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2013

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Untelling the Tales of Empire: Intimate Epistemologies of the Korean War

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

in

Literature

by

Joo Ok Kim

Committee in charge:

Professor Shelley Streeby, Chair
Professor Lisa Lowe, Co-Chair
Professor Dennis Childs
Professor Jin-kyung Lee
Professor Curtis Marez

2013

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Co-Chair

Co-Chair

University of California, San Diego

2013

DEDICATION

For my 할머니, 정 명단, whose life spans decades and continents,

For 김 용민, a revolutionary of the heart and spirit,

and

For my father and my mother.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Signature Page.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Figures.....	vi
Acknowledgments	vii
Vita.....	xi
Abstract of the dissertation.....	xii
Chapter One	
Introduction.....	1
Chapter Two	
“Although complete knowledge of them will never be mine”: Contesting Histories of the Korean War.....	22
Chapter Three	
“It’s a brown place Korea is”: the Asian-Latino Pacific and the Korean War.....	67
Chapter Four	
“Americans, your own flesh and blood”: Kinships of the Korean War.....	122
Chapter Five	
Sleuth Cities: East L.A., Seoul, and Military Mysteries in Martin Limón’s <i>Slicky Boys</i> and <i>The Wandering Ghost</i>	166
Epilogue	
“Korea. You can’t imagine it because you weren’t there”.....	213
Bibliography.....	221

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Map in Rolando Hinojosa’s <i>Estampas del valle y otras obras</i>	93
Figure 2: René Castro’s illustration accompanying Rolando Hinojosa’s poem “Friendly Fire” in <i>Korean Love Songs</i>	109
Figure 3: Reprint of letter from the War Orphan Sponsorship Program in <i>The New Era</i>	122
Figure 4: Reprint of Bok Nam Om’s profile in <i>The New Era</i>	139
Figure 5: Letter from Y.H. Kim addressed to Sgt. Cleveran.....	198

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation is a manifestation of the encouragement and love of so many people. I am grateful to my committee for their guidance, grace, and deep intellect. I thank Shelley Streeby for her brilliant work and unwavering support, and for showing all of us how we can be compassionate teachers and critical scholars. Her generosity extends beyond the boundaries of these pages, and continues to sustain my work. I thank Lisa Lowe for her illuminating intellectual vision and depth of engagement—her caring words stay with me, reflecting the strength of her kindness. Dennis Childs has shaped my academic and activist engagements with profound meaning, and always inspires me. Thank you for your support, from the very beginning. Jin-kyung Lee’s commitment and faith in my project was critical throughout this process. Thank you for all of your bighearted encouragement. Curtis Marez revitalized how I think about culture, and graciously extended his time and fierce energy. Thank you for modeling for us how it’s done, and always with such style.

The support of other members of the intellectual community was crucial in my time at UCSD, and I would like to thank them here: Rosemary George, Jorge Mariscal, Luis Martin-Cabrera, Rosaura Sánchez, Meg Wesling, Lisa Yoneyama, Patrick Anderson, and Danny Widener all generously shared their time and knowledge. Dawn Blessman, Thom Hill, Kristin Carnohan, Patrick Mallon, Sue Hawkinson, and Pam Wright deserve special thanks for keeping me employed and making sure I didn’t slip away. Funding support from various organizations ensured the time I needed to complete my dissertation: a graduate student fellowship from the Center for Global California Studies at UCSD got things moving; dissertation fellowships from UCSD’s Literature department

and the Ford Foundation kept things going. Without this support, it would have taken much longer to complete my dissertation.

The insightful questions and comments from colleagues at the Association of Asian American Studies annual meeting and the Conference of Ford Fellows, where I presented early versions of this work, were critical for clarifying my project. I thank Tim Rives and Jake Erslund at the National Archives, and Paul and Gregory Edwards at the Center for the Study of the Korean War for permission to use archival materials. Stephen Miller and José Pablo Villalobos at Texas A&M University and Ashley Hess at Arte Público Press very kindly provided access to an important new collection on Rolando Hinojosa's work. I can only be where I am because of the support of those at the University of Kansas and the University of Illinois-Chicago. Giselle Anatol and Marta Caminero-Santangelo were amazing mentors. The Dean's Scholars Program, and in particular Karen Ohnesorge, provided important insights about graduate school, insights I would not have had access to as a working-class undergraduate student. Helen Jun, Madhu Dubey, and Mark Chiang were in many ways my first teachers, and I thank them for their encouragement and wonderful care.

The following names all name the measure and strength of friendship. Angie Chau was the first person I met in San Diego, and to this day remains one of the best. Kimberly Chung continues to brighten my days, and makes sure there's laughter in my life. Every time I feel discouraged about the turns in the world, I remember that such a person as Kyung Hee Ha exists, and I feel true hope. Amanda Solomon is a fabulous friend, mentor and writing partner. And to Gabriela Cázares, who always reminds me of why we do what we do, in the most wonderful ways, *abrazos*. How lonely this journey

would have been without the smart, loving, and exhilarating presence of Tania Jabour, Ben Balthaser, Yumi Pak, John Rieder, Jason Farr, Jodi Eisenberg, Violeta Sánchez, Caralyn Bialo, Juliana Choi, Zeynep Bulut, Esin Duzel, Joyce Kim, Morelia Rivas, Adam Lewis, Josen Diaz, Chien-ting Lin, Anita Huizar Hernandez, Megan Turner, Niall Twohig, Rosi Escamilla, Ash Kini, Lauren Heintz, Laura Reizman, Thea Quiray Tagle, Davorn Sisavath, Ma Vang, Lisa Ho, Nick Mitchell, Felipe Quetzalcoatl Quintanilla, Maurice Rafael Magaña, Susy Chavez, Aneeka Henderson, and so many others. The brilliant Chris Perreira deserves more recognition than I can give here for his thoughtful engagement with my work, and for his kind, invigorating love. The life we've built together bursts with sweetness.

Outside of graduate school, family and friends made sure I inhabited worlds replete with the urgency of realness. My cousins Susie, Diana, Anne, Jenny, Joe, Unji, oppa, and Sue sure do know how to work and play like nobody's business, and in that we're more alike than not. And what would I do without the witty, wonderful John Tran? I still marvel at the fact that time bends and reshapes itself when we're together, through all those nights and days of cards, movies, feasting, and after the youngest ones finally caught up, sharing drinks. A special thanks to my family in Kansas, including my paternal grandfather, my aunt and uncle, and Grandmaster Lee. I must also thank my family in Korea, China, Chile, Venezuela, and all throughout the United States—Georgia, Illinois, California. I think often of the forces that compel such movements. As I write this, my maternal grandmother is returning to South America. I wish her a good journey, and I hope we can laugh together again soon.

This last is for my parents, who have been my truest champions. My father, 김광윤, shaped this project before it ever took solid dimensions. He taught me early on to value all forms of labor, to consider the hands and tendons, the time and care that produce our world. I asked him once, when I was young, a question wrung through cold war logics. He responded very simply that people share space, and to live together people must help one another. I hold his words close. My mother, 남일조, spirited me away to Korea for long stretches of time throughout my childhood, which resulted in big gaps in my formal education but in its place gave me another: the education of precipitous mountains, of red earth, of learning how to live when the only running water is the nearby creek. I would not trade this education for another; I never cared for dividing fractions anyway. They both live lives of fierce integrity and I love them so. I always pride of you too.

Chapter 5, in part, has been submitted for publication in the *Journal of Asian American Studies*.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Untelling the Tales of Empire: Intimate Epistemologies of the Korean War

by

Joo Ok Kim

Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

University of California, San Diego, 2013

Professor Shelley Streeby, Co-Chair
Professor Lisa Lowe, Co-Chair

“Untelling the Tales of Empire” analyzes literature and excavates alternative archives in order to situate the Korean War as a critical moment in U.S. cultural history and U.S. imperial ventures in Asia. In response to the narrative of the U.S. involvement in the Korean War as a benevolent intervention against communism, my dissertation offers a more complex reading of the Korean War, developed through critical analyses of scholarship and institutional narratives, and through close readings of the literature, visual culture and archival memories produced to commemorate, trouble, and reconsider the transnational flows that defined the war’s staging and its geopolitical legacy both within and outside the Korean peninsula. While the dominant historical archive

remembers the Korean War as a liberating intervention, I examine cultural texts and uncovered archival materials in order to open up histories of the Korean War beyond an imperial calculus of rescue and salvation.

In my chapters, I trace the history of area studies funding during the Korean War era and analyze Susan Choi's *The Foreign Student* against the legacy of dominant knowledge production about the war. I analyze narratives about the ambivalent and often critical experiences of Chicano soldiers in the Korean War in works by Rolando Hinojosa and Luis Valdez. I examine the virtual adoption of a Korean boy by inmates of United States Penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas, and in my final chapter I investigate the militarized connections between Korea and East L.A. in Martin Limón's novels. I focus on these trans-Pacific memories in order to argue that alternate histories of the Korean War clarify the stakes of the imperial relationship between Korea and the United States. The Korean War is continually remembered in dominant history as one that prevented the spread of communism and created a democratic nation-state that now serves as a critical site for monitoring the perilous North Korean state. On the other hand, I read literature and excavate archives that illuminate alternate cultural histories that remember things otherwise.

Chapter One Introduction

How can we *tell* the difference between one story and another's? It will all hinge, as we shall see, on that double modality of telling—to recount and to distinguish.
– Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*

Characterized in U.S. historiography as “the forgotten war,” the Korean War will be remembered by some this year because of the sixtieth anniversary of the Armistice Agreement. The Armistice Agreement, signed by representatives for the North Korean and Chinese armies, and the United Nations military command, marks the anniversary of an uneasy truce and ongoing war. North Korea, routinely invoked in mainstream U.S. and British news media as “irrational,” “mad, sad, and bad,” and as a nation “spewing fresh threats,” continues to function in the dominant global imaginary as a dangerous, unjustifiably militarized communist enemy that must be contained.¹ That the North Korean state’s genealogy extends from Japanese colonialism, Korea’s liberation from colonialism, and the U.S. military’s occupation and hostile takeover of a Korean civil war, is rarely acknowledged as a prehistory in dominant memory. And so the U.S. role in containing, regulating, and enacting punitive sanctions on North Korea is continually reanimated as a rational, necessary, and natural role for the global military power. The discursive dexterity of these normalized characterizations, of an irrational, capricious North Korea and a “sober, calm, cool, collected” United States, belies the imbricated

¹ “Is North Korea’s Warmongering Rhetoric-As-Usual Or Something To Worry About?”, NPR interview with Victor Cha of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 29, 2013; “Inside North Korea: ‘It’s a mad, sad and bad place,’” interview with BBC investigative journalist John Sweeney, April 2, 2013; “North Korea analyst: ‘One of the most dangerous moments,’” by Jung-yoon Choi of *Los Angeles Times*, April 2, 2013. In his interview, Sweeney is at one point compelled to declare “it’s human beings there,” presumably exercising his white, British, masculine authority to elevate North Koreans into humanity.

process that positions each nation-state in opposition to the other.² I begin with this example to suggest that rather than directing focus to the Korean War as a significant juncture for contemporary skirmishes for power in the Asia Pacific, dominant discourse instead further mystifies the war and renders it a temporal anomaly, still “technically at war” but forgotten, unknowable.³

As a proxy war in the Cold War, the Korean War was one means through which the United States solidified global power. U.S. national memory attempts to contain the multiple origins and narratives emerging from the Korean War, constructed in U.S. history as “the forgotten war,” or as a war that liberated South Korea from a communist threat. In this dissertation, I analyze literature and excavate alternative archives in order to situate the Korean War as a critical moment in U.S. cultural history and U.S. imperial ventures in Asia. In response to the common narrative of the U.S. involvement in the Korean War as a benevolent intervention against communism, my dissertation offers a more complex reading of the Korean War, developed through critical analyses of scholarship and institutional narratives, and through close readings of the literature, visual culture and archival memories produced to commemorate, trouble, and reconsider the transnational flows that defined the war’s staging and its geopolitical legacy both within and outside the Korean peninsula. While the dominant historical archive remembers the Korean War as a liberating intervention, I focus on narratives about the ambivalent and often critical experiences of Chicano soldiers during the Korean War; the virtual adoption of a Korean boy by inmates of United States Penitentiary (USP) at

² “Little: North Koreans ‘Need to Dial the Temperature Down,’” by Jim Garamone of the American Forces Press Service, March 29, 2013.

³ “White House plays down threat of imminent North Korea attack,” by Ed Pilkington and Justin McCurry of *The Guardian*, April 1, 2013.

Leavenworth, Kansas; and the militarized connections between Korea and East L.A. in order to open up histories of the Korean War beyond an imperial calculus of rescue and salvation.

I focus on these trans-Pacific memories in order to argue that alternate histories of the Korean War illuminate the stakes of the imperial relationship between Korea and the United States. The U.S. adoption of children from Korea during and after the war functions as one avenue for the ongoing payment of the ostensible debt of liberation. Within the unexamined logic of the U.S. liberation of Korea, the violence against military sex workers serving the U.S. military is morally justified and continues through the ongoing subordinated relationship of South Korea to the United States. The long trajectory of racial violence against Chicana/os and other people of color in the United States continues to reverberate today in the disproportionate targeting of racialized minorities and working-class people for the U.S. military. Throughout the dissertation, I build on Marita Sturken's theory that "cultural memory is a central aspect of how American culture functions and how the nation is defined...[and that the] 'culture of amnesia' actually involves the generation of memory in new forms, a process often misinterpreted as forgetting" (2). In the case of the Korean War, this so-called "forgotten war" within U.S. history is increasingly remembered in dominant history as one that prevented the spread of communism and created a democratic nation-state that now serves as a critical site for monitoring the perilous North Korean state. On the other hand, I read literature and excavate archives that illuminate alternate cultural histories that remember things otherwise.

My methodology consists of an interdisciplinary cultural studies approach that builds on scholarship in transnational American studies, feminist studies, and comparative race and ethnic studies to argue for the significance of revisiting “the forgotten war” through untold stories that challenge the myths of benevolent U.S. intervention. My dissertation is inspired by recent feminist scholarship in Korean diaspora studies, including work by Jin-kyung Lee, Jodi Kim, and Grace Cho. It offers a critical study, in five chapters, that intervenes in U.S. nationalist accounts of the Korean War and its aftermath by examining the multiple erasures within the Korean War, masculinist and nationalistic kinship formations, and gendered violence in camp towns in Korea. Finally, my dissertation’s focus on the representation of Chicano soldiers’ experiences during the Korean War bridges the fields of Asian American and Chicana/o Studies, and builds a foundation for studies of the literary Asian-Latino Pacific.

The Forgotten War, the June 25 Incident, the Fatherland Liberation War

The Korean War is conventionally understood in dominant U.S. history as a war that saved South Korea from the perils of communism. This origin story locates the beginning of the war in the North Korean attack on South Korea on the hot day of June 25, 1950. This origin story simultaneously reifies and erases the U.S. Army Military Government in Korea, from 1945 to 1948—reifies, because the United States capitalized on the symbolic value of “liberating” Korea from Japanese colonialism in 1945, and erases, because of the military government’s status as yet another occupying force in the peninsula, despite the putative U.S. state aversion to regarding itself as an imperial power. This origin story represses the long history of anti-colonial resistance against Japan,

evacuates the complex struggles by the Korean people to determine their own governance, underplays the competition between the Soviet Union and the United States on the global stage, and selectively memorializes June 25, 1950 as the day North Korea attacked. This selective, temporal memorialization, rather like an image, excludes anything exceeding its frame—other dates, other times, other possibilities for explaining who, when.⁴

Despite this narrative of salvation, however, the Korean War is continually rendered in U.S. history as “the forgotten war.” Sandwiched between World War II (known to some as the Asia Pacific War) and the Vietnam War (known to some as the American War in Vietnam), the Korean War presents an odd absence in dominant U.S. historiography. Cultural texts, however, register the Korean War, often in fleeting references in popular culture and subterranean currents in literary works. Cultural memory is therefore an important analytic in this project, a critical terrain on which knowledge production about the Korean War is created, controlled, and contested. In *Tangled Memories*, Sturken defines cultural memory, a discursive terrain which is as contested as official, linear, dominant history, as “a field of cultural negotiation through which different stories vie for a place in history” (1). Within this intensely contested site of struggle, the production of the Korean War as a benevolent intervention is shaped in such a way that contains the stories that remember otherwise. The narrative of the Korean War as a war of salvation attempts to enervate the possibilities of resistance to Cold War ideologies in the present and in the past, and collapses complexities rather than

⁴ “For every image memory produced, something is forgotten... They offer incomplete but often compelling versions of the past that often eclipse more in-depth historical texts” (Sturken 20).

creating space for what Lisa Yoneyama articulates in *Hiroshima Traces* as “self-critically unsettling” memories (5).

In addition to cultural memory, I understand history as another terrain that creates and mediates the tensions of conflicting ideologies. Walter Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History” generates ways of thinking about history which deviate from its dominant framework as a totalizing linearity, and fiercely holds to class struggle, “a fight for the crude and material things without which no refined and spiritual things could exist” (254). Benjamin urges the animation of “retroactive force and...constantly call[ing] in question every victory, past and present, of the rulers” (255). Because the past is a dynamic and constructible entity that enables “rulers” to reconfigure history, even unto disrupting the dead, Benjamin insists on the historical materialist’s “retroactive force.” Such a force takes on variant forms, lingers in thresholds and margins, and at times radicalizes quiet, standard methods and canons. In his discussion of W.E.B. Du Bois’s “history subjected to theory” in *Black Reconstruction in America*, Cedric Robinson states that “[DuBois’s] radical, and radically different interpretation of the [civil] war and its aftermath would conform formally to the methodological canons of historiography so that he might subvert the substance of that tradition” (195, 196).⁵ In Chapter 2 I seek to “subvert the substance” of another historiography, of a Korean civil war embedded into the memory of the U.S. civil war through literature, in Susan Choi’s novel *The Foreign Student* (1999).

⁵ For Robinson, Du Bois’s work “possessed a theory of history—a theory based on a foundation of economic analysis and class struggle. It was not simply a historical work, but history subjected to theory. The emphasis was on the relations of things” (195).

In “The Propaganda of History,” Du Bois articulates a critical problem of dominant history that carries over to and becomes repositioned in the representation of the Korean War—in particular, the problem of the naturalization of events and the inevitabilities of the outcomes. He writes: “[o]ur histories tend to discuss American slavery so impartially, that in the end nobody seems to have done wrong and everybody was right. Slavery appears to have been thrust upon unwilling helpless America, while the South was blameless in becoming its center” (714). In *The Foreign Student*, protagonist Chang attempts to situate the Korean War within the history of the U.S. civil war, by “groundlessly compar[ing] the [38th] parallel to the Mason-Dixon line” (Choi 51). Yet as I demonstrate in the next chapter, such a comparison functions to contest the dominant history of the Korean War as provoked by a communist invasion from the north, and resituates it as a civil war. Chang illustrates not only a reworking of the Korean War into the histories and racialized legacies of the U.S. civil war, but also juxtaposes two wars stimulated by capitalist expansion and predicated on ideologies of delivering liberation. The novel thus theorizes a method of critiquing “unwilling helpless America,” holding the nation-state accountable to its white supremacist histories, and carving out space for a war that at times uneasily wears the names of “the forgotten war,” the “June 25 Incident,” and the “Fatherland Liberation War” (Du Bois 714).

In this introduction, I suggest it is important to ask how the Korean War is remembered, by which names. The passive construction of “the forgotten war” removes the agent of memory from the equation, leaving in its wake the idea that there remain only the inculpable inheritors of an unknowable history. In this amnesiac schematic of the Korean War, the question of who is engaged in the act of forgetting remains unasked.

As Jodi Kim states in *Ends of Empire*, “[w]hile the Korean War (1950-1953) has been dubbed the ‘Forgotten War’ or ‘Unknown War’ by Americans, it remains for Koreans and the global Korean diaspora it engendered a defining moment of family and national history” (143). Like Sturken and Yoneyama, Jodi Kim suggests that “every willful forgetting leaves its symptoms and traces, and to label an event a ‘Forgotten War’ paradoxically inaugurates an attempt to retrieve that which has been forgotten” (145). Rather than excavating the “true” memory of the war, and enclosing it within an authoritative historical record, I look to dominant records and histories, archives and archival materials, and literary and cultural productions in order to disturb the ease with which the Korean War is continually rendered as “forgotten” in U.S. history.

In South Korea, the Korean War has been called the “June 25 Incident” (육이오 사변), although recent shifts name it 한국 전쟁, or “Korean War.” Dong-Choon Kim, in *The Unending Korean War: A Social History*, states that centering June 25 “ignores the big picture and many important facts about the war by highlighting only one aspect, its outbreak” (3).⁶ On the other hand, to remember a war exclusively by its putative date of origin bears important political weight, in particular because it directs attention to the fact that the war is yet ongoing, *unended* by the involved parties. By the 1990s in South Korea, “the official Korean War narrative...had by then become the truth, an unshakable ‘political myth.’ Korea’s unique political environment of national division provided a

⁶ While necessarily selective, the practice of naming the war the “6.25 war” also gives it a place in Korean and Korean diaspora history: “In Korean political history, integer chains mark significant uprisings, demonstrations, and political turns; for example, the March First Demonstration (1919) against Japanese colonial rule is known as *Sam-il undong* (3-1 movement), while the Student Revolution of April 19, 1960, is called *Sa-il-gu* (4-1-9)” (Abelmann and Lie, ix). 4.29 marks the date four officers were acquitted of brutally assaulting Rodney King in 1992, and 5.18 commemorates the beginning of the Kwangju Uprising against U.S.-backed military dictatorship in 1980.

firm foundation on which the former Japanese collaborators and subsequent conservatives framed the historical memory of the Korean War. From 1953 onward a type of McCarthyism swept across South Korea in a frantic fashion, causing collective amnesia over the civilian mass killings committed by the ROK and U.S. troops” (Dong-Choon Kim, “The Long Road Toward Truth and Reconciliation” 540). Dong-Choon Kim suggests that the shift in using the “Korean War” instead is also ill-fitting, since “Koreans are not entirely comfortable with this name because it makes the conflict sound like someone else’s war,” strangely removing Koreans from the war through distancing language (3). I suggest that such discomfort with naming the war is also significant for critical studies of the war, in that the inability to give the war a concrete name keeps the discourse open to critique, rather than settling it into its otherwise “forgotten” state, as so often happens in U.S. history.

On the other hand, The North Korean Academy of Sciences History Research Center defines the “Fatherland Liberation War” (조국해방전쟁) as ““carried on by the Korean people...at the same time a national liberation war and a struggle of the entire people to eradicate reactionary forces at home, to unify the fatherland under the flag of the DPRK, and to achieve democratic revolution nationwide”” (quoted in Dong-Choon Kim, *Unending* 95). While the gendered underpinnings of “Fatherland” and the totalizing nationalism in the statement must be troubled, North Korea’s name for the war nonetheless asserts another idea of “Liberation,” one that forcefully recalls the imperial extension of both Japan and the United States on the peninsula, and reframes the war as “a struggle of the entire people,” rather than a war fought on massive scale by powerful global players.

Such assertions of liberation pose incisive threats to imperial powers like the United States, a nation-state founded on differentially articulating forms of freedom via the contradictory production of unfreedom for the indigenous, slave, and indentured laborers who created its wealth.⁷ The presumed monopoly and ownership of the fraught ideologies of domestic freedom and the deliverance of liberation abroad allows the U.S. state to employ the language of “defense” against North Korea’s “bellicose” rhetoric. Indeed, the U.S. state names the North Korean state as “bellicose” with characteristic lack of self-reflexivity, as though the U.S. military flying B-52s over the Korean peninsula⁸ is not a bellicose act, as though the U.S. state is itself ideologically neutral, capable only of morally preauthorized harm in “defense” of South Korea. Under the guise of liberation from Japanese colonialism, what Yoneyama refers to as “the imperial myth of liberation and rehabilitation,” the U.S. military instrumentally and simultaneously upholds South Korea as an ally deserving of protection and the potential casualty of that protection, were the Korean War to resume on the peninsula (“Traveling Memories, Contagious Justice” 80). Yet as Yoneyama reminds us, drawing on Saidiya Hartman’s formulation of an “already accrued debt, an abstinent present, and a mortgaged future” (Hartman 131), “Once marked as “the liberated” and therefore “the indebted,” one can never enter into an

⁷ As Lisa Lowe states in “The Intimacies of Four Continents,” “[c]olonial labor relations on the plantations in the Americas were the conditions of possibility for European philosophy to think the universality of human freedom, however much freedom for colonized peoples was precisely foreclosed within that philosophy” (193).

⁸ While I refer here to the U.S. military B-52 launch in March 2013, the U.S. military employs such exercises in routine shows of force: in 2002, when South Korean president Roh Moo-hyun’s government met with the Pentagon shortly after Roh’s election, “the American delegation suddenly showed extraordinary impatience to move the Second Infantry Division back from the Demilitarized Zone as quickly as possible...such a sudden redeployment of U.S. troops out of harm’s way would not only look to the North like preparations for a preemptive strike but might actually prove to be so. Equally ominous, the Bush administration sent B-1 and B-52 strategic bombers to Guam ‘in case they might be needed in Korea’” (Johnson 93-4).

evenly reciprocal relationship with the liberators...The injured and violated bodies of the liberated do not require redress according to this discourse of indebtedness, for their liberation has already served as payment/reparation that supposedly precedes the U.S. violence inflicted upon them” (Yoneyama 81). Not only do the “injured and violated bodies of the liberated...not require redress,” the debt of freedom comes at the cost of ever more U.S. military violence, as the future casualties of U.S. military protection.

Empire’s Telling Tales, Untelling the Tales of Empire

The origin story of the “forgotten war” in dominant U.S. historiography opens with a conflict, of the North Korean attack on South Korea on the hot, hot day of June 25, 1950. This origin story unfolds in the hardships endured by GIs, the tedious gains and losses of territory for three years, the firm belief that the boys will “be home in time for Christmas.”⁹ This origin story excludes other names for the war, and comes to a somewhat happy ending: a muted capitalist victory for the emerging military power, another friend in the Pacific, even a desegregated U.S. military. This origin story adheres faithfully to the act of an empire telling tales—the unfortunate but necessary conquests of indigenous peoples, of developing expropriated and enclosed lands using multiple forms of forced labor, of annexations, of benevolently gaining the acquisitions of formerly British and Spanish colonies outside increasingly naturalized continental borders in order to fulfill a destiny, of creating racialized and gendered domestic enemies in response to

⁹ A common refrain during the first months of the Korean War, echoing General Douglas MacArthur’s statement that “maybe some of them can be home by Christmas,” as documented in histories, memoirs, and in this case, Rolando Hinojosa’s poem “Rear Guard Action I: Nov.-Dec. 1950” in *Korean Love Songs*.

capitalist crises and providing the “choice” to enlist in the military to fight other racialized and gendered enemies abroad in the name of freedom, liberation.¹⁰

Yet the U.S. empire’s tales are also telling, harboring hallmarks of imperial disavowal and racialized exceptionalist authority. Such hallmarks have been variously articulated as “city upon a hill,” “empire of liberty,” and “manifest destiny,” all working to buttress the idea that the United States was, as Shelley Streeby puts it, “an empire that was not one” (107).¹¹ Such hallmarks rely on and bolster deeply entrenched ideas of what Robinson calls “racialism,” or “the legitimation and corroboration of social organization as natural by reference to the ‘racial’ components of its elements... racialism and its permutations persisted, rooted not in a particular era but in the civilization itself” (2, 28). And so the tales U.S. empire tells, that it is destined to authorize liberty for those mired in communist regimes, weaves in the narrative of racialized inferiority, a narrative justifying the paradoxical social hierarchy engendered and embedded “in the civilization itself.”

Joy James highlights the telling tales of empire, the state’s need for abstraction that in fact materializes in white supremacist practices that attempt to enshrine white privilege and cloak challenges to white supremacy: “The European Enlightenment’s construction of the Western liberal individual as the standard for civilized humanity enabled the reconstruction of those enslaved or colonized by Europeans as essentially inferior... The Enlightenment legacy dulls the recognition of how pervasive racism is, just as the language of denial and rhetorical oppression veils acts of radical resistance to

¹⁰ Here I refer in part to John Smith’s, *The Generall Historie of Virginia*; Thomas Jefferson’s, *Notes on the State of Virginia*; The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo; the Spanish-American War and the Philippine-American War; the ongoing U.S. prison industrial complex; and the U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

¹¹ John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity”; Thomas Jefferson’s phrase “empire of liberty.”

racism” (53). James’s attention to “acts of radical resistance to racism,” despite the state’s sophisticated and pervasive attempts to suppress such acts, also articulate resistance to totalizing narratives that retell the same tales of empire: the tales of the rational, scientifically enlightened and technologically advanced “Western liberal individual”; of the “essentially inferior,” individually indistinguishable hordes and perils; of the universal, objective, and authoritative knowledge production that claims to represent “the standard for civilized humanity.”

An essential part of U.S. empire’s tale relies on racializing people on a selective scale, at times relying on gradations of racial hierarchy when necessary, but also invoking a Black/white racial binary that occludes the occupying state’s attempts to eradicate indigenous populations, the capitalist state’s instrumental importations of racialized labor, and the imperial state’s exercises of force in acquisitions abroad.¹² I suggest that racialization as a project enacted by the U.S. state legally names and purports to “know,” fundamentally, various peoples as “other,” constructs whiteness as a universal normative, and imbues these categories with varying and unequal degrees of exposure to pain, privilege, and power.¹³ Yet contradictory to the state’s binary impulse, racialization and racial formation involve processes that are relational, and that at times operate on nuanced self-definitions to transform and rework persistent racializing categories. My dissertation examines cultural representations of Asian and Chicano/a encounters during

¹² Martha Hodes’s work, “Fractions and Fictions in the United States Census of 1890,” critically examines the U.S. state’s attempts to define the gradations of racial hierarchy at the turn of the century.

¹³ Nikhil Pal Singh registers some of these constructions as “a host of ‘exceptional’ figures and legal fictions exorbitant to liberal-democracy: the three-fifths person (African slave), the ‘domestic dependent nation’ (American Indians), ‘separate but equal,’ (black citizen), ‘foreign in a domestic sense’ (Puerto Ricans), the ‘immigrant ineligible for naturalization’ (Asians), and of course the ‘free white person’” (37). In addition, I build on the critical work of Ruth Wilson Gilmore (*Golden Gulag*), Cheryl Harris (“Whiteness as Property”), and Michael Omi and Howard Winant (*Racial Formation in the United States*) for my definition of “racialization.”

the Korean War and after the armistice in order to disrupt the myth of benevolent white salvation, and to illuminate vantage points that resist retelling the dominant U.S. racial binary.

In this dissertation, I use a partial perspective framework that acknowledges marginalized and untold stories, and does not rely on retelling narratives that perpetuate U.S. nationalist accounts of the war. This framework reveals counter-histories and counter-memories of the Korean War that disrupt or “untell” dominant discourses of U.S. empire. I coin the term “untelling” to frame how archival materials, cultural productions, and even institutional narratives access alternative epistemologies of the Cold War era in order to disturb dominant discourses of racialization and empire. Untelling is an intimate process, unbinding close layers of historical knowledge of U.S. racialization, militarism, exceptionalism, and empire in the Asia Pacific region. The alternative accounts of the Korean War register the violence of these discourses in various crucibles of intimacy, such as anxieties about racialization and multiple forms of kinship.

Untelling signals the necessity to think beyond linearly accrued positive knowledge about the war, instead urging attention to “the moment the storyteller desires his or her testimony to be heard as a prophecy, or as a possible future event, the past event is relentlessly made allegorical, undermining faithfulness to the original occasion and the impulse toward mimetic representation. The remembered event is dislodged from the past and transfigured into a future happening in a fictive timespace” (Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces* 212).¹⁴ The “possible future” of the Korean War is not inevitably

¹⁴ While Yoneyama’s assertion situates the storytelling practices of *hibakusha*, or survivors of the atom bomb in Japan, I extend her analysis to understand the significance of storytelling that moves beyond the static and totalizing moves of dominant history.

determined, and remains open to critical directions, “a future happening in a fictive timespace.” The versions of the Korean War story in my chapters, often “undermin[e] faithfulness to the original occasion” and suggest myriad possibilities and critiques stemming from the war, thereby resisting “the impulse toward mimetic representation” and theorizing instead the real danger of the singular Korean War narrative.

As I demonstrate in the chapter outline below, the archival materials and cultural texts I examine in this dissertation pose critiques beyond the logic of static, dominant history, instead untelling their interventions into the history of the Korean War. I analyze a broad range of cultural works, including novels, poetry, plays, military song lyrics, uncovered archival images, a prison magazine, and hard-boiled detective fiction. The forms of some of the cultural texts themselves refuse static representation, often blurring the boundaries of genres, and self-consciously performing other genres, other forms. For example, Rolando Hinojosa’s *Korean Love Songs* operates as both a collection of poetry, but also as a Cold War *corrido* telling multiple border stories on the Pacific edge of U.S. empire. Through such formal play, many of the cultural texts refuse to enclose or settle memories of the Korean War, instead theorizing in multiplicities: the contradictions of singular genealogies, as Susan Choi’s novel *The Foreign Student* embeds the racialized history of the United States within a narrator’s memories of a white supremacist Korean War; as in the fraught notion of kinship that underwrites possibilities for national belonging, as USP Leavenworth’s prison magazine *The New Era* reveals through its documentation of the inmates’ virtual adoption of a Korean boy in the wake of the Korean War armistice; and in the conditions of possibility that launch a young Chicano from East L.A. into military police work in Itaewon, as Martin Limón’s novels *Slicky*

Boys and *The Wandering Ghost* narrate in the form of hard-boiled detective fiction that are also self-fashioned as military police procedurals.

This dissertation builds on critical articulations of culture, defined by Lisa Lowe as “the medium of the *present*—the imagined equivalences and identifications through which the individual invents lived relationship with the national collective—but it is simultaneously the site that mediates the *past*, through which history is grasped as difference, as fragments, shocks, and flashes of disjunction” (*Immigrant Acts* 2-3). Lowe’s formulation of culture is essential for an understanding of, to provide one example, the “fragments, shocks, and flashes” of the Korean War that reverberate throughout the works I examine, such “flashes of disjunction” holding in tension the multiple temporalities engendered by the war. The multiple temporalities include Chang’s deliberate reordering of the Korean War chronology in his talk for a white Southern audience in *The Foreign Student*, re-sequencing moments in history to link Japan and the United States as occupiers, and emptying the narrative of the United States as benevolent saviors. They also include Hinojosa’s representations of the perpetual, unending terror of the Korean War in *Korean Love Songs*, especially through René Castro’s images which accompany the poems. And a different type of cultural artifact from an archive, a letter addressed to Sergeant Cleveran and signed “Y.H. Kim,” theorizes “war time” as a “war season,” accounting for both prior wars of the U.S. empire, as well as foretelling the U.S. war and police actions to come.

The significance of culture in order to “imagine otherwise,” as Avery Gordon puts it, is particularly urgent for creating fissures in the narrative of benevolent U.S. intervention in the Korean War (5). Such a narrative carefully crafts the American savior

in white supremacy's image: white, male, rational, universal. The cultural works I analyze expose that dense, stubborn image, for instance by registering the potent contradictions embedded into the narrative of the American savior, and deactivating the image's putative universality. As James Kyung-Jin Lee states, "[c]ulture...is not simply a reflection of the political and economic forces that propel a society forward, or backward as the case may be, but itself becomes a productive force, registering, pushing, gesticulating a way out of a social dialectic that appears impassable" (xxiv). I argue that the cultural works in this dissertation animate productive, retroactive force in order to challenge the apparent impassability of the dominant Korean War narrative in U.S. discourse.

Chapter Outline

In addition to this introduction, I develop my argument in four chapters. The first, entitled "'Although complete knowledge of them can never be mine': Contesting Histories of the Korean War," is a critique of dominant representations and understandings of the conflict during the Cold War period. I begin with a brief analysis of William Elliot Griffis's 1882 *Corea, the Hermit Nation* in order to highlight the orientalist and exceptionalist templates for "knowing" Korea, a template that chroniclers of dominant history relied on and replicated during the Korean War and following the armistice. Another major focus of this chapter is the Center for the Study of the Korean War, a privately funded archive founded in 1987 and located in Independence, Missouri. Among the funders of the Center are groups such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy, a group founded on preserving and perpetuating white supremacy, and its

strange role in the formation of Korean War history.¹⁵ Other histories significant for this chapter include Paul Welty's 1963 text *The Asians: Their Heritage and Their Destiny*, which I suggest exemplifies a Cold War area studies approach to the construction of "Asians" as a distant, empirically knowable group with an uncontested history and heritage.

As shapers of knowledge production, the Center, the United Daughters, and Welty's text participate in the construction of a dominant historical narrative that legitimates the U.S. role in the war as a benevolent intervention liberating Korea from a communist enemy. Furthermore, in my first chapter I also examine the development of area studies during the Korean War era, in particular the Cold War knowledge production funded by the Ford Foundation. In contrast, I suggest that Susan Choi's novel *The Foreign Student* (1999) unravels dominant knowledge production about the Korean War through its representation of early moments in the informal formation of post-war area studies. Finally, in addition to illustrating the importance of archival sources for critiquing the dominant U.S. history of the Korean War, I emphasize that it is also necessary to examine how archives as institutions produce and re-produce nationalist ideologies that justify ongoing militarism and gendered violence.

In my second chapter, entitled "'It's a brown place Korea is': the Asian-Latino Pacific and the Korean War," I move from dominant knowledge production surrounding the Korean War to Chicano counter-narratives theorizing alternative memories of the

¹⁵ As Lisa Lowe reminds us in "The Intimacies of the Four Continents," the "archive is not a static, comprehensive collection of given facts or a source of recorded history. Following Foucault and Said, we must consider the archive as a site of knowledge production, 'reading' it as a technology for administering and knowing the colonized population that both attests to its own contradictions and yields its own critique" (196).

Korean War. Rolando Hinojosa's poetry in *Korean Love Songs* (1978), his novel *The Useless Servants* (1993), and Luis Valdez's play *I Don't Have to Show You No Stinking Badges!* (1986) challenge the dominant U.S. racial history of the Korean War, currently remembered through the lens of a limited Black/white racial binary. Taken together, these texts theorize a more nuanced, intimate, and relational understanding of racialization during and in the wake of the Korean War. Hinojosa's and Valdez's cultural works contribute to a different epistemology by remembering that the U.S. military required the contribution of Chicano soldiers during the war. Hinojosa's and Valdez's texts thereby destabilize the Black/white racializing binary of U.S. military presence in the Korean War and formulate uniquely situated critiques of U.S. empire by connecting the "forgotten wars" in both the U.S. Southwest and Korea. While the preceding chapter foregrounds the limits of area studies and historical scholarship that delegitimizes literature, experience, and affect as both method and source, thereby idealizing the accumulation of data, statistics, and a reliance on empirical methods as inherently more objective and bearing comprehensive authority, this chapter examines memories that exceed official history and assert alternate histories that pull away from the totalizing grasp of dominant narratives.

My third chapter, entitled "'Americans, your own flesh and blood': Kinships of the Korean War," examines USP Leavenworth's prison magazine *The New Era*, and its documentation of the virtual adoption of a Korean boy, Bok Nam Om, immediately following the Korean War armistice. Korean diaspora and adoption studies scholars have analyzed discourses surrounding the production of orphans from Korea as consumable, imperiled bodies that require adoption into normative nuclear families. I argue that U.S.

nationalist, heteropatriarchal Cold War ideologies allowed inmates to situate their claims of national belonging against the use of Asian American GIs in the Korean War. I suggest that the same ideologies also justify, rather than contradict, their virtual adoption of Bok Nam Om. In addition, I examine the prison magazine as a tenuous literary form in tension with the circumstances of its production within a federal disciplinary institution. *The New Era* remembers and makes connections between two hyper-marginalized groups, orphans and inmates, during the Korean War, and highlights the USP Leavenworth prison magazine during this era as a site of white racial privilege that demonstrates degrees of differential racialized access to national print culture.

In my final chapter, “Sleuth Cities: East L.A., Seoul, and Military Mysteries,” I focus on Martin Limón’s numerous portrayals of an impoverished East L.A. as a gritty California counterpart to the desperate, at times overtly racist, military district of Itaewon in his military mystery series. Within this context, I investigate Limón’s mystery series as an ambivalent site of cultural production for critiques of racism and U.S. empire, but also for the maintenance of masculinity and the myth of the American dream. This chapter and the second chapter (“It’s a brown place Korea is”) contribute to the currently limited but growing scholarship on texts that engage the Chicano/a presence in Korea, dating back to the Korean War. Both chapters center an alternate kinship between Koreans and Chicanos, a complex relationship that is at times antagonistic, yet also suggestive of forging solidarities that function beyond the over-inscribed Black/white binary in the dominant racial lens. In this chapter I offer critical analyses of Limón’s *Slicky Boys* (1997), *The Wandering Ghost* (2008), and Korean War archival sources as apertures exposing the racism, gendered exploitation, militarization, and expansion of

U.S. frontiers from California across the Pacific to Korea. The detective fiction genre in the Western literary tradition follows established conventions of questioning, interrogating, and observing in attempts to gain empirical knowledge and truth, often resulting in neat resolutions and a restoration of the social order. I argue that Limón's novels overturn the conventions of the detective fiction and hard-boiled genres in ways that criticize state authority and U.S. empire-building.

The untellings of empire presented by the cultural texts I examine in my dissertation shape alternative memories of the Korean War, and work against the dangerous retelling of the dominant history of the war. Sturken writes that “[a]ttempts to give the Persian Gulf War a neat narrative reinscribing master narratives of World War II—in which the United States liberates a desperate and weak country imperiled by a dangerous tyrant—are intended to chart the lineage of war directly from 1945 to 1991 in order to establish the Vietnam War (and its shadow, the Korean War) as aberrations” (123). Although characterized as Vietnam's “shadow” or “the forgotten war,” emerging dominant histories of the Korean War continually assert master narratives that affirm U.S. victory and salvation. The multiple narratives of the Korean War urgently counter ongoing legacies of the war, as dominant discourse uncritically refreshes the “threat” of North Korea. I hope that my project will challenge long-standing discourses of racialized “perils” that require more military discipline abroad and racial violence domestically.

Chapter Two

“Although complete knowledge of them will never be mine”: Contesting Histories of the Korean War

The thirty-eighth parallel ceased to be a set of points sharing an angular distance from the equator, and manifested itself as a thing. It was well on its way to becoming a political border. Even then, in September 1945, when it was still thought of as denoting nothing beyond its own coordinates, as if its former affiliation with the system of meridians and minutes could exempt it from history.

– Susan Choi, *The Foreign Student*

Subjugated knowledge, unsanctioned idioms, and disqualified practices were not outside official knowledges but folded as preserved possibilities within them. Such a line of inquiry opens to readings against the grain of colonial archives in ways that lead to alternative perspectives if not subaltern accounts. But it also leads elsewhere—to rejected proposals, to incoherencies of official discourse, to potential disruptions of what counted as knowledge and who qualified as its arbiters...

– Ann Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*

But the way difference was lived after the violent rupture of colonization was and had to be different from how these cultures would have developed had they done so in isolation from one another. There after, they were coupled—conscripted—to modernity.

– Stuart Hall, “Modernity and Its Others”

The history of dominant U.S. knowledge production about Korea prior to the Korean War faithfully adheres to the degrees of “unknowability” that characterize the ongoing neocolonial, militarized relationship between the United States and Korea. In 1882, minister and author William Elliot Griffis published *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, a history “for the benefit of the general reader,” despite his lack of knowledge about Korea (xiii). Yet it is telling that orientalist such as Griffis were quite popular, animating and confirming the exotic fantasies and benevolent impulses of eager, avid readers, which his

“Preface to the Third Edition” boasts: “The reception of this work, both in the United States and Europe, as well as in the East, has been most kindly.” Even this history, one of the earlier attempts at glimpsing the “sealed and mysterious” state, dubbed “the hermit kingdom,”¹⁶ is initially framed not only as unknowable, but also barely worthy of being known: “Many ask, ‘What’s in Corea?’ and ‘Is Corea of any importance in the history of the world?’” (xiii).¹⁷ Most telling is Griffis’s admission that he had not written this authoritative text from any substantial contact with Korea: “In one respect, the presentation of such a subject by a compiler, while shorn of the fascinating element of personal experience, has an advantage even over the narrator who describes a country through which he has travelled. With the various reports of many witnesses, in many times and places, before him, he views the whole subject and reduces the many impressions of detail to unity, correcting one by the other” (xv). I begin with this example to illustrate the existing templates for “knowing” Korea, a template that chroniclers of dominant history only just marginally modified during the Korean War and its aftermath. From the vantage point of an enfranchised (that is to say, white, male, propertied, and educated) U.S. subject, the matter of Korea merely needs a distant and putatively objective “compiler” to organize complex histories, “correcting” discordant narratives into an earnest linear history.¹⁸

¹⁶ A phrase that is attributed to Griffis.

¹⁷ Conforming to standard white supremacist impulses to distinguish and categorize “Orientals,” Griffis attempts to selectively valorize Koreans, stating: “The Corean character seems to be a happy medium between the stolid Chinaman and the changeable Japanese.”

¹⁸ Griffis’s bibliography for *Corea, the Hermit Nation* is particularly noteworthy, including selections such as *History of the Eastern Barbarians*, and *A Forbidden Land: Voyages to the Corea; with an account of its geography, history, productions, and commercial capabilities* (by Ernest Oppert and part of the Special Collections at Geisel Library at UCSD).

Griffis speculates on the future of Korea, making claims that in retrospect appear to establish *Corea, the Hermit Nation* as a handbook for U.S. imperial actions in East Asia: “At this stage of affairs, when Corea ceases to be a ‘hermit nation,’ and stands in the glare of the world’s attention, we bring our imperfect story to a close. The pivot of the future history of Eastern Asia is Corea. On her soil will be decided the problem of supremacy, by the jealous rivals China, Japan, and Russia” (441). Griffis himself casts a long, imperfect shadow—indeed, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton has referred to North Korea as a “hermit kingdom,” and overt threat of the implicit division “stands in the glare of the world’s attention,” though ominously absent from this glare is the significant role of the United States in rendering the division. His phrasing “[t]he pivot of the future history of Eastern Asia” is provocative, because again it suggests a history from which a major player is absent from the list of “jealous rivals[,] China, Japan, and Russia,” a major player that in fact is redirecting its geopolitical and imperial imperatives in the Obama Administration’s “Pivot to Asia.”

