DISPLACED LIVES: ALTERITY, MADNESS AND THE LIMINAL IN ASIAN AMERICAN DIASPORA LITERATURE

by

Sabnam Ghosh

(Under the Direction of Mihai Spariosu and Carolyn Jones Medine)

ABSTRACT

The research aims to examine the politics of displacement in literary texts and theories, as it relates to the treatment of displaced minorities, termed discursively as "displaced lives," with a twofold focus. First, displacement in ethnic texts and theories are examined through the praxis of multiculturalism in the United States and the nuances of teaching texts and theories that reflects this multicultural practice. I address the larger question of how ethnic studies, especially Asian American Studies, interacts with Western theories and literatures concerning displacement and portrayal of displaced lives and epistemologically disrupts the understanding of gender, race and transnationalism in the treatment of displaced minorities. Second, I evaluate the ethics of interaction with the other that emerges out of the ethnic encounter with the mainstream. In doing so, I identify an original space of Asian American consciousness in American interactions with Asia through discourses of diaspora, knowledge, gender and religion. This original space termed as Evanescence reconsiders and destabilizes the ethics of interaction between the self and the other in the treatment of displaced lives.

The major literature texts I use for the analysis of theoretical concepts and paradigms are Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, Nora Okja Keller's *The Comfort Women*, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*, Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasimine*, Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* and Julie Otsuka's *The Buddha in the Attic.* My theoretical range is wide and varied and includes Western theorists on displacement and diaspora, a range of Western ethical theoretical concepts and Asian American theorists. Geographically, the research conducts itself in the diasporic sense of connecting countries and cultures of origins with their host ones, hence encompassing the histories, cultures and patterns of migrations of Asian emigres to their arrival and assimilation in the U.S.

INDEX WORDS: Diaspora, Displacement, Asian American Studies, Ethnic Literatures, Multiculturalism, Colonialism, Post Colonialism, Neo-Colonialism, Gender, Alterity, Madness, Liminality, Ineffability, Hospitality, Evanescence. Literary Theory and Criticism.

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DEDICATION

To my maternal grandfather who spent his entire life in the quest for knowledge but could never go back to college after his BCom, BSc and BTech degrees. And to my dearest parents whose inspiration, enthusiasm and discipline got me to where I am today.

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that I was introduced to new materials, disagreed with interpretations and arrived at the questions and concepts that my committee had already broached to me. These I made my students slog through in the courses I taught. Hence, a massive cheer to my students for bearing with me all these years.

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INDEX

Introduction: Displaced Lives

> Those who are capable of humility, of justice, of love, of aspiration, stand already on a platform that commands the sciences and arts, speech and poetry, action and grace. For whoso dwells in this moral beatitude already anticipates those special powers which men prize so highly.
>
> ---"The Over-Soul," Ralph Waldo Emerson

Emerson, in "The Over-Soul," measures the parameters for the growth of the soul. How is the growth of the soul to be understood and what is the growth capable of achieving? Purity, justice, beneficence are qualities that are cherished qualities for the soul, but they each are not enough. Further, the qualities mentioned in the quotation above, of humility, justice, love, and aspiration situate men in a higher position already, such that they can grace the arts and sciences, speech and poetry in a most efficient manner. One of the larger aspirations of Emerson's essay is imagination. The notion of the soul over the soul, the Over-Soul, the larger spirit that dominates all spirits, forever ineffable and self-effacing, is Emerson's subject. His imagination tries to bridge the gap between the material and physical worlds and the overarching divine. The aspiration to find this connection leads Emerson to think through the growth of the soul, such

that it is able to aspire towards the divine. Such characteristics of the soul that must govern human growth are ideal characteristics, the possession of which also leads one to commune with the other, as it will with the divine. The lack of these empathies towards the other, the lack of chance to shed one's ego and extend the virtues of the soul to the other, constitutes the breach in the growth of the soul. That is the position that the "displaced" occupy, where both the aspirations for the soul and its targeted benevolence are contested. Here, the characteristics of growth of the soul are stunted and no longer aspire towards the divine, but succumbs to small mindedness, pettiness and bigotry. In this section, I shall explain some of my motivations behind this research and work on a preliminary definition of displaced lives that will be expanded on in Chapters 1 and 2.

As I write this, I observe that over the last few years the world has been swept over by such instances of mind-numbing actions and speeches of hate. Small mindedness, pettiness, and bigotry are rampant in the form of politics that espouses the "make first" rhetoric.1 All over Europe as well as Asia, economic competitiveness, trade wars, nuclear threats, wars, hurricanes and poverty have propelled a storm of possessiveness towards resources and property. India, that I proudly thought of as a religiously secular country, has just implemented the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) amidst burning protests across the country. A whirlwind of selfish mentalities has taken over the globe, and the people who are at the lowest stratum of this whirlwind are the immigrants, the refugees, and the migrants who knock at every country's door, seeking refuge. My vantage point in this political turmoil that sweeps over us today is of an Indian student in America who is in this observational position by virtue of the luxury of movement that is available to only a select few and denied to most. In such a partial world, money and intellect are the passwords for movement. Refuge, asylum, hospitality, and humanity

have become precious commodities that are dispensed with utmost caution, often denied altogether. In such a scenario, it is imperative to interrogate the moral and ethical imperative that we as global citizens are faced with. How we understand such populations, interpret their presence, their backgrounds, their places of origin, cultures influence the formation of narratives and their treatment in policy. I intend to pose such questions through the body of Asian American Literature, which literarily continues to be a representational space for the refugee or the asylum seeker, forever seeking integration and refuge in the mainstream literary circles.

These are neither unprecedented concerns, nor are they limited to the activities of this generation. The ability to appropriately convey narratives, especially about culture, has concerned us all over time, over history and remain prevalent concerns for today. I bring together the concern of translation of culture with the reified version of the treatment of strangers- who in our modern society are our immigrants, refugees, undocumented workers and people trapped at borders between countries. I am concerned with the moment of encounter, translation and the narrativization of the encounter through the forms of literary criticism, genre, teaching and ethics. Namely this threefold problematic of culture, events and their translations, whose culture? Who translates? Through what modes? From what ethical standpoint?

I was recently startled by the news yesterday of a group of mothers who have travelled in a caravan all the way from Mexico with pictures of their missing children, asking questions and delivering awareness of the dangers of immigration.2 The news shook me because it delivered a face to the otherwise “illegal” people, who are dealt with as unwanted bodies at the US borders and detention centers. Are they somebody’s sons? Are we harming families? These are some of the questions that this piece of news asks us to deliberate. These mothers, one can imagine have stepped out of their houses after days of distress where they have not received any news of their

children, while policy makers have been debating in air-conditioned offices and deciding their fates. The mothers also highlight the dangers that the "dreamers" undergo while aspiring for a better life as well as the dismal conditions at home.

The word "immigration" in a lot of languages, sounds the same, states an article in The Washington Post.3 The meaning of the word has been pinned down to, "to remove into a country for the purposes of permanent residence," which by its connotation is a permanent state. However, over time, the word has snowballed into a variety of its own notions. Not only does immigration not mean a "permanent" state colloquially, it has also been associated with a state of waste and unwantedness. Immigrants are not desired anywhere; their stays in places outside their homelands are anything but permanent; conditions are unstable, and they are subject to a variety of restrictions. Most first world countries frame the state of immigration as having arrived somewhere better, but the undertone is to have arrived somewhere better where you do not have access to the betterment. The way in which immigration is marketed is not what its reality is, and the caravan of mothers searching for their "dreamer" children only assert this precarious reality of immigration.

At the 2019, pre-conference event at the SAMLA conference in Atlanta, Yehimi Cambron, who defines herself as an author, artist, teacher, activist spoke about the trials of DACA immigrants in her talk titled "Taking Back the Immigrant Narrative." Cambron narrates her experience of winning an art competition from the city of Atlanta and not receiving the award because she was not a citizen. Growing up under DACA, Cambron says that such instances are not uncommon among children who fall under the category of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Act. These children, who feel lucky for having arrived in the United States, also live with the constant turmoil of feeling threatened by the possibility of having the act rescinded or of ICE

officials detaining their parents. Most of the time, this possibility of being detained or picked up, continues to define the status and actions of "immigrant" families, categorizing them inadvertently into "good" or "bad" immigrants. Good or bad is constituted as legality vs illegality, having a job vs being unemployed, educated vs uneducated--conditions, which are often outside the family's immediate control. The narrative of "immigration" continues to be a stigmatic association with such families who are lured into it thinking that immigrating would mean "upward mobility," but are instead stuck in the loop of the "displaced" condition for extended periods of times, often in life-threatening ways. These families are what Zygmunt Bauman terms, "collateral damage" for societal failings.

Narratives of children effected by the immigration process have occupied political center stage for a while. Two pictures in 2015 and 2016 shook the veil from the "strange" people, who posed a problem as they kept migrating to different parts of Europe from Syria. The first was the picture of a one-year-old child, Alan Kurdi, who washed up on a beach in Turkey,4 and the second was of three-year-old Omran Daqneesh sitting on a bright ambulance chair outside the wreckage which used to be his home before an explosion.5 To me as a former professional in India and a current graduate student in the US, these were just facts, figures and disagreements over foreign policy. Around this time, the Greece financial collapse also brought a new surge of refugees to the US and immigration became a big political platform for the 2016 elections. The pictures drove home the fact that the so called "refugees" were ordinary children, women, and men who have been compelled out of their homes by factors beyond their control. Recently, news of children separated from parents at detention camps also has dominated news headlines. Using children as pawns to curb immigration is a new strategy that does not lessen the trauma of

the immigration process for families who have been pitched into this veritable hell because of dire conditions at home.

I term these people who are in this state of flux, fear, and paranoia as "displaced lives," lives that have very literally been displaced from their "original" state of comfort, resoluteness, claim to proper livelihood, and security. The first question my writing will interrogate is, who constitutes displaced lives? Further, why must displacement be the identity to a form of life? What must one have done, been through, or continue to do in the present that does not relinquish them from the badge of "being displaced"? I will answer these set of questions in the introduction in order to come up with a workable definition of displaced lives. A deliberation on such a catchall term has been inspired by the varied set of recent events, that I have noted. Displaced lives by their definition includes people who fall under any category of having been displaced culturally, sociologically, politically or psychologically and who stand to constitute the "categories" of exiles, migrants, immigrants, asylum seekers, illegals, dreamers, etc. The policies and requirements for these specified positions do not fall in the scope of the research, but an analysis of the literary and theoretical positions do. The listing of the terms is solely an effort to capture the diversity of what constitutes the term "displaced" and the variety of legal and political encapsulations that the term entails. This particular approach is inclusive of all the varied definitions and theorizations that are used to categorize the above-mentioned group of people. This all-inclusive space differentiates my stance by not individualizing each experience through its legal parameter and terminology, hence, providing a space for commemoration of the experiences of displaced people, offering a path to moving forward and deliberate on reparations for the pain, loss and trauma. I argue that such a particularly inclusive definition is necessary considering displaced people fall outside the boundaries of history that are policed by

nationalistic intentions and geographical parameters. Hence, a catchall definitive term will allow for an accommodation of experiences while respecting the process of displacement from its movement from the local to the global. This movement is necessitated because of the nature of displacement, which is a caused by local factors at home and radiates outwards to the global in terms of intensity of problems and migration of people.

Such populations of people eventually become refugees, migrants, immigrants, asylum seekers who go on to constitute the diasporic populations around the world. Usually, displaced people are dubbed as "strangers," "problem people" who are seen as the social outcasts, vagabonds, and criminals and are accused of stealing jobs or benefiting from the system. The transition from vulnerable ill-fated people to the problem hoards is compelling. These populations are not worth anything in their home countries and only serve to gratify social egos in their host countries. Understanding them is a predicament that is signified in literatures and theories in a variety of ways; hence, chances of justice, reparations and well-being are a long shot. The double dispossession, as well as the "precarity" of their lives, as Judith Butler defines them or "Bare life" as Giorgio Agamben terms them are the only recourse to getting a grasp on any attempt at ascribing any humanity to them. Hence, I term these populations "displaced lives" because "displacement" itself becomes their primary form of identity, one that is permanent, reified, and unshakable and that makes them vulnerable towards being dispossessed again in the future. The research aims to analyse and address the numerous forces that aid this transition range from political decisions, social misconceptions, and popular myths to literary portrayals. I brought together these variety of instances to signify the intensity of the immigration problem in the U.S. as well as the rest of the world. This connection between countries is what makes this condition compelling because it involves multiple countries, multiple people, multiple cultures, multiple

identities which are always under the risk of erasure in the process of movement. Hence, problems connected with immigration are international problems and are in immediate need of reconfiguration and addressal.

As a scholar and teacher concerned with such devastating global events, the question arises of the role of the teacher in a moment of global instability. What kind of support must a teacher provide to students trying to grasp the magnitude of the temporal moment they are residing in? On one hand, I grappled with the reality of discrimination, gun violence, police brutality, political hypocrisy and nuclear threats. On the other hand, while designing courses, I wrestled with the materials available at hand and the problematic of unpacking them in a multi-ethnic classroom. What kinds of texts must one use? How does one teach relevant contemporary issues using these texts? How must one translate moments of incommunicability in multi-ethnic texts? What are the moral and ethical underpinnings of such teaching and how does one mitigate the general discomfort faced while teaching such works of ethnic literature?

As I taught more sections of Asian American Literature to my students at UGA and I became aware of the function of these literatures, the discomforts they inspired, in relation to the ongoing immigration debates that were raging across the U.S. I began wondering if Asian American literature could bring about a commentary on the immigration practices that have been the subject of legislation for centuries, dating as far back to Plato's *The Republic* and *Laws*. I began reflecting on the differences in attitude and sensitivity required in teaching Ethnic Literature as opposed to a World Literature class. Of major concern to me was the role that teachers play in empathically establishing a "window to the world."

To really establish the role that teachers play in framing, interpreting and conveying texts, let me digress here for a moment and take you to desegregation and the Civil Rights movement in the U.S., we shall establish the connection to my previous set of concerns soon. It is not very well known that during the momentous event of the desegregation of the United States, a lot of Black intellectuals were staunchly against desegregation, of schools, in particular. One such prominent individual was Zora Neale Hurston. She believed that desegregation discredited the efforts of black educators who had established their own curriculum and successfully ran black schools which educated black children. Statistics show that following the 1954 Brown vs The Board of Education decision, 38000 black teachers and administrators in 21 southern and southern bordering states were not hired after the desegregation of schools. However, are jobs the only price that had to be paid for the greater good of desegregation? How was the nature of the education had by black students in desegregated schools affected?

One of the major concerns during the Civil Rights movement in the 1960's was the lack of black texts for black college graduates being educated in college. The Black educators did more than just teach Black students. They validated a different way of life, a different ontology, that was alien to white educators who had the privilege of educating Black Students.

What does that mean? In a recent graduate course on Postcolonialism, we were reading Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. As we all know, Rushdie has been strongly hailed as the postcolonial magic realist author. While discussing the text, the genre of magic realism was invoked and one of the "examples" of "magic realism" was superstitions regarding crows cawing in the afternoon. In India, it is a very common household superstition that bad news visits a person/family who hear a crow cawing in the afternoon. I immediately asked, "but why is that magical?". To this the class responded that, such superstitions can only be magical, there was no

other explanation to such beliefs. But, are they really magical? I thought. Aren't they another cultural ontology which is validated in Indian culture based on certain beliefs about the bird crow? That is not magical, it is another metaphysical belief system that is devaluated by western notions of the East. For an Indian person to be sitting in a Western classroom learning that my cultural beliefs were magical bothered me. I realized that stories of slavery might seem as magical, and often redundant wining to white educators educating black students in a mixed classroom. How do we emphatically understand experiences and cultures that are not our own without imposing our own lens on them? Leopold Seder Senghor, Aime Cesaire and Frantz Fanon, as they wrote later, felt equally alienated from their own history and ancestors in their colonial classrooms.

Returning to my former point about immigration and Asian American Literature, I realized that my capability to teach these ethnic literatures had the potential to permanently alter the student's outlook towards alterity and hence, I was the inheritor of a very important tradition and task. The question became, how do the ways in which we learn, understand and teach ethnic literatures centered around immigration affect our attitude towards otherness?

Cross-referencing different ethnicities and their struggles to assimilate into mainstream culture is within the purview of "displaced lives." Bringing these different valences of experiences together brings forth the problematic nature of citizenship in the U.S. It highlights that legality of citizenship is tied into the problematics of race, class, color, and narratives that affect lives every day. When I visit my experience in the postcolonial studies classroom in light of the previously mentioned instances of the caravan of mother, Yemini Cambrone's experiences, the instances of the children and the teachers during the Civil Rights Movement, a pattern of ethnic experience emerges which is more complicated than the inclusion exclusion centered model of displacement

theories. This harkens back to my former question: what could these new pieces of ethnic literatures provide that wasn't already existing? This a problematic that I encountered in both literary texts and criticism. I realized that criticism and theories that emerge around displacement in western academia, for instance surrounding the Holocaust, was resoundingly different in quality than criticisms emerging from ethnic communities. It was much larger than what Hannah Arendt's analyzes the nature of modernity to be. This modernity of immigration that poses the facility of the nation state to be only accessible to 'citizens,' is larger than Arendt's proposed issues of bureaucracy, alienation or animal laborisms. These ethnic literatures and criticisms were about rights, equality, social equity, political representation and human rights of the disenfranchised on a local, communal and continental scale.

The research intends to analyse the issues that come up with such movements of displacement and its literary representations through its presence in theories and literatures and further, come up with ways to mitigate some of the challenges posed in our handling of the issues of reception, interpretation and epistemological manipulation. The following section will delve into some more of the specificities of the project.

***

> The Refugee Crisis is humanity's crisis.[6]
>
> – Zygmaut Bauman

Ulrich Beck's idea of "Cosmopolitan Vision" laments over the way in which we have been ushered into the age of cosmopolitanism without any warning or estimate of humanitarian costs. The vision of cosmopolitanism that is so essential to urban expanding economies and countries,

unfortunately clashes with the very mechanics of cosmopolitanism--aka, migration or displacement. Some of the first cities around the world which gave rise to the cosmopolitanism, globalization and other expansion-oriented concepts were a result of movements, migrations, colonization and other kinds of encounters. Unfortunately, the thrill of cosmopolitanism, which includes mixing of ethnicities, cultures, lifestyles, and palates, remains, but the confines of nationalism grows stronger, resulting in an exclusion-oriented cosmopolitanism rather than an expanding growth-oriented reality. This phenomenon has been evident in the crisis following the two major World Wars wherein Jewish populations were in turmoil all over Europe, migrations abounded to the New World, and migrations ensued from a variety of decolonization movements. The redistribution of world populations continues more acutely in the 21st century in an economy fraught with Beck's trio of "migration, war and terror." The century that began with the Iraq and Syria Wars, has seen, especially in the United States a recent resurgence of terror attacks, school shootings, and racial intolerance. The basis of these prejudices is, as Bauman terms, "fear." Fear has become an industry that is reflected in the high security homes, high security borders, immigration systems and the intense vetting processes that surround granting asylums to the US.

But, where does the "fear" stem from? What causes it to be directed towards migrants in the form of intense dislike, fear, hatred and exclusion? The research aims to be a timely inquiry into the systems of governance that surround discourses on displacement, migration, refugees, borders, asylum seeks, etc. The central problem that surfaced during the conception of the research was to negotiate between the reality of the "refugee" problem, its literary manifestation and the methodology that has surrounded it historically, as a literary problem and, finally, as a sociological issue. Additionally, the intersectionality of discourses surrounding migration that

includes history, politics, sociology, anthropology, gender, literature and many other dialogues complicates a research approach. The challenge lay in situating an approach that could draw from my disciplinary resources of literature from different periods and genres, comparative literature methodology, feminist methodologies, and historical engagement of diverse geographical histories. Moreover, my training in service learning and teaching pedagogies necessitated that I formulate an approach that can include both the literary and the socially actionable recourses towards a problem that is old, complex and ongoing.

The vantage point from the discipline of Comparative literature and Intercultural Studies provides the "supranational" component to the research. Privileging the idea of the supranational above the intra and inter-national provides Comparative Literature a unique methodological parameter that transcends nationalistic confines of cultures, nationalism and fanaticism. Hence, I argue that a solution to the "problem" of immigration is best undertaken under a discipline that does not suffer from geographical parameters. Using this comparative methodology, I question the ethics of engagement of ethnic literatures with more mainstream productions of literatures focusing on the process of the writing of the literary from real life to reflect the structures of race, class and gender and then back from the literary to actionability. This process reflects what Steven Totosy de Zepetnek understands Comparative Literature to accommodate, the "parallelism in intellectual approach, institutional structure and administrative practice"[7] In this methodology, I also preserve the importance of the theoretical approach to understand the anxieties associated with immigration and analyze approaches that transcend borders but preserves the basis of relationality through human conditions like trauma, madness, mental illnesses, silences and cultural epistemologies. Finally, I propose an alternate ethics of engagement with alterity, the "other" that is based on a comparative realization of the self, one

that exists (safely and securely) in relation to the other. In doing so, I destabilize prior assessments of ethnic literatures as texts that "inform" one about alternate cultures and ontologies, but as texts that interrogate our ethics of engagement with ourselves and the other simultaneously.

***

Asian American Studies arises out of the dilemma of migration and assimilation. The struggle between discourse and the individual, the refugee and the citizen, the model minority and the forever foreigner, the self and the "other" have been issues on which Asian American Literature has deliberated. This makes literatures arising out of Asian American writers a particularly rich field to explore in terms of the formation of discourse. The successive migrations and wars, from the Spanish American Wars, Korean War, and Vietnam War, resulting in Laotian, Hmong, and Cambodian refugees begs a research on the writing of "displaced lives."

The nature of my larger inquiry is three-fold. First, I aim to analyze the state of theories on the various dynamics of displacement, (like, strangers, exile, bare life, precarious life, etc.) and some original displaced spaces that arise in Asian American theories. Second, I raise questions about the dualistic nature of displacement that encompasses the home and the world, the Asian and the American. The "Asian" in the Asian American, therefore, becomes problematic if Asian American Literature remains focused on assimilation. I analyze selections of texts to understand the patterns and transference of aesthetics, practices, and spirituality that can form the "Asian" in the Asian American. Such an inquiry means we must address the duality of the real and the fake, according to Frank Chin, or the question of "authenticity" that remains a problematic exposing the nature of literature, its entanglement with real life and the specificity of discourses.

Understanding and streamlining discourses on issues like “whose story it is to tell” and the nuances of “the refugee experience” are important to ascertain the validity of issues on Asian American Studies.

I explore the populations in diaspora as “displaced lives,” with a specific focus on the lives of Asian Americans, displacement, and gender. The specificity of the Asian American is preserved as opposed to other ethnic minorities because of the 1960’s Immigration law and its role in the migration patterns on Asian Americans as opposed to other minorities. Termed as “refugees,” “immigrants,” “migrants,” “asylum seekers,” or “hyphenated identities,” the concept of displaced lives, by their existence, challenges the juridical limits of the nation state concept of citizenship. The research intends to study the role of Asian American literary works in the formation of these discourses on displacement. With its position inside the discipline of Comparative Literature, the research extends itself to the study of the dynamics of Foucauldian knowledge and power through the literatures that constitute the field of Asian American Literature.

Literature provides the first contact with the unknown. For example, classical travel narratives such as Marco Polo’s or Ibn Battuta’s writings provided the first idea of the east to the western reader. In a similar way, poems like Bret Harte’s or characters like Ah Sin provided the first idea about Asians to the so-called American community in the beginning of Asian inclusion in the United States, framing them primarily as laborers and menial workers. Given this particular picture of literature being a defining moment for attitudes, perceptions, and prejudices towards Asian Americans, I interrogate literatures that encompass moments of trauma, sanity, madness and illegality in women-centric discourses. This interrogation asks for an ethical reading of these ethnic literatures texts that appear incoherent and problematic, suggesting the role of

"evanescence" in understanding and reading these texts and in the larger understanding of the "problem" posed by immigration.

Based on the general overview of immigration and my specific project and methodology, two large research questions evolve. Both questions center around the conduit of representation, literature, and social action. They involve the politics of representation surrounding the literary divisions of mainstream and ethnic theorizations and literatures, as well as the ethics inherent in such processes of representation. The first set of questions I pose are: How do "ethnic" theories intact with mainstream theories on displacement? What is the role of the representation of displaced lives in academia, along with their theorization and textualization in Western and specifically Asian American literature? Additionally, what are some of the considerations and sensitivity necessary to read and teach ethnic texts as opposed to other mainstream texts? These questions emerge from the formulation of the role of the ethnic writer as the spokesperson for the ethnic community and the uncomfortable role of the teacher in interpreting these politics in a classroom. The representation of ethnic communities usually falls on the ethnic writer whose word is a word from the ethnic community that they belong to. The research aims to unpack such representational politics, first, by analyzing a range of popular theories on displacement that base themselves on the politics of citizenship, race, nationality and humanity. Then I contrast such theories with original spaces that emerge from the Asian American experience of displacement, where categories such as silence, exile, trauma and assimilatory politics categorize the suppression of the right of speech, healing and cultural practice. Next, I analyze these categories in a selection of canonical Asian American texts to unpack the intersection of postmodernism as a literary technique, the interrogation of democracy as a selectively accessible form of governance and the question of feminine erasure in these texts. This presents these ethnic texts as

a form of access to larger questions of ungovernability, problems of genre and the nature of ethics necessary in this instable global moment as discussed in the beginning of the introduction.

The second set of questions surrounds the question of what constitutes the "Asian" in Asian American Literature? Can there be the possibility of the rise of an original space of representation or identity from a close reading of Asian American texts? This chapter takes off from the exploration of the original spaces of displacement that categorize Asian American theorizations on displacement to theorizing an original space of consciousness that emerges from the interaction of the Asian and American spaces of identity that forms Asian Americanness. I distinguish my stance from Lisa Lowe's "heterogeneity, hybridity and multiplicity," that has been instrumental in recognizing the multiplicity of Asian American identities. I theorize "evanescence" to recognize the presence of the liminality that situates discourses in diaspora--a liminality that, for the Asian American, emerges from a specific ontology that entails the Asian religious encounter with the mainly protestant American landscape. Synthesizing a variety of parameters that causes diaspora to be a recognized in-between space, accepting evanescence provides an alternate form of ethical consciousness that embraces chance, fluidity and unbiased humanity.

These questions allow me thoroughly to analyze valuable, already existing scholarship in Asian American Studies with a Comparative Literature and feminist methodology. The research analyses a variety of perspectives that range from the euphoric view of displacement to others that practice empathy and solidarity and finally, fluidity. These perspectives push against typology so that I am able to synthesize literatures and theories and establish links instead of just accepting the grim picture of migration that one is subjected to constantly on media, especially now.

I will attempt a historical investigation into the origins of Asian American literatures and influences, drawing from historians and theoreticians such as Ronald Takaki, Shelley Lee, and Coleen Lye who document the first contact of different Asian groups with the United States and the ways in which these contacts were textualized. The later part of the research, as summarized in the chapters will aim to bring together various theories on displacement, to examine the politics of form, renewed methods in Asian American critical theory with a special focus on the thematic of Exile and diaspora, and, finally, to theorize the concept of evanescence as an original space of consciousness that rises out of Asian contact with the Americas through Asian America.

The time and space of the research is wide and necessary. Historically, I span the timeline of the introduction of Asian Religions to the Americas and move onto the introduction of Asian Americans to the United States in the 18th century. Geographically, my focus understands historical contexts of various Asian countries to understand diaspora as not just contingent on the place of arrival but also on the country of origin. To achieve this, I include the histories of China, Japan, India, Korea, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia that are relevant for the historical moments of crisis, such as war, regime changes and political crisis that I intend to analyze. Given the wide range of the time and space of the research, I have strived to provide enough background information as well as textual analysis to contextualize my discussion.

Three distinct research aims come up and form governing chapter sections. First, I explore the notion of "displaced lives" as they are theorized in the first section, both from Asian American and Western theory perspectives. I examine questions of intent in literature and ethics of interpretation and reading. Second, this section also investigates the ways in which ethnic theories, concepts, and literatures interact with mainstream Western theories, concepts and literatures gaining and losing definitions in their intent and establishment as well as probing at

the epistemological mechanisms inherent in such categorizations. Third, based on the epistemological manipulations inherent in the process of reception and interpretation of ethnic texts, in the second section I assess the ethical standpoints of such interactions through an analysis of Asian Religious contact with Western religions, mainly Christianity.

In Chapter 1, I use a range of popular and classical theoreticians such as Michael Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler, Paul Ricoeur, Theodor Adorno, Mihai Spariosu, and others, to frame a dialectics on displaced lives. The different theorizations of lives that have travelled or been forced to travel--that are, in essence, displaced from their original conditions--form the major concern of this section. I undertake an analysis of the historical origin of displacement where I use Julia Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves* as a governing text for historical and theoretical engagement. I examine, critique and extend, specifically, Kristeva's conceptualization of women as the first form of strangeness to understand the gendered positionality of the other. I focus on the words "strangers" and "foreigner" to analyze the transition from the ancient form of strangeness that Kristeva ascribes to the gendered other to the condition of being the foreigner which is a symptom of the modern phenomenon of the nation state. I claim that this transition from the ancient form of strangeness to the modern form of being a foreigner is facilitated and impacted, on one hand, by Word War II, the rise of Nazi Germany, the modernization of the Jewish diaspora and, on the other hand, by the processes of colonization across the world that imposed the geographical nation state markers on the rest of the globe, eventually fostering the stateless diaspora that is the condition of modern displacement.

In Chapter 2, I analyze and establish the major theories and methods that emerge in Asian American theory and literatures, seeking to historize and interrogate the literary framing of the

diasporic population to shift the onus of "problem" from the individual immigrant to the system that has propelled them into this condition. I examine the theorizations of exilic literatures that come up in Asian American studies and the dynamics of such categories of exile as opposed to exiles that occur out of World War II. I further examine the politics of silencing and internment in the Chinese and Japanese diasporas, war and refugees in the Vietnamese, Cambodian and Hmong diasporic identities and employment and model minoritization in the Indian diasporic scenario in the United States. I employ this particular selection of themes to reflect the wide ranging and diverse trends of diasporic analysis that the Asian American diasporic and displacement experience entails. This analysis sets itself apart from former analysis of these themes by bringing these trends of displacement experience in contact to examine the politics and ethics of migrancy, displacement poetics and literary themes that emerge out of this contact between Asian and American ontology. Additionally, it shifts the focus of displacement narratives and theories from the nation state to problems of ontology and epistemology.

Chapter 3 in the research aims to be the bridge between the westernization of ethnic theories and the search for the "Asian" in the Asian American. It investigates the ethical component inherent in the seeming impenetrable "incoherence" in a selection of Asian American texts. This chapter analyses instances of madness, trauma, and memory in a selection of Asian American texts, analyzing them from the vantage point of comparative literature and feminist methodology. It analyses the literary representation of the diasporic syndromes present in the theoretical discussion of displacement and the ways in which literary texts provide glimpses of the reality of Asian American life through various creative literary avenues. In doing so, it investigates the erasures of cultures, behaviors, ontology and practices that are experienced in the process of migration and are only revealed behaviorally through instances of incoherence manifest in

mental illnesses, trauma and deaths. The chapter works on uncovering a new epistemology through the instances of literary incoherence and physical madness, as reflected through the Asian American narratives. I also raise the question of the alternate sensitivities required in our engagement with ethnic literary texts as opposed to mainstream texts in the American academia. Such reading practices addresses the ways in which audiences can resist erasure and be sensitive towards the cultural translation that is inherent while "reading" ethnic texts.

In the second section, through Chapters 4 and 5, the research aims to dwell on the "Asian" component in Asian American texts. In ethnic or hyphenated or diasporic literatures, one of the major concerns is usually the difference of the text from those in the dominant culture. In this particular section, I study the Asian influence and insights from the Asian engagement either in philosophy or in the author's context or subject. I do so in the second section by theorizing on the concept of "evanescence" as a poetic and identarian third space that emerges as a pattern bridging the Asian and the American experiences in a selection of texts. Poets and authors like Aga Shahid Ali, Maxine Hong Kingston, Nora Keller, Theresa Cha, Julie Otsuka, Lan Samantha Chang, Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri form the central conduit of analysis who establish an aesthetic relationality between the nostalgic and often imagined "Asian selves" with the lived and often "real" American life. This section also aims to reanalyze and reframe the nationalistic notion of assimilation as a counter- movement, one that aims to assimilate the Asian life into the American along with seeking an aesthetic merging of the American reality with Asian effervescence.

My particular approach towards the theorization of evanescence aspires to be an informative paradigm in the larger context of immigration that should serve as a reminder of the effervescent nature of immigration itself. The concretizing of immigration through establishing policies,

separation of families, policing of behaviours only serves to prolong the process of migration, which by itself is disorienting and painful. Evanescence through its conceptual, non-identity thinking, and actionable paradigm will hopefully, serve as a reminder to both policymakers and migrants that this process of migration and opposition is liminal, and must end, especially with cooperation from both the host and the guest.

The research is expansive and exhaustive in underlining the liminal quality of diasporic experience and the initial struggle of immigration and refugeehood that constitute "Displaced Lives". As has been evident in the introduction so far, I have put together a diverse collection of literatures and theories to bring forth an experience of "displaced lives" that is varied and hence needs a varied ethical standpoint and consciousness to accommodate the wide ranging considerations. Evanescence as an ethical paradigm is able to achieve exactly this variety of definitions, treatments, forms, genres, historical trends, experiences and diversity. As I state in the conclusion, such a journey and consciousness can be read in Shailja Patel's uncovering of the terminology of the pattern of "paisley" that all of us love. The creative imitation of the mango began as a teardrop in Babylon, is transformed to the boteh and eventually during British colonialism is brought to England and is renamed Paisley. The journey for the 'displaced' matters, as does the end result of the journey. What is most important, as my writing highlights, is to understand the journey as a journey in all of its potential for movement, change, transformation and development as a truly postmodern and democratic process. To concretize policies, immigration, attitudes, prejudices is to discredit the movement inherent in the journey and the capacity of growth of the subjects of the journey. I have analysed the nature of discourses surrounding displacement along with the influence of Asian religions to highlight the liminal, paradoxical and fluid nature of the concepts, theories and influences. What I hope I have

achieved through this body of research is conveyed the need for space, thought, sensitivity and awareness of what for “displaced lives” is an “evanescent” journey that does not need to be concretized in either writing or attitude.

SECTION I: Theorizing Displaced Lives

Chapter 1: Theories on Displaced lives

The word *estrange* in French has a range of equivalent meanings in English. Its Greek root *xenos* (ξένος)[8] means both "stranger" and "foreigner," while *l'etranger* also means the English word "abroad." This ambiguity and expansiveness of the translated meaning is echoed in the associations that the concept's translations carry. What does it mean to be a stranger? What does a stranger imply?

Another synonymous word that accompanies a stranger is the word "foreigner." Though used as synonymous to the stranger, the term "foreigner" carries with it the added notion of being from a different place or country in most cases. It is not just the connotative meaning of being different from others, as "strange" implies, but also the added dimension of displacement from an original place of origin. Though used interchangeably in the modern concept of displacement, the journey from the ancient or the medieval to the modern transformed concept of displacement demands analysis precisely because of the "non-strange" nature of its existence. By "non-strange," I intend to bring forth the distinction of being from a foreign place versus the "strangeness" of the presence that is brought about by virtue of the body's difference in origin and space. Foreigner, I claim, no longer comes to signify "strange" as it did in the ancient and the medieval ages but becomes a stand-alone concept that unfolds against the background of progressive history and a politically and religiously changing society, as we shall analyze in the chapter.

Both the terms simultaneously have been applied by modern theorists on displacement to study and interpret policies and texts suggesting displacement from the ancient times. For example, the word "foreigner" is used to study Plato's lectures to understand policies on treating strangers. In these texts, the strangers can be from a different city, not necessarily a different country, but the laws of the *polis* in treating non-citizens of the city applies. Julia Kristeva, while studying the different categorizations of strangeness in Ancient Greece, mentions the words Barbarians, Suppliants, and Metics, based on the role of the stranger in the city.[9] We find similar words in discussing our modern vocabulary of displacement in the form of diasporas, refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, exiles, pilgrims, and aliens. These words are significantly different in sentiment and framework than the words used to describe the stranger in Plato's world and deserve reflection in order to facilitate an understanding of modern frameworks at play in understanding the shift in modern notions of displacement.

In this chapter, I claim that the history of displacement or "displaced lives" from the ancient to the modern is a journey from being a "stranger" to a "foreigner." I outline the processes of the development of the concepts and ideas of a traditional stranger as exemplified in gendered and religious displacements, to the modern foreigner who is a syndrome of the development of nation states, ventures of colonial encounters and modern forms of biopolitical governmentality.

The analysis includes discussions of displacements in ancient Greek society, religious displacements and diasporas, such as the Jewish diaspora and its eventual fateful culmination in the Holocaust. The discussion examines the roles of different nationalities and their imperial enterprises in the formation of modern displacement and of the modern concept of

foreigner, in which people are legal citizens but social strangers, specifically through an introductory analysis of Julia Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves.*

The dialogue with Kristeva has a dual significance. First, the Freudian nature of her inquiry into the concept of displacement foregrounds every individual's participation in the concept of displacement. It focuses on individual responsibility and ethics of engagement with the other and relinquishes onus on an external shaping force. Second, Kristeva's focus on the gendered nature of displacement or, more precisely, the marginal position of women in society, defined by their bodies and psychology, provides the project with its initial impetus for the need to focus on specific women-centric discourses that arise out of the condition of displacement. My reading of Kristeva privileges her selection of incidents on displacement and reconsiders the assertion she makes about the gendered nature of the initially displaced. Additionally, Kristeva's analysis helps the chapter initiate its discussion about the framework of displacement that moves from an internal psychological, albeit Freudian discussion, towards one in which the self becomes conscious of the split between itself as a person as opposed to itself as a foreigner. Hence, the focus of the conversation moves from the self, an internal onus of displacement, towards a self that recognizes itself as the other, the stranger and the foreigner. The point of reference of the modern displacement will be Asian American texts, as a signifier of the different dynamics that emerge in discourses of modern displacements, especially ones that are inherently not coterminous with the history of the nation state.

Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition* states that the central theme of her book is "What we are doing?"[10] In this, she intends to "trace back modern world alienation, its twofold flight from the earth into the universe and from the world into the self, to its origins, in order

to arrive at an understanding of the nature of society as it developed and presented itself at the very moment."[11] Using Arendt's theoretical journey as a framework, the intent of this project is to "dis-alienate"[12] the stranger and to arrive at an eventual theoretical paradigm that brings together theories on displacement as they exist in the current historical condition. In this particular chapter, in order to establish my conceptual aim to understand the journey of displacement as one from the stranger to the foreigner, I intend to establish conversations with some selected theorists on displacement to focus on the different frameworks in understanding displacement in the current historical, political and social scenario. Just as Kristeva's experience with the figure of the "foreigner" produces an elegiac piece which is particular to the French experience of displacement, Georgio Agamben and Michel Foucault parse out the conditions of what makes a "human being" into a citizen, a recognizable figure, through biopolitics, i.e. the politics of both biological and sociological existence.

Judith Butler analyses the current political scenario of the U.S. interventions in foreign war-ridden regions and its consequent stance towards its own share of immigrants. She terms the lives of the people affected by the US policies in other countries and the immigrants as "precarious." The conditions of precarity are very specific and particular and form the philosophic socio dimension of the "foreigner" in the context of the United States. Precarity is also taken up by Zygmaut Bauman, in *Strangers at Our Doors*, anthropologically to analyze the processes of rendering of strangeness as it works in the very current political scenario.

The particularity of these theories establishes that the definitions of displacement are highly individual, localized, and contextual, and are not in all their essence generalizable. The experience of Holocaust refugees is not similar to the experience of the immigrants from

Syria, which are not similar to the experiences of a political asylum seeker. Focusing on this theory through the vantage point of literature offers one the opportunity to seek out these particularities and to take up only the pure forms that one can use to formulate the characteristics of the theorization of displaced lives. In addition, different theoretical perspectives apply different frameworks to the same events to elicit more insight on the different factors that compound the lived experiences in displacement.

The chapter, drawing from the abovementioned theorists, will expand on other notions of displacement theory--for example, notions of contextual censorship that define what can and cannot be said about displacement, which I will explain through Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior.* Subsequently, I analyze another aspect of displacement theorization that concerns the ineffability of the experience of displacement as a specifically ethnic problematic while theorizing or textualizing displacement. Further, the question of displacement as a circumstantial and ever transpiring context that can really theorized is under discussion. For example, in the formerly cited example of Camus's Meursault, the stranger is categorized by non-understanding. Hence, what cannot be said, cannot be articulated, or which faces the impossibility of the incapability of articulation is discussed especially as it pertains to the situation of displacement in which articulation forms the limits of sanity and legality.

Internal to the External: From the Ancient to the Modern

Kristeva, in analyzing the beginning of the concept of foreignness in *Strangers to Ourselves*, traces it back to the "foreign women-- the Danaides."[13] The Danaides were the descendants of Io, the priestess of Hera in Argos:

> Beloved by Zeus, she was metamorphosed by his jealous wife, Hera, into a heifer. This did not discourage Zeus who, changed into a bull, continued to love her. Hera nevertheless went on with her vengeance by sending a gadfly that drove Io into a state of frenzy. Io wandered from Europe to Asia, finally reaching Egypt.[14]

Kristeva asserts that she traces back the first idea of foreignness to women, as she is "very attached to the idea of the woman as irrecuperable foreigner."[15] The concept of foreignness occupies an inherently marginal place in societal discourses, as it signifies the limits of the known, the acceptable, the normal--i.e., the self. By extending the marginality to women, Kristeva refocuses the discourse of displacement on critical discussions about women that perpetually signify the borders between the normal and the abnormal: *The somatic aspect of womanhood becomes the stimulus for the digression of the norm.* In the myth, Io physically changes from a priestess to a heifer, who wanders around continents before she is changed back to her human form. The physical changes that Io undergoes imply the added irreparable physical harm that bodies of women are subjected to in the process of defamiliarization from virginity to womanhood, from girlhood to marriage. Once married, women's bodies are placed in multiple forms of changing patriarchies that frame them in their own discourses of familiarity and foreignness. The various stages of lives of women from girlhood to womanhood to married life to widowhood are always framed in various traditional cultures by a variety of somatic, emotional and symbolic changes that makes them the symbolic markers of societal life while lying at the same time beyond societal acceptance. This is further discussed in details in the next few paragraphs through Io's plight of movement, barrenness and generational curse.

In the myth of the Danaides, marriage and the system of enforcement of marital laws occupy a central space. In the discourses of changing patriarchies, being unethical in marriage, digressing from the norm, drives one to the very margins of power and society, thus becoming the stimulus for foreignness. Io is already at the margin for having been instrumental in Zeus's cheating on his lawful wife. She is a threat, a social outcast by virtue of having been chosen by Zeus for his infidelity. The norms of the society in ancient Greece were sacred and were believed to have been instituted by the gods, but these laws, especially, laws of marriage were enforced by women who had the recourse to return to their parents in case the laws of matrimony were violated. Hera, instead of taking umbrage towards Zeus's infidelity and punishing her marriage, decides to deterritorialize Io out of her maternal land. She sends a gadfly that drives Io as the heifer to madness. Kristeva terms the gadfly as the "agent of maternal vengeance"[16] that affects only Io but leaves Zeus untouched in spite of being a crucial driving force behind Io's distress. The maternal land becomes the cost that Io pays for being the object of Zeus's lust. She endures the loss of the motherland and suffers the consequences of this loss on a personal and generational level.

Zeus's physical fixation with Io, therefore, becomes the stimulus for a generational displacement that extends from Io to her progeny through the daughters who are forever condemned to pay for the marital space they violently violated. Io is relegated to the terrain of permanent foreignness once she finds herself in Egypt, cast out of her maternal land. Looking back, Io's becoming a foreigner is a result of two social actions. First, she breaches social norms by being the cause of Zeus's infidelity. Second, the action of infidelity puts her at odds with the center of power, possessed by Hera by virtue of being Zeus's wife and a married woman who has the power to act against the violation of marital laws. Thus,

marriage and its breach become the cause for Io's social and somatic estrangement from the maternal, she has to sacrifice her maternal land and she is barren.

Adding a third cause to the above two of Io's journey towards being a foreigner, is also her inability to conceive children from her sexual acts with Zeus. The idea of motherhood that gives birth to life, itself becomes the stimulator for foreignness. Turning back for a moment to Kristeva's idea of women as irrecuperable foreigners and the three realms of the digression from ethics, going against the norm is enhanced and added to significantly by the third realm, which is Io's barrenness. The very fact of womanhood is itself a stimulator for irrecoverable strangeness. Motherhood, signifies acceptance and its lack signifies the realm of defamiliarizaton from an object which is familiar only by virtue of its objecthood.

Io's abjection starts from the moment she is unable to conceive. The violation of a marriage combines with the incapability of attaining motherhood subjects Io to be the inviolable other to her own self. Not only does she have to sacrifice her maternal land, but she experiences the personal loss of being incapable of attaining the pleasure of motherhood that would make her a part of the maternal strata of womanhood. She is twice dispossessed by her land and by her body, signifying the foreignness inherent in individuals and the dispossessed by virtue of their loss of motherland and the betrayal of their own bodies, their skin and their color.

