatory expression, not to mention differential consequences to such expressions, and the mixed race portrait seemingly encapsulates much of the unsuitably uncritical multiracialism of the Multiracial Movement. Hence it offers a helpfully well-rounded picture of what aesthetic projects reaching toward a progressive politics of mixed race—and, I would argue, a progressive politics of the ghostly—must conscientiously avoid.

So what exactly does uncritical multiracialism mean for a consideration of the ghostly? With the landscape of the Multiracial Movement in view, how do we understand the deployment of mixedness as it relates to reaching for a progressive politics of the ghostly? Such a contextualization helps illustrate that the dangers of Multiracial Movement representations, as outlined by a Critical Mixed Race Studies frame, also apply to engagements with the ghostly. Insofar as the mixed figure becomes a final solution to the problem of race, she also, within the same track of symbolic determinism, runs the risk of instantiating a final solution to the problem of (always raced) ghostly knowledge. What is at best a provisional, limited solution to the problem of epistemic tension becomes, via its placement in a bildung arc of development and particularly by way of its tethering to a mixed race identity resolution, a misleading suggestion of broad-scale, widespread resolution. And mapping the responsibility of epistemic resolution onto the mixed figure not only

imposes upon the mixed figure a confining racial role, it fails to envision a broader-based constituency of critical engagement, not singularly multiracial but collectively multi-ethnic and multi-racial. The bildung elicits readerly identification but fails to imagine avenues for any coordinated, structural response across cultural and racial boundaries. Communal and dialogic, ghostly knowledge is reduced to a defining characteristic of one figure's possessive individualism, at best a series of readers' possessive individualisms, linked only "vertically" by way of inheritance, never "horizontally" by way of community or cross-community coalition. And just as Root's bill fails to consider differential access to and consequences of possessive individualism, so too does the mixed-ghostly bildung's framing of the ghostly, ending without considering how access to critical epistemological consciousness might differ across contexts, and how that consciousness might have differing consequences for knowers in various contexts. Finally, in much the way that uncritical multiracial representations run the risk of reifying positivist notions of race, the mixed-ghostly bildung's representations of raced knowledge run the risk of reifying rigid taxonomies of knowledge.¹³⁵

For a progressive politics of the ghostly, and a progressive politics of mixed race, we need other aesthetic approaches.

¹³⁵ I do not read *Memories* or *Comfort Woman* as presenting rigid taxonomies of knowledge—in fact I would argue that both take care to illustrate how official and ghostly knowledge are syncretic and constantly evolving. But in the way Elam et al. regard first-wave mixed race representations—as doing important work but also inspiring a body of uncritical “casual discourse”—I would regard this first-wave of ghostly representations. The bildung frame too easily collapses what intend to be, and in moments are, complex engagements with the ghostly into oversimplified elements of a formula.

SECOND-WAVE MIXEDNESS, SECOND-WAVE GHOSTLY

In chapter four of *Souls of Mixed Folks*, having outlined the dangers of the mixed race bildungsroman, Michele Elam begins to theorize what she calls a “mixed race anti-bildungsroman”:

these novels are unlike the bildungsromans of Ralph Ellison or Richard Wright; the protagonists’ growth, if there is any, seems completely uncoupled from social movements. From that perspective, we cannot call these novels radical projects in decolonization. But it is precisely the dramatization of this absence of a political life, the foregrounding of the dissolution of political will in the twenty-first century fin de siècle that marks the decolonizing impulse of the mixed race anti-bildungsroman...The willed absence and invisibility of ways of talking about race and racism (137).

These novels—Elam addresses Danzy Senna’s *Symptomatic* and Emily Raboteau’s *The Professor’s Daughter* in particular¹³⁶—feature mixed race without “representing” it, without wrapping it in the baffling of promises of enlightenment or reconciliation. By detaching mixedness from an arc of development and, by extension, from the larger sweep of Multiracial Movement determinism, they begin to do what Elam et al. call for in “Beyond the Face”: move towards an understanding of mixedness as situational, as forming and reforming in relation to ever-shifting sociohistorical contexts—“identity as social act with public consequence.”¹³⁷ Following Elam’s lead, we might theorize a “mixed-ghostly anti-bildung,” work pairing a second-wave

¹³⁶ All of Elam’s aesthetic texts of choice in *Souls of Mixed Folks* feature black-white mixing; her interest, she foregrounds, is in rethinking representations of mixedness specifically in relation to the African American literary canon and the particular history of understanding black-white mixedness in America.

¹³⁷ “Beyond the Face,” 133.

engagement with mixedness with what might be labeled a second-wave engagement with the ghostly.

A good starting point is Shawna Yang Ryan's *Water Ghosts*, a direct response, as I explore in the Introduction and Chapter 1, to *Beloved*, and more generally to post-1965 ghostly literature. Published by small independent press El Leon Literary Arts in 2007, then republished by Penguin in 2009—in the thick of the rise of Critical Mixed Race studies, *after* the heyday of the Multiracial Movement—*Water Ghosts* is also, I venture, a literary response to the uncritical multiracialism of the 1990s. Like *Memories* and *Comfort Woman*, *Water Ghosts* prominently features ghosts, is written by a mixed author (Ryan is of Taiwanese and white parentage), and includes a mixed character in a central role. But that mixed character, Sofia Lee, never “comes of age,” though we see her as a child and young teen; her narrative does not trace a developmental arc. Nor is Sofia ever tagged as a carrier of popular or official knowledge; she is not party to any of the novel's wrangling with the ghostly. Her mother, Corlissa Lee, is white, and her father, Howar Lee, is a Chinese immigrant, but *Water Ghosts* never shows us any epistemic tension between them; the novel never pictures Sofia as inheritor of, much less resolution to, any competing epistemologies her parents might espouse and come to represent. *Water Ghosts'* epistemic tensions are worked out, as I examine in the Introduction, entirely via the character Poppy See, a ghostly knower/shamaness, and Ming Wai, a ghost.

Sofia's narrative thread primarily focuses on her queer relationship with Chloe. As for her mixedness, how racial identity is imposed upon her, how she self-identifies, how her racial identification shifts over time—*Water Ghosts* shows us

none of these things in any depth, if at all, and certainly does not show any culminating resolution to Sofia's mixed identity. Instead we simply get the fact of her mixed parentage, as well as the conditions that make that union possible and implicitly shape Sofia's identity: first, the legal terms of entry that enable immigration for Howar, Richard Fong, and the rest of the male Chinese residents in Locke while denying it to all Chinese women (save for those few smuggled in, like Poppy);¹³⁸ second, the larger social conditions of northern California by which lower class white women could become sex workers, and in some cases, like Corlissa's, partners, in certain Chinese immigrant "bachelor" communities; third, the social conditions within those "bachelor" communities whereby whiteness or at least white femininity is deprivileged and no dominant white gaze exists. *Water Ghosts* offers each of these as crucial contexts for Sofia's (mixed) racial identity, not to mention her sexual identity, but gives no easy formulations as to how any or all have shaped or are shaping her identities. Nothing is fixed by novel's end. The last we hear of Sofia is when Chloe stands below her window and imagines a final moment together but chooses not, at last, to say goodbye. This is non-resolution, a refusal to even attempt a resolution of their queer almost-romance or Sofia's mixed identity. This is the inverse of possessive individualism: our final image of Sofia is as figment of Chloe's imagination, not her own.