Griffis did his work, primarily writing about and lecturing on Japan, within certain hallmark moments of U.S. empire, and documents key moments illustrating various tenets of American exceptionalism. In describing the 1871 U.S. military expedition to Korea, Griffis recalls a member of the U.S. military who died in the U.S.-Mexico War (417); the war, which took place from 1846-48, enabled claims “that contiguous lands were part of the continental ‘domestic’ space rather than foreign territory...promot[ing] an exceptionalist understanding of the United States as a nonimperial nation” (Streeby 10). Griffis himself participated as a soldier in the nation-building enterprise of the U.S. civil war. *Corea, the Hermit Nation* was initially

published in 1882, the same year of the Chinese Exclusion Act, which was designed as the first racially specific immigration legislation in the United States and was fueled in part by the same orientalist fantasies animating Griffis's book. The book was reprinted in nine editions well into the twentieth century, reiterating and justifying claims about the unknowable, heathen, and uncivilized parts of Asia, just as the United States moved toward acquiring Spain's Pacific possessions and places for business interests to profit from, including the Philippines, Guam, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, as well as annexing Hawai'i in 1898.

These key moments in the history of U.S. expansion, while certainly not comprehensive, nonetheless operate to consolidate and materialize the ideologies driving American exceptionalism, the premise that the United States was, as Shelley Streeby puts it, "an empire that was not one" (107). The roots of such ideologies go deep, provoking the United States throughout the nineteenth century to acquire more lands and entrenching justification for further imperial development. Perversely, Griffis writes in the preface for his 1898 *Romance of American Colonization* that "[o]ur country is not a new England. It is a new and better Europe... To the making of the nation many peoples contributed by sending their sons and daughters with varied gifts of race and temperament, as well as with faith, moral fibre, ideas, and experience" (7). He neglects to state here that it is also the taking of other nations, especially in 1898, that constitutes the "romance" of American colonization. Furthermore, Griffis's statement that "many peoples contributed by sending their sons and daughters with varied gifts of race and temperament" refers to Europeans, and elides the histories of Native peoples and enslaved peoples in the United States. Indeed, "assertions of American exceptionalism

cannot always be taken at face value, but rather should often be seen as nervous attempts to manage the contradictions of ideologies of U.S. empire-building” (Streeby 57).

This notion that the United States occupies a unique position as “free” and more democratic, in particular compared to Europe, operates closely with the dominant belief that the United States therefore has a duty to spread freedom, progress and democracy around the globe. The idea of American exceptionalism persists as stubbornly as the phrase “hermit kingdom,”¹⁹ now selectively applied to a North Korea labeled as recalcitrant, and indeed both concepts reify each other in tenacious ways: a bold, modern, yet civilized United States operates most explicitly in contrast to a reclusive, backwards, and barbaric nation allegedly bereft of rational capability. During the Cold War era, the state remixed the ideology of American exceptionalism to include strident anti-communism in its movements toward global supremacy and domestic containment. The ideology of American exceptionalism, harboring a genealogy that drove U.S. expansion (in the guise of delivering liberation) throughout the nineteenth century, manifested in the U.S. military occupation in Korea during the post-Second World War period, ostensibly protecting the southern part of the newly liberated peninsula from the communist Soviet Union.²⁰ Thus the legacies of American exceptionalism do more than just persist—they couple with the U.S. state and military in order to combat “hostile” ideologies, and constitute the conditions of possibility for the ongoing becoming of the nation.

¹⁹ A sampling of news headlines from the past few years yields titles such as “Opening up the ‘Hermit Kingdom’ to the world” (Ed Flanagan, September 4, 2009, NBC), “Hermit Kingdom vs. House of Mouse: Can Disney stop North Koreans from wearing Mickey Mouse costumes?” (Brian Palmer, July 29, 2012, Slate), and “Hostages of the Hermit Kingdom” (Laura Ling and Euna Lee, September 2, 2009, *The Los Angeles Times*).

²⁰ Jasbir Puar connects this notion of exceptionalism to “Giorgio Agamben’s theorization of the sanctioned and naturalized disregard of the limits of state juridical and political power through times of state crisis, a ‘state of exception’ that is used to justify the extreme measures of the state” (3).

Strands of exceptionalist epistemology constitute the dominant understandings of U.S. history during the Cold War period in specifically gendered and racialized ways, and I address two such strands in this chapter: sites of knowledge production about the Korean War within archives, and area studies formed within Cold War frameworks. I trace one of these strands to a privately funded archive, the Center for the Study of the Korean War, founded in 1989 and located in Independence, Missouri. Although the Center operates as a politically neutral non-profit organization, it receives support from the Daughters of the American Revolution and the United Daughters of the Confederacy. The names of the women's groups signify the members' fidelity to and perpetuation of gendered kinship, explicitly in relationship to U.S. nationalist projects. The United Daughters of the Confederacy is based in the U.S. South with deep investments in implicitly exclusionary and often explicitly white supremacist discourses of nation-building, which specifically connects to the racialized and gendered development of an "exceptional" America. Tracing the history of the United Daughters of the Confederacy and their support for the Center yields unsettling questions about the relationship to the Center's knowledge production on the Korean War. As a site of knowledge production, then, the Center participates in the construction of a dominant historical narrative that legitimates U.S. police action during the Korean War. Furthermore, the archive's exceptionalist underpinnings legitimate ongoing narratives of the war as a benevolent intervention liberating Korea from a communist enemy.

I trace another strand of exceptionalist epistemology to Cold War area studies academic texts such as Paul Thomas Welty's 1963 *The Asians: Their Heritage and Their Destiny*, which I suggest serves as a diluted descendent of Griffis's *Corea, the Hermit*

Nation.²¹ Unlike Griffis's text, however, which emerges through the impulse to Christianize, Welty's text exemplifies a post-war area studies approach to the construction of "Asians": "it is impractical and most difficult to document adequately every statement or to include everything pertaining to the complexity of the Asian scene...Although complete knowledge of them can never be mine...It is my strong conviction that all of us should have some *fundamental knowledge* of the Asians" (4, 5, emphasis added). In a simultaneously startling and predictable echo of Griffis's book, Welty's text continues to entwine the exceptionalist narrative that I suggest is one condition of dominant U.S. knowledge production about Asia. The description of "the Asians" as fundamentally knowable despite "the complexity of the Asian scene" functions to other "the Asians" as a distant, empirically knowable group with an uncontested history and heritage and a malleable "destiny."

Fittingly, more than two decades after the 1953 stalemate of the Korean War, the fifth edition of Welty's text that purports to create stabilized knowledge about "the Asians" includes an exceedingly slim five-page chapter on Korea, sandwiched between chapters on China and Japan. The text describes the U.S. role in "liberation" as "[d]efending South Korea" against the "invasion" by "the North Koreans...thereby initiating a war," locating the origins of the conflict in a communist invasion and justifying the ongoing U.S. occupation of Korea since 1945 (252). Welty employs violent gendered language to describe Korea in the aftermath of the war: "both Koreas lay ravished and still divided; two economic, political, and social wrecks" (252). This gendered formation of Korea legitimates the military actions of an exceptional United

²¹ 5th edition 1976

States to defend a helpless, divided country against an imminently looming communism. Furthermore, Welty describes the aftermath of the conflict with a distance that absolves the United States of any accountability in the peninsula's physical destruction. Welty also repurposes the "wrecks" of "both Koreas...still divided" from the exceptionalist imperatives of the United States to rationalize the ongoing neocolonial relationship with South Korea. By tracing the epistemological formation of "the Asians" from Griffis's *Corea, the Hermit Nation* to Welty's text to the Center's mission to "understand" the Korean War, I suggest that racialized imperatives toward possessing "complete" and "fundamental" knowledge, emerging from Cold War area studies, inform dominant understandings of the Korean War in U.S. history.

In contrast to the dominant ways of knowing the Korean War outlined above, this project asks what kinds of work cultural texts can do, what kind of memories that literature, such as Susan Choi's *The Foreign Student*, recall, produce, or allow—memories that are otherwise subject to disciplinary erasure. Furthermore, not only does this project enlist cultural productions to elicit counter-narratives of the Korean War, it also demands a reading of historical artifacts, such as authoritative histories, archives, and military songbooks, as cultural texts. Grace Cho argues in *Haunting the Korean Diaspora* that assimilation into an exceptional "American dream" pays the cost of historical unintelligibility, and that haunting, as a method, produces tensions that were not present before—something else that did not previously exist in linear, homogenous accounts of the war. Following the work of Cho and others, this project insists that literature and other cultural productions create productive tensions and fractures within dominant knowledge production.

The Foreign Student unravels dominant knowledge production about the Korean War through its narration of Chang, the novel's protagonist. The novel captures early moments in the informal formation of post-war area studies, and documents Chang's perverse complicity as a part-time educator on the subject of the war, as well as the minor acts of resistance to the production of knowledge about Korea. In this chapter, I pair my critique of the area studies disciplinary formation with a reading of *The Foreign Student* in order to tease out the tension between the imperatives of Cold War knowledge production and the memories that exceed such a regime of knowledge. I turn to *The Foreign Student* again in my analysis of the Center for the Study of the Korean War and the United Daughters of the Confederacy, in order to trouble the sanitizing discourses of white supremacist kinship that buttress dominant ways of understanding the Korean War. I suggest that the novel inserts the presence of the Ku Klux Klan into memories of the Korean War, thereby writing into these memories the masculinist counterpart to the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the organization's efforts of white supremacist nation-building. By supplementing each of these critiques with a reading of the literature, I hope to rupture the uncontested, naturalizing, and linear narratives of the Korean War.

Disciplinary formations and imperatives of post-war area studies and uneasy archives sustained by white supremacist women's groups perform and constitute Cold War and post-Cold War knowledge production. I argue it is essential to also analyze these disparate but authoritative sites of knowledge production in order to trouble the execution of ongoing militarization in Asia and the Pacific region. Questioning the emergence of fields such as area studies, and examining the sources of support for such fields, such as the Ford Foundation, exposes the explicit private, state and military

underpinnings of knowledge production (which becomes a more urgent political project in the present moment of increasing privatization of higher education). Critical readings of archives in addition to *and as* cultural productions can destabilize the sociological and homogenous historical assimilation of the memories and histories encircling the Korean War.²² As Jodi Kim puts it,

Cold War epistemology is an intersecting multisited and multigeneric discourse...certain sites, genres, and modes of analysis of this discourse have been privileged over others. Namely, while government documents...have been privileged or canonized in the historical archive to support dominant interpretations of the Cold War as a bipolar rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, I read them against the grain of such an overdetermined interpretive scheme. By focusing on the documents' discursive and affective registers...[and] in juxtaposing historical documents with cultural forms, I query official nationalist constructions of "authoritative" knowledge and read historical documents as themselves cultural *texts* rather than reifying them further as "objective historical evidence." (39-40)

I build on her method, and practice an ethnography of power in order to dismantle totalizing narratives of the Korean War. In doing so, I identify potentially subversive spaces for recasting dominant knowledge construction within stories that are more sensitively calibrated to critiques of power.

²² I use Jenny Edkins's notion of "encircling" trauma: Edkins proposes the concept of "trauma time" as a resistant temporality; "Trauma time is inherent in and destabilizes any production of linearity" (16). In order for witnessing and testimony (two acts I suggest are critical for the production of historical knowledge) to be part of politicized resistance to dominant history, they must not become written into linear narratives and therefore risk de-politicization or gentrification, but should rather mark or encircle the moment of trauma (15).

Conscripted to modernity: Disciplinary formations, reading race and gender in Cold War area studies, and the war that “defied explanation”

Cold War texts such as Welty’s *The Asians: Their Heritage and Their Destiny* consistently and authoritatively frame Korea as backwards, atavistic, innocent of modernity, and requiring direction and guidance toward modernity, progress, and civilization. Such throwback ways of “knowing” Korea produce the ideological justification for military police action, in order to continue liberating the peninsula, first from Japanese colonization and again from the specters of communism. Korea is therefore discursively fettered to terrains replete with an emergent U.S. military power and violence in order for the United States to demonstrate an updated exceptionalism and to ensure the triumph of the core concepts of liberalism.²³ This double salvation and dubious welcome to modernity “after the violent rupture of colonization” no longer allowed for Korea’s independence, but instead caused Korea to be “coupled—conscripted—to modernity” (Hall, “Modernity and Its Others”).

Though the focus of Stuart Hall’s important essay “Modernity and Its Others” does not touch on the Korean War, I borrow his formulation of “conscripted to modernity” for its rich implications in thinking about the militarized legacies of the war. Definitions of conscription include the compulsory mobilization to military service, which evokes multiple meanings for Korea and the United States during the Korean War. The United States drafted GIs for the Korean War, but shifting draft laws after the war

²³ As Nikhil Pal Singh notes, ideas of both individual and market “freedom,” in addition to “an antipathy to socially determined, collectively defined forms of ascription,” form the backbone to the definitions of liberalism (*Keywords* 140). Critical understandings of liberalism must account for the “problems of political domination, exclusion, and inequality within liberalism...[in] the history of liberal-democratic nation-states founded in racial slavery and colonial expansion” (Singh 141).

started meant that at different moments, different sectors of the population were vulnerable to conscription.²⁴ One among the many enduring legacies of the Korean War is South Korea's mandatory military service for all men: "[w]artime conditions nurtured the military, which became the most organized and influential force in South Korean society" (Dong-Choon Kim, "Long Road" 535). And while Korea's passage into modernity may arguably be entwined with Japanese colonization, the ongoing U.S. military occupation of Korea lends another layer to Hall's formulation of being "conscripted to modernity."²⁵ Within the military purview of the United States, the now near-requisite passage through such a terrain nourishes the claims for the necessity of U.S. participation in the Korean War.²⁶

Critical feminist scholars have made some of the most incisive critiques of this self-fulfilling logic, of double salvation from colonization and communism, of the

²⁴ According to Melinda Pash, "[i]n theory, all young American men of draft age should have shared equally the burden of the draft, but Selective Service provisions and deferment and exemption policies worked to spread service liability unevenly. During the first few months of the conflict, mental test qualification standards led to a high rate of rejection among men from underprivileged backgrounds, allowing them to avoid service while leaving better-heeled and better-educated registrants stuck in the draft pool. In fact, mental test failure became a major source of 'deferment' or exemption during the war for African Americans and others who were too poor to attend college or to show that military service worked a financial hardship on their families. By June 1951, the Universal Military Training and Service Act rectified the inequity by dramatically dropping the minimum allowable AFQT score and allowing many of those who previously had been disqualified to enter service. Rejection rates based solely on the mental test fell from 16.5 percent from July 1950– December 1951 to 13.2 percent of those selected in 1952" (52). While Pash documents the circumstances of changing draft laws during the Korean War, her treatment of the draft's "inequity," in particular describing "African Americans and others who were too poor to attend college" as "avoid[ing] service" at the expense of "better-heeled and better-educated registrants stuck in the draft pool" implies that those naturalized in dominant discourse as disposable populations for the war—Blacks, other nonwhite peoples, and working-class people—were somehow responsible for the "unequal" fates of those naturalized as deserving of exemption due to their whiteness and close proximity to property and education.

²⁵ Tani Barlow presents important discussions on colonial modernity in her 2012 "Debates Over Colonial Modernity in East Asia and Another Alternative."

²⁶ Here, I also refer to U.S. discourses of delivering freedom and modernity to places governed by "repressed" and "fanatical" ideologies, justifying U.S. military action and occupation in the Persian Gulf War, the war in Iraq, the war in Afghanistan, as well as other ongoing and unending wars. (*Feminism and War*).

processes leading up to the formation of a new political border, and the rationalizing force for occupation following the Korean War. Grace Cho states that “[m]ilitary efforts to deal with ‘the refugee problem’ resulted in a self-perpetuating cycle of destruction and displacement. The massive dislocation of Korean civilians meant that battle lines often became obstructed with hordes of moving refugees whose origins could not be identified” (67-8). The military thereafter executed further destruction, which in turn created more refugees, which then rationalized even more “use of lethal force against civilians as a means of clearing traffic jams” (Cho 69). Yet in the exceptionalist narrative of double salvation, even this violent displacement becomes written as a gift. Lisa Yoneyama describes this process as “the imperialist myth of liberation and rehabilitation [that] presents both violence and liberation as gifts for the liberated” (“Traveling Memories” 80).

This imperialist myth bolsters not only U.S. nationalism—the notion of indebtedness that accompanies the “gift of freedom” also preauthorizes future violence. Jasbir Puar articulates the shifts in this myth in “a profound sway in the tenor of temporality: the realignment from reactive to preemptive is a conversion from past-tense subject formation to future-tense subject anticipation, from the rehabilitative subject whose violated rights can be redressed through social representation and legal recognition, to regenerative populations who are culled through anticipation” (154-5). While the “gift of freedom” allows the Cold War representation of the United States as the generous liberator, this imperial myth legitimates in advance any sort of military gesture that would again be reinforced by and reinforce dominant U.S. narratives of progress and democratization.

In addition to the self-justifying logic that permeates the U.S. liberation narrative of the Korean War, even the “gift of freedom” necessarily operates on the condition of homogenous non-persons belated to enlightenment, that characterize Cold War knowledge of Koreans:

Under liberalism’s purview, the transmutation from possession to personhood (at least to “full” personhood) is impossible, because there is no gift without debt—which is to say, no gift without claim on the other’s existence. For the anachronistic human targeted for transmutation, freedom is not generated from his or her own interiority but is manufactured, in the sense that this freedom bears the provenance of another’s hand...*To be given freedom is a process of becoming without being*. Thus does the gift of freedom carry a stubborn remainder of its absence—this trace may be called race or gender, among other names, and does not subside with the passage of time. (Nguyen 19)

In what follows, I critique Cold War knowledge production that presents itself as a neutral arbiter and mediator of the recipients of benevolent freedom, and through my reading of *The Foreign Student* expose the underbelly of nationalist knowledge-formation. Drawing on the work of feminist scholars, I contribute to the argument that such knowledge emerges from a specific time, a specific discursive space, funded by very specific organizations.

On the Cold War foundation and afterlives of American Studies, Robyn Wiegman states that “[i]nstead of emphasizing individualism, consensus, and the open wilderness, for instance, [New Americanism] would prioritize community, social struggle, and the violence of dispossession, making clear that the white masculine subject at the heart of Cold War exceptionalism was a particular embodiment whose universalized status was another example of how the story of America being told and the historical record were violently askew” (201). Wiegman’s critical statement frames the contradictions

embedded into the formation of area studies in this section, especially because my project remains attentive to the idea that all academic work emerges from specific origins, from knowledge producers inhabiting unique positions. As intellectual work is always situated in particularities, I trace the financial sources of support for the formation of area studies, then move to a discussion of the necessity of charting both a genealogy and ontology of Korean War knowledge production. Finally, I move to a reading of *The Foreign Student*, and highlight the novel's subtle moves of resistance against the emergence of Cold War knowledge production.

While Bruce Cumings is heralded as a foremost U.S. academic authority on the Korean War, in this chapter I focus on *Parallel Visions*, one of his works that extends beyond information about the Korean War and interrogates the formation of area studies. Cumings has published many important books on the Korean War, but *Parallel Visions* (1999), on U.S.-East Asian relations, presents an inquiry into the specific sources of funding, including the Ford Foundation, that enabled the formation of area studies.²⁷ Cumings writes that scholar Philip Mosely, the ruler of the Russian Institute at Columbia and influential shaper of U.S. foreign policy during the Korean War era, “was a central figure at the Ford Foundation throughout the formative years of American area studies centers, which Ford supported to the tune of \$270 million” (184). Although Mosely was a Soviet specialist, and worked closely with the Ford Foundation to develop Soviet area studies, his reach into foreign policy and state department affairs gave him clearance into confidential information that extended to various “hot” regions during the Cold War.

²⁷ According to Francis X. Sutton, “[t]he post-war anxiety over the maintenance of world peace and the precariousness of democracy throughout the world gave Ford a more strongly international emphasis than any of the major American foundations since established has had.”

Moseley's declassified files reveal, among other institutional histories, "[t]he Ford Foundation's decision in the late 1950s to pump at least \$30 million into the field of China studies (to resuscitate it after the McCarthyite onslaught, but also to create new China watchers) drew on the same rationale as the Russian programs examined above" (Cumings 185). The idea of creating new "China watchers," though an attempt to "resuscitate" China studies in the United States in the midst of stringent anti-communism, marks the emergence of methods following the geopolitical imperative to acquire untroubled knowledge about and conduct surveillance on an unquestioned communist enemy.²⁸

Examinations of Philip Mosely's and the Ford Foundation's files show how U.S. knowledge production during and about the Cold War during the Korean War era constitutes a tense balance of state-sanctioned knowledge acquisition and the degrees of alternative accounts that constantly threaten to depose that knowledge production. In particular, many have commented on the seemingly inscrutable quality of the Korean War. The implications for knowledge production about the Korean War, the representation of which has more recently been described by scholars as "an epistemological conundrum," "a kind of translation," and having "a ghostly nature," include maintaining tensions in the histories of the war, emerging from institutional studies but troubled by memories that exceed those studies (Jodi Kim 151; Daniel Kim 552; Ferguson 153).

²⁸ "The feverish national concern over subversion, disloyalty, Communism, and milder threats to the American way of life that afflicted the country in the early fifties, affected the Ford Foundation but did not reduce its international activities. Indeed, it may have had the paradoxical effect of increasing them" (Sutton 84).

The emergence of these particular institutional studies, presented by “incomplete but important evidence from the Mosely papers suggests that the Ford Foundation, in close consultation with the CIA, helped to shape postwar area studies and important collaborative research in modernization studies and comparative politics that were later mediated through well-known Ford-funded SSRC projects” (Cumings 186).²⁹ I suggest that U.S. Korean War studies must reckon with this fraught genealogy, and recognize the discursive violence embedded in its emergence, in order to urge accountability for the contours of its militarized knowledge production. Furthermore, declassified files suggest that “this interweaving of foundations, universities, and state agencies (mainly the intelligence and military agencies) extended to the social sciences as a whole... Official sources in 1952 reported that ‘fully 96 percent of all reported [government] funding for social sciences at that time was drawn from the U.S. military’” (Cumings 186). In order for narratives of the Korean War to not re-become sites of untroubled inscrutability, to not be assimilated into the rehearsals of Cold War ideologies, critical scholarship must be attentive to these disciplinary origins.³⁰

²⁹ Sutton notes that “[t]he Ford Foundation in the years after World War II shared proudly and worriedly in the common view that the US had responsibilities in the world that it was ill-prepared to exercise. The country lacked international expertise and sophistication in government, private business, the media and indeed wherever our society touched others. The Ford Foundation set out to serve the national interest by training such people.”

³⁰ Laura Briggs, Gladys McCormick, and J.T. Way raise parallel concerns in “Transnationalism: A Category of Analysis,” in which they consider both bland and vivifying uses of the word “transnationalism”: “As Bruce Cumings, Aihwa Ong, and Andrew Ross have all mapped in different ways, in the aftermath of the cold war, increasingly cash-strapped academics, universities, and fields (conspicuously area studies) were all invited to map the transnational. Cumings points to two specific incidents in the United States: the National Security Education Act (NSEA) in the first half of the 1990s, providing funding for graduate and undergraduate students (and hence, indirectly, to departments) for post-cold war area studies research, organized through the Defense Intelligence Agency (‘an outfit that makes the CIA look liberal and enlightened,’ says Cumings) with a requirement that those students serve an intelligence agency after receiving a grant; and, at the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), a restructuring plan for academic funding that includes ‘a desire to move away from fixed regional identities given that globalization has made the “areas” more porous, less bounded, less fixed.’ Cumings’ point is that

One such declassified document, a “Development Program” from the public policy think tank Council on Foreign Relations, dated June 1, 1951—nearly a year into the Korean War and in the midst of the McCarthy era—specifically argues for the objective necessity of area studies programs that are concomitant to the role of the United States on the global stage. The arguments presented in the document reflect a growing anxiety about creating and maintaining a line of scholars who conform to nationalist masculine norms, in particular to direct and appease a homogenously and paternalistically portrayed U.S. public:

The American people are faced with a situation of great tension in international affairs which may continue for some years. Our national existence may depend on their ability to stand the strain without surrendering to either the appeasers or the warmongers. The propaganda of pressure groups and the dogmatic assertions of columnists and radio commentators tend to increase the strain by bringing about an artificial polarization of opinions. To the man in the street, and even to many intelligent laymen, their plausible solutions and ready-made answers are a welcome substitute for the painful processes of independent judgment.

According to the document, the program’s concern about “[o]ur national existence” depends not on the U.S. government’s flexing of the recently fortified military industrial complex, but rather on “the strain” introduced to the U.S. public by “pressure groups and the dogmatic assertions of columnists and radio commentators,” who serve to circulate “an artificial polarization of opinions.” The program operates in the assumption that the scholars they recruit will produce true, non-“artificial” knowledge about the vaguely

in many ways academic transnationalism has had to serve the goals of the U.S. government or business. Those of us who early hoped that we could ride the transnationalism funding horse to a different destination were largely disappointed. ‘Us and IBM! We’ll all be transnational!’ one of our colleagues said as she dashed off grant proposals—only to find that the Ford Foundation, for example, was not interested in funding a ‘transnationalism’ conference in Mexico—especially not if the goal of the funding was to fly in Latin American scholars. Transnationalism, apparently, was something done in the United States by U.S. American scholars. The irony apparently escaped Ford” (626). Because I am currently funded by the Ford Foundation, I am especially attentive to Ford’s role in shaping the Cold War legacies that inaugurated epistemologically violent, politically dangerous, and exceptionalist ways of understanding the Korean War.

identified “situation of great tension in international affairs,” correcting the problem of the apparently un-American acts of expressing ideas. The document addresses concerns for a U.S. public imaginable only as masculine, “the man in the street,” even “many intelligent laymen,” who appear to struggle with “the painful processes of independent judgment.”

The document continues its paternalistic representation of Americans and their ability to comprehend the true matter of foreign affairs, stating: “Most Americans now acknowledge that their country is firmly committed to international collaboration. They go even further; they understand that, because of America’s great power and wealth, it must assume the role of leader in world affairs...Americans, especially the leaders of opinion, must be helped to understand world affairs and to make up their minds what policies are to be followed.” In addition to naturalizing the role of U.S. state power on the global stage, which it necessarily “must assume,” the program explicitly seeks to influence policymakers, “helping” them “to make up their minds” on the policies generated by the think tank, which are then unquestionably “to be followed.” The program’s recommendation for implementing an expansion of research and publication is “to add to its staff three young men of the rank of assistant or associate professor in the age group, 30-40, who are particularly competent in political science and modern history.” The document explicitly identifies the producers of true, objective knowledge as young men in authoritative social science disciplines, disciplines that feed into Cold War area studies. This criteria for selection reveals the particularly situated positions of knowledge producers, implicitly marked as white and propertied, given the limitations of

access to higher education for women, nonwhite people, and working class people during and just prior to the Korean War era.³¹

The formation of Cold War knowledge production has been sustained through such attempts to shape knowledge in the educational, political, and cultural spheres. As Lowe argues, “education forms citizens for the political sphere by disavowing the racialization and gendering of noncitizen labor in the economic sphere and through the teaching of national culture in the cultural sphere. The formation of citizens as subjects of national culture and modern civil society has required a fluency in national narratives and in those disciplinary divisions that suppresses the history of racialization and racialized exclusion from citizenship” (“International” 39). The declassified Council on Foreign Relations document’s insistence on university appointments for “young men...who are particularly competent in political science and modern history” signals an intensification of the construction of exceptionalist knowledge in the Korean War era. While it might appear axiomatic that such “young men” responsible for culling and creating knowledge on international regions of interest to the state are implicitly marked as white, I suggest the importance of calling into question how knowledge producers are positioned. While the focus on funding in reports included in Cumings’s *Parallel Visions* and Francis X. Sutton’s works is necessary, an inquiry into how Cold War policy and university knowledge producers are situated is also essential. Attending to funding sources as the only contexts underpinning knowledge production naturalizes the universal subject of knowledge production, rather than inquiring into both the structures and people

³¹ Lowe states in “The International within the National” that “[t]he historical exclusion of Asian immigrants and Asian Americans from the political and cultural spheres continues, and is reproduced, in the relative invisibility of [the] history of racialization within the modern university” (38).

participating in the formation of “disciplinary divisions that suppresses the history of racialization and racialized exclusion from citizenship” (Lowe 39).

I suggest that the Korean War signals a moment that isolates the ontology and genealogies of American exceptionalism and dominant knowledge production in the post-Cold War era. Mimi Nguyen frames her compelling book, *The Gift of Freedom*, with Foucault’s statement that “[t]his is not an analytics of truth; it will concern what might be called an ontology of the present, an ontology of ourselves” (quoted in Nguyen 1). This chapter travels both the well-worn and more obscured paths that guide us to an understanding of how the Korean War unfolds to and *continues to become* in the present as a war that was never a war for the United States, but a police action, and as a war that has not ended, but is still ongoing. And so the Korean War unsettles the meaning of “the present,” which is dressed in a normalizing temporal garb, and allows for a “genealogy... focused more on the conditions of possibility that enabled various claims to be made at different times, how claims, once made, came to be regarded as tenable, and what the political result of that outcome was” (Edkins 46). Korea, like all the nation-states geographically demarcated as inhabiting “East Asia,” has accrued meaning in the United States within nineteenth-century orientalist and exceptionalist Cold War contexts. Yet both dominant and marginal accounts of the Korean War expose fissures of such ideologies, fissures that include the very attempts made by the state to truncate access to official files.

In contrast to the narratives of the Korean War shaped by knowledge production in area studies, a discipline that is sustained by nineteenth-century roots in texts such as Griffis’s *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, I suggest that Susan Choi’s novel *The Foreign*

Student (1998) traces an alternative to dominant forms of knowledge production fueled by large private foundations and the U.S. military. In the novel, the title character Chang Ahn flees Korea in 1955 to become a foreign student at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, where he meets Katherine Monroe, a white woman who constantly challenges and thereby threatens the rigid social order of the small town. The novel cuts among Chang's life in the United States, his memories and experiences of the war, Katherine's adolescence, and the relationship they develop with each other. Significant moments in the novel include Chang's memories and nightmares of the events leading up to (and his own excruciating torture during) the war, Katherine's relationship with her father's colleague, which began when she was fourteen and he was forty, and Chang's shifting modes of racialization as he encounters differentially racialized groups in different parts of the United States.

The Foreign Student occupies a near-canonical position with American cultural studies scholars. Literary scholar Daniel Kim suggests that the novel's troubling of linear history as well as its ability to situate readers themselves as the "foreign students" of an unfamiliar Korean history "makes it a text tailor-made for an American Studies that has increasingly adopted a transnational orientation" (551). Several scholars, including Daniel Kim, Jodi Kim, Crystal Parikh, and Roderick Ferguson, note the importance of translation in the novel, commenting on Chang's role as an interpreter for the U.S. military, as well as his role as an educator introducing Korea and the Korean War for church audiences, which he conducts in exchange for his tuition at the University of the South. Jodi Kim, in her significant book *Ends of Empire*, states "*The Foreign Student*, both the novel and the character, thus present the Korean War as an epistemological

conundrum, a problem of knowledge production and comprehension overdetermined by and saturated with the imperial and gendered racial optics of the Cold War military intervention and its aftermaths” (151). She suggests that in addition to relegation as the “forgotten” war, the Korean War is also a war made unknowable or illegible, thus a project requiring translation. Her analysis of Choi’s novel attends to Chang’s multiple roles as translator, and argues that both the character and the novel serve the critical function of “bad translators” of the war, calling attention to the “complex problem” of the Korean War, inaugurating understandings that critically lack fidelity to the dominant narrative of the war (156).

Daniel Kim’s article pays “particular attention to the figure of translation. For the novel does not claim to be an objective or authentic representation of the war, but instead foregrounds the mediated quality of its depictions,” echoing very closely Jodi Kim’s argument sketched above (551-2). He further states “Choi’s novel engages in complex ways the question of how the remembrance of this historical trauma might figure in the elaboration of Korean American cultural identities,” significant also in his argument that the Korean War serves as a nodal point of transnational legacies of race and racialization (553). Both scholars are concerned with the memory and knowledge production surrounding the Korean War, so as not, in the language of the novel, to “exempt it from history” (Choi 64). Yet by the very practices of translating and re-reading the narrative of the war, Chang generates critical tensions between what readers may know as historical truth and his own uneasy, ill-fitting didactic lectures in exchange for his own education in Sewanee.

The scene in which Chang delivers a slideshow of Korea for the members of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, located in Jackson, Tennessee, is a particularly productive one for American cultural studies scholars, specifically because of Chang's attempts to make the Korean War legible or even palatable for a white Southern audience. I suggest that this scene also challenges dominant understandings of the war disseminated through the emergent area studies channels I discuss above. In his presentations Chang is "called upon to deliver a clear explanation of the war. It defied explanation. Sometimes he simply skipped over causes, and began, 'Korea is a shape just like Florida. Yes? The top half is a Communist state, and the bottom half are fighting for democracy!' He would groundlessly compare the parallel to the Mason-Dixon line, and see every head nod excitedly" (Choi 51). As several scholars observe, the Korean War "defied explanation," which I suggest applies for Chang, whose memories and experiences of the brutal war punctuate the novel, as much as it applies to his audience (Choi 51).³²

Indeed, Chang's attempts to situate the Korean War within the history of the U.S. Civil War, by "groundlessly compar[ing] the parallel to the Mason-Dixon line," stems from the necessity to position the war in relationship to a history his audience can grasp, but also functions to contest the dominant understanding of the war as provoked by a communist invasion from the north and resituates it as a civil war. The asymmetries in the circulation of knowledge are striking in this passage—the audience may well compose the "many" in Griffis's 1882 statement, "Many ask, 'What's in Corea?' and 'Is Corea of any importance in the history of the world?'" (xiii). Yet through his

³² Jodi Kim, Daniel Kim, and Crystal Parikh articulate important readings of this scene in *The Foreign Student*.

pedagogical gesture, Chang demonstrates not only how to rework the Korean War into the U.S. Civil War, but conversely the significance of juxtaposing two wars motivated by capitalist expansion and driven by ideologies of bestowing freedom. Chang also subtly frames the Korean War as a civil war, rather than as a conflict with unquestioned origins in the north's communist invasion of the south. Indeed, within the presumed racially prescribed space of the U.S. South, in which his very presence disrupts white supremacist racial binaries, his comparison of the two nationalist wars criticizes the violence of nation-building.

On the other hand, Roderick Ferguson reads this passage as associating “anticommunism not simply with the United States but with the lost freedoms of the slave-owning classes in the United States. As a result of this narrative in which democracy becomes the confederacy and South Korea becomes the Southern United States, a foreign student like Chang becomes the equivalent of the white Southern citizen as well, contriving (Southern) U.S. culture as tantamount to South Korean” (154).³³ Ferguson's reading does not consider the incommensurability of “a foreign student like Chang becom[ing] the equivalent of the white Southern citizen,” especially in the context of Chang's audience, mostly older white women who interrogate his mere physical proximity to Katherine—who drives and accompanies him to the church—with “a subtle, unremitting scrutiny, disguised as politeness” (Choi 54). Ferguson's reading forecloses the possibilities of critiquing the white supremacist state's investment in managing the intimate boundaries of white racial purity in the novel. Both social and legal anti-

³³ Ferguson states that “[a]s a dramatization that links the U.S. role in the Korean War to the changing nature of American colleges and universities, the novel allegorizes how the figure of the foreign student was shaped by Cold War anticommunism,” which I suggest is significant for an understanding of post-war area studies.

miscegenation policing complicates Chang's putative desire for whiteness. Indeed, as I discuss in the next section, richer critical possibilities emerge in examining the racial recalibration required in the U.S. South to explain Chang's relationships with both the Black and white residents of Sewanee, Tennessee.

Furthermore, as a refugee and newly stateless individual, Chang's anxious and coerced relationship with the white supremacist U.S. South compels his gratitude, yet even in such a space he resists demonizing either communism or North Korea by lecturing that "[t]he Soviets, on their side, enabled the return from exile of a great people's hero, a revolutionary who had fought the Japanese throughout the thirties" (Choi 51). By stating "[t]his man become the leader of Communist North Korea," Chang asserts a revolutionary, "a great people's hero," a man who challenges and resists both Japanese and U.S. imperialisms, as the leader of the north. I suggest that such representations brush against the grain of dominant U.S. knowledge production during the Korean War era, and create possibilities of thinking otherwise to narratives with totalizing anti-communist imperatives.

Though Chang and his audience are situated fifty years after the first publication of Griffis's *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, Chang "realizes that Korea, if known at all to his audience, exists primarily through racialized and primitivist tropes" (J. Kim 152). Chang's use of the slideshow, snapshots projected to accompany his lecture, serve as isolations of a static history and a country stuck in time, which he is expected to thaw for this audience. I quote at length from the novel in order to trace the circuit from Griffis's 1882 accounts of Korea to Chang's refusal to rehearse the dominant narratives of the war:

He punched the slide-changer now, and Korea After 1945 was replaced by The U.S. Infantry Coming out of the Seoul Railway Station, a soap-scrubbed and smiling platoon marching into the clean, level street... People were often surprised by the vaulted dome of the train station, and the European-looking avenue of trees. ‘That’s Seoul?’ a woman asked, vaguely disappointed. The file of troops looked confident and happy, because the picture had not been taken during the Korean conflict at all, but in September 1945, after the Japanese defeat. The photo’s original caption had read, ‘Liberation feels fine! U.S. and their Soviet allies arrive to clean house in Korea.’ No one was dreaming there would be a civil war. He followed the U.S. Infantry slide with Water Buffalo in a Rice Paddy, and then Village Farmers Squatting Down to Smoke, which satisfied the skepticism of the woman who had asked about the Seoul railway station. Everyone murmured with pleasure at the image of the farmers, in their year-round pajamas and inscrutable Eskimos’ faces...(Choi 52).

Chang deliberately reorders the chronology of the war in his slides, projecting an image of “a soap-scrubbed and smiling platoon” that “looked confident and happy, because the picture had not been taken during the Korean conflict at all, but in September 1945, after the Japanese defeat.” By literally re-sequencing these moments in history, Chang is able to manipulate his narrative of the Korean War in suggestive ways. In place of a picture “taken during the Korean conflict,” Chang instead inserts into this narrative chronology the beginning of U.S. occupation, following a Korean liberation that was little more than an afterthought for the United States, merely arriving “to clean house in Korea” (Choi 52). The unmistakably domestic and paternalistic overtones of “cleaning house” situates the United States in a position of establishing order, while simultaneously recalling both the U.S. military’s use of Korean “houseboys” during the occupation and the war, and Chang’s own domestic role at the university’s dining hall near the end of the novel. One of the dominant narratives of the U.S. military involvement in Korea, leading up to the Korean War, is its deliverance of double salvation, first from Japanese

colonization and then again from the North Korean, Chinese, and Soviet communist forces, ironically captured in the caption for one of the images as the United States “and their Soviet allies.” However, Chang’s slideshow links Japan and the United States as occupiers, and thereby displaces the narrative that the United States served as liberators.³⁴

Conspicuously absent from Chang’s slideshow are images of the peninsula’s devastating destruction during and after the ceasefire of the Korean War. Instead, “[m]ost of his pictures were from a set of National Archive photographs of Korea, in which it looked dim, impoverished, and unredeemable...He understood that people liked something to look at, and that even the least seasoned audience eventually lost interest in looking at him” (Choi 39). Chang’s audiences, however, do not have access to the slides’ origin, and instead rely on Chang as the transparent source of cultural authenticity in relaying information about Korea. This is, of course, just as long as Chang conforms to the audiences’ expectations, so that “[e]veryone murmured with pleasure at the image of the farmers, in their year-round pajamas and inscrutable Eskimos’ faces,” an audience who are “vaguely disappointed” with “skepticism” and “often surprised by the vaulted dome of the train station, and the European-looking avenue of trees” (Choi 52). The fact that the National Archives photographs serve as a proxy for Chang as the “something to look at” suggests not only his own objectification in the eyes of his audience, but also their attempts to situate him within the national gaze. Indeed, Chang’s “exotically” racialized presence in the U.S. South underwrites such an attempt, yet “that even the least

³⁴ Korean War scholar Dong-Choon Kim suggests both the unbroken genealogy of colonial and neo-colonial occupation in Korea and Korean anti-colonial resistance to Japanese colonialism in “The Long Road Toward Truth and Reconciliation”: while “[e]fforts by Koreans to face their dark past began on 15 August 1945 when the nation broke free from Japanese occupation,” the “U.S. policy of resurrecting Imperial Japan’s governing architecture in South Korea reflected the ideological confrontation seen in the cold war era” (525, 530).

seasoned audience eventually lost interest in looking at him” ironically frames his inclusion of the proxy image, the photograph of farmers with “inscrutable Eskimos’ faces.”

Chang uses the National Archives photographs perversely, reworking images collected by the U.S. state to inscribe “dim, impoverished, and unredeemable” portraits of Korea, for the purpose of subverting the dominant narrative of the U.S. role in the Korean War. To project slides that do capture the ruins and wreckage of the war would demand that Chang elaborate stories of a war that “defied explanation,” and would demand a more thorough examination of why he is in Tennessee, to supplement his statement “that his presence before them was the direct result of MacArthur’s Inchon landing. ‘I’m not here, if this doesn’t happen’” (Choi 50). In contrast to his presentation, “which sought to be generic and not surprising or unpleasant,” the fantastic violence of Chang’s torture scenes, spliced through the narration of his experience in the U.S. South, suggests the untranslatability of certain histories in the contradictory spaces generated by the imperialist moves of the United States (Choi 39).

Chang’s refusal to display violent images of the conflict, in contrast to the vivid dream-like spectacles of his own excruciating torture during the war, also functions to blur the temporal boundaries of the Korean War. During the war, Chang is apprehended by the nascent, U.S.-backed Republic of Korea Army and “arrested by the National Police on suspicion of espionage” on Jeju Island, where he had hoped to meet his insurgent friend, Kim (Choi 304).³⁵ Chang’s presence on the island during the war,

³⁵ “Jejudo is an island located in the southern region of the Korean peninsula. In 1948, on Jejudo, hundreds of partisan forces, active in the mountainous areas, rebelled against the general election that was destined to legitimize national division. The South Korean military and police, supported by U.S. troops, were

guided by his communist friend, is significant because of the prior South Korean and U.S. anti-communist repression of the island's inhabitants: as Grace Cho states, "[t]he peasant uprising on Jeju Island on April 3, 1948, and the subsequent counterinsurgency authorized by the Rhee Syngman regime and backed by the U.S. military" constituted one of the most violent post-Second World War clashes in Korea (55). Furthermore, Chang's capture on the island during the Korean War recalls that "[t]he mass killing of Jeju villagers in the name of anticommunism was a precursor to the events of June 25, 1950, one whose visibility casts doubt on the accepted narrative about when and how the Korean War started" (Cho 55). Read alongside Chang's temporal re-sequencing of the National Archives slides for his church audience, I suggest that his presence and arrest on the island during the Korean War also creates an alternate chronology of the war that rewrites the origin myth of benevolence and liberation into the prehistory of violent anti-communist repression.

While Chang is imprisoned by the National Police and tortured for information about the Communists on Jeju Island, his humanity becomes legible only through temporal mediation. Chang is, among other inflictions, brutally beaten, his head pulled "backwards by his hair until he thought his neck would break," "made to swallow his vomit," given "putrefying meat to eat" (Choi 308). After the National Police chains break his right wrist, "[h]e was shackled by his left hand now. He learned to haul himself up by it, to gash the inside of his right forearm against the sharp end of the bolt. He made a new gash every night. The marks spread across his arm, crisscrossing sometimes, but

deployed to subdue the rebellious guerillas. Thirty thousand of the 150,000 residents were known to have been killed for serving the guerillas. This incident represented the prelude to the Korean War massacres" (Dong-Choon Kim 534). While Chang's refuge on Cheju Island occurs during the war itself, Choi recalls the earlier violence authorized against the people resisting U.S.-backed rule.

still readable, like the lines on his palm. He did not know how else to keep track of time, and he was determined to control at least the passage of his body through time. He could not control anything else” (Choi 308). Chang’s body harbors the echoes of anti-communist counterinsurgencies, echoes of torture that, like the war itself, “defied explanation” (Choi 51). Indeed, during Chang’s incarceration no other passage is possible, confined as he is by shackles and pain, so that “the passage of his body through time” appears to be the exclusive source of movement. Yet his very body also becomes a type of passage, an organic palimpsest etched with Chang’s deliberate acts of pain, to document the remnants of violence that are “still readable,” a passage that he later refuses to read to a white Southern audience only interested in “an exciting, simple minded, morally unambiguous story” (Choi 52).

As an act of empire in the Pacific, U.S. military aggression in Korea creates an occasion for a circuit of migration, with Chang’s own migration interrupting the ongoing racial formation in the U.S. South. Indeed, his presence reveals not only contradictory processes of racialization but suggests possibilities of a potential counter racial formation through his encounters with Blacks and other nonwhite people. Through a pedagogically cloaked palimpsest, Chang’s mission for the purpose of his tuition—telling people what they might want to hear about a place called Korea—actually mirrors both the legacy of racialization and racial violence inscribed into the emergence of the United States through an anti-colonial re-narration. At the same time, however, his very presence, translatable only as utterly foreign and inassimilable, disrupts his own incorporation into the U.S. cultural matrix and throws into relief renewed processes of racialization required to explain his presence in the U.S. South. The next section stays in the U.S. South, and

examines the role of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, a white supremacist organization which exerted significant influence in building monuments dedicated to the Confederacy, as well as the unanticipated relationships created through their support for the Center for the Study of the Korean War.

Wicked falsehoods and embracing the villain within: United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Center for the Study of the Korean War

The Center for the Study of the Korean War was created by Paul Edwards, a Korean War veteran and a historian of the war. The Center, located in Independence, Missouri was established in 1989, in order to function as a repository for the artifacts of Korean War veterans who were at that time beginning to pass away. Thus the Center has two central goals: to expand its collections as an archive and library, and to further the study of the Korean War, so that such conflicts might be avoided in the future. Yet the Center operates from an investment in a dominant nationalist history of the war. In this section, I analyze Paul Edwards's book *To Acknowledge a War: The Korean War in American Memory* (2000), read the archive itself into the history of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (who provide support for the Center), and tease out the complex relationship between archives like the Center and their relationship to literature, in particular *The Foreign Student*.