Continuing the narrative, Kristeva states, that, when Io is in Egypt, the "madness of foreignness is eliminated" when Io is impregnated and has a Son Epaphus, who later becomes the ancestor of the fifty daughters who form the cult of Danaides, who "are the first foreigners."[17] The fifty daughters born of the two grand-sons of Epaphus, Danaus and Aegyptus, who respectively have fifty sons and fifty daughters, are forced to marry their

cousins. Kristeva states that in different variations of myths, the story unfolds in different ways, eventually culminating in the fifty sons being murdered on the night of the wedding by the fifty daughters. This incident in various ways, according to Kristeva, suggests the various implications and violence inherent in marriages, especially forced marriages. In the struggle of society that seeks to preserve power, esteem, structure, especially through marriage and the various societal constructs, in this Greek mythical narrative the women bear the brunt of digressions. It is on the cult of Io that the stigma of foreignness stays forever, not on Zeus. As stated by Ovid in *Metamorphosis*, the fort-nine daughters are forever fated, like Sisyphus, to pour wine or water into a cistern that has a hole in the bottom. The daughters become the somatic sacrifice for preservation of the land of the father. They continue to repent for the marital bed they violated, trying to preserve their father's kingdom and name.

The cost of the violation of marriage continues to a metaphorically rich but realistically absurd ritual of repentance that is symbolic of the status of women in widowhood. The realistic incoherence of the activity of attempting to fill an empty cistern echoes the hollow custom of tying women bodily to their husband's symbolic presence in their lives. The severance from the maternal home at the time of marriage replays itself in the rituals of widowhood, as the inability to have sustained life outside the maternal. The conveyance of the status of the foreigner on a person also serves this symbolic ritual of definition by the presence of a maternal land that the foreigner has been severed from. This echoes Kristeva's notion of the stranger that we harbor within ourselves through the ritualistic activity of repenting for a loss of recognition of the otherness that surrounds us and are inhabited by us, but we are unable to acknowledge. This incoherence, as discussed further in Chapter 3,

manifests itself textually and sociologically in multiple ways, especially in women-centric discourses.

Kristeva terms the position of women as one of "permanent marginality" that remains marginal constantly in the struggle for acceptance. She draws from Hegel, who terms the marginality surrounding women that paradoxically provides the wellspring of life to ensure the continuance of society while themselves remaining on the margins, as the "eternal irony of the community" (*Interviews*, 45). The eternal irony is a product of the position of women as the fetishistic origin of life, but also as the abject by virtue of the capability to produce this life, that is symbolized in menstrual blood. The estrangement from society that women endure by virtue of the same quality that poses them as objects of desire posits an epistemological paradox. Kristeva by focusing on the myth of Danaides, I want to emphasize, places the question of the foreigner as one that interrogates the systems of societal discourse and knowledge production in the encounter with otherness. She states that "The Greek mind condemned foreignness only when the latter tended to defy the common mean," and by this virtue, "the Danaides were foreigners for two reasons: they came from Egypt and were refractory to marriage,"[18] both reasons making them defect from the "common mean," just like the foreigner.

The foreigner is an object of desire by virtue of the range of aberrant possibilities that the figure represents. Two languages, freedom, alternate motherland, the possibility of fluidity and movement, chances of escape make the figure of a foreigner attractive, while the suggestion of vulnerability that the figure posits makes the foreigner a figure of fear and hate. It is an abject position, just like Kristeva's interpretation of women. Kristeva defines the subject of abjection as "what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders,

positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite."[19] The foreigner is an aberration to all of these composite systems of order and harmony in society, by suffering because of them. So, in answer to Kristeva's question of "by what right are you are foreigner?"[20], the foreigner is one who proves to be a limit to the concept of the citizen and definition of human being that is legal, social and psychological. Kristeva's introspection into women being the first foreigners provides the epistemological question that inquiries into the nature of social justice inherent in the legal, social and psychological processes that defines the boundaries between the acceptable and its limits. The limit case with the foreigner makes them the symbol of vulnerability, dispossession, and imposes a state of permanent transformation that is generational and metaphorically rich, but realistically absurd and stigmatic.

To extend Kristeva's understanding of the foreigner, the structure of the myth of the Danaides in its epistemological wittiness provides us an approach to understanding the nature of societal interaction with trauma, incoherence, madness, all conditions that arise from a state of being displaced, examined in Chapter 3 and 4. By pointing out that a foreigner is a foreigner only when she is made the repository of foreignness and incomprehensibility, the gaze towards the foreigner is turned inwards, towards the subject bestowing the definition. As Sara Ahmed states, "we recognize somebody as a stranger instead rather simply failing to recognize them."[21] Hence, Kristeva pushes us to interrogate ourselves in terms of our prejudices and horrors before we are eligible to partake in determining the lives of others. By turning our gaze inwards, Kristeva begs for one's understanding of oneself and the paradigms and ethics of otherness inherent in the individual and directed towards the collective, in essence interrogating the engagement of the state with the nation and, finally, turning

towards the global. The category of difference prioritized in such gazes, comes under scrutiny because of the hierarchy imposed while measuring difference. Difference and its management, continues to be the central concern even in Kristeva's engagement with what I call the modern form of displacement that shifts the onus from the external locus of determination to the self that becomes the major element of scrutiny in Albert Camus's selection of works.

Kristeva refers to Albert Camus's text, *The Stranger* to reiterate her central idea of the presence of the "other" within us. Meursault's stoicism and estrangement from people begs the question of whether "[w]e are all like Meursault." I would also like to add the example of Camus's short story "The Guest," in *Kingdom and Exile*, as a work that compliments and extends the concept and function of a stranger and strangeness. Both texts also provide the shift from the ancient concept of strangeness to modern legal foreignness for the purposes of discussion for this chapter.

Camus's *The Stranger* begins with the information of Meursault's mother's death. This first section of the book is formed through a detailed narration of Meursault's lack of emotion at his mother's funeral. He feels detached from the death and does not feel the need to provide the funerary crowd with any overt displays of grief. The second part of the book sees Meursault moving on with life and showing an interest in a girl, in his detached and nihilistic way. As the relationship progresses, the couple together decide to visit a friend's house by the beach for a day. However, a peaceful rendezvous turns into a nightmare as, in a moment of blinding rage, Meursault ends up killing his mistress's brother. He is put in jail. In order to decide on a punishment for the crime, the judge orders a series of event and character witnesses to speak about Meursault at the trial. The priest from his mother's funeral testifies

at the trial and presents to the court a crucial piece of information about Meursault's personality: his lack of emotion at his mother's funeral. Other character witnesses also attest to his emotionless, atheistic and nihilistic demeanor. This becomes the eventual basis for the decision to sentence Meursault to death, as the lack of emotional empathy deems him as a dangerous man. Meursault himself witnesses the formation of the narrative of his character and prepares for the guillotine.

A classic counterexample to the inherent question of externality that follows the notions of being a foreigner or a stranger is found in *The Stranger.* Meursault is a man who has been estranged from himself. He rediscovers himself through the voices and opinions of other people during his trail. In fact, one observes two distinct movements in Meursault's self-consciousness: in the first part of the book, Meursault displays a nonchalant self-consciousness, while in the second part, his gradual estrangement from himself is exemplified in the rediscovery of the self through others. His act of gradual estrangement of himself from his mother is more punishable than his condemnable act of murder. Or, the familiar act of estranging himself from his mother redefines his unfamiliar act of murdering a stranger. In the end, one sees Meursault really being punished, not for murdering, but for behaving contrarily at his mother's funeral at the moment the judge condemns him to the guillotine after hearing of his behavior at his mother's funeral from various sources. Either way, it leads to his execution, a process that begins with Raymond's murder, symbolic of the "murder" of the self that displays the semblance of caring, by virtue of showing up for his mother's funeral and his love for Marie.

The ambivalence in the fates of his characters seems to be Camus's trademark for his protagonists. In his short story "The Guest," Camus prepares a similar fate for his protagonist

Daru. Daru's action of freeing an Arab prisoner, as opposed to treating a prisoner as a prisoner and turning him in to the police, earns him the ire of the prisoner's compatriots. In both instances, through Meursault and Daru's actions, Camus seems to be commenting on the ways in which one is rendered a stranger to oneself, in spite of one's best intentions. The criterion of being a "stranger" is imposed on the protagonists, but the ways of dealing with strangeness are different. Unpacking the notion of strangeness being imposed on someone, it is apparent that "being rendered a stranger" or "estrangement" is the reduction of the familiar sphere of knowing someone to the unfamiliar. Meursault starts off being somewhat of a regular man; he is neither stateless nor a legal or political foreigner. It is his gradual "unfamiliarity" that provides the starting point of strangeness. It is once Meursault is *estranged* from his mother, and once he *stops being familiar* to the people around him, that he starts being estranged or being rendered strange. In that sense, it is unfamiliarity that proves to be the breeding ground for doubt, suspicion, caution and eventual condemnation. Kristeva asserts this point by placing Meursault as the opposite of her version of the *uncanny* that begins with nonchalance towards the other and ends in murder for Meursault and death threats for Daru. Hence, both empathy for the foreigner and its lack has its costs. Daru's empathy jeopardizes his life and Meursault's "trans-consciousness" gets him executed. The movement that Camus provides is the movement from familiar to unfamiliar, from the regular to the strange, which begs an acute revision of the ethics of engagement with the foreigner.

The articulation of affinity and desire are both reflections of the "endemic mourning" that Kristeva locates in Meursault. We mourn for what we cannot have, and the figure of the foreigner becomes the cause of that mourning. Meursault's case adds to the analysis of the

myth of the Danaides by pointing out that the burden of foreignness does not reside solely on the sociological conditions of ourselves but also in our capability to understand and recognize the language and articulations of the foreigner. Neither Meursault nor Daru are typical Frenchmen, because of which their visual identification misaligns with their articulations and their psychology, pronouncing them "foreigners" to our familiar selves. I want to emphasize that Camus's protagonists reiterate the fact that the condition of "foreignness" is more than just a state that can only be visited by the lack of a place or geographical dislocation; it is a form of identification that can be imposed on anybody at any moment of the identification of difference, just like the Jews and the Holocaust. It remains the human moral and ethical burden to understand, interrogate, and recognize the capacity of othering and rendering somebody else foreign. Camus's movement from recognition to misrecognition is reversed on the figure of the foreigner as a result of the nation state in which *unfamiliarity* itself becomes the precondition for strangeness. However, the nature of the existence of the nationstate is such that the category of humanity is deconstructed to render a human being a foreigner on the basis of race, origin and nationality. These markers of identification become the markers for determining familiarity and unfamiliarity. Camus's work also provides one with a framework for "writing" the stranger, the other, the foreigner. What can or cannot one say of themselves? What can be written about the other? How does one write the other?

Referring to the dilemma of the ethics of "writing" the other, Derrida asks "Isn't the question of the foreigner a foreigner's question? Coming from the foreigner, from abroad?"[22] In trying to formulate a definition for foreignness, Derrida understands that the complete essence of foreignness will never be intelligible to one who has never been a foreigner

himself, or to one who has never been the stranger. The complacency inherent in familiarity will always continue to make foreignness un- understandable. In Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake,* one experiences through Ashima's eyes, the experience of strangeness. Her unfamiliarity with large empty spaces, the stinging cold ice and the eventual unfamiliarity with her children, bring to the reader a fleeting experience of the ingraspability of foreignness. Ashima could never make the urban U.S. her home, even though she continues to embrace it throughout her life.

To return to Camus's work, in comparison, Meursault, in a symbolic moment in his prison cell, has "prisoner's thoughts" in which he thinks that had [he] "been compelled to live in the trunk of a dead tree, with nothing to do but gaze up at the patch of sky just overhead, he'd have got used to it by degrees."[23] The symbolism of the dead tree trunk and the patch of sky seems to be the characteristics of a foreigner. A formerly flourishing, but, now dead past followed by a wide-open sky, signifying possibilities in the journey of a foreigner. Soon after Meursault hears the lawyer speaking about him and a couple of people commenting on his crime, the descriptions sound strange to him because it sounds like they are talking about a criminal. If Meursault's past was in motion, where there was discourse, his being labelled as a foreigner is the moment of stasis, wherein the past disintegrates like the dead rotting trunk of the tree. At that particular moment, Meursault is estranged from himself, because he sees himself as any other person but also in the process of becoming a foreigner.

Julia Kristeva merges both of these images of stasis and flight stating that "the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity flounder."[24] Likening the stranger to Bach's composition of

"*Toccatas and Fugues*,"[25] Kristeva explores the stranger as one residing in an eternal dialectical space. Situated between anger and benevolence, danger and hospitality, ignorance and knowledge, *Strangers to Ourselves* explores the duality that the stranger evokes in the minds of people.

> Foreigner: a choked up rage deep down in my throat, a black angel clouding transparency, opaque, unfathomable spur. The image of hatred and of the other, a foreigner is neither the romantic victim of our clannish indolence nor the intruder responsible for all the ills of the polis. Neither the apocalypse on the move nor the instant adversary to be eliminated for the sake of appeasing the group… The foreigner comes in when the consciousness of my difference arises, and he disappears when we acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and communities.[26]

Kristeva's definition of the stranger is an inherently inward definition, one formed by fear, ignorance, and propaganda. As a result, the foreigner is almost a deep unconscious desire. Unconscious because we are unaware of its existence and unconscious because we still feel a deep aversion towards it. Images of the "clouds," "darkness," and "transparency" evoke the liminal space that Kristeva assigns to the stranger. She transports the physical space of a foreigner who is manifested around us in the figures of immigrants, temporary workers, and figures of anomaly to the Freudian unconscious space that exists in our minds. This is why Camus's Meursault is her first case study. She identifies Meursault as a "splitting, [a] tension put into words that defers all action."[27] In essence, Meursault is the fear that makes one dysfunctional. Camus's protagonist is the epitome of dysfunctionality, his passive monotone confession revealing a story that remains ambiguous. "Does he die?", questions

Kristeva, and she answers that, "The reader assumes he does, but does not really believe it, so much the Stranger's indifference seems to place him out of death's reach."[28]

Kristeva reasserts the place of the stranger through Meursault as a figure which defies a definitive beginning or an end. The "splitting" is both the existence of the physical stranger as well the unconscious in ourselves that make the figure of the stranger possible. Kristeva struggles to bridge this gap, that has manifested itself from our ancient Greek societies to our current political climate, by urging us to recognize that we are all strangers, an acknowledgment that she believes will prove to be the root of acceptance to the "black angel(s)"[29] who cloud our streets and psychological fears. She urges us to recognize our "inner exiles" constitutive of blind realities that stop us from recognizing the *ligare* (to bind) as the first *sacred* mandate between us and the other. Derrida expands this psychosocial definition of strangeness to including what he calls "Displaced persons, exiles, those who are deported, expelled, rootless, nomads all share two sources of sighs, two nostalgias: their dead ones and their language."[30] Displacement as the originary condition of a foreigner is the pronounced addition that Derrida makes to Kristeva. What is then the definition of these displaced lives, which emerges from Kristeva's psycho-philosophical readings?

Kristeva understands the foreigner as different according to two legal systems, *"jus soli* and *jus sanguinis*, the law according to soil and the law according to blood."[31] This is the law of the nation state in rendering one a legal foreigner. Displaced Lives caters to this notion of the foreigner by recognizing the role that legality plays in determining the fates of its "aliens." But the definition of Displaced Lives also wishes to focus on the second word of its name, the "lives." Legality and lives are important aspects of the definition of Displaced Lives, as the modern condition of the nation states is not just sovereign rule of permission hence

access, but a systematic process of evaluation of who contributes and who does not and, hence, of admission. Explicating this, Kristeva does not wish to turn the "otherness" of the foreigner into a thing; instead, she wishes to "merely touch it, brush by it, without giving it a permanent structure."[32] She aims to turn the fleetingness of strangeness into a "harmonious repetition of the differences" so far as one recognizes the characteristics in oneself and not just in its manifestation of hatred and burden towards the stranger. Doing this, she associates the first touch of strangeness to be inculcated into our ancient societies through the figures of foreign women. Mythic and transcendent, these women signified the ineffable in a society that strove for concreteness and definition.

According, to Kristeva the transition from the mythic to the modern displacement begins with the nation state. We take off "from the bourgeoisie revolution, [when] nationalism has become a symptom--romantic at first, then totalitarian--of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,"[33] she states. Nationalism intended to bind communities when the natural bonds of kinship, shared histories and racial comradery fell short. From then on, the criteria of strangeness as a racial other, national other, political other became more pronounced. In such concrete situations of otherness, Kristeva describes the stranger as a "person" or an "individual" defined by his aloofness, happiness in spite of trying times, one who has been capable of severing bonds with one's own mother and brother, one who welcomes the host and is very grateful to be alive and present. However, she states that all of these "ideal" qualities do not make the stranger more human to people, instead it is "hatred" that makes him "real, authentic so to speak, solid, or simply existing."[34]

One agrees with Kristeva on the sad downside of immigration politics which market immigrants as workers, as people who steal jobs and not as people who clean up the dirty

work that genteel citizens will not undertake. However, she still sums up the experience of the recognition of the foreigner as recognizable "because one is already a foreigner from within."[35] The benevolent "brush" or "touch" that Kristeva wishes to paint of the foreigner moves towards a strangely utopic place where foreignness is not a condition of separating but one that must unite because of the foreignness present in each one of us. However, is the erasing of the criteria of foreignness, not as a political foreigner but as a mark of otherness, a realistic utopia? Is not "difference" as mark of foreignness a cherishable criterion?

In addition, the role of the nation state in the formation of the modern concept of displacement is further enhanced by the moment of colonialism, which Kristeva does not focus on in her efforts to internalize and recognize the foreigner in ourselves. I shall explore the "modernization" of displacement politics through the modernization of the Jewish diaspora and then further at the moment of intersection of displacement politics with colonialism and neo-imperialism. Later in the project, I will analyze the inherent or pure nature of displacement politics which can also be interpreted outside these moments of history when devoid of this "mentality of power".

How the Jewish Diaspora becomes the Modern Diaspora

How does one understand Kristeva's definition of "strangeness" in the light of the oldest diaspora that exists, the Jewish diaspora? Was being a foreigner a cherish-able condition amongst Jewish populations? Defined as forever stateless, the Jewish diaspora possibly epitomizes the liminal space between strangeness and foreignness. Being cast out of Egypt, the Jews became a wandering diaspora who eventually settled in different places and

remained a religious diaspora, more than a stateless diaspora. According to William Safran, as cited by James Clifford in his essay "Diasporas," the Jewish Diaspora signifies the place of no-return as it is often an eschatological or utopian projection of the diasporic condition.[36] Safran's conditions of diasporic belonging such as, the continued connection to the homeland, the eventual longing for return are not characteristics that defined this particular diaspora. Conditions of diasporic belonging such as language, is relegated just to the scriptures. In that sense, the Jewish Diaspora can be likened to the Danaides. They are tied together by their practices and not by a nationality. As Paul Ricoeur states, that practices as such do not contain ready-made narrative scenarios, "but their organization gives them a prenarrative quality,"[37] which is to say that the systematic organization of the religious practices of the Jews constitutes them into a symmetric unit, unified by the narrative of their origin. The strength, the hard work, the bitterness of originary displacement are all observed ritualistically and it is the strength of the narrative that connect the scattered populations over time and space.

The quality of the Jewish diaspora after the formation of nation states and pre-Israel, was certainly a peculiar and a very transnational phenomenon. Having lived for generations in different nations, the diaspora began to develop certain trans-nation-religious sentiments. For example, Jews settled in the United States associated with being Americans as well as Jewish. The religious identity did not clash with their nationalities but, in addition, helped develop a feeling of national fervor and pride. Still defined as the stateless diaspora, in the meaning of state as in the absence of a state, or a fixed point of belonging, these diasporas assumed different roots and started being characterized by their perpetual religiously scattered experience. Nationalist sentiments and the acceptance of the diasporic

mentality defined the Jewish diaspora in such a way that they were never the foreigners but always one in their respective nationalities.

With the formation of Israel, there developed a fractured mentality in relation to their newly attributed nation state. Was Israel the homeland or was it not? Is it necessary to have the significator homeland or was the creation of Israel just a politically motivated British decision? Zionists believe in the existence of Israel and are convinced about the decision to maintain a designated homeland for the Jews, whereas non-Zionists are more attuned to their diasporic experience and more content with their residences in countries that did not threaten their existence. Ilan Zvi Baron poses an interesting question and critique of the Jewish, specifically American Jewish assumed relation towards Israel. He asks, "What does Israel provide ideationally for Diaspora Jews that serves as the basis for Diaspora/Israel relations and justifies the importance of Israel for Jewish identity?[38] Baron argues that the presence of Israel behaves as a "cultural tool-box of Jewish identity," a phrase initiated by Ephraim Tabory in the 2010 issue of *Contemporary Jewry*.[39] Baron deconstructs the kinds of uses that the that this "toolkit" serves for diaspora Jews in terms of obligation, authority, responsibility and meaning. His conclusions enforce the diasporic Jewish connection that I seek to make in this chapter, which is the change that Israel ushers in for the Jewry. Baron observes the authenticity and meaning in Israel for American Jews specifically as bestowing a kind of authenticity and legitimacy to Jewish contributions to the world, a politics that does not only reside in victimhood but in pioneer ship. This authenticity creates a connection of achievement, a political bond to what is "one's" people and to a larger establishment which is not only fragmented and scattered but centralized and legitimate. These are all connections

that the diaspora of any country exhibits towards their homeland, only that the connections are more of kinship, obligation and the effort to establish legitimacy.

The experience of the Holocaust, however, formed a major propellant in the decision to formulate the Jewish nation state. The flood of refugees from the terrified Jewish populations in Eastern European countries propelled the U.S. intervention in the British-mandated Palestine to secure a homeland for the displaced populations. It was at this time, that the "narrative of the displaced" was officially propelled to action and serious thought. There were many diasporas such as the ones of different African and Asian populations that had settled all over, but the experience of the Holocaust sealed the experience of "displacement" for the Western Nations. In effect, *the Holocaust racialized the Jewish diaspora just as colonialism racialized the rest of the world.* The problem of displacement, which is not just of up- rootedness but of being subjected to parameters of superiority and inferiority, i.e., hierarchy, as a result of displacement, was brought into focus with the Holocaust. Though executed on a national level, the Holocaust was less a nationalistic assault on the Jews and more of a religious pogrom. As Giorgio Agamben states one "of the few rules to which the Nazis constantly adhered during the course of the 'Final Solution' was that Jews could be sent to the extermination camps only after they had been fully denationalized (stripped even of the residual citizenship left to them after the Nuremberg laws)."[40] In essence, the statelessness of the Jews was less of a problem than race and religion, and the stripping of the state, the nationality, validated the religious decimation. Benedict Anderson states that the "Jews" will be forever Jews, "no matter what passports they carry or what languages they speak and read."[41]

In the footnote to this comment, Anderson aligns to the sentiment of the previous comments on the Jewish Diaspora stating, "The significance of the emergence of Zionism and the birth of Israel is that the former marks the reimagining of an ancient religious community as a nation, down there among the other nations--while the latter charts an alchemic change from the wandering devotee to local patriot."[42] It is at this moment of the understanding of the racialization and the creation of Israel that the Jewish Diaspora becomes the modern diaspora, one that stops being just a religious diaspora and continues to become a true "state-less" diaspora. However, in terms of the formation of the nation state, in which racial superiority gives rise to patriotic sentiments, Jewish nationalism arose out of the blow towards it as racially inferior.

Finally, did the creation of Israel serve to modernize the Jewish Diaspora from the traditional religious displacement (sustained as diasporic communities through ritual practice) to a diaspora that results out of a loss of state or citizenship? Lilian Furst, in her and her father's autobiography, written as alternate accounts of the struggle during and after the Holocaust, finishes by stating that "Home is where my things are. Home is nowhere," reflecting that her "geographical roots are shallow; only those created by the brand mark the red "J" run deep into my being."[43] The loss that initially signified the Jewish faith, the children of Abraham, was their exile from their ancient land, transfigured later by Jews around the world according to their oppression and expulsion from their homes and practices in the various countries that participated in the Holocaust.

The consecutive accounts of Desider Furst, father, and Lilian Furst, daughter, who fled from Vienna to England as "enemy aliens," explore the losses in systemic detail. Loss of an opportunity for education, stable home, childhood, occupations, devaluated practicing skills,

such as Desider Furst's skills at being a dentist, money, and property, all are a mimesis of the story of the initial religious disenfranchisement. In terms of the academy, what comes out of this experience is an intense disappointment in and disillusionment about the modern forms of governmentality and safely, along with deliberations on the meaning of loss and displacement, qualities that are resonant in usual diasporic discourses around the world. Through the experience of the Holocaust and the creation of Israel, The Jewish Diaspora is reconfigured into a modern diaspora with the citizens of Israel being subjected to the racialization, legalization and citizenship politics that govern modern diasporic experiences around the world. The history of the Jewish state and Jewish people transforms from a biblical exile into a state that figures in discourses of modern politics of survival, victimhood and a religico-ethical existence.

Moving Towards Theorizing the Experience of Displacement

With the modernization of the Jewish diaspora through the Holocaust, an identarian shift occurs in discourses on theorization and literalization of experiences of displacement and violence. The experience of the Holocaust brings forth a particular nature of experience that was never of grave concern before. As mentioned by Holocaust survivors like Elie Wiesel, the experience of Auschwitz was comparable to none. The experience defied articulation and many survivors were never capable of ever being able to convey the horror of the experience. One has a similar experience when one encounters Holocaust museums that inscribes the names of millions of victims of the Holocaust or when one encounters the heaps of personal items abandoned by the people shipped off to the camps. We all experience the inarticulable nature of evil, of horror. Does that mean that any other genocides were not comparably horrible or were more "speakable" than the Holocaust? That is not the point of the

"unspeakable" quality of horror of the Holocaust, but treatment of the nature of experience that was never encountered before. The nature of discourse about the Holocaust and its treatment within western experiences of genocides set this event apart from similar atrocities. What emerges from this experience is the evading of a particular quality of identity-based thinking that had till then been the primary mode of identification of events concerning violence, migration and displacement. I claim that the nature of these discourses concerning displacement undergo a distinct change post-Auschwitz. One can identify a particularization of experiences and individualization of discourse in the formation of postmodernism in Becketts's Theatre of the Absurd and in a range of theories that are formulated post World War II.

I analyze Theodore Adorno's *Minima Moralia* and *Negative Dialectics* to reflect on this Post-World War II move towards the particularization and individualization of experiences. Adorno is of particular interest to this transitional stage in the formulation of literary theory and criticism because of his interest in non-identity based thinking. As a young scholar Adorno is affected by the Holocaust[44] and moves to the United States where he undertakes an oppositional standpoint against the identity based philosophical theories of Kant, Husserl, Hegel and Heidegger. A detailed discussion of his philosophical standpoint can be found in Deborah Cook's chapter on Adorno's "Influences and impact" in *Theodore Adorno: Key Concepts.* Adorno for me identifies a key conceptual paradigm for the theorization of displaced lives that locates the importance of experiences and the particularity of each and every experience without rendering it to conceptual *priori*. His standpoint is important for the theoretical impact of this project towards identifying the nature of our ethical understanding with an other who has been particularly displaced, estranged and stripped of the imperative

definitions of humanness, like many others. Just as the Holocaust highlights the importance of the personal losses for every survivor, it ascribes the possibility of the identification of loss for migrants and refugees who are also varied, experientially and geographically.

Theodore Adorno's *Minima Moralia* describes a similar sentiment of loss, but of one that takes the position of the less privileged and marginalized to reflect on identity formation, "The soullessness of those in the margins of civilization, forbidden self-determination by daily need, at once appealing and tormenting, becomes a phantasm of soul to the well-provided-for, whom civilization has taught to be ashamed of the soul."[45] *Minima Moralia* arises out of the Frankfurt School's effort towards providing a counter societal Marxist critique of liberalism. Adorno laments about the loss of his childhood haven from the Fascist dictatorship in his position of exile in the United States. In a series of short personal essays that eventually develops into essays on general societal observation, Adorno points out spaces where liberalism and capitalism has created a societal structure that is extremely commercialized and ideologically inclined without understanding the real purpose of its existence or ideology. He points out small everyday habits and engagements which are neither particularized nor individualized and lead to a "damaged life" without any originality. The soullessness, as described in the former quotation, is not the lack of a soul but the classist restrictions under which the formation of a soul emerges. Adorno's "soul" is drawn from Hegel's "*Geist*," which is an ephemeral experience of the world, something that is transcendent and ungraspable, which either rejoices or despairs for the state of the world. In this particular quotation, Adorno criticizes the bourgeoisie for their soullessness in the guise of describing the souls for the ones inhabiting the margins. It is the burden of the soullessness of the upper-class stagnant idealistic individuals that lets the less privileged position cherish-

able for possessing a soul or being allowed to possess a soul. Adorno notes the classist mentality in terms of possessing a "soul." Being in contact with yourself, your innate desires and needs, without succumbing to superficiality in relationships and behavior seems to be associated with the working class. Hence, states Adorno, "the expression called human is precisely that of the eyes closest to those of the animal, the creaturely ones, remote from the reflection of the self. At the last, soul itself is the longing of the soulless for redemption."[46]

In the last two sentences, Adorno drives home the fact that the creation of the soul is more totemic than it might seem at first glance. To explicate on this, he draws from literature that searches for a soul, for obsession, for something that would rid the creative or searching human being from the drudgery of life. The soul becomes symbolic of this search, precisely because it in and of itself an inherently empty sign. It receives its meaning from the status and position of the person perceiving it. For someone sealed off by luxury and reality, being able to possess a soul is alluring. The drudgery and difficulty of life seems real because the struggle to live makes one possess a soul and morality and values come into play in this drudgery; hence the soul becomes almost a living thing.

In explaining this process, Adorno relies on the creation of heroines in literature. He states that, "Imagination is inflamed by women who lack, precisely, imagination."[47] The irony of the statement proves its purpose and asserts that meaning is created, precisely, by objects which are empty of meanings. Adorno writes, "Sade's Justine, who falls from one torture-trap into the next, is called '*notre interessante heroine',* and likewise Mignon, at the moment of being beaten, the interesting child. Dream princess and whipping-girl are the same."[48] The process of signification, as explicated by Adorno, is empty of any original intent; the experience is an empty significant of the concept with the only mediation of

language. The soullessness of the margins takes up new meaning in the eyes of the perceiver or writer whose job is to create new meanings, as well as to fit experiences into already existing tropes. So the importance of the soul--and a life of poverty and drudgery, for the soulless, that is someone who is privileged precisely by not exercising their soul, is exactly as Adorno states, "imagination needs poverty, to which it does violence: the happiness it peruses is inscribed in the features of suffering."[49] Adorno, known for his "left intellectualism"[50] unravels the system of desires and personality-making that exists in a society which has been subjected to and damaged by the violence of class, privilege and race. The experience of the Holocaust and the Jews as a stand in for the enemy, one can construct, was hollow to begin with. *Minima Moralia* through its essayistic structure becomes reflective of a society that no longer retains the capacity to function as a whole and hence is incapable or being written as a whole, resulting in the essayistic structure of the text that connects thought but is not one whole thought. What connection does it have to the former discussion on the creation of Israel and the Holocaust? In fact, several. Adorno, just like Desider Furst and Lilian Furst, realizes that the rich cultural "hothouse"[51] of his childhood was destroyed, but much to his chagrin, the individuality that he believed he grew up in was completely shattered.

Connecting the individual to enacting the historical spirit, Adorno borrows Kant's idea of the individual being an enactment of the universal spirit.[52] In that sense, the capacity of society to draw from the individualism of the individual to form a harmonious environment which would be congruent with one's organic wants and needs was rendered impossible. Adorno argues, "To the powerless, we find more and more narrowly prescribed what they can and cannot attain, passion becomes an anachronism. Adolf Hitler, tailor, as it were, after the

classic bourgeoisie pattern of a great man, gave a parody of passion in his fits of weeping and carpet chewing."[53] The formation of Hitler, as the supreme figure, the *Furher*, went against all individualizations, in fact, formed a parody of them, and that is the tragedy of the Holocaust, where efforts at resisting concepts by individualizations, by relying on the inherent judgement latent in man failed. *Minima Moralia*, through its autobiographical impressions, works towards the demythologizing of identity-based theories and concepts, such as individualization and imagination.

Adorno's struggle and transition from Kant's identity-based thinking to one of non-identity, is based on the effort to preserve the uniqueness of each experience without subletting it to conceptual horizons for the sake of understanding. *Minima Moralia*'s interest in the deprived, the marginalized and the strayed from the centers of affluence reflects both apathy and sympathy for the bourgeoisie, the well off and the powerful, for the powerful is just as much at mercy of power, as is the powerless. The striving towards achieving an identity obliterates the validity of an objective presence. It is not that Adorno does not reflect on the validity of an identity-based consciousness; instead, his constant struggle stays with a defiance to be subsumed under an easier, more lucid, more understandable nature of things. His non-identity thinking is based on the premise of trying to preserve the otherness of things. In this process, he focuses on the materiality of things and understands that in order to understand experience once must judge both, "whether the concept does justice to what it covers" and "whether the particular fulfills its concept."[54] This way Adorno asserts the necessity of both the universal and the particular, the relation to other things and the materialistic presence in order to construct experience. Returning to the idea of *mimesis*, Adorno also hopes to show that the materiality of experience strives to recognize things in

their own right, "expressing them mimetically rather than representationally."[55] Here, the subject ceases to be the center of attention and instead immerses and disappears into things it attempts to present, such that the repeated process and likening and return recover an experience of things that have been displaced by logos. Through mimesis Adorno intends to preserve the primacy of experience where and by which a "thing both withdraws and reconstitutes itself."[56] To preserve both the likeness and mutability of things is the twofold claim that the 'negative dialectics' approach towards experience preserves.

An attempt at theory on displaced lives can only originate from a place of non-identity. "Displacement" as an originary condition for a theory is brought about by the negation of the condition of identityhood and identity-oriented mentalities. Hence, understanding Adorno's attempt at a dialectical, but non-identity based approach would help us understand these various centers of fractures in nationality, citizenship and humanity to formulate a concept on "displaced lives." In *Negative Dialectics* Adorno deliberates on the ideas of identity and non-identity thinking as derived primarily from his studies of Husserl, Kant, and Hegel shedding important light on the relationship between a concept and its object; and an experience and the conceptualization of the experience. What emerges from his reading on "identity" and "nonidentity" is an acute awareness of the limitations of what he calls the place of "negative dialectics." The fact that nonidentity can only emerge from a place of identity is a simple reflection and does not elude Adorno. Instead, the majority of the theory grapples with the possible loopholes and criticisms that Adorno anticipates towards the theorization of nonidentity. He terms the process as "negative dialectics," owing to the opposite movement he envisions from the move towards "ideology" and identity formation. What unravels is an extensive deliberation on the process of experience, identity formation and conceptualization,

towards establishing a "dialectics" aimed towards preserving the uniqueness of experience that is subsumed in the primacy of a concept. Why and how does a concept come to replace or define experience, asks Adorno?

Writing in the post-Wittgenstein age, Adorno brings in the performative function of language as a crucial factor in the psychological process of transference from an experience to a concept. Our experience of the world, Adorno understands, is subject to "*logos*" as a symbolic connection between people and things. He states that "For the sake of utopia, identification is reflected in the linguistic use of the word outside of logic, in which we speak, not of identifying an object, but of identifying with people and things."[57] Language is not logic, but it plays the dual role of identification with the object as well as the people. By that logic, language preserves the individual moment of interaction under the larger umbrella of conceptuality. In the larger scheme of ideology, in the politics of identification and associating with identification, language preserves and confirms, "the individual moment in its immanent relations to other things."[58] Adorno terms this moment *gewahren,* the individual moment.

This moment of happening, reckoning is the self-consciousness of the individual. In Hegel's idea of the spirit, it is this individual moment of self-consciousness that sets a moment apart from the numerous others. Processes that follow from this moment aspire towards recognition by identifying. For example, an accident in its own right is not any other accident. It happens at a specific moment in time and space and is an event in its own right. The act of reporting the accident terms it as a tragedy which can be wreckage or a death or a loss, thus providing the event the linguistic means of associating and also understanding its

meaning. Negative dialectics aims to preserve the *gewahren* of experiences. It aims to "reverse conceptual idealizations and recall "the coherence of the nonidentical."[59]

Literature encapsulates both moments of conceptualization and nonidentity through its very act of writing. The writing of a narrative bestows identity and helps marginalized populations be a part of the larger narrative. By bestowing recognition, literature achieves both functions, one of recognizing and the other of popularizing the *gewahren.* Adorno introduces another nuance to this aspect of language which is, "meaning." Language has no effect on the meaning or interpretation of situations. In fact, Adorno in agreement with Wittgenstein who believes that meaning is communal, "it implies common commitments to further applications and uses of concepts, and to the meanings that words may acquire."[60] Meaning, according to him, is a culmination of language and experience which leads to achieving meaning. This is not to be confused with the truth of things, as according to Adorno, "truth is objective, not plausible."[61] Through this discussion of language and meaning, it is possible to understand Adorno's final thoughts on the nuances of experience. This definition of experience introduces the dialectics of his argument.

This dialectics of the narrative, containing both aspects of the question, is a major dilemma for Adorno in framing negative dialectics. The "dialectics" form the part of the definition, where the negative identity is both a negative along with a double move. The first dialectics Adorno considers is one of language and its articulation in concepts. He states, "Concepts alone can achieve what the concept prevents."[62] The fact that concepts help articulate, but also create ideologies, which limit experience provides the dialectics for either an identity--or non-identity--based approach towards language. Literature forms such limit cases, where the self-consciousness of the individual becomes ideological--especially in marginalized

literatures which become stand-ins for the subjects of their experience. Adorno argues that if "comparability" as a category of measure were to be annulled then the individuality of experiences could be preserved. Simultaneously, he acknowledges this as an ideological move which leads to "monopolies and cliques."[63] He thus concludes that experience is dependent on language and meaning, but not limited to them. "Genuine experience" is dependent on thought's dependence on the other. Experience according to Adorno, has a balanced twofold claim, "that subjectivity is embedded in linguistic practices of expression, interpretation and a normatively authorized spaces of inferences, and that it has *an epistemic responsibility for its relation to the world.*"[64]

For Adorno, the language used to articulate experiences, if filled with conceptual parameters, becomes merely another articulation of the concept, rather than the experience it means to explain. Henceforth, Adorno privileges the mimetic quality of an experience drawing from the classical Aristotelian definition of the word. His understanding of non-identity thinking is a crucial framework in realizing literature's relationship to the experience it aims to encapsulate. Wars, colonialisms, genocides or economic difficulties that stimulate forced diasporas, all struggle for this kind of genuine identification, the genuine recognition of experience. Every displaced individual, from every individual catastrophe, has a unique experience that is subsumed under the labels and concepts such as refugees, immigrants, asylum seekers, diaspora, problem populations, and eventually strangers and foreigners. Concepts such as these thrive and are framed off of the generalization of such traumatic individual experiences.

How does this relate to the larger discourses about immigration and immigrants? Generalized opinions about immigrants are used to frame nationalistic policies and identities of nations,

such as the melting pot, the definition of American cultural exceptionalism. This promise of cultural mixing also defines policies on education, native population reservations, housing sector laws, and job availability. The contingencies of all these concepts on such a wide variety of sectors also affect immigration laws and produce a significant effect on policy making. Adorno's negative dialectic's importance lies in the process of perceiving concepts. If identity-based thinking leads to an experiential obliteration, then negative dialectics can aim to preserve the uniqueness of experience such that the implications of conceptual obliteration can be forestalled. Including Adorno as a part of a survey on conceptualizing displacement serves to direct attention towards the terminology that provides access to discourses on displacement, which to reiterate are liminal and ephemeral by nature. The conceptual terminology serves to manipulate attitudes towards such discourses by making the point of access a negative experience. To complete the journey of this research, negative dialectics, by virtue of its capacity to dismantle commonly established patterns of identity formation will contribute to the definition of evanescence in Chapter 4. It will be used as a way to identify original spaces of consciousness that arise from the Asian American diasporic encounter. Literature and its relationship to the making and unmaking of the displaced will be explored in the next section of the chapter. So far, we have established that the modernization of displacement or diaspora occurs with the formation of the nation state. In addition, the paradigm of modernization is also informed by the praxis of parameters, as established by the event of the Holocaust. The following section argues that the praxis of the parameters do not naturally just occur after the creation of the nation state, but through the establishment of colonization.

What further? Nationalism+ Colonialism= Modern Displacement/Diaspora

Having established the shift in discourses of displacement post-World War II, this section turns its attention towards the other experiential paradigm of modernity that emerges with colonialism. This is the alternate modern diaspora to the Jews, one that is a result of the colonial endeavor that leads to a modern nationalistic identity, a different formulation of "strangeness" and gives diasporic discourse a different meaning. I will take up Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* as a case study because the making of Jasmine as a female protagonist in the text is noteworthy in its capacity to define a particular attitude towards strangeness. The novel displays a nonlinear style of the narration as Jasmine's past is narrated in flashbacks. The moment of narration portrays Jasmine as Bud's wife who is pregnant with their child and the flashbacks mimetically repeat "Lifetimes ago" to signify the several changes in Jasmine's life. The phrase "Lifetimes ago" signifies not just change, but severance in the movement from one stage of life to the other. This constant refrain throughout the narrative echoes Kristeva's description of the stranger as one who possesses a shadowy past, in fact several pasts all of which overlap and inform the other. Her "genuine foreignness" "frightens" Bud who wants to have a family with her; it frightens Jasmine too, she admits. Bud acknowledges her foreignness, but never enquires into it because he is afraid that the inquiry might make his own existence uncomfortable. Hence, Jasmine's foreignness is never deconstructed. It rather continues to define her and make her the object of desire because of her inscrutability.

How is Jasmine's strangeness formed in the text? The first form of "othering" is the making of Jasmine as the girl child. She is unwanted even at birth. The red choker like strain on her neck suggests that her mother tried to strangle her at birth as soon as she comes to know that she is a girl child. Jasmine states, "daughters were curses. A daughter had to be married off

before she could enter heaven, and dowries beggared families for generations. Gods with infinite memories visited girl children on women who needed to be punished for sins committed in other reincarnations."[65] Girl children are not only a curse by virtue of their own existence, they are also symbolic of sins committed by the mother in her previous "Hindu" lives. The generational poverty that ensures on the family from the act of gathering and spending on a dowry for her marriage is symbolic of the curse of having a girl child for generations after her birth.

The curious othering of the girl child in the text adds a particularity to the experience of being a socially constituted human being, and this is the first experience of strangeness that defines Jasmine. The second visitation of othering is condemnation through the identification of the cursed fate by the astrologer who condemns her to a life of widowhood. The experience of widowhood, which has a social and political dimension, defines an additional level of foreignness towards the constitution of the foreigner in Jasmine. The curse of widowhood further reechoes the fate of the Danaides who were forever fated to repent for their violation of the marital bed. Widowhood becomes Jasmine's stimulation towards a mimetically cursed life too. It starts with her father's violent death and her mother's abrupt widowhood, visiting a series of unfortunate incidents on Jasmine's life.

The foreignness described so far are gendered, cosmic and particular in character, such that the transference of the experience to an American landscape renders them as peculiar, backward, reminiscent of the strange encounters that the civilizing colonizers first found in strange lands, encounters which propelled them to force social and cosmic reforms unto the barbaric masses. These experiences are not only suggestively strange for the urban American landscape but also suggestive of exotic and other knowledges that make Jasmine

an "interesting" conversation. As in her encounter with the college professor, Mary Webb, and Bud's Mother, Mother Rippelmayer, her attitude is to entertain them but not to dare to carry over the toxic experiences. The stranger is at once foreign and alluring, as well as a threat for being cruel and uncivilized.

This circle of life as Jasmine articulates is one of the "lifetimes" out of the several that constitutes her "genuine foreignness." Her experiences on the American undefined landscape are of landing on a foreign shore, of being raped, and of committing murder. This is another circle of her life that has to be cleanly severed order to make her the recognizable nanny that she is towards Duff. She merges with the hordes of "day mummies," meaning nannies, who congregate in the laundry room to gossip about their employers. The only sign of these nameless but professional nannies are that they have endured difficult situations and need employment. They become one congealed mass of strangeness, whose experiences must not be spoken, lest they shatter the veneer of comfort and security that they provide in the American landscape. There is a cost for comfort and security, and these nannies bear the cost for their employers. Composed of their strange pasts, their lowly and struggling presents, their uncertain tongues, strangeness is composed of the incommensurability between the experiences of the legal, upper class and light-skinned beings earning a legal livelihood as opposed to the mostly illegally immigrated classless colored masses on the platform of the American landscape. Just as the fissure between the precolonial past and the colonized present of the colonies defines the need for colonization, similarly the incommensurability of the strange other and the recognized citizen defines the strangeness of the foreigner.

In analyzing the place of French nationality in the creation of foreigners, Kristeva writes to the foreigner, "You are a problem, a desire--positive or negative, never neutral."[66] To the

question of whether difference is cherish-able, the answer still stays negative, because the identification of a foreigner is a negative identification, a negation of all required positive possibilities. Taken up by Kristeva, French nationalism proves to be the basis for social and cultural exclusion based on the idea of national exclusivity. Unpacking this, French colonialism followed a devious policy as opposed to the other European imperial powers of an inclusion based on language. If you speak French, you could become a Frenchman. But was this really possible? Frantz Fanon explains it best in *Black Skin White Masks*, stating that the colonial language alienated the black man from himself. Because of the French colonial linguistic strategy, Martinique as a country voted for total integration under the French nationality. Little did the Martiniquais know that becoming a true "Frenchman" was impossible. The very fact that one could become a French citizen earned France the title of a country with a liberal nationalist policy and according to Roland Barthes, the myth of the Black man saluting the French national flag became the sign of Liberté, Equalité, Fraternité in France.

However, is learning French really the key to becoming French and a citizen? Far from that, as Kristeva states, "one is nowhere *better* as a foreigner than in France. Since you remain incurably different and unacceptable, you are an object of fascination: one notices you, one talks about you, one hates you or admires you, or both at the same time."[67] Hence, the notion of the preservation of "foreignness" nowhere else provides a better case study than in France. All these notions have seen further reinforcement with the recent attack in 2016 and the sign of hordes of refugees in Calais struggling to stay or get out of the country with either hopes or lost dreams. Maybe one can then come to a safe conclusion: that as much as Kristeva's intensely beautiful prosaic writing is possibly universally philosophically applicable, it works

best in France, as demonstrated by the case study. Nowhere else is foreignness a mere social predicament; it is equally politically and legally problematic.