Water Ghosts comes to a close a few short pages later, providing no easy resolution to the problem of ghostly knowledge either. It is Ming Wai's ending, not Poppy's—the ghost's, not the ghostly knower's. Ming Wai stands over a toilet and

¹³⁸ And Chinese merchants' wives. See the 1875 Page Act. Full text archived at <http://library.uwb.edu/guides/USimmigration/18%20stat%20477.pdf>

watches red drops bloom in the toilet water—this after the climactic scene in which she drowns Richard Fong in the floodwaters that overtake Locke, trading his life for hers. She is becoming human. Meanwhile Poppy has been burning spirit money to drive off the water ghosts and end the flood, but the ritual and chanting “made no difference” (247), and in her final turn, “she clings to the doorway and waits for her vision to return” (250). Throughout the novel she has been able to see ghosts and premonitions of Locke’s future, visions regarded as “superstition” by her rapidly assimilating Chinese immigrant community; in the novel’s climax, she alone knows what is coming and has some inkling of why, but she can do nothing to change what will happen. Her future as ghostly knower is unclear. She never reaches any critical epistemological consciousness, nor do we readers through her. The novel finally turns back to Ming Wai, alone in a bathroom, completing her transition, becoming human, seeing menstrual blood, thinking *that maybe someday another life will come out of her own*. As I argue in the Introduction, this is revision of *Beloved*’s ending, in which Beloved leaves and is forgotten; in the logic of *Water Ghosts*, we never vanquish the ghost, nor can we forget her. Rather than “haunting” us, she *becomes* one of us. This ending revises *Woman Warrior* importantly too, replacing its No-Name Woman, who drowns herself in a well, with a ghost who refuses to drown, who instead drowns the man who would erase her and assumes his life. In this twist, *Water Ghosts* self-consciously positions itself as *after*, stakes a claim to its place in literary genealogy, and reimagines the Chinese ghost/woman as agent. It also destabilizes the allegorical readings *Beloved* and *Woman Warrior* make so readily available. *Water Ghosts*’ ending does make sense allegorically—in terms of the

Chinese wife left behind by the Gold Mountain bachelor, how she was disappeared, how she returns, her insistence upon a place in history. But unlike *Beloved* and the No-Name Woman, Ming Wai remains *present* and becomes human. If we read her as ghost, not symbolic ghost but ghost as ghost who becomes human, how do we understand this ending without resorting to the symbolic? Poppy is no longer available to provide an explanation by way of ghostly knowledge; what this concluding moment augurs for Ming Wai, for Locke, and for what counts as knowledge in the community we cannot know. We are left with uncertainty, and the narrative fact of Ming Wai. This is the second-wave ghostly, free of determinism or reconciliation.

Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being* similarly signals itself as second-wave ghostly via allusion to *Woman Warrior*. Early in Part II of the novel, central character and sometime narrator Nao Yasutani writes:

Have you ever heard of metal-binding? It's something everyone in Japan knows about, but nobody ever heard of in Sunnyvale. I know because I asked Kayla, so maybe Americans don't have it. I never had it either until we moved to Tokyo.

Metal-binding is what happens when you wake up in the middle of the night and can't move, like some gigantically fat evil spirit is sitting on your chest. It's really scary (124).

Compare this passage to the following passage from *Woman Warrior*:

Cringes of fear seized her soles as something alive, rumbling, climbed the foot of her bed. It rolled over her and landed bodily on her chest. There it sat. It breathed airlessly, pressing her, sapping her. "Oh, no. A Sitting Ghost," she thought. She pushed against the creature to lever herself out from underneath it, but it absorbed this energy and got heavier (68-9).

The two read like reflections. Though they are marked as drawing from distinct folk knowledges, the former Japanese, the latter Chinese, I would argue that metal-binding

is a clear allusion to the *Sitting Ghost*, intended to announce self-consciously that *A Tale for the Time Being* is homage-revision of Maxine Hong Kingston's groundbreaking work. And as I argue in Chapter One, the *Sitting Ghost* is as seminal as the *No-Name Woman*; the latter gives us the metaphorical frame for imaginative and scholarly "haunting," the former the ghost as ghost we need to hold up alongside, and at times against, that metaphorical deployment. *A Tale for the Time Being* establishes itself as inheritor within *this particular tradition of the ghostly*, wherein the ghost is ghost, wherein rationality need not rule and its dominion can in fact be called into question. But even as *A Tale for Time Being* stages or re-stages such a dynamic, it offers no comfortable reconciliation to the ghostly, particularly not via mixed race.

Nao is a young teenager writing from a café in Japan, though as her narrative hints, she formerly lived in Sunnyvale, California, where her father was employed during the dot com bubble of the late 1990s. She is a transnational subject, writing in English dotted intermittently with Japanese, fluent in both languages, with bi-cultural consciousness of dominant American and Japanese knowledge systems and the dissonances between them. Receiving her story along with us, her reception becoming its own narrative in the novel, is Ruth, British Columbia-based novelist, clear stand-in for author Ruth Ozeki. She finds Nao's journal washed up on the shores of her home island in Canada, carried, she suspects, by the tsunami that devastated Japan in 2011.

Metal-binding is but an early taste of the ghostly in the novel. Inescapably foreign thanks to her time in America, Nao is subjected to routine forms of abuse at school,

culminating in her social “death,” her classmates and teacher performing a Buddhist funeral ceremony for her.¹³⁹ Afterwards she is at once present and absent, a condition she comes to understand as *ikisudama*, which in her annotations Ruth helpfully explains to mean “living ghost.” Thus Nao is not an actual ghost, but she (mistakenly) makes use of Japanese ghostly knowledge to understand her social life, death, and afterlife.¹⁴⁰ Not long afterwards, a true ghost as ghost appears when Nao moves to live with her great-grandmother Jiko, a Buddhist nun, for the summer; the ghost, of Haruki #1, Nao’s great-uncle, a World War II kamikaze pilot after whom her father is named, appears twice during Nao’s stay at Jiko’s Buddhist temple.¹⁴¹ Lastly there is Nao’s “ghostliness” across the narrator-reader divide: the tsunami and Ruth’s inability to find information about Nao and her family through internet searches mean we cannot know if Nao is still alive as we read her journal; she may well be “speaking” to us from beyond the grave—and not just metaphorically. As Ruth struggles to make sense of Nao’s story, new text begins appearing in the journal, blank pages mysteriously filling in.

A Tale for the Time Being plots these engagements with the ghostly into something approximating the bildung form. Nao’s is certainly a coming of age story, and Ruth sets out to synchronize the pace of her reading to the pace of Nao’s writing, exaggeratedly mapping Nao’s developmental narrative onto her own, embodying and

¹³⁹ *A Tale for the Time Being*, 106.