Significantly, as a historian, Edwards himself criticizes the discipline of history for failing to remember or even acknowledge the "forgotten war," but his deeply reactionary critique is directed toward what he implicitly frames as a multicultural and subjective history. Edwards writes that

In the last half-century or so, events of the past have often been dismissed as more representative of “memory” than of “meaning.” Thus, we are often found searching for meaning not in what has happened but in the coincidences of separate environments, special emphases, and cultural explanations...Out of a sense of national guilt—guilt for having been successful and reasonably happy—we have elected to “embrace the villain within” and moved toward a separate-but-equal concept of history...the historical disciplines [have never] been so dominated by inquiries in such limited and unrelated fields. (20)

Edwards constructs a binary of “memory” and “meaning,” in which “meaning” inhabits the teleological certainty of “what has happened,” and “memory” is relegated to the racially coded realms of “*separate* environments, *special* emphases, and *cultural* explanations” (emphasis added). “Separate,” “special,” and “cultural” all register accounts of history that exceed the dominant narrative of the war, traditionally written by white historians beginning in the 1950s.

Indeed, Edwards’s decision to describe what he perceives as a diluted history as “separate-but-equal” recalls significant legal moments in U.S. racial history—“separate-but-equal” is the language of *Plessy v. Ferguson* and *Brown v. Board of Education*, two Supreme Court cases that legislated the possibility and mandated the reversal of Jim Crow laws and attitudes in the United States. What initially appears to be curious choice of words for Edwards to use in describing the lacuna of the Korean War in U.S. history becomes clearer when we consider that the shift in history he critiques happen “[i]n the last half-century or so,” since the 1954 *Brown v. Board* decision. The unambiguous, politically authoritative, and U.S. exceptionalist understanding of history, fashioned by scholars such as the “young men” recruited by the Council on Foreign Relations during the 1950s, which I discuss in the previous section, is the history Edwards asserts as harboring legitimate “meaning.”

Edwards also claims that approaches to history since the Korean War era have been afflicted with “a sense of national guilt—guilt for having been successful and reasonably happy—[and] we have elected to ‘embrace the villain within’” (20). The unexamined, unified “nation” he invokes in this statement is categorically homogenous, and refers to those with access to the American dream, those who “hav[e] been successful and reasonably happy,” a nation implicitly marked as white and propertied. In one formulation, “the villain[s] within” are the carriers of (white) “national guilt,” who then attempt to alleviate this anxiety in the discipline of history with concessions to “inquiries in such limited and unrelated fields” (20). In another interpretation, however, “the villain within” may refer to the people on the margins of the American dream, who persistently expose the bankruptcy of the myth.

Edwards operates within the narrative of political correctness, suggesting that the teaching of a complete and absolute history has been “rewritten, reinterpreted, or selectively remembered for the sake of political correctness and to appease a national lack of self-confidence” (20). Indeed, Edwards claims that the teaching of the Korean War “would be a nightmare to those needing some politically correct presentation” (21). What emerges through his narrative of “a national lack of self-confidence” is the desire for an authoritative, comprehensive version of history, a universal, white and male version that does not succumb to “some politically correct presentation.” Furthermore, as evidence that “[t]he number of Korean War poetry, short stories, novels, academic works, and even films is small indeed,” Edwards cites scholar Paul Fussell, who “finds that the Korean War ‘generated virtually no literature’” (23, 24). Such claims gloss over the significance of the Korean War literature in English by nonwhite writers, much of which

was in print in 2000, the date of publication for Edwards's study.³⁶ In addition to anxieties about "politically correct" and therefore partial histories of the Korean War, the fact that he finds "virtually no literature" about the war, in particular ignoring literature written by Chicana/o writers and members of the Korean diaspora, suggests Edwards's narrow definition of literature and its producers. And so the ideological imperative driving the Center is not neutral or objective, but rather saturated in nationalist discourses, discourses that remain white and masculine.

The United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), which supports the Center for the Study of the Korean War and many other U.S. military and U.S. military veterans' organizations, also claims a similar nationalist discourse in its mission. I trace here a brief legacy of the UDC, from its emergence in the late nineteenth-century to their recent activities supporting the Center for the Study of the Korean War. The primary objective of UDC, founded in 1894, was "to transform [Confederate] military defeat into a political and cultural victory, where states' rights and white supremacy remained intact" (Cox 1). Membership to the organization is contingent on showing evidence of "blood descent" from veterans who participated in supporting the Confederate States of America or from members of the UDC. The gendered language of kinship that identifies the women of the organization affirms their investments in the status as "true" daughters, and thus the legitimate inheritors of the Confederate nation.

³⁶ A limited list includes: Susan Choi's *The Foreign Student* (1999); Rolando Hinojosa's *Korean Love Songs* (1978) and *The Useless Servants* (1993); and Heinz Insu Fenkl's *Memories of My Ghost Brother* (1996). Though the Korean War is not central in these works, Tomás Rivera's *...y no se lo tragó la tierra (...and the Earth Did Not Devour Him)* (1971) and Rosaura Sánchez's *He Walked In and Sat Down and Other Stories* (2000) also theorize the significance of the Korean War for Chicana/o communities.

“Daughters” also invokes naturalized discourses not just of feminization and infantilization, but also as the descendants and reproducers of the Confederacy, ensuring a living genealogy as well as preserving Confederate traditions. The process of racialized gender formation for members of the UDC in the post-Reconstruction Jim Crow South must not be understated, especially in relationship to the construction of Black masculinity as a threat to the putative racial and sexual “purity” of the nation. Thus the racialized gender formation of the UDC made it dangerous for Blacks to “publicly criticiz[e] white women in the Jim Crow South. They could criticize the message, but not the messengers” (Cox 6). The UDC’s gendered kinship status as legitimate “daughters” of the nation afforded them decisive impunity for reproducing, transmitting, and retrenching white supremacy.

The gendered ideologies driving the UDC intersect of course with white supremacy, but also with ideologies intent on preserving elite class status. In *Dixie’s Daughters*, a study of the UDC, Karen Cox states “many members of the organization were, at the very least, social elites. Judging by the officers of the organization, the Daughters married well—to merchants, lawyers, judges, and members of state legislatures. Many were also descendants of planter families, whose fathers were Confederate officers...Most received a formal education, at private female seminaries and women’s colleges” (5). While members of the UDC exercised their power in fundraising for memorials, overseeing the construction of veterans’ houses and organizations, and creating libraries and archives, they are also kin to the people that wield tremendous power in making and enforcing laws. In their role in ensuring the success of the Confederate legacy as well as supporting the U.S. military after

Confederate defeat, members of the UDC work to protect and preserve the histories of the U.S. military, and to record its practice of extending “freedom” abroad. Because the UDC to this day explicitly funds veterans’ projects, the organization creates a direct circuit between white supremacist, Southern-born organizations and military interventions abroad. Indeed, the discourse informing the emergence of the UDC is a militarized discourse, advocating for the Confederacy.

The UDC actively archived and supported Confederate projects during the Korean War, as William D. McCain, the director of the Mississippi Division of Archives and History,³⁷ evidences in his praise of the Mississippi Daughters’ work in 1952: “Your unselfish efforts to preserve and maintain the priceless records of our Southern heritage and to keep that heritage fresh in the minds of our citizens have done much to keep us from being engulfed in the chaos and slavery that the Communists and their sympathizers seek for us in this country” (Cox 159). McCain’s use of “slavery” to evoke antipathy against communists, in his support of the UDC in Mississippi, strangely realigns those in the Confederate cause as inculpable victims and resistance fighters working to protect “Southern heritage,” the destruction of which was apparently in McCain’s mind the primary aim of communists. The real threat in McCain’s statement, of course, is the work the UDC is engaged in “to keep that heritage fresh in the minds of our citizens,” which manifests in material reminders of white supremacy in the form of monuments and buildings celebrating the Confederacy.

³⁷ According to Cox, McCain “eventually became president of Mississippi Southern College (not the University of Southern Mississippi). He was also a national officer in the SCV [Sons of Confederate Veterans]” (Cox).

While the UDC's direct support for the Center for the Study of the Korean War took place after the Center's establishment in Independence, Missouri in 1989, the UDC's connection to Missouri is bound up with the organization's origins: "Ironically, the first group of women to call themselves 'Daughters of the Confederacy' was organized in a non-Confederate state, Missouri, in 1890. The Daughters of the Confederacy in St. Louis, led by Mrs. A. C. Cassidy, organized for the purpose of assisting the Ex-Confederate Association that wanted to build a home for disabled veterans... Women across the South repeated the Missouri DOC's efforts" (Cox 16). The UDC's Independence, Missouri chapter organized support for the Center for the Study of the Korean War, a disturbing reminder of the deep white supremacist roots that underpin dominant knowledge construction. Indeed, the UDC support for the Center for the Study of the Korean War itself extends from a longer history of Confederate archive-building:

Soon after its founding in 1894, the UDC became the Confederate organization most actively engaged in combating what one Texas Daughter called 'wicked falsehoods.' Many UDC leaders spoke about the importance of impartial history, but their organization's efforts to preserve history were also concrete and systematic. The Daughters collected artifacts for museums and supported their male counterparts in setting up state departments of archives and history. (Cox 95)

Notably, the "wicked falsehoods" about and the "impartial history" of the Confederacy could be corrected through collecting "artifacts for museums" and supporting "their male counterparts in setting up state departments of archives and history." History, in this case, must carry certain and objective masculine authority, especially if supported by faithful Daughters. The very idea that the UDC are able to participate in the creation of state archives, moreover, demonstrates their access establishing legitimacies that are foreclosed to others, especially for Black residents of

the U.S. South. UDC's attempts to establish a singular and universal history of the Confederacy resonates with Yoneyama's assertion that "the production of knowledge about the past...is always enmeshed in the exercise of power and is always accompanied by elements of repression" (*Hiroshima Traces* 27). To build an image of the Confederacy in response to "wicked falsehoods" vilifying the Confederacy is to repress the vein of white supremacy that runs deep in the establishment of archives. However innocuous the Center for the Study of the Korean War's funding from the UDC might appear, such actions are embedded within racially saturated ideologies and create new relations of power that channel knowledge production in certain ways.³⁸

I suggest that the UDC connects the preservation of white supremacy domestically to their support of nationalist wars (coded in the language of freedom, benevolence, and democracy) abroad, in particular the Korean War. Cultural texts such as *The Foreign Student* show, then, what happens when people like Chang, who index the impact and violence of empire, move into the imperial center, in a place such as Sewanee, Tennessee, which is saturated in the restrained and overt expressions of white supremacy. For this section's reading of the novel, I return to the scene in which Chang and Katherine travel together to Jackson, Tennessee for Chang's lecture on Korea for the members of St. Paul's Episcopal Church. Instead of returning to Chang's lecture itself, which I argue above engages in both a perverse complicity in reiterating dominant

³⁸ Literature plays a fascinating role in the wartime recollections of some U.S. prisoners of war in Chinese camps: "There were a few tattered, dog-eared books which passed from hand to hand. Andrew Condrón read Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca*, and was driven mad by the absence of the very last page, torn out by his captors. Years later Condrón discovered that it contained a casually hostile reference to Communists. Generally, they were allowed to keep books the Chinese considered ideologically sound: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *War and Peace*, Lenin's *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, some Steinbecks, those works of Dickens which were thought to present a sufficiently bleak portrait of the plight of the proletariat" (Hastings 295).

knowledge claims about Korea and asserts a critique of those same knowledge claims, I first turn to a conversation between Katherine and the priest that greets them on their arrival to the church. I suggest this scene critically captures the racialized and gendered anxieties occasioned by Chang's presence in the South and subtly records the embedded impact of the UDC.

Constructions of white womanhood and the hint of potential miscegenation characterize this scene, which takes place just before Chang's lecture about Korea. After their arrival at the church, "[t]hey saw the priest coming across the yard, frowning and nodding in welcome. 'I'm Katherine Monroe,' she announced when he'd drawn near, rising to offer her hand. He was looking at [Chang] as he groped for it. 'I didn't realize Mr. Ahn would be accompanied'" (Choi 48). While the priest was expecting the arrival of the foreign student to present his lecture on Korea and the Korean War, Katherine's unexpected presence jars the priest into assessing and policing the possibilities of their relationship. In this scene, Katherine decides not to stay for Chang's lecture, stating that her presence would only make him nervous, and asks the priest, "'Did you think of anything I should see, Father?'" (Choi 48). After some light banter, the priest responds "'If you were a southerner, I could think you'd take an interest in our monument square, but you might find it interesting anyway.' Katherine laughed again. 'I am a southerner, Father'" (Choi 48).

Though a small moment in the novel, I suggest that it directs readers to the heart of the racialized and gendered anxiety that Chang's presence generates, and hearkens to the legacies of the UDC. The fact that the priest does not perceive Katherine to be a southerner registers her limited viability in representing respectable white womanhood, a

proper southern “Daughter” to his status as “Father.” Furthermore, the priest’s suggestion to “take an interest in our monument square” (Choi 48) alludes to the fact that “the Daughters successfully campaigned to build monuments in almost every city, town, and state of the former Confederacy...Monuments were central to the UDC’s campaign to vindicate Confederate men, just as they were part of an overall effort to preserve the values still revered by white southerners...Significantly, southern blacks, who had no stake in celebrating the Confederacy, had to share a cultural landscape that did” (Cox 49). Bound up in this moment, in which Chang, Katherine, and the priest negotiate a renewed racial crucible in which to alter the existing Black/white racial framework, is the physical evidence of a white supremacist landscape shaped by the efforts of the gendered subjects of white supremacy.

Choi’s novel also recalibrates the racialized triangulation around the “threat” to white womanhood through the predatory and coercive sexual relationship in the beginning of the novel between 14 year old Katherine Monroe and 40- something Charles Addison, who becomes Chang’s Shakespeare professor. By juxtaposing their relationship against the myth of the Black rapist that continues to inform the dominant U.S. racial imaginary, Choi untells the myth in showing the actual sexual threat of the white Charles Addison. Furthermore, Chang’s eventual relationship with Katherine compounds anxieties about interracial intimacies and miscegenation in the U.S. South, and makes visible differential spectrums of racialized acceptability. The intimate epistemologies unsettling racialized and sexualized ways of “knowing” function critically

to both recall and counter the “storehouse”³⁹ of racial imagery embedded into the dominant U.S. optic. Thus Choi’s novel refuses to forget the contesting histories of U.S. empire, and enables a reading practice that discloses the disjunctures and continuities of the long shadow of racialization in the United States, concentrated in the novel’s memories of the Korean War.

Juxtaposed against the figure of Charles Addison, who perceives himself to be a liberal thorn in Sewanee’s side, the Sons of Confederate Veterans operates as a direct masculine counterpart to the UDC, which “regarded the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) of Reconstruction as the South’s redeemer” and “officially recognized the Klan for helping to restore southern home rule and white supremacy” (Cox 37, 107).⁴⁰ In addition to the subtle gesture toward the work of the UDC that Choi makes in the scene with Katherine and the priest, Choi also writes in Chang’s encounter with a Grand Dragon in the KKK. Chang’s roommate in Sewanee, Crane, invites Chang to his home in Atlanta for Thanksgiving, assures Chang that ““They don’t hang Orientals,”” then ruminates on whether or not Chang would be mistaken for Black and lynched (Choi 56). The Grand Dragon is Crane’s father, who offers Chang the “choice” of white meat or dark, a racial binary allegorized in a Thanksgiving turkey: ““When you look back, Mr. Ahn, on your first years in America, on your first lessons in things American, you will think of the

³⁹ Here I refer to Robert Gooding-Williams’s chapter in *Reading Rodney King/Reading Urban Uprising*, entitled “Look, a Negro!”

⁴⁰ The UDC played a prominent role in knowledge production about the KKK: “UDC member Laura Martin Rose of West Point, Mississippi, rose to prominence as an authority on the Ku Klux Klan,” and “[i]n 1913 the UDC gave Rose’s primer, *The Ku Klux Klan or Invisible Empire*, its official endorsement and asked that division presidents promote its use in schools” (Cox 107, 109-10).

Cranes. I am giving you white meat and dark. You will develop a preference in time. You may develop a preference right away. If you do, exercise it” (Choi 60).⁴¹

As the ultimate representative of white supremacy, the Grand Dragon establishes his family as all “things American,” the universal, rational, and civilized template that attempts to define Chang’s “first years in America.” Through the occasion of Thanksgiving, a nation-building holiday memorializing the Anglo repression of Native peoples, the Grand Dragon dictates the “first lessons” of the United States: white supremacy reigns through the execution of conquest, terror, and imperial aggression. Rather than succumbing to the absurd scenario “of some noble aim like the creation of peace and understanding between a Grand Dragon of the Klan and a young Oriental,” the narrative instead propels Chang from an imperial and civil war in Korea and embeds him in the violent racial terrain of the U.S. South in 1955 (Choi 57). Crystal Parikh suggests the significance of the novel’s place and time: “in 1955, the year of the brutal and highly publicized murder of fourteen year old Emmet Till. The memory of the young boy’s tortured and broken body, as it was displayed by his mother to the nation in his open-casket funeral, thus offers a vanishing point against which we can consider Chang’s recuperated body as it moves into the segregated South.”⁴² The fantasy of integration and equality necessary for justifying the emergent U.S. role as a global power capable of democratizing nations on their way to freedom is absolutely shattered by Choi’s novel.

⁴¹ Daniel Kim states that “[t]he irony and symbolism of this gesture is hard to miss. Rather than being affronted by the appearance of a non-white guest at his dinner table, Mr. Crane seems willing to grant [Chang] an honor that his organization would forcibly reserve only for white men: the right to choose freely between white meat and dark” (563-4).

⁴² Mary Dudziak charts the historical moment immediately prior to 1955, noting that the “narrow boundaries of Cold War-era civil rights politics kept discussions of broad-based social change, or a linking of race and class, off the agenda,” even as ongoing racial violence (particularly against Black and Brown GIs returning from the Second World War) troubled international perception of the U.S. as champion of democracy (13).

Ongoing lessons in devastating moments of nation-building constitute Chang's experiences as a foreign student at the University of the South in Sewanee.⁴³ And despite the implications of his university's name, such lessons extend beyond the U.S. South as Chang travels throughout the United States during summer vacation, disallowing the notion that deeply rooted racism is regionally fixed.

The novel inserts the presence of the Ku Klux Klan into memories of the Korean War, thereby writing into these memories the contradictions inherent in the formation of the U.S. nation-state and contesting histories that seek to whitewash the long litany of violence that characterizes the nation. While the monuments to the Confederacy constructed by groups such as the UDC and the KKK may not be legible to Chang as physical manifestations of white supremacy, he might have encountered Confederate flags in Tennessee with a flash of recognition, from "a 1951 scandal involving Confederate flags hanging from Army tanks," or from the fact that "rebel flags fluttered in abundance in Korea" (Pash 172, 173). While passing through Georgia, Chang's gaze might linger on the vague familiarity of a Confederate uniform, since "the Army gave permission to the 31st Infantry Division band to wear Confederate uniforms because the rebel gray 'represents the regional origin of the division which enjoys all the heritage of the "Deep South" from which the division comes'" (Pash 172-3). Chang did not need to be present in Tennessee to witness the cultural artifacts of white supremacy; he, along

⁴³ More literal lessons, with more concrete challenges to dominant history also occur in the novel: "First-term grades were posted; he got an A in calculus, a surprising B in history, and the gentleman's C from Charles Addison. This last grade made him sneer. For history he had written an impassioned, grammatically reckless paper on the mistreatment of the American Indian which his professor had lavishly praised. Seeing it again he didn't recognize it. If he had been accused of plagiarism at that moment he would have surrendered. He had lost all interest in the English language and spoke less than ever, ate alone in the dining hall staring fiercely at a page of mathematics, the universal language that nobody spoke" (Choi 219).

with Black, Brown, Native American, and Asian GIs in the U.S. military, may have already known them in Korea.

Read together, *The Foreign Student*, the corralling of knowledge production by the Ford Foundation and the CIA, the emergence of Korean War archives, and the history of the United Daughters of the Confederacy urge us to remain attentive to the shifting, yet closely affiliated geographies of power. These disparate sites code and recode the Cold War ideologies that in turn animate orientalist and white supremacist specters from the nineteenth century. Yet *The Foreign Student* imagines the marginalized voices responding to those ideologies, forming alternate histories that vividly contest the dominant templates of white supremacist, heteropatriarchal capitalist nation- and empire-building, and illuminating possibilities that can change the typeset of those templates. The novel also captures what the misleading density of archives does not, providing narratives that exceed the seductive quality of archives which promise to contain and bridge spatial and temporal affects, moments, memories, histories.

Chapter Three
“It’s a brown place Korea is”: the Asian-Latino Pacific and the Korean War

Caught a double feature at the air base; both are at least two years old: *Treasure of Sierra Madre* and a western called *Red River*. . . As usual, Mexicans got gunned down in both movies, and this is when Joey said, “Between Bogart and John Wayne, they’ll get rid of all the Mexicans in Hollywood. . .”

– Rolando Hinojosa, *The Useless Servants*

My Dad fell in love with an Asian girl, when he was in Korea. Wanted to marry her, but the Army discouraged him. . . So he came back to the states, promising to send for her. He never did. . . Rumor has it he might even have left a son behind. . . poor bastard. A Korean Chicano. . .

– Luis Valdez, *I Don’t Have to Show You No Stinking Badges!*

Badges? We ain’t got no badges. We don’t need no badges!
I don’t have to show you any stinking badges!

– Alfonso Bedoya, *The Treasure of Sierra Madre*

In this chapter, I move from dominant knowledge production surrounding the Korean War to Chicano counter-narratives theorizing alternative memories of the Korean War. Author, scholar, and veteran Rolando Hinojosa was present from the earliest official U.S. military engagement in the Korean War, and in June 1950, “Hinojosa was incorporated into the hurriedly-formed Task Force Smith, the first U.S. response” to the war (Miller and Villalobos xii). Through Rafe Buenrostro, the primary narrator of the Klail City Death Trip Series, Hinojosa recalls Chicano participation in the Korean War, most vividly in his 1978 collection of poetry *Korean Love Songs* and 1993 novel *The Useless Servants*. Both Hinojosa’s participation in the war and the cultural texts he wrote in the following decades suggest that not only are the histories of the Korean War part of Chicano histories, but also that incisive critiques of the war from the situated perspective

of a marginalized U.S. subject emerged from the earliest official U.S. action in the war. Hinojosa's experiences and critiques of the war, as well as his cultural works, disrupt linear historical understandings of the Korean War and question the dominant history of the war.

While Luis Valdez's *Zoot Suit* (1978) is perhaps his best-known work, his play *I Don't Have to Show You No Stinking Badges!* (1986) is replete with subterranean currents of Buddy Villa's experiences in the Korean War. The play zooms in on the Villa household in Monterey Park, California during "[t]he Reagan years, early in 1985," and captures the anxieties and absurdities of representing racialized acting roles in an ostensibly "colorblind" United States (156). Buddy Villa, father of the household and Korean War veteran, has acted as a Mexican bandit in John Huston's film *The Treasure of Sierra Madre* (1948), in a sense working in "bit parts" (as proletarian soldiers) in two imperial theaters—the movie theater, in which he "brought up the rear" in a film that exploits Mexico as a backdrop to the dramas of three working-class white men, and the theater of war, in a so-called "forgotten war" that secured U.S. military entrenchment in the Asia Pacific region (Valdez 168). I argue that Hinojosa's and Valdez's texts critically situate the multiple narratives emerging from the war, holding in tension alternative, intimate accounts that challenge totalizing attempts to contain the Korean War within the dominant narrative of benevolent liberation.

In this chapter, I explore the productive tensions generated through the analytic of intimacy in the context of the literary Asian-Latino Pacific, focusing on works by Chicano authors Rolando Hinojosa and Luis Valdez that present counter-narratives of the Korean War. I use the term "intimacy" throughout this chapter to describe the militarized

circuits Hinojosa and Valdez rearticulate in order to hold the moves of empire accountable, especially as intimacy lingers on the threshold of multiple, far-reaching, and seemingly unconnected imperial frontiers. Intimacy evokes Hinojosa's and Valdez's representations of the sexual encounters between Chicano GIs and women in Korea and Japan, and the ways each author revises longstanding white supremacist and orientalist tropes emerging from Giacomo Puccini's operatic adaption, *Madama Butterfly* (1904).⁴⁴ Intimacy also functions as an analytic that brings together two "forgotten wars" and the legacies of imperial frontiers reverberating from the Korean War and the U.S.-Mexico War, which both authors criticize in their cultural works. In other words, intimacy not only alludes to individual sexual encounters within imperial borderlands, but also remaps spatial and temporal boundaries, such that unlikely and seemingly disparate densities of empire concentrated in Korea and the U.S.-Mexico border are realigned, literally remapped in Hinojosa's work, and potentially held accountable within the same imperial genealogy.

In "The Intimacies of Four Continents," Lisa Lowe presents three definitions of intimacy, which revolve around the figure of the Chinese "coolie" in the colonial histories of the nineteenth century and the instrumental use of the ostensibly free "yet racialized and indentured labor" the figure was made to represent (194). The illegibility of the Chinese "coolie" in such histories, yet the centrality of this figure for the emerging racialized management and division of labor, suggest the significance of intimacy as an analytic through which such dimmed histories can be brought into focus. Lowe theorizes the first definition of intimacy through the proximities of racialized labor variously

⁴⁴ Puccini's opera adapts John Luther Long's short story "Madame Butterfly" (1898).

articulated as “free” and “unfree,” which allowed for the concept of universal freedom to emerge from colonial labor relations, “the political economic logics through which men and women from Africa and Asia were forcibly transported to the Americas, who with native, mixed, and creole peoples constituted slave societies, the profits of which gave rise to bourgeois republican states in Europe and North America” (193).

The second definition, “often figured as conjugal and familial relations in the bourgeois home,” troubles the distinction between the private and public laboring spheres to recount the experiences and exploitations of laboring women, in addition to the experiences and exploitations of indigenous, African, and Asian laborers whose subjections unsettled the practices of constructing separate spheres (Lowe 195). Lowe reminds us that “in the colonial context sexual relations were not limited to a ‘private’ sphere but included practices that disrespected such separations, ranging from rape, assault, domestic servitude, or concubinage to ‘consensual relations’ between colonizers and colonized” (195). This second definition of intimacy is especially attuned to the wide-ranging pitch and tone of power in the multiple spaces of coerced labor, articulated as private and public but troubling the distinctions of those binaries. The third meaning “is the sense of intimacies embodied in the variety of contacts among slaves, indentured persons, and mixed-blood free peoples living together on the islands” (Lowe 202). This chapter revisits her definitions of intimacy, that of unlikely proximities and forced labor, and the varieties of contacts among people who negotiate matrices of colonial aggression. Lodging these theorizations within representations of Chicano soldiers drafted into the U.S. military during the Korean War, and within the contacts among sex workers,

members of the U.S. military, and other wartime subjectivities, highlights the emergence of important connections and critiques of empire stemming from the Korean War.⁴⁵

Ann Stoler and Nayan Shah have also articulated the possibilities for robust analyses of the doings of imperial power through the analytic of intimacy. Stoler suggests “that matters of the intimate are critical sites for the consolidation of colonial power, that management of those domains provides a strong pulse on how relations of empire are exercised, and that affairs of the intimate are strategic for empire-driven states” (*Haunted* 4). The cultural works of Hinojosa and Valdez, however, illuminate the ways matters of the intimate also pose significant challenges for colonial power, situate disruptions for empire’s exercises, and strategically redeploy the affairs of empire. Shah suggests in *Stranger Intimacy*, his study of the liminal social, affective, and legal spaces created and occupied by male South Asian transient laborers in the United States and Canada in the early twentieth century, that “[t]ogether transient migrants forged relations of ‘stranger intimacy’ that shaped more than random and quixotic support. Certainly migratory work and transportation crossroads produced environments of compulsory sociality, but it was the appetite for passionate engagement, the determination to smash alienation, and the desire for visceral solidarity that created both fleeting and enduring relationships” (55). While removed from the particularities of the South Asian laborers’ historical circumstances, Hinojosa’s and Valdez’s characters, as different sorts of transient migrant laborers, theorize another kind of “stranger intimacy” as racialized

⁴⁵ In *Immigrant Acts*, Lisa Lowe states that “[i]n light of the ideological construction of the military subject, the situation of U.S. soldiers of color recruited for the wars in Asia is a complicated and powerful site in which the contradictions between U.S. nationalism and racial formation emerge” (179).

proletarian soldiers negotiating the contradictions of their positions in the Korean War moment of U.S. empire's Pacific encounter.⁴⁶

Drawing on the work of Lowe, Shah, and Stoler, my use of intimacy as an analytic necessarily looks to the multi-faceted power relations produced in the dominant and alternative narratives of the Korean War.⁴⁷ These dominant narratives converge in some instances and compete in others, but the alternative literary accounts of the Korean War register the violence of dominant narratives in various crucibles of intimacy: anxieties about racism and racialization, multiple forms of kinship, and gendered and racialized sexual violence in camp towns. I suggest that racialization as a project enacted by the U.S. state legally names and purports to “know,” fundamentally, various peoples as “other,” constructs whiteness as a universal normative, and embeds these categories with varying and unequal degrees of exposure to pain, privilege, and power.⁴⁸ Kinship, as both a normalizing state project and as communal experiments forged of affective desire, relies on naturalized understandings of intimacy as a measure of control but at times also creates other possibilities for articulating intimacies that exceed legitimate channels of familial belonging. And while many important cultural and scholarly works have chronicled and condemned racialized sexual violence against Korean and Japanese women, Hinojosa and Valdez both initiate critiques of such violence through characters

⁴⁶ In *Service Economies*, Jin-kyung Lee explores “military labor as occupying an inherently paradoxical and contradictory position—that is, its simultaneous roles as the agent of the state’s necropolitical power and as its very potential victim. On the one hand, military labor carries out the will of the state in conquering and subjugating the enemy...while soldiers—especially or exclusively those who fill the lower ranks—carry the risk of themselves being exterminated by their enemy” (38).

⁴⁷ Jasbir Puar asserts that “[t]hinking about intimacy as a technology of legibility must go beyond Oedipalization, beyond sexually interactive bodies of subjects to the militarization of bodies and the multiple bodies of the population that Foucault speaks of” (164).

⁴⁸ I build on the critical work of Ruth Wilson Gilmore (*Golden Gulag*), Cheryl Harris (“Whiteness as Property”), and Michael Omi and Howard Winant (*Racial Formation in the United States*) for my definition of “racialization.”

not equally but nonetheless self-consciously enmeshed in the circuits of militarized white supremacy.⁴⁹ In particular, their literature foregrounds the imperial encounters that make possible contacts among marginalized, racialized, and gendered subjectivities that theorize differently about imperial power and violence.

In “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective” (1988), Donna Haraway presents “an argument for situated and embodied knowledges and an argument against various forms of unlocatable, and so irresponsible, knowledge claims. Irresponsible means unable to be called into account” (583). Haraway distills the possibilities for uneven power dynamics within Michel Foucault’s definition of “subjugated knowledges,”⁵⁰ and cautions readers that “[t]o see from below is neither easily learned nor unproblematic, even if ‘we’ ‘naturally’ inhabit the great underground terrain of subjugated knowledges. The positionings of the subjugated are not exempt from critical reexamination, decoding, deconstruction, and interpretation” (584). Rather than stopping at exposing historical contents, scholars must commit to working against historically settling knowledge claims. Bedoya’s line, “I don’t have to show you any stinking badges!” therefore embodies the unsettled histories that make up a series of “situated knowledges” that rearticulate alternative memories of

⁴⁹ Through her deft reading of An Il-sun’s 1995 Korean novel *Mudflats*, Lee asserts that the “experience of psychological and sexual ‘pleasure’ on the part of sex workers, as profoundly ambivalent and complex as it is, can act as an effective way of restoring a certain amount of agency to their subjectivity, undermining the racial and gendered socioeconomic hierarchy of such commercial-sexual transactions. The GIs themselves, in a way, become irrelevant, or they become relevant only as objects, as the women themselves are able to affirm their ‘pleasure’” (156).

⁵⁰ Foucault defines “subjugated knowledges” as “historical contents that have been buried or masked in functional coherences or formal systematizations,” and also as “hierarchically inferior knowledges, knowledges that are below the required level of erudition or scientificity...unqualified or even disqualified knowledges” (7).

the Korean War. The line also performs a resistance and refusal to assimilate into the totalizing logic of subjugation.

Bedoya delivers this line in his role as “Gold Hat,” the leader of a group of bandits posing as Federales, in response to Humphrey Bogart’s character’s demand that the bandits show badges proving they are indeed Federales. The initial meanings of the line emerge from an encounter between Bedoya’s and Bogart’s characters, in which stereotyped representations of Mexican bandits attempt to rob hard-working yet *noir*-inflected white American men from their gold dust in 1920s Tampico, Mexico. Although the stereotyped representation of “Gold Hat” may be meant to function “as a quick and convenient instrument of filmic humor,” Juan Alonzo argues “that it is the spectator’s ability to critically read the stereotype that makes the circuit of subversion complete” (16). Valdez’s own subversive use of *The Treasure of Sierra Madre* in *I Don’t Have to Show You No Stinking Badges!* presents itself in a stage note describing Bedoya’s character as a “wily Mexican bandit...confronting a scruffy Humphrey Bogart with toothy disdain, somewhere in the wilds of Mexico” (158). Indeed, Bedoya’s “toothy disdain” and delivery sharpen the conditions under which both men encounter each other, both perceiving each other’s ill-begotten access to space, land, and gold in the wake of the Mexican Revolution and in the years leading up to the Great Depression in the United States.

In the first epigraph which opens this chapter, Joey’s wry quip about “Bogart and John Wayne...get[ting] rid of all the Mexicans in Hollywood” entwines the militarized space he and Rafe, the narrator, occupy during the Korean War, with the “gunning down” of Chicano GIs in the war eerily mirroring the representations of “Mexicans [getting]

gunned down” in *The Treasure of Sierra Madre* (Hinojosa 163). Sonny Villa can only nostalgically perceive of his possible half-brother as a “poor bastard,” capturing the tensions of Sonny’s own experiences with racism in the United States, and his retroactive predictions of what life might be like for a mixed-race “Korean Chicano” in Korea with an absent GI father (Valdez 200). The quotes above propel performances of claims to legitimacy, as well as critiques of putatively legitimate belonging to an idealized nuclear family and the U.S. nation-state.

The cultural works of Rolando Hinojosa and Luis Valdez constitute complex, contradictory, and variegated counter-representations of the Korean War and reveal the gaps in mainstream frameworks of a Black/white racial binary in the United States that structure dominant histories of the war, a binary that “serves the perpetuation of racialized hierarchy within the history of the United States” (Lowe, “International” 42). On the other hand, actor Alfonso Bedoya’s legendary line, “Badges? We ain’t got no badges. We don’t need no badges! I don’t have to show you any stinking badges!” works beyond John Huston’s film *The Treasure of Sierra Madre* as a platform for and critique of dominant forms of legitimacy in Hinojosa’s and Valdez’s works. Within the imperialist and white supremacist frameworks in the United States emerging from the Korean War era, which are increasingly adaptive Cold War frameworks that exercise flexible methods of incorporating differentially racialized bodies, the cultural texts perform multiple degrees of resistance to demands for proof of legitimacy.

The historical and political contexts of *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, which as an interwar film of 1948 looks back to both the Mexican Revolution and the Great Depression, are embedded into the Korean War narratives of Valdez and Hinojosa.

Bedoya's line articulates the "situated knowledges" talking back to imperial mandates of legitimacy, the American exceptionalist mandates that are repurposed in the Korean War as authoritatively dictating freedom and democracy for both Koreans and for Chicano GIs in the Korean War. Hinojosa's novel *The Useless Servants* references the ironies of watching the gunning down of movie Mexicans in the Pacific theatre, revealing the complex multilayered terrains built into white supremacist structures of war.⁵¹ Valdez's play *I Don't Have to Show You No Stinking Badges!* performs a triple critique of the marginalization of Chicana/o actors in Hollywood, the implicit contradictions of military participation and imperial interventions as avenues for Asians and Chicana/os to build middle-class American lives, and the fraught relationships between the "illegal border-crosser" and sexualized "model minority."⁵²

In the following sections, I analyze how Rolando Hinojosa's novels and poetry and Luis Valdez's plays suggest that intimate racial histories of the Korean War are currently constructed in national discourse in a reductive Black/white binary. These cultural productions untell singular and totalizing narratives, and trouble the "functional coherence" of dominant histories and archives of the Korean War (Foucault 7). Taken together, these texts theorize a more nuanced and relational understanding of racialization

⁵¹ Hinojosa's father fought in the Mexican Revolution. Hinojosa's earliest story was "a tale about two campesinos who tried to escape the levy during the Mexican Revolution" (Calderón 146).

⁵² Naturalized discourses of the "illegal border-crosser" intensified in Southern California during the Korean War era. According to Rodolfo Acuña, "[t]he Korean War hostilities ended in July and an economic recession beset the nation... The press and public always find scapegoats for the system's structural defects. The daily Los Angeles press announced the 'wetback' invasion, easily making scapegoats of undocumented workers," predictably without regard to the fluctuating imperial borders that constructed workers as "undocumented" in the first place. Victor Bascara traces the long history of the equally normalized and instrumentally applied "model minority" myth: "From the 1890s to the 1980s, Asian difference goes from being a peril that should be excluded and exploited to being the imperiled that should be incorporated, uplifted, apologized to, and at times, literally healed. The transition from menace to model minority conveniently rendered state power not only legitimate but benevolent" (xxii).

during and in the wake of the Korean War. The interracial intimate relationships haunting the cultural texts also exceed the confines of and refuse incorporation into legitimate narratives of recognition. Furthermore, the texts allow us to consider “the gendered racial ‘return’ of the Korean subject over ‘here’ to the imperial center” (J. Kim 281) as already embedded into the gendered racial dynamics that Hinojosa reframes in Korean War R&R spaces, and that Valdez constructs in 1980s Monterey Park.

From this untelling emerges a reading practice that considers the ways multiple histories of the Korean War, minor and dominant histories, have always been intimate with each other. As Lowe reminds us,

The material legacy of America’s imperial past is borne out in the ‘return’ of immigrants to the imperial center, and whereas the past is never available to us whole and transparent, it may often be read in the narratives, cultural practices, and locations of various immigrant formations, these fragmentary, displaced memories of America’s imperialism, refigured as alternative modes in which immigrants are the survivors of empire, its witnesses, the inhabitants of its borders. (“International” 29-30)

Hinojosa and Valdez re-script the concept of such a return through their narrations of “the survivors of empire, its witnesses, the inhabitants of its borders.” While Rafe and the Villa family are not post-1965 immigrants from Asia, their location in the imperial borders of the United States and Korea recalls “displaced memories of America’s imperialism” prior to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. The texts negotiate an ongoing circuit of racialization produced by the U.S. military during the Korean War, a production that builds on existing white supremacist frameworks to construct “gooks” and “chinks,” all the more easily disposable for their dehumanization. Yet, in the Korean War, the U.S. military also implemented reluctantly integrated units, though many

academic and cultural texts testify to the realities of anti-Black and anti-Latino racism. Finally, along with the “return” of the first waves of the Korean War-era Korean diaspora, Hinojosa and Valdez theorize the gendered racial return of Chicano subjects back to the imperial center. I extend Kim’s and other feminist and postcolonial scholars’ analyses of imperial returns⁵³ to suggest that subjects such Rafe and the Villa family, who inhabit multiple imperial terrains, negotiate and rework the “imperial center” through their expressions of and challenges to legitimacy.

“The Geisha and the Greaser,” the literary Asian-Latino Pacific, and recalibrating the racial rubric of the Korean War

I Don’t Have to Show You No Stinking Badges!, while focused on the domestic drama of the Villa household, is haunted by the subterranean history of the Korean War, a history that clings stubbornly to Buddy, Connie, and Sonny Villa. Like *Zoot Suit*, *Badges* undermines stereotypes associated with race, gender, class, and sexuality, and reworks stereotypes in order to subvert and complicate their presumed injurious aims. Sonny’s own budding intimacy with the sansei Japanese American Anita Sakai unsettles Connie, his mother, as it reminds Connie of Buddy’s relationship (and potential Korean Chicano son) during the Korean War. Sonny and Anita’s romance is saturated with undercurrents of Buddy’s phantom relationship with “an Asian girl” during the Korean War (Valdez 200). Sonny is a precocious sixteen-year-old who has dropped out of Harvard to pursue a career in Hollywood, in an attempt to both follow in the footsteps of

⁵³ In the context of South Korea as a subempire, Jin-kyung Lee asserts that “[o]ne of the peculiarities of a subempire consists of the multidirectional flows of migration. In conjunction with the recent influx of migrant workers into South Korea, there is also a continuing outflow of South Koreans to various locations around the globe, to the core countries as well as to the peripheral regions” (228).

and overtake his parents, who act in small, often stereotyped roles of Latinas and Latinos in big films. Anita, a dancer and choreographer, takes out a *Village Voice* ad for a traveling partner driving from the East Coast to Los Angeles, to which Sonny responds. In one of Sonny's attempts to provoke Anita, he jokingly proposes to make a film with her entitled "The Geisha and the Greaser," chronicling their cross-country stopover: "Remember Little America, that truck stop in Wyoming? The one with all the redneck cowboys? It was like a scene out of a movie, wouldn't you say?" (Valdez 195). Anita dismisses the idea of "The Geisha and the Greaser" as "[t]oo weird," leading Sonny to respond, "Precisely. Rednecks won't pay to see us making love. Unless it's a porno" (Valdez 195).

I suggest that Sonny's satiric title, "The Geisha and the Greaser," works as a refitting of gendered and racialized epithets in order to subvert white supremacist attempts to name, contain and fix complex subjectivities. Within the Korean War pre-history of *I Don't Have to Show You No Stinking Badges!*, the alliterative insults of "geisha" and "greaser" invoke Buddy's romance with "an Asian girl" in Korea, in addition to inscribing Sonny and Anita in the white supremacist imaginary of Wyoming's "redneck cowboys." Yet "The Geisha and the Greaser" also resists the earnest taxonomy of white supremacy, playfully engaging the algorithms of race, gender and class in order to create a story that unfolds outside of the dominant gaze, as "[r]ednecks won't pay to see [them] making love." Sonny's insistence that such a film will not succeed "[u]nless it's a porno" also highlights and criticizes the legacy of hypersexualization and exploitation attached to the idea of "The Geisha and the Greaser," redirecting the gaze to the heteropatriarchal viewing practices that operate on naturalized stereotypes.

Indeed, their conversation emerges out of an attempt to decenter whites as the unquestioned occupants of “Little America,” denaturalizing the temporally jarring presence of the “redneck cowboys” using cinematic, almost ethnographic language: “It was like a scene out of a movie, wouldn’t you say?” In effect, Sonny turns the ethnographic gaze back to whites as unnatural inhabitants of a settler frontier. This reading of their exchange sets the stage for the theoretical discussions in this section. Existing scholarship on the racialized and gendered legacies of the Korean War suggests how such legacies play out in both Hinojosa’s and Valdez’s texts. Their cultural works recalibrate the racial rubric of the Korean War, in particular when situated within scholarship in both Chicana/o and Korean diaspora studies. Finally, the cultural works formulate a framework of the literary Asian-Latino Pacific and suggest its significance for theorizing alternative accounts of the Korean War.

Critical feminist scholars have built a significant body of scholarship concerning race, gender, and the legacies of the Korean War. Katherine Moon and Ji-Yeon Yuh have investigated the tensions of racially segregated clubs in U.S. military camp towns in Korea, an anti-Black segregation that military authorities attempted to displace onto the women of camp towns rather than acknowledging as an extension of the racial tensions in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s. In *Haunting the Korean Diaspora* (2008), Grace Cho traces the haunting of U.S. imperial aggression in Korea to the Korean diaspora in the United States through the figure of the GI bride, and asserts that what she describes as the fantasy of honorary whiteness erases the encounters between Korean women and Black GIs. In *Ends of Empire* (2010), Jodi Kim examines how Asian American cultural productions critically reframe understandings of the Cold War,

especially in relation to white supremacist Cold War knowledge production. Nadia Kim explores the importation of racist hierarchies to Korea through encounters with the U.S. military, in particular asserting the initial racial illegibility of Latinos for Koreans who emigrated to Los Angeles in the 1970s and 1980s (129).

Jin-kyung Lee's analysis of the proletarianization of gendered labor in conjunction with South Korea's economic and military relationship to the United States provides some of the most nuanced critiques of the operations of race, class, gender, and sexuality in Korean camp towns. In her readings of revisionist camp town literature,⁵⁴ Lee articulates the complexities of race, class, sexuality, and power in the militarized space of camp towns, for instance through examining the queer relationship between a Korean sex worker and a Black female GI in Kang Sok-kyong's short story "Days and Dreams" (1983). In addition, Lee states that

For those women who live with or marry African American men, the fact of their men's racialization becomes a basis of kinship, as the women themselves experience their own racialization imposed on them by Koreans and white Americans in camp towns...what can sometimes further bind these two groups of women and men is the recognition of their respective military and sexual proletarianization as soldiers and prostitutes, what brought them to the camp town in the first place. (162-3)

As the list of Korean and Korean diaspora texts suggest, many cultural works situate Blackness as an important racial marker, with many of the texts highlighting the antagonistic devaluation of Blackness in both Korea and the United States.⁵⁵ While such

⁵⁴ Examples of the literature include works by Korean authors An Il-sun (*Mudflats*) and Kang Sok-kyong ("Days and Dreams"), as well as the Korean American text *Memories of My Ghost Brother* by Heinz Insu Fenkl.