Colonialism and foreignness are inextricably linked, more so than the formation of the nation states. According to Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, where the imagined constructions between communities forged nationalistic instincts, colonialism's imagined sense of power structure forged superiority structures that still govern our ideas of otherness. Lynn Ramey in studying the rise of racism in Medieval times traces it to the concept of the Hamitic Hypothesis which sees the Medieval T/O maps[68] and claims that the continent of Africa was a result of the curse on Ham, whose descendants were forever cursed to be the slaves of the descendants of his brothers, Sham and Japhet. Being able to rationalize prejudice and oppression religiously signifies the strength of the belief that colonialism was a just process that was divinely mandated. Modern racism transcends religious prejudice and justification and informs the institutional juridico-political decisions, as well as the less institutionalized micro aggressions in the societal and interpersonal levels.

Zygmaut Bauman's insightful statement, "The Refugee crisis is humanity's crisis" drives home the non-institutional side of what it means to be displaced. The different ways in which "displaced people" are used to politicize and capitalize on security, jobs, peace and popular discourses about the other are discussed in Bauman's *Strangers At Our Door*. In discussing all of these factors around the migration problem or the refugee crisis, Bauman surveys comments by politicians and major newspaper headlines to analyze common ideas and the language around discourses about immigration.

> Sid Miller, the Agriculture Commissioner in the wealthy state of Texas, compares Syrian refugees to rattlesnakes, posting on Facebook images of snakes and refugees and asking, 'Can you tell me which of these rattlers won't bite you?' His superior, Governor Greg Abbott, tells reporters that 'we cannot allow charity for some to compromise the safety for all'. And last, though not necessarily least: the information that 'Katie Hopkins will not face charges over allegations that she incited racial hatred in a newspaper article calling migrants "cockroaches" [the name, by the way, given by the attackers to their victims during the Rwandan genocide], and "feral humans", as well as over publishing an article with the title 'Rescue Boats? I'll Use Gunboats to stop Migrants', was printed by the already-quoted *Mail* under the heading "Cops Get Attack of Common Sense at last."[69]

In addition to this, there is Dominic Sandbrook, rebuking the British Prime Minister's lenient stand in the *Daily Mail,* stating, "Mr. Cameron's predecessors managed to keep out Napoleon and Hitler, both of whom had gigantic armies and an entire continent behind them. So, he really should be able to cope with a few thousand exhausted migrants--shouldn't he?"[70] The languages used to describe the lives that, undeniably, have borne hardships and dangers to save themselves and their families, is at best dehumanizing. References to them as dangerous critters, invaders, infiltrators veer the discourse clearly towards a variety of historical, natural and terroristic references which are not just by accident. When one references "rattlesnakes," one is aware of the ways in which scientific inventions over ages have tried to fight against such naturally life-threatening elements, implicitly stating that such measures should also be taken towards such unfortunate migrating people. Secondly, the reference to gunboats invoke scenes of infiltrating predatory people, akin to invaders and terrorists, who need to be fought off even before they touch land. Instead of treating migration, especially refugees as people

who have unfortunately been subject to unfavorable conditions, conditions that we are vulnerable to, conditions that might have rendered them vulnerable to at the cost of our safely, they are made to shoulder the cost of their unfortunate plight.

However, Bauman asks, what does the usage of such language amount to? The usage of language reflective of our growing vulnerability to such disaster-inducing phenomenon further increases concerns and insecurity about safety, security, jobs, cultural miscegenation and a variety of related problems: "Capitalizing on *these* anxieties caused by the influx of strangers--who, it is feared, will push down further the wages and salaries that already refuse to grow, and lengthen yet more the already abominably long queues of people lining up for stubbornly scarce jobs,"[71] politicians render these insecurities into agendas for furthering their political pogrom. This problem of "securitization"[72] is a "genuine bane on our society that prides itself, through the lips of its political leaders, on the progressive deregulation of labor markets and 'flexibilization' of work, and thus, as a result, is notorious for propagating a growing fragility of social position and instability of socially recognized identities- as well as an unstoppable expansion of the ranks of the precariat,"[73] thereby turning fear into a political market that itself becomes a self-growing and self-regulated capitalistic commodity.

The element of fear caused by the lack of an assurance of security, Bauman argues, saturates "daily human existence as deregulation reaches deep into its foundations."[74] and leads to an army of ways of managing and controlling this fear. The rise of security systems, gated communities, watchmen, watch dogs all speak of this feeling of threat that only the privileged can feel at the fear of losing it all. The presence of this fear benefits electronic industries with their army of electronic safes, electronic security systems; the housing

industry which can be incredibly secure and selective in its high security and high privilege accommodations, and finally, the political sector which fans these fears to create a society dependent on the sense of safety they can sell. As Bauman states, "Governments are not interested in allaying their citizen's anxieties. They are interested instead in beefing up the anxiety arising from the future's uncertainty and the constant and ubiquitous sense of insecurity,"[75] while they make grand statements as is the "Back to '*greatness'*" trend in the political slogans nowadays.

"Refugees," Bauman writes, "are the very embodiment of 'human waste', with no useful function to play in the land of their arrival and temporary stay."[76] The shift of focus from "people in need" to the greatness of the "people who host," with the underlying fact that they do not need to help but they are generous enough to still do so, is a rising self-centeredness, where the notion of "hospitality" is dependent on the mere kindness of the host, and not the dire need of the guest. The host does neither realizes his proximity to the site of disaster that has facilitated the guest's escape, nor does the host see himself as a party to their guest's disaster. This obliviousness to the closeness and dependency on the danger can lead to a "not my problem" attitude to danger that might come to haunt the "now safe" populations. As Bauman points out, this "[I]dentifying the 'migration problem' with the problem of national and personal security, subordinating the first problem to the second and, at the end of the day, reducing the one to the other-in practice, even if not in so many words--is indeed aiding and abetting three interconnected intentions of the Al Quaedas, Daeshes and their prospective extensions and followers."[77]

The "three interconnected intentions" as Bauman states are mostly psychological effects from what should be considered a traumatic migration for most people who are dubbed as

"refugees." To briefly overview these states, Bauman, first, is concerned about the psychological effect of being the "constant suspect" for terroristic or illegal activities on young immigrants from the Islamic countries. He thinks that by dint of the "us versus them" mentality it might become a self-fulfilling prophecy that incites people towards violence because of their dire conditions of living, which are cyclically caused by them being in a state of "constant suspect." The second, interrelated side effect, is of the real sad state of refugee living conditions on a personal level, which might lead again to more assumption and execution of the so called "feared" acts. The third is capitalizing on the idea of the stigma that lives with refugees regardless of their moral or ethical conduct. Hence, the "tendency to 'securitize' the migration issue and the question of admission vs rejection of refugees and asylum seekers, together with the 'guilty before the crime' stance promoted by a large part of the opinion-making media,"[78] further pushes the psychological trauma and the 'us versus them' mentality of dealing with danger.

While Bauman proposes a more conversational and emotive method of understanding such problems with immigration, I think that an understanding of the fact that "problems are problems," irrespective of them or us, is an important strategy. It is true that this might lead to paternalistic attempts at rescuing the other person as exemplified in the U.S. stance towards Vietnam, or the Philippines, but it does not necessarily need to be so. A more detailed discussion of this stance will be discussed in the conclusion, once the discussion of another part of the refugee problem that comes up with literature is dealt with in the next section.

The Stateless Diaspora

As we come to the final section of the chapter, it is important to reiterate that the core intent of the chapter. The purpose is to survey the different approaches towards researching foreignness and displacement to form a theoretical framework for a definition of displaced lives. A perspective can open up grounds for a critical analysis of both analyzing and framing a theory only when it analyses not only the conditions of production but also the ontology of the conditions of production. The originary idea for this chapter is to understand literature as the first place of encounter. Literature is the liminal space that defines, conceptualizes, and informs about the object of the encounter. Through this perspective, literature becomes the medium that both facilitates and defines experience. In such a scenario, in a conversation on displacement, literature becomes the articulation of both the concept and the experience. But is the articulation a "pure articulation" or is it a reflection of the conditions in which the articulation comes to exist as an entity independent of the subject of articulation? The major dilemma that the chapter addresses is precisely this relationship and proof that literature and theory bear to the real experience and object. The object of discussion for the chapter and for the project is displacement and the theorization and textualization of displaced lives. Connecting this discussion to the end of the last sections discussion where we relied heavily on Zygmunt Bauman's analysis of the construction of strangers, this section intends to bring out the function of discourse that literature promotes.

Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* outlines a very important moment in Asian American Literature. In many ways the novel's debate with Frank Chin and other Asian American intellectuals during that period forms the impetus for my project. Needless to state, Kingston's text starts off a major era of women's writing in Asian American Literature after Edith Maude Eaton, who wrote as Sui Sin Far in the late 19th and early 20th Century. Apart

from that, the novel also exposes the underbelly of the Asian American experience that had not really been explored in the discipline as yet in the 1970's. Understandably, distortion of myths and a tendency towards privileging the gendered experience of the displaced Asian American experience upset the major players in the discipline who all happened to be male intellectuals, working towards putting up a face for the field that made Asians appear as disciplined and loyal citizens. This was an important identarian move that made the US give up the three Asiatic Barred Zone Acts and led to the opening up of citizenship to Asians in the 1960's.

In any case, specifically for *The Woman Warrior,* Frank Chin, author, playwright, and pioneer of Asian American theater and ongoing critic of Kingston, identifies three points of contention towards the text: first is Kingston' distortion of myths; second is the text's attitude towards Chinese American men; and, third is his discontent with the acceptance and popularity of the novel in spite of the distorted information that the novel presents. Chin produces and parodies Kingston by producing a distorted Joan of Arc inspired narrative, in which he demonstrates how the integrity of the historical story falls through with the distortion of the factual details of the narrative. The debates exposed the question of what can and cannot be written in literature. The added nuance of this debate appearing in Asian American literature adds the dimension of what can and cannot be written about a diasporic group who have been displaced from their homeland and are struggling to establish themselves as good citizens in a country that has just given them the privilege to be legal citizens. Evidence of this debate is found in the criticisms levelled towards *The Woman Warrior* through Frank Chin's essay "The Unmanly Warrior," through his 1991 article "The

Most Popular Book in China," and through his introduction to *Aiiieeeee: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* with Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada and Shawn Wong.

The addition of displaced groups to the question of what can or cannot be written gives an inherently political dimension to the literature and invites an analysis of the theorization of displacement to understand the limitations and stipulations in which literature writes the displaced other. Is literature really reflective of the struggles and the identarian politics of real life? This is the question that Kingston tries to address throughout her narrative. As a Chinese American *girl* child who had never visited China but had grown up with overpowering stories of her mother's homeland, she realizes that the folkloric quality of her American life had never been explored. In a normative narrative, differences in upbringing, difficulties and struggles are appreciated and empathized with. In an ethnic narrative, in which the author is susceptible to being the spokesperson for the ethnic groups, such narratives of difference enable stereotyping. Hence, the medium of literature as a means of expression is not innocent. The relationship between the narrator, the narration, and discourse are complicated and bound to political, legal and social actions. Therefore, the criticisms that Kingston faces include the critical impossibility of the acceptance of alterity produced by an ethnic writer, in which the very definition of "ethnic" pronounces them as the other, even before their moment of narration. The narrative only serves to produce them as doubly the other. However, the very scope of literature enables a specific relationship between the self and the narrative identity that enables Kingston's narrative, as we will explore through Ricoeur's theorization of the self and narrative identity. Kingston's narrative identity becomes so inextricably linked to her persona as the author, such that it denies her the interpretation and empathetic reading that normative white authors are entitled to.

Paul Ricoeur, in addressing the relation between the "Self and Narrative Identity," states that the way in which literature emulates real life is through the triad of "describing, narrating and prescribing."[79] The first step towards describing is the crucial identification of the character itself. A character comes into being once, as Ricoeur points out, and it distinguishes itself from the other characters. Hence, the *ipse* is distinguished from the *idem*, which is temporal permanence or selfhood as opposed to sameness. In the distinguishing and identification of this definition, character works towards not just an element of the plot, but it constitutes the plot in itself.[80] The constitution of the plot happens when, the "character draws his or her singularity from the unity of a life considered a temporal totality which is itself singular and distinguished from all others."[81]

Such a narrative theory particularly advantages narratives by and about displaced people, as the nuances of each and every displacement experience forms the uniqueness of the narrative. Finally, in placing the importance of imagination in a narrative, Ricoeur writes that the, "mediating function performed by the narrative identity of the character between the poles of sameness and selfhood is attested to primarily by the *imaginative variations* to which the narrative submits this identity. In truth, the narrative does not merely tolerate these variations, it engenders them, seeks them out."[82] This particular quality of parsing out the differences and uniqueness, wherein the character becomes the plot, such that the uniqueness of the experience becomes the narrative is the quality of the narrative used very astutely by Kingston in writing *The Woman Warrior*. The fact that literature forms its characters by identifying qualities of difference in real life, the writing down or the inscribing forms the quality of permanence of a particular type in the spectrum of ways in which a character can be and has been explored in a narrative. The "writing down" informs the paradigms of

imagination, and Kingston seeks this particular permanence and recognition of her experience through her narrative.

In light of this quality of the narrative transformation from real experiences, there are two distinct moments in the text that I would like to point out and unpack in order to help tie together all the above-mentioned points in the chapter and concluding arguments. The first is the moment in the narrative, when in the narrator's reworked myth, her parents carve words of revenge in her back.

> My mother washed my back as if I had left only for a day and were her baby yet. "We are going to carve revenge on your back," my father said. "We'll write out our oaths and names."
>
> "Wherever you go, whatever happens to you, people will know our sacrifice, "my mother said. "And you'll never forger either." She meant that even if I get killed, the people could use my dead body for a weapon, but we do not like to talk out loud about dying.[83]

The second moment is when Moon Orchid, Brave Orchid's sister, the narrator's aunt travels to the United States. The family waits for her at the airport in anticipation of her arrival. But the precise moment of arrival and identification of her by her sister and children is heart-rendering.

> She was tiny, tiny lady, very thin, with little fluttering hands, and her hair was in a grey knot. She was dressed in a gray wool suit; she wore pearls around her neck and in her earlobes. Moon Orchid would travel with her jewels showing. Brave Orchid momentarily saw, like a larger, younger outline around this old woman, the sister she had been waiting

> for. The familiar dim halo faded, leaving the woman so old, so grey. So old. Brave Orchid pressed against the glass. *That* old lady? Yes, that old lady facing the ghost who stamped her papers without questioning her was her sister.[84]

These two moments in the narrative have multiple functions in terms of the text and tie together the discussions in this chapter, especially those of the contingencies of the modern or the "stateless" diaspora. The first incident of the words being inscribed on the narrator's body, especially words of revenge, invoke the moment when the physical body becomes the site of a message, a message that could be one sent from the home to diaspora or vice versa. It signifies the moment at which the body becomes a stand-in for ownership, memory, revenge, gender and continuance. This act invokes Foucault's Biopolitics, in which the politics of the body is used for the governance of the state. "Modern man," states Foucault, "is an animal whose politics calls his existence as a living being into question," as opposed to man's uniqueness of having the capacity of political existence as stated by Aristotle[85]. The parents intend to use their daughter's living body as a slate for inscribing their oaths and the atrocities perpetuated on them.

Her dead body, too, they intend, to transform into a repository for the infiniteness of injustice. This act also signifies the body's infinite role as a symbol that can be manipulated for a multitude of functions. One sees this in popular discourses, in which the state of burial for a body--mass graves, marked grave, unmarked grave, unidentified grave, unidentified body--each becomes a signifier of the larger discourses of injustice, governmentality, care, concern and negligence. In that sense, the body that is being signified here, or the daughter, is first a gendered body; second, it is a body that is in a state of transformation through the physical journey it is supposed to undertake.

Finally, it is body of somebody who has the courage to struggle--such as in this case, to go to war for a variety of reasons, ranging from claiming revenge, ensuing the continuance of the family lineage, or finally, to inscribe the family and its struggles in history. The words are the institutional, the objective power, a symbol of the power that has wreaked havoc in the lives of people. The stateless diaspora, or the modern diaspora, post colonialism uses the body as its site for inscribing laws, inclusion, exclusion and violence. The physical body transforms from being a repository of justifiable life to being a repository of bare life, not protected by anything since it is without nationality.

According, to Agamben, this flux or the journey to war that the narrator undertakes, with the language on her body, unites and signifies its moment of merging of the "juridico-institutional and the biopolitical models of power."[86] Through Agamben's analysis, the narrator's body is the collateral damage in the clash of different models of power, the one that perpetuates and the one of the victim. Her body becomes the memorial that hold the inscription for justice, which is vengeance and is made into an instrument for war. The body is the victim, the plaque and the revenge all combined. This combination is crucial to the position of embodiment of victimhood in the modern nation state. Agamben states that

> the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power… Placing biological life at the center of its calculations, the modern State therefore does nothing other than bring to light the secret tie uniting power and bare life.[87]

As a major piece of Asian American writing, Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, through the mythical character of the narrator, is able to bring out the rifts and combinations of power that defined her life as a person of Chinese descent in the United States. The focus on

language, on writing, brings about the permanence of the inscription of power. Referring back to Adorno, the usage of language is the starting for negative dialectics, or the inscription of difference. This is signified materially by different language usages and the different kinds of otherness that is signified by language in an ethnic American lifestyle.

In addition, Agamben's statement that "In Western politics, bare life has the peculiar privilege of being that whose exclusion founds the city of men,"[88] can be unpacked in the light of this moment in the text. The narrator is a girl who is initially shunned for her gender. She is not capable of defending her family against invaders; she, by virtue of her being a girl child, does not even belong to the family because she would be married off and be the liability of her husband's family and, hence, not capable of greatness. All of these assertions are turned around as soon as she breaks out of her gendered moldings. This kind of "inclusive exclusion,"[89] signifies an additional quality of modern life which is reflective of the place that refugees hold in nation-states: "By breaking the continuity between man and citizen, nativity and nationality, they put the originary fiction of modern sovereignty in crisis."[90] If the ultimate identitarianism is comprised of the nation and national identification, then the refugee represents "the first and only real appearance of rights outside the fiction of the citizen."[91] In that sense, the position of being a "Chinese" in the United States in the time period that Kingston is writing in, when the rights of citizenship have still not been extended to Asian people in the United States, this in-betweenness of life, of citizenship, between the myth and reality, between a talk story and the real hard life, is what defines a displaced life.

The mythical in Kingston's narrative comes into contact with the real problems of immigration and travelling through the character of Moon Orchid, her aunt. Kingston's

mother's reaction at the moment of having spotted her sister dealing with the immigration agent is symbolic of the shattering of the myth of the romantic imagined homeland. Envisioning the homeland as a place of power, tradition, privilege and eventually forgetting it as a place of hardships and sorrow is a common phenomenon in diasporic life, Stuart Hall explains in "Debating Identity." The various nuances of the contact between high context and low context cultures are brought into focus as the two sisters encounter each other after years of separation in the modern airport lounge of the New World. The exoticism that Kingston grew up with about China is shattered as her mother sees her aunt as really tiny and grey. This returns us to the story of the different ways in which China is perceived, recreated, and reimagined on the diasporic landscape. Traces of exoticism, fetishization, assimilation inform the story or narrative compiled about the homeland.

The various academic disciplinary methods that emerged in order to study culture, cultural differences, geographies, such as culture studies, area studies, and the various national ideologies that come out of such studies, such as melting pot, multiculturalism, etc., bring out the ways in which immigrant lives are systematized, broken up and stretched out as objects of study and analysis. What we must realize through these stories is the "precariousness" of all our lives and the "contingent vulnerability" of our existence. Bringing Agamben and Judith Butler's views on the conception of bare lives together, we must imagine bare lives to be grievable lives too. The precarity that Moon Orchid experiences is a condition of contingency that connects all of us. She is a sophisticated woman who in China is destabilized because her husband leaves her and who travels abroad to secure their economic fortune. Her life is dependent on her husband, and when she travels to the U.S. in search of him, to reclaim her place as his first wife, her survival is contingent on the unstable

hospitality of the laws, immigration policies and social attributes of the host country. So, the system of contingency and precarity is a never-ending contingency. The knowledge of this will lead to, as we stated earlier, the identification of a problem as a problem, and not just "their problem."

Mihai Spariosu in *Wreath of Wild Olives* and *Modernism and Exile* proposes the irenic-ludic mentality as an exploration of attempts to locate concepts of state, citizenship, immigrants and exile in a peace-centered mentality. His thesis locates the interplay of the various forces in locating ourselves legally, politically and sociologically as forms of play that do not need, necessarily, to be antagonistic. Drawing from Johan Huizinga's concept of play as an essential characteristic of modern societies and Vann Gennep's and Victor Turner's usages of the concept of liminality, Spariosu understands the modern concept of exile as a form of playful liminality. Divesting exile from its negative undertones, Spariosu pushes for the understanding of exile as a utopic concept, one that opens up borders and expands the horizons of individuals.

Spariosu acknowledges that the experience of exile "is perceived as a highly negative experienced by the individual who is forced into it" and that, in both ancient and modern societies, the usage of exile continues to be a "power game."[92] However, he proposes an understanding of exile as one that provides "a free space or playground at the intersection of various cultures and political systems,"[93] essentially a liminal space that can be situated outside the center- margin dichotomy and propose a new kind of utopia. This place, Spariosu proposes, is one of "radical freedom" that "allows us to value it as a potentially positive cultural experience."[94] This version of displacement proposes an extension of the ethics of engagement with the other, as we discussed thus far in the chapter. This version of

engagement that provides "radical freedom" requires a different ethics of friendship and accommodation from both the self and the other, where absolute accommodation combines with absolute effort.

Though utopic, Spariosu's framework for understanding the notion of displacement is an irenic-ludic mentality that deserves attention and engagement precisely because it shifts the onus of responsibility from just the host to the guest as well. A political emigree from Romania, Spariosu bases this version of exilic mentality on his personal experiences of moving to the United States from Romania in a spirit of embrace and acceptance. He establishes his irenic-ludic mentality by citing the initial idea of the Olympic games which were based on the true spirit of competition, where the winner was not awarded gold and riches, but just a wreath made of olive branches. This idea of the "spirit" of survival, in which the winner is not going to be awarded a prominent place in the universe, but just the opportunity to live peacefully, is a mentality that is imperative for the survival of humanity in the growing nuclear age. The fact that a refugee is only a refugee when offered the hospitality of a "refuge," a state of being that we are all in while living on this planet, must be acknowledged.

Having surveyed all the different approaches, frameworks, and nuances in the writing and conceptualizing of displacement literature and theories, displaced lives, for the scope of this research, is an amalgamation of the conditions of survival of displaced populations around the globe and the acknowledgement of the contingency of their survival on universal participation in the preservation of bare life. Each one of the concepts explored here provides an added dynamic in the sensibility towards understanding displacement and the ethics behind its treatment. Life without the comforts of nationality deserves to live, and this is a

realization that the survey of approaches intends to bring into focus. The second chapter will provide a survey of the usage of these concepts in Asian American Literature and analyze some locational concepts surrounding displacement that is specific to diasporic life in Asian American Studies.

Chapter 2: Critical Theories and Methods in Asian American Literature

The intent of the chapter is to examine the various qualities of displacement that have been explored in Chapter 1, specifically in Asian American Literature. The chapter is situated at the crossroads of five different experiences unique to Asian American Literature, in the relationships between the various countries in Asia that fall under the purview of Asian American studies and their relationship to North America. The first is the exilic experience theorized in Filipino American literature and its gradual evolution through the various streams of Filipino American immigration to the U.S. Second, the chapter looks at the experience of being defined through literature that is unique to the Chinese experience in the U.S. Third, the chapter analyses the theoretical forays into the Japanese Internment experience in the U.S. wherein the various renditions of that experience frame the Japanese as possessing a unique place in the Asian American struggle towards gaining citizenship. Their experience is of one marked by loss, alienation, exclusion, as well as inclusion, difference between generations, and, finally, privilege of government attention. Fourth, the chapter turns its attention to the Asian American displacement experience that results uniquely out of war and insurgency, mostly with US involvement. This part takes into consideration theoretical and historical writings that intend to capitalize on the experiences of Koreans, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong, and Laotians in the U.S. ethnic narrative. The conclusion unites the different characteristics of displacement that can be gathered from the unique quality of experiences of Asian Americans in the U.S., with a special mention of Indian Americans and their contributions to the ethnic entrepreneur scenario in the U.S.

1. **The Exile Literature of the Filipino American**

"To the Filipino exile in America, Christmas is the longest day and the season itself, an eternity" Bienvenido Santos proclaims in a heartfelt description of one of his Christmases as a Graduate Student at the University of Illinois.

--*My Most Memorable Christmas in America*[95]

The "old-timer" author misses not just the festival but also the spirit of festivity and familiarity at home in the Philippines. In the only essay in a book containing his collection of short stories which had already been published in various places over time, *The Day The Dancers Came*, Bienvenido Santos revisits his time as a graduate student sentimentally and, eventually, returns to visit the church that provided him refuge and familiarity, multiracially, with his family and proclaims that he must not be "sentimental." The importance of the sentimentality of the occasion is historical because of the paradoxically fraught existence of the Filipino American Immigrant in America between the 1920's till mid-1975. As members of a colony of the United States, Filipinos were not immigrants to the United States leading up to the five decades of U.S. domination till 1946. As Ronald Takaki states, "Technically they were not foreigners,"[96] but in reality, they were not only treated as lowly immigrants, lower than the status of the other Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Indian immigrants, but also as exiles on the declaration of the 1972 martial law.

Santos's life provides a perfect example for the diverse immigration experience to America for Filipino Americans, as he made more than four trips to the United States. First, as a graduate student at Iowa where he stayed for five years from 1941-45, when he was technically an U.S. citizen, owing to Philippine's status an U.S. colony. He made three more trips to America, first

as a Rockefeller and Guggenheim fellow and later as an Exchange Fulbright Professor.[97] Later, in 1972 he visited the U.S. with his wife when martial law was declared. He states that his novel *The Praying Men* scheduled for publication in the Philippines "became a casualty of martial law,"[98] as publication plans were stopped with the declaration of the law.

Paradoxically, throughout his preface to his other collection of short stories *Scent of Apples*, Santos reiterates that "Each time I left the United States for the Philippines, I thought I was going for good."[99] 1972 was especially significant, as this was supposed to be the family's final return when both he and his wife resumed their administrative jobs at their university in the Philippines and settled permanently in this house. With the declaration of the law, not only was the trip home jeopardized, but also the possibility of earning a stable livelihood in the U.S., as both his wife and he were repeatedly rejected from jobs because they were either over-qualified or because they were too old. Once they realize that "the new political order was going to last a long time," Santos starts working on a new novel, which he intended to be "funny," but "then the grin in both story and writer kept getting twisted in a grimace of pain close to tears."[100] The author who intended not to be sentimental is caught in the condition of forced exile which forces him into sentimentality as a way of keeping the homeland alive. The desire to return home strengthens in this period as Santos concludes, "All exiles want to go home. Many of the old Filipinos in the United States, as in these stories, never return, but in their imagination, they make the journey a thousand times… Some fool themselves into thinking that theirs is a voluntary exile, but it is not."[101] Santos certainly was able to return home, but lots of Filipinos were not.

Such is the condition of exile for many Asian Americans from various nationalities, but Filipino and Filipino American literary theory is accorded a special status in Asian American theoretical

discourse as literature that exudes the awareness of being in exile. Oscar Campomanes describes Filipino American literature as "exilic writing and an exilic sensibility that informs both the identity politics and the cultural production of this 'community-in-the-making'" (297), given the status of the Philippines as an American colony for over five decades, when migrations to the U.S. was unrestricted and widespread. However, not only were conditions racist, very soon their status as naturalized American citizens were barred along with other Asian American nationalities.

Most Asian American theoretical discourse presents the early 20th century status of Asian American legality in a soap drama fashion that briefly grants acceptance for citizenship and then very abruptly retracts it. For Filipino Americans, the situation had a heightened intensity as characterized by Carlos Bulosan in *America is in the Heart*, as "to wonder at the paradox of America."[102] But what really characterizes the paradoxical exilic experience of the Filipino American? Oscar V. Campomanes makes a case for the paradox of identity formation of the Filipino American[103] and argues that U.S. political relations with the Philippines gives unique shape to the theoretical and canonical trends in Asian American Literature. He argues for "a literature of exile and emergence rather than a literature of immigration and settlement whereby life in the United States serves as the space for displacement, suspension, and perspective. Exile becomes necessary, if inescapable, state for Filipinos in the US…"[104] Viet Nguyen calls Filipinos the "invisible minority," a minority who both suffered and assisted in U.S. imperial expansion. The racialization of the Filipinos and their exclusion from the U.S. national narrative, in spite of their territorial inclusion in the U.S. imperial project, frames the paradox of the identarian politics of Filipinos in the U.S., as both soldiers and ignoble colonialist projects whose labor and loyalty kept the nationalistic borders intact.

The exilic condition is accentuated by the invisibility of the colonial country because of the earlier period of Spanish colonial rule in the Philippines and the double invisibility of U.S. imperialism that renders the Philippines a colony but only in a benevolent paternalistic guise. U.S. imperialism is less rooted in medieval colonial dominance but more in subtle structures of labor migrations, the importation of English education, and the invisible but present mass of domestic workers who service the colonial messengers posted in the Philippines. Denise Cruz and Erin Suzuki trace the ways in which the U.S. transforms from being an overseas colonial power to a neo-colonialist power in the 20th century, thus relinquishing its former colonial legacy but still keeping intact the implicit forms of neo-colonialism that make the Filipinos' relationship with their former colonizer complex and varied. Owing to this history, the streams of migrations from the Philippines to the U.S. vary with three identifiable time periods: first, are the people who immigrated in the 1920's when immigration to the U.S. was open for Filipinos; second, are the people who migrated after 1947 when the Philippines is declared as an independent country after three years of Japanese rule; and, third, the population that immigrated after the immigration act of 1965. The first set of immigrants are usually referred to as the "old timers" and the last as the "new immigrants." All three migrant populations have lived through a different political version of the Philippines and enter the U.S. in radically altered relationality to their homeland, thus giving them relational and identarian values that makes the category of one stable unifying identity redundant.

Yen Le Espiritu seconds Campomanes's claim of paradox identity formation but in a slightly altered vein. The centerpiece of the three trends of immigration, for Espiritu, are the Filipinos in the U.S. Navy. Espiritu states, that "By 1970, in large part due to the grave economic, political and social problems besetting the Philippines, there were more Filipinos in the U.S. Navy

(14,000) than the entire Philippine Navy."[105] The presence of this population in the navy alludes to two major additions to my arguments. First, the Filipino population in the U.S. navy, according to Espiritu, helps radically evade the regionalism in the local Filipino population. The Navy population, because of its association with the U.S., the prestige of being in the Navy, along with their association to the promises of affluence, status and security made possible by the U.S. made a different self-contained social class that added to the Filipino social structure in the mainland and in the U.S. Second, U.S. neo-imperialism is made traceable by the presence of the Filipino population in the U.S. Navy, because it assures a stronghold of U.S. political and economic interests in the Asia Pacific region. This arrangement in the Navy for the Filipinos emerged out of the colonial process when the U.S. facilitated the Military Bases Agreement with the Philippines, in which the U.S. was able to "lease five major bases and at least twenty minor military installations for ninety-nine years at no cost,"[106] not from a sovereign independent country but as an agreement between itself and its colony. These bases and the populations associated with them became the centers for wealth and affluence amidst Filipino poverty, allowing the U.S. to sustain not only its political stronghold in the region but also the cheap labor that can be drawn from the regions.

The population of "cheap labor" came with its set of contradictions, that signified legal inclusion but a heavy social exclusion that affected the U.S. reception of their naval counterparts. Their acceptance in the U.S. professional scenario was juxtaposed with their former emigrant counterparts amongst whom sex work and gambling were rampant. Filipino Americans ignited sexual jealousies amongst their white Caucasian counterparts during their "sojourner" stint in America. Ronald Takaki's account of "The Forgotten Filipinos" frequently references the younger Filipinos' participation in gambling and prostitution houses. They also liked dancing

and, hence, frequently visited dance halls and spent a lot of money. Takaki lays out the reasons behind the womanizing spirit of the Pinoys.[107] First, the Filipinos did not develop their own ethnic sections in the cities like their Japanese or Chinese counterparts.[108] This was mainly owing to the fact that most Pinoys, especially in the 1930's, saw themselves as American citizens, "born under the Stars and Stripes,"[109] with the capacity of travelling back and forth from the homeland whenever needed and as many times as necessary. However, in spite of their "colonial" status, they were separated from their families under the provisions of the Tydings-McDuffie Act[110], and it "did not exempt family members and wives as the 1908 Gentleman's Agreement did for the Japanese."[111] Owing to the lack of any vocation other than back-breaking labor on different plantations, the young Filipino Americans turned towards gambling. Takaki states that "Most of these boys never gambled once or even knew what it was until they came here."[112] Having nothing else to turn their attention to, Filipino men turned towards prostitution, frequenting prostitutes in the Chinese American neighborhoods. They took an especial interest in white women,[113] because of the lack of Filipino women in America. This interest, coupled with the time period of the 1920's when women in America[114] were beginning to experience a greater financial freedom, further perpetuated the stereotype of the hypersexuality of the Filipino men. This metaphor of hypersexuality reflected the social anxiety towards miscegenation in the nascent American ethnic experience and contributed to both the paradoxical and the exilic experience of the first Filipino Americans. These stereotypes also emerged from the first wave of Filipino emigration to the United States, when the wave mostly consisted of poor, illiterate farm workers, who availed themselves of the opportunity to emigrate to find better work opportunities and created a rift in image for the later waves who came following the immigration restrictions and mostly on job seeking ventures.[115]

Both Campomanes and Espiritu agree on the disconnection of identity between the three streams of Filipino American migration to the US. The Old timers are the "Sojourners" to use the term coined by Ronal Takaki to describe Asian American populations in The Forgotten Filipinos.[116] They came to the U.S. when there were no immigration restrictions for them and mainly worked as farm laborers and hired hands. They were subject to racist laws, often had violent experiences. and were largely illiterate, according to Takaki, Campones, and Espiritu. The second stream of people who migrated were varied. They were often exposed to the same conditions in the U.S. with jobs similar to the sojourners but were subject to immigration restrictions, whereas the third group immigrating post-1965 were literate and skilled laborers, and usually were from the Manila city region, from upper- or middle-class societies. Espiritu states that "the post 1965 Filipinos are 'uppity', 'pushy', 'know-it-all', 'materialistic', and 'clothes conscious.' To the new immigrants, the local Filipinos are 'passive', 'lacking in class', 'sloppy dressers', 'uncultured' and 'lacking in depth.'"[117]

One of the major ways that this divide is played out is also in terms of language. The establishment of English education in the Philippines after U.S. domination shifted the social hierarchy to not just economical, but also a language-based hierarchy. Better English meant better job opportunities--often U.S. associated jobs, better economic prospects, better class mobility, and better conditions for living. This is similar to the linguistic colonialism Frantz Fanon critiques in French Martinique, where the capacity of speaking French signified the "whiteness" of the native Martinican.[118] It is not unfair to say that language also became the ladder to "whiteness" and eventual "Americanness" for the native Filipino.

Oscar Campomanes describes the turn towards Filipino English postcolonial writing with the establishment of English education. ~~It is best described in the Santos's short story "The Day the~~

~~Dancers Came.~~" In addition to Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in The Heart*, Santos's short story "The Day the Dancers Came" is another popular text whose interpretations examine the problematics and complexities of the Filipino American identity.

Elaine Kim and Oscar Campomanes explore Santos's story to describe, as Campomanes states, "the frequent impossibility of "identity," between the different social classes and waves of Filipino Americans.[119] The story narrates the lives of Fil Acayan and Toni-Antonio Bataller who are Filipinos in Chicago in the 1950's. Having lived in the U.S. for a long time Fil is extremely homesick. He is very excited at the prospect of meeting a troupe of Filipino dancers who are performing at a near hotel, just by virtue of their being from the Philippines. However, once he gets to the hotel and tries to acquaint himself with them, he realizes that they are not interested in interacting with him. Not only that, they might have been cautioned against strange old-timers like him in advance. Disappointed, he goes back to his apartment and reflects on his and Toni's life, which he thinks are like "abandoned fetuses", twice disinherited, once by America and next by their own country.

Both Kim and Campomanes reflect on an image of bottles at the hospitals preserving fetuses. Kim interprets this image as a foray into Fil Acayan's life which has not been allowed to develop to its full potential and is emblematic of the thousands of other Filipino American immigrants who have passed Fil like "aborted fetuses."[120] Campomanes interprets the image as a "reflection of himself [Fil] in these aborted, disowned, and arrested lives, mediated by the figure of the 'bottle' that both exhibits and encloses them," which forms a powerful statement "on the utter disconnection of the old timer from the flow of time and from Philippines whose birthing as a nation itself has been aborted by American colonialism."[121] While Kim focuses on the identity politics inherent in the image, Campomanes extends the image to further represent the colonial

politics between America and the Philippines. Both interpretations account for the exilic condition of the Filipino American who is caught between their sentimentality and nostalgia for the home country while being unable to leave the U.S., both for financial and sentimental problems. The trouble is that the nostalgia for the Philippines does not cut down on the patriotism that the characters feel for America, it just ends in the U.S. furthering and sustaining their belief.

Both Fil's and Tony's lives, through their competences in English and Tagalog become a race for further acceptance--first. as Filipinos and, second, as Americans. While I agree to the doubling of the Filipino American image that Fil and Tony represent in the text, according to Kim and Campomanes, I extend the argument to the fact that these two characters are representative of not only the Filipino or the immigrant sensibility, but also of a unique experience that is specific to the exilic condition. Edward Said in his description of the experience of exile describes it as "contrapuntal." This is a term used in music, to demonstrate the ways in which opposite keys produce a harmony, a rhythm that opens up a special place of meeting, or resolution and resonance. "The Day the Dancers Came," I claim, opens up the sensibility of dancing, the aesthetics of dancing, wherein opposite harmonies come together to create a unique space that is beyond nationalities, a space that is truly transnational. The condition of the Filipino Americans does not just reflect a diasporic sensibility or an exilic consciousness, it is a unique space that is located, deferred, transnational and centered. It is a particular sensibility or feeling that Fil experiences on the *Day* that the *Dancers* came. Hence, the locatedness of the experience is the locatedness of the Filipino American experience of exile at the particular point in time that Santos is situated in, one not of perpetuity or timelessness. This is the exilic consciousness of the

Filipino American or the exilic sensibility that Filipino American literature contributes to or figures in the wider discipline of Asian American Studies.

More recent Filipino American literature has been making an effort towards evading the invisibility that characterized the body of literature by the old timers such as Carlos Bulosan, Bienvenidos Santos, for well over five decades. The particularity of the exilic consciousness present in old timers has gradually morphed into a multi-faceted identity dynamic for the recent Filipino American population, states Eleanor Ty in her article "Contemporary Filipino American Writers and the Legacy of Imperialism." I choose to end this section with Ty's article because she highlights the different modalities of the Filipino American experience as one that extends itself to a variety of theoretical paradigms that circulate around the complex structure of modern displacement, including the literary fragmented nature of experience, the Filipino American experience as inclusive of the political climate in the U.S. such as the post 9/11 Islamophobia, and of the genres of collective and post-memory. By analyzing Filipino-American literatures that cater to these theoretical groups, Ty extends the Filipino American experience from the monolithic migration-centered exilic existence, to one that has multiple valences and is capable of participating in recent sociopolitical and cultural discourses. In fact, Ty alludes to the notion of a triple marginalization of the Filipino experience, one that is not just situated between the Philippines and the Americas, but one that centers around the consuming of the Philippines by the Americas and the ramifications of the mass migrations that still continue to dictate contemporary Filipino psyche in the Philippines and the Filipino-American psyche in America. Additionally, the mass migrations center around the hyper-visibility of the Chinese in the Americas, where the Filipinos are another marginalized Asian population. The triple invisibility is evaded after the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization

act, leading to Filipino American discourses being a more integral part of what constitutes Asian American discourses and policies around displacement.

2. **Why was Bret Harte unsuccessful in presenting a more realistic picture of the Ah Sin's?**

One of the first popular pieces of literature about Asian Americans was without doubt Bret Harte's "That Heathen Chinee."[122] The most popular lines in the poem that describe the social and economic anxieties about the Chinese in Transcontinental Railroad America are:

Which I wish to remark-
And my language is plain-
That for ways that are dark
And for tricks that are vain,
The heathen Chinee is peculiar,
Which the same I would rise to explain…

We are ruined by Chinese cheap labour"-
And he went for that heathen Chinee.[123]

Bret Harte, in spite of being an immensely successful and, at a point in his career, one of the most highly paid poets in America, remains well known today for this portrait of the Chinese in the 1870's. Harte's poem become an instant "hit" and is republished in four successive editions in England in 1870.[124] Robert McClellan perceives this poem, particularly the last three lines of the fist stanza, as the lines that could be "chiseled into the headstone marking the burial place of the last chance for a sympathetic understanding of the Chinese in this country."[125] The phrase "heathen Chinee" became part of a national image, and "Bret Harte was quoted on the floor of Congress during the debates on the Chinese question."[126]

A detour is necessary at this point to understand the chapter's intention in focusing on Harte's poem and hence opening up the discussion to other Caucasian depictions of the first Asian

Americans in America. The Chinese question in America has been framed in opposition to and association with the Irish question and the Italian question, always in comparison to the plight of Caucasians who emigrated to the United States. Why was the Chinese presence treated in comparison? Apart from the different official commissions that debated the Chinese question and the different policies and laws instituted to control and maintain the growing Chinese populations, literary works remain as records of the social anxieties that stimulated the above deliberations.

In the introduction, I state that this thesis intends to perceive literature as the first place of encounter. Hence, with an analysis of Bret Harte's poem, the question is how local people who had not had any physical encounters with the early Chinese would perceive them. Harte's poem becomes symbolic of the inscription in public memory that a work of art, in this case a poem, prescribes. I do not mean to simplify the function of literature as a reflection of society but extend it to the function of "encounter" that a work of art occasions. For example, for people who have never been to Venice, the piazza and the waterways and canals are still familiar scenes. Works of art, such as, paintings, documentaries, descriptions have inscribed the beauty of Venice in public memory. Literature plays a familiar role in encountering people, especially minority groups. It studies, reflects, and paints the other and bestows solidity and permanence on the image. Hence, often minority groups are captives of not just their reality as experienced physically around them, but also of what literature writes them to be. The Heathen Chinee describes Ah Sin, a Chinese man and Bill Nye, an Irishman, playing a game of Euchre. Bill Nye discovers in the middle of the game that Ah Sin has his sleeves full of duplicates of the cards so he can cheat Bill Nye. Nye, who himself had also meant to cheat proclaims that "We are ruined

by cheap Chinese labor" as he goes to grab Ah Sin to make his reveal the cards that he had been cheating with.

So how does Bret Harte describe the "heathen Chinee," or Ah Sin? The name is clever and does not escape the insinuation of sinfulness, foreshadowing the end of the poem. This poem, as suggested by a lot of critics is not the same name as "Plain Language for Truthful James." In this particular 2nd edition of Harte's poem, "That Heathen Chinee" and "Plain Language" are two different poems, though they both present images of cheating and deceiving Caucasian and Chinese men.[127] Ah Sin is described as "child-like," a remark that the poet seems to have made to Bill Nye, the hero of the poem, several times. Clearly, Bill Nye is an image of the ideal American masculine man, who plays cards, drinks and defeats social enemies. Ah Sin is the victim, who exhibits characteristics similar to Bill Nye, but who is beaten up and exposed. He is described in the poem to be of a temperament similar to the soft skies of August and the poet suggests that his claim that he does not understand the game is false. Bill Nye's sleeves were stuffed with aces and bowers, but still the hands dealt by Ah Sin were "frightful." Ah Sin is exposed once he deals the same "bower" that Nye had already dealt, thus exposing Ah Sin's sleeves full of cards with which he meant to cheat. At this Nye "went at" Ah Sin, and soon the floor was strewn with the cards that Ah Sin had up his sleeves-- at which point the poet and Nye remind the audience of how cheap Chinese labor has ruined the country and their countrymen's chances. Ah Sin in the poem is a sly trickster who becomes a stand-in for the figure of the sly inscrutable Chinese in the 1870's.

The poem sparked anti-Chinese sentiments in the entire country. According to Iris Chang, "The *New York Globe* published it twice and in January 1871 the paper reported that hundreds of people had gathered to see a version of 'The Heathen Chinee' displayed in a shop window"

proclaiming that in, their knowledge of New York, nothing like this had ever been seen on Broadway. Based on these comments, Mark Twain and Bret Harte collaborated to bring on stage the poem titled *Ah Sin*.[128] The anti-Chinese sentiments that made the Chinese the laughingstock of town revealed itself in the loss of economic opportunities and intense racial sentiments. The number of literary endeavors that were sparked by the poem in addition to *Ah Sin* document the increasing rise of negative sentiments. Nick Garder's *Two Ring Circus Songster* sports a song titled "Hong Kong" that is an instant throwback to "The Heathen Chinee." The first stanza begins with "My name is Sin Sin, come from China. The poem parodies the usage of pidgin English popularly associated with the Chinese.