¹⁴⁰ And not metaphorically, but with the genuine conviction she is a ghost. This is potentially important ground for further examination, ghostly knowledge as applied beyond the bounds of the ghostly, how it makes meaning not simply of ghosts and the supernatural, “mistakenly” or otherwise.

¹⁴¹ *A Tale for the Time Being*, 240.

dramatizing the readerly identification so vital to the bildung form. But the novel complicates this process of identification, picturing it as far from smooth or easy for Ruth, marked as much by disbelief and torturous self-doubt (and even growing marital tension) as by empathetic identification. In fact readerly dis/belief becomes a key thematic, much of Ruth's narrative thread devoted to her struggles with the allure and demands of ghostly knowledge *particularly within* the largely—but not uniformly—rationalist surround of Vancouver Island. Why is this story so absorbing and what does it augur for her own writing futures? Has the journal changed in front of her eyes? Is she going crazy?—this last question clearly (if unconsciously) prompted by the rubrics of rationalist thought. Ruth's husband and several of her neighbors, who weigh Nao's story and work to solve its "mystery" alongside her, frequently to Ruth's consternation, are scientists (or in her husband Oliver's case, an eco-artist steeped in the sciences) who consistently bring the languages and methodologies of the sciences to the task. Yet both Oliver and neighbor Muriel, a retired anthropologist, are more than willing to entertain the notion that Nao is actively writing the journal, speaking across time; that the irrational is in fact possible. Knowledge systems are colliding here, but those systems are complex, not necessarily reciprocally constitutive or mutually exclusive, the collisions uneven, sometimes not collisions at all. The novel's ending, including the mystery pages which conclude Nao's journal, provides some answers—to the question of Nao and her father's whereabouts, to the question of why Ruth has been unable to locate them via internet searching—but leaves much unclear. How to make sense of Haruki #1?

How to understand Nao's ability to complete her journal across space and time? This is the stuff, unreconciled, perhaps irreconcilable, of the second-wave ghostly.

The framing of time/space especially stresses the foundations of the bildung form. On the one hand, the novel constantly foregrounds distance between writer and reader, and the resulting vexed-ness and sometimes failures of readerly identification. On the other hand it dizzyingly collapses that distance in ways a rationalist framework, and dominant Western traditions of reading, cannot abide without recourse to metaphor. *I am reaching through time to touch you*, Nao writes, and Ruth hears this line echoing repeatedly in her head. How can we accept a coming of age story as model when the very boundaries of that story are always fraying and the very prospect of readerly identification comes undone? The ghostly writing in Nao's journal unravels the accepted bounds of time/space necessary for defining an "age," hence too of a "coming of age"; we lose concrete sense of when/where Nao is writing from and how old she is or was. And the necessary divide between protagonist and reader, the divide that the bildung's work means to bridge, has disappeared, the banks of each shore running into one another: *I am reaching through time to touch you*. Nao's and Ruth's stories influence one another, Ruth's dream seemingly leading to new pages in the journal. And then the ghost itself, whether Haruki #1 or Nao herself: the ghost defies our fundamental rationalist notions of life and death, and therefore of *time*, upon which a coming of age story depends. That is, in what we might call "ghostly time,"¹⁴² our accepted temporal

¹⁴² A cousin, perhaps, of "queer time." See Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: NYU Press, 2005); Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham:

measurements, so thoroughly defined by human lifespans and the developmental milestones therein, come unmoored. When consensus on the basic terms of possibility disintegrates, so too does any hope of pat reconciliation.

The novel's representation of mixedness is also decidedly second wave. There is only one oblique mention of Ruth's racial self-identification, linked to a single oblique mention of any parental racial legacy; no direct mention of mixed parentage; and no overt engagement with whiteness or the construction of race. We simply have Ruth the character as stand-in for Ruth Ozeki the novelist, whom we know is mixed,¹⁴³ who participated in the Hapa Japan Festival 2013,¹⁴⁴ whose short story "The Anthropologists' Kids" was published in the anthology *Mixed* (alongside a brief note about growing up with a white father and Japanese mother),¹⁴⁵ whose first novel, *My Year of Meats*,¹⁴⁶ features a mixed protagonist, Jane Takagi-Little, and overtly thematizes her mixed white and Japanese heritage as part of its larger explorations of race, culture, nationalisms, and food politics. But all of these contextual frames remain dormant in the space of *A Tale for the Time Being*, implicitly available (by way of Ruth as Ruth) but never proffered directly.

Duke UP, 2010); and E.L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen, eds., *Queer Times, Queer Becomings* (New York: SUNY Press, 2011).

¹⁴³ See <http://www.ruthozeki.com/about/long-bio/>.

¹⁴⁴ See the Hapa Japan Festival website at <http://hapajapan.com/>.

¹⁴⁵ *Mixed: An Anthology of Short Fiction on the Multiracial Experience*, ed. Chandra Prasad (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006).

¹⁴⁶ Ruth Ozeki, *My Year of Meats* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999).

In a rather amazing act of self-restraint, Ruth also never comments directly on Nao as bi-cultural, as moving between two cultural spaces, alienated in both, as viable analog to or perhaps inverse mirror of Ruth herself as mixed race. If Nao's transnationality and alienation speak to Ruth, she resists making overt connections or drawing any larger conclusions about mixedness and migration, mixedness and national/cultural belonging. There is undeniably a host of historical, cultural, and racial resonances between the two characters, but the novel never openly addresses them, much less works them to some resolution. Again, Nao's story is never Ruth's alone to engage. It is also Oliver's, and Ruth and Oliver's as *shared* puzzle, something upon which they freight their long relationship history, at once opening and closing avenues into the story. Nao's narrative is also Muriel's, and Muriel, we learn repeatedly, is a gossip who seemingly shares it with everyone on the island, so that what Ruth initially wants to see as her own solitary, interior work is never conducted in isolation but always in communal dialogue, whether she likes it or not. Part of the drama of her readerly identification, in fact, has to do with her gradual opening to a dialogic process, admitting she needs the help of Benoit to translate, Oliver to remember pieces of the puzzle she's forgotten, Dr. Rongstad Leistiko to provide backstory about Nao's father, Haruki #2, and Muriel, importantly, to help Ruth feel not-crazy. Ruth needs—we as readers need—all of these characters, with all of their curiosity and frustration and outrage and despair, to validate and stimulate and amplify her—and our—own range of emotional, ethical, and identificatory responses.

Entailed in this “it takes a village” logic is a refusal on the part of novel to (over)bind racially, to suggest Nao’s story is Ruth’s alone or Ruth’s first and foremost because Ruth is a racial bridge, because she is mixed, because, as “part” culturally Japanese, “part” racially “Asian,” she can and has a responsibility to make sense of Nao’s story in ways others cannot. At one point Oliver notes that Ruth’s mother was not, unlike other Japanese, particularly invested in funerals and memorials, and Ruth responds by saying, “Yeah, Mom was weird. She wasn’t very Japanese” (373), to which Oliver retorts, “Neither are you” (373). This is the most direct engagement with cultural/racial identity the novel extends, and any glimmers of special attachment by way of “Japanese-ness” the novel carefully qualifies or counterbalances. If Ruth’s abilities to read Japanese and annotate Nao’s narrative give her, and the reader, a greater depth of understanding of that narrative, so too does Dr. Leistiko’s ability to supply pivotal backstory, and so too does Benoit’s ability to translate Haruki #1’s French journal—not to mention Ruth’s writerly, novelistic sensibilities and how those, if we are to somehow separate them from her “racial” identity, helpfully open Nao’s narrative for us too. In other words, never do Ruth’s racial identity and cultural heritage eclipse other vectors of engagement with the ghostly. They are part of a spectrum of engagement, just as Ruth is part of a larger community of engagement—each member, because of a variety of reasons, race among them, having differential access to the ghostly and differential consequences¹⁴⁷ of engaging the ghostly.