⁵⁵ Korean and Korean diaspora cultural productions include Kang Sok-kyong's short story "Days and Dreams," Nora Okja Keller's novel *Fox Girl* (2003), Kim Ki-dok's film *Address Unknown* (2006). Scholarly works examining this tension include Nancy Abelman and John Lie's *Blue Dreams* (1995), Claire Jean Kim's "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans" (1999), and Nadia Kim's *Imperial*

work is significant for their examinations of triangulated racial formations among Koreans, Blacks, and whites, the works yield analyses that function within a dominant U.S. Black/white racial binary. Academic works asserting the significance of Chicano/as in the Korean War, however, are limited, even as the body of Chicana/o cultural production appears to be replete with memories of the war.

Chicano and Latino participation in the Korean War is currently understudied. While scholarship on Chicana/o and Latina/o participation in the Second World War is well-known, their participation in the Korean War is documented only in a handful of academic and historical studies. Raul Morin published one of the earliest books documenting Latinos in the Korean War in his 1963 *Among the Valiant: Mexican-Americans in WWII and Korea*. Morin's study includes interviews with Latinos who served in the Korean War and works to ensure the visibility of Chicano participation in the war. William Arce's 2009 dissertation, *Nation in Uniform: Chicano/Latino War Narratives and the Construction of Nation in the Korean War and Vietnam War*, is a literary and historical study of war novels and autobiographies by Chicanos and Latinos during the Korean War and Vietnam War eras, examining in particular the "narrative reconstruction of the United States as a heterogeneous, yet interconnected nation" (vii). Finally, University of Texas Libraries' VOCES Oral History Project, under the direction of Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, collects the narratives of Latina/os who participated in the Second World War, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, archiving significant

Citizens: Koreans and Race from Seoul to LA (2008). Responses to the Korean War from Black veterans include Curtis Morrow's *What's a Commie Ever Done to Black People?: A Korean War Memoir of Fighting in the U.S. Army's Last All Negro Unit* (1997). Finally, Toni Morrison's *Home* (2012) narrates the story of Frank Money, a Black Korean War veteran who returns to his home in Georgia. This is, of course, a limited list of texts.

memories and narratives. Academic studies that center Chicana/o participation in the Korean War appear to be limited to these sources.

While few academic studies focus on Chicana/o participation in the Korean War, literary scholarship does create more space for discussion. Literary scholarship that examines the Korean War in Chicana/o and Latina/o fiction challenges the idea of naturally extant national boundaries by framing borderlands studies in relation to the transnational experiences of writers such as Américo Paredes and Rolando Hinojosa.⁵⁶ Ramón Saldivar argues that Paredes's "years in Asia exposed him in a crucially formative way to the differing ethno-cultural complexities that imperialism and modernization in their multiple varieties had bequeathed to both the Americas and the Far East" (*Borderlands* 10). These complex and shifting legacies of racialized empire and modernity straddle national borders within regions, such as the U.S./Mexico border and the DMZ constructing North and South Korea, but they also bridge a discursive space I call the "literary Asian-Latino Pacific." I focus on literature and other cultural productions here in response to the overdetermined positioning of Chicana/o and Korean diaspora subjects within isolated disciplinary studies as "illegal" workers, vexers of white nativists, model minorities and middlemen.

In contrast to more traditional historical and area studies, and to mainstream military studies of the Korean War, literature and culture involves a more complex and nuanced politics of memory. I do not mean to suggest, however, a binary in which cultural productions are inherently critical of dominant discourses, as some of my

⁵⁶ Jungwon Park's 2012 article "Korea, the Wandering Signifier in Foundational Chicano Narratives" explores how representations of Koreans are narrated in Chicano literature, albeit without consideration of gender and sexuality in the significance of these representations.

primary sources, including unofficial U.S. military songbooks, function to distill and intensify manifestations of nationalist misogyny within their lyrics. Yet such songs articulate what dominant studies are reluctant to: that militarized empire-building is fueled by racialized sexual violence. On the other hand, Hinojosa's and Valdez's cultural productions create ways of resisting dominant discourses. For instance, as I discuss in a later section, Hinojosa's *Korean Love Songs* (which Saldívar suggests can be read as a *corrido* story), works against the brutal misogyny of unofficial U.S. Air Force songs through its content as well as its form as a border ballad. Readings of Hinojosa's and Valdez's cultural texts can subvert the sociological and homogenous historical assimilation of the memories and histories encircling⁵⁷ Chicano participation in the Korean War.

My discussion of the literary Asian-Latino Pacific follows Curtis Marez's formulation of the "transpacific triangle," which he defines as "a critical cognitive map that articulates American studies, Latin American studies, and Asia Pacific studies...I would argue that the transpacific triangle is particularly promising since it makes visible transnational relationships that are obscured by a too narrow focus on isolated areas" (505).⁵⁸ Such a "critical cognitive map" intervenes on static disciplinary formations and enables a closer examination of important transnational relationships. In addition, recent

⁵⁷ I use Jenny Edkins's notion of "encircling" trauma: Edkins proposes the concept of "trauma time" as a resistant temporality; "Trauma time is inherent in and destabilizes any production of linearity" (16). In order for witnessing and testimony (two acts I suggest are critical for the production of historical knowledge) to be part of politicized resistance to dominant history, they must not become written into linear narratives and therefore risk de-politicization or gentrification, but should rather mark or encircle the moment of trauma (15).

⁵⁸ My formulation of the literary Asian-Latino Pacific is also inspired by existing scholarship and cultural works that examine the Pacific as a key site for creating new subjectivities and solidifying anti-imperial critiques. Forthcoming scholarship includes Moon-Ho Jung's *The Unruly Pacific: Race and the Politics of Empire and Revolution, 1898-1941*.

scholarship in Latina/o literary and cultural studies has also emphasized not only the utility but the necessity of triangulation as a method. As David Vázquez puts it in *Triangulations: Narrative Strategies for Navigating Latino Identity*, “[n]avigators relate an unknown position to the known location of two others by mapping an imaginary triangle. The triangle then yields coordinates for the unknown position based on the distance from and angle of the other two. It is critical that triangulation emphasizes the mathematical relationships between *all three* points of a triangle, since without all the constituent points, it is impossible to navigate” (3). The literary Asian-Latino Pacific illuminates the “unknown,” or to use the language that surrounds and mystifies the Korean War, the “forgotten” presence of the Korean War in Chicana/o cultural production, and advances the coordinates of studies in comparative racialization, studies that unsettle naturalized notions of the “illegal border-crosser” and “model minority.” Finally, the framework of the literary Asian-Latino Pacific disturbs historically embedded understandings of such racialized constructions during the Cold War era.

Some Chicana/o literary and cultural studies scholars, however, urge against a reckless focus on “Asia” in Chicana/o cultural texts. José Limón criticizes Ramón Saldivar’s work on Paredes for reading evidence of “Asia” where “Asia” is not present, charging “I certainly see no ‘marks’ in content, style, or perspective that connect these texts to Asia” (599). I suggest that Limón’s critique, however, misses the apparently tangential yet nonetheless indelible presence of the Korean War in the larger body of Chicana/o cultural production, much of which emerged after the ethnic nationalist movements of the 1960s, but which returns to an earlier moment of the Cold War

period.⁵⁹ The Cold War ideologies that required the participation of Chicano GIs in the Korean War, in particular the discourses that constructed enlisting and conscription as legitimizing opportunities for people marginalized from national belonging, are the same ideologies taken up by Chicana/o cultural production to reveal the disproportionate numbers of Black and Brown people impressed into fighting against Asian people in the Second World War, Korean War, and Vietnam War.

The presence of the Korean War in Chicana/o cultural production is significant for both Korean diaspora studies and for Chicana/o studies, in order to study experiences that have historically been neglected or even dismissed, as well as to consider processes of racialization that do not reproduce the dominant racial hierarchy. Saldívar makes his case for the importance of comparative analyses of “Asia” in the works of authors such as Paredes, inviting us to “[c]onsider the nuances of [Paredes’s] subject position: a Mexican-American soldier in the US Army of occupation; a native of racist, segregation-era south Texas familiar with the history of conquest and occupation in the American borderlands; a journalist and humanitarian aid worker finding himself in a nation which in its own wars of empire and conquest on mainland Asia had been a merciless occupier” (589). Building on these proximities to empire, the framework of the literary Asian-Latino Pacific may accommodate some of the protean narratives and understudied experiences emerging from the Korean War.

In *Social Death*, Lisa Cacho theorizes the gendered links among ethnically specific masculinity, the military, and social disposability. She suggests that cultural

⁵⁹Some examples include Hinojosa’s Korean War works in his KCDTS, Paredes’s *The Hammon and the Beans* (1994), Luis Valdez’s *Zoot Suit* and *I Don’t Have to Show You No Stinking Badges!*, Martín Limón’s novels, Rosaura Sanchez’s “One Morning: 1952” (2000), and Culture Clash’s *Chavez Ravine* (2005). John Sayles’s *Lone Star* (1999) also quietly folds in the Korean War.

representations of Latina/os as “macho” justifies and normalizes deaths of Latina/o GIs, who are overwhelmingly and disproportionately located in the more dangerous infantry units. This naturalization then shades conditions of structural racism and economic injustice with patriotic residue, imposing the language of “choice” into decisions masked by necropolitical disposability. I build on Cacho’s framework to suggest that Hinojosa and Valdez create counter-memories of Korean War that in many ways speak back to the discourses of patriotism that pre-authorize the disposability of Chicano GIs. However, these counter-narratives also replicate masculinist discourse, in particular through representations of Asian women. While neither Hinojosa nor Valdez construct strictly uncritical representations of the relationships between GIs and Korean and Japanese women, the texts may also displace potentially feminist readings and articulate Chicano subjectivities by representing a discrete, homogenous and unchanging “other” in the form of Asian women.

In addition to framing the literary Asian-Latino Pacific, the stakes of this chapter include centering feminist modes of analysis and reworking Kuan-Hsing Chen’s framework of “Asia as method,” which insists that “historical experiences and practices in Asia can be developed as an alternative horizon or perspective, and seen as method to advance a different understanding of world history” (140). Chen states further that “[t]he potential of Asia as method is this: using the idea of Asia as an imaginary anchoring point, societies in Asia can become each other’s points of reference, so that the understanding of the self may be transformed, and subjectivity rebuilt” (212). I propose a revised adaption of this concept in this chapter, to show that centering “Asia as method” may have the effect of eliding trans-Pacific discourses that are critical to discourses in

Asia, the United States, and elsewhere, which include the possibility of framing multiple voices that have been marginalized or co-opted for a different sense of subjectivity and transformation.

While I agree with Chen's argument that scholars must move away from an East/West binary structure, I suggest that a reconsideration of the materially and discursively marginalized multiplicities inhabiting both "East" and "West" more closely observes the critical potential of "Asia as method." Chen states that "the global structure of power is uneven, and the geographical and imaginary site of the West is the most dominant and the richest in resources. The West has been able to enter and generate real impacts in other geographical spaces without experiencing the same type or intensity of impacts from the outside" (222). I would add here that Hinojosa's and Valdez's narratives suggest counterpoints to Chen's statement that the "West" has not experienced "the same type of intensity of impacts from the outside." For instance, to propose a certain "outside" to a discrete, unified, and homogenous "West" elides the long history of challenges to Western discourses of modernity, progress and enlightenment from diverse people inhabiting the fluctuating boundaries of the United States.⁶⁰

In contrast, Rosa Linda Fregoso asserts a formulation of "Chicano [that] refers to a space where subjectivity is produced," and in doing so, advances the coordinates of historically attentive, materialist work that also makes room for critical comparative

⁶⁰ Chen states that in the post Korean War period, "[t]he United States has become the inside of East Asia, and it is constitutive of a new East Asian subjectivity," but I would like to reiterate my claim of the foreclosed possibilities in regarding the United States as homogenous and fixed (8). Within the framework of the literary Asian-Latino Pacific, just as Chicana/o studies dealing with the Korean War need to be attentive to feminist and critical Asian studies, so must Asian diaspora studies, if it retains the qualifier "critical," be articulate with the relationships and histories of resistance from marginalized groups from within the "west."

analyses of power (xix). Angie Chabram-Dernersesian compiles several such studies in her edited collection, *The Chicana/o Cultural Studies Forum*. The participants in this virtual forum, including Rosa Linda Fregoso, George Lipsitz, Lisa Lowe, Kent Ono, Emma Pérez, José David Saldívar and Sonia Saldívar-Hull, all locate themselves within Chicana/o Studies in their theorizations and formulations of the necessity of multi- and trans-disciplinary work.⁶¹ As the literary Asian-Latino Pacific unsettles naturalized notions of the “illegal border-crosser” and “model minority,” the analytic also disrupts historically embedded understandings of such racialized constructions during the Cold War era. In other words, considering the literary Asian-Latino Pacific reveals the historically situated production of and relationship between the “illegal border-crosser” and “model minority.”⁶² In particular, Chicana/o cultural production exposes the interpellation of American subjecthood against a communist Korean or Chinese enemy, but simultaneously documents various fronts of resistance to yet another instance of U.S. empire, this time in the Pacific.

Returning to the epigraphs, in addition to Sonny Villa’s speculations about his father Buddy’s falling “in love with an Asian girl, when he was in Korea,” resulting in

⁶¹ “This desire to retrieve the forgotten tradition of cultural studies as practiced and produced outside the imperial center has materialized at an intense moment in this so-called post-cold-war era, when all of us are forced to emerge from our own geographical isolation and disciplinary ghettos in order to more adequately respond to neoliberal globalization and subsequent regionalization, and answer questions which were suppressed, suspended, and closed off during the cold-war era. Under the rubric of cultural studies, we might be able to do this necessary work, work which cannot be done in other fields. At the same time, we might also be able to change the terrain of cultural studies itself” (Chen 88).

⁶² Disciplines such as sociology view “assimilation as a normal social process that immigrants go through, rather than a normalizing project carried out by networks of discipline and control, in which the field of sociology is thoroughly implicated,” although some Korean American social scientists have challenged assimilative indicators of “success” (Cho 142). Samuel Huntington’s 2004 essay, “The Hispanic Challenge,” provides a glimpse of dominant understandings of Chicana/os and Latina/os: “In this new era, the single most immediate and most serious challenge to America’s traditional [white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant] identity comes from the immense and continuing immigration from Latin America, especially from Mexico, and the fertility rates of these immigrants compared to black and white American natives” (*Foreign Policy*).

Sonny's hypothetical "Korean Chicano" brother, other intimate relationships in Hinojosa's and Valdez's texts also transgress normative frameworks that attempt to regulate legitimate relationships within strict racial boundaries (Valdez 200).⁶³

Hinojosa's *Korean Love Songs* highlights through poetry the relationship between Sonny Ruiz (who has gone AWOL and adopted a Japanese identity), and the Japanese schoolteacher he marries, and the moments of intimacy between Rafe and sex workers

In some well-appointed, hygienic, bug-free,

US ARMY APPROVED and designated brothel. (Hinojosa 39)

Unlike the brothels Rafe and his friends visit, not all of these intimate encounters are stamped with the textually aggressive, magnified and authoritative badge of "US ARMY APPROVED." I suggest that on the contrary, the texts ultimately assertively perform the intent behind Bedoya's legendary line: "I don't have to show you any stinking badges!"

In other words, representations of the intimate encounters between Chicano GIs and Korean and Japanese women, sometimes ambiguously described as "an Asian girl, when [Buddy] was in Korea," at other times more explicitly located in a "US ARMY APPROVED and designated brothel," function to tell different stories about racialization and sexuality emerging from the Korean War. Such stories, which I examine in the following sections, work against the singularizing narratives of dispossessed, subaltern sex workers and GIs, and refit moments of intimacy to shift critiques onto white supremacy, contradictions embedded in the idea of the normative U.S. citizen, and multi-faceted gendered and racialized exploitation.

⁶³ The term "Chicano," through its complex history from an epithet to a critically reclaimed term signaling the instabilities of the U.S. nation-state, already problematizes the fixity of categories such as "race," "mixed-race," "nationality," "cultural ethnicity," and so on.

“We’re a likely pair, we are; and I’m certainly no Pinkerton

To her Butterfly”: *Korean Love Songs and The Useless Servants*

Rafe Buenrostro, the speaker of *Korean Love Songs* and *The Useless Servants*, insistently recalls South Texas during his time in Korea, embedding memories of each space in each place:

It’s a brown place Korea is; hilly, too.

And cold, but the summers can be

South Texas hot (31).

In the poem “New Battery Position,” Rafe keenly layers memories and makes intimate the imaginative spatial terrains of Korea and South Texas in an uneasy cartography of empire. The line “It’s a brown place Korea is” destabilizes the Black/white racializing binary of U.S. military presence in the Korean War, while the following lines inseparably solder the memories of the Chicano speaker to the affinities he creates during the war. Hinojosa embeds these spatial terrains not only in his poetry, but also in an illustrated map in *Estampas del valle y otras obras*, one that remaps the Asia Pacific and South Texas in a closer, more intimate geography. Héctor Calderón writes of Hinojosa’s “schematic map of his invented world which appears in *Estampas del valle*. At the top portion of the map toward the left, hanging in space, Hinojosa situates Kobe, Tokyo, Panmunjon[sic], Fort Sill, and Fort Ord with lines of relation to each other. These are the cities that through the Korean War will affect the Mexican families of Belken County” (148). The image of the map (Figure 1) constitutes part of the series of discursive and actual maps that appear through the Klail City Death Trip Series (KCDTS), which knit

the Asia Pacific with South Texas, compelled to manifest themselves not only through the mechanisms of war, but also through intimate observations of actual terrains.

I suggest that this visual representation of Hinojosa's world remaps the intimate geographies of the Asia Pacific and South Texas, creating a counter-memory to a dominant Cold War map that attempts to fix hard lines demarcating first, second, and third worlds. The dominant map presumes rigid and stable power relationships among capitalist, communist, and so-called "non-aligned" nation-states without critical consideration of past and ongoing colonial and anti-colonial movements. In contrast, the illustration invites a different sort of understanding, asking viewers to reflect on a map that exclusively renders both the imperial borders drawn in the Asia Pacific and South Texas, but also centers the inhabitants of those borders through its depiction of a human head. Marita Sturken suggests that "[j]ust as memory is often thought of as an image, it is also produced by and through images," and asserts that photographic images, in particular, are inherently exclusive, naturalizing images as presenting and producing objective truths (11). The exclusions in this illustration, however, are critical omissions—while the borderlands of Kobe, Tokyo, Panmunjom, and Belken County exist in mutually connected spatial relationships, other places remain off the map, or are represented in a list. Furthermore, the lines connecting different sites in Asia hover behind Rafe/Hinojosa's head, serving as an ongoing haunting presence that colors his perspective of South Texas.

Panmunjom and Belken County serve as significant sites within this map, because their fictitiousness functions to unsettle naturalized understandings of national borders. Belken County is a fictional county located in the Lower Rio Grande Valley; by creating

a name for the county, rather than using one of the formal county names in the region, Hinojosa shifts attention to the constructed nature of borders and boundaries, especially significant in the South Texas region that harbors the histories of the Civil War and the U.S.-Mexico War. While Panmunjom is the officially recognized name for the now-defunct village marking the border that divides the Korean peninsula, and the site in which the armistice agreement was signed, it too marks an imperial border signaling political instabilities. As a phantom village, Panmunjom exists in tension with its ostensibly incomplete past, as South Korea never signed the Korean Armistice Agreement that halted the armed conflicts, but not the war. That the two sites are exclusively rendered within the same map casts into relief the intimate imperial positioning of the Asia Pacific and South Texas. Finally, as the map opens Hinojosa's *Estampas del valle y otras obras*, it also opens up observations on the multiple forms Hinojosa reworks in KCDTS.

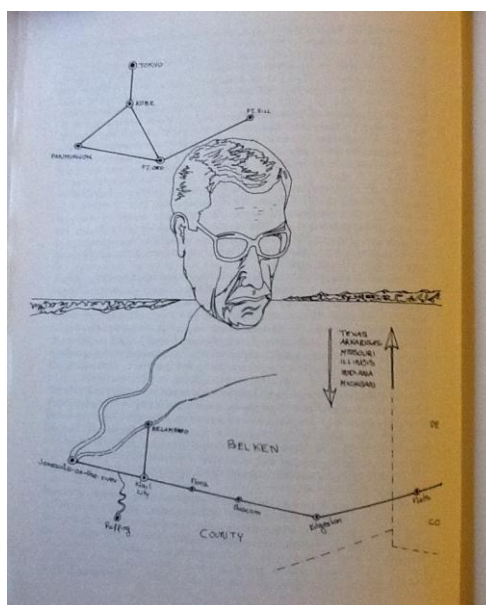


Figure 1: Map in Rolando Hinojosa's *Estampas del valle y otras obras*

Both *Korean Love Songs* and *The Useless Servants* destabilize the knowledge production from more traditional literary forms treating the Korean War. While there are many poems, novels, and films that topically deal with the Korean War, cultural texts that are often produced by veterans and participants of the conflict, Hinojosa's interventions in that genre significantly rework dominant ways of knowing the war. The first intervention is Hinojosa's placement of *Korean Love Songs* (KLS) and *The Useless Servants* (TUS), two of the texts focused on the Korean War, within his formally adventurous KCDTS, which consists of fifteen volumes and which is narrated through the evolving and mutable voices of Rafe Buenrostro who chronicles the stories emerging from Klail City, located in the Lower Rio Grande Valley in South Texas. KCDTS, which is so deeply invested in the "local color" of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, stitches in throughout the texts memories from the Pacific (as readers see in the map above), to the extent that South Texas cannot be dissociated from Korea, Japan, and the wars in the Asia Pacific. Furthermore, the minute observations about dis inheriting land and dis inheriting borders (often articulated through portrayals of "legitimate" real estate exchanges and urgent desires to either forge new homes elsewhere, or maintain deep fidelity to the Valley) in South Texas operate in a similar fashion to "dispossession," or losses and regains of military boundaries. The map above provides one example of the imperial dispossession of boundaries. The texts' attention to the small, to the everyday, enables critical observations about something as large and seemingly unknowable as the Cold War imperial engine that relies on the labor and bodies of racialized subjectivities.

The second intervention reworks both poetry and the novel form. KLS is a series of loosely affiliated meditations on topics which range from mortality to traveling

racisms to possibilities for articulating new forms of kinship, which becomes fleshed out in “novel” form in TUS.⁶⁴ Describing his process of writing KLS, Hinojosa states “when I began writing *Korean Love Songs* in narrative prose and in English, it was easier. But it wasn’t what I wanted, either. Eventually, after reading many of the British World War I poets, I got the idea that maybe I should use poetry to render something as brutal as war” (*Rolando Hinojosa Reader* 181). Although KLS follows the British World War I poetry tradition, by interspersing verse with images, Hinojosa reinvents the sub-genre of war poetry; the poems in KLS offer a distinct contrast to other poems, verse, form, and extended narrative voice in British war poetry.

Through these reinventions, KLS asks the question: how does form and image impact our ways of “knowing” the war? The table of contents of KLS reads like a poem or litany itself, presenting a rapid-fire summary of wartime actions and forming a skeletal plot structure, the only condensed narrative in the book.⁶⁵ Squeezed into these temporalities are crowded spaces, the so-called gaining and losing of land in Korea, the trips for R&R in Japan, with most of the Chicano GIs who survive ultimately returning to

⁶⁴ Hinojosa’s Korean War texts are written in English, in contrast to the other works in the series, which were initially written in Spanish. Hinojosa has stated that he started to write *Korean Love Songs* in Spanish, but found he could not, because the language through which he experienced and understood the war was English, and therefore had to be narrated in English: “[*Korean Love Songs*] was written in English: the reason for that was I had originally tried to write about Korea in Spanish, but that experience wasn’t lived in Spanish. Army life isn’t conducted in Spanish, as you know” (*Rolando Hinojosa Reader* 181). Hinojosa also states: “Writing in Spanish, at other times in English, at other times giving different versions of the same novel in one language or in the other, and always trying to produce a linguistic tension, the different values attained point toward some significance that I myself am trying to explain” (*A Voice of My Own* 113).

⁶⁵ The epigraph framing *Korean Love Songs* is from scripture, 2 Kings 9:19: “And Jehu said, What has thou to do with peace?”. Even if readers are not familiar with the Bible, they still confront the question, who is righteous? Although more directly recognizable as an indictment of war in general and the U.S. intervention in Korea in particular, the scripture’s use of “thou” carries the dual effect of the reader’s relationship to “peace,” as well as the situated relationship of Rafe and his hometown friends to Korea and the war.

Texas. Hinojosa's work refuses straightforward narration, is necessarily fragmented, and provides no totalizing framework for accessing the memories of the Korean War.

Although scholars have noted the resemblance between KLS and TUS, down to some of the exact same lines of poetry, refitted into Rafe's war journal, TUS is just barely more of a novel than KLS. Despite the resemblance, the war journal format of TUS builds in automatic closeness, in contrast to the more mediated distance in the poetry of KLS. In a way, TUS directs readers into thinking they might have unmediated access into Rafe's thoughts and memories. This move allows Hinojosa to rehearse some of the exact same lines of poetry within the form of a war journal, revealing the significance of form in shaping content and meaning. Repeating lines also impacts how readers experience temporality. Housed in TUS, ensconced within the authority of dates and times, our way of knowing the Korean War becomes something dangerously confident, even with (or perhaps because of) Rafe's conversations about his (often lack of) emotional devastation with the army psychologist. Hinojosa's use of multiple genres, in particular the ways different texts within the series work together, invites readers to consider the various forms that history is packaged in, and troubles our understandings of any static history or temporality.

The third intervention is the texts' engagements with the genres of *corridos* and film. Because TUS functions as a kind of war journal, providing snapshots and glimpses of military life in Korea while narrated throughout by Rafe, the novel evokes an underground documentary style. The informal documentary nature of TUS and the text's treatment of a film like *The Treasure of Sierra Madre* trouble the line between fact and fiction. The subterranean authority of the war journal mirrors the authority performed by

Alfonso Bedoya when he declares “I don’t have to show you any stinking badges!” yet TUS also enables an eerie moment of recognition as it frames Rafe and Joey watching the film’s “gunning down” of Mexicans while within a war that dispassionately consumed Chicano/a lives.

Furthermore, KLS makes just as much of an intervention into the *corrido* tradition as it does in the genre of British war poems. Américo Paredes situates the emergence of the *corrido* in the ballad forms circulating before the mid-nineteenth century, and within the material and historical circumstances of Greater Mexico and in particular the shifting borders between the United States and Mexico (*With His Pistol* 129). Chicano scholars, in particular Ramón Saldívar, have read *Korean Love Songs* as a *corrido*, especially in its structure and themes of border justice. I would like to modify Saldívar’s argument that

Hinojosa’s *Korean Love Songs* tells the *corrido* story of border conflict and social justice in the symbolically displaced form of the long narrative poem and the ideologically different context of the Korean War... As paradoxical as this claim may seem, given that the entire action of *Korean Love Songs* is set in Japan and Korea, it can be shown that Hinojosa’s poem, like the *corridos* that form its generic model, is about South Texas and Mexican American life in a moment of crucial self-formation. (136)

I pose the question here, what if *Korean Love Songs* is just as much about Korea and Japan as it is about South Texas and Mexican American life in a moment of crucial self-formation? I suggest that recalibrating Saldívar’s claim to illuminate Korea and Japan allows for feminist readings of the Cold War *corrido* in addition to his readings critiquing various forms of U.S. imperialism.

In this Cold War *corrido*, Hinojosa binds border ballads in Korea to border ballads in Texas, yet also critiques the white supremacist, heteropatriarchal masculinity of the U.S. military in the Asia Pacific. If the border ballad functions to mediate,

document, and critique the violent doings of empire, then military ballads function to illicitly celebrate the same violent doings. Indeed, the two forms constitute two sides of an imperial coin in the context of the Korean War, embedding and replicating military masculinity but also providing fissures for critiquing white supremacist empire-building. Hinojosa's construction and imagination of "love songs" is significant, especially in contrast to unofficial U.S. Air Force songbooks such as *Songs My Mother Never Taught Me* and *The Fighter Pilot's Hymn Book*,⁶⁶ which express the heteropatriarchal anxieties sutured to U.S. nation-building in a series of violently misogynist collection of lyrics burdened with imperial residue.⁶⁷ My intention here is not to privilege or de-legitimize the *corrido* as a form, but rather to point to the racializing kingcraft and patriarchal, military masculinist systems that also ominously operate as another kind of transnational border ballad. Given the accumulation of masculinities embedded into the military songs of the Korean War era, I consider what it may mean to "add" Korea, in both the military songs and in *Korean Love Songs* as *corrido*.

The vexed genealogies of patriarchy, militarism, and nationalism linger through forms, and document the fluctuations of moving borders, the songs carrying these

⁶⁶ Folk music scholar Vance Randolph discusses the "mimeographed armed forces' bawdy songbooks issued privately by officers (usually) for assistance in communal singing during their beer-busts. Neither the singing nor the songbooks were, of course, an official activity, but were always tolerated" (75-6).

⁶⁷ Militarized misogyny lurks furtively in songbooks circulated among members of the elite U.S. Air Force. Race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationalism interacted to cast a strange and substantive alchemy in the Korean War. President Harry S. Truman's 1948 Executive Order 9981 was intended to end racial segregation in the U.S. military, but reluctantly and often violently dragged through the years of the Korean War to culminate in a listless integration, one that still retains the long histories of processes of racialization in the United States. The pervasive logics of white supremacist racialization continue to manifest in the power hierarchies of the military, visibly articulated by the mostly white and mostly male occupants of the highest positions. During the Korean War, elite U.S. military corps' reactionary responses to racial integration emerge in unofficial songbooks such as *Songs My Mother Never Taught Me* and *The Fighter Pilot's Hymn Book*. I suggest that infiltrating the cultural texts of the elite corps of the U.S. military, such as unofficial songbooks, undresses the gendered, racialized and sexualized logics informing U.S. imperial ventures in Asia.

legacies through multiple wars. *Songs My Mother Never Taught Me*, for instance, issues a “word of warning” for readers with “tender sensibilities,” and explains that “[m]any of these lyrics were adopted to the Korean ‘situation’ after becoming popular among the same warriors during WWII, and at least one or two were sung around the campfires[sic] of the eve of Gettysburg. It follows, therefore, that they are not the product of a particular generation.”⁶⁸ The temporal disavowal of the “word of warning” recalls ongoing heteropatriarchal legacies that inform the long genealogy of U.S. nation-building, beginning “at least” on “the eve of Gettysburg.”⁶⁹ Other song lyrics, such as “Taegu Girls,” reprinted below, from *The Fighter Pilot’s Hymn Book* capture the intense misogyny and racism of elite U.S. military officers during the Korean War:

We are from Taegu, Taegu are we
 We don’t believe in virginity
 We don’t use candles we use broom handles
 We are the Taegu girls

And every night at twelve on the clock
 We watch the white man piss on the ROK
 We like the way he handles his cock
 We are the Taegu girls

The lyrics of the U.S. Air Force song “Taegu Girls” entangle the violent erotics embedded within formations of nationalism, gender, and sexuality in U.S. military

⁶⁸ Indeed, such eroticized misogyny characterizes the foundations of an institution like the U.S. military, and therefore cannot be limited to “a particular generation”: “soldiers are purposely taught to *eroticize* violence—from a heterosexual, male-aggressor perspective. During the first US Gulf War on Iraq in 1991, air force pilots watched pornographic movies before bombing missions to psyche themselves up. Internalizing a misogynist, violent sexuality becomes embedded in soldiers’ training to function psychologically as killers. The widespread sexual abuse of female soldiers by male colleagues, with overwhelming impunity, is a symptom of this institution’s modus operandi” (Chew 80).

⁶⁹ In *Air Force Airs: Songs and Ballads of the United States Air Force World War One through Korea*, William Wallrich asserts that “Songs such as these are known on every flight line, are sung in airmen’s, NCO, and officers’ clubs and messes throughout the world. They are the voice of the line mechanic and the supply clerk, the second lieutenant wingman and the ‘retread,’ the front-line peon and the rear-echelon honcho.” The songs included in this 1957 collection exhibit less severely misogynist lyrics, which suggests degrees of “official” and “unofficial” incorporation of these songs.

expansion during the Korean War.⁷⁰ In particular, the fantasy that “Taegu Girls” “watch the white man piss on the ROK” and “like the way he handles his cock” animates the illusion of both a masculine and racially homogenous United States degrading an implicitly feminine, burgeoning Republic of Korea, bolstered by the willing sexual desire of Korean “girls.” In the context of the emergent nation-states on the peninsula, the song suggests that the nation-building enterprise itself is mired in misogynist ideology. Indeed, the lyrics of “Taegu Girls” appear to presage white supremacist claims to what would become a significant military acquisition for the United States, as the U.S. military occupation of South Korea represents the sole “U.S. military presence on the Asian mainland.”⁷¹

Furthermore, the military circulation⁷² of the lyrics demonstrate that U.S. nationalist white supremacy does not operate independently of processes of gendering and sexualization, both discursively in the feminization of “the ROK” and in the sexual availability of Korean girls and women (“We don’t believe in virginity”). Melanie McAlister states that such an Orientalist feminization and masculinization “served to legitimate the exclusion of colonized peoples from democratic rights. In this model,

⁷⁰ Cholla and Kyongsang provinces, located in the southernmost part of the peninsula, “have been noted for extensive leftist activities since the liberation” (Cumings, *Korea’s Place* 243). Taegu is located in Kyongsang province, and the city’s role as a site for organized guerilla warfare may factor in the particular hostility of the song. Since the 1960s, however, Taegu reemerged as a site of reactionary politics, “under the tent of the southeastern Taegu-Kyongsang elites (or T-K Group) that had dominated the ROK since 1961, thus to form a single-party democracy that would rule for the ages—or at least for the next generation. A host of analysts (not the least being the U.S. Embassy in Seoul) came forward to laud this ‘pact’ between softliners and hardliners among the elite, which seemed to mimic the democratic transitions of the 1980s in Latin America” (Cumings, *Parallax* 114-5). Cholla province has maintained its reputation as the radical region of South Korea.

⁷¹ Walden Bellow, “From American Lake to a People’s Pacific,” in *Let the Good Times Roll*.

⁷² Because this is an unofficial songbook, and because only white men of privilege occupy the ranks of the Air Force, the songbooks would have enjoyed a limited and exclusive circulation among the upper ranks (Mariscal 10 Dec 12).

citizenship and nationality were necessarily represented as white and male” (11-2).

Contrary to the dominant legibility of the Korean War as a masculine discourse, Cynthia Enloe asserts that the maintenance of the U.S. military empire depends on such “myths of Asian women’s compliant sexuality” in order to ensure enlistment (*Good Times* 23).

Such assertions of militarized masculinity are also classed, as the rehearsal and circulation of the songbooks enable the elite members of the U.S. military to also perform their privileged status. One former naval officer states

“I was in an elite status...mine and bomb disposal, which with a few exceptions, attracted top-ranking university grads from all over the USA as officers. This officer group exchanged ROTC and fraternity songs and limericks. Copying meant mimeographing in those days, and few of us typed well...We were dependent on Yeoman, the Navy’s secretaries and clerks, all male...they did not enjoy literary erotica, and were even disgusted by some limericks...At the same time, they themselves typed and circulated page after page of descriptions of lurid, boring, repetitious heterosexual fantasies. Nonetheless, by position of rank and other favors, we were sometimes able to get our collections typed and copies for exchange” (Randolph 76).⁷³

Not only do the songbooks document the misogynist and nationalist erotics underpinning the elite corps of the U.S. military, the material process of creating the artifacts also requires the complicity of “Yeoman,” perhaps military personnel who themselves had been conscripted.

⁷³ The fuller quote from Randolph’s research states: “[h]ere is how one former naval officer, Commander F.M.F., saw the matter during four and a half years in the U.S. Navy during World War II (letter of August 3, 1989): ‘I was in an elite service...mine and bomb disposal, which with a few exceptions, attracted top-ranking university grads from all over the USA as officers. This officer group exchanged ROTC and fraternity songs and limericks. Copying meant mimeographing in those days, and few of us typed well. None of us had access to mimeographing equipment. We were dependent on Yeoman, the Navy’s secretaries and clerks, all male, and with highschool[sic] educations. As well described in your *Limerick* introduction, they did not enjoy literary erotica, and were even disgusted by some limericks. Buggery and animal themes were anathema. At the same time, they themselves typed and circulated page after page of descriptions of lurid, boring, repetitious heterosexual fantasies. Nonetheless, by position of rank and other favors, we were sometimes able to get our collections typed and copies for exchange’” (76).

Rolando Hinojosa's lines of poetry from "Old Friends" in *Korean Love Songs* suggest a critique of the white supremacist and misogynist forms of nation-building, through his own tenuous position as a member of the occupying U.S. military force. Unlike the officers and pilots of the Air Force, Rafe is a working-class Chicano situated at multiple borderlands—the U.S.-Mexico border in Texas, the shifting borders constituting the evolving Korean nations, the complex borders of racialization in which he is neither Black nor white, but fighting alongside both racialized groups against an Asian enemy. In "Old Friends," Rafe references the 1904 Italian opera *Madama Butterfly* in his disidentification with Pinkerton, who represents the deplorable white U.S. Navy lieutenant stationed in Japan. Butterfly is the young Japanese girl whom Pinkerton abandons upon his departure for the United States. Rafe disarticulates his "old friend," Mosako Fukuda, a sex worker at Shirley's Temple of Pleasure Emporium in Kobe, from the tragic figure of Butterfly from the opera:

We're a likely pair, we are; and I'm certainly no Pinkerton

To her Butterfly (Hinojosa 41)

Rafe constructs an alternative theorization of mutual racial belonging that appears to bypass the dominant fantasy of whiteness when he declares, with iteration, "We're a likely pair, we are." In addition to asserting the intimate possibility of the Chicano and Japanese pair, the lines also suggest an implicit impossibility riding on the currents of formal laws and informal violent reprisals against miscegenation throughout U.S. racial history, in this case reaching across the Pacific.⁷⁴ Rafe's disidentification with Pinkerton

⁷⁴ Katherine Moon documents the racially segregated "requirements" for Korean sex workers to serve either white or Black GIs. The ideology of the Cold War, informing the U.S. state agenda of both protecting democracy and spreading capitalism, is multiply inscribed in the understanding of "DMZ" as

suggests not only his disidentification from whiteness, but also a remove from the salacious exploitation of a young “Butterfly.” Indeed, Mosako Fukuda labors with

no pretense here:

Her parents know where she works,

And I, learning the ways of the world,

Do not add insult to their injury

By visiting their home. (Hinojosa 41)

Despite Rafe’s sensitivity, having “learn[ed] the ways of the world,” he still functions within the operating structures of overlapping patriarchies and empires, deeply saturated with and replicating imbalances in power. For Mosako Fukuda’s parents, her labor reads as “injury,” and Rafe himself, as a Chicano GI, represents a racialized “insult” to that injury. Furthermore, Rafe allegorizes through Mosako Fukuda the U.S. occupation of Japan as an injury, and simultaneously denaturalizes his own position in the role of “liberator.” Yoneyama reminds us that

Literary and other cultural representations contributed to the understanding of the nation’s new position in the global order through the tropes of femininity, masculinity, and sexuality. The racialized stories of Japanese women flirting with foreign soldiers or suffering metaphorical or actual rape, which suggested the inability of Japanese men to protect the chastity of “their women,” underwrote images of Japanese men emasculated by the absolute power of the United States. Sexualized and gendered relations operated persuasively in popular memories of the period and helped figure the nation’s (that is, the masculine subjects’) inferior status in the postwar global order—more precisely, its political and economic subordination to the United States. (*Hiroshima Traces* 190)

both a tension between an ostensible “de-militarized zone” dividing Korea as communist or capitalist, and the racialized zones within the entertainment centers of camptowns as “Dark Man’s Zone.” In other words, the multiple meanings of “DMZ” not only retain and register the physical segregation marking “communist” from “capitalist,” but also capture the ideological contradictions between a putatively democratic order and its practice on racialized and sexualized bodies.

Learning “the ways of the world” for Rafe include a consciousness that race, gender, and class are not separate, but are rather mutually constitutive. In this Cold War *corrido*, Rafe simultaneously affirms heteropatriarchal masculinity through his relationship with Mosako Fukuda and challenges another imperial war in the Pacific, demonstrating the necessity of an anti-racist, anti-imperial feminist framework that dismantles existing structures of power and builds other ways of being. Finally, while Rafe might perceive Mosako Fukuda’s parents in light of “injury” and “insult,” his narrative of his friend Sonny Ruiz’s adoption of a Japanese identity (which I discuss below) complicates the dominant representation of “Japanese men emasculated by the absolute power of the United States.”⁷⁵

The formation of the militarized subjectivities above hone in on a multiplicity of desires, though I am not suggesting an easy equivalence between the subjectivities constructed through the performance of “Taegu Girls” and the theorizations of “Old Friends.” That GIs sing and reiterate the lyrics, which are from the perspective of “girls” in Taegu, point to a perverse discursive occupation of the subaltern, one that amplifies the tensions of white supremacist and misogynist roots of empire-building emerging from the Korean War. And while existing scholarship formulates important arguments about the imperial critiques made by Hinojosa, there is a vacuum of transnational feminist readings of his works. I begin addressing this gap by arguing that military songbooks and Chicano cultural productions about the Korean War theorize that both patriotic desire and the

⁷⁵ While Korean diaspora studies has primarily focused on Korean sex work, many U.S. military personnel relied on the labor of sex workers in U.S. military bases in Japan, many of whom were Japanese. I do not mean to suggest that Japanese sex workers are somehow more or less “subaltern” than Korean sex workers, but rather that it is significant to consider the hetero-sexualized imperatives of the U.S. military operating through the complex nexus of both Japanese and U.S. empires.

desire for sexualized and racialized bodies constitute two sides of the same imperial coin. In my readings, these desires are articulated with each other, mutually constituted, and perform the contradictory functions of embedding and replicating military masculinity, as well as creating spaces for critique of the U.S. military expansion in Korea.

For example, Hinojosa's KLS at times playfully subverts masculinity, especially in relation to the extreme and fringe misogyny of the Air Force songs. Indeed, his texts explicitly assert underlying conditions of racism and poverty that chart his (and his friends') presence in the Korean War, rather than a desire borne of machismo, as they were drafted into the war. Rafe's friend Sonny Ruiz chooses to remain and assimilate in Japan with his Japanese wife, rather than return to what he is convinced will continue to be a deeply racist South Texas. Ironically, a white supremacist military provides the open cover for Sonny Ruiz to remain AWOL, an event that Hinojosa narrates in the poem "Brief Encounter." The poem begins with Rafe's apprehension by military police during his R&R in Japan:

Two M.P.'s deep into their jobs, stop my uniform;

It's nothing to do with me:

The uniform's a good target, and when it moves,

They aim. (Hinojosa 45)

The poem begins with the declaration that "It's nothing to do with me," but that the military police "stop my uniform," rather than Rafe as a person. That Rafe considers himself to be in the crosshairs as "a good target" of this military authority suggests his own position at odds with the military. After a tense exchange, during which Rafe asserts

his own authority as “an old hand” in contrast to their “few months,” the military police let him pass, but

Just then, Sonny Ruiz passes by and tips his hat, showing,
As he carries, the biggest, the loudest, the most glorious bouquet
In the whole of Honshu.

One of them grunts and says:

“Pipe the gook and them flowers, there.

Damndest place I’ve ever seen.” (45)

Sonny Ruiz, in his “Business suit, hat, arms at his side,” is illegible to the military police as an American (44). In the poem “Nagoya Station,” which narrates Sonny’s AWOL status from the U.S. military, Rafe observes that “To Americans he looks Japanese” (43). Sonny Ruiz “passes by,” in the dual meaning of strolling along but also racially passing, safe from the military police even with “the biggest, the loudest, the most glorious bouquet.” And what seems like the only commentary possible through a white supremacist military authority is ““Pipe the gook and them flowers, there.”” The gendered implications of the bouquet labor to equate “the gook and them flowers” as feminine, but does not perform the presumed emasculation that the military police intend in that statement.

Indeed, the poem refuses to devalue the feminine association of the flowers, especially as Sonny Ruiz knows the military police are incapable of truly seeing him, and

the visibly “glorious” flowers in fact flaunt his challenge to their authority.⁷⁶ Finally, that Rafe and Sonny Ruiz recognize each other, even as Sonny Ruiz is legible only as “the gook” and Rafe himself is only recognizable as a uniform to the military police, suggest both the absurdities of white supremacy and the performative dimensions of race. Though not explicitly challenging the ideological formations of machismo that color U.S. military recruitment practices which target working-class Latina/os and Blacks, KLS and TUS resist narratives of hyper-masculinity as the sole driving force underpinning military participation by adding to the mix complex understandings of racialization and subversive femininity.

Another poem’s attention to the devastation of Korean people emerges through observations of the land, stating

What the guns crews don’t trample,

The shells and supplies will

...

What could grow here?

And what do these people eat? (Hinojosa 30, 31)

In contrast to the detached national discourses that dehumanize Koreans and selectively memorialize U.S. veterans of the war, “New Battery Position” shapes another epistemology that counters dominant discourses. The attention to land is also significant, in particular Rafe’s attentions to cotton season in Texas in the works, because it theorizes the material conditions of farming and labor: “Tomorrow is 9/1, which means most of the cotton’s been picked and due to be plowed under by Texas Dept of Ag law. The

⁷⁶ In this moment, Sonny Ruiz certainly does not have to show the military police any stinking badges.