Robert Ge further writes that, in the same song sung by Charles A. Mason under the title of "Chinese Song" and published in Charles A. Loder's *Hilarity Songster*, the meanings of the words become increasingly nonsensical and offensive. Each reproduction strengthened the associative component of "That Heathen Chinee" making the titles more and more simple for the purposes of identification of the Chinese and the content increasingly gibberish, childlike and nonsensical. The poems were successful in relegating the Chinese into a further domain of obscurity, such that their visibilities in menial jobs were accompanied by their nonsensical language and culture. Lee further describes the trans-morphing of the poems to a varied range of subjects that furthered the inscrutability. Along with making the language in the poems nonsensical, a focused attention was paid to Chinese food, to their appearance--especially their pigtails. Black Minstrel practices were combined with simple song making to ridicule the Chinese and further alienate them from assimilation into a racist immigrant saturated society.[129] Bret Harte seemed to have been aware of these sentiments before writing the poem, as is demonstrated in one of his reports in a letter to the Spring field Republican on March 30, 1867,

in which he states, "They [the Chinese] furnished innocent amusement to the honest miner, when gambling, horse racing or debauchery palled on his civilized taste, and their Chinese tails, particularly when tied together, cut off or pulled out, were more enjoyable than the Arabian Nights entertainment. Nature seemed to have furnished them with that peculiar appendage for the benefit of the Anglo-Saxon."[130]

The poem certainly paved the way for the fixed determination of the Chinese as the Yellow Peril in the 19th century. Harte's writings were furthered by writers like Jack London and Ambrose Bierce who harbored ambivalent sentiments towards the Chinese and wrote popular novels with them as the ultimate scapegoats.[131] Both these authors furthered the Yellow Peril stereotype around the growing concern about Japanese modernization and Chinese numerical power.[132] Ambrose Bierce offered a solution to the Chinese problem in the columns of the San Francisco *Examiner* stating, "There is but one remedy…I do not recommend it: to kill the Chinese. That we shall not do…--the not doing being the difference between "Attrition and Contrition,"[133] as Cesaire's Gonzalo proclaims in *A Tempest.*[134]

It is not that Bierce does not seriously want people to consider the massacre, but he, indeed, is afraid that one day the entire population of the West will have to answer to China for it.[135] Coleen Lye adds a legal dimension to the Yellow Peril problem by situating it in the creation of the U.S. Pacific Rim and increasing consciousness of Asia's capacity and rise as a strong political and economic rival to U.S society. Analyzing Jack London's works, Lye attributes the "turn of the century Asiatic threat" to a combinatory notion of China and Japan. Japan in London's works is depicted as barbaric, but, with "an unusual capacity for sudden development."[136] It was the potential that China and Japan posed as combined powers that instigated insecurities in Europe and the U.S., not necessarily any particular strike made by the

powers. Hence, the claim of modernization that drove the colonial and later neocolonial empires in Europe and the U.S. recognized the same potential for reverse destruction in the various countries in Asia, manifested in the public economic insecurities in turn-of-the-century U.S. politics.

Bret Harte's analysis of the Chinese was transnational, a point that is often neglected in the various interpretations of "That Heathen Chinee." Harte was an Englishman, who had just arrived in New York in search of better working conditions. His encounters with the Chinese were not new, and the economic insecurities caused by competing ethnic minorities were not novel. Industrial England was subject to a similar economic crisis, and minority population management as was faced by the U.S. policy makers. Harte's poem "fixed" the Chinese populations in their roles as Fanon understands the term. Fanon states in *Black Skin White Masks* that the Black man in his role is "fixed," racially and psychologically.[137] This is the state of the Chinese through Bret Harte's depiction.

Critiques, Asian American and others have justified the poem as Harte's "humorous" attempt at describing the Chinese in America. Elaine Kim states that for Harte, "the Chinese subjects were convenient vehicles through which to attack the ignorance and violence of members of his own race."[138] Ronald Takaki notes that that poem not only negatively stereotypes the Chinese, but it exposes Nye as a cheater too.[139] Elaine Kim quotes that Harte was "greatly amused by the unfavorable meanings that so many read into 'That Heathen Chinee,'" while Mark Twain commented on Harte being quite concerned over the sentiments in the poem that made him popular.[140] Takaki quotes a similar sentiment in which Harte was quite disconcerted over his reputation and respect through such a poem.[141]

Both Kim and Takaki, however, resort to analyzing Harte's later writings in order to understand if his intentions were deliberate or if "That Heathen Chinee" was but a mere slip in demeanor. Takaki's endeavors state that the disconcerted Harte continued to protest about the injustices towards Chinese Americans, but he, in his other writings, "perpetuated anti-Chinese racism through his images of 'heathens' and threats to white America."[142] His short stories "Wan Lee, the Pagan" and "See Yup" elicit contradictory responses from Kim and Takaki. While the former sees them as making amends, Takaki clearly thinks that, "Harte's point was not entirely clear."[143] The differential readings of the poem also point towards the differential treatments that Harte receives in different literary circles. He is immensely famous in England as a humorist, whereas in the U.S., he seems to be openly inflammatory towards minorities and is backed up by other prominent literary figures such as Mark Twain.[144]

The poem did not inspire anti-Irish sentiments, as Nye cheats and yet "handles" Ah Sin when he finds his opponent cheating too. It does inspire more Irish hatred towards the Chinese, as portrayed in the interpretation of the Irish Bridget poems in Peter O'Neill's book, *Famine Irish and the American Racial State*. Here insecure Irish Bridget laments that the Chinese have stolen her jobs from her.[145] It instead helps further the Irish agenda in the U.S. by pushing them further on the racial scale. The poem, indeed, played an important role in American nation-building policies, with the Asiatic Barred Zone and the subsequent Alien Land Laws that disinherited both Chinese and Japanese people from owing land in the country.

It is also interesting to note that the poem sparked anti-Chinese sentiments in spite of being about a located scenario that depicted a particular Chinese man in a particular card game. Franz Fanon, in his encounters with racism, states that the biggest problem either for a black man in the midst of white men or for the instance of a black man using language imposes on him his "dimension

of being-for-others." "It being understood," Fanon states, "that to speak is to exist absolutely for the other."[146] Fanon intends to understand the impact of the moment of speech for the racialized other, whose moment of speech and the speech itself is always societally defining. The speech always seeks a moment to impose a definition that is larger than the individual speaking self. Ironically, for the Chinese man, in the precise moment of the 1870's, when the transcontinental railroad had been completed and the shortage of jobs increased, being spoken for was equivalent to speaking. Ah Sin does not speak; in fact, Ah Sin is never given an opportunity to speak. His moment of being spoken for becomes his moment of self-definition.

The Chinese man's attachment to his language was similar to European linguistic nationalism; it imitated the West's nationalistic fascination with language. Language acted as a way of alienating ethnic minorities from the American mainstream culture in a very uniform way. English linguistic skills became the sign of privilege, class, social strata, education, and refinement for the American mainstream population. Alternately, it became a sign for the level of assimilability, backwardness and inscrutability for the emigrant minorities. Asian American theory observes a sustained focus on linguistic issues starting with Elaine Kim. Kim states that "Asians either spoke English badly because they were slow and unable to grasp Western ways, or they spoke it with a flowery, almost unnatural fluency that was humorous or sinister."[147]

As much as the lack of linguistic skills was condemnable, Asian efficiency in English was constructed as a sign of the sinister, such as the villain qualities of Fu Manchu. The civilization produced by the language exercises the unrefined soul of the Asian, who is, in his own true self-realization, a villain. Hence, this limited language, instead of completely transforming the individual, created a limit to civilization's civilizing capacity. In essence, Fu Manchu signified the inherent sinister qualities of the Asian that could not be "cured" by language, but only

sufficed to clothe them. Further, the Chinese dialect became the source of ridicule with its "high pitched, sing song tones, tortured syntax, the confounding of l's and r's, etc."[148] It bestowed on the Chinese a childlike status; in fact, it potentially locked them in a perpetual state, where language became its imprisonment.

The disparaged language epistemologically continues its hierarchal attitude to this day, where linguistic proficiency becomes a sign for civilization, progress, assimilation, and social class. Bret Harte's poem, according to Kim, "provided the model for writings in this vein."[149] It is a stylistic that was perpetuated not *by* Chinese writings, but by the writings *for* the Chinese. This is a style that one finds in Harte's other poem about the Chinese, namely "Further Language from Truthful James."[150] The utter silence of the Chinese man himself in these writings is astounding and should itself be the subject of analysis. Why is the Chinese man silent? As mentioned earlier, Chinese laborers in the U.S. during and right after the Gold Rush were mere sojourners, like the Filipinos, as mentioned earlier. They were sparsely literate folk from the countryside who had come over to seek economic success after which they wanted to go back. Faced with the lack of economic success as a result of the racist environment in the U.S., many decided, eventually, to stay.[151] One of the major ways of controlling the emigrant Chinese population was not only disenfranchisement from economic benefits, as demonstrated in the various economic laws passed for the Chinese, but also their disenfranchisement from any personal settlement arrangements. Chinese women were not allowed to emigrate; hence, there was no possibility of familial progress. There was fear of racist laws and violence if the laws were trespassed. Such an atmosphere of legal restriction propelled the ethnic minority into a submissive silence: they wanted to stay in the U.S. but stay invisible. This invisibility perpetuated the silence and facilitated their identification and definition through racist literature

and ridiculed stereotyped language. This way, the image of the Chinaman in the United States projected everything that an American is not, marginalizing him in nationalistic discourses and contributing to the myth of nation building in the country.

Marginalization is an inherent exilic condition, and it certainly promoted and contributed to the silencing of the Chinese men. One of the major books written about this silence is Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men*. The book places the Chinese man in the relations of power, in nation building, gender, and diaspora and immigration politics and paints an extended portrait of their status in this journey from China to the U.S. In "The Great Grandfather of the Sandalwood Mountains," one of the eight chapters from *China Men,* the Chinese man in the sugar plantations in Hawaii are under strict instructions to not speak once during work hours. Kingston narrates that the imposition of the silence, enhanced by the difficult conditions of living, often renders the men ill or suicidal. Bak Goong, the narrator, realizes that the men are falling sick because of the "congestion from not speaking."[152] He thinks that the solution would be to "talk and talk." So, he devises ingenious ways of speaking during work, such as coughing and cursing under their breath. Finally, he arranges a "shout party," where the men dig holes in the ground and shout their secrets into the hole. They have, quite literally, "dug an ear into the world."[153] The men feel magically strengthened after this act, such that the white "demons" become afraid of imposing more rules on them anymore. By overcoming the oppression of "imposed silence," the short tale constructs the oppressiveness of silence, when perceived on a national and legal scale.

Silence is an exilic condition. The imposition of silence, in the case of the Chinese happens through a variety of ways, such as personal, legal, political, and even gendered. The men's masculinity is silenced by sexism with the feminization of China. The Chinese men are portrayed as objects with delicate feminine features, competency at domestic chores, such as laundry, and

their submissiveness, which is usually desirable in domesticity. In one way, the Chinese men in the United States enact the positions that they gave their women back in China.[154] Shih states that "the bound feet that epitomized women's imprisonment and subservience in traditional China become the fate of China Men in America."[155]

The silencing completes an epistemological function in the lives of the emigrant Chinese men, by suppressing any proper knowledge of the Chinese history and culture that justifies the existence of these men. Shih reads Kingston's writing as creating a dichotomy between the conditions of "humanity/mortality/speech and inhumanity/immortality/silence."[156] If speech becomes the condition for relegation to humanity, then silence confines one to the domain of the inhuman. Left with no other choice between speech and silence, where speech is not a possibility, the Chinese plantation and railroad workers are perpetually confined to inhumanity in American nation building discourse. The "Chinaman," signifying the Chinese people in the U.S. who happened to be predominantly male, becomes the creation of American racist discourses which is purely an exilic condition, because, it is neither Chinese nor do they have any place in American political or legal life.

Having analyzed Harte's poem and its implications, do we assume that Harte was a racist? This is a question that is similar to one Achebe asks about Conrad. Was Joseph Conrad, the renowned writer of *Heart of Darkness,* a racist?[157] It is a question that one asks about Kipling.
Was Rudyard Kipling, in his spirited discussion of the role of the colonizer in "White Man's Burden," a racist? How does one answer these questions? One can turn towards other writings by the author. Apart from "That Heathen Chinee," "Further Language from Truthful James" does not do a better job. The Chinese along with the Irish here are opportunistic, greedy, drunkards. They do not pass an opportunity to snag some money without any morality involved in it. Elaine

Kim and Ronald Takaki also undertake analysis of Harte's short stories "Wan Lee, the Pagan" and "See Yup," as I stated earlier. The analyses offer contradictory responses, but, in general, are not favorable towards the Chinese. Even though Harte's letter to the Springfield Republican on March 30, 1867, as quoted by Robert G. Lee, exhibits anti-Chinese discriminatory sentiments, his other collections of letters have a couple of references to his success through the poem.

Gary Scharnhorst labels Harte, "A liberal on social issues,"[158] who protested again racial and ethnic intolerance. According to Scharnhorst, Wan Lee's character being killed as a foreigner in mindless mob violence overshadows Harte's racist clichés by upholding the mindlessness of racist prejudice. He considers it unfortunate that "That Heathen Chinee" was "misread as a burlesque of the inscrutable Oriental that exploits, rather than, resists that stereotype."[159] Ironically, however, it still remains one of Harte's most referenced poems,[160] a tradition that was appreciated and continued back in London, as the *London Daily News* famously termed him "a Chinese embassy" and applauded its popularity.[161] Harte's letters offer a slightly different view than his admirers and critiques do. He seems to have given Sol Eytinge, Jr. ideas on illustrating the poem in a letter to James R. Osgood on 6th March 1871.[162] In another letter on April 1, 1871, Harte calls the poem a "damnable iteration," yet proceeds to write and "ought-to-graph" a copy of it for Mr. James T. Fields.[163] Paradoxically, Harte is appreciative and amused by illustrator Solomon Eytinge Jr.'s immense popularity for his illustrations of the poem, such that he maintains a copy for himself.[164] Eytinge becomes popular not only because his illustrations caught the spirit of the author, but also "by reason of a psysiognomical accuracy in his caricature."[165] If Harte's stance in the poem was not already problematic, his amused endorsement of the illustrations leaves the reader in a more confused position.

Returning to our initial question, we face a dilemma similar to digesting Achebe's accusation of Conrad. Both Conrad and Harte had ambiguous stances towards their subjects or colonialism and emigration. One of the questions that is frequently asked about Conrad, especially in English departments, is, was it possible for Conrad, given his time, to be neutral towards his subject of exploration? One must ask the same question of Harte. Was it possible for Harte to provide a neutral and positive picture of the Chinese populations during his time period? As opposed to individual efforts by authors like Harte, the Chinese men collectively were rendered more exilic by the literatures that preserve their silence by voicing their opinions about these men. Similarly, Harte becomes a product of his time period, one who not only cannot completely demystify the silence of the Chinese and who, instead, ends up hurting them more.

3. **Accounts of Japanese American Internment: Exclusion or Inclusion?**

> The speech that frees comes forth from that amniotic deep. To attend its voice, I can hear it say, is to embrace its absence. But I fail the task.
>
> – *Obasan*, Joy Kogawa

Silence continues to be a recurring theme in Japanese American Literature, especially later, in the 21st century. The period during the Second World War initiates debates about censorship and political exclusion in Japanese American discourses. Censoring contact with Japan and the ensuing problematic act of Japanese incarceration under the Roosevelt government contributed to the growing lack of discourse on Japanese American issues, one that led to generations of continued media and political silencing. Greg Robinson in "Writing the Internment," asks "Why

did Japanese Americans not write more about the Camps?" In response he states, "The mass of former inmates were encouraged both by internal and external pressure to hold their silence about their wartime experience in order to concentrate on fitting into mainstream society. The trauma of the survivors was matched by the erasure of the wartime events in postwar public discourse."[166]

The veneer of this assimilatory technique, to this day, stays severely underwritten and undertheorized in Asian American Literature. A theoretical survey of selected theories on the internment brings out three major trends in theorizing the interment narrative, of exclusion, inclusion, and betrayal. However, it is important to establish the nature of the silence surrounding the experience of internment before delving deeper into the possibilities and trends around the theorization of the Internment. Two literary texts that make this connection and commune on the silence are Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* and Julie Otsuka's *Buddha In the Attic.* The two paradigms of silence involve, first, Obasan's silence surrounding narratives of WWII in Japanese America and, second, Otsuka's silent withdrawal by the Japanese.

Joy Kogawa's novel is a multi-dimensional narrative that comments on sexual abuse, trauma, dislocation, pain and silence. The element of silence is especially important as it becomes a reaction and coping strategy for all the other factors. The silence is a result of various events that happen politically, socially, culturally, and psychologically. Naomi, the child protagonist, is a child sexual abuse survivor who has been separated from her mother as a child and who then goes through the relocation camps. The silence surrounding sexual abuse is compounded by the absence of her mother as a protector and listener and is doubly compounded by the censorship and secrecy of the relocation camps. Hence, Naomi's silence is gendered, alienated and racialized. Charles H. Long uses the phrase "twice displaced" to describe African American

discourses after the Middle Passage and post emancipation.[167] Naomi is someone who is triply dislocated, once by her parents from Japan; second, by the removal of her parent, physically her mother; and third, by the country of which she is a "citizen" by birth. This triple reinforced silence can also be a thrice removed silence of a voice, one that is taken away on the removal from Japan; in the second sense by the removal of the child's protection in the form of a mother; and third, the removal or silencing of the voice of the minority Japanese Americans in the larger discourse of Canada and America. The triple silencing of discourse reveals the perpetual nature of the violence that is perpetuated by the silence, it is cyclical, continuous and self-perpetuating.

Naomi's mother is caught in the atomic bombing of Japan. She was "utterly disfigured. Her nose and one cheek was almost gone. Great wounds and pustules covered her entire face and body. She was completely bald. She sat in a cloud of flies, and maggots wriggled among her wounds."[168] Her gruesomeness pushed Naomi's mother not to establish any contact with her children in Canada. The violence inherent in the act of bombing the cities perpetuates and breeds the violence of silence in familial relations. Naomi's aunt, out of deference to Naomi's mother, maintains this silence throughout her life towards Naomi, rendering the child incapable of voicing her abuse and worries. The silence is also caused by the linguistic divide between Naomi and her mother: the mother's letter in Japanese stays incomprehensible till Sensei reads and interprets it for Naomi. Even then, the words strike Naomi as incomprehensible because of the alienation of the words from their sender, her mother. Usually, the space of the family is seen as a space safe from external turbulences and uncertainties. The problem in a text like *Obasan* lies in the intermingling of the personal and the public spheres through the censorship of expression.

The Buddha in the Attic comingles with *Obasan* on a similar front. However, the paradoxes of both narratives lie in their treatment of silence, for the latter as an inspiration for the text and for the former as the end of narration. In *The Buddha in the Attic*, exile proves to be the narrative impulse. A random combination of factors have launched a group of young women in a ship on the sea. They all find themselves at sea because of different personal events, none of which are properly explicated because the women do not necessarily have individual faces but are all part of a larger social and political experience. Irrespective of their origins, they are all travelling to the U.S. to meet their new husbands, ones who have chosen them based on their pictures. These women are the picture brides. After having met their husbands, the women go through a series of experiences, ranging from the tragic to the comic, providing a collection of examples of diasporic life, until they all arrive at the momentous moment of Japanese American history of internment. Otsuka's rendition of the internment experience is important because of its sheer simplicity, banality, and silence. The entire event of the internment is shrouded in doubt and silence from the moment of its conception, information and execution. What is even more striking is that the existence of the Japanese on the American landscape is in harmony with their disappearance. The book starts with "Come Japanese," continues with "First Night," and ends with "A Disappearance." Otsuka makes sure that nowhere in the length of the text is there a single coherent dialogue by the Japanese; it is a story about them but written as an experience, not following the usual novelistic tradition of a first person or invisible narrator.

The last chapter entitled "A Disappearance" states, "The Japanese have disappeared from our town. Their houses are boarded up and empty now. Their mailboxes have begun to overflow. Unclaimed newspapers litter their sagging front porches and gardens."[169] All descriptions of the disappearance point towards an absence, a move which had not left a forwarding address. The

people have disappeared, but the vestiges of a life that had been lived are present. The chapter continues,

> Downtown, on Main Street, their dry cleaners are still shuttered… The mayor assured us that there is no need for alarm… Theories, of course, abound… You can still see the official notices nailed to the telephone poles on the street corners downtown, but already they are beginning to tatter and fade, and after last week's heavy spring rains only the large black letters on top--*Instructions to All Persons of Japanese Ancestry*--are still legible.[170]

If the posters announcing the rounding up of people are reminiscent of acknowledging their presence, the poster's gradual effacement is the effacement of the people from public memory. If the posters signal the presence of an unrest and discourse about the Japanese, their eventual roundup and disappearance are the censorship that prohibits discourse. And indeed, as Otsuka narrates, soon the houses are occupied by new neighbors, with new habits, and the townspeople involve themselves in their new neighbors' lives hastening the process of effacement of the Japanese lives. As "With each passing day the notices on the telephone poles grow increasingly faint," the memory of the Japanese gradually slides out of people's minds, such that, "By the first frost their faces begin to blend and blur in our minds. Their names start to elude us. Was it Mr. Kato or Mr. Sato?"[171] By forgetting the names and, hence, language that the people used to address their neighbors, an entire social effacement of Japanese presence is perpetuated. Names that form the first identity and the first signifier of presence is deluded in the silence thereby establishing a final break between the towns people and their neighbors. Otsuka powerfully ends the novel with a refrain that "we shall probably not meet them again in this world."[172]

What is coded in Otsuka's language is the absence of immediate information and literature from the camps. By shifting the voice of narration from the third person plural to second person plural,

which are the neighbors' views about the Japanese, Otsuka seems to state that all information that was available about the Japanese during the internment was of onlookers and bystanders. Camp literature was not published, and neither were the internees given options to voice themselves.

Traise Yamamoto, in a 2016 essay entitled "Coded Critiques," studies the coded writing in the Japanese American community during and post-internment. Yamamoto states that, "Because camp publications were censored by government authorities, overt criticism of the internment was rare. Consequently, writers had to mask their criticisms.[173] In keeping with the tradition of such masked critiques of the internment, Otsuka avoids any open critical language and instead merges the different voices of the neighbors to convey the sudden puzzling absence of the Japanese. One must stop for a moment to think that if the disappearance was so puzzling to the onlookers then it must have been more terrifying to the Japanese who were picked up without any indication of the why and where of their future. With the recent Nazi atrocities that were perpetuated in a similar secret manner, especially separating families and keeping locations secret, the possibility of more concentration camps was not distant.

Otsuka's strategy is masterful even more because of the rampant censorship that literatures during the internment faced if their languages were directly expressive of the mindlessness of the internment. Taking for example John Okada's now popular novel[174] which is very direct in exploring the fates of the Japanese Americans who did not agree with the government decision and answered "no" to the three crucial questions of the internment questionnaire.[175] These people were sent to the camps instead of the "patriotic" army and termed as the "No No Boys" socially. The position of the "No No Boys" was stigmatized, as they were perceived to have betrayed not only their country but also the Japanese American community's ticket to inclusion,

"nationalism." As powerful as Okada's narrative is in exposing the position of the Japanese Americans even post-internment, when the very act of internment was supposed to remove all blame, it is more heartbreaking hearing the treatment of Okada's manuscript for his second book by CARP, the Combined Asian American Studies Project.[176] As Ruth Ozeki states, the agenda of silencing and censorship that began during the Second World War did not end right after the war, nor was all the relief societies sensitive or inclusive of all the experiences of the Japanese Americans. The process of sorting was still in process and even officialized with projects of these kinds.

The struggle between the Issei, immigrant Japanese, and Nisei, American-born Japanese generations present in Okada's work is one of the major points of discussion about the Japanese Americans in the first theories and histories about Asian Americans by Elaine Kim and Ronald Takaki. Some may ask what is special about the Japanese generational experience when this is a conflict and trend that one experiences in all ethnic minorities in the U.S.? According to many theorists, the experience of the internment[177] renders and registers a significant generational gap around purpose of stay for the Japanese Americans in the U.S. According to policies that justified internment of the Japanese, internment was a possibility because the Issei Japanese could not be put to any other use for state purposes and yet had to prove their innocence and patriotism towards America. On the other hand, the Nisei, who were born in the country and were younger, were given the option of serving in the war and earning their citizenship. Either way, it was a question of proving the Japanese allegiance towards the country and a convenient way of weeding out the too old and infirm housed in the country.

Ronald Takaki traces the generational rift to the laws and censorships that defined the Japanese presence in the U.S. in the 20th century. After the Asian Barred Zone Act and the Chinese

Exclusion Act in 1882, when Chinese laborers were barred from immigrating to the U.S., Japanese laborers were put to work in the various plantations and factories that were in dire need to laborers. This resulted in Japanese concentration in the Pacific Coast area, especially California, where the percentage of Japanese populations shot up from 42% of the total Japanese population in the U.S. in 1900 to 70% thirty years later. According to Ronald Takaki, by 1930, the total population was also evenly divided between the Issei and Nisei generations, with about 40% of them ushering Japanese American into the *teiju*--the era of settlement in the U.S.[178] Japanese workers worked in all kinds of sectors, including agriculture, railroad, and canneries. However, none of these jobs offered them any reprieve either from racial discrimination or any hope of permanent settlement in the U.S. The migratory nature of the jobs, coupled with difficult working conditions, led most laborers to settle down at their places of work. However, between the time period of the opening up of Japan for Trade by Commodore Perry and 1913, Japanese-own businesses, farm land and produce had increased so rapidly in the country that tensions began to rise.[179] Hence, after several years of efforts, California finally passed a bill prohibiting Japanese land or property ownership in 1913. This particular law, I argue, led to the intensifying of the generational rift between the Issei and Nissei in Japanese America. This rift was further strengthened and reinforced by the internment and becomes one of the socially and politically defining features of the displaced Japanese American communities.

Elaine Kim and Ronald Takaki present the *Issei* as a hard-working, newly emigrated generation of Japanese, mostly labor class people who were severely affected by the alien land laws. After the 1913 law in California, when the Japanese had increased their landholding manifold, a further law in 1920 made them, “aliens ineligible to citizenship [who] were not even allowed to lease agricultural land, not to acquire agricultural land under the names of native-born minors or

stock in any corporation owing real property."[180] Even though many farmers and other workers evaded this law by owing land or farming by "borrowing the names" of American citizens,[181] most of their hopes and aspirations banked upon their children, whom they saw as saviors from their alien status in America: "Through the Nisei, the parents hoped, Japanese would no longer be forced to be 'strangers' in America. English speaking and educated in American schools, the second-generation Japanese would be "ambassadors" for the Issei."[182] Kim states that, especially after the 1924 immigration law prohibiting further immigration from Japan, "the immigrant Japanese relied increasingly on his children to vindicate him, to prove that his sacrifice and his decision to leave Japan had been worthwhile after all."[183] Such hopes and aspirations led the *Issei* to stress on the need and importance of education for their children. Education would be the passport to overcome the racial prejudice as well as the "racial mark of the Mongolian face" for the *Nisei.* The expectations of the *Issei* from their children very quickly turned into a rift because of intense pressure their expectations exerted on their children. Opinions of parents as uneducated and working class, as people who ate strange food, spoke minimal and broken English, and lived minimalistic lifestyles became more stigmatic markers for the *Nisei* than an ownership of their culture.

The children of the picture brides who immigrate to the U.S. in Otsuka's novel, *The Buddha in the Attic*, suddenly realize that their children had become strangers to them. They spoke a different language, led lifestyles incomprehensible to their parents, and did not strongly believe in Japanese culture or ethics. As much as other mothers lauded the changes of Americanization that their children brought about in their lives, some saw Japan, as a memory, gradually becoming an inventory of cultural beliefs, habits, and practices, rather than a way of life as it had been in the beginning. They could transfer only certain traits to their children, and the essence of

being Japanese was gradually lost to them. Difference in terms of language, behaviors, from a high to low a context culture,[184] lifestyle, food, education, jobs--all became signs of difference rather than growth for the *Issei.* The *Nisei* truly felt their twoness, and this was sharpened by "the condition of their parents as "strangers" in America."[185] During the internment, the rift deepened with the different emotional and political stances that the *Issei, Nisei* and the third group of second-generation Japanese who had been schooled in Japan after having been born in America, the *Kibei*, had towards the internment. Most of the *Issei* were sent to the camps, whereas the *Nisei* took it upon themselves to serve their country. The dilemma is very clearly reflected in novels like *No No Boy* and in Kim and Takaki's surveys. Kim states that "the group most adversely affected by internment were the *Issei* men, who felt useless and frustrated, particularly as their wives and children lost confidence in them."[186]

The most disheartening part was that the entire process of establishment of the Japanese as an educated, highly-skilled, intellectual class of citizens in America had to start again after the rift of the internment. Many *Nisei* men who were enrolled in colleges and technical schools and had to withdraw before the internment had to start their lives all over again, as demonstrated in a contemporary novel like *No No Boy*. The event of the internment has been analyzed differently by different theorists and critics, shedding light on different aspects of the agenda, purposes and relationships around the internment.

Frank Chin views the internment as a narrative of betrayal, of one Japanese to another and of the *Issei* by the *Nissei*. Terming it the "behavioral modification program,"[187] Chin attributes the beginning of the internment to a race for power both by the government and by power hungry Japanese who wanted to mold Japanese Americans in the image of Americans. The internment, Chin states, "worked because the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), led by Mike

Masaru Masaoka, betrayed Japanese America into the camps and assumed the leadership of Japanese America with government help."[188] Everything that made the Japanese into unassimilable aliens or Orientals in America sought to be eliminated by this program. For example, the JACL asked the government to use the camps to "eliminate Li'l Tokyos, the Japanese language, Japanese accents and all the differences in behavior and mannerism" that distinguished the Japanese American Nisei from their fellow Americans" (52). By catering to the hegemonic behavior, Masaoka thought that the Japanese would become the model minority citizens of America. Further, the internment would create an exclusive class of Oriental children born and bred in America who would enter the army and earn their citizenship. According to the JACL version of history, one that inscribed the association's name indelibly in official American memory, "Mike Masaoka led Japanese Americans to accept the injustices of the evacuation and internment as their contribution to the war effort and prove their loyalty."[189]

However, this was not a uniform acceptance or benefit for all the Japanese population. The "JACL wanted the *Nisei* put in put in camps without hearings, that the organization wanted the *Nisei* to be treated better than the *Issei*, that it wanted the "elimination" of the Japanese language and the elimination of Japanese accents."[190] To Masaoka, such promises were not a violation of any constitutional rights but were "resettlement projects," which were merely supposed to redirect the Japanese American vision. Further, he assured Eisenhower that, "twice that 50% of the *Issei* would die as a result of the conditions of their old age, compounded by the evacuation and violent adjustment to the extremes of desert summers and winters; their deaths would make it easier to eliminate the Oriental sounds, thoughts, and mannerisms in the remaining *Nisei.*"[191] In fact, these people who were to be concentrated in the camps, would provide a very good opportunity for anthropologists to observe their behaviors, culture, religion,

beliefs and encourage sampling of patterns of treating the other and further policy making.[192] Anthropologists of the Community Analysis Section (CAS) of the War Relocation Authority and the social scientists of Dorothy Swaine Thomas University of California Japanese Evacuation Relocation study were actively sent to the camps to study and change the Japanese Americans.[193] In this version of the internment narrative, betrayal looms large from the organization, JACL, which was created to protect the Japanese and ended up betraying them. It is betrayal by the *Nisei* towards the *Issei* who brought them to this country and raised them. It is also a story of betrayal in a democratic country that espouses freedom of all cultures, religions, sexuality and the freedom of expressions.

Coleen Lye, however, interprets the event of the internment not only as a denial of democratic rights, but also as an integral instrument of renewing government faith amongst the agricultural rural classes in 1930's America. According to her, the narrative of the Japanese American peril episodes began way before the Japanese set foot in America. Through an analysis of American naturalist texts and authors, Lye comes to the understanding that the fear of Japanese rapid progress towards modernity and urbanization had always plagued the U.S. economic and political interests. Jack London and Ambrose Bierce's journalistic writings observing the war strategies amongst the Japanese and the Chinese provide detailed description of Japanese organization, minimalism, aesthetics and food, all of which startle their American senses and instincts for self-preservation.[194] Jack London first uses the term "yellow peril" to describe the "particular combinatory kind of anti-colonial nationalism, in which the union of Japanese technological advance and Chinese numerical mass present Western civilization with a potentially unbeatable force."[195] Thus, London signals the simultaneous formation of the Asiatic racial form and the American democratic ideals of aggression or accommodation towards

potential threats on the American ethnically saturated democratic landscape. In this light, the terms of "yellow peril" and "model minority" are "best understood as two aspects of the same, long running racial form, a form whose most salient feature, whether it has been made the basis for exclusion or assimilation, is the trope of economic efficiency."[196] In that sense, Lye subverts the exclusionary rhetoric of internment to one of inclusion which is based on the same trope of economic efficiency in more devious policy-making factors of American nation and trust- building. She argues that the same model minority aspect of Japanese farmers who worked their land flawlessly in California, doubling and tripling their profits every year, became subjects of the internment because of their skills.

Tracing the origins of the New Deal, started by the Roosevelt administration, a policy instituted to integrate and source incomes for lower classes of white Americans and boost white prosperity, Lye connects the origins of the policy to the U.S. political stance towards Asian Americans. Especially in California, where Japanese farmers formed a large part of the population and worked the agricultural land, the Japanese existed in a "caste like social structure,"[197] that sought to divide and hierarchize race. California, owing to the large amount of agricultural land and its closeness to the Mexican border, saw a large influx of different kinds of labor forces. Mexicans, Filipinos, and Japanese formed large numbers of the migratory and unstable labor population. Such large populations and the sustenance of all the labor populations led to a massive strain on the Immigration and Naturalization services, especially when labor unions began to straighten out and establish rules and demands. This occasioned a series of studies, led by the University of California's College of Agriculture under R.L. Adams, leading to a forced and mostly contrived association between agricultural land exhaustion and conservationism to Japanese farming practices. This notion of "Japanese soil damage" immediately led to assertions and unearthing of

Asian exclusionary ideas of Japanese as gold diggers and unstable populations who contributed to the drainage of U.S. land resources. In addition, the claim was intensified by the large Japanese population present in the U.S. Depriving the Japanese of their land, the War Relocation Authority sought to distribute lands evenly to anyone from the white population who could farm it. In addition, the subsequent Alien Land laws presented themselves as a result of the paranoia towards unsustainable land development.

Instead of reading the situation and politics as one of racist aggression and hegemony, Lye seeks to understand the WRA's role in the internment or the "Relocation" as one that helped the Japanese populations escape racial aggression and riots. Second, the concentrated Japanese population in California was distributed evenly on the U.S. landscape such that their skills in agriculture would benefit the country's economy more evenly. In that sense, the presence of conservationism initially used as a form of exclusion, was turned around by the WRA to be read as a preservation of human rights for minority communities in the U.S.[198]

In a simultaneous fashion, narratives about the internment range from exclusion to inclusion, with accounts of betrayal. Lye's analysis seeks to place the Japanese American predicament at the root of policy and decision making in the U.S., one that served to contribute towards the economy rather than be a result of malicious racist rhetoric. Her outlook almost serves to be an epistemic change in the narratives of the internment. But, instead of taking her research as the final narrative take on the internment, one can use this to deliberate on the nature of interment narratives in general.

The displacement caused to the Japanese American population served as an epistemological heuristic for narrating the Japanese experience of Americanization that would be unique amongst

all the racial minorities in the U.S. The progression of American perception of Japan, combined with the history of the Asian racial form in the U.S., American policy-making, and economic enterprises, along with the betrayal from the Japanese American community, all bring the otherwise "silent" population to the forefront. While exploring theories of displacement in Asian American Literature, the Japanese American paradoxical experience of silence and nationalistic crossroads become crucial towards understanding the ways in which populations of people become pawns in nationalistic exchanges of inclusion and exclusion. It also works towards driving home the claim by diaspora studies that the twoness of diaspora continues to effect populations, as exemplified by the Japanese Americans who were affected both by Japan's international policies of aggression and the U.S. policy of minority management in times of border crisis.

4. **War and Refugee Aesthetics: Korean, Vietnamese, Hmong, Cambodian and Laotian Literatures.**

Amongst the various displacement aesthetics of loss, mourning, trauma and silence exhibited in Asian American literature, one of the most recently emerging and tragically flourishing one is of war and refugee aesthetics. The first Asian Americans in the Chinese populations in the United States were not associated with war, but later populations of Filipinos, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian emigres and populations have always been characterized by war. Amongst these, two of the most paradoxical war refugee experiences can certainly be associated with the Korean and the Vietnamese populations. The Korean war is usually termed the "forgotten war" while the ambivalence of the Vietnam war lies in its naming, but in the U.S. is officially termed as the "American war."[199] Diasporic populations from Cambodia and Laos are also associated with the Vietnam war as representatives of the U.S. involvement in the

Vietnam War and are albeit the silent population in the most visible "American War." The continuities of these wars constitute the character that war sensibilities bestow on Asian American literature. As Kim and Nguyen state, the wars are not only "a continuous history of American, Japanese, and Chinese imperialism in Asia," but they also "invite a reconsideration of these foundational concerns of Asian American studies."[200] I shall touch on the dynamic of the Korean War and then focus on the Vietnam War in the U.S. and its memorialization on an American landscape, as this war provides the radicalization that Asian Americans needed during the 1960's and the defining refugee aesthetics that the war leaves on the combined Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian diasporic literature.

The period of the Korean War which has mostly been forgotten in larger American memory remains only as a reminder of the reality of the Cold War. The tensions between the Soviet Union and the U.S. solidify during this period, leading to the official declaration of the Cold War, but neither country encounters the war on their landscape. Korea is significant as the space that lends itself as the battlefield for the tensions that existed between the superpowers. Korean emigrants and diasporas forever signify the trauma of being homeless and uprooted during the war and the simultaneous silencing and lack of discourse on the major upheaval on their lives. Daniel Y. Kim cites the war as an exceptionally devastating conflict that led to over 3 million civilian deaths, a number that accounts for 20% of the pre-civilian war population. Kim asserts that the death count was majorly a result of the U.S. sanctioning of massive counter-insurgent strikes against North Korea, practically leaving the North a wasteland. Hence, the effects of the war were felt by populations that remained under oppressive regimes in Korea and the ones that migrated to the U.S. post 1965.[201] The silence of the uprooted Korean population and the traumas of the war manifests itself in over three decades of silence post-war and the mainly

autobiographical form of exploration of war narratives. Kim states that even after the flourishing of literature in the 1990's, "the focus of this literature has generally been of dislocations and disorientations of immigration and assimilation" (Kim, 61). These literatures mainly give voice to "forgotten traumas" of their families and ancestors and the intertwined nature of the war with multiple predatory superpowers such as the U.S., the Soviet Union, and Japan. Of more recent concern is also the two-faced nature of the U.S. involvement in the war, as Kim states, arguing that novels give life to "the humanitarian justification that has been used by the United States to intervene in Korea and elsewhere- illustrating how such altruism is nearly always Janus faced, bringing napalm as well as chocolate, saving orphans but also creating them."[202] Such theorizations of the war in the Korean American community strive to un-silence the war and focus on responsibility and healing while demystifying the politics behind the Cold War realpolitik. It also tries to destabilize the assumption that a war ends with a declaration or a treaty or retreat by war troops, because the effects of the war continue to linger and shape families for generations, thereby adding the dimension of traumatic continuity to lives that are displaced by war and insurgency.

In contrast to the Korean War, the period of the Vietnam War saw Asians in the U.S. as established legal citizens, participating and partaking in the empowering Civil Rights Movement. The 1965 Immigration and Citizenship law that changed that reality for Asian Americans was passed during the ongoing war crisis and refocused attention to Asian American immigration. In addition, the war sees itself in the U.S. at a time when increased media coverage and new technologies provided direct frontline information and war footage to diasporic Vietnamese communities and people in the U.S. Elaine Kim comments on the effect of the Vietnam War on Asian Americans stating,

> it was difficult for some Asian Americans not to respond to the racial character of American involvement in South East Asia. Stunned by television news footage and photographs of war-torn hamlets, some Asian Americans said they saw the faces of their friends and relatives in the visages of the Vietnamese peasants…They perceived the parallels between the war in Vietnam and the conquest of the Philippine resistance during the Spanish American War, in which one sixth of the Filipino population has been killed.[203]

The war was an experience in visuals and information that was brought about at the right juncture of Asian American history. The combination of legal citizenship, revisionist attitude towards history and the privilege associated with all of these factors, and the generational continuation mark the Vietnam War as the beginning of Asian American consciousness and groups that sought equal rights revolutionized Asian American visibility on media and in American everyday life. Issues of "war, colonialism, racism and experiences of being exiles, refugees and immigrants"[204] were brought to the forefront and instigated discursive politics. Viet Nguyen, while commenting on the war brings out the two faced nature of Asian American publicity through the war, "Vietnamese Americans find opportunities for self-representation open and closed to them because of the historical event and trauma with which they are so closely associated: insofar as 'Viet Nam' is tied exclusively to the Vietnam War, Vietnamese Americans tend to be visible so long as they speak of it and invisible when they speak of other matters."[205] According to Nguyen, visibility and invisibility continue to be thematic in many Asian American texts demonstrating the ethnic predicament of gaining an eager and enthusiastic audience. The nature of sensationalism that ethnic writers must provide to their audience in order to be heard reflects the problematic nature of the American melting pot strategy. The tokenized nature of the attention and empathy that displaced populations go through, in which the extraordinary becomes the normative for concern, while everyday problems are shuffled under

the carpet, comes up in numerous war theories. For example, the enormous casualties of the Vietnam War where, by 1968, half a million American troops served, among which 58,000 American nationals and approximately three million Vietnamese lives on all sides, military and civilians perished[206] was devastating enough to merit attention. However, unequal living conditions for Asian Americans in the U.S., unequal job opportunities, racism, and prejudiced everyday environments were considered normative. This sensation mongering attitude is also reflected in approaches towards ethnic texts.

One of the major multicultural misunderstandings is the perception that writings by ethnic writers must have authentic information about their ethnic groups. Such a view attributes the ethnic writer the role of the native informant who possesses some extra or secret information about their ethnicities. Such attitudes are reflected in the choices of writings that win various literary awards and accolades (as will be discussed in the conclusion) as well in the various controversies about truth claims in Asian American Literature. One such major "pen war" is of the one over Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior.* Daniel Y. Kim and Viet Nguyen assert that literatures of the Korean and Vietnamese Wars militate against this attitude and instead call attention to responsibilities of the U.S. intervention and the role that the Korean and Vietnamese played in their own countries.[207] By refocusing attention to people, to private spaces and everyday livelihood, these literatures touch on an important aspect of war theorization, that war is a result of everyday practices. Nguyen in his treatise on war theory *Nothing Ever Dies* states that, "War involves so many because war is inseparable from the diverse domestic life of the nation. To think of war solely as combat, and its main protagonist as the soldier, who is primarily imagines as male, stunts the understanding of war's identity and works to the advantage of the war machine."[208]

By refocusing attention from just the war, just the government policies, just injustices, and just violation of human rights, such rhetoric calls attention to every person and his role in the War. The fact that every person and normal lives are co-conspirators and contributors to the war regime initiates a refocusing of war aesthetics to responsibility as opposed to blame. The fact that normal life can be lived while a massive war ranges in another place is itself a phenomenon that Nguyen takes issue with. According to him, normal human activities such as buying food from supermarkets, buying a refrigerator, continuing with everyday routine and assuming that the war is being fought somewhere else negates the tension that a war environment perpetuates. So, by disrupting the everyday and calling attention to the materiality of a "normal" every day, Nguyen through the pretense of war calls attention to ethical individual responsibility, radical change, and an ethics of empathy and just memory for the other. In such a refocusing, the contingencies of war become the subject of discussion, and one understands that one's stability of life is contingent on the instability of someone else's every day. Such ethics of focusing on the other removes the war as a faraway event and instead leads to the understanding of the faraway as a place that is someone's home, someone's everyday life, someone's family, when that someone could easily have been me. Such a scenario facilitates the perception of displaced lives as a syndrome of the stability of our everyday and relegates the faces of trauma, mourning, loss and alienation as ones who facilitate the functionality of other secure landscapes.

A just and radical awareness of the other, in my opinion, can be the basis of reevaluating the spaces of security and harmony in our daily lives and lead, in this context of war literature, to a reevaluation of what constitutes Americanness. The notion of American exceptionalism is a textbook theory that is observed in the treatment of ethnic minorities, especially Asian American communities. One can take the beginning of American connection with China, for example.

Once the first ship, the *Empress of China* brought back goods from China in 1784, Chinese products, *chinoiserie,* became fetishized for their connection with the orient. *Chinoiserie* became a sign of status, of artistic taste, of connections and came to signify acceptance into social status. Shelley Sang Hee-Lee states that, Chinese objects and ideas played an instrumental role in the formation of U.S. cultural and national identity.[209] Even George Washington was known to be particularly fond of Chinese tea sets and Queensware as, even in the heat of battle, they reminded him of his "status and authority."[210] The beauty and delicateness of the oriental objects along with information by the sea merchants of the beautiful and enchanting women in China, already led to America's perception of China as an exotic place, but one albeit feminine.

A similar dynamic emerges with the profession of laundry and domestic chores by the initial Chinese migrants to America. This serves not only to enforce the feminized status of China, but also a delineation of the Chinese men into almost separate categories of humanity. Americanness was everything that the Chinese men did not stand for. The exclusion and stereotyping against the early Chinse Sojourners helped shape American ideas of nationhood, character, professionalism and ethics. One can observe a similar connection and trend with the handling of displaced lives who migrate to the United States. The U.S is usually a place of relief, refuge, escape and asylum for the war-torn migrants from the Korean and Vietnam Wars, but the status of the refuges in the U.S. are not what Americanness stands for. They are differentiated by their looks, language, clothing, values and ideologies. War literature has used this trope of *difference* to establish an alternate definition for Asian migrant communities.