¹⁴⁷ I am thinking in particular here of how distraught Benoit becomes after translating/reading Haruki #1’s French journal—not to mention how Ruth notes this turmoil, how it affects her own process of reading and responding.

As “anti-bildung,” *A Tale for the Time Being*, like *Water Ghosts*, is far less neat than the mixed-ghostly bildung. Nowhere in either is the tidy reciprocal constitution of mixed race and the ghostly. Nowhere is any racially bound vision of reconciliation, particularly not of the ghostly. The Page Act that makes possible Howar and Clarissa’s union, and therefore Sofia, also makes possible Ming Wai as ghost, yes; but Sofia is no proving ground for ghostly knowledge, nor is ghostly knowledge a toolkit, let alone a solution, for Sofia. And Ruth as mixed figure is no proving ground for Nao’s story, nor does the ghostly offer Ruth a solution to the problem of her mixed identity; that “problem” never even makes it on stage. *Water Ghosts* and *A Tale for the Time Being* show us the particular historical conditions—legal, economic, migratory—that make racial mixing possible and shape how we popularly understand it, but both are careful never to advance a broad theory or resolution of mixed race, never to show mixed identity as anything other than provisional, situational, shifting. We are also, in a decidedly post-Multiracial Movement move, distanced from any possibility of possessive individualism: in both novels the ghostly shapes and is engaged by a broad community. In *A Tale for the Time Being* in particular, the ghostly becomes communal occasion, communal puzzle, and communal work, if no communal “solution” ever emerges. Ruth desires Nao’s story for herself but at every turn finds how that approach fails, how it cannot work, how others always intervene and how those interventions offer avenues previously unavailable to her. *A Tale for the Time Being* leaves us with two powerful models: one of the allure and failure of possessive individualism; and another of the promise

of dialogic engagement, drawn with attention to differential access, differential investments, and differential consequences.

ANTI-PORTRAITURE

I would like to turn briefly to one last recent work of second-wave ghostly/second-wave mixed representation, one that advances an important form of anti-portraiture,¹⁴⁸ an answer to Kip Fulbeck's oeuvre and the larger corpus of mixed race documentary focusing on the face and body. An as-yet untitled series by artist and scholar Laura Kina, it includes five paintings (pictured below in Figs 2-6) with accompanying text (not pictured). Each painting appears upon first glance to be a portrait; the larger series appears upon first glance to be a genealogy, a series of portraits across five generations of Kina's family.

This multi-generational scope itself marks a significant departure from the Fulbeck-ian mixed race portrait, always singular, and from the Multiracial Movement's only slightly broader scope of interest, focused bi-generationally, on interracial parental couple and mixed child. Kina's series demands mixedness be viewed in a fuller context, stretching well beyond the mixed figure herself, stretching back well before the "originary" interracial union. Kina's series gives us *two* mixed figures, Kina herself (pictured in Fig. 5)—of Okinawan, Spanish/Basque, Scotch-Irish, French, English, and Dutch descent¹⁴⁹—and her daughter, Midori Sarah

¹⁴⁸ For another "anti-portraiture" series, see Loren Holland's *Pedigree Series* (2006).

¹⁴⁹ Laura Kina, "untitled narrative," unpublished, 2013, 3.



Fig. 2. "Issei," by Laura Kina. 30 x 45, canvas, 2011.



Fig. 3. "Nisei," by Laura Kina. 30 x 45, canvas, 2012.



Fig. 4. "Sansei," by Laura Kina. 30 x 45, canvas, 2012.



Fig. 5. "Yonsei," by Laura Kina. 30 x 45, canvas, 2012.



Fig. 6. "Gonsei," by Laura Kina. 30 x 45, canvas, 2012.

Aronson (pictured in Fig. 6), Okinawan-Spanish/Basque-Scotch-Irish-French-English- Dutch-*Jewish*. Thus we have in Kina the mixed figure as *parent*, as *contributor* of racial/cultural heritage, a huge shift from mixed figure as always only *recipient*. She is no longer the end point and resolution of mixed race, and while we might be tempted to see that mantle as simply shifting onto Kina's daughter, the series, as I will explain shortly, resists that pitfall as well.

The series works to build Kina's racial/cultural heritage as multi-generational, not reducible to ethnic labels or even iconically "ethnic" faces; the paintings "Issei," "Nisei," and "Sansei" (Fig.s 2-4) and their accompanying text supply the kind of rich sociohistorical context mixed race portraiture typically elides. "Sansei" (Fig. 4) pictures Kina's parents together, as they appeared in an engagement photo, "the

patchwork pattern on the side,” Kina notes, “from my baby blanket that was made from recycled 1960s and 70s aloha shirts.”¹⁵⁰ Her parents

met at Seattle Pacific University at a college mixer. My father was determined to leave the life of poverty he had grown up in and after attending community college in Hawaii, he transferred to SPU and then went on to become a doctor. My parents became Christians together and enjoyed a mutual interest in cycling. When my mother went off to the Beirut College for Women in Beirut Lebanon in 1967, they corresponded via letters and fell in love. When she returned, they decided to get married.¹⁵¹

One recalls Beccah’s urgent desire in *Comfort Woman* for the romance of her origin story, the story of her parents’ interracial union—a narrative whose work must always be to explain (and effectively justify/romanticize) how two “unlikely” (read: racially/cultural disparate) partners came together. Kina’s painting and narrative conduct that same work, express that same desire—a possessive-individualistic funneling of history into identity-explanation. But of course “Sansei” (Fig. 4) is not a lone piece, and its linkage to other paintings and text in the series effectively denies the possibility of funneling as reduction. The marriage, and Kina herself, exist within a longer continuum. The origin story cannot erase what comes before.

What comes before: “Nisei” (Fig. 3) gives us the migration of Kina’s grandmother from Okinawa to Hawai’i. Not simply a portrait of Kina’s grandmother but of migration itself, it pictures the ship, the Kamakura Maru, that will carry Kina’s grandmother—the “one smiling” in the painting, Kina notes—from Tokyo to Hawai’i sometime between 1937 and 1939.¹⁵² But the prior painting in the series, “Issei” (Fig.

¹⁵⁰ “untitled narrative,” 3.

¹⁵¹ “untitled narrative,” 3.

¹⁵² “untitled narrative,” 2.