Valley is just as hot as Korea in the summer, so the cotton bolls must have popped open like popcorn and gotten as big as baseballs” (*Useless Servants* 58). Yet while he accesses this intimate knowledge of both land and labor in Korea, “Rafe Buenrostro returns from Korea. He will no longer make his living from farming like his forefathers” (Calderón 150).⁷⁷

Although Rafe’s familiarity with the backbreaking and difficult work of harvesting cotton in Texas emerges through his and previous generations’ experience with labor, cotton also functions as a sign for both Korean economic development and wartime destruction: according to Jin-kyung Lee, “three ‘white industries’ (cotton, sugar, flour)...were the mainstay of 1950s South Korea,” and cotton has been grown in Korea for centuries (77). Despite Rafe’s close knowledge of cotton season in South Texas, because of the devastating impacts of the Korean War on the peninsula (“What the guns crews don’t trample, / The shells and supplies will”) his own participation in the destruction of the land forces him to ask “What could grow here?” The Korean War apparatus cuts short Rafe’s ability to know that “[w]hat could grow here” includes cotton, and this inability to recognize this familiar crop because of the Korean War follows Rafe through after he returns to Texas. Serving in Korea would allow Rafe to access the GI Bill for college education, creating social and economic possibilities previously limited to farm workers in the Valley. For Rafe, Korea serves as both the condition for theorizing possibilities and limits of terrains, whether as farmland, real estate lost or won in imperial

⁷⁷ “The hostile weather, a history of conflict, and racism in Texas served Rafe well for enduring the war, the weather in Korea, and the racism of the U.S. Army” (Calderón 164-5).

transactions, or the devastated land of the Korean War, as well as the occasion that releases him from working the land.⁷⁸

Similar to the terrain Hinojosa remaps in the illustration opening *Estampas del valle y otras obras*, which I discuss above, the illustrations that accompany his poems in *Korean Love Songs*, created by René Castro, are essential for a critical reading practice. Such a practice reveals critiques of both the police action in Korea as well as U.S. wars and police actions elsewhere. Indeed, I suggest that the two forms of media are inseparable for the meanings they generate. Figure 2 accompanies Hinojosa’s “Friendly Fire,” a poem theorizing the bizarre tempos of war through light and sound. The framing phrase accompanying the image, “friendly fire,” suggests the failures of liberal democratic principles in attempts to absorb racialized bodies, especially in the U.S. wars in Korea and Vietnam.

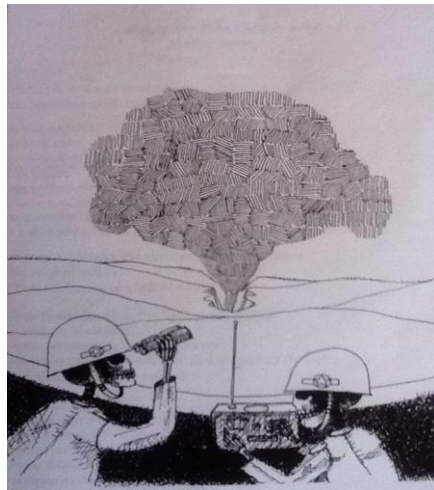


Figure 2: René Castro’s illustration accompanying Rolando Hinojosa’s poem “Friendly Fire” in *Korean Love Songs*

⁷⁸ Both *Korean Love Songs*, published in 1978, and *The Useless Servants* embed their epistemologies of the Korean War in the farm workers’ movements in the United States, and invites critiques of the racializing national engine that disproportionately selected Black, Chicano, and Mexican American GIs for the Vietnam War.

The figures in the image are skeletons, no flesh mediating their contact with the seemingly benign instruments of war. What marks the figures and gives them legibility are the accoutrements of the military, in particular the helmets. However, their skeletal presence renders the protective helmets null, showing instead figures marked by bare life, ghosts intent upon and impressed into increasing their number. Castro's illustration creates careful details, down to the finger bones and radio knobs. Yet the sloping landscape harbors no trees, reminding readers of Hinojosa's lines in "New Battery Position,"

What the guns crews don't trample,

The shells and supplies will

...

What could grow here?

And what do these people eat? (30, 31).

The landscape is rendered as equally bare as the figures, and is also singularly marked by the greedy and imprecise explosions, cruel blossoms of war. The viewer's perspective frames the image, the viewer's gaze fixing the figures and the explosion in startling perpetuity, eerily predicting the decades of ongoing wartime status, something Castro and Hinojosa could not have known during KLS's time of publication. Part of this perpetuity mirror's the viewer's own gaze, as the figure on the left fixes its empty gaze on the spectacle of war. The figure on the right manipulates the signals and mute sounds that fall on hard ears, controlling the gears of modernity in the engine of so-called progress. And although military technology shifts and "develops," the bareness of the image and the lack of identifying features carry this wartime illustration into unending terror. The

nearly empty landscape allows the viewer to graft the series of U.S. wars and police actions abroad since the Korean War into this scene.⁷⁹

Hinojosa's poem "Friendly Fire" puts into relief the conflict between sight and sound, significant for its critique of the technologies of war. Hinojosa stages this critique through the ironic title, particularly disturbing in the context of the Korean War because of the lethal misrecognition by the U.S. military and the U.N. forces of South Korean military units as North Korean or Chinese. Hinojosa theorizes the destructive elements of "friendly fire" through close knowledge of the embodied pain accompanying dismemberment:

Light travels faster than sound,
But sound travels fast enough for some.

The burnt hand caught the shrapnel direct and sailed off
As the abandoned arm shot upward
Looking for its partner
Now partly buried in the mud. (6)

In these stanzas, Hinojosa represents bits of shrapnel embedding their militarized presence into the bodies of GIs, and the bodies of GIs themselves embedded into the

⁷⁹ Mimi Nguyen states that "[t]he task before us is to theorize the significant ways in which liberal war and liberal peace as conjoined operations proceed under the *signs* of exception and emergency, and which are neither. Especially with never-ending war on the horizon, it is more crucial than ever to understand how the exception is foundational to liberal empire, while tropes of *transition* and *timetable* in fact prolong the duration of war, terror, and occupation" (xi). Not only is there a "never-ending war on the horizon," I suggest we are living the legacies of another war, the Korean War, which has never ended. Crucial to the creation of "never-ending war" is the rapid consumption of poor people and people of color for the production of terror.

earth. Hinojosa also theorizes the liminal spaces inhabited by the representatives of technological progress, critiquing both technological and medical modernity:

The hip, too, felt the smoking clumps
Which now don't have to be surgically removed:
That wire-laying signalman is as good as dead. (6).

“That wire-laying signalman,” like the other characters occupying the pages of *Korean Love Songs*, represents a proletarian labor force drafted into the Korean War. Yet the explanation for why the “smoking clumps” of shrapnel “now don’t have to be surgically removed” suggests the imprecise and haunting nature of the Korean War, in that the “wire-laying signalman is as good as dead,” but not quite actually dead, instead still bridging both life and death.

Hinojosa’s TUS in many ways fleshes out the critiques of the easy disposability of racialized bodies in the service of empire in the Korean War, which he presents in fragments through poetry in KLS. I return now to the moment in TUS that focuses on the screening of *The Treasure of Sierra Madre* during R&R at Itazuke Air Force Base in Tokyo. Rafe and his friend Joey watch *The Treasure of Sierra Madre*: “As usual, Mexicans got gunned down in both movies, and this is when Joey said, ‘Between Bogart and John Wayne, they’ll get rid of all the Mexicans in Hollywood’” (Hinojosa 163). Rafe’s and Joey’s observations of easy death during the Korean War carry precedence, with the “gunning down” of Chicano GIs eerily mirroring the cinematic “Mexicans [getting] gunned down” in *The Treasure of Sierra Madre*. This moment of spectatorship, of a film Rafe notes is “at least two years old,” reflects and recasts the unglimped

memories of the Korean War in Chicana/o cultural production. In my final section of this chapter, I examine other subterranean histories of the Korean War in Luis Valdez's plays.

“I hope you’re not talking about Korea?”: *Zoot Suit* and *I Don’t Have to Show You No Stinking Badges!*

Each year, Hollywood’s Academy Awards commemorates actors, directors, producers, musicians, and others involved in the film industry that have passed. In the 2013 Academy Awards, however, the commemoration was marked by the absence of Lupe Ontiveros. In an industry historically characterized by (and with roots in) deep racism and misogyny, Ontiveros’s omission in the commemoration was both sadly predictable and telling. Many of the roles available for the Mexican-American Ontiveros were roles portraying maids, which marks the mainstream film industry’s inability and unwillingness to represent diverse complexities within racial and ethnic groups, but also the occasion for Ontiveros to critique the devaluation of gendered labor, partly emerging from her experiences with ethnic typecasting: “I’m proud to represent those hands that labor in this country. I’ve given every maid I’ve portrayed soul and heart.”⁸⁰ Lupe Ontiveros plays Dolores in the 1981 film adaptation of Valdez’s *Zoot Suit*, and bears striking resemblance to Valdez’s character Connie in *I Don’t Have to Show You No Stinking Badges!* Indeed, *Badges* highlights the struggle behind finding complex, non-stereotypical roles for Chicana/o actors.

⁸⁰ Mireya Navarro, *The New York Times*, July 27, 2012, “Lupe Ontiveros, Who Portrayed Maids and Moms, Dies at 69.”

I begin with this story because it captures one of the tensions in Luis Valdez's 1986 play *I Don't Have to Show You No Stinking Badges!* The play zooms in on the Villa household in Monterey Park, narrating Buddy Villa's and Connie Villa's struggles to find acting roles that are not flat stereotypes of Latina/os, their precocious sixteen-year old son Sonny's decision to drop out of Harvard and become an actor, and Sonny's sansei friend Anita's frazzled attempts to figure out her life.⁸¹ Buddy has acted as a bandit in *The Treasure of Sierra Madre*, and is also a Korean War veteran, in a sense working in "bit parts" (as proletarian soldiers) in two imperial theaters—the movie theater, in which he "brought up the rear" in a film that exploits Mexico as a backdrop to the dramas of three working-class white men, and the theater of war, in a so-called "forgotten war" that solidified U.S. military entrenchment in the Asia Pacific region (Valdez 168). In Sonny's conversations—permeated with Buddy's experiences in the Korean War—with the Japanese American Anita, Sonny discloses his dad's love affair with "an Asian woman" during the war, and wonders if he has a "Korean Chicano" half brother somewhere in Korea (Valdez 200). *Badges* traces several genealogies stemming from the Korean War—the wartime experiences of racialized and gendered subjectivities, the anxieties about the possibilities and limitations of kinship, and the fraught relationships between the "illegal border-crosser" and sexualized "model minority," or as the language of the play articulates, "The Geisha and the Greaser."

⁸¹ The acting work Buddy and Connie have access to reflects the devalued labor designated as reserved for and most visibly occupied by racialized laborers, as Connie points out to Buddy: "Work for a whole two days, mi amor. Both of us—right here in town, just the way you like it. A maid and a gardener. Are you happy now?" (Valdez 165). Valdez and other playwrights of color create important roles for Chicana/o, Black, and Asian actors, it is also telling that *Badges*, with its explicit critiques of Hollywood and the entertainment industry, appears to be relatively unknown compared to *Zoot Suit*.

Like KLS and TUS, *Badges* also theorizes part of its resistance to narratives of legitimacy by challenging form. The play already troubles the theatricality of the stage, of single-genre storytelling, by framing *The Treasure of Sierra Madre* as a meta-narrative in the stage directions: “Behind BUDDY VILLA, the VCR on, a rack comes on, playing a scene from ‘The Treasure of Sierra Madre.’ On the studio monitors: A wily Mexican bandit is confronting a scruffy Humphrey Bogart with toothy disdain, somewhere in the wilds of Mexico” (Valdez 158). *Badges* plays with form and the performative by using the film as an over-arching point of reference. Yet the space given to the film in the play is minimal, just as Buddy’s role “somewhere in the wilds of Mexico” in the film is extra, and just as Buddy’s role as a veteran “somewhere in the wilds” of Korea is marginal. Indeed, formally, Valdez treats the Korean War as it is treated in dominant U.S. history—almost forgotten, lurking in the edges “somewhere in the wilds” of other, realer, more contained, more civilized history.⁸²

Valdez subverts this marginal representation, however, by rendering the Korean War both haunting and spectral. As Avery Gordon states in *Ghostly Matters*, “[t]o be in the seemingly old story now scared and not wishing to be there but not having anywhere

⁸² *Badges* is also a play about movie actors, and shows that Buddy had a “bit part” as a bandit in *The Treasure of Sierra Madre*. As I discuss in previous sections, Hinojosa’s characters Rafe and Joey view the film during the Korean War in TUS. They would have recognized Buddy in the film as a marginal character, as part of the background, yet Buddy would not have been invisible to them, as he seems to be for mainstream white audiences. Indeed, Buddy’s work as an “extra” might have served as an occasion for Rafe and Joey to recognize their own positions as marginal participants in the Korean War. Buddy is a Mexican getting “gunned down” in Hollywood, just as they theorize their own possibilities of getting “gunned down” in Korea. That Buddy’s labor is officially recognized by the U.S. film industry as “extra” also resonates with Rafe and Joey’s labor for the U.S. military, which Rafe narrates in the poem “A Matter of Supplies”:

It comes down to this: we’re pieces of equipment
To be counted and signed for.

On occasion some of us break down,
And those parts which can’t be salvaged
Are replaced with other GI parts, that’s all. (Hinojosa 50)

else you can go that feels like a place you can belong is to be haunted” (190). In the context of *Badges*, “the seemingly old story” is the Korean War, a past experience only Buddy is privy to, the others in the play “not wishing to be there,” but nevertheless “not having anywhere else” that escapes that story. Even if the characters were to discount or willfully ignore Buddy’s Korean War experiences, the U.S. nation-state’s Cold War logics continue to erupt as hauntings in their lives as actors: a rare speaking role for Buddy arrives in the form of “a Costa Rican General,” presumably in a film (casting Jack Nicholson in the lead role) about the 1948 civil war, presaging Costa Rica’s brushes with the Cold War (Valdez 194).⁸³ In an attempt to placate Sonny, Connie tells him about a role, as “[s]ort of a soldier...A *guerrilla*. The story takes place in Central America, see? And there’s this American Marine who’s down there advising the *contras*. Well, you’re one of the boys he’s training” (204). Ironically, in the play, the only viable possibility for Sonny in Hollywood is that of playing a bit part as a proletarian soldier, this time in an anti-communist U.S.-backed force: “Who’s financing this thing, the Sandinistas or the CIA?” (204). Sonny dismisses Connie’s own role in the film as the owner of a “whorehouse,” virtuously exclaiming his disdain for such roles as extras in films that glorify the United States in its anti-communist repressions in Central America.⁸⁴

Badges also renders the Korean War as spectral, in the phantom non-presence of Sonny’s Korean Chicano brother, and his mother, the “Asian girl”: “My dad fell in love with an Asian girl, when he was in Korea. Wanted to marry her, but the Army

⁸³ As Dong-Choon Kim notes, “South Korea resembled many Latin American, African, and Asian nations that had endured U.S.-supported dictators during the cold war” (“Long Road” 527).

⁸⁴ Valdez constructs an increasingly “supercilious” Sonny after his time at Harvard: “SONNY: (Shaking his head) You must be awfully tired of playing Mexican maids. CONNIE: (Archly) As Hattie McDaniel used to say: ‘I’d rather play a maid than be one.’ SONNY: What’s the difference?” (174).

discouraged him...So he came back to the states, promising to send for her. He never did. The family pressure was so against it, he ended up marrying my Mom instead. Rumor has it he might even have left a son behind...I guess he'd be older than me now—poor bastard. A Korean Chicano...” (200). The identity of the “Asian girl” remains unclear, as do the circumstances under which she and Buddy meet. Reading between the actors’ lines and silences, the fact that “the Army discouraged him,” and that “family pressure was so against” their marriage suggests the illicit nature of their relationship.⁸⁵ While the U.S. military viewed “prostitution [as] a necessary evil and Korean women [as] mere commodities, whose bodies and human dignity were disposable,” the military routinely discouraged GIs from marrying Korean women, which would endow the women’s racialized “disposable” status with the putative privilege of U.S. citizenship (Moon, *Dangerous Women*, 167). For the spectral “Asian girl,” “[i]mmigration to the United States through marriage represents an opportunity for the Korean woman who is associated with military sex work to shed the stigmas of the past by legitimizing her sexual labor, to the extent that it is no longer legible as sexual labor” (Cho 14). Yet this opportunity for legitimacy was foreclosed for the “Asian girl,” who, if she did have a “Korean Chicano” son, would face tremendous challenges in a Korean society attempting to rebuild after the ceasefire.

Badges thus raises, through the hidden contours of the Korean War, important questions about kinship. As a normalizing state project regulating and legitimizing

⁸⁵ Throughout the play, both Connie and Sonny express anxieties about the implicit connections between Buddy and Anita, calling attention to the legacies of hypersexualization of Asian women: “BUDDY: What the hell’s going on? CONNIE: I don’t know! Maybe he’s head over heels in love? Like father, like son. BUDDY: What’s that supposed to mean? CONNIE: Figure it out. BUDDY: I hope you’re not talking about Korea? That was a long time ago—before I even met you!” (Valdez 185).

kinship, the management of marriage extends to the imperial borders of Korea, demarcating the intimate borders of the state institution. As Nancy Cott puts it, “[n]o modern nation ignores the intimate domain, because the population is composed and reproduced there. Marriage regulation provides the clearest instance. Legal marriage is only one form of intimacy, but it is the form of sexual and intimate relationship in which the state figures by definition” (*Haunted* 470). During the Korean War, U.S. military authorities rely on normalized understandings of “proper,” heteronormative intimacy as a measure of social control, especially as marriage grants belonging to a nation forged through the ideology of white supremacy.⁸⁶ Sonny Villa’s wistful invocation of his “Korean Chicano” brother, on the other hand, suggests the affective desire for kinship. Sonny Villa’s pitying speculation that his brother would be a “poor bastard” indicates not just the presumed material poverty of his hypothetical brother, nor just the sensitivity to racism his brother might confront, but also his illegitimacy within any intimate, societal, and national parameter.

In contrast, Hinojosa’s Sonny Ruiz, in the poem “Nagoya Station,” considers kinship as a communal experiment forged of mutual desire, in his marriage with a Japanese schoolteacher. Yet Sonny Ruiz too must construct kinship within a legitimate national framework, invisible to the U.S. military. After “he filled out and signed his own Missing-In-Action cards,” Sonny Ruiz “simply walked away to the docks” (Hinojosa 43).

⁸⁶ In the event that GI marriages to Korean women do occur, the U.S.O. Bride School provides training in “proper” American domesticity: “An article in the *Christian Science Monitor* titled ‘The Perfect American Wife, Korean-Style’ describes the kind of training [women received] at the Bride School: ‘Yvonne Park bangs a head of lettuce against a table and extracts its core... Twenty Korean women take note of the neat trick. They’ve never made an American-style salad. Next they learn how to baste turkey, slice canned cranberry gelatin, and bake pumpkin pie’” (Cho 140). The article was published in 1998.

Not long after, cards started to arrive from Nagoya and signed
 By Mr. Kazuo Fusaro who, in another life,
 Had lived as David Ruiz in Klail City,
 And who, in this new life,
 Was now a hundred and ten per cent Japanese. (43)

Sonny Ruiz's marriage operates on the precondition of his assimilation into Japan, adopting an identity that is Japanese even in excess ("a hundred and ten per cent") of his past life. I read Valdez and Hinojosa together here because their works theorize the multiplicity of kinships. Despite the insistent regulation of marriage by the U.S. military, both works imagine other possibilities for articulating intimacies that exceed legitimate channels of familial belonging.

Indeed, *Badges* examines the fraught, anxious relationships between the "illegal border-crosser" and sexualized "model minority" during a period of turbulent multiculturalism. In my earlier reading of "The Geisha and the Greaser," I suggest that Sonny's satiric title of his proposed film works as a refitting of gendered and racialized epithets in order to subvert white supremacist attempts to name, contain and fix complex subjectivities. Within the Korean War pre-history of *I Don't Have to Show You No Stinking Badges!*, the alliterative insults of "geisha" and "greaser" invoke Buddy's romance with "an Asian girl" in Korea, and also set the stage for the play's treatment of racialized and gendered stereotypes. In particular, that the play unfolds during "The Reagan years, early in 1985" throws into relief the racialized stereotypes emerging from U.S. imperial aggressions during the Cold War, especially given the selective invocation

and erasure of “race” during and since the incorporative “multicultural” moment (Valdez 156).⁸⁷

I would like to conclude this chapter with a reading of another Valdez play, which also glimpses into the Korean War. *Zoot Suit* (1978), like *Badges*, plays with the genres of theatre, and chronicles the 1942 Sleepy Lagoon murder case, which tried and convicted seventeen young men for the murder of José Diaz, and which is regarded as the precursor of the 1943 “Zoot Suit Riots.” Valdez’s theatrical re-working of the murder trial follows the story of Henry Reyna, who along with his friends is wrongfully condemned for the murder, and the efforts of his family, friends, and other communities to clear their names. In the play, Henry is released from incarceration, but faces another encounter with the police, which culminates in a series of possible endings. In one, Henry Reyna’s younger brother, Rudy, states: “Henry Reyna went to Korea in 1950. He was shipped across in a destroyer and defended the 38th Parallel until he was killed in Inchon in 1952, being posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor” (94). As one of the alternate endings of *Zoot Suit*, this line is significant for several reasons. Although the play directs most of its critique against direction of the military apparatus against Chicano/as during the Second World War, this line establishes the Korean War within the existing critical discourse against racist state power. The fact that Rudy speaks this line also demonstrates the impact of multiple imperial wars within this particular Chicana/o family. Furthermore, as in the works of Hinojosa, the play theorizes the

⁸⁷ Here I refer to the multicultural palimpsest emerging from “The Reagan years”: a layer of paint or an eraser that attempts to hide and rewrite the state’s interest in capital accumulation and white supremacy, through which the traces of histories of repression and resistance nonetheless emerge. I borrow from James Kyung Jin Lee’s formulation “to discover and recover an urban palimpsest from celebrations of easy multicultural promises and even easier visions of racial pathologies” (xxix).

dizzying duration of war. Henry's time in Korea is significant as the war outlives him and to this day continues to outlive him, as an active war even in its stalemate status.

Moreover, the order and placement of this particular alternate ending lends it further significance. At the end of the play, the press reports: "Henry Reyna went back to prison in 1947 for robbery and assault with a deadly weapon. While incarcerated, he killed another inmate and he wasn't released until 1955, when he got into hard drugs. He died of the trauma of his life in 1972" (Valdez 94). The Pachuco, who functions as the audience's narrator and as a spectral alternate to Henry, responds "That's the way you see it, ese. But there's other way to end this story," followed by Rudy's line "Henry Reyna went to Korea in 1950" (Valdez 94). I argue that *Zoot Suit* critically frames the two possible endings—incarceration and deployment into the military—in a mirror that reflects Chester Himes's ending of *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, which I examine in the next chapter. Yet another character in the play has already theorized the devastation of that experience, as Dolores, played by Lupe Ontiveros in both the Broadway and film adaptation of *Zoot Suit*, says to Henry in the beginning of the play: "I still can't believe you're going off to war. I almost wish you were going back to jail" (Valdez 34). My next chapter continues the discussion of this continuum, focusing on the tension inherent in the "choice" between prison and the military during the Korean War era.

Chapter Four

“Americans, your own flesh and blood”: Kinships of the Korean War

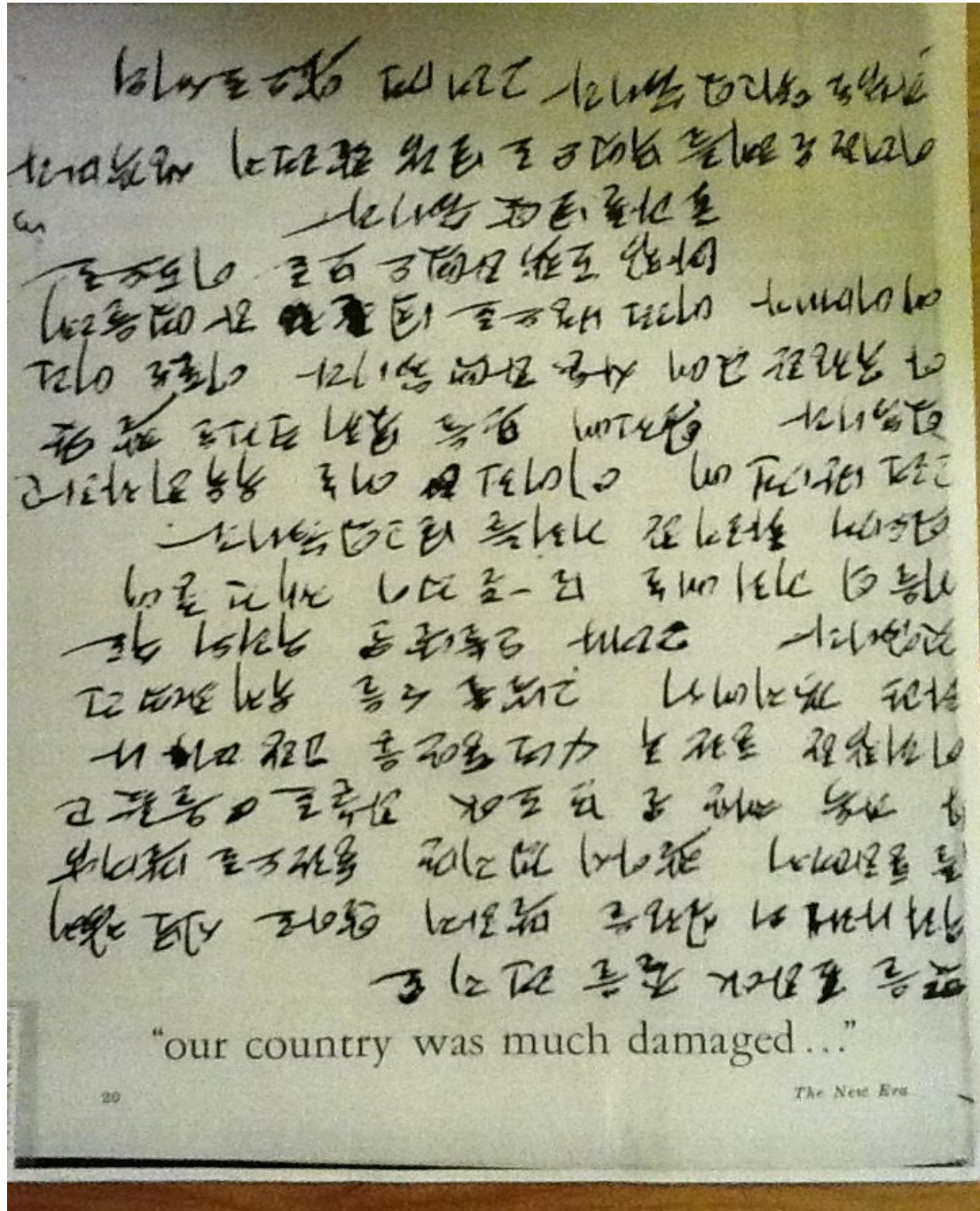


Figure 3: Reprint of letter from the War Orphan Sponsorship Program in *The New Era*

In 1954, the year following the declared stalemate of the Korean War, the inmates of United States Penitentiary (USP) Leavenworth documented their virtual adoption of a Korean boy named Bok Nam Om. By adopting Bok Nam Om, the inmates participated in the burgeoning post-Second World War U.S. phenomenon of sponsoring orphans abroad, particularly in the East Asian nations destroyed by war.⁸⁸ Many of these “virtual” adoptions involved sending money through established organizations and exchanging letters and photographs. Figure 3, from the USP Leavenworth prison magazine *The New Era*, showcases part of the exchange between the inmates and the agencies sponsoring Bok Nam Om. In this chapter, I focus on the prison magazine *The New Era*’s records of the adoption of Bok Nam Om by the inmates of USP Leavenworth through U.S. sponsorship programs as well as its articles recommending the use of prisoners in the Korean War.

USP Leavenworth’s award-winning prison magazine *The New Era*, operated and produced primarily by inmates, published letters, articles, poems and editorials that engaged with the Korean War from its official beginning.⁸⁹ I examine the prison magazine as a cultural text in tension with the circumstances of its production within a

⁸⁸ In addition to children orphaned by the war, various agencies supported children like Bok Nam Om, whose father was missing and who lived with his mother and grandmother.

⁸⁹ According to archivist Tim Rives, *The New Era* “was founded in 1914 as a part of a larger wave of progressive penal reforms that offered inmates recreational and educational privileges in exchange for better behavior” (128-9). By 1949, *The New Era* was “listed among the best magazines of its kind and is therefore to be seen regularly in many libraries. It is edited by inmates, most of its articles and other material are written by the inmates, and the art work, printing and binding is a product of the industrial department of the prison... Those who avail themselves of the privilege of perusing the New Era magazine will realize why the Leavenworth prison has such a high rating among penal institutions” (“Prison Magazine Now on Display: Leavenworth Staff Has Excellent One,” *The Southeast Missourian*, June 30, 1949).

federal disciplinary institution.⁹⁰ *The New Era* records relationships between two marginalized groups, Korean War orphans and U.S. penitentiary inmates, in addition to editorial pieces that petition for the participation of prisoners in the U.S. military during the Korean War, especially in response to the inclusion of “treacherous” Asian Americans in the U.S. military.⁹¹ I argue that U.S. nationalist, heteropatriarchal Cold War ideologies allowed inmates to situate their claims of national belonging over and against the use of Asian American soldiers in the Korean War; these same ideologies justified, rather than contradicted, their virtual adoption of Bok Nam Om.

Figure 3, from *The New Era*’s first article regarding Bok Nam Om’s adoption in the 1954 winter issue, begins with a reprinted letter in Korean from the sponsor agency and encapsulates the tensions mediating the relationship between Bok Nam Om’s sponsor agency and the prisoners. The letter is reprinted upside down, with a translation of one fragment in English at the bottom of the page, reading “our country was much damaged...” (20). Not only does this misprint suggest the violence of epistemological misrecognition, the phrase selected for translation obscures the conditions for the “much damaged” country, the devastation of the Korean War. Furthermore, the translated fragment discursively justifies Bok Nam Om’s virtual salvation by the prisoners,

⁹⁰ The content of the magazine is necessarily selective, as it is produced under conditions of intense surveillance in the penitentiary. Although *The New Era* builds in various subversive moments throughout its publications during the Korean War and its aftermath (1950-57), I focus on the stories of Bok Nam Om and the Korean War in order to critique the nationalist, white supremacist, and heteropatriarchal ideologies emerging through the publication.

⁹¹ Lisa Lowe asserts that “the American soldier, who has in every way submitted to the nation, is the quintessential citizen and therefore the ideal representative of the nation, yet the American of Asian descent remains the symbolic ‘alien,’ the *metonym* for Asia who by definition cannot be imagined as sharing in America” (6).

positioned as the U.S. nation's rightful "fathers."⁹² The accompanying article for the reprinted letter states:

Inmates of prisons and reformatories in our country can be proud of their contributions to the fighting of wars. But they can be even more proud of their efforts to bring comfort to children who might otherwise perish. Leavenworth can be particularly proud of its part in this great undertaking... Their gratitude is tremendous, as is evident in a portion of Bok Nam Om's letter: "Words cannot express the gratitude we feel in our hearts." These words show that we are helping to repair the "much damaged" areas of Korea... Perhaps by aiding these children we have aided ourselves [sic] even more. (20-1)

The letter of gratitude from the sponsor agency, along with the article, suggests the writer's discursive occupation of the position of a paternal figure, who does not reflect on the necessary connection between "their contributions to the fighting of wars" and "their efforts to bring comfort to children who might otherwise perish." The article argues for the legitimacy of adopting a child who remains "over there" in Korea, a space seemingly demarcated from the United States by oceans and continental boundaries, and for the prisoners, contained by the cruel architecture of the penitentiary.⁹³ Virtual adoption is thus rendered as ideal, demonstrating the abstract logic of helping Korean "others" without the "others" physically coming "here," within the boundaries of the nation. Indeed, the letter of gratitude from the sponsorship agency "show[s] that

⁹² Christina Klein states in *Cold War Orientalism* that "[t]he 'adoption' process also opened a route to participation in terms of education, in ways that echoed the contemporary discourse of travel... The exchange of information played an important role in the 'adoptive' relation. American 'parents' and their 'adoptees' exchanged personal narratives, letters, and photographs, thereby fostering a personal bond of intimacy that incorporated the Asian child, emotionally and textually, into the American family" (158). Because the inmates cannot travel, the exchange of information functions as the only method of creating connections, in contrast to the white, middle-class, suburban American families who are represented as the institution requiring protection from those incarcerated in federal penitentiaries.

⁹³ In *The Feeling of Kinship*, David Eng states "[t]he movement of the transnational adoptee from 'over there' to 'over here,' and from public charge to private family, individuates her while simultaneously working to encrypt colonial histories in the domestic space of intimate family and kinship relations" (102-3).

[inmates] are helping to repair” Korea, such that Bok Nam Om could, by virtue of the adoption, remain safely removed from the nation. And so “[p]erhaps by aiding these children [inmates] have aided [themselves] even more,” securing abstract paternity while imprisoned, which demonstrates the potential for white prisoners during the Korean War era to rehabilitate into the nation-state, without jeopardizing the racial purity of the nation.

While official records on the racial demographics of federal penitentiaries during the late 1950s suggest the incarceration of a significant number of people of color, *The New Era* articles and editorials from the Korean War era reveal considerable anxieties about white racial purity and national belonging.⁹⁴ The Federal Bureau of Prisons’ review of 1959 reports that federal institutions incarcerated a total of 10,707 white inmates, 3,790 Black inmates, 736 American Indian inmates, 39 Chinese inmates, and 2 Japanese inmates (53). In the absence of data specific to USP Leavenworth, demographics during the Korean War era may be inferred to be similar, with the penitentiary incarcerating a majority of white inmates.⁹⁵ I suggest that official measures of demographics are important, not because such measures reflect any accuracy or essence about racialized prisoners, but because official records read against the grain may yield critical insights into how the state manages differentially rendered subjects.

⁹⁴ Joy James provides a critical definition of whiteness and the legacy of Enlightenment thinking, and how this legacy continues to value white life against the deaths of other racialized peoples: “Given the racialized value of human life as an Enlightenment legacy in Europe and European settler states, humanity (and the abhorrence over its loss) is based on whiteness, as embodied in the European” (54).

⁹⁵ Although Martha Hodes’s “The United States Census of 1890” centers a different state demographic project, her findings are relevant here: “within the arbitrary nature of racial constructs lay the authority of the state to divide, count, mark, and erase. Those initiatives in turn fostered the intertwined national projects of subjugation, assimilation, and extinction at the turn of the century, in the interest of white purity and supremacy” (258). In addition, while Joy James rightly critiques Michel Foucault for “universaliz[ing] the body of the white, propertied male” in *Discipline and Punish*, an examination of the white prisoners in USP Leavenworth through *The New Era* contributes to theorizations of differential racialized vulnerability to privilege and pain.

Implicitly underpinning white supremacist ideology is the idea of “race” as an effective instrument of social control, an instrument that replicates and wields its force through hierarchies. I assert that reading *The New Era* during this moment in the absence of hard data is significant for two reasons. First, the prison magazine functions as a site of relative white racial privilege, engaging with and responding to the larger national circuit of print material, occasionally accessing spots in newspapers through the form of reprints, and addressing editorials to President Eisenhower.⁹⁶ Although mediated by the institutional parameters of the penitentiary, as well as the national parameters of anti-communism, white inmates nevertheless enjoyed a right of entry into print culture. Second, *The New Era* during the Korean War moment therefore registers the erasure of alternative imaginings,⁹⁷ and demonstrates the degrees of differential racialized access to discursive sites of privilege, such as participating in national print culture, however limited, and claiming a stake in belonging to the idealized national family through the virtual adoption of Bok Nam Om.⁹⁸

USP Leavenworth’s origins and operations are intimately tied to U.S. acts of war and empire. Fort Leavenworth, founded in 1827, served as both a destination and

⁹⁶ *The New Era* also reprinted news articles documenting USP Leavenworth’s adoption efforts, including “Men Behind Prison Walls Aid War Victims” by David L. Kirk, chief editorial writer of the *Spokane (Washington) Daily Chronicle*. Letters of appreciation from prison magazine editors, prison directors, and other subscribers from locations as varied as Ontario, Canada, Copenhagen, Denmark, and Oklahoma are documented in the winter 1954 issue.

⁹⁷ *The New Era* changes tremendously during the next few decades. For instance, by the early 1970s, radical Chicano poet Raúl Salinas published editorials in the prison magazine, in addition to starting another, *Aztlan de Leavenworth*. Rives suggests that dissent was “forbidden at Leavenworth. There was plenty of it behind walls, especially during World War One with inmates from the Industrial Workers of the World, the Green Corn Rebellion, and other antiwar groups incarcerated for criticizing the war and resisting the draft. But dissident views were censored completely. Surely there were antiwar prisoners during WWII, Korea, and Vietnam, but they too had no voice. Underground newspapers and manuscripts were forbidden so there is no written evidence of their activities” (132).

⁹⁸ “I would suggest that the possession of a child, whether biological or adopted, has today become the sign of guarantee both for family and for full and robust citizenship, for being a fully realized political, economic, and social subject in American life” (Eng 101).

stopping point for people participating in westward expansion. Before the fort was established, however, people of the Kaw Nation (Kansa/Kanza) inhabited the geographical region. Members of the Kaw Nation were pushed south to Indian Territory through a series of expansion and Indian removal acts. Fort Leavenworth continued to absorb the space, serving as the United States Disciplinary Barracks in 1874, a military prison whose inmates built the civilian penitentiary USP Leavenworth the following year. According to archivist Tim Rives, “Leavenworth housed military inmates, including veterans of the Civil War and the Frontier Army campaigns. Other troubled soldiers, sailors, marines and veterans arrived with subsequent conflicts: the Spanish American and Philippine Islands wars, the Mexican Border Campaign, the Great War” (127). The penitentiary is thus embedded within the histories of multiple and sometimes overlapping moments in U.S. empire, suggesting its transnational character through the incarceration of inmates who served or refused to serve in white supremacist wars abroad and domestically.⁹⁹ The Korean War marks another instance in U.S. imperial history in USP Leavenworth; the official beginning of the Korean War in June 1950 prompted an immediate response by William Jones, inmate and editor, who published his argument for using inmates to participate in the war in the July-September 1950 issue of *The New Era*, which I examine in further detail below.

The adoption of Bok Nam Om by USP Leavenworth inmates brings into focus the history of adoption during a period of Asian exclusion from the United States, opening up

⁹⁹ Susan Gillman’s argument for the stakes of comparative studies is especially useful for theorizing the space and time of empire in USP Leavenworth: “Comparability entails a theory of space (meaning geography and place) and time (meaning temporality and history) that would recognize the ‘palimpsestuous’ quality of the present, where multiple times exist simultaneously within and across the same places, or coexist as uneven temporalities” (193).

significant stories about both transnational adoption and racially engineered immigration restriction.¹⁰⁰ Korean diaspora and transnational adoption studies scholars have analyzed discourses surrounding the post-1945 production of orphans from Korea as consumable, imperiled bodies that require adoption into normative white nuclear families. The adoption also tells a story of truncated kinship, relationships that fail to attain the status of the idealized nuclear family, thereby providing space for readings of critical deviance from that dominant narrative. Instead of only evoking U.S. imperial legacies in Asia, the adoption also throws into relief the impossibilities inherent in normative liberal definitions of family. This dominant notion of family is at once inclusive and exclusive, marking the boundaries between trustworthy intimates and unfamiliar others, between those who belong and those who are on the outside. Furthermore, the argument for inmates to participate in the Korean War in place of Asian American soldiers suggests that racialized others will never be trustworthy. The awkward spectrum of time and space articulated in *The New Era*, the tension and ambivalence, is a familiar story in U.S. history, in which various racialized groups are welcomed for their labor but pushed away from “belonging” in the national family.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ It is important to note despite the 1965 Hart-Cellar Act, which “dismantled” previous immigration restrictions (some immigration acts include the Page Act of 1875, the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the Immigration Act of 1924,), the history of Asian migration to the United States was a history of selective exclusion.

¹⁰¹ “The rhetoric of adoption symbolically ‘solved’ the problem of America’s racially exclusive immigration laws. It freed the idea of family from its biological roots and dependence on physical proximity and made it a function of sentiment instead. Asians did not actually have to enter the United States in order to become tied to Americans through family bonds; instead, the American family, and the love and aid that went with it, could extend out beyond the borders of the nation. This idea of a multi-racial, multinational family repudiated the history of American racism without the difficulties of putting that position into practice at the level of social and political policy” (Klein 153).

The stories of post-Second World War and post-Korean War adoptions, both virtual and physical, offer critiques of dominant definitions of family, which have occupied privileged positions throughout U.S. history. Indeed, the common applications of “family” in national discourse reveal their roots in the conception and extension of U.S. nationhood, from “Founding Fathers” and “Republican Motherhood” to “family values” and “family planning.” These dominant definitions attempt to settle and stabilize meanings of family and kinship and often struggle to erase the Cold War origins and the uneven power relations between the United States and Korea that such adoptions produce. I suggest this is especially true for the inmates of USP Leavenworth, who are rendered by the state as civilly dead and are ostensibly unable to participate in familial affective relationships. Furthermore, the inmates’ access to and remaking of kinship operates within and creates uneven articulations of power, especially in relationship to Bok Nam Om. This chapter examines the triangulation of militarized state power, negotiations with civil death, and transnational adoption during the Korean War. I argue that within the framework of an anti-communist, white supremacist war, the inmates, suffering from civil death, virtually claimed Bok Nam Om, also marked by civil death, in an attempt to produce an alternative kinship, one that suggests different kinds of affective relationships that brush against dominant definitions of family. However, I assert that this attempt ultimately upholds the prevalent discourse of heteropatriarchal white supremacist capitalism.

Owning “your own flesh and blood”: whiteness as property and the pliability of civil death

Before the adoption of Bok Nam Om, however, *The New Era* published an editorial on the racialized unfitnes of Asian American GIs, allowing the writer to position the white inmates of USP Leavenworth as rightful, deserving, and voluntary participants in the Korean War. The 1950 July-September issue documents prisoner William Jones’s open letter, signed by the inmates and addressed “To Whom It May Concern.” The open letter articulates the need for additional troops in order “to send our fighting forces into Korea to combat communism and to check its spread, [setting] a precedent that must be continued in many other critical points throughout the world.” This statement suggests that the author imagines the inmates as belonging to the nation, despite the fact that they were held captive in a federal penitentiary and definitively excluded from both private and public spheres, in the interest of protecting the national body. William Jones’s identification with “our fighting forces” aligns his position unquestionably with the U.S. nation-state. Furthermore, the letter enthusiastically supports the national insistence on “combat[ing] communism,” conforming to the dominant narrative that Korea functioned as a spectral domino that could potentially push the unchecked movement of communism into “many other critical points throughout the world.”

The address of the piece, “To Whom It May Concern,” opens up questions of racially differentiated access to privilege, public space, and power. While a common greeting, it also asks the question, to whom does the letter concern? Written by William Jones and signed “The Inmates,” the letter is directed toward government authorities, but

also expresses paternalistic concern about politically and militarily incapable Koreans, other “Asiatics,” and U.S. troops involved in the war. It also suggests, however, the privilege of being able to address those in positions of power, including policymakers, despite the fact that accessing legislators who might re-script conscription laws to manage the actual and symbolic transition of white prisoners into the U.S. military is unlikely. In distinction from the “Asiatics,” who even as citizens are believed to be dangerous communist threats, the letter argues that “inmates of our penal institutions...are Americans, your own flesh and blood,” and therefore deserve the right to sacrifice their lives in the service of the nation.¹⁰²

In his discussion of scientific experiments on prisoners and the theory of consent in U.S. prisons and Nazi concentration camps, Giorgio Agamben states that “[t]o speak of free will and consent in the case of a person sentenced to death or of a detained person who must pay serious penalties is, at the very least, questionable...What the well-meaning emphasis on the free will of the individual refuses to recognize here is that the concept of ‘voluntary consent’ is simply meaningless...” (157-8). William Jones’s letter, however, suggests the nuanced ideologies operating on subjects with white supremacist privilege, and reveals the logic of such a hierarchy replicating in USP Leavenworth during the Korean War. In other words, degrees of racialized differentiation and access to what Cheryl Harris calls “whiteness as property” modify “the concept of ‘voluntary

¹⁰² Giorgio Agamben states in *Homo Sacer* that “the sovereignty of the living man over his own life has its immediate counterpart in the determination of a threshold beyond which life ceases to have any juridical value and can, therefore, be killed without the commission of a homicide. The new juridical category of ‘life devoid of value’ (or ‘life unworthy of being lived’) corresponds exactly—even if in an apparently different direction—to the bare life of homo sacer” (139).

consent,”” such that even in an abject space of detention, prisoners racialized as possessing legitimate personhood can “volunteer” to participate in the Korean War.¹⁰³

While William Jones reworks the narrative of voluntary conscription in order to fashion a narrative of choice and liberation from USP Leavenworth, for Black, Brown, Native and Asian peoples, the ostensible choice is riddled with the contradictory violence of being racialized as nonwhite in a white supremacist state. Indeed, the white prisoners of USP Leavenworth can “volunteer” themselves for participation in the Korean War because the white supremacist state equates whiteness with agency, action, and political will, and legally reifies the property of white personhood, positioning whites as owners of their “own flesh and blood.” In “Whiteness as Property,” Cheryl Harris defines white supremacy as

privileging “white” as unadulterated, exclusive, and rare. Inherent in the concept of “being white” was the right to own or hold whiteness to the exclusion and subordination of Blacks...In the commonly held popular view, the presence of Black “blood”—including the infamous “one-drop”—consigned a person to being “Black”...Recognizing or identifying oneself as white is thus a claim of racial purity, an assertion that one is free of any taint of Black blood. The law has played a critical role in legitimating this claim. (1737)

Jones identifies the white prisoners of USP Leavenworth as “Americans, your own flesh and blood,” the ideology underpinning such a move defining the prisoners as “unadulterated, exclusive, and rare.” In other words, in contrast to deviant and treacherous Asians, the white prisoners can exercise their “exclusive” and “rare” (Harris 1737) possession of “unquestionable” patriotism and citizenship (Jones), which is itself

¹⁰³ Within the context of USP Leavenworth, given the hostility against “Asiatic” soldiers in the Korean War documented in *The New Era*, any Asian prisoner might have faced severe limitations in his capacity to “volunteer” in the war. While other nonwhite prisoners might also “volunteer,” I suggest that they have restricted access to publishing pieces reflecting their racialized position within USP Leavenworth.

defined against Black exclusion, the subordination of Native peoples, and the robust volume of legalized restrictions of people of color. Lisa Cacho asserts that “those with social privilege often still interpret economic, social, political, and/or legal integration as a (conditional) ‘gift’” (7). While the white inmates of USP Leavenworth clearly do not have access to most forms of “social privilege,” I suggest that Cacho’s statement is nonetheless important. The letter suggests that Jones and other white inmates negotiate these logics, but more significantly, also engage with potential entitlement and access to the “gift” of integration into the national family, political order, social possibility, and patriotic participation. The letter, then, crafts another fold into the discourse of white supremacy and “whiteness as property”: the racialized spectrum of differentiated access not just to whiteness, but extending also to the questionable citizenship of Asians, in particular in the wake of Japanese internment.¹⁰⁴

National white supremacist ideology and series of legislation imagines U.S. citizenship as exclusively white and masculine, and begrudgingly admits non-propertied, non-educated white men and women, and other racialized peoples into the realm of citizenship throughout centuries.¹⁰⁵ Such an ideology underwrites Jones’s anxiety that “President Truman has already signed a bill sponsored by Senator Lodge of Massachusetts to allow aliens to enlist in the U.S. Army. After five years they can qualify for citizenship!” That “aliens...in the U.S. Army” could “qualify for citizenship”

¹⁰⁴ “Whiteness conferred on its owners aspects of citizenship that were all the more valued because they were denied to others” (Harris 1744).