Viet Nguyen analyses this trend while critically reading Le Ly Hayslip's *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* and *Child of War, Woman of Peace.* The first novel written in a naturalistic autobiographical style narrates Hayslip's migration to the U.S. from Vietnam where

Hayslip poses herself to the recipient of various traumatic events and deathlike experiences. Hayslip builds up a notion of self that suffers from the politics in Vietnam as well as a refugee on her migration to the U.S. Nguyen terms her as both the "subaltern" and the "emblematic victim" (Nguyen, *Race and Resistance*, 111). She is the subaltern, who through her lack of voice signifies the importance or the scope of a voice. She is also the "emblematic victim" whose moment of speech becomes the moment of interest and whose voice becomes inevitably the voice of the ethnic community. By establishing such victimhood, Hayslip distances herself from holding or having the capacity to hold or partake in any position of power, apart from the fact that she is the narrator of the novel. By identifying with the victim who is fallen and downtrodden, Hayslip also positions herself as one who not only had deathlike experiences but also has submitted bodies back to Mother Nature, as in buried bodies of the fallen of the war. In another experience in which Hayslip has been ordered to be killed by soldiers who repeatedly raped her, Hayslip refocuses attention to the plight of the body, which is left bruised and wounded. The repaired re-centering of the body focuses attention from the soldiers to the human body which eventually becomes the recipient of the damages of war.

A further rhetorical strategy also inserts Mother Earth and nature as recipient of the damages, along with receiving the body of the victim. Through these strategies, Hayslip sets up an oppositional materiality between the technological advancements of the War waged by the U.S. and its violation of the naturalistic body of the Vietnamese. In such a scenario, the war technology is only capable of perpetuating destruction, while the wounded body is capable of not only being one with Mother Earth, but also of healing. By associating the women's body with earth and nature, Hayslip characterizes the Vietnamese as people who are more connected with their natural and primal instincts, while the U.S. modern progressive agenda forces a constant

denaturalization of people and an eventual alienation of the body from its naturalistic factors of sustenance and growth. The hyper-masculinity of the American landscape directly contrasts the feminine and organic quality of the displaced migrant-hood that is the subjectivity proposed by the author. Again, by relegating displacement to a non-masculine category, one of inherent weakness of bodies in need, of traumas that are easy and violent, the cycle of the feminization of the displaced other is endorsed and maintained. Such endorsement again is not without precedent as Shelley Lee states that difference between the European version of the Orient differed from the American one because the American vision of the orient was one of delicateness, spirituality, and the organic other. Such polarizing dynamics that construct the orient are also seen in the polarizing attitudes towards the displaced other, who constantly become a stand-in for what America is not and will not be.

What do such polarizing attitudes do to the event of remembering or forgetting the Korean and Vietnamese Wars? Some of the most common forms of remembering that are used socially are narrative, remembrance days, museums, war monuments, art, films, etc. Viet Nguyen, while exploring the concepts of remembering and forgetting of War, accounts for the politics that are brought up in places of remembering and forced forgetting. Some traumas are remembered as they contribute to nationhood while others are deliberately forgotten so that one can move on with their lives. However, the ethics of remembering always operates through the act of remembering one's own, according to Nguyen.[211] As he states, the South Vietnamese who migrated to the U.S. insist on remembering their own, while the American side of the war insist on remembering their fallen soldiers and the American casualties. American memories of war often forget the real Vietnamese casualties while also glossing over the Cambodians and Laotians, furthering a remembrance of war that clearly delineates the enemy and the savior.

Nguyen calls such partial representative remembering as the "industrialization of war." He states that, "through rituals, parades, speeches, memorials, platitudes, and "true war stories", the citizenry is constantly called to remember the nation's own heroes and dead, which is easier to do when the citizenry also forgets the enemy and the dead."[212]

By making war a recurring public memory, it is the ritual of war that come to the forefront, and the event of war becomes a day of celebration, a holiday, a field trip instead of mourning and reflection. Such industrialization not only does a disservice to the memory of war but is also disrespectful of the ones who fell for its causes. One can take, for example, the movie industry that thrives off of war. One of the most famous movies on the Vietnam war is undoubtedly *Apocalypse Now.* One watches the brave soldiers kill the faceless victims, bomb villages, fly planes, have fun on the battlefield, get drunk, sacrifice their lives for the others, mourn over only the bodies of their fallen comrades, and, finally, take their stance as national heroes. The movie sells the masculine image of the brave and fearless soldier very well and promotes the faceless enemy-hood of the Vietnamese who are problems. Is this really just remembering? According to Nguyen, "A just memory opposes the kind of identity politics by recalling the weak, the subjugated, the different, the enemy, and the forgotten… A just memory constantly tries to recall what might be forgotten, accidentally or deliberately, through self-serving interests, the debilitating effects of trauma, or the distraction offered by excessively remembering something else, such as the heroism of the nation's soldiers."[213] The ethics of just memory can be achieved by opposing identity politics, recognizing and paying reverence and assuming responsibility of the marginalized and minimizing spaces of ambiguity in war narratives. In addition, by accepting that forgiveness for war atrocities[214], for crimes, minimal reparations might not be an achievable reality, it is only by recourse to a just memorialization

that one can expect to achieve some form of justifiable ethical ground for the lives that were destroyed and displaced by the wars.

Foregrounding Vietnam's losses and casualties in the narrative of the Vietnam War does not account for the entirety of the Vietnam War narrative in the U.S. One of the other major emerging areas are the literatures that emerge out of the Cambodian, Laos, and Hmong populations displaced by the U.S. intervention in Vietnam. The very fact that these are border states who were majorly affected but seldom brought up in discourse reflects the marginal state of the literatures emerging from the communities. In addition, the status and subjecthood of such literatures that confine themselves to perpetual refugee status relegates them to the margins of Asian American discourse which in the recent years has sought to move away from just immigrant subjectivities to one that is grounded in America and reflects the American ethnic narrative of survival. According to Cathy J. Schlund-Vials, Cambodian, Laos, and Hmong narratives assert their unique experience of displacement through solidarity with the victimhood of Shoah narratives.[215] Holocaust narratives' emphasis on the violation of human rights, universal justice, and unspeakableness of horror are characteristics that relegate them to a more universalized domain than just a localized experience. Exposing the complicity of the western world in the perpetuation of the Holocaust remains a prime narrative technique in these narratives. These thematic are taken up by the "other" collateral narratives of the Vietnam War. The addition of the term "refugee," in addition to the Holocaust narratives, gives the Cambodian, Laos and Hmong narratives their unique marginalized status, where they are not only collateral damages in a war that was fought in Vietnam by other superpowers, but also the universality of the narratives where wars and genocides end up destroying innocent people who just happened to be on the fringes of a war torn nation. Such unique "Refugee Aesthetics" as Schlund-Vials terms

them, is a unique addition to the displacement characteristics of Asian American literature. By calling attention to the "refugee," these narratives call attention to the variety of forms that are accessible in writing the experience of war, not only because of indigenous narrative patterns, but also because of the deprivation in forms that such narratives entail.

A narrative must suit the lived experience of the narrator and the familiar forms that the narrator is able to articulate the narration in; hence, such forms by these ethnic minorities often display a flair for "historical modes of creative expression in the country of origin flavored oral stories, oral poetry, and textile art. Such contexts to varying degrees anticipate an emphasis on poetry, as a blended oral and written form which assesses structures and rhythms from Hmong folklore, textile art, and music."[216] Other frequent genres are of elegies, the *bildungsroman*, autobiographies as "testimonial literatures, refugee accounts, and histories of genocide"[217] to represent first-person subjectivity in narration often as direct memory and, in many cases, as post-memorial narration. Such narratives foreground the fact that the "proving" of victimhood becomes the only mode of survival in the strict vetting processes towards claiming "refugeehood." The direness of the populations here is reflected in the fact that while moving away from victimhood as a narrative construct continues to be the everyday struggle of the Asian American writer, it is only through the claim to refugeehood that a lot of people in this section get to be promoted to the level of humanness from a nameless faceless population. The cycle of theorizing displaced lives from "strangeness" to a nationless stateless characteristic of displacement as stated in the previous chapter comes to a full cycle when one considers the first Chinese populations in the U.S. to be strangers and the ones at the very end, the Cambodian, Laotian and Hmong populations to be only recognizable in their statelessness.

5. **Conclusion: What constitutes Asian American displacement?**

The narrative of displacement for Asian American populations is a journey from exile, strangeness, and alienation towards war aesthetics or statelessness. This makes the state of displacement for Asian Americans to be inherently modern. They are stateless refugees, immigrants--sometimes forced, sometimes voluntary--but nevertheless integral to the formation of the ideologies of U.S. nationalistic narratives. Lisa Lowe analyzes the role of the Chinese immigrant laborers in the formation of narratives of modern liberalism in both the UK and the U.S. The influx of Chinese laborers in the UK and U.S. are tied very intimately to the period of abolition in the U.S. and, indeed, is an integral part of the success of abolition. Similarly, the migration of Chinese workers in the U.S. is at a crucial time of modernization of transport, industry and ideology. The building of the transcontinental railway is integral to the processes of movement and modernity in what can be termed as the modernization of the U.S. and the success of the modernization was intimately tied to the success of the Chinese labor force. These labor forces were exclusively excluded from nationalistic imagination or from constituting any part of the narrative of the nation, but were used exclusively as ones to build the national narrative against. Everything that the Chinese signified was excluded from the national narrative. The ability to completely other Asia formed the mechanism against which the yardstick of national definition was placed. In this situation, the "face" of the Chinese was nothing more than the face of the "absolute other," one that through its incapacity to define itself, defined the national narrative around them. This is the "intimacy" that Asian, exclusively Chinese laborers, for Lisa Lowe, holds with North America and England. As exemplified through the Filipino, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Laos and Cambodian diasporas, these Asian diasporas were excluded through every possible process, through narratives, through policies and finally by war and exile. These different modes of exclusionary practices indicate the different avenues through

which practices of marginalization were conceived of and implemented. However, all of the practices allude towards a united but uncoordinated force towards marginalization, connoting that even through uncoordinated, marginalization could gather force. Hence, the pervasive mentality towards marginalizing Asian populations were a part of the nationalist psyche that formed the consciousness of being American.

It will be incomplete to conclude a discussion on Asian American marginalization without a reference to the pioneering initiatives of Indian American populations in the U.S. These populations not only form the driving force behind the self-established stereotype of the "model minority" in the U.S. but also constitutes the force behind the progressive IT industries in the U.S. I draw from two pioneering researches in this area, first *Life Behind the Lobby: Indian American Motel Owners and the American Dream* by Pawan Dhingra and the recent *High-Tech Housewives: Indian IT Workers, Gendered Labor, and Transmigration* by Amy Bhatt. These authors reveal the hidden pioneering skills by Indian Americans in the U.S., who range from dependent sponsored populations to transmigratory IT works dependent on unstable H1B visas.

Pawan Dhingra situates the first Indian American motel business in the U.S. as a pioneering initiative by Indian migrants to the U.S. seeking respite from hard farming work back home and menial underpaid jobs in the U.S. The first-time immigrants took the opportunity to buy old, dilapidated and often abandoned buildings in neighborhoods and convert them into low-budget or medium-budget motels and hotels, both for short and long stay purposes. By doing this, these migrants capitalized on forgotten or neglected industries to deliver an essential service to communities seeking a facelift. The benefits were not just cosmetic, but also financial, where such businesses formed the economic backbone of the neighborhoods. Dhingra's research is crucial because it provides an alternative to the Chinese breakthrough in the laundry business in

the U.S. These small-time businessmen who often operated in co-ethnic cohorts and family establishments by pooling resources and money formed a large backbone for independent financial support as well as support for more family immigrants. This way, these businessmen not only supported themselves but also provided viable shelters in neighborhoods that needed expanding and support to cater to diversity and a variety of financial classes.

Amy Bhatt compliments Dhingra's research by delving into the unstable but steady stream of transmigrants in the U.S. comprised of Indian IT professionals and their families. Bhatt studies the role of such families in the U.S. IT industry and well as the reshaping of financial statuses in India along with changing family dynamics that reflect modern educated couples. However, these couples are also characterized by their sacrifices in the shape of "high-tech housewives" referring to the class of IT women who migrate to the U.S. to support their migrating husbands and often find their career opportunities have come to an end because of visa restrictions. Such transmigrants, referred to as "circulating brains," trade their skills in different places for financial as well as class mobility. This class of highly skilled IT individuals who migrate to the U.S. on H1B visas support the progressive IT industries, often holding high positioned developing jobs, with limited chances of visa renewal. However, the liminality and instability of the visa renewals are accepted because a lot of these workers view job opportunities in the U.S. as integral to further financial statues and work skills. Hence, the limited opportunity to work in the U.S. often makes them eligible to negotiate higher income jobs on their return to India, thus capitalizing on their mobility to the U.S. even beyond their stay. Bhatt also focuses on the gendered side of such involvement by bringing up women in the IT industry from India. Such women often migrate on spousal or family reunited visas to find themselves without a job, especially given the limited renewals of the H1B visas that their husbands hold. Bhatt's focus on these women to highlight

the un-paid but essential roles that such highly skills "housewives" play in sustaining the neo-liberal economic and political mobilities. Both Dhingra's and Bhatt's researches highlight an alternate role for Asian American migrants who cater to the capitalistic and industrial forces of growth, rendering immigration politics into an industry that does not just trade jobs, but incurs "brains" that accounts for the technological "progressiveness" and "advancement" of the U.S.

Analyzing these characteristics in the theories of Asian American studies, one understands the cyclical and progressive nature of displacement narratives in which the forms and nature of displacement are continually under flux. Displacement and exclusion continue to be the basis against which ideologies of nationhood and nationalism are formed and implemented. It is exclusion that helps define what can or cannot be included. The central tenet of all this marginalization is the *telos* of non-whiteness, around which different strategies of treating or theorizing the displaced populations evolve. This realization is a focal point for this chapter, because it brings into sharp contrast the visibility of race in these modes of exclusion, as analyzed here, as opposed to the treatment of displacement explicated in Chapter One. The theories of the stranger that transform into the figure of the immigrant in modern discourses of displacement, in the first chapter, is implemented on the bodies of the migrant and diasporic groups analyzed in this chapter. The conceptualization of the politics of nationhood formed on the "bare life" of the refugee, the immigrant, the prisoner, in the U.S. political scenario also revolves around the heuristic of race and of the nation state.

Displacement in Asian American literature offers a new range of epistemological factors to work with, such as migrancy, refugeehood, loss, grief, silence. These new modalities of experience have the capacity to provide new points of organizing experience rather than just the form of knowledge offered by the nation state, around which the modern experience of diaspora seems to

center. This *telos* of experience has its own benefits, but deliberating on the organization of displacement around diaspora, social theorists and philosophers are able to uncover the flaws of the model of governance stipulated by the nation state. The formation of the nation state is very much based on the idea of "imagined communities" as conceptualized by Benedict Anderson. It is a long-standing form of governmentality that has continued to become more and more hegemonic over time, such that it is not just any community, but a community that wields power through its people, infrastructure, politics, government, resources, and, often, through the exploitation of resources from other places. Studying the nation state from the vantage point of diaspora, therefore, has its own benefits and is productive to enhance governance.

This model of understanding displacement, one that centers around the heuristic of inclusion and exclusion, is the central axis for theorists like Judith Butler, Georgio Agamben, and Michel Foucault. Though productive, studying and understanding displacement and its dynamics and aesthetic solely through the model of the nation state tends to miss a variety of affective factors through which subtle micro-prejudices are enacted. For example, the new field of Refugee aesthetics pioneered by scholars like Gish Jen and Cathy J Schlund-Vials privilege the knowledge producing though the capabilities of refugees and migrants. These include issues like raising children or owning property, that are constantly monitored by the government and how immigrants incur the risk of children being taken away because of inadequate parenting. Or the risk of land being confiscated because of failing to comply with rules and regulations, owing to the culturally insensitive nature of policies. Such policies that separate mothers from children fail to take other or alternate parenting styles into account and invalidate alternate ontologies. Policies that facilitate the confiscation of lands invalidate different cultures and their engagement with land, raising livestock or cultivating a garden. Such modes of knowledge are not apparent

knowledge, precisely because they are sub-categories under the race, class, gender intersection. Ethnic literatures, examining these configurations, have the capacity to stimulate a new epistemological shift, such that one can revise not only one's behavioral patterns but also one's engagement with the other. The qualities of exile, silence, ridicule mentioned in the categories of this chapter is precisely an effort to understand the center of epistemological privilege facilitated by ethnic literatures and studies. The following chapter will uncover a few more niche recurring areas present in Asian American Literature that fall outside the legitimate governable areas of the nation state.

Section I, Chapter 3: Incoherence: Madness and Ungovernability in Asian American Literature

On Incoherence

"Incoherence- the lack of relationships" – Jerome Thale[218]

In the pen wars between Frank Chin and Maxine Hong Kingston over Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, one of the central concerns was the lack of coherent codes that would make the work acceptable within the Asian American community. According to Chin, Kingston's novel lacked a cohesive motive for presenting distorted images of Chinese American men and for disrupting popular myths. This was aggravated more by the incoherence of the experiential paradigm suggested by Kingston in "Memoirs of a Girlhood Amongst Ghosts," the subtitle of her book. The potential of the lack of coherence in a text is immense, as is demonstrated particularly through the debates among critics in Kingston's case. Incoherence, therefore, can have multiple ramifications and often has the potential to reveal alternate ontologies through which emerge new epistemologies, that is the aim of this chapter. The connecting thread between the selected texts is incoherence. First, I will evaluate the nature of the incoherence through a set methodology, second, I will interpret the texts, using the questions that emerge from the methodology, and finally, I will assess the emerging forms of epistemology from the interpretation. The central texts for the chapter in chronological order are *The Woman Warrior* by Maxine Hong Kingston, *Comfort Woman* by Nora Okra Keller and *Dictee* by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha. What my particular approach provides in identifying the nature of the incoherencies is not a celebration of the very fact of the "representation" of the instances of incoherence, as signified later in the analysis, but an analysis of the "lack" that is brought forth through attention to these incoherencies. What is it that is missing so that a text does not make sense? The chapter suggests

possibilities for what is "missing" and what that absence indicates societally, psychologically and epistemologically. I shall bring forth an analysis of genres that indicate epistemology through a "lack" of coherence, texts that are incoherent and their ensuing societal correlatives of this lack of coherence

When I first read the three texts analysed in the chapter, *The Woman Warrior, Comfort Woman, Dictee*, my first reaction to them was of literal confusion. What were they talking about? Why could I not understand them? What could I not understand? On my second reading, I realised that the incoherence of the texts was their strategy and that by constructing an alternative epistemology of misunderstanding, the texts were intentionally obscure and incoherent.

Jerome Thale outlines three kinds of incoherencies in his article "On Incoherence in Literature." From Thale's study of Bob Dylan's song "Tombstone Blues," one can come to the conclusion that poetry is an exercise of transforming coherence into incoherence, and vice-versa, purely as an aesthetic exercise in creativity. The incoherent material is transferred often from a reality to an incoherent form and then transferred back to coherence in the reader's interpretation. In such a case, the very constraint of form in literature becomes the medium to negotiate the "cleavage between experience and literature,"[219] often as a purely aesthetic exercise in creative potential. Keeping aesthetics, intentionality and playfulness in mind, Thale's three categories are "1) superficial incoherence which conceals an underlying coherence, not readily and immediately recognised; 2) grand mimetic coherence incoherence, which duplicates the peculiarly incoherent state of the world as perceived by the writer; and 3) sportive incoherence."[220] The categories are important because of the criteria Thale employs in compiling them. He understands incoherence in literature to be above general linguistic incoherence of relationship, logic, association or syntax. In fact, in general practice in the writing of literature, incoherencies are treated as

inconsistencies and incapacities and as evidence of poor skill. That is to say, the strict vigilance and policing of grammar, syntax, along with the conventions of British English, American English, etc. are strictly validated and encouraged. In such a scenario, incoherence in literature cannot be treated with anything but strict intentionality--one that involves strategies that reveal either a critical understanding of reality, or with the incongruity of the world with one's mind. In such a sense, it is understandable to opine that it is only discussed in "two places: in writing textbooks, where it is regarded as a disease of writing, to be prevented or to be cured by revision; and in discussions of mental illness, where "flight of ideas" is regarded as a symptom."[221] Especially in the case of literature, Thale distinguishes that as opposed to the "existence" of incongruity in the abovementioned situations, literature does not expressly deal with "existence" but with the "perception of coherence of incoherence by the reader."[222] In such a situation, literature and its forms can be understood as a "creative exercise" that can be a literary strategy that gratifies authors' mental acumen. Understood purely in that sense, the points that Thale parses out make sense.

I will evaluate some other categories in literary works and genres that emphasise these and some other problems of incoherence. The exercise will hopefully help us to evaluate the natures of the incoherencies and the various themes associated with them. I would like to put forth a classification of four different categories of texts. First, when we think of incoherence in classical literary works, one cannot ignore Kafka's *The Trial* or Eliot's *The Wasteland* or Gogol's *Dead Souls* or his short story "The Overcoat." These texts emphasise the literariness of the concept of "perception": how one perceives the world and, furthermore, how one writes of their perception of the world. The genre of "The Absurd" or later of Beckett's "Theatre of the Absurd," all work on the absurdity of the world. Meaninglessness of existence, the lack

of coherence in everyday activities, the fallible nature of humans, and, finally, a creative effort at "creating" the sense of dissonance that one experiences in their interactions with the world.

In contrast, a text like Natalie Sarraute's *Childhood* disrupts the reliance of just the creative in emphasizing the absurd, by introducing a focus on the process of writing. Sarraute's contribution to my premise in this chapter is immense, as it is through a reading of her *nouveau roman* efforts that I became aware not just of creative incoherence but the very incoherence of the process of research and writing. Sarraute's *Childhood* is her memoir which she writes at the age of eighty-three, recollecting only the first twelve years of her life. In doing so Sarraute makes the reader question her intentions, her recollection, her memory and the very process of writing that involves the writing down of 'truth' on paper. On one level, one recognises, just as Jerome Thale does, the incongruity of the world. Another level is of a creative distorting that introduces incoherence to understand the "experience" of incongruity. The in-between and in my opinion, a much more organic step that one often tends to miss, is of incongruity of the material of writing, the research, the matter of the text. Similar, but not quite, are two more classifications which might help clarify my fascination with Sarraute.

First, are the depictions of unravelling of the mind in Shakespeare, such as in *King Lear* and *Hamlet.* In both works, the major protagonists experience traumatic dissonances in their worlds that lead to them losing their senses of self. The degeneration of the self, the real-world manifestation of madness, and the literary way of perceiving the lack of reason is manifested in these characters. However, they are still Shakespeare's creative protagonists who are made to be insane for psychological effect. This is not the same as the incongruity of material. To explain this, we draw from the genre of magic realism. This is a genre that arises out of the works of Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier and Argentinian novelist Jorge Louis Borges,

and later, is made popular by Colombian Nobel prize winning novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, one of the most renowned works in the genre of magic realism, Marquez describes the fictional village of Macondo where everyone eventually has amnesia. It is a remote village where everyone forgets simple everyday words like book, bottle and door and, hence, must label them. By making the situation so realistic such that it seems almost magical, Marquez highlights the intense political situations in Columbia and in the larger context other Latin American countries that have been through so many successive unstable and violent dictatorships that it boggles human memory. By enacting the plague of insomnia, Marquez highlights the plight of the populations of people who have been subjected to brutal regimes as if the rest of the world has forgotten about them. A former political journalist and later an author, Marquez states that form and genre fall short in conveying the immense brutal reality of Latin America. The outsized nature of the reality contributes to the near incoherencies in his work. Paradoxically, the experience of amnesia can signify a wiping out and a rebirth, such that there is a growth of new memory and new histories that, he hopes, will be better than the ones in the past.

Marquez commented on the genre attributed to his work, namely "magic realism." The Nobel Prize committee's stated motivation for awarding him the prize was, "for his novels and short stories, in which *the fantastic and the realistic* are combined in a richly composed world of imagination, reflecting a continent's life and conflicts." It will be useful to analyse Marquez's response to the reception of his work and of the award's motivation in a quote from his Nobel lecture:

> Eleven years ago, the Chilean Pablo Neruda, one of the outstanding poets of our time, enlightened this audience with his word. Since then, the Europeans of good will – and sometimes those of bad, as well – have been struck, with ever greater force, by the

> unearthly tidings of Latin America, that boundless realm of haunted men and historic women, whose unending obstinacy blurs into legend. We have not had a moment's rest. A promethean president, entrenched in his burning palace, died fighting an entire army, alone; and two suspicious airplane accidents, yet to be explained, cut short the life of another great-hearted president and that of a democratic soldier who had revived the dignity of his people. There have been five wars and seventeen military coups; there emerged a diabolic dictator who is carrying out, in God's name, the first Latin American ethnocide of our time. In the meantime, twenty million Latin American children died before the age of one – more than have been born in Europe since 1970…
>
> I dare to think that it is this outsized reality, and not just its literary expression, that has deserved the attention of the Swedish Academy of Letters. A reality not of paper, but one that lives within U.S. and determines each instant of our countless daily deaths, and that nourishes a source of insatiable creativity, full of sorrow and beauty, of which this roving and nostalgic Colombian is but one cipher more, singled out by fortune. Poets and beggars, musicians and prophets, warriors and scoundrels, all creatures of that unbridled reality, we have had to ask but little of imagination, for our crucial problem has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable. This, my friends, is the crux of our solitude.[223]

The lecture draws attention to the nature of the political reality that is so brutal and absurd that to countries and other academies it can only be perceived as "magical." The lack of "conventional means to render our lives believable" becomes a heuristic of emerging ontology. Believable to whom? Why must one strive to make her realities believable? By whose standards? These are conventional questions. Alternately, there emerges the idea of the existence of a "believable" reality, one that already exists and is considered the normal. Anything extra-believable in that sense or extra-realistic becomes the magical. Hence the quota of "magic" becomes a contested category. What is the magical? Is it really magic or is it a measure of our ability to perceive?

Here, I would like to return to my analogy of the potential messiness of the data that a text draws from, a messiness that *is* the nature of the data. No amount of necessary ordering of that data can make the reality a palatable reality that can be believed. The function of a form, so crucial to the ordering of speech or reality takes a place of prime importance here. Must a writer impose the form on the data such that the data or text makes sense, or must the form be adapted

to fit the data? The latter manifests itself in the previously mentioned works of Beckett and Sarraute. Also, Maurice Blanchot's short story "The Madness of the Day" somewhat uses the form of the short story to disrupt the form, by questioning it. At the end of story, the protagonist who has been driven to madness and disbelief exclaims "A story? No. No stories, never again." By expressing his confusion with form and an acceptance of the flight of reason, the short story beautifully blends itself with the inability of being able to cohere experience, itself into a form. It highlights the moment when experience does not lend itself to a smooth narration as the narration does not do justice to the experience. In such an instance, how must a reader understand the text's sense of self and their own sense of self or bestow any readability on a text? This was one of my first impressions on reading Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, Keller's *Comfort Women* and Cha's *Dictee.*

The interpretation of the selection of texts to understand the nature of their incoherencies will be impossible without a methodological parameter because of the sheer elaborateness of the problem of incoherencies in literature as examined above. This is primarily because of the breadth of devices that the authors use to convey their experiences. Kingston's sense of confusion in the text is much in keeping with Sarraute or Blanchot, where the narrator herself suffers from intense conflict and confusion and, hence, is unable to formulate a linear concrete narrative. The narrative progression occurs in sections of different lengths, most of which seem fantastic. In most of my classes, when I have taught the text, students have come up with their former experiences of reading these particular texts or other texts and have labelled it as magic realism. It seems like the very presence of incoherence in a text confers on it this label. In Keller's *Comfort Women*, the narrative format is similar to trauma memoirs of a parallel parent-child narration to understand impressions and inconsistencies of memory. The content, however,

very quickly veers from any kind of understandability. The predominance of cultural and social superstitions and spells almost render it into the magical category, but not completely, by the grace of Becca, the child's confused and angry narration. *Dictee* presents a more complicated and fragmented text then the former ones. Cha uses a variety of strategies from stream of consciousness narration, to spelling punctuations, different languages, pictures, theatrical experiences, and misinformation to draw attention to the text. Urging the inattentive reader to shed her complacency, the text also underlines the general confusion of an interlinguistic, intercultural and interpolitical existence. All three texts highlight the need for cohesiveness in both their content and in their forms. Even though the formats of the texts are sometimes understandable and clear, the nature of the content also throws the reader into a tizzy and, hence, in need of a method in order to be able to interpret.

Methodology as Theory

"I do not claim to be a complete critic or a critic at all. I am not really interested in a text unless I feel it understands something I cannot yet understand myself."

Mihai Spariosu, *Diacritics*, Spring 1978[224]

Fine writers help us "see" things in tangible ways and "feel" things through intangible means. Their ability to turn the world at a tilt, to explore our humanity and inhumanity challenges me in ways that theories and concepts do not."

Emily Towns, *Womanist Ethics,* 2006[225]

The function of methodology is important in this chapter because of my reluctance to rely only on concepts to bring about my understanding or interpretation of the selection of texts. I want to rely on a set of questions that arise out of previously tested methods of interpretation and out of an examination of paragraphs from the texts, so as to ensure that my interpretation of the

texts are sensitive and, yet, not biased based on my personal opinions. I adopt a feminist methodology because the texts under analysis that deal with incoherence manifests themselves through their women protagonists. Taking the discourse of insanity as a discourse centred around women, the set of methodologies I adopt provides me with the possibility of a conceptual interpretation that provides both questions and directions. Let us take an example from *Comfort Woman* for analysis:

> To ensure my safe passage through the critical year of the fire snake, my mother decided to meet me after school one day in order to purify the campus. Taking the same route as the morning bus, my mother walked and chanted her way from The Shacks to Ala Wai Elementary School. Every few yards, she dipped into her shoulder bag and threw out handfuls of barley and rice--scrap offerings to lure the wandering dead and noxious influences away from the path I took to and from home everyday. By the time she reached the campus, she had collected a gang of kids. "Eh, bag lady" Eh, crazy lady", they called out as they circled her. "Whatchu doing? Feeding the birds?" [226]

I take this paragraph to be good example of understanding the conflict between the comprehensible and the incomprehensible in the text. Let us first account for what we can understand in the paragraph. We understand that Becca, who knows about her mother's spells, is in school and that her mother wants to make sure that she is safe. The structure of the paragraph is coherent and does not have any structural inconsistencies such as grammatical inconsistencies or different languages or misinformation. We understand the children's wonder at Becca's mother because they do not understand why anybody would walk to school when she can ride a bus or why a woman would sprinkle grains on the street. The children's incomprehension of the mother also reflects the reader's incomprehension of the mother. So, let us understand what stands out as incoherent in the paragraph. First, the reason for ensuring safely is in itself not clear. Why is the "year of the fire snake" a critical year and why would it harm Becca? How does the sprinkling of "rice and barley" allay any of the effect that the year can have on Becca? In addition, what role does "rice and barley" play in "purifying" the school? How will the

"offerings" lure the wandering dead or dispel any noxious influences? Hence, the children's reactions are warranted since they either do not understand the mother or have never seen anything like her activities. The coherence of the children's activities renders the mother doubly incoherent to the reader. The different levels of incoherencies here between the text and the reader are, first, of visual incoherence and, second, of practice, where activities and events mentioned in the texts do not support or conform to the system of belief that informs me as a reader. If we take the gap between the mother's activities and the children's reactions as a praxis for the emerging methodology, then following are the questions I would like to ask. I will further follow the questions with an explanation and selection of methodology by other researchers.

What do we know about the mother? What do we know about the children? Why are the mother's activities unintelligible to the children? What is the cleavage of knowledge and experience that we are looking at? Why is it important to understand the mother's activities, culturally, sociologically, psychologically, nationalistically and in a humanistic perspective? Finally, how is the mother's knowledge important? I will try to answer these set of questions during my interpretation of the texts. The questions are based on information that I find difficult to understand and are beyond the parameters of my knowledge, centred around the information in the stated paragraphs. However, to provide parameters and checks for what I consider to be the gaps in my knowledge, the set of methodologies I propose to use will help me establish a progressive process for my interpretation that begin with the text and discourses on the issues surrounding the texts.

The first approach I will take towards literary interpretation, one that conveys a different ethics of sensitivity and knowledge in literary interpretation, is based on Paula Gunn Allen's methodological essay. Gunn Allen contributes to the method of analysis in interpretation based

on her position as a Native Indian feminist researcher in "Kochinnenako in Academe: Three Approaches to Interpreting a Keres Indian Tale." In this particular article, Gunn Allen discusses the problems of writing down of a popular Keres Indian tale. This particular oral narrative that is usually narrated and used for ritualistic narration to signify the change of seasons is written down by Gunn Allen's uncle John M. Gunn in the format of a short story. The first problem that Gunn Allen signals is one of the changes of narrative structure, from an oral narrative to a short story. By adapting the structure of a short story to an oral narrative, the focus of the narrative morphs from one of harmony, unity and change to one of conflict, hierarchy and dominance. Gunn Allen states that in many ways, "literary conventions, as well as the conventions of literacy, militate against an understanding of traditional tribal materials. Western technological-industrialized minds cannot adequately interpret tribal materials because they are generally trained to perceive their entire world in ways that are alien to tribal understanding."[227] Through this comment, Gunn Allen discusses my former point of "gap in knowledge" and the sensitivity that is required for the interpretation of a text that is based on the understanding of difference. The focus on sensitivity and difference in the process of interpretation are my main adaptations from Gun Allen's article.

To underline her points further, Gunn Allen discusses the interpretation of the adapted short story, first through its adaptation of form, then as a Keres interpretation, a modern feminist standpoint and finally a feminist tribal interpretation. Three structural points that Gunn Allen highlights in the Keres interpretation are, first, of dissonance in understanding the actual narrative through the short story; second, the shift of central focus of the story; and, finally, acceptance of the overall narrative because of the absence of any other frameworks of inscribing the story. The acceptance of a framework because of the lack of conventional,

traditional ones highlights the submission of the narrative to larger forces of articulation and the control and domination implicit in such submission. The modern feminist interpretation, according to Gunn Allen, imposes the format of racial and structural conflict on the short story. The shift of the centre of focus is strengthened further in the modern feminist interpretation because of the predominance and trend of reading the race, class, gendered structure on any narrative interpretation. Finally, the feminist tribal interpretation according to Gunn Allen will succumb to the fallacies of the two former readings and still acknowledge that something odd is happening in the tale. However, in keeping with the Keres interpretation, the feminist tribal interpretation will still not reject the short story because of the "absence of real knowledge of the colonizing process of story-changing,"[228] and, instead, these feminist tribal interpreters will change their perception of themselves and of their view of the world. Gunn Allen's article very astutely underscores the important role of interpretation of texts in the formation of the narrative as well as the distortion of the interpretation based on the positionality of the interpreter, as evidenced by the change in interpretation by the "feminist" interpreters. The importance of culturally sensitive and knowledgeable interpretations cannot be ignored, and one must pay due diligence to the culture under research instead of adapting the narrative to fit the interpreter's sociocultural environment.

The only criticism of Gunn Allen's piece that can be made is one of standpoint. Gunn Allen stresses the sensitivity that the position of an insider brings to the interpretation. The privilege of the standpoint must be acknowledged in this case. Standpoint theory is a concept of Marxist epistemology that stresses the value and origin of knowledge. Knowledge according to standpoint theory is never value-free and is always a result of practical labour and human interests. In addition, Marxism also privileges the role of economic class in the creation of

knowledge and holds that the working class enjoys a distinct epistemic privilege. Nancy Harstock adopts this Marxist theory into a Feminist Standpoint Theory that emphasizes the role of Foucault's "subjugated knowledges"—that is, knowledges generated just by the privilege of the position, such as "prisoners or slaves."[229] Feminist standpoint theory holds the position of women to have epistemic privilege by virtue of its positionality in the sites of family, domesticity, oppression and privilege. Jagger asserts that, "women's distinctive social experiences generate insights incompatible with men's perceptions of reality, and these insights provide clues as to how reality might be interpreted from the standpoint of women."[230] This, in my interpretation, will be used to draw attention towards the learned knowledge of the location or of the self through everyday activities, practices, codes of behaviour and an attention to social locations, interests, and commitments. However, traditional criticisms of the feminist standpoint theory revolve around the centrality and totalization of the standpoint of the researcher or the feminist researcher. Assuming the heterogeneity of women or of one unified group is crucial to the full realization of the potential of the theory.

My interpretation will draw from the basic methodological parameters of feminist standpoint theory which are: first, to recognise the marginalised and oppressed as valid subjects for epistemological investigation; second, to identify the categories of ruling that the subject can be categorised under; third, to acknowledge categories for other knowers in and around the main subject; and finally, to be aware of my own shortcomings as a researcher owing to my own position and standpoint. These methodological parameters will help me impose an additional level of balance to the Paula Gunn Allen method of sensitive interpretation to allow space for the subjectivity of a standpoint.

The privilege of standpoint from the experience that comes with it is another crucial place to establish. Joan Scott establishes this point in her powerful article "The Evidence of Experience." The relevance of the article lies in literature's relationship to and reliance on experience. For example, in a text like *Heart of Darkness* and in many others. the place of experience that bestows the text with credibility has been devaluated by changing discourses. The change of discourse over time, as well as the criteria for expression of experience, are revised over time. Discourses of political correctness have been revised over time, focusing attention on the atmosphere for the experience and on the discourses for relaying and narrating the experience. Joan Scott focuses on the role of experience for historians whose texts and writings are often subject to invisible class and privilege standards and, hence, are not applicable towards productive discussions. She argues that an historical explanation must call into question the originary status of the experience and that this will only happen "when historians take as their project not the reproduction and transmission of knowledge said to be arrived at through experience, but the analysis of the production of that knowledge itself."[231]

In a larger scenario, Scott refocuses attention from just the individual experience to the epistemology of the category of relaying an experience or to the levels and abstract forms of emotion or feeling in the process of experiencing. Here, not only is the "form" or the "genre" used to narrate the experience under scrutiny but also the claim to "experience" that the author or writer has of the event being narrated. Scott's epistemological sensitivity adds to Gunn Allen's cultural insider knowledge as it helps question every standpoint and does not let the reproduction of naturalised categories dominate discourse and interpretation. My analysis will draw from Scott by being sensitive to revisiting ontology as a fixed construct rather than a fluid and mutable background that is subject to cultural and sociological constructs.

Further, the categories of cultural sensitivity, interpretation and experience will benefit from a larger opening up of subjugated knowledges by being able to imagine them as a global processes and webbed connections. Donna Haraway argues for the understanding of the world as a starting point for a variety of conversations rather than a unitary source of knowledge. Knowledge, according to her, can have different starting points in feminism, in biology, and in other purer sciences and can have the capacity of epistemological reflexivity and of encouraging further webbed connections on similar epistemological revisions. This adds to my already existing structure for numerous checks and balances towards opening up of the discourse rather than a narrowing of focus. This is exactly the standpoint that I propose—namely, intersectional privileges.

The variety of viewpoints that an intersectional approach can bestow on a conversation is the acknowledgement of places for intersection and influence rather than a closed discussion of narrowed focus. Both Donna Haraway and Kimberle Crenshaw's perspectives allow me to draw from the methodological steps of interpretation from Gunn Allen, Hartstock, and Scott and to expand the adaptability of my topic to larger discourses. The opening up of avenues of discussion that an intersectional approach can facilitate, much like the metaphor of a car, used by Crenshaw, caught up in an unfortunate accident, enhances the multidimensional function of my interpretation. Crenshaw's car can be caught in an accident because of a variety of forces that might be immediate or a causal effect of the past. To take the accident as the fateful meeting of the researcher to her research subject or the text can help view the moment of contact as the possibility of a variety of interpretations. I would like to look at my texts and their interpretation as a similar fateful accident through which I intend to broach conversations on a variety of topics with my methodological parameters intact.

Finally, the set of questions I intend to pose for my interpretation of the texts are: What do we know about the text? What information does the text provide us? What information does not make sense? Why does it not make sense? What are the possible experiential paradigms that are necessary in order to understand the incoherence in the text? What is the cleavage of knowledge in the text and our lack of experience that we are looking at? How must we understand the "experience" and its evaluation? Why is it important to understand the incoherence in the text, especially culturally, sociologically, psychologically, nationalistically, and in a humanistic perspective? Finally, how is the knowledge and understanding of the incoherence important? Based on these assumptions, I intend to render an interpretation of the texts that will help comment on the larger issue of the chapter and the dissertation, namely the aesthetics of the foreign in the body of selected texts and their epistemological importance in the larger body of Asian American Studies.

Interpretation: What the Text Conveys

The Woman Warrior

The Woman Warrior, in general, is a difficult text to analyse and for which to agree on interpretation of. The first realization that a reader comes to in a text like this is the sheer possibility and mutability of interpretation. There is no fixed possibility of meaning and the absence of the possibility becomes the root for incoherence in the text. The text is labelled a "memoir" and involves fantastical descriptions of scenes and events in the life of the protagonist. So, the problem of interpretation becomes the problem of reconciling and finding meaning for the fantastical such that it emulates the realistic. However, must the fantastical be relegated to the

realistic? Or can the fantastical be a part of real life? Finally, can the fantastical just be the lack of knowledge?

Kingston's text begs these questions when it describes the protagonist's journey in its second chapter, entitled "White Tigers." In this chapter, Kingston describes her fantastical and mythical journey through myths and stories throughout the different terrains of her childhood. Here, the myths of Fa Mulan and Ngek Fei combine to create a journey that is at once historical, mythical, brave, and fantastic. This is one of the "fantastical" places in the text that received a lot of criticism from Asian American critics like Frank Chin, Benjamin Tong, and Katheryn Fong.[232] Kingston begins the fantastic part of the narrative by alluding to the bravery of women's narratives in her mother's stories. She seems to have partaken in their bravery stating that, "At last I saw that I too had been in the presence of great power, my mother talking story" (20). This is the beginning of the role of the fantastical throughout the rest of the narrative. Wild stories of ghosts, fantastical journeys, unrealistic experiences dominate the text; however, most interpretations miss the fact that all of these happen in and through discourse, through the mother's talk stories and, often, in conversations between the mother and daughter. Especially, in White Tigers, three references towards the extreme fantastical as they happen in the daughter's imagination after being saturated with the mother's talk stories are, first, references to the old man and woman; second, the narrator's experiences of enduring extreme conditions to be a warrior; and third, the magic gourd. These experiences in the chapter appear to be what my students' term, "magical realism." However, on carefully reading the texts, one must not miss the narrator stating:

> "It would seem that this small crack in the mystery was opened, not so much by the old people's magic, as by hunger. Afterward, whenever I did not eat for long, as during

> famine or battle, I could stare at ordinary people and see their light and god. I could see their dance. When I get hungry enough, then killing and falling are dancing too."[233]

This particular excerpt and chapter provide an extra-fantastical glimpse of the narrator in the process of her narration. As the protagonist re-tells her mother's narratives as she heard them, she imagines the impact that the story had on her. The visions of the men and women, the mythical animals are hallucinatory images that occur out of extreme starvation. The moments of real occurrence of periods of crisis, maybe of extreme work or lack of resources, in the child narrator's mind are interwoven with moments from the stories that correlate with her real situation. In that sense, the co-existence of fact and fiction, the reality and the narrative in a diasporic life is beautifully highlighted.

Often, the inability of being able to separate the two realms of factual and fictional experience leads to the incoherence in the text. This is observed even in the Chinese myths of Fa Mulan and Ngek Fei, which are combined to create an urban and modern version of Chinese American mythology that continue to define the possibilities of Asian American writing to this day. The criticisms of this fictional versus factual, magical versus realistic aspects of the text were accrued because of the legitimised category of experience that the genre of memoir calls for. Namely, memory in the memoir is expected to be only through experience, but Kingston's inclusion of the fantastical contests the paradigm of experience in the text. We shall further discuss this aspect of incoherence in terms of the larger aspects of linguistic and psychological incongruity in the text at the conclusion of this section.

The next chapter in the text titled "Shamanism" explores the mother's escapades through her medical school. It involves burning ghosts, finding communist spies, and balancing the spirits in the world. The themes of ghosts start from this chapter and contributes to the overall feeling of

confusion in the text. What are these ghosts? Why is everything a ghost? "Taxi Ghosts, Bus Ghosts, Police Ghosts, Fire Ghosts, Meter Ghosts, Ghosts, Tree Trimming Ghosts, Five-and-Dime Ghosts… White Ghosts… Black Ghosts."[234] How does the mother kill ghosts? The perception of ghosts or the *kuei* in Chinese culture is a more palpable existence than in western societies. The liminality of life and afterlife and the fluidity of both existences are manifested in the discussion of ghosts both metaphysically and in folklore. For example, references to the "water ghost" when her aunt jumps into the well and the "ghost wedding" when Fa Mu Lan is absent from home for a long time and the family ceremonially performs her wedding to her husband are everyday cultural rituals that are observed in traditional Chinese Culture. The "water ghost" or the "water monkey" is believed to refer to people who commit suicide or accidentally die, and forever wait in drowned or sunken places to seduce or to force people to fall into the water so as to take possession of their body in order to reincarnate. Similarly, ghost marriages are common in cases when one or both parties are dead. Just like the wedding of living people, the two families exchange dowries and bridewealth and hold a wedding ceremony. Some of the purposes of such a wedding are to integrate an unmarried daughter into a patrilineage, to ensure that the family line is continued, or to prevent the younger brother from marrying before an elder brother.[235] Such folkloric beliefs intersect with Chinese metaphysics in which everyday life is not devoid of afterlife but continues to be an active and fruitful part of it.

Further, one must take into consideration the title of the chapter "Shaman." The protagonist's mother has the capacity of killing ghosts because she is a shaman. This kind of capacity is usually manifested in people who are called into having the capacity to balance for the tangible and the intangible world. Shamanism focuses on energy, harmony and balance. All of these are achieved through the balancing of the human and the spirit world. The mother exhibits the

capacities of dealing with both these worlds and of curing illnesses, identifying weaknesses and negative energy.