2), pictures Kina's family *already* in Hawai'i. Kina's "great grandma came to Hawaii from Okinawa via the picture bride system of arranged marriage probably around 1919 and she lived a very hard life of manual labor and in poverty"—depicted in Fig. 2 in a line of female sugar cane plantation workers.¹⁵³ Kina's grandmother's migration was, it turns out, a *re*-migration:

She grew up in camp #5 sugar cane plantation in Pi'ihonua on the Big Island of Hawaii just outside of Hilo...[She] was reportedly a bad worker and lazy and she accidentally poked her mother's eye out with a sugar cane stalk and was sent away to Okinawa. She didn't fit in there and came back to Hawaii.¹⁵⁴

Immigration history with a transnational hiccup, then. The family story spills beyond the normative bounds of properly progressional assimilation, and Kina's series takes care to reproduce that spillage, resisting any tidying impulse. That the series takes up immigration and generation so explicitly—the paintings are not simply chronologically arranged but titled, processionally, by generation, Issei, Nisei, Sansei, Yonsei, Gonsei—is itself an important reframing. Mixed race here fits into a Japanese/Okinawan immigrant system for understanding cultural heritage as lineage. This is not a possessive individualistic claiming of identity, then, but a far-reaching move to reframe how that system might be applied, and also at once how mixed race might be usefully contextualized.

And then the ghostly: appearing at the center of "Issei" (Fig. 2), the ghost of Kina's great-grandmother Makato Maehira inserts another layer of complexity into Kina's family history. Certainly the ghost here offers a tempting wealth of symbolic

¹⁵³ "untitled narrative," 1.

¹⁵⁴ "untitled narrative," 2.

possibility. Like *Water Ghosts*' Ming Wai as stand-in for all the Chinese wives rendered invisible by the Page Act and Chinese immigrant bachelor desire, this ghost is stand-in for all the Japanese and Okinawan picture brides turned plantation laborers erased from American and global history. But upon gifting the painting to family members in Okinawa, Kina learns that "Issei," based on a photograph, does not picture her great grandmother but her *great* great grandmother, also named Makato Maehira, who died not in Hawai'i but Okinawa during the 1945 Battle of Okinawa. The revelation means that the ghost of the picture, *not an immigrant*, carries a very different symbolic weight. This "new" ghost also disrupts the lineal order of the series: the Issei generation, Makato Maehira "#2", is not absent-as-ghost, as we might have initially thought; it is simply absent.

Kina's narrative never invokes the symbolic, though, and instead describes "Issei" (Fig. 2) as "[recalling] obake ghost stories."¹⁵⁵ Its ghost is thus a visual instantiation of ghostly knowledge, establishing ghostly knowledge as formative element of the family history. And the ghost recurs. When Kina's grandmother returns to Hawai'i, "She fell into a depression and tried to commit suicide (drowning in a river?)"¹⁵⁶—she is near-ghostly, and a perhaps-unwitting evocation of the drowned No-Name Woman and Ming Wai. Later in the narrative, Kina writes of the painting "Yonsei" (Fig. 5), an image of her wedding to husband Mitch Aronson; at the time of ceremony, "Grandma Kina kept it real, 'Why you wear white? You look like ghost!'" And finally daughter Midori, depicted in "Gonsei" (Fig. 6), is self-consciously

¹⁵⁵ "untitled narrative," 1.

¹⁵⁶ "untitled narrative," 4.

painted “in the same posture as Issei,” the Hello Kitty decal on her t-shirt blurred “in the same way there is a drip on Issei.”¹⁵⁷ The ghostly is not a singular apparition but a body of knowledge threaded throughout the series, contorting the family narrative, overlapping its racial explorations, but never ultimately resolving anything or being itself resolved, certainly not in the “culminating” image of Midori. This is second-wave ghostly to pair with second-wave mixed race.

In keeping with the sociohistorical myopia of possessive individualism, Fulbeck’s Hapa Project portraits contract the self-expression of identity to a space tightly bound both by page size and time. What he offered participants in the Hapa Project was an on-the-spot, flash-impressionistic opportunity to craft identity however they pleased on a seven by seven page.¹⁵⁸ By contrast Kina gives over ample time and space to narrativizing her portraits, eschewing speed and pithiness in favor of rich veins of detail, numerous tangents, and recursive loops. Perhaps the most important of gems in her narrative: the revelation of her mistaken identification of her great grandmother, part of a running theme in the series, the farcically fraught nature of self-construction and self-representation of identity in terms of cultural history. Late in the narrative, regarding her wedding-day appearance, as captured by “Yonsei” (Fig. 5), Kina writes

I have no idea why I did this but I went to the Midwest Buddhist Temple (even though I grew up Fundamentalist Christian) and I hired two women from the temple to dress me in traditional kimonos for the wedding and reception. So I walked down the aisle with a

¹⁵⁷ “untitled narrative,” 4.

¹⁵⁸ If foregrounded and thematized, the Hapa Project’s “on-the-spot” approach to cataloguing identity could perhaps indicate the situational nature of identity construction, but as is, it does not.

dagger tucked in my obi. I look mixed. Possibly more Asian than white looking but usually I get pegged as Latina or Hawaiian and never Japanese. In retrospect wearing a Kimono was me performing some sort of constructed identity. I thought I was being so authentic but Grandma Kina kept it real, “Why you wear white? You look like ghost!”¹⁵⁹

Like Ruth in *A Tale for the Time Being*, Kina has, in looking back, settled into a comfortable “not-very-Japanese-ness,” a rejection of essentialized identity that for Kina also extends to poking fun at her prior attempts at possessive individualism, including showing us her grandmother comically skewering Kina’s wedding-day performance of cultural/racial “authenticity.” The point is not simply to critique contextually myopic self-identification or even to call into question the larger project of cultural/racial genealogy via portraiture; it is also to model self-reflectiveness via narration. Kina shows us mixed-ghostly bildung-style critical consciousness, but not figured as end-point, not as final solution to the problem of race. What she models is opening up a willingness to see the processes of ghostly and racial representation as vexed, and dangerous, and without easy resolutions.

CONCLUSION

Elam and Kina et al. draw the dividing line between mixed race studies and Critical Mixed Race Studies with, among other things, critical wariness and a refusal of resolution. These tenets separate first- and second-wave representations of the ghostly as well, and we find the second-wave ghostly and second-wave mixedness in operation together in Kina’s, Ozeki’s, and Ryan’s works. We are reaching for progressive politics of both mixed race and the ghostly, and we draw closer, at least,

¹⁵⁹ “untitled narrative,” 4.

by outlining what they must avoid, at times as they overlap. Yes, much of this dangerous ground is in the crossing—systemic and representational, racist and would-be emancipatory—of the ghostly and mixed race. So how do the two delimit one another, and how, potentially, do they open one another? *Can* the two cross, be crossed, productively?