¹⁰⁵ “[R]acialization along the legal axis of definitions of citizenship has also ascribed ‘gender’ to the Asian American subject. Up until 1870, American citizenship was granted exclusively to white male persons; in 1870, men of African descent could become naturalized, but the bar to citizenship remained for Asian men until the repeal acts of 1943-1952. Whereas the ‘masculinity’ of the citizen was first inseparable from his ‘whiteness,’ as the state extended citizenship to nonwhite male persons, it formally designated these subjects as ‘male,’ as well” (Lowe, *Immigrant Acts* 11).

after only five years conflicts with U.S. citizenship's centuries-deep origins in white supremacist logic, as evidenced in the 1790 Naturalization Act. Such an apparently audacious presumption to citizenship, coupled with the idea that incarcerated white citizens are rendered devoid of civil status and are thus unable to participate in the Korean War, forms the basis for the racialized anxiety in Jones's statement.¹⁰⁶ As David Eng puts it, "the less apparent and visible aspects of sexual and racial identifications...come together not only to construct Asian American male subjects but also to produce against these particularized images the abstract national subject of a unified and coherent national body," a national body discursively occupied by the white inmates of USP Leavenworth, among others (*Racial Castration* 3).

Indeed, the letter rationalizes the racialized unfitness of American "Asiatics: Japanese, Chinese and Filipinos [sic]" as troops by naturalizing the teleological association of peoples with their assumed and "undeveloped" countries of origin: "Rather than being in a position to help, both China and the Philippine Islands need help to save themselves from the fangs of communism. The Japanese, until a scant five years ago, were our dreaded enemy. Pearl Harbor was an example of their trustworthiness."

¹⁰⁶ Another letter from the inmates equates whiteness with American-ness, and theorizes "freedom" as a condition they were capable of losing, given their access to whiteness as property. Indeed, the letter frames degrees of freedom and unfreedom in relationship to liberal democracy and capitalism, equating incarceration with popular perceptions of encroaching, "insidious" communism. Close to the time of the Korean War armistice in July 1953, *The New Era* published "An Open Letter to the President," which begins by congratulating Eisenhower, whom the prisoners commend for fighting the "insidious forces that are at continuous work to pull the props from under our country." The letter connects the articulation of "freedom" and national citizenship to the potential loss of liberal democratic, capitalist freedom. Even while designated as unfree by the capitalist state, the inmates would "resist the loss of it again." Furthermore, the letter's plea for "the continuing freedom of [the nation's] people" is utterly disconnected from the state's pervasive white supremacist practices, built into denying that very freedom in differential degrees to variously racialized groups. The assertion "[b]y virtue of having lost our freedom and of knowing the degradation such a loss entails" posits a figure enjoying full possession of "freedom," with attendant possibilities of loss.

With this statement, Jones infantilizes “China and the Philippine Islands” by charging that they require “help to save themselves from the fangs of communism.” In contrast to the infantilized, helpless China and the Philippines, Jones builds urgency for the United States to intervene against “the fangs of communism,” resonating with longstanding notions of the United States as a national paternal figure that takes up “the white man’s burden.”¹⁰⁷ The language “Americans, your own flesh and blood” situates “the fangs of communism” as particularly pernicious, poised to drain deserving citizens of their morally superior capitalist ideology. Indeed, the letter suggests larger tropes of a fully developed, masculine United States working to save the undeveloped, politically unsophisticated yellow and brown bodies from a fiendish political system. The rhetorical moves of this letter indicate that some inmates aligned themselves with the exceptionalist narrative of national paternalism that constructs Asian nations as helpless, “dreaded” children, long before their virtual adoption of Bok Nam Om.¹⁰⁸

In addition to their insistence on the racialized unfitness of “Asiatics,” some inmates also exercised the patriotic duty to contribute to the Korean War, and adopted Bok Nam Om virtually through the War Orphan Sponsorship program and Save the Children Federation. I suggest that the inmates made use of virtual adoption in order to demonstrate their ability to conform to an abstract ideal of the model citizen, of a model

¹⁰⁷ Attributed to Rudyard Kipling’s 1899 poem “The White Man’s Burden.”

¹⁰⁸ “Popular media presented the white, middle-class, suburban family as one of the foundations of postwar national identity, an emblem of a prosperous and secure America. It often reinforced this identification through a contrast with communist nations, which it represented as bent on destroying the family and replacing it with the state” (Klein 147). Demographic information from the Bureau of Prisons suggests that USP Leavenworth inmates may be predominantly white, but they are clearly not middle-class suburban families. Yet, virtual adoption allows them to imagine themselves in this way.

member of the racially “pure” national family.¹⁰⁹ However foreclosed the normative domestic sphere might be for the inmates, the logic of national belonging extends to the hyper-controlled carceral space of the penitentiary.¹¹⁰ Ironically, the penitentiary represents what Dylan Rodriguez describes as “the production of a social logic essential to the current social order—a fabrication and criminalization of disorder for the sake of extracting and dramatizing order, compliance, authority” (14). Jones himself offers a passing reference to this militarized social order by way of explaining the presence of some inmates in USP Leavenworth, “who went through their formative years sans proper parental care. (Father in the Army – Mother in essential war industry.)” As persons differentially fabricated and criminalized into representing disorder, the prisoners of USP Leavenworth participating in the adoption draw on the same social logic, with the effect of replicating the national familial order and demonstrating charitable authority over subjects such as Bok Nam Om.

What does it mean for the inmates and Bok Nam Om, both differently marked with civil death, to attempt to form ties of kinship forged in spaces of exception, in the spaces devastated by war and enclosed by domestic punishment? I suggest that *The New*

¹⁰⁹ “This representation of the Cold War as a sentimental project of family formation served a doubly hegemonic function. These families created an avenue through which Americans excluded from other discourses of nationhood could find ways to identify with the nation as it undertook its world-ordering projects of containing communism and expanding American influence... The expansion of the American family out into Asia enabled those excluded from the national-domestic ideal—the elderly, single, divorced, homosexual—to feel that they were integral parts of American society... The discourse of adoptive family formation thus performed a dual function: it helped construct a broadly inclusive historical bloc within the U.S. at the same time that it cultivated support for the integration of noncommunist nations around the world” (Klein 159).

¹¹⁰ “Within the tradition of American sentimentalism, the family has long represented the most prized form of community... With its hierarchies of age and sex, the family also serves as a sentimental model for managing unequal social relations. Nineteenth-century sentimental narratives used the figure of the family to integrate symbolically into the social order those socially marginal figures whose humanity had been questioned on grounds of race, criminality, or mental capacity” (Klein 150).

Era articles function to remember this curious moment, and to demonstrate, despite the articles' attempts to reclaim personhood for some of the prisoners, the white supremacist, heteropatriarchal, and capitalist state's imperatives of punishment. In *The New Era*, this punishment is embodied by the Korean civilian population, of which Bok Nam Om is one representative, the GIs drafted into the Korean War, and the prisoners negotiating white supremacist logic in order to seek liberation from one punitive enclosure to the putative freedom of the Korean War. Furthermore, not only do the articles trouble dominant understandings of kinship, they also make possible the distinctions between total social death, as I argue above, and the discursive pliability built into the condition of civil death for prisoners racialized as white.¹¹¹ In the next section, I examine in further detail Bok Nam Om's virtual adoption and its implications for dominant understandings of family and kinship.

¹¹¹ Orlando Patterson elaborates "the definition of the slave, however recruited, as a socially dead person. Alienated from all 'rights' or claims of birth, he ceased to belong in his own right to any legitimate order" (Patterson 5).

**Adoption in “a racist state obsessed with blood, sex, and procreation”:
denaturalizing the idealized national family**

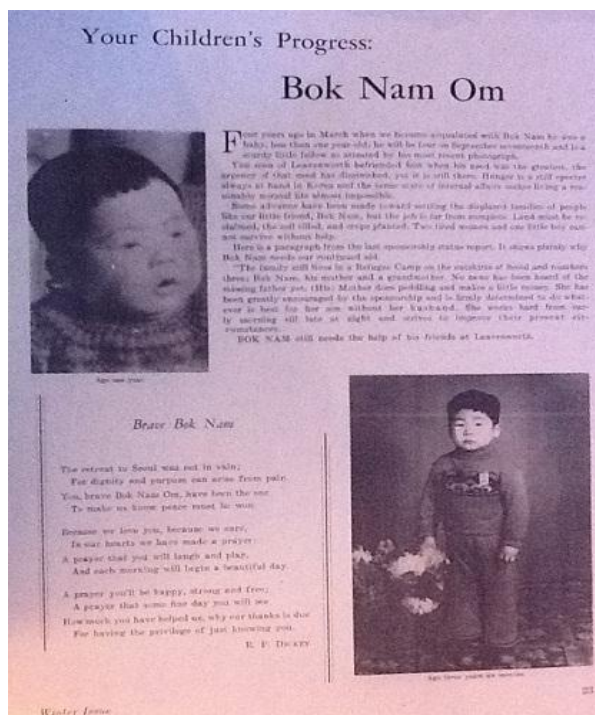


Figure 4: Reprint of Bok Nam Om's profile in *The New Era*

In distinction from the “Asiatics,” the letter argues that “inmates of our penal institutions...are Americans, your own flesh and blood,” thereby affirming white bodies as “rightful” members of the American family. The virtual adoption of Bok Nam Om by the inmates of USP Leavenworth was legally circumscribed due to racially restrictive immigration policies, yet the same exclusionary practice enables participation from a segment of the population that otherwise would not be able to adopt.¹¹² Furthermore, as Klein argues, “[t]he figure of the white parent to the non-white child has long worked as a trope for representing the ostensibly ‘natural’ relations of hierarchy and domination.

¹¹² Indeed, numerous contemporary agencies that advocate programs to “adopt a prisoner” suggest a similar distant benevolence toward inmates.

The infantilization of racialized Others and marginalized social groups has been a standard rhetorical means of legitimating unequal power relations...As a practice, trans-racial or trans-ethnic adoptions have also served as a means of social control” (175). *The New Era* articles rely on longstanding discourses of infantilized “Asiatics” in order to make white supremacist claims of legitimate national belonging by revaluing prisoners’ criminalized statuses against others demarcated as subhuman.

On the other hand, the articles also complicate Klein’s question of trans-racial adoptions serving “as a means of social control,” as the prisoners themselves delimit one boundary of national social control. While Klein’s argument holds true for those who inhabit the political terrains of normative citizenship, the inmates act in a field licensed with alternative workings of power. They are adopting to gain recognition as participants in the nation, the same nation that created the boundaries of exclusion for the inmates in the first place. Virtual adoption enables the prisoners to negotiate the discourses of kinship required by the white supremacist state in order to navigate possibilities for ostensible liberation from the penitentiary. Yet as Eleana Kim shows in *Adopted Territory*, actual physical adoptions in the immediate aftermath of the Korean War were quite limited: 4 in 1953, 8 in 1954, then increasing to 59 in 1955 (20). These numbers suggest that for USP Leavenworth inmates, the possibility of adoption was always virtual or discursive, and in no material way altered relationships, either for Bok Nam Om or for the prisoners. Thus the virtual adoption remains a dress rehearsal of reintegration for the white prisoners, an avenue to perform their possible reintegration into civil society, out of civil death. Yet such selective racialized access to the performance of national belonging highlights the impossibility for the nonwhite prisoner to demonstrate rehabilitation and

reform and further perpetuates the nonwhite prisoner's ontological status as inherently criminalized.

Scholars locate the emergence of modern transnational and transracial adoption at the end of the Second World War. David Eng describes transnational adoption as “a post-World War II phenomenon associated with American liberalism, post-war prosperity, and Cold War politics” (94). Christina Klein comments on the legal emergence of transracial adoption, stating “[t]he Korean War, in combination with the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, which lifted the racial bar on Asian immigration, cleared the way for the adoption of Asian children” (175). Given the recent celebrity media visibility of transnational and transracial adoption, Jodi Kim urges readers to consider “the long-standing history of the practice, a history whose modern origins we can trace back to the end of World War II and one that intersects in complex ways with America’s imperialist Cold War geopolitics and gendered racial logics in Asia,” but also extends to the white settler colonialist practices of forcible “adoption” of Native children (168,171).¹¹³ Before the adjustment of racially restrictive immigration policies in 1952, however, Americans were able to “adopt” virtually through various Christian and global relief organizations such as the Christian Children’s Fund, the War Orphan Sponsorship program, and the Save the Children Federation, by exchanging letters and photographs, and by sending money. Klein states that these post-war “moral” adoptions made possible U.S. cultural imaginings of a global, multiracial “family” that

¹¹³ In her 2010 dissertation, SooJin Pate “suggest[s] that rather than a natural consequence of war, Korean adoption emerged from the neocolonial relations between the U.S. and Korea. And this relationship did not begin in 1950 with the formal start of the Korean War but in 1945. So rather than situating Korean adoption within the context of the Korean War (1950-1953), I situate it in light of U.S. military occupation of southern Korea that began as early as 1945” (14).

symbolically enabled visions of democratic, capitalist triumph, especially before racially exclusive immigration laws were lifted.

Within Korea, numerous factors contributed to the phenomenon of sending babies and children abroad for adoption. The occupying force of the U.S. military since Korea's ostensible liberation from Japan in 1945 not only left intact the structure of Japanese military prostitution but expanded it to accommodate growing U.S. military bases. The encounters between members of the U.S. military and Korean sex workers produced a mixed-race population classified as undesirable by the Korean state and dominant society. According to Tobias Hübinette, "International adoption is...one of the Korean modernity project's most long-lived mechanisms of power, used to cleanse the country of 'impure' and 'disposable' outcasts in the name of social engineering and eugenics" (*Outsiders Within* 147). The years of war physically devastated the country, which also dismantled possibilities for social support. As Hosu Kim states, "[a]fter the cessation of the Korean War, instead of establishing domestic social services to deal with orphaned children, the South Korean government, driven by a national agenda of military security and economic development, relied on foreign resources and private humanitarian initiatives" (*International Korean Adoption* 136). The conditions of possibility for transnational, transracial, and virtual adoptions were therefore partly formed by the Korean state's responses to U.S. imperial actions, setting the stage for benevolent intervention by organizations such as the Christian Children's Fund.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ "It is critical to acknowledge that, from the start, humanitarian aid and a political agenda were embedded into the concept and practice of intercountry adoption" (H. Kim 137).

Virtual and “moral” adoptions revise dominant understandings of “family” in the United States, both reinforcing existing conceptions of kinship and creating alternative ways of thinking about family. The categories of family and kinship have occupied privileged positions throughout U.S. history. “Family” delimits access to property, and through the mid-20th century, defines which gendered and racialized members are property.¹¹⁵ This conception of family not only suggests a hierarchy placing male authority at the top, followed by other members, but also naturalizes and justifies this power imbalance. As Mark Jerng states, “[t]he nation regulates and institutes kinship so as to ‘reproduce the state’ and secure personhood as meaningfully lived within the normativity of generational transmission” (xviii). Those who live beyond the state’s approved boundaries of kinship are not only socially marginalized, but also defined as deviant threats to the social order, which allows for a consistently normalized reinforcement and obfuscation of a constructed, fluctuating, and unstable measurement of kinship. At the same time, people whose lives exceed the state’s definitions of family also continually disrupt the naturalized conceptions of kinship to reveal the selectively inclusive and exploitative functions of dominant definitions of family.

The concept of family has also shaped the history of race in the United States. As Carla Peterson states, “[d]efining slaves as property, U.S. law denied them the right to create families, rejecting both the legality of slave marriage and the legitimacy of its children” (114). By defining slaves as property, the U.S. state not only wrote Blacks

¹¹⁵ Anne McClintock suggests an interesting reversal of “adoption” in “‘No Longer in a Future Heaven’: Gender, Race and Nationalism”: “Nations are frequently figured through the iconography of familial and domestic space. The term ‘nation’ derives from *natio*: to be born...Foreigners ‘adopt’ countries that are not their native homes and are naturalized into the national ‘family’...In this way, despite their myriad differences, nations are symbolically figured as domestic genealogies” (91).

outside of the parameters of citizenship, but also defined the “national family” against their exclusion. After the abolition of slavery, this racialized scripting of normative family and citizenship would extend to restrictive immigration laws that barred the entrance of Asian women to the United States because of fears that different groups of Asian laborers would form families and remain in the country. Transnational and transracial adoption in the post-Second World War era was limited by the exclusionary legacies that inaugurated the same racialized and gendered immigration laws that began with the Page Act of 1875, which barred Asian contract laborers and Asian women from immigrating to the United States.¹¹⁶ These restrictions simultaneously functioned to delimit and reinforce the legitimacy of propertied, white male citizens and members of the national family, comprising what Saidiya Hartman describes as “the regulatory power of a racist state obsessed with blood, sex, and procreation,” (10) ironically rendered in the state’s will to also govern non-procreative methods of family-making.

On the other hand, an expanded understanding of “kinship” implies possibilities for alternative kinds of affective relationships that may reconfigure and disturb dominant notions of family. Indeed, the definitions of family and kinship are always in process, being made and unmade, and interacting with a dynamic multitude of factors.¹¹⁷ While virtual adoptions enabled U.S. Americans who felt excluded from the familial norms of the 1950s to participate in building idealized families, they also enabled prisoners, who occupy hyper-marginalized social and political positions, to make claims to the imagined

¹¹⁶ According to Eng, “the Page Law of 1875, largely banning female immigration from China to the United States, might be a more appropriate historical date to mark the *gendered* form in which racialized exclusion of Asian immigrants from the U.S. nation-state took place,” which is of particular significance to his study of the phenomenon of baby girls adopted from China (107).

¹¹⁷ Eng defines the feelings of kinship as “the collective, communal, and consensual affiliations as well as the psychic, affective, and visceral bonds” that organize alternative meanings to family (*Feeling* 2).

national family, citizenship, and humanity. Examining the definitions of kinship in the space of the penitentiary reveals that kinship in this instance is closely affiliated with civil death and militarized state violence, which I explore in more detail below. Rather than serving the apparently reifying function of building idealized families, the example of virtual adoption by inmates instead reveals the inherent instabilities of kinship, instabilities which are critical to dis-functioning, or shaking the legitimating foundations of, the idealized national family.

An analysis of the virtual adoption and sponsorship of Korean orphans exposes nationalist formulations of the idealized American family, citizenship, and exclusion. In other words, how does the Korean War in particular reveal racialized problems and conundrums constricting dominant conceptions of the “American” family? In what follows, I consider David Eng’s call to “contest romanticized notions of privacy and family as outside capitalist relations of exploitation and domination or—as generations of feminist scholarship has taught us—as free of gendered labor and value” (*Feeling* 8). As Jodi Kim suggests in *Ends of Empire* and as Eng argues throughout *The Feeling of Kinship*, the gendered and racialized bodies of Asian adoptees labor to shore up both heteronormative white conceptions and queer liberal notions of family. Eng challenges scholars to attend to the “racialization of intimacy,” the ways race is both exploited and erased in the service of the idealized private family, in order to uncover the long histories of racialization that organize our contemporary moment (10). While the virtual adoption attempts to mask the contradictions of expulsion from the national family by remodeling the white supremacist heteropatriarchal hierarchy in which the prisoners occupy the most

privileged position, the adoption also makes visible the fractures in such a hierarchical conception of family.¹¹⁸

One such instability is the troubled hierarchy fueling normative discourses of kinship. In the case of USP Leavenworth, in the practice of virtually adopting Bok Nam Om, the inmates symbolically occupy roles as “fathers” and caretakers of a weak and defenseless child. Within dominant understandings of kinship, this symbolic relationship becomes naturalized as benevolent and necessary. Yet the practice of virtually adopting Bok Nam Om functions also to obscure the conditions that saturate the genealogies of such a relationship: the violent U.S. intervention in Korea that itself poses as a benevolent paternalistic action, and the state’s systematic stripping of civil life from prisoners that itself acts as an exercise in parental discipline.¹¹⁹ The inmates themselves are confined, symbolically punished within the national family, deprived of their own families as well as parental authority, and subject to the paternal administration of the state. This hierarchy and the triangulated relationship among the state, the inmates, and Bok Nam Om bring into relief the fraught and mediated construction of normative kinship.

Normative understandings of family and the national body are often defined in relation to legally constructed “outsiders” such as prisoners, a group that has been

¹¹⁸ Eleana Kim highlights the racialized problems underpinning trans-racial adoption in the 1950s and 1960s: “Even as liberal, color-blind paradigms hopefully assumed that adoptees would seamlessly acculturate to family and nation, however, the topic of their futures did draw some concern in the early years of Asian international adoption...[people] repeatedly returned to an urgent question: Given the legal and cultural prohibitions against miscegenation, who would they marry when they grew up?” (*Adopted Territory* 102).

¹¹⁹ Orlando Patterson states that in the making of the slave’s social death, the slave is “[a]lienated from all ‘rights’ or claims of birth [and] he ceased to belong in his own right to any legitimate order” (5). For the prisoners as well as Bok Nam Om, the category of natal alienation in this case intersects with both the destruction of the prisoner’s kinship ties, and in the specific case of Korean kinship, the orphan’s removal from a family registry or genealogy.

severed from social belonging throughout the history of the prison as an institution.¹²⁰ In a recent study, Caleb Smith notes that “[i]n the original American penitentiaries [of the late eighteenth century], the inmate was divested of rights, social connections, and identity, stripped down to a bare life no longer recognizable as human” (22). Through the disciplining and reforming mechanisms of the penitentiaries, white prisoners were then to be elevated back to the legal and social realms of citizenship and humanity, into the familial fold of the nation.¹²¹ Other scholars, such as Colin Dayan, theorize the prisoner as a figure marking the “legal fiction of ‘civil death’: the state of a person who though possessing *natural life* has lost all *civil rights*” (44). Reduced to bare life, and subjected to civil death,¹²² prisoners are legally constructed to be excluded from affective and kinship possibilities, as “outside the boundary of human empathy: no longer recognized as a social, political, or individual entity” (Dayan 55).

Within both formal, acknowledged systems of incarceration such as prisons, and regimes of oppression such as Native genocide and chattel slavery, white supremacy supplied “*a logic of social organization* that produces regimented, institutionalized, and militarized conceptions of hierarchized ‘human’ difference” (Rodriguez 11, original

¹²⁰ Linking the virulent anti-communism of the Korean War era to contemporary anxieties surrounding race, Angela Davis states “[t]he fear of crime has attained a status that bears a sinister similarity to the fear of communism as it came to restructure social perceptions during the fifties and sixties...racism is more deeply embedded in socioeconomic structures, and the vast populations of incarcerated people of color is dramatic evidence of the way racism systematically structures economic relations” (*House* 270).

¹²¹ According to Ruth Wilson Gilmore, since the 1980s in United States, “the purpose of prison has become incapacitation—which means, quite simply, to hold convicts for the term of their sentences in such a manner that they cannot commit other crimes. This stark time-space punishment disavows the penal system’s earlier responsibility for, or concern with, rehabilitation” (14).

¹²² Within the domestic norms that continue to persist in the United States, marriage symbolizes a key stepping stone toward the idealized nuclear family. Until women gained the franchise in 1920, they forfeited their political and economic rights upon getting married, and were also considered to be civilly dead. Ironically, women’s roles in idealized domesticity and the “national family” also required their civil death.

emphasis). Within the prison system, which includes white and non-white inmates, such a racially hierarchized logic operates, replicates and intensifies this white supremacist social organization. Indeed, one way for USP Leavenworth inmates to stake claims to the national family, in addition to virtually adopting Bok Nam Om, was to donate blood to the UN forces in Korea, thereby materially sharing bloodlines with the defenders of the nation. The white supremacist social organization of the United States persisted stubbornly through its military occupation in Korea, as even this contribution and demonstration of belonging to the national family was segregated well into the Korean War.

“Fighting blood for fighting men”: segregated blood for a (de)segregated military

In addition to the adoption of Bok Nam Om, the inmates of USP Leavenworth imagined another avenue for constructing kinships during the Korean War by infusing blood into the U.S. and U.N. armed forces, to better defend against “the fangs of communism.” The winter 1951 issue of *The New Era* documents blood donations from inmates, followed by a list of donors, organized by amount of pints donated:

Fighting blood for fighting men will have a little more meaning next month when blood bank time rolls around. Seventy-two hours after you have contributed, your blood will be reviving some United Nations warrior on the Korean battle front.

Approximately 250 volunteers will be called and the customary post-donation refreshments served...Concerning the following listed donors, keep in mind that those credited with but one or two pints probably have not been here long enough to contribute more.

With the contributions of 250 “volunteers,” the inmates at USP Leavenworth literally enlivened “United Nations warrior[s]” during the Korean War. Yet the language of

voluntarism within this carceral space, as well as the suggestion that those who have donated “but one or two pints” will have plenty of time to give more blood, suggest that the U.S. military is directly leeching blood from the inmates. In other words, veiled through the patriotic language of the article, the boundary between “voluntary” participation in the U.S. military and prison is increasingly blurred in the context of USP Leavenworth.¹²³

The same white supremacist ideology that enables both the notion of belonging to the U.S. nation, and of self-possession, what Harris defines as “the act necessary to lay the basis for rights in property—was defined to include only the cultural practices of whites. This definition laid the foundation for the idea that whiteness—that which whites alone possess—is valuable and is property” (1721). Despite the tense implication of consent residing in the statement “volunteers will be called” for blood donation, such an ideology again scripts white blood as “valuable,” as “property” that inmates possess, despite their civilly dead status. Thus the pliability of civil death for the white inmates intersects with the ostensible impossibility of consent, forging a matrix of power through which differential avenues of privilege and punishment emerge. I do not mean to suggest that all inmates were equally enmeshed in such exercises of power, nor do I mean to suggest that civil death does not carry severe consequences for the inmates at USP Leavenworth. Rather, this instance of blood donation during the Korean War serves as a site through which we can interrogate the workings of white supremacist ideology, articulated through attempts to forge kinship as well as possessing personhood.

¹²³ In the context of U.S. slavery, Hartman asserts that the “repressive problematic of consent frames everyday practices in terms of mutual obligation and reciprocity between owners and the enslaved. Thus it stages the agency of the enslaved as a form of willed self-immolation in that what is ‘consented’ to is a state of subjugation of the most extreme order” (53).

Ultimately, the carceral population, through collective civil death, is made to reanimate state power, their blood donations fortifying the state's ability to kill with impunity, thereby laboring at the intersections of biopower and empire. Biopower—what Michel Foucault suggests is the state's interest in a “positive” logic engaging subjects in the preservation and reproduction of life—extends in this case to the management of prisoners as well as to the transfer of their blood donations to GIs, another population subject to total state authority, both cases instantiating “the break between what must live and what must die” (*Society* 254).¹²⁴ The state's absolute access to both GIs and prisoners during the Korean War, made kin through the alchemy of blood, delimits who must be detained and kept alive, in order for others to be conscripted and made to both kill and die. Foucault asks “[h]ow can a power such as this kill, if it is true that its basic function is to improve life, to prolong its duration, to improve its chances,” and proposes in response the insinuation of racism into the State's operations (*Society* 254).

Rather than introducing a contradiction, Foucault asserts instead the compatibility of racism and biopower in both the abstract and material calculations of war—the enemy's death not only establishes the immediate personal safety of the self, but guarantees into the future a “healthier and purer” life without the “bad” or “inferior race” (or the “bad” or “inferior” communist ideology) (*Society* 255).¹²⁵ Such an exercise of

¹²⁴ On the related subject of biopolitics, Agamben traces the idea to Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*, but notes the curious absence of Hannah Arendt's theorizations in *The Human Condition* as a precursor in Foucault's work.

¹²⁵ In “Right to Kill, Right to Make Live: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans During WWII,” Takashi Fujitani demonstrates how Imperial Japan's demand for labor necessitated the incorporation of othered subjects into the nationalist body politic by analyzing the figures of the Korean Imperial soldier and the Japanese American soldier. This “benevolent” incorporation allowed a transition from “vulgar” or obvious racism to a “polite” racism, serving as a harbinger of liberal multiculturalism in both Japan and the United States. Fujitani employs Foucault's conceptions of “bio-power” and “governmentality.” “Bio-power” is distinguished from pre-19th century models of exercising power, in which sovereigns exercised

biopower intersects with the imperial interventions of the U.S. military on the Korean peninsula; the white supremacist logics that imbue the white prisoner with subjecthood; the white supremacist desire to both make live an “orphan” belonging to an inferior race while ensuring his physical distance from the nation; and the necessity of using prisoners, who are made to live within the strict purview of the state, to keep alive GIs, who are made to kill inferior others.¹²⁶

Ironically, it is not the “fangs of communism” that plagues the inmates of USP Leavenworth, but rather the racial capitalist state that drains their blood (*The New Era*). Despite U.S. federal penitentiaries’ relatively “diverse” racial demographics, given that the Red Cross segregated donated blood, we can infer that the penitentiary’s blood collection efforts were also segregated. Thus the narrative of national belonging does not re-script racialization as the underlying plot, even if the details of the story shift to the collective confines of civil death. Yvette Richards notes that “[a]lthough the American Red Cross eventually began to hire black employees, the organization continued to

power negatively “through the right to kill, or put in the obverse, by allowing subjects to live” (Fujitani 2). Foucault’s “bio-power” is a positive logic engaging subjects in the reproduction of life, and “for Foucault it is precisely the discovery of population as the ultimate end of government that characterizes what he calls governmentality” (Fujitani 2). Fujitani notes Imperial Japan’s strategic need to incorporate Korean labor, and identifies 1937 as a point where determinations about Koreans in relation to the Japanese metropolitan population had to be made, and the utility of Koreans for diminishing population in general and the core Japanese population in particular marked a transformation in making Koreans “inside” of the Japanese empire. This transition necessitated a re-articulation of existing understandings of racism, especially for maintaining unity in the military, and the mobilization of Korean “volunteer” soldiers made it difficult to ignore the welfare of Koreans. The changing notions of racism are interesting here because racial formation and racialization itself seems to remain for the most part untouched, but the boundaries of the nation-state or empire that formerly relied on racial exclusion shift to “polite” inclusion.

¹²⁶ Grace Cho theorizes military sex workers (here, Cho refers to the workers as “yanggongju,” or “Western princess”) in Korea as inhabiting the biopolitical thresholds of both the United States and South Korea: “The highly regulated system of prostitution around U.S. military bases in Korea has produced the yanggongju as a subject disciplined by both the U.S. military and the South Korean state. Like Giorgio Agamben’s figure of the *homo sacer*, the ‘bare life’ that is included in the political order only through its exclusion, the yanggongju is the woman who is designated as the life that can be killed without being sacrificed and dies an unsanctified death in the biopolitics of U.S.-Korea relations” (113).

segregate blood during the Korean War until United Nations employees protested” (74). Catherine Ramirez documents a similar instance of blood segregation that pachucas faced during the Second World War: “To prove their patriotism, they offered to donate blood to the American Red Cross, but the organization rejected it on the grounds that they were Mexican” (46). The Red Cross’s rejection registers the disqualification of the racialized and gendered pachuca subjects from national belonging, but also indexes a remove from the particular biopolitical project of enlivening U.S. imperial soldiers.

These examples indicate that the ideology informing the idea expressed in *The New Era*, that the inmates are “Americans, your own flesh and blood,” is shaped and constrained by racially exclusive and white supremacist boundaries in support of the national family fighting against communism in Korea. The inmates created ties of kinship in two ways: first, the virtual blood ties with Bok Nam Om and second, literally giving blood to the U.S. soldiers fighting in Korea enable them to claim belonging in the nation. Yet these kinship ties are knotted by white supremacy: the kinship ties with Bok Nam Om are virtual and the donated blood is segregated, such that even a biopolitical imperative to make GIs live operates on multiple distinctions among racialized citizens rendered as the “inferior” other. Finally, the prison magazine documents the contradictions generated by the fact that inmates marked with civil death are materially energizing GIs, the figures of national patriotism, who are dying to “rescue” Korea from communism.

Furthermore, I argue that the inmates’ efforts to represent themselves as “rightful” members of the “American” family in order to join the Korean War hauntingly mirrors the coercive conditions for citizenship for nonwhite people, especially Chicano/as,

Latino/as, Asians, and others who were perceived as “foreigners” during the Second World War. The open letter written by William Jones and signed by the inmates of USP Leavenworth aggressively makes the argument that inmates should be allowed to participate in the Korean War, especially in place of “Asiatics” in the United States. Ironically, for many people of Asian descent, as well as for Blacks, Chicano/as, and other nonwhite people in the United States, participating in the U.S. military (often in conflicts in the Asia Pacific region) afforded otherwise inaccessible opportunities for both real and symbolic citizenship. This was particularly true during the Second World War, when many Black and Brown youth participated in efforts both for and against the war. In *Black is a Country*, Nikhil Singh quotes a statement from a young student attending a Black college in the South, a statement that succinctly captures the white supremacist tensions of the Second World War: ““The army Jim-Crows us. The Navy lets us serve only as messmen. The Red Cross refuses our blood. Employers and labor unions shut us out. Lynchings continue. We are disenfranchised, Jim-Crowed, spat upon. What more could Hitler do than that?”” (101).

While *The New Era* must conform to nationalist parameters in its articulations of “voluntary” participation in the Korean War, certain cultural texts theorize alternative ideologies operating in the logic of choice and consent. I read *The New Era* in relationship to the ending of Chester Himes’s novel *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945) in order to illuminate the novel’s critiques and alternative theorizations of voluntary conscription for nonwhite people. In the *noir* novel, Himes fictionalizes racialized and gendered tensions exacerbated by the shifting social templates of the Second World War. Bob Jones, the Black protagonist of the novel, is falsely accused of raping Madge Perkins,

a white coworker in a naval shipyard. Jones is convicted and goes to jail. At the end of the novel, the president of the shipyard company drops charges against Jones, and presents him with a choice: to remain in jail, or to enlist in the army. The closing scene of the novel, however, refuses to individualize Jones's predicament, and instead folds in a discussion of another racialized group in wartime Los Angeles. Jones approaches his cop escort to the army recruitment station:

“Come on, boy,” the cop said.

The two Mexican youths he had with him grinned a welcome.

“Let's go, man, the war's waiting,” one of them cracked.

“Don't rush the man,” the other one said. “The man's not doing so well,” and when I came closer he said, “Not doing well at all. Looks like this man has had a war. How you doing, man?”

They were both brown-skinned, about my colour, slender and slightly stooped, with Indian features and thick curly hair... They talked in the melodious Mexican lilt. (203)

The novel closes with Jones's impending deployment as a soldier in the war. In his conclusion, Himes suggests a critique and reversal of the conventional narrative of masculine development, in which a “boy” becomes a “man.” The cop demands that Jones move, referring to him as a “boy.” Such a devaluation of racialized masculinity continued to operate in the Korean War, as a member of an all-Black ranger unit testifies: “William Weathersbee recalled that ‘[w]e were “boys.” No one ever referred to us as “men”’” (Pash 172). The two Mexican youths, on the other hand, repeatedly and conspicuously refer to Jones as “man,” thereby revaluing his humanity, which is also expressed in one of the youth's concern for him, when the former notes with devastating precision, “Looks like this man has had a war.”

The examples above show that, unlike the inmates of USP Leavenworth who signed the letter I analyze, who appear to regard joining the military as a means of

proving their fidelity to the nation, for many Asians, Blacks, and Chicano/as, the “choices” they had for participating in the war were conditioned by the (im)possibilities of citizenship and the necessity of proving their loyalty to the nation. Yet to suggest that the inmates were only complicit in an empire-building, war-mongering system is too simple. From their particular locations within the penitentiary, the courses they charted in order to navigate this system triangulated avenues of kinship as well as avenues of combat, both building possible paths into legibility as normative citizens, normative members of the idealized national family.

The New Era: triangulating the military-, prison-, and adoption-industrial complexes

The New Era also documents a history that throws into relief the haunting Cold War moment that marks an overlap between the prison-industrial complex and the emerging discourse of the “adoption-industrial complex.” The concentration of capital around central constellations of the military apparatus during the period of the Second World War defines what Dwight D. Eisenhower named the “military industrial complex.” Drawing critical connections to the logic behind the military-industrial complex, in particular “[b]ecause of the extent to which prison building and operations began to attract vast amounts of capital,” Angela Davis states “[t]he term ‘prison industrial complex’ was introduced by activists and scholars to contest prevailing beliefs that increased levels of crime were the root cause of mounting prison populations” (12, 84). Tracing this logic back to the large amounts of capital and profit generated through the

system of transnational adoption¹²⁷, I build on the discourse of an “adoption-industrial complex” as an analytic that directs us toward a critique of transnational adoption.

Though all three terms contain different problems in usage, thinking through the emergence of these “industries” calls attention to the material and discursive formation of the military, the prison, and transnational adoption as interrelated phenomena.

Triangulating the three “industries”—military, prison, and adoption—works to denaturalize the idea of family, shifting it away from its putatively given outcome of representing the nation, in addition to allowing space for a critique of the nation’s paternalistic role in global military affairs.¹²⁸ Although the “military-industrial complex” and the “prison-industrial complex” are now established terms in both non-academic and academic discourse, the “adoption-industrial complex” is an emerging term that I situate in order to examine the Korean War, the USP Leavenworth inmates, and the virtual adoption of Bok Nam Om. Indeed, such a triangulation couples notions of the heteronormative family to the violence of imperial war and instrumental criminalization, revealing the interconnectedness of national and transnational violence in the service of defending the idealized national family. In this instance, the more familiar prison- and military-industrial complexes serve as known locations to chart the course that a triangulation with the “adoption-industrial complex” might yield.

¹²⁷ According to Jodi Kim, “many orphanages require the adoptive parent(s) to make a substantial donation to the orphanage in addition to paying the processing fees, and many intermediaries (private adoption agencies, lawyers, etc.) profit handsomely” (177).

¹²⁸ David Vázquez states that “[n]avigators relate an unknown position to the known location of two others by mapping an imaginary triangle. The triangle then yields coordinates for the unknown position based on the distance from and angle of the other two. It is critical that triangulation emphasizes the mathematical relationships between *all three* points of a triangle, since without all the constituent points, it is impossible to navigate” (3). Putting the three “industries” together makes it possible to navigate the complex relationships generated in relation with each other.

Such a triangulation maps the ways family is re-inscribed to further entrench nationalism, and anticipates the formation of neoliberal economic practices rooted in disassembling the state's management of welfare and increasing state dependence on contracts with private corporations in the post-Second World War era. In other words, examining the triangulation of the military-, prison-, and adoption-industries reveals the interconnections that increasingly rely on privatization, but also exposes the economic crises that exacerbate such state dependence. The military-industrial complex enables an economic boom in Southern California during the Second World War, which heralded what Ruth Wilson Gilmore describes as “the ‘golden age’ of US capitalism (1944-74), [and] the rapidly growing economy both generated and was partly dependent on the now legendary military/industrial complex that Dwight D. Eisenhower spoke of with alarm during his final presidential address” (13). The neoliberal dismantling of the welfare state in California, flexed by “new and reorganizing power blocs that have led the assault on income guarantees and other provisions against individualized calamity,” enables state power to define, create and target criminalized populations, inaugurating the burgeoning prison-industrial complex, or “[t]he state’s attempt to produce a geographical solution (incarceration) to political economic crisis” (Gilmore 14). *The New Era* captures the early moments of the military-industrial complex, but also anticipates the formations of two other “industries”—prison and adoption.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ For the USP Leavenworth inmates, in addition to the possibilities of demonstrating belonging to the idealized national family by virtually adopting within the coercive carceral institution of the penitentiary, “[p]rison professionalized people” into normative citizenship, similar to the way the U.S. military provided “professionalization” for those whose access to national belonging was otherwise curtailed (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 24). Foucault, however, neglects to work his understanding of race into his formulation of prison’s ostensible professionalism.

While the United States witnessed the residual vestiges of “the ‘golden age’ of US capitalism” (Gilmore 13), during South Korea in the 1970s, the capital generated by sex work and by sending babies and children abroad through adoption contributed significantly to the economic development of South Korea.¹³⁰ Since that time, “the Korean tourism industry has experienced a boom, hand in hand with the sex industry. At an extreme, government officials have enthusiastically supported prostitution as a way to increase foreign exchange earnings for the Korean government” (Moon 43). As Jodi Kim states,

within the context of the Cold War in Asia, American military intervention and war produced the conditions—the birth of GI babies, increasing numbers of orphaned and abandoned children, devastation of local economies, and unequal economic and neoimperial dependencies, to name just a few—that led to the availability of children for adoption. This increased availability of potential adoptees coincided with the demand to “rescue” Asian girls from a more putatively pernicious Asian patriarchy, and, more recently, with the maternal desires, nontraditional (re)productive possibilities, and middle-class material privileges afforded by liberal feminism. (169)

In the context of Korean transnational adoption from the 1970s, the discourse of biopolitics, of managing the conditions of reproduction and making “abandoned” children live, intersects with a multiplicity of discourses that sustain U.S. liberal democracy—the narrative of masculine salvation, strategically juxtaposed against “a more putatively pernicious Asian patriarchy”; the narrative of liberal feminism, which through “nontraditional (re)productive possibilities” and “middle-class material privileges” delivers the promise initiated by the USP Leavenworth inmates in the form of virtual adoption; and the illusion of integrating the gendered and racialized recipient of

¹³⁰ In the context of South Korea’s lucrative relationship with the U.S. military during the Vietnam War, Jin-kyung Lee states “South Korea operated as an offshore military-industrial complex for the United States during the Vietnam War years and beyond” (41).

rescue into a benevolent, welcoming capitalist democracy.¹³¹ South Korea occupies an “exceptional” biopolitical position for transnational adoption, not only because it is a “developed” sending country, but also “from the fact that it has the longest history of overseas adoption, and its advanced medical services and streamlined process ensure healthy infants within a short period of time, thereby earning it the reputation as the Cadillac of adoption programs” (E. Kim, *Adopted Territory* 2-3).

Significantly, the production of civil death marks the convergence of subjectivities defined by bare life and constructed by the state. Although situated differently from the inmates of USP Leavenworth, Korean adoptees are also marked by civil death. Eleana Kim writes that for Korean adoptees in the contemporary moment,

an “orphan hojuk,” or orphan registry, served to render the child as a legible, free-standing subject of the state in preparation for adoption and erasure as a Korean citizen. The child was thus registered as a family head of its own, single-person household and solitary lineage. This disembedding of the child from a normative kinship structure and its legal reinscription as a peculiar and exceptional state subject singularize the child as an orphan, without any extant kinship ties. In the context of Korean law, she becomes a person with the barest of social identities, and in the context of Korean cultural norms, she lacks the basic requirements of social personhood—namely, family lineage and genealogical history. (521)

Just as the prisoner is divested from the privileges of normative citizenship, the Korean orphan undergoes “erasure as a Korean citizen.” The Korean orphan is made into a “peculiar and exceptional state subject” and expelled from normative kinship ties, similar to the “exceptional” status of the prisoner outside of the idealized national family. In

¹³¹ While the South Korean government has repeatedly made attempts to end transnational adoption, it did so primarily because of influence from other nation-states. Eleana Kim discusses one such moment “in the 1970s when South Korea announced the suspension of foreign adoptions due to censure by the North Korean government, which vilified South Korea’s commodification of children as the logical end point of capitalism” (*Adopted Territory* 2).

short, both figures are made “bare” by the state, for the inscription of particular national genealogies to underwrite their conditions of existence.¹³²

Furthermore, Jodi Kim extends Eleana Kim’s argument to suggest that “the legal production of the orphan renders a social death to the orphan,” in light of the fact that adoptees are stripped of social status and the because of natal alienation of birth mothers and adoptees (J. Kim 186).¹³³ Yet each of these subjectivities are differentially marked by the legacies of gendered racial capitalism, despite Lisa Cacho’s assertion that “[t]o be ineligible for personhood is a form of social death; it not only defines who does not matter, it also makes mattering meaningful” (6). Within such a framework, the figures of the orphan, the birth mother, and the prisoner negotiate differential access to making “mattering meaningful”—in the case of the white inmate of USP Leavenworth, he can still make claims to kinship in ways that a Black inmate, for instance, would not be able to access. While the uses of “social death” to name the condition of Korean orphans can be generative, I retain the use of “civil death” in the specific case of USP Leavenworth inmates and their adoption of Bok Nam Om in order to highlight the differential degrees utilized for making “mattering meaningful.”

In one sense, the civil death of adoptees enables a symbolic reclamation of normative family life and a discursive resurrection from civil death for the inmates of

¹³² For many Korean adoptees, “‘Korea’ was actively relegated to the past—within the temporality of their own biographies and also within the temporality of a modernist development teleology—as the sign and symbol of their difference and as a boundary between their unknown pasts and their present realities” (E. Kim, *Adopted Territory* 13).

¹³³ On the subject of social death, Jodi Kim states “[i]n using this term, I am not, of course, arguing that transracial adoptees and birth mothers are slaves. Rather, I am building on extensions of Patterson’s work that take up ‘social death’ to index the persistence of gendered racial domination, violence, and the production of degrees of social nonpersonhood within the context of formal emancipation, freedom, or sovereignty. That is, I am pointing to the ways in which natal alienation and gendered racial governmentalities outside the space of formal slavery persist in creating a variety of ‘social deaths’ for subjugated groups” (281).