Moreover, the retaining of a perfect balance between the different energies in the different worlds necessitates rhythms and practice. Hence, the mother cannot sleep at night once she migrates to the U.S. because "it does not shut down for the night."[236] The general balance of environments that the mother protects is also lost upon her migration since her skill levels are devaluated and her medical practice is not a valid set of skills anymore. In reading the text this way, one understands that the term "magic realism" does not really apply to the text because the practices, actions and events are based on belief systems that exist in reality and are practiced, just not in a westernized context. It is also for this reason that the mother's shamanistic skills are kept confident by her group of colleagues and do not really show up in her medical school certificate because the school is run by English nuns who believe in western medicine practices. The chapter, hence, also exhibits the loss in transference of experiences. The transmission of experience through the form of an oral narrative that is eventually committed to the page renders it incoherent because of its form of a memoir. In fact, the incoherence renders the text realistic, as the disorderliness of real-life manifests itself in the lack of credibility of the narrative.

In addition, the ghost also might signify a reversal of gaze, as all the ghosts are professional ghosts doing everyday jobs like driving taxies, collecting garbage, delivering newspapers and mail. In that sense, the ghosts are the White people in the U.S. that the mother encounters and feels no attachment to whatsoever. Hence, they remain nameless, faceless, soulless and without an identity for her. On that note, the ghosts signify the carrying over of cultures diasporically, where both home and host culture manifest their ghostly existence. This probably accounts for

the child protagonist's confusion, as her entire life as a Chinese girl in the U.S. is nothing but a liminal ghostly presence that is neither here nor there, neither in China and nor in the U.S.

These two chapters, "White Tigers" and "Shaman" in the text are the chapters that bring the linguistic word play and metaphorical incoherence in the text. On one level, the chapters reveal diaspora and lives in diaspora through a playful unravelling of the different codes of everyday life, one that constantly swings between two extreme horizons of recognition and alienation. The young girl narrator is familiarised with Chinese myths and ways of life through her mother's fantastical talk stories, while the American landscape remained immutable and sharply white in the background. The incoherence between presence and absence in the landscape, myths and context contributes to the incoherence in the child narrator's ability to understand her surroundings as well as the reader's incapability to fully grasp the text, especially without a careful reading.

Finally, the last kind of incoherence in the text is one involving the presence and the role of characters who are small and collateral, but who also exhibit incoherence through their presence and activities. The first one of these kinds of characters is the crazy lady in "Shaman." The mother's village is raided, and an atmosphere of panic and anxiety spreads through the village. The constant bombing and raids add to the fear of wartime devastation of life and property. In one brief moment of peace, the crazy lady appears and celebrates this peace. She is immediately perceived as a spy and eventually stoned and hacked to death. The crazy lady is perhaps the symbol and the symptom of the war. As she emerges in the narrative, she is wearing a headdress and bright colours, and she greets the animals and sways in the breeze. Her movements are a picture of harmony, and hence there in nothing wrong in her pointing towards the planes. Yet, an activity that would be perceived as completely normal during ordinary times is rendered

antagonistic during the time of war. In the face of such transference of values, one wonders if the "craziness" of the lady is inherent or if it is a result of war.

Similar references are made to crazy women and girls later in the last chapter entitled "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe." The narrator states that within a few blocks of her house, there were half a dozen crazy women and girls.[237] She begins by identifying a lady who is crazy, without any way of identifying why. She assumes that it might be the husband's behaviour towards her that renders her crazy. There would be occasional doors slamming in their house, though there were no children to playfully do that. Soon after that the husband disappears, and then, she disappears, being sent away to an institution. A few years later, she returns with a child, and even through her mental faculties are diminished, she dies happy, tending and cooking for the child. One can associate her mental degeneration with the anxieties incurred from her family and to the lack of having a child. The narrator lets slip that such instances were not uncommon and that there were brief references to places like "Napa and Agnew" which could be references to mental institutions.

Furthermore, the narrator mentions another "crazy" girl named "Crazy Mary." Mary seems to be the only crazy one in the family. As opposed to the other children, Mary seemed to have eyes that were different and was often not as well-groomed as the other children. That made her stand out as the "different" child in her cohort. The children's reaction towards her are of caution and fear. It is also because of her strange smell, one that the narrator identifies as camphor which, she mentions, is supposed to be a cure for madness. Or one wonders if it is a cure for difference?

The other crazy woman mentioned right after Mary, who does not get better is someone the children name Pee-A Nah. The word is childish garble but simultaneously could mean the garble

associated with the crazy. Because, craziness does not have one defined meaning or characteristic, it just means incongruity with coherence. The word Pee-A Nah signifies the ordering of what the children could not fathom and hence term as "insane." As if in congruity with the other impersonal crazy characters and crazy narratives in the text, Moon Orchid emerges for a brief moment and quickly dissolves into an incongruent state of mind on her migration to the U.S. She had led a perfect life of peace and comfort in China, but the complete reversal of values and culture that she experiences on her migration to the U.S. leads her to lose her functionality. Additionally, the final verbal disowning and attitude of disregard from her husband in the U.S. leads her pride and ego to crumble. These scattered instances of insanity through the text suggests a pattern for what is termed as "insane behaviour" as opposed to sanity.

The last chapter in which the discussions on sanity and insanity occur is a chapter that tests the limits of communication and language. The struggle associated with a multilingual identity is present in terms of the myth of Ts'ai Yen, who is a Chinese poetess. Ts'ai Yen was captured by the barbarians as a young girl; she had children that she had to abandon when she was bought back to her father's family in order to continue the family name. In the time that she bore children for the barbarians, she could not communicate with her children through language, though they laughed with her when she laughed and sang along whenever she sang, often thinking that she had gone crazy in her linguistic isolation. The narrator's struggle with balancing between her linguistically Chinese household and English school is constantly under tension in a similar way. Her Chinese-ness is opaque to her English school classmates, while her Englishness is transactional to her family, who constantly expects her to be their translator. In such a situation, the narrator tries to define the limits of sanity and insanity:

> I thought talking and not talking made the difference between sanity and insanity. Insane people were the ones who couldn't explain themselves. There were many crazy girls and women. Perhaps the sane people stayed in China to build the new, sane society. Or perhaps our little village had become odd in its isolation. No other Chinese, neither the ones in Sacramento, not the ones in San Francisco, nor Hawaii speak like us.[238]

It seems like speech delineates the limits between the sane and the insane. The capacity of speech combined with the intelligibility and relationality of the speech forms the cause and effect of what is termed as "crazy" in the text. The point of difference itself becomes the point of demarcation of the rational and the irrational. To sum up, incoherence in the text is threefold. First, there is the confusion with genre that leads to the conflict between fiction and reality. This dichotomy informs the second aspect of incoherence in the text, namely one of the ghosts, which occurs on the level of the metaphysical and of identity. Finally, the last level of incoherence is of madness which becomes significant of degenerating mental health issues in the community, reflections of diasporic trauma and, finally, of silence and speech. In addition, all references to craziness are attributed to women. Does one assume that culture affects women more adversely than it affects men? If not so then what must one of make of such gendered experiences and the rampant encounters with experiences like that?

Comfort Woman

Comfort Woman follows a traditional structure for its novelistic experience. The form of autobiography that details parallel accounts of a traumatic experience or an exceptional experience can be seen in texts like *Home is Somewhere Else* by Desider Furst and Lilian R. Furst, as mentioned in Chapter 1. It is an "Autobiography in Two Voices" and details the parallel experiences of a father with his child daughter during the Holocaust. However, adapted to the style of a narrative like *Comfort Woman* the narrative shifts to an intersectional format, from the exploration of the event to one exploring life as lived with the postmemory of

the event. Becca, the daughter does not have any direct experience of her mother being a "comfort woman" for the Japanese soldiers in Korea, but she details her life with her mother as lived after her mother's migration to the U.S. The narrative emphasizes the effects and possibilities of the life lived post a traumatic event.

For the most part then, *Comfort Woman* is a traditional mother daughter narrative. The daughter Becca's experiences are painful, but straightforward. Her struggle at school because of the insecurity caused by her mother's spells, the difficulty of dating and relationships in a multiethnic and multicultural scenario, the transnational nature of diasporic life, makes the narrative an exemplary Asian American tale. What then is the incoherence in the narrative?

The problem with understanding does not just begin with the introduction of the mother Akiko, but also with Becca's reporting of her conversations with her mother, which though clearly incoherent seems to make sense to her. This possibility of sense in incoherent speech played out in the mother daughter conversations provides the reader with the initiative to pursue the narrative and decipher its incoherencies. This deliberate strategy by Nora Okja Keller saves the text from being ruled out as a jumble of cryptic dialogues. However, gradually, as Becca grows older, receives an education at school and from her American friends, she assumes a more western rational, enlightened knowledge and separates herself from her mother's views, validating the reader's confusion with the mother. This defamiliarizing strategy to a careful reader helps establish Akiko in an alternate ontological space that informs her conversations, trances and beliefs.

Akiko's section of the text begins by stating that "The baby I could keep came when I was already dead."[239] The possibility of a metaphorical rendition of an event however does not count

as incoherence. In that sense all poems ever written would be incoherent, as quoted from Thale at the beginning of the paper. The reader can understand that Akiko does not refer to a physical death but to a metaphoric one, the one of spirit. By this, she immediately establishes a difference between the surface meaning of her words and their actual intent or meaning. One sees a similar metaphorical and linguistic play in the first chapter with Becca as the narrator reporting a conversation with her mother, where Akiko confesses to Becca that she had killed her father. This confession concludes the chapter and becomes the narrative impulse for Becca's narrative by providing the reader with a picture of her partly senile, and obviously incoherent mother. Akiko's confession soon turns out to be less of a physical act, but more of a desire that she seems to have executed by wishing death on him. Her metaphysical system of beliefs affirms the viability of such wishes, leading her to believe that his physical death was a result of his affliction caused by her curses and desires.

Similarly, while commenting about her own mother, Akiko states, "My mother dies more than once in her life."[240] The difference between a physical act and a metaphysical one becomes a set thematic and one learns to read Akiko's experiences with a certain amount of discernment and understanding. In addition, it confirms a certain framing of life and death in a realm of naturalistic harmonies, which preserves life or causes death. Happiness, survival and misery are a result of a body's capacity to maintain the naturalistic harmony that surrounds it. Here the body is not just a physical entity susceptible to its maladies and afflictions, but a volatile entity that must maintain its balance with nature. The *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* expands on the Korean philosopher Hwadam's concept of Great Harmony which unites the physical and the metaphysical,[241] as clearly alluded in Akiko's formulation of life and death or life and the spirit.[xxi] Further, by stating that Akiko herself is dead, she manages to establish two different

dynamics of the body and the mind. According to her, the body moves on even after the soul or the spirit dies. This must lead one to the question of what it means to really live. This is a question Akiko keeps grappling with through the experiences in her narratives both metaphysically and physically through her semi trance and semi-conscious state.

Akiko is an assumed name for Soon Hyo, a name that Becca's mother abandons once she becomes a comfort woman in the camps. Akiko is the name that was given to a former comfort woman in the camps named Induk, who Soon Hyo replaces. Her name becomes a token replacement for her position as a comfort woman. It also signifies the stripping of the identity of the real name in order to make the body of the woman pliable, identity less and accessible to the dehumanised but legalised prostitution in the camps. The transition from her real name to Akiko is the moment in her life that Becca's mother seems to be constantly stuck at. She is unable to get rid of Induk, calling her guardian angel and Becca's godmother, and going to the extent of feeling her body and spirit being replaced by Induk. Induk visits her in all moments of crisis, she often appears as Soon Hyo's mother and always provides her relief from critical situations like when she is near death and lying in the forest or when she is giving birth to Becca. Alternately, Induk is also a mischievous character who replaces Soon Hyo when her husband tries to have intercourse with her. The mother's confusion with herself and Induk reflects the original moment of her replacing Induk. She seems to feel that her replacement as Induk opens the way for Induk to perpetually haunt her body as they assume the same identity of Akiko for the soldiers.

The continuity of possession and identity formed by the disparagement of their bodies by the soldiers continues to be praxis for Soon Hyo's post-traumatic stress from the camps. Her identity has been forever compromised with the assumption of Induk's position and her comfort

woman name. This link to Induk poses the question of continuity and moving on from a traumatic event: is it possible? And concurrently, if it is possible to move on, then what is the cost of moving on? Clearly, Becca's mother moves on at the cost of her mental fragmentation. A part of her memory and body continues to be haunted by her camp experience while the other struggles to connect her daughter and herself to the matrilineage of the connection with her mother and herself. The impossibly of a linear connection and continuance of life, family, memories and coherence becomes the cost of the moving on.

Finally, the entire text is strewn with Korean religious and spirit words that are associated with health, balance and death. All three of the themes are connected to normal living as well as with Shamanism. Soon Hyo clearly depicts characteristics of a Shaman, who knows about people's pasts and about their dead. Her trances do not represent disorderly craziness but ordered spells induced by her memories of the camps and her shamanistic capacities. She tries to harmonise people's lives and solve their connections with the dead. Her predisposition to mediate between the afterlife and human life builds and justifies her previous spells and hallucinatory illusions of Induk and Manshin Ahjima. Additionally, having grown up in the perpetual company of women, her locus of experience are constantly governed by maternal spirit figures who resemble and act like her mother. She constantly resorts to these figures for help and support as she believes that even though they are dead she will be able to invoke them through her shamanistic skills.

Coherence in the text is achieved when Auntie Reno identifies the mother's trances as "spirit possessions" and organises for her to "perform" her shamanism through "ritual" performances and "ambiance building" paraphernalia much like the organised performative spells of the mad nuns at Loudun by Michael Certeau. Akoko's performs and brings about coherence to her

actions and harmony to the lives of others by bringing them news of their dead. The mother's position in *Comfort Woman* is similar to the protagonist's mother in *The Woman Warrior* but her position is additionally enhanced by her traumatic experience of the camps. In addition, the Shaman-like qualities that both women possess add them to the discourse of the ways in alternate spiritualties manifest themselves in diaspora and of the different ways in which "women' navigate their trauma from severely traumatic events of the past. Their incoherent behaviours, lapses into the fantastical, reliance on a range of invisible cures and trances and spells speak not of magic "magical" realism but of erasure of alternate ways of beings that have been replaced by contemporary "scientific" knowledge of the West. Practices from Asia are redolent with such moments of erasure, which continue to live through these recalcitrant women who are thought to be possessed by ghosts or are committed to asylums because of their aberrant behaviours.

Dictee

Dictee is a crucial text that helps tie the strategies and context of *The Woman Warrior* and *Comfort Woman.* Based on a diasporic life similar to Kingston and Keller, Cha proposes to disrupt the harmony of the narrative in terms of cohesiveness, content and culture. Discourse for Cha defies definition as a text like *Dictee* constantly works anti definition in regards to the writing of history, the writing of discourse, the writing of nationalistic boundaries, the concept of home, etc. Of these, of particular interest to me are the writing strategies that the text uses to defamiliarize the cohesiveness of narratives.

The beginning of the text testifies to the defamiliarization. Cha starts the text with a series of French and English sentences with instructions to translate and write. In discussions of

incoherence, lists or listed sentence writing are highly incoherent because they usually do not follow a specific format or topic. By alluding towards the infamous French practice of dictation and writing that focuses on the skills of articulation of language and precise penmanship, Cha highlights the aesthetics of a language that has set such high standards for its people, its academics and its culture. French academy is notorious for its insider status. Usually, non-French citizens are excluded from holding jobs in French high schools and higher academics in order to preserve the uniformity of the system. In the introduction to the text, Cha first writes out a text exactly as it would be dictated, spelling out the punctuation, asking the reader to pause and think about the strangeness of the script. By writing out a few dictation sentences Cha alludes to the mind's capability of understanding disorderliness in different formats but the inability to perceive a mixture of forms at once. The contents of the dictation lessons also reveal their purpose which is to transmit different historical facts in a decontextualized fashion.

In addition, Cha uses a variety of photographs and visual lithographs to transmit a visual experience of the text. Most of the photographs correspond to the dry, barren or destroyed landscapes that often display bodies of the dead or killed. The prevalence of a juxtaposition of such photographs and their meanings in an Asian American context alludes to the trauma and suffering that constitutes the diaspora. Exile for Cha is constitutive of a variety of dissonant discourses and through the text she intends to expose the meaninglessness of each, especially of formed juxtaposes against each other. *Dictee* heavily focuses on the suffering of the Korean people once colonized by the Japanese empire and then afflicted by the Korean War. Through the artistic work, she juxtaposes colonization, war, diaspora and neo-colonization to pose the main question of what constitutes a "real experience" of war and migration and trauma? What does discourse do to such experiences?

The first two chapters focus on discourses and difficulties of surviving in Korea under Japanese rule and the institutionalization of such discourses. Cha provides a misinformed and exaggerated story of Yu Guan Soon who was just a student revolutionary but is portrayed by Cha as a larger than life figure who played a major role in history. The over representational nature of historical discourses that distort facts and people out of proportion for their purposes seems to be the aim of Cha's chapter. Consequently, the chapter also details the story of her mother, or the protagonist who is termed as the "mother" in her struggle to flee to China during the Japanese invasion of Korea and keeps her mother tongue silent in order to not appear counter revolutionary. The suppression of the "mother" tongue assumes a larger metaphorical dimension in the suppression of the mother, the tongue, the familial relationship, the country and its history. By highlighting the plight of the Korean people under Japanese Colonization and the nature of representational history, Cha highlights Korea's place in the global continuum of the country's destruction because of the lack of the knowledge in the United States. The text's circular pattern of narration becomes evident here as Cha expands her discourse from one of just Korea, to Korea's encounters with her colonizers; to the diasporic efforts to save Korea by Korean Americans and, finally the normalization of life in Korean America where she grows up in California and attends a French school, highlighting her elitist and global upbringing.

The locus of comfort and tradition, for Cha's family, however, continues to be Korea and her culture, history, words, food and traditions. This particular space of reference in the text becomes an effort to capture and put into words emotions that have been lost or were possibly not even experienced. A lot of the experiences also occur through pictures as written before, maybe commenting on the processes of memory that is not pure and subject to external media like pictures, movies, religion and discourses. It might also signify Cha's introduction to her Korean

family, lost in the war or loss of connection because of the war, only through pictures. Any knowledge, information, conversations, or memories of them are confined to one pictorial snapshot, just as Korea is to the young Cha. In such a context where each form of information juxtaposes itself on formerly existing knowledge, discourse becomes an activity that is constantly shaped and is fluid. The text thus becomes representative of the juxtapositional nature of diasporic life; which is largely incoherent and relies on certain forms of discourse construction to assume coherence.

In Conclusion

The paradigm of incoherence can signal the beginning of a new epistemological revelation as this chapter has argued. The different kinds of incoherencies revealed through the creative distortions as well as the cryptical nature of the texts have the capacity to begin the examination of a different ontology and a different epistemology that is not Eurocentric and do not cater to western notions of positivism and enlightenment. This is certainly the trend in all the texts discussed above. A part of Kingston's work in *The Woman Warrior* is a reflection of Chinese metaphysics where ghosts, spirits, traditions coexist in a modern society. The division between the primitive and the modern, which are Western modes of orientation of time do not hold much importance in the society that Kingston refers to, because the discussion is not about the traditional or the modern, but more about a different system of beliefs, that has been relegated to the wonderous, colorful, and whimsical as a result of Western intervention in the East. The invalidation of Kingston's mother and Akiko's system of beliefs reflects the loss and dissonance in Eastern values in their contact with the West. Sun Hyo's reference to the in-betweeness between Induk and herself, between her own physicality and Induk's spirit existence in *Comfort Woman* is all significant because of its reliance on Korean metaphysics and religions

that relies on a different ontological explanation, symptoms of which are also categorised at PTSD. The discontinuity between the traditional and modern classification creates a rift that inevitably ends up classifying the traditional as a disorder and invalidates an alternate explanation.

Traditionally, madness or insanity has always been categorised as possession. The connection between the lack of coherence and the ineffable world has always been present, and this is not just true of Chinese metaphysics, but also of Abrahamic religions, where "evil spirits and divine punishment were considered causes of mental disorders" (Malcom). In that sense, fits of insanity, mental illness and the supernatural are inseparably linked when looked at from a metaphysical standpoint. Bringing the traditional and the modern together, then PTSD is inextricably linked to possessions when diagnosed from a different era and is in fact a different interpretation of what used to be once termed as possession. This destabilizes the belief that only Western science provides access to knowledge. This strand of reasoning will be explored further in the next chapter.

However, I intend to pick up on such "oriental" renderings in these texts and their purposes. By relapsing into the traditional vs. the modern debates, critics have termed the selection of texts as Orientalist texts that pander to the Western audience. Contrarily, some critics have focused on the strength of these "Oriental renderings" by refusing to term them as "pandering" and instead calling them "strengthening." The category of "retro orientalism" refers especially to this categorical theorization. Such critics who work on retro orientalism tend to imagine authors like Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, and Nora Keller as authors who intend to subvert the stigma of the magical or the fantastical that is bestowed on such works that seriously discuss topics of ghosts and insanity. By referencing alternate ontologies and metaphysics, these authors push for

recognition and validation of alterity through alternate ontological systems of belief, thus organically dehegemonising Orientalist projects. They also do this by repurposing multi-ethnic ghost scholarship or reviving Shamanist ontology, thereby positing these moments of incoherence as a dichotomy between the Eastern mind and its perception as opposed to the Western mind. This form of Ontology provides a system of beliefs that is beyond metaphors and epistemologically beyond Western Positivism, politically beyond western supremacy and revealing of ungovernability, categorically not gendered, and psychologically enriching. The conclusion will deliberate on these particular aspects of the texts that ensues from incoherence and works to unveil the epistemological, political, psychological and gendered factors that validate such incoherencies. Further, the conclusion will also deliberate on the larger structures of ungovernability that are unveiled through these instances of incoherence, which are so often dismissed as gibberish.

What do these instances of incoherence have to do with larger structures of governance and displacement? How does the literary aesthetic of ungovernability relate to the social and political theorizing of ungovernability of a social and public space, especially concerning ethnic minorities? There are several relationalities that can be perceived as a channelling of the problematic of form to one of governance. Just as the incoherence with the text leads to an incoherence with proper structure and form; ungovernability is the incapacity of being able to contain a population in its “form” or “structures” of governance. Just a Marquez does not find a proper form to narrate a story, problems of incoherence presented in cases of madness and insanity face this precise struggle with form and expression in normative structures of reality. It is when the form is unable to provide proper governance to its population of people that tensions occur; manifesting themselves in terms of discontent, protest, rebellions, violence and intense

psychological turmoil. If our notion of the "normal" resides on form and proper governance, any deviation of it results in turmoil and ungovernability.

So, the question that I must undertake to answer now, is the problematics of governance that are revealed in increasing situations of lack of form, especially of explicit mentions of madness and insanity, in a governed state. In *The Myth of The Model Minority*, Feagin and Chou state that a recent study of U.S. teenagers found that "Asian American youth had by far the highest incidence of teenage depression… Elderly Chinese American women have a suicide rate ten times that of their elderly white peers. Although Asian American students are only 17 percent of the Cornell University student body, they make up fully half of all completed suicides there."[242] Such statistics are reflected in National Latino and Asian American Study (NLAAS) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention statistics as well. The grim reality of Asian American mental health has come under review in the recent times. Cultural stress, linguistic incapacitations, "feeling alienated from both cultures and having interpersonal conflicts with whites," systemic racism, family conflict, form some of the reasons for the phenomenon. In a phenomenal 1999 documentary film, *When You're Smiling* "communications scholar Janice Tanaka provides a rare documentation of the heavy costs of racism for Asian Americans… [especially] the racialized internment of Japanese Americans in World War II concentration camps… focuses on the psychological effects of this internment on those imprisoned and on their children and grandchildren."[243] The psychological effects of the camps dominated their psyche throughout the following generations as the fear of their reoccurrence forced them and their children and grandchildren to work harder to conform to the image of the model minority so that they would be spared the trauma later. The effects of "aggressive conformity" have not been pleasant to say the least, as it has led to recurring drug abuse problems, mental instabilities and

often suicides. The authors state that, "The white racial frame is old, enduring, and oriented to assessing and relating to Americans of color in everyday situation."[244]

Feagin's popular idea of the racial frame plays an important role in the Asian American perception of themselves. These are the literary instances of the mad women in *The Women Warrior,* Becca's mother's insanity which is a result of her being severely sexually abused as a comfort woman during the Korean War and Cha's inability to cohere a coherent narrative out of the Korean War. Moreover, these moments as analyzed in these texts are not isolated instances of their representation in texts. Asian American literature is replete with the magical, the crazy, stories of suicide and other more commonplace struggles of melancholia and failure. This study seeks out these hidden moments in these texts in order to counter the myth of the model minority so staunchly associated with the Asian American population seeking to demystify the commonplace narrative that the Asian Americans have "made it". Instances of the magical can be observed in the writings of other authors like Amy Tan, Frank Chin and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Instances of craziness occur in *Bone* by Fae Myenne Ng, and *Hunger* by Lan Samantha Chang. Suicides, suicidal tendencies and melancholia are more commonplace occurrences and are observed in texts like *No No Boy* by John Okada, *When The Emperor was Divine* by Julie Otsuka, *Family Life* by Akhil Sharma, *Wife* by Bharati Mukherjee, in the short stories in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*, Monique Truong's *The Book of Salt*, and in many others. The prevalence of these themes in such a wide variety of works insinuate patterns of behavior in these communities, that are infrequently represented in literature, but have been mentioned enough to present a basic identification of patterns.

This precarity of life that comes associated these forms such as depression, loneliness, trauma, madness, Alzheimer's, etc. are undertheorized and their larger relations to the conditions of

being human, state, nationhood and conditions of migrancy and dispossession are seldom explored. But the exclusions of these discourses beg Butler's question of "Who counts as human?", leading to the larger question of what does the absence of the "human-ness" mean? Moreover, how are we to understand or articulate or theorize these moments of insanity? What is it that one loses in order to be unable to deal with loss? Ann Cheng in *The Melancholy of Race* states, "Melancholy involves loss; melancholia, ultimately, involves exclusion as the melancholic takes into the self, internalizes, what is loved and lost and attempts to sustain the self through the ghostly emptiness of a "lost other," The reality of loss of a home because of war, the loss of a close one because of ethnic violence, the loss of a homeland because of political instabilities, the loss of a mother or parent and being unable to visit or perform eschatological rights are scarring moments of trauma, that never ceases. For example, in Keller's *Comfort Woman* Aikiko is driven to the brink of the human and the spirit word because she has to constantly navigate the intense guilt of having had to leave her friend Induk to die in the fields and not having had the ability to give her a funeral. The absence of the past and its denial into the future informs the melancholy of a lot of Asian American diasporic texts. What is it that one loses and mourns for, is a difficult question to answer. But such is the position of exilic life, in addition to Said's utopic dualness. The multiplicity of identities, the inability of balancing between them, linguistic and racial boundaries and eventual insanity or madness are also characteristics of exilic people of exilic identities as magnified through Asian American texts.

The nature of incoherence as discussed through the texts form a varied array of patterns, and in terms of creative exercise demonstrate a form of play that economises on itself, by rendering meaning with. Mihai Spariosu defines play through the concept of mimesis as "miming" or "bringing forth" as demonstrated in archaic Greek culture. Spariosu states that, "Archaic mimesis

is related to the dramatic miming of the gods, to the action of manifesting and making present their power. Mimesis in this sense is an ecstatic, nonrational play of forces, generating a complex of hierarchical, power-based values typical of aristocratic warrior societies."[245] The lightness as well as the complexities of the strategies of writing eventually demonstrate and claim power by their relationality to their order of actual materials and form an economy of words that are not playful but dense and sombre. Spariosu later defines Aristortelian mimesis: "Aristotelian mimesis, when viewed against the interrelated themes of mimetic monstration, play, and power in the archaic Greek mentality, takes on a new complexity; for the representational concept of mimesis does not simply replace archaic mimesis but establishes a new power configuration that subordinates play and the nonrational manifestation of force to the mediation of reason."[246] The new configuration demonstrates itself in the texts in which the understanding and regard for form of play with words become the sole entry towards understanding the texts.

The incoherence of the texts becomes more than just inattentive writing and become a serious form and, often, the only form of engaging with the mode of discourse. It also establishes the standpoint of the women, who can establish their knowledge of their position and being only through such a format. In fact, in *Dictee*, the disorganised and incoherent stylistic is in of itself a comment on the nature of discourses that are non-representation, selective and often false. The first chapter in which Cha presents the image and life of Yu Guan Soon reflects the ways in which the revolutionary character has been presented in history books. Her date of birth is wrong as is the nature of her engagement with the revolution. In order to demonstrate this point, the picture of her is a cut out from a group picture later, signifying how her characters has been represented without context. What emerges from the texts is a specific economy of incoherent writing, specifically women's incoherent writing and discourse that is informed by the event of

trauma and can only be presented on paper through the play of words. The subjugated knowledge redefines the concept of light-hearted play by making it the only representational economy that can give form to the events of trauma categorised only by their incoherent lack of wholeness. The ordering or structure of the words perform what they through their intentionality of purpose or function cannot.

Drawing from Lyotard's concept of "Libidinal Economy," the women who figure in these texts are the collateral damage of an economy that is run on libido. In that sense, the role of women and their very presence in these texts, focused on migration and war, are very important. Through these two processes the bodies of these women become the trampling grounds for a variety of concepts rendering them to be focal but invisible point of structures. War is one of the spaces nationally that is run on the basis of libidinal economy. Lyotard describes libidinal philosophy as an underlying structure of events, the left over or residue of a structure or an event once it is interpreted. He uses a variety of terms such as libidinal energy, effects, and intensities to describe the philosophy. The terms "intensities" and "affects" specifically draw from Freudian analysis and postulate that the libido is formed of primary and secondary processes which are the physical desires and the unconscious desire of the body specifically. Separating out just the physical desire from the affects, which are materially important for the realisation of the libidinal economy, Lyotard discusses the different structures that use libidinal affects to compile and sustain an economy. War is one of the places that uses the libidinal economy to define and sustain its space. The glorification of the endeavour of war, the masculine space for bravery and courage, is mystified and protected. The very urge for the libido to manifest itself becomes the nature of war. In Keller's *Comfort Woman*, the bodies of the women with their sexual capacities are the economy that translate to the libidinal economy of the war. Their bodies are central to the

war effort and, hence, they go through the ritualistic process of stripping of name, identity, nationality, cloths and finally life or sanity. This also proves to be the critique that Cha articulates in *Dictee*, where the formation of a cohesive nationalistic identity is based on the economy of misrepresentation, lies, and the suppression of one kind of libido for another. These spaces, according to Lyotard, are the underrepresented spaces by virtue of the fact that experiences are so diverse that they defy representation.

On a similar note, one might also count the "crazy" women in *The Woman Warrior* as the economy of insanity based on which sanity glorifies itself. Michel Foucault in his extensive history of the role of *Madness in Civilization* uncovers the ways in which madness transforms from a malady, to play, and, finally, to a repository of knowledge from the Middle Ages to the 21st century. The different hidden libidos, based on which the industry of knowledge, the industry of capitalism, nationalism and power operate, are through the economy of a hidden order and conduct and that sets them apart from madness. I define the knowledge inherent in madness, in the speech of the "traumatised", in the trampled bodies of women in war as the "hidden libidos", they through their absence and erasure, define sanity, knowledge, normalcy and order in society. Foucault states, "if knowledge is so important in madness, it is not because the latter can control the secrets of knowledge; on the contrary, madness is the punishment of a disorderly and useless science…. Learning becomes madness through the very excess of false knowledge."[247] In essence, madness comes to represent the limits of knowledge and its role in not being able to manage processes through its knowledge of the body and mind.

Michael de Certeau adds to Foucault's comments by identifying the ritualistic nature of possession, the way it capitalizes on the religious history of Loudan, its geographical proximities and the capacity of possession to unleash a way or religions. This ritualistic nature of possession

is present in both *The Woman Warrior* and *Comfort Women*. The child narrator specifically notes the similar natures of insanity of all the women she knows as crazy. They are not particularly wild or do anything outlandish. Their eyes seem different; they do not wear their hair like normal people, and they have the smell of camphor associated with them. In *Comfort Woman*, Auntie Reno transforms Becca's mother into a shaman from what used to be just her spells. Reno gives her the "look" which includes attire, incense (smell), and a price for her services that determine her as a "legitimate" conveyer of experiences. The ritualistic nature of both processes, which otherwise would just be "insane," or the lack, or sanity, or the dire lack of order, as Certeau unveils, has a distinct order and assumption of performance to them. This can be seen in Certeau's narration of "ritual" that was built around the nuns' madness in Loudon. Their fits, which could have been fits of mental disorders, were transformed into fits of the manifestations of the divine through the rituals they started being surrounded by, such as the smell of incense, the ringing of bells and the spectacalization through the audience. The performativeness of the texts as it emerges through their associations with literary theory have a distinct method to their madness.

I extend Foucault's analysis of the categories of insanity in which he lists mania and melancholy and hysteria and hypochondria to the category of trauma. The binding experience in all of these texts is the trauma or the lack of wholeness that emerges out of a shift in ontology through migration, out of a breach of the cohesiveness of the body or sexual harassment, or out of a shift in the ontological character of society leading to a fragmentation of the experience of both the mind and the body. The question of aesthetics becomes a question of tracing the ways of writing down of trauma, a fragmentation that uses the concepts of play, categorization, separation of the body and mind-- essentially a deconstruction of what constitutes "wholeness." The characters in

these texts aspire by all means to achieve that cohesiveness of space, matter, body and mind to become cohesive whole people who are finally free of their liminality.

This is the specific part of the incoherence of the migrant's—that is, the particular Asian American text's and women's experiences that are ungovernable. It is neither the presence of structures of treatment for mental illnesses nor the presence of sanitoriums that can contain the surge of insanity, madness or the manifest conditions of mental breakdowns. It is the absence of a sense of coherence, of wholeness and wellbeing, that are not concurrent with state institutions of knowledge, that forms the *telos* of ungovernability.

"It is just that there be law, but law is not justice," Spivak states, drawing from Derrida, and this is the exact transition I intend to make clear from the transition of form to one of ungovernability in the form. The instances of insanity, madness, suicidal thoughts that one encounters in these texts occur in a position where the present available institutional mechanisms of power are unable to provide any relief. This is precisely because of our focus on the institution as opposed to the human. The category of the citizen, requires "nurturing," it is precisely
this psychological category which is absent to the migrant, the immigrant who has suffered grave and traumatic losses in the process of movement. These women represent the nature of the immigrant experience that is exempt from such psychological wellbeing and is solely characterized by loss, pain, crumbling of family values and ethics, and, finally, sanity. In that sense, as stated above, manifesting and containing trauma is a major factor in the presence and incoherence of articulation of these realities and of the rising costs of the insanity that we experience today in our Asian American communities. What we as a society cannot understand, hence, can be valuable knowledge that we tend to dismiss, especially in our perceived threat from immigrants, we contribute to erasures of traditions, knowledge, and stories. I shall end by

borrowing from Derrida, from the end of his lectures on *Of Hospitality*, where he asks, "which tradition of hospitality are we inheritors of." I shall end with this question too, because today's immigrants are our future citizens, so which tradition of governance do we want to continue?

SECTION II

Aesthetics of the Foreign in Asian American Literature

A preliminary analysis of Asian American theories reveals the presence of alternate categories that add to the definitions of immigration, exile, citizenship and legalities that define displaced lives. Categories of silence, censorship, multiple legalities and politics, expand the ways in which Asian American immigrants were subject to the diverse racial and immigration policies that categorised 18th and 19th century immigration landscape in the U.S. Furthermore, these categorical engagements serve as a reminder of the role of Asian Americans in the U.S. nation-building narrative that is often disguised under the trope of either the yellow peril or the model minority. The journey from the former stereotype to the latter serves as a testimony to the struggles of early immigrants who fought to survive in the U.S. despite the harsh legal and political disgust towards them.

However, this was certainly not the only significant way in which Asian Americans or immigrants from Asia impacted the nascent American landscape. This section of the project addresses the psychological, religious, and sociological impact that Asia had on the Americas, leading to a revolutionary change in monolithic ways of spiritual and religious interactions.

Chapter 3 is the bridge chapter that addresses the liminal spaces of madness and ungovernability that exist in American societies through a reading of three classic texts in Asian American literature, *The Woman Warrior* by Maxine Hong Kingston, *Comfort Woman* by Nora Okra Keller and *Dictee* by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha. The readings of these texts aim to identify spaces that remain largely unaddressed and unrecognised in American society, namely the psychological toll of immigration. The chapter focuses on the traumas and experiences of the women in the three

texts, aiming to uncover the histories of their senile presences, the deconstruction of the "model minority" myth, addressing the larger scope of the effects of the lack of wholeness and wellbeing in immigrant communities. The readings also espouse a method of reading ethnic texts, which advocates sensitivity, recognition of alterity, and unveiling of epistemologies that are invalidated in the geographical, continental, cultural, psychological and emotional move that migration entails. Such a reading practice recognises the bias of knowledge in the transmission from Eastern methods of practice to Western modes of evaluation and recognition and is sensitive to the ways in which narratives are constructed such that the knowledge bias does not just become a mode of prejudice culminating in irrecoverable loss. Finally, the chapter enforces the intent of interrogation of the first section, which is to provide a commentary on the ways in which ethnic concepts, theories and texts interact with mainstream Western concepts, theories and texts and the gains and losses inherent in the exchange.

In the final and ensuing section of the research, the engagement with knowledge bias continues to be the orienting parameter. Divided into two chapters, this section, through an acknowledgement of the knowledge bias, evaluates the various ways in which diasporic life is framed through an analysis of a selection of theories. The selection of theories is based on the acknowledgement of the liminal nature of diasporic life that is neither here nor there, but concretely continues to be informed by dual or triple or multiple cultures and geographies. In analysing these theories, Chapter 5 moves to an analysis of the spaces of Asian influence in America, namely the influence on American spiritualities, which also circulates around the liminal. By doing so, Chapter 6 addresses the most crucial question of the dissertation, one of an original space of consciousness that emerges out of American interaction with Asia. Just as W.E.B DuBois's concept of "double consciousness" continues to inform the African American

consciousness in America, this chapter theorises on the Asian notion of "evanescence" that continues to inform Asian American consciousness in the United States. The Asian organization of life and spirit around the evanescent notion of the intermingling of life and afterlife, the human and the divine, is fraught with his ever liminal, effervescent paradigm of evanescent behaviour. The chapter concludes by elaborating on the presence of evanescence in the fictionalization of Asian American diasporic life in a selection of Asian American texts.

Finally, this particular approach towards the theorization of evanescence aspires to be an informative paradigm in the larger context of immigration that should serve as a reminder of the effervescent nature of immigration itself. The concretizing of immigration through establishing policies, separation of families, policing of behaviours only serves to prolong the process of migration, which by itself is disorienting and painful. Evanescence will hopefully, serve as a reminder to both policymakers and migrants that this process is liminal, and must end, especially with cooperation from both the host and the guest.

Section 2, Chapter 4: Evanescence: Tracing the "Authentic" in AAL--The Diasporic Liminal Space

"India always exists
Off the turnpikes
Of America

So I could say
I did take the exit
And crossed Howrah"[248]

--- In Search of Evanescence, Agha Shahid Ali

Agha Shahid Ali wrote a series of poems addressed to his dear friend Philip Paul Orlando, who died of AIDS at a young age. The poems dedicated to Philip are an effort to trace the connections in their friendship through their literary and intellectual exchanges in the unfolding landscape of the United States, where, Ali is a diasporic Indian American. The cycle of poems titled after the book, *A Nostalgist's Map of America*, starts with a dedication to Emily Dickinson. Dickinson, writing in the early age of telecommunication, imagines the future fate of communication to be just like a bird's quick colorful flight from one bud to the other. The poet stands in awe of the tiny colorful flying bird who effortlessly flits between flowers, while "every blossom on the bush; *Adjusts* its tumbled head." The movement and the rearrangement with movement are ideas that Ali intends to draw our attention to. Ali insinuates that as much as movements are natural, so are readjustments focused on accommodating movement. The diasporic dilemma of fixity, authenticity and resistance are not Ali's primary concerns, instead he privileges mobility and change, choosing to refocus on the creative spaces that open up as a result of embracing change.

In a conversation with Philip, Ali evokes a memory of literary exchange, "I gave Emily Dickinson to you then, line after line, complete from heart."[249] The possibility of literary exchange between an American and an Indian, conversing on literary poets from the former

imperial country Britain, is an exchange that has been made feasible by travel. Ali means to highlight the intellectually enriching possibilities that emerge out of the travel and movement that opens up creative possibilities and connections otherwise unexplored. This is because, there are certain imaginations, visions and connections that are possible for people with a certain experiential range. For example, while Ali speaks of finding Calcutta on one of the exits of Ohio, he also writes that "a woman climbed the steps to Acoma, vanished into the sky."[250] The empathy that Ali feels for the vanishing Native American tribes is the same sympathy he experiences towards the gradually increasing violence in Kashmir, his homeland, whose customs and traditions are on the verge of obliteration because of the constant political conflict between India and Pakistan over reclaiming land in Kashmir. The combination of creation myths of "vanishing" after having climbed the steps echoes the same mythic tradition of storytelling that is prevalent in societies that privilege oral communication or are still transitioning from the primacy of an oral mode of communication to a written one. The connection between the Native American persecution and the postcolonial trauma that a native from the Indian Sub-continent makes, can only be realized because of the experiential import that one has been exposed to.

Ali's exchanges with Philip, therefore, are the establishment of the motive and possibility of creativity resulting from the spaces and connections that are made possible by travel in this post-immigration world. In addition, one also must notice the meticulousness of the exchange "line after line, complete from heart." The careful, sincere, and heartfelt exchange is heart-rending, not only in the care that one feels towards his exchanges with a friend, but also with the fact that this is a memory now. Does this insinuate the closure of creative spaces resulting from exchange or does Ali mean to make us aware of the possibility of exchange from the encounter resulting from travel? That possibilities and interstitial spaces are places of potential creativity is not a novel

idea anymore, as it has been explained by theorists such as Homi Bhabha, Mihai Spariosu, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Michel de Certeau and Paul Gilroy. Hybridity, metanarratives, liminality and oceanic passages have been the spring for modern creative movements and exchanges. Ali distinguishes himself by humanizing and personalizing the creativity that results from such spaces.

In further conversation with Philip, Ali imagines a place called Evanescence, leading to a further series of poems titled *In Search of Evanescence.* One wonders if the name is an intentional evoking of the American Rock band Evanescence, to assert the ways of successful Americanness that Ali might have experienced. It is significant, in that way, to note that the band originated from Little Rock, Arkansas, a politically important place in terms of Native American histories, which leads to a renewed pondering on the meaning of the word Evanescence. Evanescence means "disappear" or "vanish," used to indicate the fear of the rapid fading of one's loved one from memory or sight after their passing away. This is the name for Ali's imagined place with Paul. It is an ever-fading memory that reminds him of the fragility of life. In addition, it also reminds one of the common vulnerabilities of life to sickness, death and loss.

Creating Evanescence is Ali's way of dealing with the loss of a dear friend. It is through loss that Ali begins mapping out America too. On first encountering Calcutta on one of the exits of Ohio, Ali writes, "But even when I pass--in Ohio--the one exit to Calcutta, I don't know I've begun/mapping America, the city limits of Evanescence now everywhere."[251] There can be several ways of interpreting Ali's encounter with Calcutta in the urban landscape of Ohio. First, Calcutta was the first capital for the British Imperial Empire in India. Situated on the banks of the Ganges, Calcutta provided a very fertile space for business and imports for the then thriving East India Company. However, it has been recently that the name Calcutta has been changed

back into Kolkata, the former and original Bengali pronunciation of the name. Calcutta has undergone a conscious process of renaming to shed off the vestiges of colonialism tied to its very name. However, Ali is not rid of the past when he encounters Calcutta in all its glory in Ohio. The place stands as a vivid reminder of the colonial past, just having been remapped onto an alien landscape, where its colonial past is possibly invalidated. One wonders if this is an effort consciously to erase history or to invalidate the experience of history by validating a colonial name in a foreign space. It reflects one of the ways in which colonialism is a constant part of the American landscape, though covert, it is exposed in the naming of places, American holidays and traditions, the presence of "reservation land", foreign policy and the its handling of "multiculturalism". These instances are always present, but always changing, evolving and vanishing.

Secondly, by stating that the "city limits of Evanescence now everywhere," can one consider this a lament for the rapidly fading history, a history that one holds dear and as a part of one's identity? Or is it just a process of lamenting the very fact that history itself is gradually taking leave of the uniform urban landscapes where names, places, and relationships are so uniform that they no longer hold any meaning? Encounters like Ali's on American landscapes are frequent. but carry no recognition of any other association. Names like, Rome, Milan, and Athens abound, without any historical import. Moreover, one must also consider that for Ali, encountering Calcutta is encountering a piece of home, a connection, that one very intimately tied to the colonial historical past can only make. In that sense, this is the place of the artist's encounter with both the home and the world, and, ironically, that is an exit of off the Interstate. Homi Bhabha in his essay "The Home and the World" quotes Morrison to establish the experience of what he calls "the shock of recognition of the world-in-the-home, the home-in-the-world." This

feeling Bhabha defines as the moment when "the border between home and world becomes confused; and uncannily the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting."[252]

Ali's position is exactly of the one who stands outside the home and realizes that the inside and outside gradually blend as a result of "uncanny literary and social effects of enforced social accommodation, or historical migrations and cultural relocations."[253] It is at this point that one realizes the falling away of the borders of the home but the infinite opening up of the world to oneself. This is the position of the diasporic writer, specifically the Asian American diasporic writer, who owing to his unique position of being able to identify his exact place of origin, stays in a perpetual situation of inbetween-ness, and comes to realize that he has been perpetually "unhomed."