Historically they have crossed and do cross, undeniably. As each of the mixed-ghostly representations I have examined illustrate in varying degrees, knowledge always overlaps with, and at times constitutes, race. Ghostly knowledge has been rendered “Asian” or otherwise racially other; official knowledge is a pillar of whiteness. Since the 1965 Immigration Act opened America to new waves of immigration, ghostly knowledge has consistently been in circulation,¹⁶⁰ portaged into the country by Asian and other immigrants, policed and erased by various official means. Hence ghostly knowledge formed a backdrop, if an often invisible backdrop, for the rise of multiracial consciousness in the 1980s and 90s. That is, especially post-1965, ghostly knowledge was always an element of racial formation, and therefore mixed race discourse and mixed race identity formation—even if primarily an element by way of forcible erasure, by way of its positioning as signifying the unassimilated, the unassimilable, the primitive, the “pre-modern.” Like every other person in America, the mixed race figure must contend with the ghostly in terms of what counts as knowledge, a necessarily “racial project”¹⁶¹ within what is an always

¹⁶⁰ Of course it circulated before, carried by earlier waves of immigrants, as well as emerging from indigenous communities. See the dissertation’s Conclusion for a brief consideration of the ghostly in the longer view of American history.

¹⁶¹ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States from the 1960s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986).

already raced knowledge economy. And cultural productions throughout the 80s and 90s, and stretching well before and up to the present, have persistently made use of the mixed race figure as “bridge,” as means to (attempt to) resolve racial and cultural tensions, including epistemic tensions and the problem of ghostly knowledge.

Critical Mixed Race Studies would do well to incorporate this shadow history, this shadow genealogy, into its critical engagement with race and mixed race. Understanding race as not only “socially constructed” in a broad sense but situationally constructed, with careful attention to sociohistorical contexts—identity as *social act with public consequences*—requires attention to the backdrop of ghostly knowledge and compulsory rationalism. The same is true for Asian American literary studies and Asian American studies more broadly: in their engagements with what it has historically meant and what it currently means to be “Asian,” white, and “Asian American,” they have neglected almost entirely the dynamics of ghostly knowledge and compulsory rationalism. Critical considerations of and critical deployments of the ghostly, on the other hand, heretofore almost absolutely falling within the rationalist rubrics of spectral scholarship, must take into account the ways in which knowledge is always raced. And scholars across disciplines need to look to cultural productions that recognize the dangers of easy resolutions to race, mixed race, and the ghostly; that imagine the ghostly and mixed race, as they overlap and inform but never resolve one another; and that give us the vitally complicating and constitutive sociohistorical contexts out of which constructions of race and the ghostly arise.

To turn back, in conclusion, to *Memories* and *Comfort Woman*: for all its missteps and flawed formula, what the mixed-ghostly bildung does provide is productive

attention to the gaze whereby racialization takes place, and, as importantly, whereby we might reach for critical race, and epistemological, consciousness. *Comfort Woman* in particular models Beccah seeing herself looked at as she looked at, looking at as she was looked at, vis a vis the ghostly and mixed race, linked. The danger here is the location of this modeling within the deterministic formula of the bildung: positioning this dawning consciousness as resolution to the problems of race and the ghostly. But freed from the bildung frame? It echoes a process Elam highlights in Danzy Senna's "mixed race anti-bildungsroman" novel *Symptomatic*, a process of moving

from spectatorship to participation, from staring to social recognition, especially if it enables the stare to look back. This is perhaps one of the richest opportunities for a progressive politics of mixed race, for it not only refigures one of the most common conditions of mixed race—being stared at—but it also remakes the common tendency to try to make race intelligible into an occasion to make race into an intelligence about oneself and an other.¹⁶²

So here—and in *Comfort Woman*, and Kina's self-reflections, and *A Tale for the Time Being*'s model of readerly (dialogic) identification—is a kind of reckoning representational work can enact, and model for us. Rather than making race and the ghostly intelligible, it can make race and the ghostly into an intelligence about ourselves and others. This is reaching for a progressive politics of mixed race, a progressive politics of the ghostly.

¹⁶² *Souls of Mixed Folks*, 156-7.

Conclusion

Years after the publication of *Memories of My Ghost Brother*, Heinz Insu Fenkl would post on his personal website the short essay “A Few Notes on *Memories of My Ghost Brother*,” which opens with the following passage:

Everyone who has heard me read from *Memories of My Ghost Brother* eventually asks me if I believe in ghosts...I’ve had to answer it in many different contexts: in classes full of students who were curious about the Japanese Colonel and Gannan, among skeptically-minded friends and colleagues who want to insist that I am creating a literary trope, among anamist Koreans of my mother’s generation who find my ghosts commonplace. In trying to explain my ghosts in a common language that makes sense to everyone, I have found it useful to talk about haunting, a word and concept imbued with the idea of ghosts, but also associated with memory and emotion. We are “haunted by the ghosts of the past,” “touched by the ghost of a memory,” “haunted by conscience,” moved by “a haunting melody.” Over the years I’ve come to believe that literal and figurative hauntings can be the same: memories are ghosts of the past and ghosts are those memories embodied.¹⁶³

Just a few short years after the publication of *Water Ghosts*, Shawna Yang Ryan would pen a note of similar tenor, entitled “Leaving Whiteness,” about her own novel, including the following passage:

As captivated as I was, in a heart-thumping way, by things that go bump in the night in the works of Edgar Allen Poe, or Stephen King, it was the metaphorical possibilities of ghosts that intrigued me as a writer. My first challenge in constructing the novel was writing the “absence” of Chinese women, and showing how that absence loomed large—even defined life—in Locke...[but] Writing ghosts, especially ones based on Chinese myths, also presents challenges. My inner high school girl, who had devoured Stephen King’s oeuvre and plundered the paranormal section of the library, wanted to include a little fright amid my loftier

¹⁶³ Fenkl’s website is no longer active online, but “A Few Notes on *Memories of My Ghost Brother*” is still archived and accessible here: <http://www.oocities.org/gnoth7/haunting.html>

aspirations. But more significantly, I was very conscious of how I used ghosts in the context of Western stereotypes of “Oriental” superstitions and beliefs. I feared that constructing a ghost story would contribute further to the image of Chinese as mysterious or exotic, or “other” my characters to non-Asian American readers, even though the concept of water ghosts has a substantial cultural basis.¹⁶⁴

With a little unpacking, what each passage bespeaks is Foucault’s twinned notion of subjugated knowledge: the restoration of both erased histories and deprived popular knowledges. Instead of Foucault’s terminology of choice, Fenkl and Ryan write of “cultural tradition”—Korean animism, Chinese myth—framed as responsibility, representational responsibility, in Fenkl’s case literally embodied by a physical audience of Korean animists. Ryan’s concerns are less with satisfying the representational desires of a Chinese or Chinese American audience than with refusing the Orientalizing, racializing projections of a “non-Asian American” readership. She refuses the easy reduction of popular ghostly knowledge into “superstition,” which effectively amounts to refusing Fenkl’s “skeptically-minded friends and colleagues who want to insist that I am creating a literary trope”; as I have argued throughout the dissertation, rationalist skepticism that would render the ghost into only metaphorical possibility is *always raced and racializing*, if often tacitly and even unconsciously so. At the same time Fenkl and Ryan are both distinctly invested in the metaphorical, in using the ghostly to access hidden histories, hidden landscapes. Ultimately Fenkl imagines “figurative” work *in concert with* the “literal” ghostly, and Ryan conceives of any productive usage of the metaphorical ghostly *as tempered by* representational responsibility. Both variants of subjugated

¹⁶⁴ “Leaving Whiteness” is an unpublished essay, excerpted here by permission of the author.

knowledge can be restored. The re-privileging of popular knowledge and the resurrection of history/memory can go, and must go, hand in hand.