USP Leavenworth. However, what the inmates are offering in exchange for such symbolic reclamation and discursive resurrection is in fact their lives, in order to be read logically within the confines of legitimacy and patriotism. Situated within the emergence of the military-industrial complex, the repeated requests to be released from USP Leavenworth on to the Korean peninsula during the war serve as a harbinger of what will unfold in the next decades as the intimate relationship between the military- and prison-industrial complexes. Furthermore, the inmates' requests to serve in the Korean War are prescribed against the spectral and virtual body of the Korean orphan, a figure that rapidly assumes corporeal shape in the decades following the war.

Reconfiguring the inmates' relationships to idealized notions of kinship—for instance, the requests for national inclusion via military participation and virtual adoption—refines and reifies liberal state power over incarcerated subjects. Within the framework of a rabidly anti-communist, white supremacist, and heteropatriarchal war, the inmates, suffering from civil death, virtually claim Bok Nam Om, also marked by civil death, in an attempt to produce an alternative kinship within the prevalent discourse of heteropatriarchal white supremacist capitalism. However, the juxtaposition of the inmates and Bok Nam Om, bearing various degrees of civil death, which I read as an effort to produce an iteration of normativity, also functions to critique the unquestionable nature of normative and idealized notions of family.

“Two tired women and one little boy cannot survive without help”: gendered productions of the Korean War

Dominant conceptions of kinship, family-making through transnational and trans-racial adoption, and differential degrees of civil death during the Korean War are all sites that are entangled in processes of gendering. In this section, through *The New Era*, I wish to examine what Saidiya Hartman articulates as the “production of gender in the context of very different economies of power, property, kinship, race, and sexuality” (100). The production of gender is mediated through the analytic of the normative family, historically demarcating male access to inherited property, as well as centering male authority and naturalizing the subordination of others. Western discourses in the nineteenth century relied on the idea that “[b]ecause the subordination of woman to man and child to adult was deemed a natural fact, hierarchies within the nation could be depicted in familial terms to guarantee social difference as a category of nature” (McClintock 91). Following the work of critical feminist scholars, I understand gender, race, and sexuality as mutually constitutive, and instantiated in U.S. history through immigration exclusions, the selective protection of white womanhood, and the feminization and devaluation of certain forms of labor.

The New Era relies on normalized constructions of gender and produces knowledge of the Korean War on such constructions. The winter 1956-7 issue of *The New Era* contains an article entitled “Your Children’s Progress,” which states: “Some advance [sic] have been made toward settling the displaced families of people like our little friend, Bok Nam, but the job is far from complete. Land must be reclaimed, the soil tilled, and crops planted. Two tired women and one little boy cannot survive without

help” (23). The article sets up a masculinized understanding of “national” reconstruction in juxtaposition to “[t]wo tired women,” Bok Nam Om’s mother and grandmother, who “cannot survive without help” from a benevolent United States. In addition, this understanding naturalizes the division between North and South Korea, especially as the article omits mentioning the Korean War as the force that “displaced families of people like...Bok Nam.” Indeed, the language of land reclamation renders a ghostly double, given that the sentence lacks a subject—who is reclaiming the land, and for what purposes? With the U.S. military occupation on the Korean peninsula, the language of settlement and land reclamation mirrors the entrenchment of U.S. military bases during this period. The gendered rhetoric driving this claim for saving South Korea employs a white masculine voice, shoring up U.S. nationalism and patriotism by coming to the aid of a feminized and infantilized representation of Korea.¹³⁴

Furthermore, a reprinted letter from the sponsorship agency supplying the connection between Bok Nam Om and the inmates of USP Leavenworth states: “The family still lives in a Refugee Camp on the outskirts of Seoul and numbers three: Bok Nam, his mother and a grandmother. No news has been heard of the missing father yet. (His) Mother does peddling and makes a little money. She has been greatly encouraged by the sponsorship and is firmly determined to do whatever is best for her son without her husband.” *The New Era* suggests that Bok Nam Om’s father has been missing since the outbreak of the Korean War. The gendered configurations allow the inmates’ symbolic

¹³⁴ Such discourses of the “deserving” gendered racial body as articulated against the “irredeemable” gendered racial body continue to inform white adoptive parents’ decision-making about their potential children: “For instance, model-minority myths about Asian immigrants coincide with predominant views of infant Asian girls as most likely to be accepted in white homes and communities. In contrast, older black boys in foster care have been stigmatized as the least ‘redeemable’ and most risky” (E. Kim, *Adopted Territory* 28).

occupation of the vacated position of “father,” abstractly completing the nuclear family. The sponsorship report also taps into familial discourse in order to encourage donations by noting the absence of the father. The last line above, in which Bok Nam Om’s mother “is firmly determined to do whatever is best for her son,” ends by reaffirming the lack in the nuclear family—“without her husband.”

Within USP Leavenworth during the Korean War, the arguments made in *The New Era* suggest the necessity to not only implicitly defend white vulnerability against “the fangs of communism,” (July-September 1950), but also, as I show above, to paternalistically and selectively extend freedom and protection to distant “others” through adoption.¹³⁵ For the USP Leavenworth inmates, given the civil death imprinted onto the crucible of the penitentiary, the virtual adoption of Bok Nam Om functions as one way to reclaim citizenship, humanity, and a place in the national family, despite the fact that the very same structures created the conditions for their exclusion and incarceration. In other words, for the white inmates who were recognized as citizens prior to incarceration, virtual adoption served as a critical means of reclaiming it; even as they were stripped of citizenship and humanity through the process of incarceration, virtual adoption opened up new patriotic possibilities tied to the imagined national family. These patriotic possibilities, much like the ability to imagine belonging to the nation that expelled the prisoners in the first place, operate as discursive property for white prisoners. For the Black, American Indian, Chinese, and Japanese prisoners, not only is the displacement of such possibility the functional logic of the white supremacist nation-state, their own

¹³⁵ “American civil society (in both its local and global articulations) aggressively constructs normative whiteness as biopolitical power, creatively transposing the technologies of racism and white supremacy into alternate (putatively ‘nonwhite’) racial identifications and embodiments” (Rodriguez 25).

exclusions from the idealized white national family delimits access for participating in this “new” virtual family. *The New Era* documents the orchestration of state power via the management of blood, kinship, and incarceration. I suggest that while some of the prisoners strategically negotiate their whiteness in order to obtain a certain false liberation, the ostensible ownership of their subjectivities ultimately just transfers them under the governance of the state. The desire to be a GI, and to exercise “whiteness as property” to attain that status, is mirrored by the fact that GIs, like prisoners, remain legally demarcated as property of the state—as government issue.

Chapter Five

Sleuth Cities: East L.A., Seoul, and Military Mysteries in Martin Limón's *Slicky Boys* and *The Wandering Ghost*

So I'd lowered myself to a common thief. A Korean one, at that. Most GI's would swear that they'd never do such a thing. But most GI's bubbled over with racial hatred and an inflated sense of pride that came from being part of a country that had been on the top of the heap for over a century. Such things didn't bother me. I was from East L.A. I'd been fighting my way up from the bottom all my life.

– Martin Limón, *Slicky Boys*

The fellow who can write you a vivid and colorful prose simply won't be bothered with the coolie labor of breaking down unbreakable alibis.

– Raymond Chandler, "The Simple Art of Murder"

What Raymond Chandler characterizes in his 1950 essay "The Simple Art of Murder" as "the coolie labor" of writing detective stories neatly frames the hierarchies of "racial hatred and an inflated sense of pride" I expose in Martin Limón's novels *Slicky Boys* (1997) and *The Wandering Ghost* (2008). The date of publication for Chandler's 1950 essay also marks the official beginning of the Korean War, a war I argue is critical for shaping the urban spaces of East L.A. and the U.S. military district Itaewon, located in Seoul. Popular contemporary novelist Martin Limón's "Sergeants Sueño & Bascom" mystery series (published from 1992 to the present) features George Sueño as the Chicano protagonist from East L.A. The series takes place during the 1970s in Itaewon, a place known for the well-established U.S. Army base with military origins in the Korean War. Given the patterns of Korean immigration and the flows of labor and capital

between L.A. and Korea, especially in the decades following the Korean War, much scholarship has focused on the Korean diaspora in Los Angeles.

In the wake of the 1992 L.A. riots, the number of academic texts centering Korean Americans as subjects increased, some of the texts explicitly addressing the racialized economic structures that accounted for Korean and Chicano/a experiences of the uprisings. There is very little scholarship surrounding the body of cultural texts, however, which engage and account for the Chicano/a presence in Korea.¹³⁶ In this chapter I explore cultural representations of Chicano/as in Korea, specifically focusing on Limón's numerous portrayals of an impoverished East L.A. as a gritty California counterpart to the desperate, racist military district in Itaewon. I also explore the genre of this mystery series as an aperture into white supremacy, gendered exploitation, militarization, and expansion of U.S. frontiers from California across the Pacific to Korea. In particular, I examine Sueño's gendered, raced, and classed relationship to notions of "home," "domesticity," and what Chandler calls "coolie labor" in Limón's *Slicky Boys* and *The Wandering Ghost*.

That Limón's series begins with *Jade Lady Burning* in 1992, the year of the L.A. uprisings, and continues through a string of U.S. police actions and wars around the world up to the current moment marks his series as one that mediates the extension of U.S. military power and registers the eruptions of multiple racially oppressive institutions. Limón's series functions in part as a litany of misdeeds and criminal behavior perpetrated

¹³⁶ As I state in chapter three, some examples include Hinojosa's Korean War works in his KCDTS, Paredes's *The Hammon and the Beans* (1994), Luis Valdez's *Zoot Suit* and *I Don't Have to Show You No Stinking Badges!*, Martin Limón's novels, Rosaura Sanchez's "One Morning: 1952" (2000), and Culture Clash's *Chavez Ravine* (2005).

by the U.S. military, and also as an open index of the stubborn white supremacy, temporal and spatial, of the United States. In “Sleuth Cities,” I explore Limón’s portrayals of racism and xenophobia in East L.A. and Itaewon in *Slicky Boys* and *The Wandering Ghost*, which I argue marks a transnational circuit of racial formation. With Chandler’s formulation of the “coolie labor” of detective stories in mind, I analyze the novel’s militarized apertures that focus on the figure of the “houseboy,” which I argue urges rethinking about domesticity, gender, and labor. Continuing with the critique of military masculinity, I analyze an uncovered archival document from the Center for the Study of the Korean War, a letter from a Korean grandparent who asks a U.S. military sergeant for work. I suggest that the unknown gender of the grandparent reveals the gendered parameters of labor, which range from the position of “houseboy” to sex worker. Finally, I examine such gendered labor at the intersections of race and empire *The Wandering Ghost*, in particular by tracing the limits of white liberal feminism in the U.S. military.

“Sleuth Cities” is situated in relation to bodies of scholarship that focus on U.S. militarization and empire in order to bring together two fields that may initially appear unrelated—Korean War/Korean diaspora studies and Chicana/o studies—but that, taken together, expose revealing intersections of racialization, militarization, Cold War contradictions, and U.S. empire-building. I argue that the importance of Limón’s work lies in its ability to bridge Korean War/Korean diaspora studies and Chicana/o studies. Within this critical context Limón’s mystery series serve as an ambivalent site of cultural production for critiques of white supremacy and U.S. empire, but also for the maintenance of heteronormative masculinity and the myth of the American dream. The

interventions of this chapter, which include bridging transnational Asian studies and Chicana/o studies, build a foundation for studies of the literary Asian-Latino Pacific.

Scholars such as Jorge Mariscal have offered critical cultural histories of the participation of Chicano/as in the wars of U.S. empire and their aftermaths. Historian Raul Morin has also initiated conversations about Mexican American participation in the Second World War and the Korean War. Literature is one important site of cultural memory in this regard: literary critic Ramón Saldivar argues for the necessity of examining the works of Américo Paredes, for instance, in relation to his wartime experiences in East Asia.¹³⁷ In the field of transnational Asian studies, on the other hand, sociologist Nadia Kim explores the importation of racist hierarchies to Korea through encounters with the U.S. military; Grace Cho traces the haunting of U.S. imperial aggression in Korea to the Korean diaspora in the U.S through the figure of the GI bride; literary critic Jin-kyung Lee analyzes the proletarianization of gendered labor in conjunction with South Korea's economic and military relationship to the United States; and literary critic Jodi Kim examines how Asian American cultural productions critically reframe understandings of the cold war. I situate this chapter as well as chapter three in relation to these bodies of scholarship that focus on U.S. militarization and empire in order to bring together two fields that may initially appear unrelated—Korean War/Korean diaspora studies and Chicana/o studies.

¹³⁷ More recently, William Arce's 2009 dissertation explicitly engages the Korean War and the Vietnam War in novels and autobiographical works by Chicano and Latino writers.

Theorizing trans-Pacific space in detective and hard-boiled fiction

Because of Southern California's development as a production center of the military-industrial complex, many newly enlisted Chicanos and Latinos received training in San Diego before crossing the Pacific to Korea. Furthermore, the same military defense production plants that sustained the economy of Southern Californian cities such as San Diego and Los Angeles demanded labor forces that were often racially segregated, mirroring the segregated military units during the Korean War and also during 1970s Itaewon, as Limón narrates in his series.¹³⁸ In this section, my aim is to analyze the Pacific circuit between East L.A. and Itaewon.

While cultural and literary studies have focused on Los Angeles as a transnational *noir* city, Limón's mystery series disrupts such readings by rejecting the representations of "hordes" of perilous Asians and other racialized groups infiltrating Los Angeles that frequently appear in many dominant versions of the *noir* tradition.¹³⁹ Instead, Limón's work depicts a sympathetic Chicano narrator's memories and experiences in negotiating racial and class oppression in East L.A., which prove to be critical for solving military crimes in Itaewon. Itaewon during the 1970s also figures as a "seedy" district for military prostitution and transactional sex in the transnational cultural imagination, a representation that Limón embeds into Agent Sueño's narratives. The urgency of

¹³⁸ While President Truman issued Executive Order 9981 for the abolishment of racial discrimination in the U.S. military in 1948, de facto desegregation, if not outright anti-Black and Brown violence, was standard during the Korean War and its aftermath.

¹³⁹ Limón's first novels were published by Bantam Books, but are now exclusively published and reprinted by SoHo Press. Limón's first novel, *Jade Lady Burning*, was a *New York Times* Notable Book in 1992. His next novel, *Slicky Boys*, was reviewed in *New York Times* on May 25th, 1997. Limón's *G.I. Bones* was one of National Public Radio's best books in 2009, and NPR excerpted the novel on their website on December 11, 2009. His series is critically acclaimed, and receives attention in mainstream media. His most recent book in the series, *The Joy Brigade*, was published in hardcover in July 2012.

addressing the gendered trafficking and sexual exploitation intensifies when we consider reports and concerns over the migration of Korean sex workers to Los Angeles,¹⁴⁰ continuing a circuit established by militarization and structured by ongoing hetero-racist fantasies that read Asian women's bodies as hypersexualized commodities. It is precisely at this intersection that I read Limón's mystery series as one that binds together East L.A. and Itaewon as interconnected sites of war, poverty, gender and racial exploitation that inspire a critique of state power.

Framing Los Angeles and Seoul as layered imagined spaces in Martin Limón's military mystery series requires some historical detective work that brushes against accustomed understandings of militarization in both places. This section briefly introduces a theoretical discussion of the overlapping spatial temporalities of Los Angeles and Seoul. The military development timelines of both cities provide the critical geographical framework for understanding Limón's mystery series. Los Angeles burst into economic development during the Second World War, when the city's residents became involved in the defense industry and military preparation for war personnel. According to literary scholar Raúl Homero Villa, "[d]riven by national emergency and fueled by government subsidy, Los Angeles enjoyed boom conditions of industrial growth and diversification (via Southern California's next great growth industry: defense contracting, particularly in aerospace technologies), labor immigration (both domestic and foreign), and real estate development (via the housing crunch for war workers)" (75).

¹⁴⁰ Park, Sung-hee and Sung-woo Park. "Seoul Worries About Prostitutes' Exodus to the U.S." *Korea Joongang Daily* 20 June 2006.

While Villa outlines the multi-pronged impact of wartime development in Los Angeles, urban historian Norman Klein and other scholars also show that Los Angeles did not randomly and serendipitously become a privileged site of development, but that the city was instead aggressively promoted by city and county officials. According to Klein, “[c]ompetition to attract government defense money was fierce during the war. L.A. became the center for military industries serving the Pacific, and many of these remained afterward, as part of the huge postwar defense industry here” (42). As much as the city was a center for military industries, Los Angeles was a microcosm for wartime contradictions, from segregated defense plants to explicit white supremacist hostility and violence against nonwhite people, as demonstrated in cultural works such as Chester Himes’s *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945) and Luis Valdez’s *Zoot Suit* (1978).¹⁴¹ For the city’s Chicano/as, participation in the booming war industries changed little of prevailing white supremacist social attitudes. Indeed, following the war, the county of Los Angeles attempted to forcefully disrupt Chicano/a communities, for instance by situating prisons in Chicana/o neighborhoods.

The military language during this period performed a supple function; it was used to describe war strategies as well as city development plans. While the growth of Los Angeles in this era was fueled by military development and some of the city’s residents unevenly benefited from the growth, Seoul (along with the rest of the Korean peninsula) suffered brutal attacks by the U.S. military on the people and the land during the Korean War. Grace Cho states “[b]etween 1950 and 1953, U.S. bombers dumped as much as

¹⁴¹ Luis Alvarez documents wartime hostilities directed against and resistance by youth in his 2008 *The Power of the Zoot*.

600,000 tons of napalm over the Korean peninsula; in Churchill's words, it was 'splashed' over the landscape. This was more napalm than had been used against Japan in World War II and more than would later be dropped over Vietnam" (71). The U.S. military "promiscuously" strafed living and working spaces on the Korean peninsula, making it impossible for civilians to remain stationary, thereby adding to the ever-increasing refugee population on the move from random air attacks (Cho 69). The movements of refugees putatively necessitated further aerial bombing, as the U.S. military made no effort to distinguish civilians from North Korean, Chinese, and South Korean troops. The discourse of American exceptionalism and white supremacy pardoned U.S. military attacks on civilians, justifying the military's actions as necessary in order to protect defenseless South Koreans against communist North Korean "gooks."

Significantly, Villa and Klein document the military language used in urban planning discourses in Los Angeles, in particular freeway development in the 1950s: "urban-planning campaigns 'took on the spirit of wartime propaganda, particularly aerial bombings,' suggesting the urgent need for scorched-earth policies to raze the 'infected' central-city neighborhoods" (Klein quoted in Villa 71). The people "infecting" these particular neighborhoods in Los Angeles were Mexican and Chicano/a residents, and urban planners used the language of "blight," "rot" and "decay" to justify urban renewal programs in nonwhite neighborhoods underdeveloped or impoverished by earlier instances of racist city planning. It is no surprise, then, that the military language used by planners carries a direct correlation to the concurrent Korean War. The rationale for using military language in city planning discourses is brought into forceful relief when we consider the popular support for napalm and popular opinion against communism in

the wider U.S. public: “The scorched-earth policy and the widespread use of napalm were unquestioned, even celebrated. The American war propaganda of the time unabashedly and affectionately termed its new weapon ‘flaming death’ when captioning aerial photographs of napalm bombings. ‘Burn ’em out, cook ’em, fry ’em’” (Cho 71). Historian Rodolfo Acuña has observed that “polls in the early 1950s show that 58 percent of Americans favored destroying communism at any cost, even if it meant that innocent people would be hurt” (23).¹⁴² The development and use of militarized language to justify the unsettling of Chicano/a communities for urban renewal closely mirrors the larger U.S. public’s support for devastating military actions in Korea.

It is important to make some distinctions here; the horrific use of napalm in Pacific wars is not tantamount to the aggressive discourse and practices of razing neighborhoods for freeways. Yet these phenomena share deep ideological roots. The common dehumanizing language of infection and decay, of burning and frying “gooks” occurs at the same time for the purpose of spreading exceptionalist progress and modernity—for bringing modern development to Los Angeles, accompanied by accruing profits for the powerful, and for delivering “freedom” from communism to Korea. Acuña documents even more explicit connections between the ceasefire of the U.S. war in Korea and the impacts for residents of East L.A.: “The Korean War hostilities ended in July and an economic recession beset the nation. As is the case during all recessions, economic crisis surfaced a latent nativism. The press and the public always find scapegoats for the system’s structural defects. The daily Los Angeles press announced the ‘wetback’

¹⁴² In *Dead Cities*, Mike Davis recounts similar fervor during the Second World War: “On the home front, civilians were often more avid advocates of total warfare than their military counterparts. Walt Disney, for instance, popularized the chilling ideas of Russian émigré Alexander P. de Seversky—a fanatical advocate of bombing cities—in the film, *Victory Through Airpower*” (71-2).

invasion, easily making scapegoats of undocumented workers” (40). The racist treatment of workers in East L.A. exposed the hollowness of the first hot war during the Cold War, waged in the name of freedom and democracy.

Though by now narratives of gentrification have become familiar, especially about large U.S. cities and their urban renewal programs, there is little mainstream discussion about the development and gentrification of the spaces around military bases, which emerge through gendered discourse. Jin-kyung Lee states that “[o]ne of the ways in which modernization was made concrete was through the ongoing and fast-paced urbanization. The constantly changing landscape of the old city, Seoul, included the continual construction of buildings, the ever-expanding network of the mass transit system, and the growing ubiquity of squatters and their slums” (101). Lee’s statement applies at an even more intensified scale in the case of military bases in the 1970s, as the center of the bases gleam with new buildings, constructed as emblems of modernity, while the impoverished periphery is inhabited by people who work in the camp towns that serve the bases. Lee’s feminist scholarship about laborers, particularly sex workers, models deep commitments to critiquing structures of power that grid the life chances of workers in militarized places like Itaewon.

Lee’s attentions to the suffering that accompanies modernization brushes against the work of mainstream scholars like G. Cameron Hurst III, who approaches the development of Itaewon with a Cold War area studies perspective embedded with untroubled linear understandings of history and progress. The introduction to his 1984 field report “It’aewon: The Gentrification of a Boomtown” states: “While *not yet* a bastion of establishment respectability, It’aewon has become a shopper’s paradise and

perhaps the most comfortable international environment in metropolitan Seoul” (1, emphasis added). For Hurst, Itaewon’s gentrification proceeds along familiar routes of consumer-driven capitalist development, but the “not yet” of Itaewon’s “respectability” carries what he characterizes as the unwanted effects of the Korean War. Dipesh Chakrabarty, in his study and critique of postcolonial and historical thought, states that “[h]istoricism—and even the modern, European idea of history—one might say, came to non-European peoples in the nineteenth century as somebody’s way of saying ‘not yet’ to somebody else” (8). Chakrabarty argues that this notion of development and so-called entry into political modernity is wielded as a measure of “civilization,” and that “it could always be said with reason that some people were less modern than others, and that the former needed a period of preparation and waiting before they could be recognized as full participants in political modernity. But this was precisely the argument of the colonizer—the “not yet” to which the colonized nationalist opposed his or her ‘now’” (9). Hurst measures Itaewon’s “respectability” by noting that the military district is a “shopper’s paradise,” not yet prepared to be recognized as equal participants on the skewed spectrum of civilization, but still on its way as a site of consumer development.

Hurst’s selective recognition of Itaewon belies the violent underbelly of modernization and exposes the troubling ideological parameters of area studies scholarship. Along with considerations of Itaewon’s gentrification, Hurst acknowledges as an afterthought the sedimented histories of militarization that construct the social and political space of Itaewon: “The Japanese military establishment was located at Yongsan (the U.S. military simply took over the same facilities after the Japanese left)” (2). Nor does Hurst give due credit to the U.S. military for why Itaewon is not “respectable”:

“While no longer a boomtown, It’aewon has not completely cast off that stigma as yet...Most telling, It’aewon still has the whores and the GIs” (5). This account of the “stigma” permeating Itaewon erases the militarized order of operations: the occupying presence of GIs figures prominently in the presence and exploitation of sex workers, some of whom were forced to labor for the Japanese Imperial Army during the Second World War, rather than sex workers as an a priori development of Itaewon.

Even when Hurst attempts to provide explanations for sex workers, he resorts to portraying their presence as an endemic part of Korean culture: “That war, poverty, and colonial rule contributed to social breakdown and encouraged some Korean females to turn to prostitution as a means of survival is neither debatable nor unique to Korea...The real source of the industry’s proliferation is Korean male chauvinism, not Japanese and American depravity” (6). Though Hurst gives attention to the patriarchal structure of Korean society, which merits ongoing social and political critique, his motive for introducing “Korean male chauvinism” is to erase the official military infrastructure constructed by both the United States and Japan to produce racialized and sexualized violence.

Indeed, Hurst attempts to absolve the U.S. military of any influence on the “stigma”: “Given the long-established cultural patterns underlying the industry, it is hard, to determine what impact boomtowns have had in this area. Once these were the main avenues through which foreign influences filtered, and no doubt American attitudes toward male-female relations penetrated the country through boomtowns...[But] there are magazine [sic], movies, and other influences; an increasing number of Koreans are going abroad, even as tourists. So how much comes through boomtowns is difficult to gauge”

(6). Not only is the “stigma” of Itaewon justified by “long-established cultural patterns underlying the industry,” Hurst would have readers believe that Korean tourists in the early 1980s were somehow responsible for the militarily sanctioned, racialized exploitation of women by the Japanese Imperial Army dating back to the Second World War. Hurst’s masculinist account attempts to neatly remove the U.S. military’s “penetration” of foreign influences, and absolves Japan from their perpetuation of militarized sexual violence.

Hurst’s masculinist understanding of Itaewon, initially employed to assert a “neutral” perspective on the district’s gentrification, turns into a strange and defensive denial of culpability for the presence of military sex workers. Furthermore, the gendered language of orientalist ideology accrues further troubling significance:

Once weak and helpless, Korea welcomed U.S. military support and the tremendous economic advantages the large U.S. military presence provided. But as Korea becomes economically more secure, as her international status increases...South Korea feels a greater degree of self-confidence. This makes it difficult to maintain the same harmonious relationship with the United States, which still enjoys a sort of 'semi-colonial' rule over the country. (6, emphasis added)

Hurst portrays Korea as a victim of gendered violence, “[o]nce weak and helpless,” but when “economically more secure,” feeling “a greater degree of self-confidence,” making it difficult for the United States to “enjoy a sort of ‘semi-colonial’” power over the nation. Again, Hurst makes no mention of how Korea came to be “weak and helpless” in the first place, and what role the U.S. military played in Korea’s condition. Katherine Moon states that Cynthia Enloe and other feminist scholars “have asserted that the very maintenance of the military establishment depends on promoting gendered notions of femininity and masculinity, weakness and strength, conquered and conqueror,” justifying

multiple forms of state and military violence (10). Hurst's bald acknowledgement of the United States's "semi-colonial" enjoyment of Korea suggests that the entire southern part of the Korean peninsula is facing gentrification by the United States, particularly at the expense of poor and uneducated people, especially women, from rural Korea.

Hurst's attentions to Itaewon as an emerging cosmopolitan playpen in the 1980s belies the harsh conditions that people endured during the prior decades, and he chooses instead to perpetuate the language and ideology of "stigma," in particular when he refers to military prostitution. In Itaewon and other camp towns, "[a]long with the seediness of these areas arose social disorder, violence, and crime. With the establishment of these shantytowns in the 1950s and '60s came an influx of not only poor women and war orphans but entrepreneurs and criminals seeking fortune off the U.S. dollar and anonymity from the law" (Moon 7). It is unsurprising, then, that Limón constructs Itaewon as a perfect setting for his hard-boiled novels, with multiple entanglements of power and lack of power shaping spaces of devastating desperation, human disposability, and notions of criminality.

The detective fiction genre in the Western literary tradition, dating to the early nineteenth century,¹⁴³ follows established conventions of questioning, interrogating, and observing in attempts to gain empirical knowledge and truth, often resulting in neat

¹⁴³ Shelley Streeby discusses the complexities of popular crime narratives during the 19th century, focusing in particular on post-1848 *corridos* and serialized crime stories in the United States: "[A]lthough *corridos* take the part of the criminal and question the justice of U.S. law, the *Police Gazette* disseminates ambivalent representations of criminals but ultimately upholds the law by striving to make its victory over criminality seem natural, inevitable, and best for the safety of the public...*corridos* attack the legitimacy of the new forms of power and law that the *Police Gazette* ends up defending. As popular crime narratives, *corridos* and the *Police Gazette* are engaged in a discursive battle not over a generalized, abstract law or power as such, but over the violent transition from Mexican to U.S. law in the postwar period" (258).

resolutions and a restoration of the social order. Marxist theorist Ernest Mandel states that “[t]he detective story is the realm of the happy ending. The criminal is always caught. Justice is always done. Crime never pays. Bourgeois legality, bourgeois values, bourgeois society, always triumph in the end. It is soothing, socially integrating literature, despite its concern with crime, violence and murder” (47-8). Mainstream detective fiction manufactures anxieties in attempts to reconcile readers with the current social order, often functioning to restore faith in justice systems, since the perpetrators are always found out. Indeed, without the criminals there would be very few satisfying ways of ensuring the uprightness of the social system as it exists. For scholars of critical race theory and racial history in the United States, detective fiction can function to individualize violence and criminality, to the effect of foreclosing any critiques of the system. Yet the genre also builds in a certain degree of self-conscious discovery, at least for the narrator, as scholars of detective fiction argue that “[i]n a diverse array of mystery novels...time and again the detective also unravels a mystery about him- or herself. The novel is as much his or her story as it is the story of the crime” (Rodriguez 8). Even so, readers’ perspectives are often confined to the narrators’ ideologically normative positions, including latent racism and more blatant heteropatriarchy, and readers may find themselves reaching beyond those limits in order to formulate social and political critiques.

Hard-boiled crime fiction, recognized as the U.S. response to more conventional bourgeois detective fiction emerging from Britain, can be traced to the years following World War I. According to Mandel, “Raymond Chandler actually theorized the turn, and dated it as beginning with [Dashiell] Hammett’s work [in the 1920s]. It was an abrupt

break with the gentility of the classical detective story...Social corruption, especially among the rich, now moves into the centre of the plots” (35). Moving away from exclusively individualized and private motives for crimes, the hard-boiled genre often focuses specifically on the corruption of the powerful, featuring detectives or investigators that work for a living rather than solve mysteries as a hobby. Although grittier, more explicitly violent and sexual, less respectful of authority, and more attentive to working-class perspectives, the hard-boiled genre still carries over conventions from traditional detective fiction, often modifying them and creating different possibilities for critique. Like more conventional detective fiction, hard-boiled fiction “[a]lmost always...uses first-person narration, with the voice of the detective central to readers’ experiences of the text” (Reddy 8). Maureen Reddy argues that given the initially white and masculine narrative perspectives of hard-boiled stories, writers that narrate from positions of racial and sexual marginality necessarily transform the genre with “other” ideological frameworks (9). The genre’s built-in features of critiquing various forms of modern authority—economic, legal, and social, among others—allow for critical modifications, in part due to its ideologically white male-dominated emergence and the challenges to that inheritance.

Raymond Chandler, one of the vanguard authors in the hard-boiled genre, wrote a critical essay about detective stories entitled “The Simple Art of Murder” in 1950, the year of the official beginning of the Korean War. Though solidifying the conventions of the U.S. hard-boiled detective story in the decades prior to 1950, his observations conform wholeheartedly to Limón’s portrayal of 1970s Itaewon: “The realist in murder writes of a world in which gangsters can rule nations and almost rule cities, in which

hotels and apartment houses and celebrated restaurants are owned by men who made their money out of brothels...where no man can walk down a dark street in safety because law and order are things we talk about but refrain from practicing...” As Hurst circuitously denies, as Chandler suggests above, and as Limón explicitly portrays in his novels, the real “criminals” in Itaewon are not, for instance, the workers in brothels, but the “men who made their money out of brothels,” who are deeply complicit in the U.S. military structure. Following the conventions of the hard-boiled genre, Chandler flips the power structure not exactly on its head, but destabilizes it enough to create spaces of interrogation and critique.¹⁴⁴

Mandel shows in *Delightful Murder* how the popular development of detective fiction is woven into the fabric of both print technology and U.S. militarism:

The real massification of the detective story occurred with the paperback revolution, triggered off by the introduction of Penguin Books’ first low-cost series and, in the United States, by the appearance of Simon and Schuster’s Pocketbooks (with their adaptation of mass-marketing techniques to publishing), and by the need during world war two to print large numbers of cheap books for the US armed forces...But given the dimensions of the American market and of the US military establishment during world war two, it was the mass production of paperbacks and pocketbooks for these that qualitatively altered the scope of both publishing and reading. Virtually overnight, thousands of readers became millions. (66)

This particular material history forms the condition of possibility for an “imagined community” of detective fiction readers, many of whom we can speculate were part of the U.S. military serving globally, and constructing U.S. nationhood against “foreign”

¹⁴⁴ Luis Martin-Cabrera proposes “hardboiled detective fiction as a parable of the state of exception [and] as a progressive confusion of the application and transgression of the law” (80).

others.¹⁴⁵ Many detective fiction, hard-boiled fiction, and *film noir* scholars, including Maureen Reddy, Ralph Rodriguez, Mike Davis, and Norman Klein, argue that the hard-boiled genre creates in particular an “imagined community” of white male subjectivity, especially leading up to the Second World War. Chester Himes’s *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945) and *Lonely Crusade* (1947), both set in Los Angeles, are two texts that brush against white supremacist depictions of nonwhite people in the genre, documenting the fact that “Los Angeles was a particularly cruel mirage for Black writers,” especially within the segregated defense plants during the Second World War (Davis 42).

The hard-boiled genre in turn influenced U.S. *film noir* in the 1940s and 1950s. In *City of Quartz*, Davis states “*film noir* is described in shorthand as the result of the encounter between the American hardboiled novel and exiled German expressionist cinema,” though he suggests this is a limited definition that excludes more complicated stylistic and thematic treatments, including the possibility of critiquing dominant forms of racialization (40). He states that “the most interesting transit across Los Angeles’s literary scene in the 1940s was probably the brief appearance of Black *noir*,” noting the curious absence of works by Himes in the *noir* canon (42). Klein remarks on this absence in *The History of Forgetting*, his study of erasure and memory on Los Angeles: “As much as I love *noir*, and find it exotically compelling, it is nevertheless often utterly false in its visions of the poor, of the non-white in particular. It is essentially a mythos about white male panic...the hard-boiled story cannot help but operate, very fundamentally, as white males building a social imaginary” (79). Himes’s novels

¹⁴⁵Here I refer to Benedict Anderson’s term “imagined communities,” the idea that nations are based on a shared fantasy that sustains a sense of belonging to a larger whole.

absolutely interrupt the process of “white males building a social imaginary,” and instead show the possibilities for building different, more critical spaces within the genre.¹⁴⁶

Furthermore, Klein’s admission of the “exotically compelling” nature of *noir* and the hard-boiled story recall the military recruiting slogan during the Second World War, “Join the Army, See the World.” The “world” in the slogan is meant to be imagined from the perspective of a normative U.S. subject, who could be deployed to “exotic,” often feminized locales such as Korea and Japan.

Such “exoticism,” whether in the so-called “far east” or U.S. urban spaces, functions as part of the appeal of the detective genre, according to Patricia Linton: “In the contemporary detective genre, novels often develop an intriguing complexity by drawing on culturally specific detail...Indeed, the reader’s appetite for...exotic settings, rare expertise, cultural difference—is part of the appeal of the genre...Thus, part of the satisfaction detective fiction provides is the (sense of) entree into another world” (18). But for people of color, immigrants, women, and those who identify as queer—the people against whom the normative U.S. subject is defined—the “culturally specific detail,” the “exotic settings,” the “cultural difference” and “another world” in mainstream detective fiction are often stereotypical snapshots, prematurely saturated ways of “knowing” the world.

¹⁴⁶ In his discussion of “racial borrowing” in hard-boiled fiction, Christopher Breu states “the image of the Mexican can be read not only as a displacement but also as geopolitically specific, borrowing from the iconography of the Chicano ‘bandit’ that is distinctive to the California landscape of much hard-boiled fiction. Thus the specific racial antagonisms that characterize the history of U.S. imperial aggression in California become one source for the racial borrowing that distinguishes the white male protagonists of both *noir* and hard-boiled fiction” (75). In this article, I build on Breu’s argument, suggesting the significance not only of a Chicano protagonist in East L.A., but also the Chicano protagonist’s theorizations of U.S. imperial aggressions in a trans-Pacific context.

Over the past few decades, however, both detective fiction by people of color and women, as well as scholarship on multiethnic and queer detective fiction has flourished.¹⁴⁷ Ralph Rodriguez addresses the critical possibilities of the genre for Chicana/o writers, arguing that given the feeling of alienation many Chicana/os confront in the United States, the voice of the alienated hero or detective functions as an ideal mediator. Regarding the potential of the genre, Rodriguez states “Aztlán offered a place of being for the alienated Chicana/o other. By contrast, the Chicana/o detective novel offers the alienated hero not a mythic homeland, but a discursive space from which to examine the world and its shaping discourses” (7). In Limón’s novels, George Sueño—the alienated Chicano hero of the series—delivers for readers both a seedy urban place and a layered discursive space that position his insights about transnational racism, critiques of the military power structure, and memories of East L.A.

Finally, that Limón’s series begins with *Jade Lady Burning* in 1992, the year of the L.A. uprisings, and continues through a string of U.S. police actions and wars around the world up to the current moment marks his series as one that mediates the extension of U.S. military power and registers the eruptions of multiple racially oppressive institutions. Limón’s series functions in part as a litany of misdeeds and criminal behavior perpetrated by the U.S. military, and also as an open index of the stubborn racism, temporally and spatially, of the United States. In what follows, I first explore Limón’s portrayals of racism and xenophobia in East L.A. and Itaewon in *Slicky Boys*, which marks a

¹⁴⁷ Chester Himes published *If He Hollers Let Him Go* in 1945, and Reddy states “Himes had intended to write a detective novel, but he shifted away from the mystery while writing. As he told Marcel Duhamel in an interview, ‘I had started out to write a detective story when I wrote that novel, but I couldn’t name the white man who was guilty because all white men were guilty’” (39). Some scholars locate Pauline Hopkins’s *Hagar’s Daughter* (1901-2) as one of the first African American detective novels. Rodriguez asserts that Rolando Hinojosa’s *Partners in Crime* (1985) is the first Chicano detective novel.

transnational circuit of racial formation. I then analyze the novel's militarized apertures that focus on the figure of the "houseboy," which I argue directs rethinking about domesticity, gender, and labor. Next, I present a reading of a forgotten archival document from the Center for the Study of the Korean War, a letter written by a grandparent that requests work on a U.S. military base, but also layers in critiques of the U.S. presence in Korea. Finally, while the novel *The Wandering Ghost* introduces similar critiques of the U.S. military, I suggest that it does so from a white liberal feminist framework rather than anti-imperialist feminisms in the context of Korea.

“Koreans might be inscrutable to most of the world, but they aren’t inscrutable to me”: the Chicano detective in *Slicky Boys*

The militarized developments in Itaewon and East L.A. and their operative ideologies become even more entwined in Limón's 1997 novel *Slicky Boys*. *Slicky Boys*, like all of Limón's military mysteries, chronicles the adventures of Sergeant George Sueño and his partner Ernie Bascom as they solve various military cases in their capacity as detectives for the 8th Army, based in Itaewon during the 1970s. Their encounters often entail brushes with Korean civilians, state entities, gangsters, and "business girls," a term used as a euphemism for sex workers. Rarely do they solve their crimes and mysteries the "official" way, instead opting to work with shamans, "business girls," and black market racketeers, especially since the perpetrators of the crimes are often military officials or personnel, complicit in or directly committing violent crimes against civilians and lower-ranking military personnel. Sueño and Bascom also operate at odds with various U.S. military agencies since the criminals are often representatives of the U.S.

military. The detectives' investigations usually showcase Sueño's desire to understand, protect and accurately represent Korean society against the bald apathy of the U.S.

military. In other words, Sueño attempts to function as a voice and champion for Korean civilians.

In this section, I analyze Limón's 1997 *Slicky Boys*, first focusing on the transnational circuits of racism that layer the "home" spaces of East L.A. and Itaewon, and then exploring critiques of gender, labor, and domesticity through the character of Mr. Yim, a "houseboy." The novel follows Sueño and Bascom as they try to find out who is committing a series of gruesome murders, starting with the murder of a U.N. guard. Their initial instinct is to blame the murders on a highly organized network of black market gangs called the "slicky boys." The "slicky boys" have roots in the Korean War, when people struggled to live by pilfering food and other essential items from the U.S. military. As they discover with the help of the gang leader, named Herbalist So, the murderer is in fact Lieutenant Commander Bo Shipton, a white Navy Seal, who went AWOL after he was rebuffed by a Korean woman, the daughter of a Korean official, who planned to marry him. The twists include the Korean official covering up murders in order to protect his family's name and Shipton's hatred of Mexicans, which he developed growing up on his family's Texas ranch. Though not always as explicit as Shipton's racism, interrogations of various degrees of white supremacy critically underpin the novel's development.

Martin Limón's military mystery series embeds Sueño's childhood and adolescent memories of East L.A. into Itaewon in the 1970s. In doing so, not only does the series urge the examination of the militarized development of both spaces, it also destabilizes

conceptions of race and frames a different racialized lens in operation in Korea, compared to the United States. In *Slicky Boys*, Sueño notes that “Mexican or Anglo, we were all just Americans in the eyes of a Korean policeman. When I was growing up in Southern California that attitude would’ve come in handy if more people had shared it. Saved me a few lumps” (16).¹⁴⁸ By using both East L.A. and Itaewon as frameworks for Sueño’s observations on race and racisms, the novel raises important questions about the optics informing citizenship, national identification, and the transnational circuit of racialization.

Sueño considers the benefits, however problematic, of a “colorblind” Southern California that overlooks race in favor of a U.S. national identification. Describing himself, Sueño states “I’m dark, tall, big, Mexican, and used to being stared at” (Limón 193). Indeed, Sueño’s consideration privileges a U.S. nationalism closely linked with citizenship, and his self-description captures the nuanced history of racism against Chicana/os in the United States. As Mary Pat Brady states, Chicana/o “symbolic status within the United States nevertheless remains in question as long as the nation continues to conflate citizenship with having an Anglo appearance” (78). Sueño’s self-description belies his consideration of a “colorblind” Southern California, instead pointing to how his U.S. citizenship is already called into question when he is “being stared at” (193). Recalling the World War II slogan “Join the Army, See the World,” we observe that when Sueño joins the army, he becomes the “world” that both Americans and Koreans “stare at.” That Sueño reflects on U.S. racism in relation to Korean state power simultaneously

¹⁴⁸ Interestingly, according to sociologist Nadia Kim, “Koreans who immigrated to the United States in the 1970s and early 1980s knew very little about Latinos in general or about Mexican and Central Americans in Los Angeles in particular,” (129) corroborating Sueño’s experience with the Korean policeman.

challenges U.S. national understandings of “race” and shifts the emphasis to problems of nationality and citizenship.

Awkwardly, Sueño regurgitates lessons of the American Dream in one of the few moments in the novel where he discusses his East L.A. childhood at length. Sueño’s father takes off to Mexico after Sueño is born, and from that point Sueño is moved from foster home to foster home: “I was brought up by the County of Los Angeles—in foster homes. It was a rough existence but I learned a lot about people, how to read them, how to hide when it was time to hide, and how to wait them out” (22). Here he reverses and controls the dominant optic directing the American Dream, “reading” and “hiding” his way into a space within that dominant dream. Sueño’s name, translated into English as “dream,” reflects his multiple, often untranslatable, and contradictory relationships with the ideologies undergirding the American Dream.

Recounting his difficult childhood, Sueño asks “What was I grateful for? For having a real life, for having money coming in—not much, but enough—and for having a job to do. I was an investigator and I wore suits and did important work. A status I never thought I’d reach when I was a kid in East L.A.” (22). Unsurprisingly, realizing the American Dream in the United States does not appear to be a possibility, given the structural lack of opportunity permeating Sueño’s life in East L.A. Rather, Sueño’s “real life” unfolds in the camp towns of Korea. Here Sueño serves as an ill-formed template of the rugged individual, wearing empire’s suits and doing important work he’d never thought possible as “a kid in East L.A.” That Sueño needs to be in the American

neocolony¹⁴⁹ in order to achieve this dream speaks volumes about the possibilities really open to him. As Jorge Mariscal puts it, “[s]ustained by a constant flow of new immigrants and relatively limited career opportunities for the native-born working class of color, Latin@ military service has been a primary vehicle for assimilation, access to full rights of citizenship, and the construction of ‘American’ identities premised on traditional patriotism” (“Latin@s in the U.S. Military” 37). Sueño participates in one of the readily available options for young people of color and working class people from impoverished neighborhoods—the American military, which in this case sends him to Korea in order to serve at the empire’s Pacific edge.

Yet it is Sueño’s childhood in East L.A. that allows him access to less stereotypically saturated ways of understanding Koreans and forms the condition of possibility for being a detective in Itaewon, and, in a sense, feeling home in Itaewon: “Koreans might be inscrutable to most of the world, but they aren’t inscrutable to me. I grew up in East L.A. speaking two languages, living in two worlds, the Anglo and the Mexican...So learning a third language, Korean, hadn’t intimidated me...And living in the Korean world hadn’t bothered me either. Their culture was just another puzzle to unravel, like so many that I’d faced when the County of Los Angeles moved me from home to home” (25). Sueño’s understanding of Korea and Koreans is contingent on spatialized knowledges of “worlds,” “cultures,” and “homes” that are Anglo, Mexican and Korean.

¹⁴⁹ “The frequency of a term used in the Korean media, ‘the Korean Dream,’ referring to the desire of migrant workers from overseas to come to South Korea for work, seems at first puzzling. Echoing the more globally famous term ‘the American Dream,’ the South Korean counterpart implies a certain desire for equation between Korea and America as a destination for immigrants and migrants, as the term ‘the Korean Dream’ recognizes Korea’s new place in the global hierarchy as a semiperipheral metropole” (Lee 214).