This chapter intends to particularly comment on the poetic device of evanescence and its role, one that emerges out of the avenues of travel, experience, and transition to understand the nature of Asian American diasporic life and literature. The subjective position in diaspora is similar to Ali's exploration of evanescence, it emerges out of a shift in the physical positionality of the subject and often renders it to an object position. One becomes both the subject and the object of discourse in diaspora. The mobile subject is the object of fear, strangeness, poverty, oppression, yet at the same time the face of privilege, mobility and duality. This tension between the very subjectivity of the person in diaspora along with the fluidness of the diasporic position becomes the stimulant for my inquiry into the inherent nature of diasporic discourse, especially Asian American Diasporic discourse that emerges out from a high cultural context and often rubs shoulders with a low context cultural situation in the U.S.[254] How then, does one assert the nature of this diasporic entity that is so steeped in dissipating and disintegrating? When the very nature

of existence becomes one of transit, how must one assert the reality of such an existence? This section will first assess the nature of the theories that emerge on diaspora, it will then explore the nature of usage of evanescence among theories so far before exploring its compatibility with diasporic aesthetics; and finally make cases for its theoretical applications that arise out of Asian American Literature.

Nature of Discourse about Diasporas and Asian Religious Influences

By juxtaposing different presents and pasts, including the colonial and the post-colonial, and pasts and presents that are violent, Ali espouses a globalization that provides connections between histories, nationalities and connected presents. This celebratory kind of nationalism, for Ali, is infused with melancholia, echoing the loss of things very near to oneself, but also allows for a "global continuum" of loss that allows for reparations and closure. These are places in which one perceives ghosts of the past, but also comes across visions of the future that range from possibilities of utopia or dystopia. The fluidity brought about by the spaces of hybridity, unhomliness are possible through the modes of fluidity brought about by travel, whereas the fixity of systems of citizenship, policy, and immigration laws stand as a counterbalance to the fluidity of change. Discussions on displacement hover in this interstitial space that resides in the transition from change to fixity, from transition to structures, from the governed to the ungovernable. This dichotomy between fixity and fluidity often assumes contradictory shapes that become definitional and prejudiced. A concrete place that reflects this prejudice is policies and laws directed at migrants and refugees. The conglomeration of processes that stimulate migration stand unanalyzed when faced with the concrete laws of immigration that govern the lives, fates and cultures of migrants.

The tension between the shifting changes and the fixed forms, dominate the changes of lives, cultures and poetic aesthetics also demarcate what can be predicted and fixed and governed and what is fluid, mutable and essentially ungovernable. The ungovernable includes the spaces not only of the fluid and mutable but also the un-categorizable that eludes understanding and hence, definition. The intention behind theorizing the tension is to bring about an understanding of the cultural and aesthetic transferences that are brought about by the spaces of travel and movement. This section of the chapter intends to bring together a selection of theories that surround and define diaspora, focusing exclusively on the fluidity of the nature of diasporic reality, often uncategorizable, often inarticulable, involving a variety of paradoxes. The section, further analyzes the influence of Asian Religions on America to understand the idea of travelling cultures and religions in diaspora and their struggles with articulation and influence.

Memory--Postmemory

The continuance of diasporic life is contingent on the perpetual continuance of the memory of the past. Most Asian American texts revolve around the praxis of life before and after travelling to the country of one's refuge. This analytical paradigm of recollection and memories forms the central thematic of discourses around texts and also figures in William Safran's widely cited characteristics of diasporic life. Safran states that people in diaspora retain, "a collective memory and myth about the homeland as the reference point of belonging and home, often idealized as the supposed ancestral home."[255] The characteristics of "collective memory and myth," the "reference point of belonging and home" and "ancestral land" are my central concerns in this analysis.

Sandra So Hee Chi Kim takes up the discussion of the relevance of memory and postmemory discourses and their connection and role in diasporic discourse and theory. She intends to "move beyond ontological definitions based on categorical criteria toward a more phenomenological definition that can help us better understand the lived experience of diasporic subjects and the formation of diasporic communities"[256] with a central focus on memory and postmemory. The discourse around memory is specifically important to the analysis because of its ephemeral nature. Memory is a "recollection" of the past, not the past itself. Kim astutely makes the difference between the subject of the past and the subject of memory and establishes its specific place in a diasporic context. Issues of postmemory brings up the non-structured, yet loosely structured nature of transference that shapes the discourse of diaspora. It is unstable, yet a very important component of what constitutes diasporic consciousness going forward.

Generations beyond the first immigrant generations continue to be diasporic and to assimilate based on the postmemorial transmission of experience of hardships, of movement, and of a continued image of the homeland. Kim invokes Lily Cho's formulation of diaspora as an entity that is not concrete, yet aspires towards a transitory concreteness, stating, "not quite nation, not quite race, not quite religion, not quite homesickness, yet they still have something to do with nation, race, religion, longings for homes which may not exist."[257] Postmemory brings together these "not quite" communities who are bound together by the experiences of their ancestors and continue to entrust faith in the past, that they have never seen. This brings up a definition of diaspora that is rooted in a reality that is not the present and often is not recorded because of times of extreme crisis.

The particular ephemeral nature of the diasporic engagement with postmemory comes from three crucial diasporic characteristics that contribute towards the definition of diaspora: first, the mode

of transfer of memories; second, the work of imagination; and, third, the nature of the foreignness that emerges out of these transactions. The modes of transfer of memories in diaspora are highly unstable as stated earlier. They are not only unstructured; they are also primarily non-verbal and non-assertive. Hirsch's mode of postmemory relies not only on stories but majorly on artifacts, through pictures, music, and family heirlooms. One can observe the ways in which China seeps into the child narrator in *The Woman Warrior*, as she encounters old photographs, her mother's college graduation certificate and a variety of other artefacts that her mother brought over from China. Kingston's text highlights the unreliability of transfer through the artefacts by restating the various versions of the stories that her mother associates with them, depending on her frame of mind at the moment of narration. I want to insert, that postmemory, or memory gained through transference, forms the narrative impulse for texts, but they are fictional precisely because of their primary difference in the truth content. As Kim states, "postmemory is the active search of another's past."[258]

The verifiability of postmemorial narrations are miniscule, and they often do not correspond to historical accounts. This brings me to the intention behind Hirsch's rendering of postmemory and Kim's theorization of its incompatibility with diasporic postmemory. The Holocaust is a major historical catastrophe in the Western World, but it undeniably has its parallels with catastrophes in the East which do not enjoy its privilege. Hirsch's theorization of postmemory intends to continue the engagement with the Holocaust beyond the immediate survivors, to their following generations towards continuing a discourse not on mere politics but on a personal level. This affective dimension of the Holocaust is its special place in politics and theory that distinguishes it from diasporic memory. Hence, for Hirsh, postmemory is a syndrome of being in diaspora, wherein the very condition of the catastrophe initiates displacement. However, to characterize

diaspora: memory and postmemory become pre-conditions for the continuance of diasporic life. In this case, as Kim states, memory is characterized by its temporal distance from the event and is characterized by experience and that makes it different from imagination. Since both of these markers of time and experience are prolonged and absent in a postmemorial setting, postmemory becomes an evanescent visitation, that is present but absent at the same time. As Kim states, "postmemory must imagine worlds. Diasporic postmemory in particular must actively conjure up places, situations, and bodies from which it is not only temporally discontinuous, but also spatially, culturally, and/or linguistically so."[259]

Once postmemory is devoid of the political theorizing as is present in theories of the Holocaust, its reliance on diasporic transferences becomes more ambivalent. In that sense, harkening back to our third point, postmemory in diaspora only serves to intensify the mark of foreignness present in diaspora. China, for Kingston's child narrator continues to become stranger as she grows up. Similarly, Becca in *The Comfort Woman* gradually estranges herself from her mother's experiences as she assimilates into the American landscape in her teenage years. Living with her mother's post traumatic experiences as a form of post memory of Korea only serves to disrupt the "normalcy" of her daily life. This eventually manifests itself in her broken relationship and attachment issues at the end of the text. A similar ending is observed in the life-long issues of the child narrator in Akhil Sharma's *Family Life,* in which the diasporic family's lifelong struggle with his comatose brother leaves him with relationship and attachment issues forever.

One must note the two temporal movements in diasporic postmemory. As the subject of transfer, the child, the second generation grows older and strives to assimilate into the host country, the parent or the person transmitting the memory continues to grow more estranged from her former home. For Kingston's mother, China continues to go further in her "imagination" while Becca's

mother continues to "perform" Korean Shamanism for the diasporic American audience, thereby rendering the boundaries and the system of postmemory more and more porous. The often-disintegrating structure of families in Asian American literature especially speak to the breakdown of a system of communication, that can potentially put a stop to the entire process. The terms of diasporic exchange through memory and postmemory, though true and extremely real, are also unstable and extremely porous, thus reflecting on the very nature of diaspora, which continues to be an amorphous state that borders on constant transience and ephemerality.

Unhominess

Kingston's mother experiences a widening of the borders of her life as she travels from China to the U.S. She is awed yet unaccepting of the cultural norms in the U.S., but gradually becomes aware of a variety of traditional and often outdated norms in China. For example, the putting up of pictures on walls, according to her, is a frowned upon practice. However, Kingston's mother evades it, and her walls are full of pictures of her children and family all smiling out of them. Simultaneously, she observes white Americans as nothing but spectral presences, reducing their physical existence to "ghosts" while continuing to live in the ghostly spectral country of China in her imagination, even if it is only through cautionary tales that do not apply to her reality in the U.S. The boundaries of the home and the world for both Kingston and her mother become blurred with the memories of the past and their incongruency with the present, such that the present seems unreal and unfair. This incongruency drives the child narrator mute, where she no longer is able to articulate herself to her family and is declared temporarily insane and different.

Similarly, in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, Jasmine lives in a facsimile of her life in India. The images of happy faces on the college campus that her U.S. aspiring husband Prakash and she

witnessed on the cover of the college brochure are nowhere to be found. But what Jasmine does encounter are piles of waste lining the shore, as she enters the U.S. to be violently raped and murdered. This is the kind of violence she intended to leave behind in India. However, her journey through the urban U.S. landscape continues to be a journey of encountering India in the U.S. Both conditions of encountering the familiar and making of the unfamiliar in diaspora in both Kingston's and Mukherjee's texts have renderings that comprise Bhabha's definition of the unhomely: "displacement the border between home and world becomes confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting."[260] Borrowing from Freud's description of *Unheimlich* or the uncanny, Bhabha bases the condition on the feeling of when the intimate and familiar space of the home becomes the uncanny site of the exterior world, such that it becomes a site for history and memory and becomes disorienting for the resident. The diaspora is a perpetual condition in which being unhomed becomes a precondition to the formation of the diaspora and a continued condition for its existence. The diaspora becomes the space wherein the concrete discourses of the host, the neighbor, the family, the home, the citizen, fragments and becomes disorienting. The very term *diaspora* in this context becomes as empty signifier of the variety of syndromes it can contain. It contains what previously was the ineffable, the loss, trauma, decisions and discursivity.

While theorizing on the concept of home in an interview with Schloss Wilkinghege in Munster, Germany in 2013, Bhabha states,

> I think the very term "home" has two aspects of it, just as a concept. One – something to do with the normalized, the naturalized, the inevitable, the original. It's there – the "thereness" of your existence, even more than the "hereness" of your existence. It is always there; this is my home. I understand this landscape. I know these people. I know the language, and so on. So that's one important concept. And the other, it seems to me,

> is the kind of Conradian idea that home is what you return to. So, there are these two moments of temporality, these two narrative moments – coming out of the home and somehow allowing yourself to imagine, whether you can or you can't, that you can go back: so emergence and return are complicit with the concept of home.[261]

This discursive concept of the home is instrumental in the theorization of diasporic reality because of this fragmented home that is often formed over multiple movements, displacements, forced or voluntary, but also often a result of a career or an informed decision. However, all these cases necessitate stepping outside the physical boundaries of one's home and defamiliarizing oneself with one's inherent culture. Hence, the site of home becomes the background of the discourse that contains diasporic discursive practices and experiences. In diaspora, the home is perpetually tied to the Conradian notion of "return."

As mentioned in William Safran's discussion at the beginning of this section, the place where one intends to return, but maybe never can, continues to provide the reality check for one's values, morals and perspective. It is the feeling of being present, but not quite, to draw from Lily Cho. The return orients the subject in diaspora, such that the echoes of the home once left behind, the now imagined past, continues its "undecipherable echo." This echo is of a past repressed, something familiar that has been rendered unfamiliar and indeed strange, such that it seems frightening. "Diaspora" provides the means to make these otherwise uncategorizable echoes valid by providing them a moment of recognition, bringing them to the edge of the knowable—namely, foreignness. This is a similar murmur or stillness and unfamiliarity that Ichiro Yamada discovers once he arrives home from prison in Okada's *No No Boy.* The familiar rhythms of his parents and brothers have been deeply affected by their de-recognized home in America after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. The space of the house has become "something *which is* beyond control, but it is not beyond accommodation."[262]

The in-between-ness even in the familiarity of one's home constitutes the ambivalence of the diasporic identity. The home becomes estranged to the point at which the Japanese picture brides do not recognize their own children anymore in Julie Otsuka's *Buddha in the Attic*. It also re-echoes itself in Kingston's mother's alienation from her children and Akiko's gradual derecognition of her daughter in Nora Keller's *Comfort Women*. The literary echoes of the *unhomed* continue to be a constant thematic through these Asian American texts, struggling with their imagined past homes.

Imagined Homelands

The imagination of diaspora, however, is not just the imaginary, but experience colored over time. The past is experience for the immediate émigré or migrant, but gradually moves further out and often obscurely back into memory, such that recollections become colored by romanticized memory. Thus, the place of the "imagination" or social "imaginaire" is tantamount in diaspora, further contributing to its ambivalent ephemeral status. Concepts of the imagined past, imagined homelands that reside somewhere between the often-distant experience, and imagination form an orienting praxis for a variety of texts. In Julie Otsuka's *The Buddha in the Attic*, the process of the imagination, or the distancing of memory and gradual imagination is clear and poignant. The women on the ships have come together on the voyage to the U.S. for a variety of reasons ranging from escape from social norms, poverty, force, informed decision to just a quest for change. The liminal space of these women, full of their now-recent social and familial past-presents makes the ship and the sea the vessels of rendering the distance on them. As the ship gradually starts floating further away, fears and insecurities abound about their new homes, new adjustments, new husbands and new society. Further still, the insecurities give way to hope of new homes, new romantic opportunities, hopes of a better life and a new beginning.

Once the women reach the shores of the U.S. and encounter their often-older--or not really the one in the picture--husbands, fears of home resurge; old letters are taken out and hearts ache for home old mementoes like quilts, photographs, jewelry, and other artefacts become important. Gradually, when settling down becomes a distant dream and home consists of a sack in the middle of the fields, the women accept their new rhythms of poverty and servitude. At this point, their concerns consist of their still-born babies, their new drunk husbands, their destitute lives, and their new employers. Bhabha's "now" and "there" home has receded into its Conradian model of the place of return. These women have become fully diasporic residents where their place of return is imaginary, their pasts are imagined and romanticized, and their homelands are confusing and no longer stable. They are neither residents of the U.S. nor of Japan. This fully diasporic status is transitional and holds individualized experiential characteristics as exemplified by Otsuka's juxtaposition of experiences after experiences in the stream-of-consciousness style of narration.

The lack of one unifying experiences echoes Bhabha's opinion in *Location of Culture*, that culture is not home; it is a constituent of its different parts. It is not located but is constantly mobile. The experiences of the "imaginary" in diaspora, can be, therefore, a blanket term for the uncategorizable of the yearnings of the hearts that are not at home. They are in perpetual exile, but they continue to engage the past through their imaginations. The array of transitory terms like imaginary, unhomed and post-memory continue to form some of the central discourses in diaspora. In that sense, diaspora can be termed as "soul-defining" as opposed to Bhabha's "soul-making," by virtue of providing language to a reality that is otherwise uncategorizable and unrecognized.

Exile

The condition of being in exile is similar to the transitoriness that I have already described. Said uses the words "nomadic," "decentered," and "contrapuntal," to describe the state of being in exile. The condition of not being able to locate oneself in the place that one's heart desires, the feeling of twoness, and the multiplicity of mental locations are typical to an exilic mentality. However, the individual continues to be physically located in a one particular place. In that sense, the experience of exile is a completely ephemeral and mental process born out of one's perceptions of where one can and should ideally be located. The set of categories used to describe exile are also ones that escape definition but are reified through discourse.

The first such discourse that an exiled state of living opens up is its opposition to nationalism. The state of being is exile is a negation of one's natural right to reside in their home country. But, due to adverse circumstances of being, exiles are forced to relocate and to seek asylum elsewhere. Hence, the discourse of nationalism, with its boundary regulations, the inhumanness of immigration, the contention between laws and human beings are some of the issues that discussions on exile open up. It is the clash between the ideologies of nationality and citizenship formation that exiles oppose and against which they define themselves.

Said opines, "exile, unlike nationalism, is fundamentally a discontinuous state of being. Exiles are cut off from their roots, their land, their past... Exiles feel, therefore, an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as part of a triumphant ideology or a restored people."[263] The totality produced by the nation state is challenged by the condition of exile, such that the rupture in the totality brings out the structural hegemony which assures the continuity of the nation state. However, just as a coup always brings about a new regime which eventually tends towards a new hegemon, exiles are not discontinuous human beings who live solitary lives; they are united in their ideological state of discontinuousness and

always seek a totality, as exemplified in Said's example of the "fate of the Jews, the Palestinians, and the Armenians." Further, in order to categorize the different kinds of exiles, Said defines exiles, refugees, expatriates and emigres, surmising the transitory nature of all these states. Some states are more solitary while others bring with them a touch of spirituality. However, they are all characterized by their transitory and short-lived nature in a physical state. This state works out to the benefit of some, who experience a utopian opening up of the world as exemplified in eastern European refugees who found respite from oppressive regimes.

The idea of "where one should be" continues to form the orienting experiential praxis for exiles. This is evident in Mihai Spariosu's play and ludic liminal definition of exile. For Spariosu, who was a Romanian immigrant to the U.S., exile becomes a form of *utopia* or, "properly speaking, *atopia* if one uses this term in the original, etymological sense of "nowhere.""[264] Separating from Said's "negative" impression of exile, Spariosu draws from the ancient Greek idea of *agnon* or contest to understand exile as a power game. This kind of play, Spariosu asserts, has been used from ancient Greece to the present, for example in empires such as Russia as well as in voluntary exile to define the space of the nation and its power to choose its citizens through elimination of dissidents. So, for these exiles who leave because of differences, exile can have a range of ambivalent and unintended consequences which do not need to be limited to loss.

Spariosu states that exile "may actually have the opposite effect of providing a free space or playground at the intersection of various cultures and political systems."[265] In his analysis, this view is supported by an analysis of a range of texts such as *The Epic of Gilgamesh, The Pentateuch,* Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* in which exile is performed as a shaping space for definitive future action. This view of exile as a form of "ludic liminality" allows us to value it, in Spariosu's words, "as a potentially positive

cultural experience."[266] This certainly is a view of diasporic life upon which first generation immigrants concur. Asian American Literature follows this arch of positivity in exile to a gradual comprehension of the disadvantages in exile for immigrants and asylum seekers. However, Spariosu's view of exile certainly contributes to my description of the diasporic space as an inherent liminal space that is fraught with interpretations and possibilities, that are transitory, individualized and consciousness-explaining.

Said adds that the exile is also able to look outside the totality and comprehend infinity, that she forms the touchstone that reminds one of the existence of borders, which usually serve the purpose of securing, rather that limiting, for the majority. Finally, exile is a contrapuntal state of mind. To borrow from the world of music, Said, theorizes exile as a state of harmony achieved by two contradictory notes, two discordant realities, two perspectives and two experiences, that play against each other to form a discordant whole. We can surmise, that to be an exile is to ultimately meet the other of one's self that is present in the self. Such meetings are not physical, but perceived, imagined and reified. In that sense, exile is also a reified state of mind that becomes a central diasporic discourse, lending the characteristic of reification to the list of categories that define diaspora.

Perennial Philosophy and the Influence of Asian Religions

The particularity of the inspiration that the American cultural and spiritual scenario draws from Asian religions is another site for the formation of evanescent discourse that perpetuates the tension with the diasporic space as a place that produces change. The tension between form and change, between organized structural religious understanding and ephemeral oneness with the divine is ushered into Western thought and eventually into the American intellectual, spiritual,

and mystical tradition through the conceptualization of what, popularly, Leibnitz describes as *philosophia perennis* or perennial philosophy. Although there is a no agreement on the concrete definition of the phrase, it can be roughly used to indicate that "some sort of continuous theme runs throughout the history of philosophy, that certain enduring and lasting truths are recognizable in the philosophical writings of all historical periods."[267] *Philosophia Perennis*[1] that

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[1] The term derived from the long-standing Platonic tradition of *presca theologia* draws attention to interconnected philosophical truths that have outlasted philosophical and theological fads over time and that are believed to be the continued spiritual connection between all religions, philosophies and ideologies. It has been adopted by "adherents of Thomistic Scholasticism, Scholasticism in general, Platonism, mysticism, positivism, naturalism, Catholic philosophy, Western philosophy and world-wide philosophy, Eastern and Western (Schmitt, 505,)" Given its wide variety of originary sources, perennial philosophy combines the qualities of arriving at oneness of all these sources, as well as remains perpetually open to new integrations, interrogations and ideas.

This connection with alternative ideas and alternative philosophies is reflected in the works of Marsilio Ficino, the founder of the Platonic Academy of Florence, who is attributed with first connecting *prisca* ancient *theologia* with the "perennial fountain (Schmitt, 511)" What this basically indicates is the nuances of Fico's philosophical adherence. In spite of being a Platonist, Fico "drew significantly, in one way or another, from a number of other philosophers, including Lucretious, Plotinus, Jamblichus, Augustine, Proclus, Pseudo-Dionysius, Psellus, Pletho and a variety of pseudonymous and mystical writings, including the Hermetic *corpus*, the *Chaldaic Oracles,* and the pseudo-Orphic writings (See Schmitt, 507)" In this sense, Schmitt calls Fico, a Platonist only with reservations. Ficino's explorations into the alternative philosophers ensued from the belief that the *prisca* Ancient theology contained a variety of truths which was consummated in Plato (See Schmitt, 509-511),[5] but they all further connected with the alternative philosophies and this continues the perennial fountain of philosophical truth that can only be gained through true engagement with philosophy and the nature of the truth, not by adherence to any one structured and pre-defined philosophical, theological or scientific tradition.

Giovanni Pico (1463-94) furthered Ficino's alternative philosophical attachments by proclaiming that Ficino's much valued *prisci theologia* did not have any special access to truth, "but aspects of it are to be found in Averroes, the *Koran*, the Cabala, the writings of the medieval schoolmen and in many other places as well (See more, Schmitt, 513)" Such liberalism, though might be commonplace today, it was quite radical in the medieval ages. Arthur Versluis, author of the trilogy (Versluis, Arthur. *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religious,* 1993; *The Esoteric Origins of the American Renaissance,* 2001; *American Gurus,* 2014.) that examines the influence of alternative religions and philosophies on the American intellectual and religious traditions states that, "in fact the early Christian Church Fathers inveighed fiercely against the Mystery traditions of antiquity, scorning them and underscoring the differences between monotheistic faith and the earlier initiatory pagan traditions represented in the Mysteries" (American Gurus, 7). Thus, there was a strict opposition towards reading, and accepting "other" theologies and modes of orientations and beliefs. The major point of contention according to Versluis is the mode of orientation that is perceived between the mainstream and the alternative, such that the dominant survives by rejecting and demonizing the other, because the other privileges direct individual illumination and experiences of the divine as opposed to structured spiritual initiation. Such a situation can be noticed in texts as late as Shakespeare's *The Tempest.* Prospero's kingdom is usurped by his brother Antonio with the help of the King of Naples. When he is driven out of the city Prospero is able to escape with a few books of magic. In Aime Cesaire's rewriting of the text, Prospero states that the Holy Church charged him on three specific counts.

> "The Holy Inquisition for the preservation and integrity of the Faith and the pursuit of heretical perversion, acting through the special powers entrusted to it by the Holy Apostolic See, informed of the errors you profess, insinuate and publish against God and his Creation with regard to the shape of the Earth and the possibility of discovering other lands, notwithstanding the fact that the Prophet Isaiah stated and taught that the Lord God is seated upon the circle of the Earth and in its center is Jerusalem and that around the world lies inaccessible Paradise, convinced that it is through wickedness that to support your heresy you quote Strabus, Ptolemy and the tragic author Seneca, thereby lending credence to the notion that profane writings can aspire to an authority on a level of the most profound of the Holy Scriptures, given your notorious use by both night and day of Arabic calculations and scribblings in Hebrew, Syrian and other demonic tongues and, lastly, given that you have hitherto escaped punishment owing to your temporal authority and have, if not usurped, then transformed that authority and made it into a tyranny, doth hereby strip you of

dates all the way back to Thomistic Scholasticism and Platonism continues to be the alternate religious engagement for Greco-Roman philosophers such as to name a few of the important ones, Marsilio Ficino, the founder of the Platonic Academy of Florence, Giovanni Pico (1463-94), Agostino Steuco (1497-1548), till it is taken up in the mid-twentieth century by Aldous Huxley in *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945), where it perpetuates itself into the American religious scenario. Huxley's "alternative" engagement taps into another long-standing religious engagement that was already in place.

> your titles, positions and honors in order that it may then proceed against you according to due process through a full and thorough examination, under which authority we require that you accompany us." (A Tempest, Cesaire)

Cesaire's Prospero is run out of his kingdom because of his opposition to structured forms of beliefs, theology and philosophies that define the Church. It is finally, in the midst of mystical nature that Prospero is able to exercise his knowledge and realize his magic through Ariel. But, how is Ariel magical? What kind of magic is it? There are questions that Shakespeare does not answers. Ariel, in this case, might be a shaman who is able to exercise something akin to miracles or magic. In any case, it does prove the fascination with practices and religions that can lead to such magical or extra worldly practices. Philosophers like Ficino, Pico and further Steuco transcend and go beyond the established parameters.

Agostino Steuco (1497-1548), is possibly the most closely and immediately linked to Leibniz and his assertion of perennial theology that emphasizes one continuous religious center or experiential essence. Steuco was a staunch defender of the tradition of *prisca theologia*, and he completely developed "the theme of harmony, of consonance, of universal agreement into a coherent philosophical system" in his seminal work *De Perenni philosophia* (1540).(For more, see Schmitt, 515) Steuco was principally a theologian and biblical scholar, but the major part of his work, as Schmitt notes, was to make an attempt "to make many varieties of pagan philosophy and theology compatible with the orthodox tradition" (516). He, however, strictly denounced the teachings of Calvin and Luther. He begins the *De Perenni philosophia* with the assertion that there is "one principal of all things, of which there has always been one and the same knowledge among all peoples" (Schmitt, 517). However, history, according to him cannot merely provide this continuity because it has become factual and flawed. He asserts that this is primarily because of the nature of knowledge, which, goes through three stages.

The first perfect stage is where it is handed down from God to man, but it soon becomes dissipated and scattered, and, finally, it just seems like a dream. This is so with the word of God as well, so in order to preserve the first impact of the word with God at the moment of encounter, Steuco emphasis the continuity of history and perennial philosophy, such that truth can be reached without the excesses of structured understanding: "True theology is nothing other than the revealed truth which has been known to mankind from the earliest times" (Schmitt, 518). Hence, the few principles that remain in philosophy are nothing new as they were known to the ancients and are being transmitted to the later centuries. Schmitt asserts that not only was the philosophy older than the Greeks themselves, but it came from the barbarians to Greece. True philosophy is the philosophy that continues from the beginning of the human species and the unity of this knowledge with the ages is called "the universal agreement" or "perennial philosophy" (522). Additionally, "*philosophia perennis* has an epistemology in which God is knowable by human reason; it is a religious philosophy which induces piety and desire for the contemplation of God" (522) This can only be achieved through the continuation of the tradition of *prisca theologia*.

Though Steuco, is not the modern originator in the conversation of the perennial philosophy, it is immediately from him that Leibnitz draws his definition. The difference lies in the destabilization of the tradition of *prisca theologia* by the advent of the Christian era as most texts defining the ancient theology were denounced or declared as forgeries (See more in Schmitt, 524). The term is later popularized by Aldous Huxley in *The Perennial Philosophy* in the mid-20th century through his series of definitions.

The Western fascination with "alternative traditions" or Asian religions can thus be documented as early as the 14th century. Versluis states two instances of suspected Buddhist and Sufi influences in his researches: the first in "The Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth," an initiatory Hermetic treatise, included in the *Nag Hammadi Library,* of a dualistic engagement between a father and son that suggests Sufi and Buddhist influences.[268] Second, he mentions the *koan*-like structure in which Jesus speaks in The Gospel of Thomas, but which does not include the traditional advice that follows such formats.[269]These influences of the "alternative" eventually continue through world of literature in Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, the Transcendentalists and finally to Huxley and beyond. The discussion of perennial philosophy becomes particularly important because of its emphasis on the "truth" content in alternative traditions of worship, mysticism and philosophies, which in 18th and 19th centuries evolves into the acceptance of Asian religions into mainstream spiritual practices, especially of Buddhism and Vedanta practices, with the World Parliament of Religions in 1893. Vedanta becomes introduced into American spiritual practices, and one sees the advent of various Gurus, or spiritual leaders who lead their disciples towards higher truths.

According to Versluis, The poem "Kublai Khan or A vision in a dream. A Fragment" by Coleridge includes evanescent visitations of the sublime other. The visitation and the subject of the visitation are both foreign and reflect engagement with Sufi and Islamic traditions. This is also reminiscent of the power that individual engagement with nature holds for the romantics. The raw, natural, visceral knowledge that nature provides echoes the aspirations of the Neoplatonists who sought escape through truth. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Thomas Moore were all indeed infatuated with the Orient, Byron with Persian and Arabic sources and Moore with Hindu sources.[270] Versluis states that he finds in the works of these authors, as well

as the German poet and author Novalis, a similar ”mysticism that most manifests itself in close proximity to nature” and further that ”in the poetry, prose and fiction of the Romantics, one does not see a rationalistic subject-object division in which God is ”out there,” divorced from nature and from man.”[271] Nature provides the raw unmediated truthful experience of the world for the romantics, particularly man in nature is able to provide the perfect space for infinite communion with the divine.

This tradition continues into the American transcendental experience, though after a considerable lapse of time and through a noticeable rejection of the romantic influence from England. As opposed to the Romantic tendency of finding an unmediated space of communion with the higher powers, the transcendentalists encounter this alternate spirituality at a crucial point of change in both social, religious, and political terms. Transcendentalists like Emerson, Thoreau, and Alcott are introduced to Asian Religions during a time of burgeoning social and academic interest in Asian Religions as signified by the beginning of Parliament of World Religions in Chicago in 1893. This made Americans aware of the existence of religions and theologies far beyond the established Judeo-Christian tradition. This was combined with the intense spirit of social revolution signified by the emancipation of slavery and the spirit of American progress. Simultaneously, Versluis states that this happens precisely when” scientific theories like those of Darwin were gaining credence and beginning to shake religious faith as it had not been shaken before.”[272] Clearly, the juncture of these crucial forces shaped the notion of” progress” and American” spirit,” of which transcendentalism can be seen as an intellectual and religious outcome.

Further, according to Versluis, “Emerson believed that the true scholar, the American scholar, could set the stage, could lay the seed for the restitution of the *philosophia perennis,* of

primordial religion in this new land, just as he himself sought to do, subtly and with great care. Into this vision of a new literary religion he incorporates, Plato and Manu, Hafiz, and Saadi, Confucius and Buddha." The engagement with religions other than the Judeo-Christian tradition signified a literary and intellectual pursuit that contributed to the "progress" of the nascent modern American spirit. Even though, the engagement was not without its contradictions--such as when the religions were interpreted to suit the American landscape and, in the process, diluted and oversimplified--they still signified progress through the "engagement" with, not "acceptance," of the other.

Like the English Romantics, Emerson was fascinated by mysticism, which almost emerges as a catchword for any concepts that are unidentifiable in a Western context, especially Hindu concepts of Maya, Karma and Brahma. One can see the influences and Americanization of the concepts in his series of essays--some for example, being Nature, Fate, Compensation, The Over-Soul and etc. The Over-Soul, in particular, summarized the nature of Emerson's immersion in the alternative religions. With ample evidence of having read several of the Hindu scriptures such as "The Laws of Manu," "the Zoroaster," and several others from William Jones's translations, Emerson most profoundly alluded to his readings in "The Over Soul." The concept of the *paramatman* is distinctly present in his acknowledgement of the larger "Unity, the Over-soul." The relationship between the human presence on earth and the larger divine being concerned Emerson, and the essays became efforts to think through the connection between what Mircea Eliade would term the "sacred and the profane." Versluis opines that The Over-Soul "is about the relationship between the human individual and eternity, how the two intersect."[273]

The sacred and the world of the profane, ordinary existence, meet to create the heirophany accor ding to Eliade, but Emerson seems more immersed in inquiring into the nature of the co-

existence of the divine and the human being. After discussing the immensity of The Over-Soul, Emerson states, “We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime, within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal being, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal one.” These directly echo the concept of the *Brahman* in Hindu philosophy, the larger soul into which all other soul merge. In that sense we are all one. As if in response to this, Emerson clarifies in The Over-Soul, “And this deep power in which we exist, and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object, are one.” Distinguishing between Christian Theology and Hindu Theology, one observes exactly this difference, the distinction of the one and the many, the one and infinity. The readings of the Vedas and the Upanishads are certainly reflected in the modeling of Emerson’s thoughts. In addition, Emerson acknowledges the becoming of God through an integral worship of god, stating, “The simplest person, who in his integrity worships God, becomes God.”[274] One can read this reference as an allusion to Buddha nature, where through God-like or Buddha-like behavior one becomes the Buddha. However, one can also read this as a part of Christian Theology where the idea of the presence of God in everybody is reflected in the idea of the presence of soul in human beings. Emerson is clearly being adaptive of Hindu beliefs which he is merging into his understanding of religion through Christianity. Emerson’s thoughts and readings certainly shaped the intellectual tradition of engaging with alternative religions in the United States, and engagement with their thoughts signified the opening up of wisdom and intellectualism. In short, the progress of America was affected through these alternative explorations as well.

One can see the gathering of the World Parliament of Regions in Chicago, 1893 as a direct outcome of such engagements. The Parliament sought to “unite all religion against all irreligion,

make the Golden Rule the basis of this union, and present to the world... the substantial unity of many religions in the good deeds of the religious life." according to Charles Bonney.[275] The Parliament showcased a majority of Hindu practices including those defined by Swami Vivekananda, and theism or the Brahmo Samaj was represented by Pratap Chandra Majumdar. In addition, the Parliament also formed the first introduction for the Theosophical Society, Theravada Buddhism, Jainism, and the Bahai Faith to the United States as a way to mark the intellectual progress for the 400th anniversary of the United States. The exposition led to the introduction of the Vedas and Vedanta to the U.S. and, subsequently, led to the establishment of several Vedanta Societies. Hal Bridges states that there are at least 10 centers in Boston, New York, Los Angeles and other cities which are affiliated with the Ramakrishna Order and are run by Swamis trained in India.[1276] These centers formed a well spring of influence on later alternative spiritual transcendentalists and practitioners such as Alan Watts, Aldous Huxley, Thomas Leary, etc.

However, the version of Vedanta and Buddhism practiced by these proponents in the West are modified and "less-severe" versions of the original practices. Kathleen Raine in an interview with Keshav Malik and Geeti Sen, describing the influence of alternative religions on a range of modern and postmodern authors and the role of alternative religions states that, "Of course we seek knowledge which is congenial with ourselves" and this proves to be the truth about the "adaptation" of the "other" that we see in Emerson, Huxley and Leary. Hal Bridges, commenting on Auldous Huxley as the exponent of mysticism in America, adds by stating that, "Huxley does not advocate severe physical austerities, and he condemns what might be called the pseudomortification of the stern, stoical Puritan."[277] In fact, these theological puritans, according to Huxley, must practice humility and charity along with temperance and chastity.[278]

Versluis observes a similar trend in Emerson, who "proceeds to bring it" "down to earth" "Ties and Straps," children's toys, even the deliberately homey expression that "all is one stuff, cooked and painted," are down home Yankeeisms clearly intended, in this relatively late work, to bring down the truth he recognized in Hinduism into the sphere of his audience."[279]

Later, the Beats and the Psychedelics experimented with later spiritualities and brought about different ways of asserting the truth of existence and experience, although these new intellectual and alternative experiences were unable to provide a substantial challenge to the prevailing Judeo-Christian tradition. These alternative practices provide the added advantage of diversification to the American spiritual and religious landscape and signify the "spirit" of the American multicultural landscape. In that sense, these practices add to the magnanimity of America without taking away from it, and further the practice of perennial philosophy. This is signified mostly through Aldous Huxley's treatise, *The Perennial Philosophy*. Huxley's collection of quotations adds the ideas of the Hindu "That art Thou" to the Protestant conception of the individual relationship with God. Through this, Huxley intends to define the core of the spiritual mystics and understand the role of the alternative spiritualities in conforming with the Judeo-Christian ideas of salvation, non-attachment and the miraculous. He also intends to put the "knowledge" of the alternative spiritualities as productive knowledge for the self, spiritualities that helps widen the self towards larger social responsibilities and interactions. He works towards making the spiritual ideas a source for action and social work, by contemplation and prayer, and also by attention towards the negation and understanding of the self. Understanding the idea of "knowledge being a function of being" helps us act to enrich our social relations and open us to more empathy towards the other.

This counter-cultural atmosphere that starts with the transcendentalists and continues to the Beats and psychedelics had a tangible influence on modern social action and activism. Thoreau's essay, "Resistance to Civil Government," which he allegedly wrote after refusing to pay poll taxes because of his resistance to slavery and oppression, taught popular activists like Gandhi and Dr. King Jr. to work on the aesthetics of non-violence. Thoreau's action of civil disobedience to counter mainstream moral acceptability of inhuman practices like slavery, drives forth the understanding of the mainstream as much as a form of ideology as is the alternative. Such action and resistance help us understand and finally comment on the nature of constructed reality, where beliefs and values all result from our upbringing and education. The transcendentalist and mystic experience of direct communion with God, shunning the structured tiered pathways and hierarchies, rituals and practices involved in the encounter otherwise, provides activisms with resources for thinking through the mainstream and to discover the alternatives. Such is the way in which the transcendental experience also influenced feminism, which started as a counter cultural movement that opposed traditional hegemonic thinking. The Combahee River Collective is a concrete example of such activism, which started as a small initiative but expanded into a worldwide movement that turns from anti-gender discrimination, to anti-hegemonic and anti-oppression of all sorts.

Thus, one can surmise that the nature of Asian religions influenced counter cultural movements: it not only opened up an intellectual and academic space of interest in Asian religions in the academy, but it also engineered a new space of feeling and exploration in the American cultural and intellectual scenario. The question that this part of the essay tends to pose is, what could be the possible space of the Asian in the larger American mainstream cultures given the above-mentioned explication on the very ephemeral nature of diasporic life and the countercultural

influence of Asian Religions? How can explications on the natures of these interactions contribute towards an exploration into the nature of migratory conditions and the treatment of displaced lives?

Hybridity

Expanding on the abovementioned questions, I draw from Homi Bhabha's explication on *The Location of Culture.* Culture, as articulated in discourses post colonization, was a binary condition wherein the state of the subjects who had been decolonized was understood as a continuation of the colonial condition in postcolonial and postmodern discourse. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* enunciates a new form of discourse. This discourse is neither colonial, nor a decolonized version of the colonial, but a third kind, which acknowledges undeniable influences of the colonial and hopes to articulate the nuances of the influenced position. Such is the dynamic that the Asian American influences bring to the American intellectual, social, cultural and psychological landscape. This position has also been articulated by a number of other philosophers and social theorists. Harkening back to the concept of unhomed, by Bhabha, as discussed earlier, unhominess brings with it the association of both belonging and non-belonging. On one hand, one struggles to belong and on the other, one struggles to un-belong oneself. This is the constant struggle of the second-generation immigrant assimilating into the American hyphenated identity political scenario. Belonging and unbelonging are cultural, linguistic and personal existential states that the experience of diaspora or dispersion causes on the individual or group experiencing it, hence becoming an experience that is hybrid in character and unhomed in kind.

Frantz Fanon in his chapter "The Fact of Blackness" speaks of existing "triply" and of looking at himself as "an object."[280] On being laughed at by a group of innocently cruel children, Fanon experiences himself the most when he cannot experience himself at all. The detachment with himself, in comparison to the white people around him, makes him acutely feel himself. He states, "I existed triply: I occupied space. I moved toward the other… and the evanescent other, hostile but not opaque, transparent, not there, disappeared. Nausea…."[281] The presence of the other in this dual position of belonging and unbelonging is of evanescence. The existence, but not quite, not in a full bodily form, but as a spectral presence. One can harken back to WEB Dubois's idea of double consciousness of the self, in which the presence as a human and a racial or colored person is the constant state of being. Dubois speaks of the self, whereas evanescence refers to the place of the other in the self's imagination. Both are situations of unhominess, where both the self and the other have been displaced from their secure places. Belonging and unbelonging have the potential to create a third space for the self.

Bhaba's articulation of hybridity, which he defines as "the third space for enunciation," romantic and utopian, seems to be the space inhabited by the Asian American writer. It is not a sheer position of uncomfortableness, or discomfort, nor is it the feeling of 'being ugly' in one's own skin as Fanon articulates.[282] It is a position of experiencing the triple space of belonging, that is not quite a space yet, a space that one experiences, but doesn't know how to quite express. In other words, it can be discredited knowledge that lives on the boundaries and cannot have a central discourse owing to its transitory and ephemeral nature. It is knowledge that finds itself difficult to articulate, and difficult hence, to recognize; a transitory knowledge that signifies a motion from one state of permeance to another.

Achebe refers to this space while speaking of himself as an African writer in the English language. Instead of wondering why he does not write in Nigerian, Achebe accepts his position as a post-colonial subject who has been initiated into English as a colonized subject and has an equal claim to the language. This is the same sentiment Fanon expresses about the black man who speaks French and disassociates from himself. He is neither able to see himself as French, nor as just a black person, hence he becomes a stranger to himself. Kingston experiences a similar sentiment as a child when she refuses to speak in school and covers all her paintings with black paint. The child in her is unable to find the space between the English American school and environment and the dominating Chinese mother figure at home.

Achebe's stance is particularly important because of the distinct articulation of the third space. Belonging and unbelonging result in the 'polyphony' of voices as Said states in his essay Reflections on Exile and culminate to find rest in the articulation of the third space for both Achebe and Kingston. Said too, in spite of his utopic definition of exile also states that "Exile, immigration, and the crossing of boundaries are experiences…can…provide us with new narrative forms or, in John Berger's phrase, with *other* ways of telling" (Exile, 315). Spariosu's definition of exile as the ludic liminal space becomes clear in this space owing solely to it "potential and possibilities." One can take away the fact that travel and conditions resulting from travel are certainly wellsprings for narrative experiences. They always initiate new forms and surprise encounters that challenge existing modes of narration. The ensuing section aims to formulate an approach based on the examination of the nature of diasporic discourse and the influence of Asian religions. I incorporate the transitory nature of the discourses surrounding diaspora as an aesthetic of diasporic discourse and suggest words and concepts that form supporting parameters for the aesthetics. The next chapter endeavors to formulate a new kind of

aesthetics that emerges from the nature of displaced lives and suggests spaces for social utility and action, emerging from Asian American Diaspora Literature and expanding itself to the larger discourse of displacement and migration surrounding diaspora.

Section 2, Chapter 5: Evanescence: Usage, Concepts and Terms of Definition- The Poetic Space

"It seems the embrace of change comes as a resistance to it, that the free outpouring of lyrical emotion that creates poetry requires a tremendously wide-ranging cultural consensus and, yes, formal participation."

- *Evanescence and Form,* Charles Inouye [283]

Discussions of evanescence involve different structures of imagination, physical and emotional feeling, cultural aesthetics, of feeling and form and finally of aspiration towards articulating the ineffable. The approach through evanescence becomes relevant as it allows us to understand displacement not in a stable unified way, but as a space that is fragmented, fluid, often formless and replete with paradoxes. Yet, the fluidity is able to encompass and include in itself human parameters of feeling, emotions, apprehension, fear, forms and imaginations without distracting one from the authenticity of the encounter. The biggest service however, that evanescence does to displacement is a recognition of the impermanence of life and hence of displacement also as a temporary, impermanent condition. In turn, discussions on displacement have always to understand and to accommodate the inherent fluidity and shapelessness of the term. By "displaced," one means an ontological disposition towards being outside form, shape, space, geography and often history, hence, definitions aiming to capture the essence of the term have to capture the liminality of the concept that is perpetually suspended between realities and always tends towards re-examination of all we hold stable.

Evanescence has been articulated by a range of poets and theorists to articulate the variety of its reaches. We shall look through them to understand the inherent form of evanescence and then fit it as a parameter that allows us to re-examine displacement in a new light. I do not invalidate

already existing conceptualizations surrounding displacement, but I use them to frame a new ethics of solidarity. This approach tasks us with evaluating discourses on displacement to understand its ephemeral nature and come up with an associative poetics, that encompasses other conceptualizations but seeks to rise above them and propose a new ethics of engagement with "displaced lives." We shall start with Shelley, then travel to Thoreau, progress towards the presence of evanescence in Japanese and Buddhist aesthetics and poetics through Motoori Norinaga and Charles Inouye, then we shall visit the concept of *Maya* in Hinduism and finally conclude with a range of words and concepts, such as vulnerability, precarity, palimpsest, ineffable, that touch the various manifestations of evanescence as a poetic device. In the next section we shall bring together a range of aesthetic and identarian consideration that connotes "evanescence" in diasporic life to evaluate and apply this concept to Asian American Literature.