My project is equal parts reading the ghost as ghost and documenting and decrying the epistemic violences of spectral scholarship. But as I stipulate in the Introduction, my intention is not to invalidate the spectral scholarly reading strategy wholesale, nor to replace it; I mean instead to illustrate spectral scholarship's position within the larger rationalist project, to make visible its impulse to set popular ghostly knowledge as the far edge against which it defines itself as acceptable. Spectral scholarship need not define itself that way; metaphorical readings of the ghostly need not be antithetical to literal readings, and I certainly do not mean to advance a literal reading that is antithetical to metaphorical possibility. I would instead begin the work of refining spectral scholarship, identifying its heretofore hidden or ignored responsibilities and ramifications, all the while advancing another reading strategy, a literal strategy, as productive complement. Each approach must leave room for the other, and signal the other as recto to its verso, so as not to implicitly perpetuate the predominant illusion of mutual exclusivity. Because ultimately we need both approaches, conjoined.¹⁶⁵

Foucault calls this conjoining a genealogy. "In contrast to the various projects which aim to inscribe knowledges in the hierarchical order of power associated with science," he writes,

a genealogy should be seen as a kind of attempt to emancipate historical knowledges from that subjection, to render them, that is, capable of opposition and

¹⁶⁵ If not necessarily mutually constitutive, let alone the "same," as Fenkl frames them.

of struggle against the coercion of a theoretical, unitary, formal and scientific discourse. It is based on a reactivation of local knowledges—of minor knowledges, as Deleuze might call them—in opposition to the scientific hierarchisation of knowledges and the effects intrinsic to their power: this, then, is the project of these disordered and fragmentary genealogies. If we were to characterize it in two terms, the ‘archaeology’ would be the appropriate methodology of this analysis of local discursivities, and ‘genealogy’ would be the tactics whereby, on the basis of the descriptions of these local discursivities, the subjected knowledges which were thus released would be brought into play” (85).

Fenkl’s and Ryan’s works, along with the various other Asian American literary works I have addressed in the course of the dissertation, constitute the first literary glimmerings of such a Foucault-ian genealogy. *Memories* “emancipates historical knowledges” of American imperialism abroad, *Water Ghosts* of legal exclusion and racialization at home. Both “reactivate local knowledges” in the form of ghosts and ghostly popular knowledges; both recognize the responsibilities inherent to representational work, and the opportunities the ghostly offers to restore subjugated knowledges of both varieties, to draw our attention to their subjugation and the mechanics of rationalist dominion.

Scholarship across disciplines must follow suit, and my dissertation is an opening contribution to such a ghostly genealogy. Like the precedents I have identified across Asian American literature, scholarly work engaging or applying the ghostly must do so with a fuller understanding of the rationalist investments and consequences of its framings. As we parse and apply the metaphorical ghostly, we must always take care not to foreclose the ghost as ghost as productive possibility, and we must responsibly pursue that literal avenue of reading especially where it grows out of and impinges upon communities of ghostly knowing. We must begin the necessary work of seeing these shadow communities and their shadow histories, bearing witness to the

violences they suffer *as inextricably coded into proper American subject-hood*; bearing witness to how these ghostly knowers work within and beyond institutional structures; bearing witness to what ghostly knowing opens up and builds for them. Always, we must remember, ghostly and rationalist knowledges are raced and gendered, racializing and gendering—thus our participation in their analysis, their circulation by way of analysis, has real public stakes, and taps into existing channels and hierarchies of power.

Our choices to envelop the ghostly in historical and scholarly contexts must be accompanied by, counterbalanced by, a responsibility to popular knowledge contexts as well. Tina Chen's reading of *Comfort Woman* in *Double Agency* draws extensively upon accounts of Korean shamanism, accountings in some cases by actual Korean shamans; Ryan's *Water Ghosts* draws heavily from Chinese myth and accounts of Chinese death and burial practices, a debt she broadcasts in an end-note. These are important models for a ghostly genealogy. But as I mention in the Introduction, religious studies has paid relatively little attention to date to the ghostly in Asian American communities, whether spiritual practices or systems of belief, so if our work is to draw upon what religious studies materials do exist—many of them, as with Chen's and Ryan's materials, from Asian religious studies rather than Asian American religious studies—it must also be to actively press for new scholarship on this largely ignored dimension of Asian American history and experience.

Of course these are not simply responsibilities; they are also opportunities to productively and responsibly refigure academic practice, opportunities to reach for a progressive politics of the ghostly. A ghostly genealogy has a vast scope of

consequence, at once drawing from and offering to transform Asian American studies, religious studies, and scholarly practice and pedagogy across disciplines by way of a refined spectral scholarly lens. As Foucault writes, a genealogy becomes possible only through a single condition: “the tyranny of globalising discourses with their hierarchy and all their privileges of a theoretical *avant-garde* [is] eliminated.”¹⁶⁶ This is another recto and verso, challenge and promise together.

THE AMERICAN GHOST STORY

In “The ‘Uncanny,’” his famous foray into the ghostly, Freud writes of the familiar returning, suddenly and terrifyingly unfamiliar and familiar at once. We experience the uncanny, he argues, specifically when “infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed.”¹⁶⁷ *Primitive belief, premodern superstition*: Freud like Avery Gordon a century and a half later espouses an ethnocentric, specifically a Western-centric, judgment by privileging rationalist over non-rationalist knowledge along a civilizational timeline of progress. Non-rational equals primitive; rational equals modern. My project begins in 1965, and in Chapter One I settle the rise of spectral scholarship in the larger swell of 1970s-1990s multiculturalism, itself in part a response to the mass-influx of immigrants to America following the Hart-Celler Act. Freud’s formulation here, published in 1919, reminds

¹⁶⁶ *Power/Knowledge*, 82.

¹⁶⁷ Freud, “The Uncanny,” *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works* (Ed. and trans. James Strachey. London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74, 250).

of the longer view. The ghostly is not a new discourse any more than ghosts are a new phenomenon. Freud's mention of "surmounting" in particular brings back into view what Gordon hides, the power relations and violence inherent to their shared judgment, a long history of imperial triumph, "modern" Western thought working to dominate "primitive" non-Western belief or superstition. Of course Freud's framing also helpfully inserts his central trope of repression, and the fear and shame always accompanying it: if we have triumphantly surmounted, we were once primitive too; focus on the former is always a repression of—and at once inescapably a reminder of—the latter.