Sueño's usage of "home" registers in multiple decibels of empire, domesticity, nation, and gender.¹⁵⁰ Sueño, at least within the County of Los Angeles, has no place to claim as "home," though his spatial identifications are firmly with East L.A. This sense of ambivalent belonging points also to a critique of the U.S. annexation of Southern California from Mexico, and the ever-stringent surveillance of the U.S.-Mexico border, in the "two worlds" of East L.A. Ralph Rodriguez argues that "[t]his feeling of being on the outside, being the alienated other, thematizes the hero of the detective novel *and* resonates especially well with Chicana/os, who though subjects of the nation are often represented as alien to it" (6). Sueño's presence in Korea adds a third dimension to this argument, considering Sueño's position as a racialized U.S. subject who travels abroad on the circuits of militarization. When Sueño does leave East L.A., "living in the Korean world" becomes his job, his new homeland, in the neo-imperial military outpost of Itaewon. Sueño's claim that "living in the Korean world hadn't bothered [him]," that Korean culture was "just another puzzle to unravel," suggests an epistemological orientation he braids together from his lived entanglements with power: his foster home experiences, his racialized brushes with alienation and belonging in East L.A., and his participation in the U.S. military.

In the context of Korea, "world," "culture" and "home" also carry multiple valences in the decades following the Korean War, especially when we consider the border at the 38th parallel dividing the peninsula into putatively separate worlds and

¹⁵⁰ Rosemary George states in *The Politics of Home*: "Over the course of the last hundred or so years, the concept of home (and of home-country) has been re-rooted and re-routed in fiction written in English by colonizers, the colonized, newly independent peoples and immigrants" (1). She further states that: "Homes are not about inclusions and wide open arms as much as they are about places carved out of closed doors, closed borders and screening apparatuses" (18).

cultures, fragmenting the Korean “homeland.” In addition to the partition, the physical destruction of the peninsula in the war created millions of homeless refugees. Furthermore, Sueño’s statement urges consideration of the militarized borders both between the United States and Mexico, and between North and South Korea. Sueño’s discussion of the simultaneity of “two worlds” shows the constructed nature of space and reveals the sedimentation of imperial histories near the U.S./Mexico border, significantly remapped in Korea during the 1970s when the peninsula is negotiating with the aftermaths of Japanese colonialism and the presence of U.S. military occupation. Sueño’s reflections on “home” denaturalize these national borders, revealing the artificiality of national spaces. Finally, in the contemporary context, Sueño’s presence in the military in Korea evokes the double threat of communism and nuclear war that North Korea represents in the mainstream imagination, noxiously articulated as belonging to a putative “axis of evil” by George W. Bush. In this way Sueño’s use of “home” also connects to Homeland Security, both in the imagined threat embodied by the near presence of Mexico and the looming presence of North Korea.¹⁵¹

Another border that Sueño’s use of “home” disrupts is the one marking domesticity, especially in consideration of GI exploitation of domestic labor performed by houseboys, which I suggest is useful for rethinking the archive of the term “domestic.” As Rosemary George states in *Burning Down the House*, “[t]he close association between women and the domestic arena is of such long standing that it is sometimes perceived as a natural affinity that draws the two together” (4-5). Because of the naturalized

¹⁵¹ “Home” also evokes an important contribution to U.S. literature about the Korean War: Toni Morrison’s 2012 novel, *Home*.

association between “domestic” and feminized labor, it is particularly important to examine narratives about “houseboys” in order to critique ongoing ideologies of domesticity, gender, and race, and their connections to military discourses. Dating back at least to the Second World War, “native” boys and men made their living by performing domestic work for foreign military personnel around the globe. Similar to the Filipino, Japanese and Korean workers serving these functions in the United States, especially in California, the male workers, regardless of age, were called “houseboys.” The very name links engrained understandings of domesticity in “house” to an implicitly undeveloped masculinity in “boy,” a designation stripped of an ostensibly threatening masculinity and made instrumental by the military in Korea and middle- and upper-class families in the United States.

In the novel, Sueño interviews a houseboy named Mr. Yim for their investigation, and Sueño describes Mr. Yim’s life as “an endless chain of shining shoes, washing laundry, ironing fatigues, and putting up with GI bullshit,” (59) despite the fact that Mr. Yim’s “English was well pronounced. Hardly an accent. I knew he’d never gone to high school—probably not even middle school—or he wouldn’t be working here. He’d picked it up from the GI’s over the years. Intelligence radiated from his calm face. When I first arrived in Korea, I wondered why men such as this would settle for low positions. I learned later that after the Korean War, having work of any kind was a great accomplishment” (57). Sueño’s description of Mr. Yim unravels tightly bound, normative understandings of domestic labor as private, unpaid labor performed dutifully by women.

Limón's discussion of houseboys in *Slicky Boys* is valuable for rethinking the archive of the term "domestic," especially in relationship to transnational gendered and racialized divisions of labor. According to George, "[w]hat is truly remarkable are the ways in which dominant domestic ideologies and practices have become globally hegemonic as a result of colonial and capitalist expansion and modernization, even as they have entered into contestation with other local forms of domesticity" (*Keywords* 92). Sueño's narrative of Mr. Yim shows the "globally hegemonic" manifestation of domestic ideologies in several ways. First, Sueño's questioning of "why men such as this would settle for low positions" belies his assumptions about domestic labor and both gender and class, that women might perform the labor but not men, and that there might be something innately "low" and demeaning about the work itself, rather than the uneven logics of power that enable the devaluation of both the labor and the laborers.

Second, "colonial and capitalist expansion and modernization" (George 92) carve routes that allow U.S. GIs to maintain masculinist approaches to strictly policed military regulations such as "shining shoes, washing laundry, ironing fatigues" (Limón 59), by exploiting the work of houseboys. That Korean men and boys in the U.S.-occupied militarized space of Itaewon perform this intimate labor functions to uphold the masculinity of GIs against the feminized bodies of Asian males, which has a longstanding tradition in the United States, and is used as justification for exercising various repressive mechanisms.¹⁵² For instance, we can trace this route to the figure of the Chinese

¹⁵² In *Disidentifications*, José Esteban Muñoz's study on queers of color and performance, he argues against the recovery of masculinity, except in a very few instances, as in Jack Halberstam's conceptualizations of "female masculinity": "Masculinity has been and continues to be a normative rubric that has policed the sex/gender system. I see very little advantage in recuperating the term masculinity because, as a category, masculinity has normalized heterosexual and masculinist privileges. Masculinity is,

laundryman in the United States, who recalls the gendered conditions of transnational labor migration and the legacy of the legally engineered racialized exclusion of Chinese women from migration to the United States. As the Chinese were increasingly and violently pushed away from most types of labor because of intensified economic competition in the United States, especially in California, one form of labor they were able to pursue was the laundry business. During the Korean War, and in its aftermath, the work that people could find was often devalued forms of labor, which U.S. military personnel exploited, allured by the availability they perceived through the lens of orientalist ideology.

The devaluation of gendered labor operates multiply in the racialized labor of both Chinese males in the United States and Korean males in Itaewon, as the “globally hegemonic” U.S. domestic ideologies entered “into contestation with other local forms of domesticity” (George 92), especially given that within the patriarchal societies of China and Korea, domestic work was also considered to be demeaning for men. However, in Sueño's account, the agency of workers like Mr. Yim is clearly marked as dignified, as Mr. Yim is described as “lucid, calm, smart, sober,” and laboring to value his work, though “houseboys were so low on the social scale that nobody took their testimony seriously” (59). Mr. Yim’s dignified performance of his work coalesces with what José Esteban Muñoz calls “disidentification”:

Disidentification is about recycling and rethinking encoded meaning. The process of disidentification scrambles and reconstructs the encoded message of a cultural text in a fashion that both exposes the encoded message’s universalizing and exclusionary machinations and recircuits its

among other things, a cultural imperative to enact a mode of ‘manliness’ that is calibrated to shut down queer possibilities and energies” (Muñoz 58).

workings to account for, include, and empower minority identities and identifications. Thus, disidentification is a step further than cracking open the code of the majority; it proceeds to use this code as raw material for representing a disempowered politics or positionality that has been rendered unthinkable by the dominant culture. (31)

Though Muñoz's *Disidentifications* focuses on queers of color and the performance of politics, I suggest that his concept extends to “rethinking encoded meaning[s]” of both domesticity and houseboys.

“Domesticity” then reveals normative associations of feminized labor, a distinct private/home sphere, and unpaid or low-paying work, but Limón’s depiction of Mr. Yim also denaturalizes masculinist power structures, exposes the layering of private/public spheres, and undoes devalued notions of domestic work. In a similar way, the word “houseboy” appears to affirm U.S. masculinity and generosity, and denigrate the status of “native” men, but Mr. Yim registers a particular affect that shows him to be “lucid, calm, smart, [and] sober,” in comparison to “GI bullshit” (59). Thus “houseboy,” a “positionality that has been rendered unthinkable by the dominant culture” (Muñoz 31), accrues the possibility in Mr. Yim’s performance to dislodge dominant discourses, to gain traction to critique, and to create accessibility to different ways of understanding the “unthinkable.”

Limón’s sympathetic portrayal of Mr. Yim works to reposition the dominant perspective of houseboy from “unthinkable” to one that bears the traces of multiple imperialisms and militarisms. Indeed, the figure of the “houseboy” indexes genealogies of racialized and gendered labor, and registers its concomitant migrations, racial formations, and global critiques of empire. In California, for example, Henry Yoshitaka Kiyama’s *The Four Immigrants Manga* introduces some critical representations of

Japanese “houseboys” from 1904-24, and Carlos Bulosan’s short story “The Filipino Houseboy”¹⁵³ resonates with his own experiences working as a houseboy in his 1946 personal history, *America Is in the Heart*. Younghill Kang also documents his houseboy experiences in the East Coast in his 1937 autobiography *East Goes West*. Such narratives give weight to important moments in gendered and devalued labor in the United States, and theorize the constructions of masculinity, race, and domesticity.

While the cultural texts above explicitly narrate representations of “houseboys,” another document more implicitly theorizes labor and empire. I present here a letter uncovered from the Center for the Study of the Korean War, written by Y.H. Kim and addressed to Sgt. Cleveran, found among Cleveran’s effects in the archives. Y.H. Kim’s letter shares a similar critical spirit as the creative representations noted above, recoding the “unthinkable” and refusing to disqualify its positionality. I have transcribed the text of the letter as follows:

Dear Sgt. Cleveran: How are you in (t)his time? As you know I have a hard time now. I am a refugee came from Seoul with my grand children. You and other G.I help me lots during the last year. But I have very much trouble after I was discharged. Any way I thank you very much.

Dear Sgt. Let me ask you once more. if you don’t mind take care me please. I want work again, reappointment or recommendation of other place. Oh San air Base or any other place.

Dear Sgt. I believe you help me and my family in this war time. if you refuse me, I have no aske any other one. I am awfully sorry but aske you only.

Your faithful, Y.H. Kim.

¹⁵³Published by University of Washington Press in 2005 with *All The Conspirators*, a World War II era mystery thriller attributed to Bulosan.

Dear Sgt Cleveran:
 How are you in this time? as
 you know I have a hard time now. I
 am a refugee come from Seoul with my
 grand children. you and other G-I help
 me late during the last year. But I
 have very much trouble after I was discha-
 rd. Any way I thank you very much.
 Dear Sgt. Let me ask you
 once more. if you don't mind take
 care me please. I want work again,
 reappointment or recommendation of other
 place. Oh San air Base or any other place.
 Dear Sgt. I believe you help
 me and my family in this war season.
 if you refuse me, I have no ask any
 other one. I am awfully sorry but ask
 you only.
 your faithful,
 Y. H. Kim

Figure 5: Letter from Y.H. Kim addressed to Sgt. Cleveran

The letter is written in perfectly cogent, grammatically imperfect English.

Though the letter is signed, the initials make the writer's gender ambiguous. Given that most girls and women did not have ready access to formal education in Korea until after reconstruction following the Korean War, and given that Y.H. Kim states having "grand children," Y.H. Kim likely attended school during the Japanese colonial era. Although it would be safe to assume that the letter is written by a grandfather, I suggest that its ambiguity is generative for rethinking domesticity and labor. Non-normative readings of

Y.H. Kim's letter direct different outcomes, and the letter provides potential for critical gender analyses if we imagine and situate the writer's multiple positionalities. In the next section, I first analyze the larger significance of Y.H. Kim's letter in the discourse of "benevolent" liberation and military violence and then turn to the different gendered possibilities and readings of the letter.

While the purpose of the letter is to ask for "work again, reappointment or recommendation of other place," I suggest that it also encapsulates Lisa Yoneyama's argument that "the imperialist myth of liberation and rehabilitation presents both violence and liberation as gifts for the liberated" (80). Not only does this imperialist myth bolster U.S. nationalism but the notion of indebtedness that accompanies the "gift of freedom," according to Yoneyama, "has serious implications for the redressability of U.S. military violence. The injured and violated bodies of the liberated do not require redress according to this discourse of indebtedness, for their liberation has already served as payment/reparation that supposedly precedes the U.S. violence inflicted upon them" (81). Reading Y.H. Kim's letter alongside this argument reveals that, in addition to the "gift of freedom" allowing the United States to portray itself as the generous liberator ("You and other G.I help me lots during the last year"), the imperial myth legitimates in advance any sort of military action ("But I have very much trouble after I was discharged") that would again be reinforced by dominant U.S. narratives of generous and benevolent liberation ("Any way I thank you very much").

Yet the sentence "As you know I have a hard time now" is revealing not just of Y.H. Kim's dire situation, but also because of the sharp implication behind "As you know." Sgt. Cleveran might know better than anyone, except for the Koreans suffering

from the impacts of war, how and why Y.H. Kim would “have a hard time now.” While the letter vacillates between gratitude and pleading, Y.H. Kim offers damning critiques of the war and the U.S. military. Indeed, the letter’s statement “I am a refugee came from Seoul with my grand children” could be read as an indictment, directing attention to how Y.H. Kim became one of the millions of refugees during the Korean War, how Seoul suffered destruction and evacuation, and how Y.H. Kim’s movements with “grand children” implies the absence of their parents as a haunting reminder of the human loss of war. When Y.H. Kim states “I believe you help me and my family in this war time,” “war time” (전쟁시절) could also translate into English as “war season.” Read in this way, I suggest that the cyclical language of “seasons” accounts for prior wars of the U.S. empire, foretells the U.S. wars and police actions to come, and strings them temporally through a strand of domestic labor. As much as Y.H. Kim “aske[s]” for work, the letter also holds “Dear Sgt.” accountable for the Korean War’s violence and destruction, ultimately disrupting the myth of benevolent liberation.

Readers could easily imagine Mr. Yim from the novel writing this letter, despite the fact that “he’d never gone to high school—probably not even middle school” (Limón 57). And while Mr. Yim’s life might be “an endless chain of shining shoes, washing laundry, ironing fatigues, and putting up with GI bullshit” (Limón 59), if we situate Y.H. Kim’s gender as female, then her labor might be exploited for more than domestic work, to include sexual exploitation. Read in this light, Y.H. Kim’s request to find work at “Oh San air Base” (Osan Air Base), located approximately thirty-eight miles south of Seoul, resonates with the ongoing contemporary sexual exploitation of workers at Osan Air Base. Osan Air Base, like many other military bases in South Korea, serves as a nodal point of

gender and sexual exploitation, particularly for poor, uneducated rural women, and increasingly, women trafficked from the Philippines, sometimes referred to as “juicy girls.” The explicit reference to “Oh San air Base” in a letter from the Korean War era requesting work exposes the bleak continuity of the U.S. military “war season” and its imperial legacies in creating and maintaining gendered and sexualized exploitations.

While I argue that the figure of the “houseboy” indexes critical histories of militarism, empire, domesticity, and gender, I also want to exercise caution, so as not to elide the everyday laboring experiences of girls and women who also perform the same domestic work under often more rigid and exploitative constraints. In other words, I suggest that centering the “unthinkable” figure of the “houseboy” should not exceptionalize domestic labor performed by boys and men, and that tracing this figure should not selectively valorize their labor. Rather, my aim is to make “thinkable” a critique of how feminized labor and domestic work itself is demeaned, and described as “low” labor, which continually justifies ongoing exploitation of the people performing this work.

“Had Corporal Jill Matthewson’s politics become so radicalized that she’d decided she’d had enough of the U.S. Army?”: transnational circuits of race, gender, and militarism in *The Wandering Ghost*

Like *Slicky Boys*, Limón’s novel *The Wandering Ghost* (2007) represents gendered contradictions of labor at the intersections of race and militarized power. In this section, I analyze Limón’s representations of gender, race, and sexuality against the novel’s backdrops of East L.A. and Korea’s camp towns. *The Wandering Ghost* follows

Sueño and his partner Bascom to Camp Casey, a U.S. military camp approximately forty miles north of Seoul and located near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), which was established at the Korean War ceasefire in 1953. While Itaewon was installed in a former Japanese military base after the Japanese defeat in 1945, Camp Casey was not constructed until 1952, during the Korean War. Camp Casey is located near several other U.S. military camps close to the small city of Tongduchon. The main mystery in *The Wandering Ghost* is the disappearance of Jill Matthewson, “the first woman MP ever assigned to the 2nd Division Military Police,” with rumors and suspicions of sexual harassment and rape guiding Sueño and Bascom’s search for Matthewson (2). As with Limón’s other novels in the series, Sueño and Bascom rely on the assistance of sex workers, shamans, and reluctant lower-ranking U.S. military personnel in order to solve the multiple crimes surrounding Matthewson’s disappearance: the U.S. military’s attempts to cover up the GI manslaughter of a schoolgirl named Chon Un-suk, several mysterious deaths, and black marketeering by high-ranking U.S. officials. As in the other novels from the series, and following hard-boiled fiction conventions, Sueño states “I worked for the little guy. We worked for the private or the sergeant or the Korean civilian who’d been stepped on by criminals or by the system” (Limón 4). However, I suggest that Sueño’s own masculine identity comes to depend upon the variously feminized bodies of racialized women.

While *Slicky Boys* upholds Mr. Yim as a dignified houseboy, *The Wandering Ghost* alludes to other exploitative factors that undergird gendered labor, such as different forms of sex work and the complex racial hierarchies within domestic labor performed by women. The same patriarchal ideology that constructs domestic work as demeaning to

men, thereby devaluing the labor of “houseboys,” allows for the gendered exploitation by the U.S. military of girls and women who work to support their family members. In the novel, Pak Tong-i, an entertainment booking agent, explains why one of his workers, Kim Yong-ai, might have owed money: “‘Stripper always owe money,’ he said. ‘That’s why they get into business. Maybe their mom owe money, maybe their daddy owe money, maybe they have younger brother who want to go to school. Very expensive, how you say, hakbi?’” (Limón 62).

“Hakbi” translates into English as “tuition,” and the phenomenon of young women participating in the sex work industry in order to support their male siblings’ tuitions is well-documented. Jin-kyung Lee discusses this phenomenon taking place in 1960s and 1970s:

Under the new economic policies of the Park Chung Hee regime, which further impoverished the rural areas, making subsistence living impossible, young girls and women who had previously contributed to family farming and domestic work were now compelled to leave for the urban centers. There, they would be able to make more contributions to family finances, by supporting themselves and sending the rest of their income home to help with their male siblings’ education. The traditional undervaluing of daughters placed the burden of helping to educate the male heirs of the family on the shoulders of these young women, as male members’ acquisition of higher education was expected to elevate the social and economic status of the family as a whole. (84-5)

Indeed, young women engaging in sex work in order to support their brothers’ tuitions emerges as one of the violent trademarks of Korean and Korean diaspora camp town literature. In one canonical Korean camp town short stories, Kang Sok-kyong’s “Days and Dreams,” a sex worker named Ae-ja states “‘And I’ve heard that some of the girls are squeezed for money by their own families. If their families can’t pity them, how can they take money the girls make by having their crotches ripped open and then use it for

someone's tuition?" (17). Furthermore, Elaine Kim states that "[d]uring the long decades of military rule in South Korea, beginning with the 1961 military coup d'état and extending to the end of the 1970s...I heard many stories of women tricked or lured into working as prostitutes and 'service girls' to support families in the countryside or to send younger brothers through school" (109). Korean economic policies implemented by U.S.-supported military dictatorship form one condition of possibility for gendered labor exploitation, a condition that Sueño layers with his memories of gendered exploitation in East L.A.

In *The Wandering Ghost*, Pak Tong-i's statement that female sex workers labor in order to pay for their male siblings' tuitions jaggedly foreshadows the multiple and uneven instances of gendered labor and violence in the novel. In one case, Sueño's memories of a Chicana friend who becomes a sex worker in East L.A. coincide with his investigations in Korea, spinning a complex web of transnational racialized gendered exploitation. These memories haunt Sueño, and they partially explain his motivations to save the "little guys." He recalls, "[o]ne of my classmates, Vivian Matatoros, started hanging out with gang members. Everything about her changed...she slid down from the classes that held the top students to the lowest rung of academic hell" (104).¹⁵⁴ Sueño remembers cornering Vivian, "forc[ing] her to talk," and she tells him that she started hanging out with gang members because nobody was paying attention to her. When Sueño offers to help her, she "looked at [him] with contempt. 'Where were you when I

¹⁵⁴ Limón makes several mentions of gang members to explain Vivian's entry into prostitution. In the novel, gang members are the visible source of blame for Vivian's transition, rather than the racist political economy that manifests in Sueño's own dropout from high school, and the gendered logics that allows for Vivian's particular exploitation.

needed you?” (105). Eventually, he hears about Vivian “working a corner off Whittier Boulevard” (105). Sueño states that his friends “wanted me to go look—and laugh and shout names at her—but I couldn’t do it. I remembered the Vivian who used to help me with my algebra. The girl who’d shared a sandwich with me when I had no lunch. That Vivian was the only Vivian I wanted to remember. The only Vivian I could bear to remember” (105).

Sueño problematically constructs Vivian Matatoros exclusively as an object of rescue, whom he then chooses to remember only as a top student. In “forc[ing] her to talk” (105), not only does he take credit for attempting to save Vivian, but also by selectively remembering her, his response indicates that he individualizes the entire responsibility for her circumstance. For Sueño, Vivian does not own her actions in either case, but as Neferti Tadiar reminds us, “women are themselves produced as the objects to be exchanged by men. *How they are produced* hence becomes a crucial question...Instead, women are viewed as finished products whose subordinate status in society is a result of their place in an already operative system of relationships” (37). Sueño’s characterization of Vivian forecloses ways of understanding her own mode of navigation through various structures differentially charged with power. Instead, Sueño can only regard his relationship with Vivian in terms of benevolent regret that ultimately bolsters his own sense of primacy within her transformation.¹⁵⁵

In contrast to the representations of Kim Yong-ai and Vivian Matatoros, both of whom Limón generally portrays as victims, he represents Jill Matthewson exercising

¹⁵⁵ Lisa Lowe argues that Hata, the narrator of Chang-rae Lee’s 1999 novel *A Gesture Life*, “displaces the war trauma through the gendered abjection of K. He depicts himself as being too late to be responsible for the impending violence” against K, a ‘comfort woman’ whom Hata was guarding” (“Reckoning” 237).

more agency, though the portrayal is narrated through Sueño's objectifying gaze. As a white female U.S. military police, Jill Matthewson's relationship to the nonwhite women in the novel is fraught with racial tension. Many of the Korean women in the novel either remain victims, even though the military cases depend on their cooperation and participation, or need to be "saved" like Vivian Matatoros. Limón represents Jill Matthewson as a white liberal feminist, and I argue that this representation comes at the expense of portraying Korean sex workers as voiceless and abject. In one instance, Limón creates a troubling portrayal of Korean sex workers idolizing Matthewson as a savior figure. In the excerpt below, as Matthewson walks through the streets of Camp Casey, the "business girls" spot her leading Sueño and Ernie to their destination:

They'd seen uniformed MPs before, plenty of them, but they'd never seen one shaped like this...Even beneath her bulky fatigues one could see that her waist was small and her ample bosom had to be firmly held in place...They elbowed one another, pointed, and stared in awe as Jill Matthewson waded through them...it was clear to me that these young, put-upon, Korean business girls, had just seen something akin to a miracle. A woman in a position of power. A woman leading men. A woman wearing a pistol and a uniform, set on her own self-determined goal, not letting anything stand in her way. (226)

Limón shapes a tangled narrative of gender, race, and power in the passage above. Sueño's attention to Jill Matthewson's body is one of the many times he directs an objectifying male gaze at women in all of the novels. What is exceptional in this instance, however, is that he displaces his gaze to the "business girls," so that they see Matthewson's normatively feminized body, "[e]ven beneath her bulky fatigues" (226). Given that Sueño uses very similar language to describe women—especially sex workers—throughout the series, what "awes" the "business girls" is not Matthewson's body, and not just the MP uniform, but what in Sueño's perspective is the unlikely

combination of the two. Furthermore, Limón uses the imagery of a tall, blonde woman “wading” through a group of Korean women who regard her as a “miracle,” painting Matthewson as the feminist savior that Sueño failed to become, at least for Vivian Matatoros. More troubling, by portraying Matthewson and the “business girls” in this way, Limón bypasses both official and unrecorded legacies of feminist women throughout Korean history.¹⁵⁶ Finally, even if Matthewson functions as a sort of role model for the “business girls” who see her, it is in her role as an imperial soldier, as part of the occupying force in Korea. The only kind of feminist power that is legible to Sueño in this instance is “a woman wearing a pistol and a uniform” (226).¹⁵⁷

Limón’s attempts to construct a visibly feminist figure in Jill Matthewson are directly related to her hyper-sexualized construction in the novel. Limón addresses early in the novel not just the issue of sexual harassment in the military, but also the speculation “that someone had sexually assaulted her, murdered her, and then disposed of her body” (3). A higher-ranking officer, Lieutenant Colonel Alcott, attempts to throw suspicion to “a Korean” based on the normative legibility of Jill Matthewson’s sexuality: “‘A woman on the street,’ Alcott persisted. ‘An American woman. Tall. Blonde. A much more tempting target than a Korean would have seen before.’ ‘So you think her creamy white flesh drove some Korean mad with lust,’ Ernie said. Colonel Alcott nodded vigorously. ‘And why not?’” (12). Alcott invokes the white supremacist formula historically used in the United States, especially during the nineteenth century, in order to criminalize nonwhite men and subordinate white women—the myth of a nonwhite male

¹⁵⁶ Perhaps one of the most well-known figures is anti-colonial revolutionary Yu Guan Soon, who inhabits a central position in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s *Dictee*.

¹⁵⁷ “The US military conditions men to devalue, objectify and demean traits traditionally associated with femininity, molding soldiers to adopt a role of ‘violent masculinity’ that glorifies domination” (Chew 79).

rapist. Alcott's glib remark, "And why not," indicates how saturated U.S. military structure is in misogyny, and his statement directs the suspicion back to his character. Rhetorically, both Alcott and Ernie Bascom attempt to empty Korean women of personhood when they use "a Korean" and "some Korean" interchangeably to mean "Korean man," remarkable in a sentence in which the actual rapist—Alcott—is trying to displace blame for his crime of raping Matthewson.

The novel ends with Jill Matthewson "pulverizing" and starting to "gouge out...eyeballs" of another military officer who had previously raped her and is attempting to rape her again, and readers discover that a primary catalyst for Jill Matthewson's feminist consciousness is her desire for revenge against the three military officers who raped her (309). However, despite the discourse surrounding the sexual harassment and sexual assault of female military personnel throughout the novel, Sueño initially misreads the evidence documenting Matthewson's rape in a photograph that clearly shows three men, "[a]ll naked. All working on some poor young woman who'd been bound and gagged. The lighting was dim. I studied the woman. I expected her to be the stripper, Jill's friend, Kim Yong-ai. But then I realized that she wasn't Kim. She wasn't even Korean. She was American. And then I realized who she was. The impetus for Jill Matthewson's rage became clear to me" (309).

Sueño's misreading of the photograph is significant for several reasons. First, his matter-of-fact expectation that the victim would be a Korean woman speaks volumes about the embedded reality of sexual assault against Korean women in U.S. military bases during the 1970s. The revelation that "[s]he wasn't even Korean" appears to be a surprise, implicitly revealing that sexualized violence against Korean women by U.S.

military personnel is a mundane occurrence. Second, the expression of Matthewson's rage suggests that although sexualized violence against Korean women is condoned, it would be punished if the violence were directed at a white American woman. Third, in this novel Matthewson appears to be the only woman with agency to pursue her rapists, despite the fact that Sueño frequently encounters many Korean women attempting to resist harassment and assault by military personnel. Throughout this dissertation, I contend that the U.S. military is a misogynist and homophobic institution. Past and present charges of sexual assault in the U.S. military are not exceptional deviances from some putatively noble and honorable norm, but rather a sexualized instantiation of the gendered and racialized violence that structures such an institution.

Furthermore, as in *Slicky Boys*, Sueño again conflates "American" with "white," despite the fact that he represents a multi-racial U.S. military throughout the series.¹⁵⁸ That he chooses to employ the word "American" rather than "white" reiterates the presence of the occupying force in Korea, a presence that fights back rather than remains abject, as Sueño suggests a "Korean" might. Jill Matthewson was "bound and gagged"

¹⁵⁸ For instance, describing a GI bar fight, Sueño states: "A crowd of jerks had gathered. I knew the type. When a fight erupts they're always there. It happened when I was a kid in school. They'd gather around like a pack of baboons, hopping and hooting. This type of behavior knows no ethnic boundaries. I'd seen it in blacks, in Anglos and, I'm not proud to say, in Chicanos" (49). In another instance of racial tension, Sueño states "I was trying to think of a way to talk my way out of this confrontation but there were a lot of hard feelings between black GIs and white GIs. In the early seventies, the good fellowship of the civil rights movement had long been forgotten. Black GIs no longer waited patiently for the white power structure of the U.S. Army to reform. They were fighting back. Demanding equal promotions, an equal shot at choice assignments. Actually, I agreed with them. But there was a whole other element of the black experience—aside from the legitimate aspirations—that I, as a cop, had to deal with. The draft had been stopped a couple of years ago. To fill the ranks the army had lowered enlistment standards and young men with juvenile records a mile long—and even adult felony convictions—were being allowed to join up" (140-1). In such moments, Limón participates in the discursive criminalization of Blacks, and identifies with the white supremacist power structure. Rather than invoking "even adult felony convictions" in the context of Black GIs in the U.S. military as an occasion to critique the false choice between prison and military for working-class people, he instead legitimates the U.S. military as an institution.

but ultimately breaks free to seek revenge, aided by both her whiteness and her American citizenship, posing a very sharp contrast to most of the Korean “business girls” Limón portrays, who figuratively remain “bound and gagged.” Indeed, throughout the novel, Matthewson speaks for Kim Yong-ai, whom Matthewson rescued from her financial debt to booking agent Pak Tong-i, and was unable to rescue from her rape by higher-ranking military officials: “Sullenly, Kim Yong-ai followed [Matthewson] but rather than speaking...she kept her eyes averted, ducked through the small entrance to the cement-floored kitchen, and shut the door behind her” (230). Rather than leaving Kim Yong-ai to refuse to speak with Sueño and Bascom, which would enable Kim Yong-ai to choose her silence, Limón instead shows Matthewson speaking on her behalf, ““She’s not comfortable with men”” (230).

Although Limón represents Jill Matthewson as a white liberal feminist, certainly a bold move for an author who began the series with Sueño wholeheartedly enjoying the services of “business girls,” I argue that this representation comes at the cost of portraying Korean sex workers as voiceless and abject. Curiously, Limón recognizes the conditions and creates the space for an exoticized version of third world feminism through his introduction of “Mexican *brujas* and the Korean *mudang* [shaman]” in the novel (131). Sueño’s recognition of these powerful female figures forms during his childhood in East L.A., and his memories link childhood fears of *las brujas* to both U.S. state power and a conflicted cultural past:

When I was growing up in East L.A., I knew all kinds of kids—Anglo, black, Mexican—but one thing I realized early on was that Mexican kids are brave. Ridiculously brave...Backing down in front of the other kids was unthinkable...Only two things frightened the tough little *vatos* of East L.A.: *la migra y las brujas*. Immigration and witches. Immigration

because, for the most part, their parents were in the United States illegally and they'd been taught to shy away from anyone wearing a uniform. And *las brujas*, the witches, because they represented the power of the ancient world. The world from which their families had fled. (130)

In the passage above, "*la migra y las brujas*" are represented as an unlikely duo that wields temporally specific forms of power on a continuum of modernity. *La migra* possesses capabilities to displace undocumented people from a future in the United States, by sending them "back" to an "ancient world," symbolized by *las brujas*.

In fact, Sueño fetishizes the atavistic qualities of *las brujas*, but also connects them to Korean shamans: "The word witches is misleading. Actually, *las brujas* are female shamans, like the Korean *mudang*. Their power arose from the ancient religions of the Aztecs and the other tribes that populated the Valley of Mexico and its environs since before the beginning of time" (130). As in some other Chicano/a detective fiction works, Sueño invokes Aztecs as symbolic of a mythic past that informs the detective's abilities to solve crimes, but in this case Limón uses *las brujas* to create a transnational link between the spiritual powers of two distinct cultures: "Did the Mexican *brujas* and the Korean *mudang* evolve from the same traditions, hoary with age? From somewhere in Siberia or along the Bering Strait? No one knew. Probably no one would ever know. But I was aware that both groups of women held positions that were similar. Positions within society of awe and respect, positions of power" (131). Despite Sueño's attempt to create space for a kind of third world feminist possibility, such an attempt is retroactively displaced in an exoticized scene made "hoary with age."

In this chapter I have tried to help to initiate a conversation between Korean War/Korean diaspora studies and Chicana/o studies, in particular by connecting the

militarized developments of Itaewon and East L.A. I have argued that the concurrent language of extending development, freedom and democracy for both places during the Korean War also supports the gendered discourse of development and militarism in Itaewon, especially linked to military prostitution. I suggest that the history of wartime Los Angeles and the broader genre of detective fiction are important contexts for understanding Limón's novels, and have emphasized the significance of Limón's choice of Itaewon and East L.A. as fitting settings, with their multiple entanglements of power shaping spaces of devastating desperation, human disposability, and notions of criminality. As well, I argue that *Slicky Boys*, in addition to embedding Sueño's memories of East L.A. into Itaewon, also negotiates racism and xenophobia operating on the circuits of militarization, and disrupts stabilized notions of "home," "nationality," and "domesticity." The letter from the archives of the Center for the Study of the Korean War helps me to trace the history of the "houseboy," which is central to my reading of Limón's novel, and to analyze how this figure registers histories of militarism and racialized and gendered labor as well as critiques of putatively "benevolent" U.S. military intervention. At the same time, however, I expose the white liberal ideologies underpinning Limón's representations of feminism, which partly do the work of disrupting stable notions of home and national domesticity, in *The Wandering Ghost*. In my epilogue, I again take up the idea of home, in order to suggest the necessity for reckoning with the violence of empire from within.

Chapter 5, in part, has been submitted for publication in the *Journal of Asian American Studies*.

Epilogue

“Korea. You can’t imagine it because you weren’t there”

“the men there were veterans. The two oldest fought in the First World War, the rest battled in the Second. They knew about Korea but not understanding what it was about didn’t give it respect—the seriousness—Frank thought it deserved” – Toni Morrison, *Home*

Legacies of the Korean War continue to unfold in U.S. literature, perhaps most recently represented in the 2012 publication of two highly visible novels: Adam Johnson’s *The Orphan Master’s Son* and Toni Morrison’s *Home*. Johnson’s novel, chronicling protagonist Pak Jun Do’s negotiations with the contemporary North Korean state, was awarded the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. Morrison’s novel narrates the story of Frank Money, a Korean War veteran who joins the U.S. military in order to escape his home, and who makes a painful way back. I present a brief reading of *Home* in order to analyze the legacies of gendered racial terror that undergird the Korean War era and its aftermath. In contrast, Johnson’s novel, and in particular his interviews and published articles about the novel, function to other North Koreans, despite his insistence on their “humanness.” I suggest that Morrison refuses such an othering, and instead redirects U.S. readers to “home”—to its violences and the urgent need to reckon with its legacies.

Labor camps and other institutions of incarceration figure prominently in Johnson’s novel, revealed through Pak Jun Do’s experiences in an orphanage, a medical camp in which the unwell are drained of their blood, and, presumably, the North Korean state itself. In an interview with NPR’s Rachel Martin, Johnson describes his access to

the U.S. State Department's images of North Korean gulags, which he viewed as part of his research for the novel:

The State Department has an incredible list of Google maps of all the gulags on its website. Seeing the satellite images of the huge barracks and the prison mines and the graveyards and the execution yards, it's just terrifying. Reading about the amputations and forced abortions, it filled my mind with darkness for a year. And honestly, I tried to prevent too much of that dark reality from seeping into the book because I didn't want to outweigh the humanness of my characters.

Johnson embodies the standards of reasoned moral shock in this statement, and constructs benevolent ethical grounds bolstered with demonstrations of superior advancement.

Sophisticated surveillance technology and satellite images are invoked to simultaneously decry North Korea's violations against humanity, and demonstrate the putatively universal liberal subject's ability to endow North Koreans with "humanness." Johnson's exposure to "forced abortions...filled [his] mind with darkness for a year"; his visual subjection to "images of the huge barracks and the prison mines" were "just terrifying."

As discussed in previous chapters, the dominant narrative of the U.S. imperial reach in Korea is one in which the United States has already saved the southern part of the peninsula, and is ordained to deliver freedom for those in communist regimes. Such a narrative is braided with ideas of racialized inferiority, and functions as a manifestation of "[t]he European Enlightenment's construction of the Western liberal individual as the standard for civilized humanity" (James 53). Such tales of the rational, technologically advanced and ethically enlightened Western liberal individual, in particular positioned against the individually indistinguishable hordes of North Koreans, filters Johnson's novel. Johnson's templates are rich, reaching back to a genealogy I trace in chapter two, composed of William Elliot Griffis's 1882 *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, punctuated by Cold

War area studies knowledge production, and sustained by current discourses of evil axes and irrational dictators.

While Johnson is reluctant to dwell on such a seemingly remote “dark reality,” Morrison’s novel discloses the intimate terror executed by large- and small-scale U.S. technologies of violence. *Home* narrates the story of Frank Money, a Korean War veteran who absorbs the impacts of white supremacist reality during and after the war, as articulated by a reverend who aids him: ““An integrated army is integrated misery. You all go fight, come back, they treat you like dogs. Change that. They treat dogs better”” (Morrison 18). Frank Money returns to his home in Lotus, Georgia, in response to an urgent message about Cee, his sister, all the while negotiating with the post-traumatic specters of his experience in Korea. A white eugenicist doctor named Beauregard Scott has conducted medical experiments on Cee, who was employed by him and who “believed the blood and pain that followed [the experiments] was a menstrual problem” (Morrison 122). While the specifics of Scott’s experiments on Cee remain vague, readers do know that “he got so interested in wombs in general, constructing instruments to see farther and farther into them. Improving the speculum” (Morrison 113). Scott represents the chilling distillation of the Western liberal individual, “the standard for civilized humanity” bent on medical progress and technological improvement (James 53).

I focus on this moment in *Home* to suggest the legacies of gendered racial terror that undergird the development of modern medicine during the Korean War era, in sharp contrast to Johnson’s statement above on the “forced abortions” he reads about. My intention is not to propose an easy equivalence between Scott’s experiments on Cee and Johnson’s “terrifying” exposure to the North Korean abortions. Rather, I seek to

juxtapose two discourses emerging in a time of political turbulence and heightened anxiety about the threat embodied by the North Korean state. After Frank Money removes Cee from Scott's house and office, they return together to Lotus where Cee is healed by the women in the community they had both previously sought to escape, women who use alternative methods of medicine in comparison to the ostensibly modern methods of Scott. Once Cee has recovered, she tells her brother "I can't have children" (Morrison 131). Whereas Johnson externalizes the state-sanctioned violation of human life to North Korea, Morrison suggests the permutations of such violence are already coupled in the U.S. imperial reaches in the Korean War, already embedded in long histories domestically.

In other words, Johnson appears to evacuate the U.S. role in the Korean partition, while Morrison directs attention to "home" during the Korean War era, to the capillaries of violence that demand reckoning in the domestic space. Cee labors as a domestic worker while Frank Money grapples with the racialized contradictions of having killed gendered racial others under the U.S. military regime, yet returning home to the saturated tensions of a white supremacist state, one in which "men, both hooded and not," blur the boundary between enlightened liberal subject and Klan member (Morrison 10). The reception of both novels is telling—some critics have suggested that *Home* is too brief and "distant," "insubstantial and contrived."¹⁵⁹ On the other hand, critics have enthusiastically praised *The Orphan Master's Son*: "A great novel can take implausible fact and turn it into entirely believable fiction. That's the genius of *The Orphan Master's*

¹⁵⁹ Review of *Home* by *Los Angeles Times* by book critic David L. Ulin, published May 6, 2012.

Son.”¹⁶⁰ Johnson’s novel has clearly registered a chord with the dominant imaginary, another critic stating “so accurate were the details...Johnson has made just one trip in his life to North Korea, but he’s managed to capture the atmosphere of this hermit kingdom...”¹⁶¹ I suggest that part of the appeal of Johnson’s novel for many mainstream critics is the ostensibly neutral and objective gaze outward, capturing the vivid details of violence in the communist state despite his “just one trip in his life to North Korea.”¹⁶² Morrison refuses to succumb to a similarly earnest accuracy, and instead theorizes the violence of such representation: “*You can’t come up with words that catch it*” (41).

Furthermore, Johnson’s novel and interviews raise the question: why do North Korean gulags register when prisons in the United States and U.S. military prisons such as Guantanamo Bay detention camp appear to escape him? Johnson’s concerns about the “dark reality” of “gulags” and “huge barracks” made legible to the world via superior U.S. technology belie the ongoing development of the prison-industrial complex in the United States. In *Golden Gulag*, Ruth Wilson Gilmore examines “the phenomenal growth of California’s state prison system since 1982,” a growth of “nearly 500 percent between 1982 and 2000,” despite a documented decline in crime rates which suggests that “prisons are partial geographical solutions to political economic crises, organized by the state” (5, 7, 26). Prisons are startlingly ubiquitous and deeply embedded in the organization of daily life in the United States, impacting the approximately 2.3 million people incarcerated in the thousands of institutions, to their loved ones, to those

¹⁶⁰ Review of *The Orphan Master’s Son* by *The Washington Post*’s David Ignatius, published January 9, 2012.

¹⁶¹ Review by Barbara Demick of *The Guardian*, published February 17, 2012.

¹⁶² To be sure, Johnson has a better record than Griffis, who could not be bothered with a visit to Korea before publishing *Corea, the Hermit Nation*, despite his regular trips to Japan.

employed by correctional facilities, to those of us in California “public colleges and universities, [who] are provided with furniture produced by prisoners, the vast majority of whom are Latino and black” (Davis 36).

Yet the “gulags” and “huge barracks” filling Johnson’s “mind with darkness for a year” are those captured by satellite in North Korea, despite the fact that, as Angela Davis puts it, “[t]he prison is one of the most important features of our image environment” in the United States, and has become so mundane as to be taken for granted (18). By naming the California prison apparatus “gulag,” Gilmore invokes both the administrative component of the prison-industrial complex, and directs attention to state-sanctioned mass incarceration in the United States. Johnson, on the other hand, sensationalizes the North Korean gulags, thereby implicitly positioning the United States as exceptional, enlightened, and so progressive as to disavow such brutal institutions. His investment in representing the spectacle of gulags outside of the United States attempts to erase the massive buildup of prisons and the devastating impacts of incarceration inside the United States, back “home.” And for all his lurid descriptions of the North Korean state collecting blood from prisoners, the biopolitical bloodletting of U.S. inmates during the Korean War, as I analyze in chapter four, functions as a perverse precursor to Johnson’s representations.

I do not introduce the comparison of North Korean labor camps and U.S. carceral institutions to suggest that they are tantamount to each other. Indeed, in contrast to the example of “forced abortions” in North Korea, in portraying Cee’s subjection to medical experiments which devastates Cee’s ability to have children, Morrison theorizes the history of eugenics in the United States, of the white supremacist desire to regulate and

limit nonwhite reproduction. Thus I seek to direct attention to the intact Cold War apparatus unevenly guiding the selective visibility of the doings of so-called evil communist regimes. Such an apparatus is constructed with the white supremacist ideologies that buttress the racial capitalist state, deeply rooted in invoking specters that threaten the economic order. Morrison's *Home* imagines the contours and scope of white supremacy that sustains capitalist stratification in the figure of Cee, who even as she conducts her gendered and racialized labor in the "crowded bookshelves" of the eugenicist doctor's office, ponders: "How small, how useless was her schooling, she thought, and promised herself she would find time to read about and understand 'eugenics'" (65).

In addition to her domestic work, Cee's body becomes the gendered racial labor the doctor exploits while the United States is engaged in violent acts of delivering freedom in Korea. The genealogy of gendered domestic work during the Korean War, in part captured in Morrison's use of *Home* in the title, is embedded in other narratives I examine in this dissertation. As I discuss in my final chapter, Martin Limón's *Slickly Boys* enriches the analytic of "home" by considering the GI exploitation of domestic labor performed by houseboys, allowing for a rethinking of the term "domestic." Regardless of age, male workers were called "houseboys," and I suggest that the very name links engrained understandings of domesticity in "house" to an implicitly undeveloped masculinity in "boy," a designation stripped of any potentially threatening racialized masculinity and made instrumental by the U.S. military in Korea.

Johnson's NPR interview concludes with the host Rachel Martin's question, "What if you got it wrong? Is there a part of you that wonders...I'm using my

imagination here to fill in the blanks.” Martin poses the question in a way that presupposes the significance of Johnson’s representation, a question loaded with the thick benevolence of an imperial state. Johnson replies: “Well, the way we would know if we got it wrong is that freedom comes to the DPRK; is that artists there are allowed to tell their own stories.” Johnson mystifies how exactly “freedom” would “[come] to the DPRK,” all the while presuming that “artists there” are not already engaged in “tell[ing] their own stories.” The exceptionalist hubris in this statement develops surreal dimensions in a piece Johnson submitted to *The Guardian* shortly after *The Orphan Master’s Son* was awarded the Pulitzer, in his description of his visit to North Korea: “As we drove, one of our guides, a clean-cut young man, informed me that I was now in the most democratic nation in the world.” The irony, of course, is that Johnson implicitly suggests that his young guide is misinformed, because in fact “the most democratic nation in the world” could only be the United States. Despite Johnson’s visit to North Korea, we might read Frank Money’s insights as a critique of Johnson’s violent occupation of North Korean subjectivity: “*Korea. You can’t imagine it because you weren’t there*” (Morrison 93).

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