I mean to invoke in particular an American past in which ghosts and the ghostly have figured prominently.¹⁶⁸ There is no untethering current spectral scholarship or the shadow history of Asian America from America's longer history of grappling with, and "surmounting," ghosts—including but not limited to Freud and the ascendance of Freudian thought and psychoanalysis as science, theory, and practice.¹⁶⁹ In 1898, Henry James writes "Turn of the Screw," perhaps the most famous of American literary ghost stories; in 1905 he publishes *The American Scene*, a travelogue of musings on, among other subjects, immigration, with at one point a

¹⁶⁸ Though of course we might reach back to a European past, to the intervention of the Enlightenment and its great marshalling and focusing of rationalist energies, back even, say, to the ghosts of *Hamlet*, which Freud references briefly in "The Uncanny."

¹⁶⁹ In fact numerous works of Asian American literature set the ghostly directly in antagonistic relationship with psychoanalysis, both as Science and practice. See for instance *Monkey Bridge* and *The Hundred Secret Senses* as representative examples. For analysis of the relationship between the rise of Freudian thought and (the decline of) the American ghost story tradition, see Howard Kerr, John W. Crowley, and Charles L. Crow, Introduction, *The Haunted Dusk: American Supernatural Fiction, 1820-1920* (Eds. Howard Kerr, John W. Crowley, and Charles L. Crow, Athens: The U of Georgia P, 1983, 1-10).

reference to arriving immigrants as “spectral bodies.” Meanwhile, in this same precise stretch of American history, Sui Sin Far is writing fictive and journalistic accounts of Chinese immigrant communities, including mention of their spiritual practices.¹⁷⁰ Earlier we have Hawthorne’s ghost stories, and Poe and the Gothic tradition.¹⁷¹ We have innumerable regional ghost traditions.¹⁷² We have the paranormal traditions Ryan references, stretching from early American occultism and spiritualism¹⁷³ to present-day ghost tours, horror flicks, and Stephen King. And we have ghostly popular knowledges emerging from numerous immigrant and “minority” communities: Latino, Native American and Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian, African American and African, to name but a few.

We might bring all of these rich contexts to bear as part of a full ghostly genealogy and, at once, see the refigured ghostly as importantly re-illuminating each of these contexts, stretching across a panoramic sweep of American space and history.

THE TRANSNATIONAL GHOSTLY, THE POCO GHOSTLY

¹⁷⁰ Far, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings* (Eds. Amy Ling and Annette White-Parks. Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1995).

¹⁷¹ Howard Kerr writes of the ghostly work of Henry James, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Edgar Allen Poe in conversation: Kerr, “James’s Last Early Supernatural Tales: Hawthorne Demagnetized, Poe Depoetized,” *The Haunted Dusk: American Supernatural Fiction, 1820-1920* (Eds. Howard Kerr, John W. Crowley, and Charles L. Crow. Athens: The U of Georgia P, 1983, 132-148).

¹⁷² See for instance Judith Richardson, *Possessions: The History and Uses of Haunting in the Hudson Valley* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2005).

¹⁷³ For a survey of these traditions, see the Introduction to *Spectral America* (Ed. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, Madison: The U of Wisconsin P, 2004, 3-17) and Howard Kerr, *Mediums, and Spirit-Rappers, and Roaring Radicals: Spiritualism in American Literature, 1850-1900* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1972).

She carries ghost stories like a sheaf of papers under her arm. Brave Orchid carries the stories of the Sitting Ghost and the No-Name Woman to California. Po Pei-become-Poppy carries the story of the River Ghost to Locke, Akiko the stories of Saja the Death Messenger and Induk the Birth Grandmother to Hawai'i, Insu the stories of the Japanese Colonel and Gannan to the Westward Land. This is ghostly knowledge as parcel of immigration.

But Asian American literature also pictures Asian Americans traveling “back” to ancestral lands, with the ghostly as part of the drama of “return,” the stuff of transnational traffic. To name but a few examples: Olivia of *The Hundred Secret Senses* traveling to China; Anil of Michael Ondaatje’s *Anil’s Ghost* returning to Sri Lanka; Piya of Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* traveling to India; Nao returning to Japan, and Ruth “traveling back” to Japan by way of Nao’s narrative, in *A Tale for the Time Being*. In each of these works, encounters with the ghostly filter through a distinctly Asian American consciousness, through a character always already awake to the dramas of immigration and assimilation. Various Asian characters too—for instance Palipana and Sarath of *Anil’s Ghost*, Nirmal and Kanai Dutt of *The Hungry Tide*, Jiko of *A Tale for the Time Being*—are cognizant of epistemic tensions. Often they are *more* cognizant than their Asian American counterparts, but always they play ancillary, guiding, mostly static roles. We are asked to identify instead with Asian American characters moving across national boundaries, positioned between knowledge systems, in the process of coming to greater consciousness of the ghostly and compulsory rationalism. This is the Asian American ghostly proffered as globally, dynamically transgressive.

In Chapter One I examine the ghostly in national and transnational space, though predominantly as feature of immigrant arrival, as opposed to departure or circulation. But of course the ghostly threads through each of these phases and spaces of global migration. It has much to tell us about “globalization” in a variety of senses: the encroachment of modernity, the mechanisms and legacies of imperialism, the Internet Age and information technologies, the contemporary traffic of Asians and Asian Americans between Asia and the Americas. The shadow history of the Asian American ghostly reveals itself as one of Asian global migration and American imperialism as well. If the ghostly imbues what Homi Bhabha has punned the “‘rationalizations’ of modernity”¹⁷⁴ with another valence of meaning, one thinks too of Ashis Nandy’s call for the shaman as postcolonial “symbol of resistance to the dominant politics of knowledge”¹⁷⁵—only the shaman need not be *only* symbolic. Popular ghostly knowledge stands symbolically *and* literally as refusal of imperial power. A ghostly genealogy, fundamentally transnational and postcolonial in nature, at once enriches and must draw upon transnational studies and postcolonial studies frameworks.

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¹⁷⁴ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 2nd edition, 2004, 246).

¹⁷⁵ Nandy, “Shamans, Savages and the Wilderness: On the Audibility of Dissent and the Future of Civilizations,” *Alternatives* (XIV(1989): 263-277). Tina Chen never references Nandy directly in her *Double Agency* but makes a similar call for the work of the shaman as useful analog for our work as scholars.

We talk, these years I write and research, at the dinner table. She speaks freely about ghosts and memory, America and Viet Nam, my uncle, a healer, a “shaman,” his children, my cousins, dismissive. The dissertation. “It was really there”—she says not as compulsory qualification but about compulsory rationalism. The leg walked back and forth. Telling people only what they are ready to hear—one of my uncle’s guiding philosophies. What skepticism looks like. Here in this space we’ve opened, my writing, my project. My father listening, interjecting sometimes, disagreeing, sometimes told to be quiet. Her “sickness,” the rimpoche. My uncles and their public-private circuits of ghostly knowing in Little Saigon, Orange County, stretching to San Jose, stretching to Saigon, stretching to China. Traveling to study, traveling to teach. Ghosts of the War, ghosts of Katrina. The severed leg walked back and forth across the room. The legion War dead speaking to us. Her ghostly knowing, our storytelling, my writing. The ghost is a lost history. The ghost is a product of history. The ghost is always outside history. A genealogy. And, not but—and: the ghost simply is.

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