Evanescence plays a predominant role in Percy Shelley's treatise "A Defense of Poetry." Shelley begins the treatise by contemplating two classes of mental action, "reason and imagination." The former, he defines as the mind contemplating thoughts and their relationship to one another, while, in the latter, the mind contemplates its own thoughts and colors them with its own ideas, where each thought possesses its own "principle of integrity." In the process, reason stands as the "principle of synthesis" that respects differences, while imagination is the "principle of analysis" which conducts thoughts as independent wholes in a larger system of unity and considers the "similitudes of things." In that sense, reason and imagination could be both foundational parameters for ethical relationality. Poetry falls under the realm of imagination and, hence, divorces itself from the immediate nature of things and transcends into something higher, more integral to nature. In this transcendence, it does not lose form, but the form gives the ephemeral

words its shape and bestows recognizability. Because of these dynamics, imagination releases the poet from the immediate hold of time and space, such that "the poet participates in the eternal, the infinite and the one." Here, the essential parameters become harmony, beauty and melody, all unmeasurable parameters, as opposed to reason.

The immeasurability of poetry bestows on it its "poetic" nature. However, Shelley challenges himself to dig further into the so-called "purposes" of such an imagination. If reason does good for the world and imagination bestows pleasure, which would be more useful to man? Shelley states that there are two kinds of pleasure, "one durable, universal and permanent; the other transitory and particular." One is more physical and confined to relations in society, whereas pleasure is derived from consistency, and advantage. On the other hand, there is pleasure of the transitory realm, which enlarges, expands and rejuvenates the mind, one that is inexhaustible, precisely because it is formless, shapeless and only poets can provide words to it. Owing to this fundamental nature of the mental state that inspires poetry, Shelley believes the poetic presence to be one of "evanescence." This is the poetic faculty. Shelley states that it is twofold, "one creates new materials of knowledge and power and pleasure" and "by the other it engenders in the mind a desire to reproduce and arrange them accordingly to a certain rhythm and order which may be called beautiful and good," it is at "once the center and circumference of knowledge." This is the "evanescent" character of poetry, always vanishing, but also forever producing. Because of its ever fluid and expandable borders, it is always under flux and can always accommodate growth. We intend to draw from this ephemeral characteristic noted by Shelley to formulate a new poetics for the displaced space, one that is always at the periphery, but simultaneously a standpoint for new knowledge; always at the margins, at the danger of being constantly discredited (information).

My reading of Shelley intends to focus on the ideas of "evanescent visitations of thought and feeling sometimes associated with a place or person." Shelley goes on to state the nature of these evanescent visitations, which come unbidden but always leave one with joy and pleasure, even if it is through sorrow, it still leads one to derive pleasure from the experience. The very nature of poetry as with evanescence, is this tension between form and content. Reason signifies form whereas imagination signifies a transcendent departure from the form, via the content. In that sense, reason and imagination are forever bound, wherein one does not make sense without the other. Poetry will not make sense without its meter, its rhymes and its content that starts with a relatable context and takes us elsewhere, gradually elevating us and our senses. This departure from reason, from the form to the realm of the evanescent content, needs a strength of comprehension, which is an intellectual exercise of pleasure for the poet and is an elevating journey for the reader. The readers read poetry and finds themselves outside the structures of society and in a realm where the strictures of society no longer apply, but in this space, the mind is free and aspires towards more freedom. This is where my reading of Shelley applies to the nature of displacement.

If citizenship is the opposite of modern displacement and migranthood, then citizenship signifies form, structure and reason, whereas displacement signifies an intentional or unintentional freedom from the structures of movement, place and time, but a larger harmony and oneness with humanity. Maintaining Shelley's tradition and understanding evanescence as one of the inherent natures of being displaced, as Shelley applies it to poetry, I intend to bring forth the "transitory, fleeting, ephemeral things and experiences in this world" as significant of the displaced condition. In that sense, citizenship causes lack of citizenship, *vis a vis*, displacement, whereas a displaced condition is not permanent; it is liminal and is significant of the journey that

ends in some kind of citizenship. Displacement is the lack of form and structure that citizenship thrives on; hence, it is a disconcerting and albeit a threatening form, but in all its lack, it also signifies as Shelley states, “the spirit of its form.” In this sense, displacement is naturally and infinitely evanescent. It is not a permanent state; it is transitory, in-between and forever vanishing. The very nature of displacement is tied to place-- dis-place-ment, or the lack of place. Once the place is gained, the displaced, like the reader is returned to a place, which might be a new place, but a “place” nevertheless, and the physical condition of displacement stops. I will continue to discuss this further as I present the themes and the concepts that each add a layer to “evanescence” being a critical analytical and aesthetical category of the nature of discourses on displacement.

One can turn to Thoreau as the transcendental offspring of the romantics and their obsession with the "evanescent visitations.” Thoreau’s works especially, *Walden*, are a complex compound of the tension between innate knowledge and learned knowledge--in essence, the usage of the evanescent poetic device involves the unlearning or gradual effacing of knowledge of the past to return the self to a moment of infancy. This state of the self, naïve and curious, according to Thoreau, allows for the “real” experience in the world. Thoreau’s presence at Walden, was to contemplate the prevalent nature of life, life when stripped of all its forms and structures, to unmask the very nature of its form and the schema of the body when devoid of all its forms. At Walden, Thoreau submits to life, to the wind blowing in the leaves, to sand in the living room, to the darkness and to the primal spirit of nature immersed in its harmonies, sounds and beauty. In doing this, Deborah Slicer, states, that “he was most successful when he took the stance of a poet using literary devices employed most often by poets, one of which is evanescence”.[284] The

device is used in the "service of "evanescing" the personal ego," especially through the spirit of the device and by succumbing to the device.

The method that Thoreau uses, benefits our discussion of evanescent discourse on displacement, by giving us a model for ways to achieve the evanescing of the ego through ethical routes. In the upcoming discussion of the different ways in which evanescence is used in silencing the ego, the definition of evanescence that emerges is one of taming the self. Evanescence becomes a device that through its ephemeral nature provides relief from structure and allows for the freedom and realization of the self.

There are a few ways in which Thoreau utilized the poetic parameter while living in Walden. The silencing of the ego is first achieved through his unadulterated communion with nature. Thoreau states, "It is only when we forget all our learning that we begin to know."[285] Thoreau choses to transcend Emerson's and the Romantic's association with nature as a symbolic place--that is, a place for raw material to be transformed by the human mind. It was only when he was able to perceive nature beyond this materialist scope, and instead engaged with it more physically, that he was able to achieve the communion that he so desired. Thoreau's engagement with nature is more in the style of the primitive man who oriented his senses according to what nature has to offer. Thoreau feels enriched by this original association with nature as he learns to gradually efface his knowledge of nature as dangerous, disorderly, raw or wild. Thoreau, according to Slicer, is interested in the "structures that yield "experience" or phenomenon."[286] He chooses to shun all the conditions of our experiences which generates "tropes, myths, metaphors, conceptions and images" and instead see traces of all that nature leads him to physically in a tactile way. This is neither a mystic union nor a poetical experience, but more of

an experiential, phenomenological experience that he evokes through the poetic device of evanescence.

One of the first ways in which the communion with nature is achieved is through the effacing of the self. Slicer, calls this persona in which the self, in effacing itself, refuses to display one stable unified characteristic, an "elusive persona," and this is significant of Thoreau's time at Walden.[287]

The second way in which he associates with nature is through sounds. Thoreau listens to the different kinds of sounds in the secluded woodland, and in particular, he uses evanescence to transform "the way human sounds evanesce into something else more in tune with nature."[288] He hears the sounds of the wind in the woods, the cows returning home, the wood-nymph, the sounds of the oncoming train and silence. All the sounds combine to provide lyrical knowledge of the rhythms that surround him but that are not immediately available visually. These sounds, in spite of being aurally available to Thoreau, are all at a distance; they are all at once close and yet far. Slicer states that" a distance, a critical change of the ego's perspective, is a necessary condition for allowing things to show themselves, to be themselves, and importantly, for taking" an original and unprejudiced view of nature." Through his distance from the objects of his aural pleasure, Thoreau is able to dissociate them from their sources, yet at the same time associate them with objects of his fantasies, such that the cow's mooing becomes music and evanesces the militia's" great guns" and "waifs of martial."[289]

Third, Thoreau effaces his ego by molding his consciousness to be inclusive of the paradoxes through his stay at Walden. One of the places where the paradox most strongly manifests itself is when he washes his house by taking his pieces of furniture out on the lawn and by pouring a

splash of pond water on the floor. The inside and outside mingle seamlessly in this scene in W*alden*. The furniture sits outside with Thoreau in what Slicer terms his" wild-urban/human-nature interfaces."[290] This paradox is furthered by Thoreau's interest in nature where different kinds of berry trees sit in his garden, very close to the house, almost engulfing the house in a mini-forest of its own. The wild-urban dichotomy becomes more present through these scenes of seamless communion. Evanescence here, is instrumental in its capacity to embody paradoxes and dichotomies albeit in a postcolonial and postmodern sense.

Finally, Thoreau takes the final step in evanescing the ego through his oneness with darkness. While visiting his neighbors, Thoreau strays off the usual wooded path and, instead, tactilely feels his path around the forest, such that he finally feels his house door and steps in. The darkness is the final step in quieting the ego because it requires complete submission of the self to release oneself of the fears of what one cannot see, to "appreciate the vastness then" and "realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations."[291] Through these steps, Slicer argues, one witnesses the various ways in which the evanescence is used as a poetic and aesthetic device to let go of one's ego and prepare the self for real interaction.

This analysis of Thoreau's usage of evanescence in his writing and experience of *Walden* is of multiple uses to us. We see Evanescence used to efface the self, to commune originally with nature through sounds, to embody paradoxes, and to represent complete submission to the power of nature's darkness. How does this contribute to a discussion of displacement? If one is to consider displacement as an encounter with the other, the other who is the absolute stranger, the foreigner, then in Derrida's tradition of absolute hospitality, one must first let go of one's ego in order to do justice to the encounter. This spirit of neighborliness or of friendship is best achieved through the openness towards encountering the other as Thoreau encounters nature by subduing

the ego. The evanescing of the ego and the unlearning of prior experiences provide us the only ground for an unadulterated communion with the other, allowing us to provide "absolute hospitality."[292] Understanding the space of the self and the other as both transient spaces that are just grounded in immediate and physical realities, one can tear themselves apart from the *topoi* of myths, experiences, and prejudices. The evanescing of reality, and the subsequent erasure of the self, allows for the accommodation of the other's preferences, as stated in Thoreau's understanding of the sounds. Without a determined ego, the other's reality no longer stays incongruent with our needs, but resonates as a part of the larger harmony of a life, of which both our needs and the other's needs are both fragments.

Second, allowing the effacing of the self facilitates an acceptance of paradoxes not necessarily innate to one's own self. Paradoxes form an important part of diasporic and postcolonial reality because these are spaces of encounter of bordering cultures, nationalities, values, morals and ethics. The incongruencies that one experiences through these paradoxes are varied: they can be funny, enriching, eye-opening or traumatic, damaging and inconsistent. For example, such a paradoxical reality is reflected in issues of language in a postcolonial reality. The language of the colonizer comes to replace the language of the native and signifies progress, class, status, intelligence and capability. However, national linguistic movements like the Bengali language Movement or the Bhasa Andalon in 1971 provided a counter movement to the linguistic reality of postcolonial India, Pakistan and Bangladesh and let to the formation of an alternate linguistic intelligentsia whose identity was provoked by the native language. Hence, postcolonial and diasporic encounters, much like the encounters with the other are replete with paradoxes and the evanescing of the self allows for the accommodation of the paradoxes.

Finally, Thoreau's submission to darkness is reminiscent of one's engagement with the other, in principle. The feeling of the trees, the tactility of feet and feeling around in the darkness to find the way signify the original moment of encounter when there is no set way, because a way hasn't been laid out yet. The concept of "feeling around" that Thoreau engages in with the trees is reminiscent of the method for engagement with the other. One must "feel" to know, to understand, to engage and be concerned before the moment of encounter with the other defines the other. The very presence of the other must not be the moment of definition as that removes the other from possessing any agency of making themselves known in the first moment of encounter. Perceiving the other as the evanescent other and the self as the evanescent self allows for feeling, tactility, original method of approach and the complete effacement of the ego.

Mono-no-aware (evanescence and feeling)

Another concept that we find associated to evanescence is the Japanese concept of *aware*: the empathetic awareness of things. In a song (*uta*) one sings about the indispensable nature of *aware*, as it forms one of the most crucial elements the composition of either songs or poems. As both of these forms are produced by being moved by something, *aware* is the expression and the sensibility of being moved. The word *aware* as explained by Motoori Norinaga encompasses a range of emotions. In his essay titled on "On *Mono No Aware*," Norinaga outlines all the different interpretations of the aesthetic. It is the feelings of the heart that Norinaga privileges over any other kind of emotion. According to him, the heart retains and understands the emotions which are expressed in *aware.* Norinaga states that the "heart knows *mono no aware*," which he defines as the "thinking heart." A thinking heart is one that is affected when it comes in contact with emotions which can range from sad, charming, happy, angry, etc. "Therefore," states Norinaga, "to know "*mono no aware*" is to discern the nature of happiness or sadness

while experiencing the world."[293] These feelings Norinaga claims are usually best described and experienced in their fleetingness and ephemerality, such that viewing cherry blossoms can elicit a feeling of impermanence of natural phenomenon, and by extension a reminder of human frailty, while the change of seasons can bring one to tears. These phenomena move the heart not only because of their presence, but by their transitory nature, eliciting *mono no aware.*

The nature of *mono no aware* is best explained through the formats of songs and poems, though Norinaga also states that there is no essential difference between poetry and *monogatari*. The essential unity of poetry and *monogatari* is in their common roots in *mono no aware.* Just as one understands and adapts the meaning of a song and is moved according to one's encounter with the song, one understands *mono no aware* when one is moved by the emotions conveyed by the song. In a similar way, poems are also expressions of an intense awareness of *mono no aware.* The engagement with poetry to express the deepest of the emotions felt by the heart is a very Wordsworthian engagement. One observes the connection with Wordsworth's pronouncement that "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions" (Lyrical Ballads) in Norinaga's statement, "Poetry simply makes splendid whatever moves the human heart" (197). Whatever moves the human heart is *mono no aware*, thus poetry becomes one of the most powerful genres to explore it through. Hence, literary narratives in which poets exchange and compose verses are the ones in which the sense of *mono no aware* is most intense.

Intense feelings of love, intense attachments with nature or intense longing for something cultural or traditional, which are feelings that are strong, but transitory and have the capacity to not just move but evoke a particular kind of emotion is *mono no aware.* The vision of the cherry tree remains crucial to the definition of *aware*, but if the vision of the cherry tree evokes the feeling of sadness or happiness then it becomes *mono no aware*. This Japanese aesthetic is

present in any form of art and can be evoked through emotions anywhere that is reminiscent of passing reality. I want to borrow this particular definition of *mono no aware* to read Charles Inouye transformation of *mono no aware* into a distinctive Western aesthetic titled as Evanescence.

Evanescence and Form

This is a concept that is similar to the Japanese aesthetic of *aware* in its effort at embodying the feeling of fleetingness or passing. Inouye draws from the same image of the cherry tree that Norinaga refers to, but for him the cherry tree not only produces an emotion (*aware)*, but it also reminds one of the fleetingness of life. It is this moment of being aware of the fleetingness that Inouye terms as evanescence. He does not expand the concept to the range of emotions as signified in *mono no aware* from the step of being moved; rather, he chooses to freeze this transitoriness in its moment and uses it to understand the different ways in which Japanese society and culture of perceiving reality are structured around these fleeting transitory moments of time and space. He intends to work evanescence as a poetic device that provides an introduction to the nature of Japanese culture, one that dominates the change of seasons, the perception of reality and the nature of art and philosophy. It also frames the perception and encounter with the divine along with informing physical alignment with non-physical phenomenon. Fleetingness, as Inouye defines it, is the rapid transition from one form to another, such as the change of the seasons which is a transition from one form of season with its different manifestations such as temperature, nature, people's cloths and behaviours to another season with different manifestations of the same places. The change, thus, from one form to another, or the tension between "change and form" is what Inouye aims to capture through his theorization of evanescence in the Japanese culture.

Since Inouye aims to defines evanescence as a poetic device, it is best to begin the demonstration of the discussion through a poem. He cites a Buddhist poem in the *Man'yoshu*: nos. 4468 as an example of the Buddhist struggle with living in a current form that changes rapidly:

Man counts for nothing,
A body empty, ephemeral--
Let me gaze on beauty
In clear mountains and rivers
While I search for the way[294]

The poem embodies several paradoxes that Inouye points out in the course of his analysis of evanescence in Japanese culture. First, the mortal man lives in his body, which is but a shell for the present. The state of the present becomes a preparation for the future and through this realization one communes with the divine. The Buddhist concept of non-attachment presents itself in everyday functions through a non-attachment with the physical and the internal self, both of which are manifestations of the current, but not permanent reality. Attesting to this, Yamanoue Okura (660-ca.733) writes, "In this world nothing is permanent. Hills become valleys, and valleys change to hills. The length of a mortal's life is undetermined--thus one lives to a ripe age while another falls to untimely death. In the twinkling of an eye, a hundred years of life are extinguished; in the straightening of an elbow, a thousand years become nothing".[295]

The rapid succession of change as well as the constant possibility of change that Okura mentions is precisely Inouye's telos in the formulation of the aesthetic of evanescence. Inouye starts asserting the impermanence of the moment from the very formation of Japan. Japan or the Portuguese "*Jampon"* is a string of volcanic islands that have come together because of plate tectonic movements, from a geological point of view. And it is precisely the blessing of the movement that formed the very island that the Japanese culture reveres. Citing Inouye, "Rigidity invites disaster. Flexibility enhances survival".[296] On the island, earthquakes are a frequent

occurrence, and they are another reminder of constant change. Houses are lighter and earthquakes are larger than just natural disasters. They are a constant reminder of the "truth of evanescence--that nothing is permanent," not even massive and seemingly immovable mountains. The lack of any codification with the landscape results in a larger effort to codify the seasons. According to Inouye, this codification of the seasons can be seen as "a larger attempt to simplify the complexity of the natural phenomenon" that the landscape presents. Strict changes in the perception of different seasons, such as cherry trees being associated with spring and the moon being strictly associated with fall, in spite of its presence throughout the year, and strict changes in the wardrobe irrespective of the reason season signify a strict attention to formality and structure than a practical affair or a simple acceptance of changing seasons. A more aesthetic reason for such codified formalities might be to assert unity over the unity of the landscape over all of Japan. By codifying behaviour nationally, it facilitates a cultural unity that unites national spirit and pride and asserts cohesiveness over everything that is called "Japan."

Japanese poetics, according to Inouye, also worked in a unifying and interconnected way over what could be potential paradoxical realities. He refers to the ancient religious practices in Japan which were "animistic, polytheistic, and shamanistic" as bridging the human and the divine realms. Shamanism considers the human world and the world of spirits as porous spaces, which when crossed provide relief to a range of physical and physical issues. To facilitate this, a range of hierophanic spaces manifest themselves all over the place. This might be a tree, or a waterfall or a rock that is the in between space and is considered as God, the sacred in the profane. This ability to see infinity in a banal object, constitutes the overarching capacity of evanescence. It widens perceptions and bestows beauty and importance on everyday surroundings that might reveal something beyond. An important aesthetic object to demonstrate this crossover of spaces

is “the empty, spent shell of a cicada” called “*utsusemi.”* According to Inouye, *utsusemi* is an early image of evanescence as it “affirms life’s brevity and fragility,” asserting that reality is necessarily “without permanence,” a very Buddhist view of the world.

The cicada which abandons its shell once it morphs into a beautiful butterfly signifies the material presence of change in the everyday. Used as a common pillow-word, the cicada shell has become a permanent signifier of evanescence for the Japanese through words such as, “cicada-shell world (*utsusemi no yo)* is understood as being empty, frail, and quickly passing. So is cicada-shell life, cicada-shell man and cicada-shell lover.”[297] The cicada-shell also balances Confucian form with a Buddhist appreciation of change. The coexistence and rapid transition from form-change-form speaks to the reality of life, which is also the truth of mortality. As Inouye asserts,” the truth of mortality is the truth of evanescence.”[298]

This intense focus on impermanence in the mortal world is also a counterbalance to the belief in the presence of the enlightened world. *Samsara* is this evanescent world, whereas *satori* is the sense of spontaneous insight into the nature of things. Inouye signifies *samsara* and *satori* throug h series of diagrams where a series of uneven overlapping, concentric circles signify *samsara* and a release of the circles upward but in a singular form such that one is able to perceive a renewed vision of the world, is signified by *satori*. *Satori* is the Bodhisattva’s path, where a glimpse of the ultimate enlightened space is possible, but where return to the evanescence reality is also the only recourse. Apart from *samsara* the evanescent world and *satori* the enlightened departure and return, there is also the solid and fixed space of the divine that is depicted by Inouye by a square. This is juxtaposed on the everyday, on the evanescent world and is connected through codified formal physical gestures that signify the departure from the profane and entrance to the sacred. The sacred space is distinguished from the

profane everyday by a series of protocols, such as, silence once the sacred space is entered, humility, the physical gesture of bowing that applied to the commoner as well as royalty. These are gestures that remain *permanent* during the transition from the everyday world to the sacred realm. The permanence "points to a world that is neither this realm of constant change, nor partakes of its essence."[299] This ever-present permanent provides continuous form to the evanescent world signifying the presence of form in the evanescent change. This ever presence of change in form and vice versa is the message that I intend to build upon in understanding displacement through evanescence.

Life in and of itself is potentially evanescent, not just the life of the citizen or the displaced, but everybody's. This inherent impermanence of life is a permanent characteristic that affects all human beings. The attachment to land and property that serves to alienate all migrants and consider them threats to the unilateral policies of economics and language can all be perceived differently through this ideal of non-attachment which renders all of the set of permanence as nothing but momentary. This constant and everyday tension between citizens and their gate keeping towards the migrant populations reach an impasse once the reminder of neither the land, nor the weather are secure environments that are going to last forever reach home. Additionally, once the realization settles in of the fact that the secure country that is being gated now can in the blink of an eye be rendered destitute by forces outside one's control, such as the constant awareness towards the possibility of earthquakes in Japan, one realizes: first, the vulnerability of one population towards the other. Second, the palimpsestic nature of reality. The fact that America as a landmass was occupied by Native Americans before its discovery as the New World, speaks of the susceptibility towards changing fates and lifestyles that take one moment to

historically alter itself. The awareness that permanence can be flipped and destroyed any moment also promotes more historical awareness.

Thus, evanescence as an aesthetic to approach the understanding of displacement has important lessons to deliver. On one hand, it reaches out for an understanding towards both the citizen and the displaced and relocates the centre of responsibility from the syndromes of larger political events, the displaced migrants and immigrants, to the common underlying condition of humanity. The relocation of the telos of action serves to unhome not just the mobile populations, but, everyone. It expands the capacity for the understanding of reality, of experience and history, this, expanding and enriching one of existence beyond one's immediate physical realm. Hence, the expansion of realm in terms of time and space that one finds in Inouye's engagement of everyday life with the divine bestows one with a renewed perspective of life, such that one experiences the Buddha moment, where one is elevated from everyday evanescent *samsara* and transcends to meet the *satori*.

The moment of enlightenment is also captured in the Hindu concept of *Maya* that Emerson refers to as *Maia* insinuates the idea of evanescent reality as an illusion. The Buddhist non-attachment is influenced by Hindu *Maya* in temporal terms of the conception of Buddhism from Hinduism, extends non-attachment in Japan to Hindu practice in India as reality and hopes of permanence as only an illusion. The illusion becomes possible because of the lack of enlightenment where one is able to perceive one's being as beyond the pettiness over space and resources of today and the vision of successive generations partaking in the privilege of permanent space. Furthermore, the structures of citizenship, nationality and politics that make visions of such permanence receives a renewed attention, where the understanding that they are constructed in a Foucaldian sense becomes apparent, instead of the consciousness of such structures as the

natural order of things. The consciousness of all these structures can provide a renewed impetus for change.

One can take for example Huxley's exploration of perennial philosophy: he takes up an age-old philosophical stream and inculcates the official "other" religious teachings into it. By this, Huxley, unlike Emerson does not just passingly refer to Hinduism or Buddhism; instead, he makes them the focal point of his philosophy, locating them as its well spring. The poetics of evanescence play the same rejuvenating role on displacement theories. Evanescence by refocusing attention on the subject with ever vanishing agent, helps articulate a concept that might just be ineffable. Just as the interaction with the divine is often inarticulable and ineffable, similarly, the articulation of one concrete diasporic quality might well be as inarticulable. The truth of diasporic life is often too close but just out of reach because of its human nature, which is constantly shifting and often manifesting itself in different forms.

The problem with defining displacement is precisely that it is undefinable. Hence, the fear of the uncategorizable, the undefinable when it encounters immigration laws which are constant and often physical boundaries for the one displaced. The history of this encounter that is often so replete with hopes but often dismal, disillusioning and heart-breaking, is what de Certeau refers to as the history from above. Even though, one might claim that these are histories of the marginalized and the down trodden, it is still history that can be articulated and committed to page, whereas the other kind of history, i.e. history from below in this case is often the history that eludes imagination, understanding and hence, capture. Here, one can refer to the infamous Frank Chin and Kingston debate over authenticity. What is authentic? Who determines and how? How can one claim that an experience is inauthentic? What is the measure? Evanescence, provides an alternative answer to these questions by focusing on mimesis instead of the written

word. Human experience is regenerative, circumstantial, and purely personal. All of these categories elude generalization and hence, cannot be committed to the debate over authenticity.

By focusing on mimesis because of the regenerative quality of evanescence, one focuses on cycles, instead of patterns. The difference is that patterns come and go, cycles are regenerative and outside particulars of times and spaces, because they can crop up concentrically and in a decentralized manner. Such an imagination can only be accommodated by fluidities, by reimaginations and regenerations which are life giving. Diaspora poetics carry the evanescent characteristics and bestow it with a certain relationality to life and its fluidity that helps conceptualize and basically grasp the nature of evanescent diasporic life. In particular, in Asian American Diaspora poetics an intervention in terms of its nature becomes essential to resolve the extreme symptoms that make them the "extreme yellow peril" and the other extreme of "model minority". Hence, the poetics of evanescence become the one way in which one can arrive at the position of articulating a constantly moving experiential center. Evanescent diaspora is thus a decentralized, regenerative, life giving, mimetic cyclical process that is constantly under scrutiny and which constantly eludes fixity.

Evanescence Aesthetics in Asian American Literature

One can look at the women in Julie Otsuka's *The Buddha In the Attic*, to understand an adept form of narration, but the inability of successfully establishing the third space that articulates the polyphony of identity or even allows one to deal with it. The text is a historical novel that deals with the immigration of Japanese Picture Brides to the United States in the early 20th century and ends with the Japanese internment during the Second World War The constant narration in third person plural is because of the peculiar experience with the lack of individuality that Otsuka had

while interviewing picture brides before writing the book. Otsuka hears the repetitive phase "like all the others," "like everybody else," "all of us," as repeated collective markers while narrating the experiences of migration across the ocean.

The text starts off with "On the boat we were mostly virgins" (3). The liminal space of virginity in the wider narrative of life and experiences as a woman compliments the spatiality of the narrative, which is a boat. It is a narrative of journey, of leaving and arriving, of disassociating and associating, of unbelonging and belonging. The women on their arrival find themselves in very peculiar situations in America. Their husbands turn out to be fifteen years older than their pictures, without homes, and they are raped in a variety of places. Their letters home reflects their inability of coming to terms with their own reality. They work in white homes and realize that "Most of them took little notice of us at all… We stayed in the background, quietly mopping their floors, waxing their furniture… We never talked back or complained…" (44). The invisibility and strain of work is complemented by their strange ambivalence or blindness to their conditions when they write letters to their mothers stating, "We did not mention them in our letters to our mothers. We did not mention them in our letters to our sisters or friends. Because in Japan the lowliest job a woman could have was that of a maid. *We have quit the fields and moved into a nice house in town… I am putting on weight… My face is fuller… My stride has lengthened*" (45), when "SECRETLY" they hoped "to be rescued from them" (31). The narrative accommodates the, "heterogeneity, hybridity and multiplicity," through its strategies, as suggested by Lisa Lowe, but ironically renders them lost in the lives and narratives of the characters.

Anita Mannur and Allan Issac deliberate on the impact that Lowe's theorization of the Asian American experience had on the field of Asian American Studies. The reckoning of the Asian

American experience as "heterogeneity, hybridity and multiplicity" opened up a range of diverse issues relating to the understanding of what constitutes the experience of diaspora for Asian Americans. The authors state that it offered "a conceptual vocabulary to think through multiple differences that structured Asian American cultural, social and political formation".[300] I draw from Lowe's conceptualization not just the enhanced conceptualization of the Asian American experience but also the positionality of the Asian American subject in their multiple class, gender, and racial forms. As much as Lowe's conceptualization accounts for the diversity of the particular Asian American experience, it does not account for the particularity of either the Asian struggle in the Americas or the American assimilatory move that is stressed on in a diasporic experience. What I mean by that is that "heterogeneity, hybridity and multiplicity" describes the nature of Asian American demographics, both vertically across generations and horizontally through geographies of space. Lowe accounts for the diversity inherent in the Asian American experience because of the misnomer "Asian". Such a conceptualization aims to dehegemonize cultural domination and evades Asian American categorization as one stable entity who are either unsettled or migratory or stable and diasporic communities. Owing to the diverse quality of the demographic the conceptualization asserts that the experiences are varied. It does not intend to capture the fact that the demographics shift in status and consciousness irrespective of their diverse quality. Evanescence aims to encapsulate the naturally shifting consciousness of such varied demographics. I mean to stress on the migratory patterns of definition that are not just Asia and America centered, but are multi-nation/space centric, but participates in the politics of the American cultural agenda. Such populations, such as the one by Shailja Patel, as explicated in the conclusion, considers the U.S. as another stop in their migratory pattern, but contributes significantly to the U.S. cultural scenario. I intend to add to Lowe's conceptualization

by focusing on the multiple positionalities that the Asian American body holds, including their positionalities both in the U.S., in Asia and as global citizens.

Du Bois accounts for the Asian American experience as one that operates in "double," the African and the American. Du Bois states, that the experience of double consciousness is "peculiar sensation," it is the divided subjectivity of "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body." The experience of double consciousness always seeks reconciliation and escape from the divided subjectivity, but the agony of the condition is the dire fact that it does not provide any escape from either one of the consciousness. It is the constant identification of the African in the American self. Theorists and literary critics sensed some respite in this conceptualization as it helped them frame their dualistic consciousness in an organized conceptual format. Lowe's conceptualization of Asian American identity opens up a similar space and expands the definitional scope of Asian Americans from double to multiple. The continental scope of Asia is itself a misnomer, as mentioned before, as it encompasses multiple nationalities, multiple races and multiple economies who are all lumped under Asian. This western terminology has continued to define the experience of Asians in the West and of Asian Americans in the U.S.

My selection of texts in the dissertation have focused on texts that are inclusive not only of the assimilatory aspect of the Asian American experience, but also of the spaces that focus on the Asian side of the hyphenated paradigm. This Asian part of the identity is often characterized as traditional, primitive, fixed as opposed to progressive, hegemonic, dark and often as the identity that merits being left behind or effaced. If so, that what is the Asian in the Asian American experience? Where must one locate one's Asian counterpart to the progressive and assimilatory American identarian paradigm? Authors like Julie Otsuka, Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan,

Nora Keller, Theresa Cha, Bharati Mukherjee focus on their Asian familial backgrounds that refuse to be left behind. Texts by these women authors struggle with the complexity of the Asian identity that is reified in their racial experiences in America as discrimination, marginalization, and also as exoticization, all of these identifications characterized by difference between the Asian and the American parts of one's self. What characterizes the "Asian" then becomes a complex question, one that does not provide reconciliation, but one that also focuses on mutability. This is where I would like to refer back to the effect of Asian religions on the American landscape. Concepts like Maya, cycle of births and rebirths and evanescence, which influenced the romantics, the transcendentalists, the psychedelics, all focus on the mutability and fluidity of human life. This capacity of mutability to adjust to change is reflected in novels like Otsuka's.

The Buddha In the Attic is a classic example of a narrative that springs from the "pull" diaspora kind of immigration, where migrants are lured away from their homes with the promises of a better life and future elsewhere. The idea of the narration is very utopic: one sees respite and relief in this travel. But the dire reality of living the immigrant experience is a reality very difficult to comprehend. The condition of carefully monitored but unexpected stifling exile that these women are in, echoes Edward Said's idea of the *contrapuntal*. What is the contrapuntal? It is a piece of music that revolves around two different melodic strains. The intellectualized form of exile can be seen to echo Said's sentiments, where it is a space that is both positionalizes as well as depositionalizes one, that politicizes yet depoliticizes individuals, a space that one seeks to belong through unbelonging. Said states that this is a position of choice that makes us aware of our own instability as permanent creatures in a permanent habitat, and releases us from "the underlying assumptions [of]… dogma and orthodoxy", that accumulate when we take 'home and

language for granted'.[301] This would be the much-cherished exilic condition, a place in which the different factions of the self may come to exist in harmony with one another. To draw from Agha Shahid Ali, this would be the space for the creative and the mundane, a space for friends and literariness, of sharing and receiving. But how then does one account for narratives like Lan Samantha Chang's *Hunger*, or Kingston's *The Woman Warrior,* Theresa Cha's *Dictee*, where the narrative inspiration springs form a deep space of oppression, of encountering war and depression, or experiencing a third space but finding oneself unable to articulate it?

Kingston's narrative of *The Woman Warrior,* as noted before, has been the subject of much controversy and criticism from a major faction of the Asian American community. It has been frequently titled as "one of the most widely circulated and frequently taught literary texts by a living American author".[302] Sau-Ling Cynthia Wong in her footnotes to the introduction of the casebook cites sources stating that "according to Rita Holmes of the Sandra Dyjkstra Agency, Kingston's agent, as of September 1996," the book had sold "over 900,000 copies." The text was taught not only in literature departments, but also in "courses on American studies, anthropology, ethnic studies, history, women's studies, and even Black studies," along with its translations in over twenty languages.[303] In spite of the immense commercial success of the novel, the Kingston Chin debate, revolving around dramatist Frank Chin's criticism of Kingston has ever since been the model spate in the Asian American academe. According to me, the debate serves to outline the inherent existing hegemony in academia as well as underlines the breakthrough that one particular piece of work can bring about. The questions that arise at this point are firstly, what accounts for the immense popularity of the Kingston's first novel? Secondly, is the success itself the stimulant for the critique, if so, then why? Kingston distinctly became part of what came to be known as the "Chinese American Pen Wars," where she clearly became aware that she had

become the voice "for an Asian American female community".[304] Asian American activists think highly of the book as it "confirms their experiences with sexism" in the Asian American community and activism.[305] Helena Grice's collection of writings on Kingston's books, titles a section in the *Woman Warrior* as "Legacy or heritage?" where she details Kingston's achievements in inspiring a generation of Asian American women writers in the 1970's. Amy Tan, author of the immensely famous novel *The Joy Luck Club*, as well as other novelists mentioned through the research attest to Kingston's success as their inspiration to be Asian American authors. Phoebe Eng in summarizing Kingston as an inspiring writer, writes, "*The Woman Warrior* gave young Asian American women a voice. It legitimized our issues."[306] Emerging out of a space of oppressive struggle between cultures, Kingston turns the moment of difficulty into a moment of inspiration to provide empowerment for factions of people who had never had the recourse to voicing themselves before.

One of the most intriguing parts of the text is the treatment of ghosts. And, as analyzed in Chapter 3, the ghosts in the text assume a discursive definition. R. Radhakrishnan writes, "Kingston demonstrates painfully in Woman Warrior, both the home country and the country of residence could become "ghostly" locations and the result can only be a double depoliticization.[307] The double depoliticization is a constant reality in most Asian American texts, the presence of two histories, of two regimes, and two oppressive lives form the reality of narratives. I choose the word oppressive because diaspora as much as it empowers, also limits capacities of expression. For example, times when practices of expressing oneself renders oneself foreign, such as food, culture and language. One is reminded of "Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" in Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*, in which the Indian American family sits at home on Halloween dressing up their little daughter as a witch and simultaneously watches the news for

the separation of East and West Pakistan and the emergence of the new country of Bangladesh. One also observes this in Viet Nguyen's recent Pulitzer Prize winning novel *The Sympathizer*, in which Madam's Pho shop has a clock set to the wrong time, which eventually turns out to be the Vietnamese time. The purpose of the clock being set there is to raise money for the war initiative against South Vietnam falling to the communists of North Vietnam, after a deal being struck with the local MP in the us to support their electoral votes in the future. These people are Vietnamese and have fled Vietnam. They live in the United States as refuges in really low paying and demeaning jobs. Their routes to return to Vietnam have been cut off, as they have already metaphorically betrayed the country by having fled it in the first place. The double depoliticization in both these instances are real and lived.

To return to *The Woman Warrior*, Radhakrishnan also states "the anguish in the book is relational; it is not exclusively about China or the United States. The home country is not "real" in its own terms and yet it is real enough to impede Americanization, and the "present home" is materially real and yet not real enough to feel authentic."[308] The question of authenticity is embodied in the text in both structure and spirit. On one hand the text is marketed as an autobiography and on the other it is fictional. Kingston's mother strives to make her Chinese, but she is never Chinese enough for being rendered just Chinese, nor American enough to be just American. The myths that Kingston uses are a blend of urban myths that has been passed down to her through her mother's talk stories, blending gender and mythical narratives. Frank Chin's criticism of Kingston, frames Joan of Arc as a man who has been raised as a woman in China, in a family that craved a daughter. He is pushed into homosexual relationship and eventually hung, on being discovered a man. Parodying Kingston's mixing of the myth of Ngak Fei, the legendary warrior who had the names of his enemies carved on his back with Fa Mulan, Kingston commits

an inescapable crime in Chin's opinion. Criticisms towards the text ranges from an "inauthentic" portrayal of Chinese society to an American audience to calling Kingston's novel an act of 'unethical distortion'. But one needs to ask, 'unethical distortion', to whom? Who does Kingston owe an explanation to for writing the story of her life in her memoir? Who does she need to be authentic to?

The Asian American cacophony of voices in their narratives emerges from this moment of authentic encounter that usually operates on three levels: authentic to the home country, authentic to the host country and authentic to the in-betweeness. How can a writer justify all three positions? Harkening back to Radhakrishnan's point, none of these positions, or if one considers them identities, is real--they are positions that are framed for mutually beneficial and recognizable purposes. "The diaspora is an excellent opportunity to think through" among other things of "identity as invention and identity as natural location-subject positionality and the politics of representation, rootedness and rootlessness".[309] How do this positionality and cognition of the existence of the other manifest itself in texts? Returning to the notion of the discursive definition of the "ghosts" in Kingston's narrative, it will be important to examine the different ways in which the word ghost is used. As already mentioned in Chapter 3, on one hand, the ghosts refer to the other people. Kingston writes, "America has been full of machines and ghosts--Taxi Ghosts, Bus Ghosts, Police Ghosts… the world was so thick with ghosts, I could hardly breathe."[310] They also refer to the flurry of 'white' everyday activity that the characters encounter around them. In addition, white American practices are referred to as 'ghostly practices' such as hanging photographs of living members on the walls instead of just dead ancestors. At the same time Brave Orchid's encounter with ghosts is a Shamanistic ritualistic exorcising practice. Her talk stories are takes on ghosts and their lives in the human world,

whereas the rest are ancestors and dead people alongside whom the living lives their lives. The spectrality of the "ghosts" are possibly the only way in which hyphenated texts can represent themselves as well as their encounters with others. Since the Asian American writer inherently emerges from an experience of dual- identity, history, politics, culture and language, his modes of encountering the other is not a stable linear encounter, but one that is spread out in a wide range of perspectives.

"Ghosts" in Kingston's texts make appearances in Mukherjee's *Jasmine,* Lan Samantha Chang's *Hunger* and in Theresa Cha's *Dictee.* They do not, as explained, signify already dead people, but people who demand recognition, engagement and identity. On one hand by appearing as ghosts in an ethnic American text, they form a counter narrative to the mainstream narratives, where the interiority of the Asian American cultures, renders the white dominant culture as the "ghost." Just as the natives in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* are nothing more than dark shapes and angles, Kingston's narrative does not describe a single character from the white culture in which the narrative is set. The structural choice of the other, in terms of ghosts operates on two levels. First, it echoes Butler's view of experiencing and encountering the other on a spectrum, such that the representation resists any typification or fixities. Kingston refuses to comment on the "white" space that her Chineseness banks itself on. This is a space that is essentially foreign to her, Chineseness has been her upbringing. So, by intentionally distorting her Chinese myths and making them move towards a renewed understanding in the urban American context, she demonstrates her in-adeptness at both Chinese and American cultures. Second, the ghosts are eternal markers of foreignness, or the unknown. It is not the foreign as in "stranger" according to Kristeva, but an affective marker that signifies both the foreignness of the writing individual as well as the foreignness of the written subject. To commit to paper a subject that the author does

not understand fully, makes the writing a process of coming to terms with the foreign. Such is the function of the Asian American text, which searches for its own identity in the process of addressing problems with identity, both evanescing processes that merge in the process of identity formation.

Chin's critique for Kingston is thus an inability to acknowledge foreignness. According to Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, "The possibility that the less unregenerate readers may learn to read the allusions in *The Woman Warrior*, just as generations of minority readers have learned to read the Eurocentric canon, is never one raised; nor is the possibility that a Chinese-American writer may by right expect, and by duty promote, such learning in his or her audience."[311] The demand for a text to be read as any other non-ethnic text, seems to be the claim that an ethnic text in the ethnic cannon loses by its virtue of its very existence as a part of the canon. So identarian politics for the Asian American writer is not just confined to criticism from the non-ethnic but also from the community that it seeks to write from. The double negotiation of positionality is an inherent situation for the Asian American writer. Countering Edward Said again, the utopian understanding of exile not only fails on the level of rendering the real and the corporeal lives of people, but also on the level of the authorial or the readerly. Neither are romantic or utopian positions to be taken. The third or negotiated space is the only recourse for Asian American texts and writers as it helps establish a space for which foreignness of encounter and practice is the norm.

The "predicament" of culture is a perpetual problem while dealing with the impact of foreignness. James Clifford explores the "predicament" through the placement of art and culture in an ethnographic fashion in museums and galleries. One can borrow Clifford's argument that 'Culture' in the world of ethnography is never authentic. "The actual experience, hedged around

with contingencies, rarely lives up to the ideal; but [remains] as a means of producing knowledge from an intense, intersubjective engagement".[312] Culture and its accepted exoticism in the apparently 'no culture' world of the urban American landscape, is a permanent sign of unbelonging or being the other. Cultural stereotyping and essentializing, both physical and cultural, are problems that are constantly negotiated by Asian American texts. The graphic novel *American Born Chinese* depicts the cultural misfits and linguistic differences in the most hilarious ways. Odd impressions such as the Chinese eat cats, or an Asian marries any other Asian in the class is a reflection of the essentialized state of Asian culture or cultures. Such small prejudices are magnified in the celebrations of Chinese New Year in San Francisco, which is carefully manned by the police. If people dressed up in odd and outlandish costumes on Halloween do not evoke fear of security issues on public streets, then why would a multicultural country provide extra police security for ethnic and legitimate cultural celebrations? Do a lot of ethnic people conglomerating on the streets inspire fear, one wonders. Moreover, the celebrations are also performed not with the intent of just celebrating but showcasing Chinese Culture and extravaganza to the public on the streets.

Deviating for a moment, in last year's graduate student India night at UGA, the programs on the agenda started with a Saraswati Vandana, or a dedication of the evening to the Hindu Goddess of learning. Why would an Indian cultural night start with a dedication to a Hindu Goddess? Isn't India a secular country? The point I intend to drive across is the selective popularization and showcasing of culture that is a part of the 'predicament' of cultural stereotyping that Asian American texts often take on themselves to de-mythologize. Borrowing from Barthes definition of myths as being the "second order of signification," it is a matter of time before the highly protected Chinese New Year festival and the "Hindu Goddess" become a stand- in for both

China and India, just as arranged marriages and eating cats are a stand in for Asia-ness in *American Born Chinese*.

Reflecting back on the definition of culture though, it is these moments of contact or encounter that assert culture, upholds the facets of culture that one wants to or seeks to uphold. According to Clifford in *Routes*, these encounters also become sites for the making of cultural identities. Just as one is not Chinese in China, but becomes prominently only Chinese once in contact with other Asian nationalities, or just Asian when in contact with other racial identities, in a similar way, culture when it comes in clash with other cultures, makes and remakes cultural identities. The problematic of this approach is the low-cultural value of some cultures as opposed to others. Is being Chinese with their different cultural attributes itself harmful? Not really. But when it comes into contact with other 'dominant' culture, it becomes the subject of ridicule and mockery, which leads to low internalized cultural identities.

Issues of identities and cultures are shifting motifs in Asian American literary fictions. A lot of them are written in forms of memoirs, to absolve any accusation of pattern break. However, most of the texts are written in the formats of memoirs with the narrator as the first person I, thus providing one a biographical style of narration. This style has something particular to offer to the Asian American writing tradition, especially in women's writing, leading to the establishment of a unique third space that originates in the Asian American diaspora. I want to term this third space, the space that changes, mutates, reframes dominant narratives and is essentially the space of counter narrative and counter memory, as evanescence. As described earlier, evanescence signifies the dissipating core of discourse on displacement. This is a particular definitional space that arises out of studies on displacement from Asian American literature. All of the examples of texts mentioned in the above discussion all allude to the problematics of the definition of the

constitution of Asian American displacement or diasporic discourse. It is a space constituted of multiple consciousness, that is continental, national, regional, colonial, ethnic and extremely particular. At the same time cultures are diverse, food, languages, customs, habits, values, ways of coping with trauma and violence are diverse. The ghost that Kingston alludes to are different from the ghosts that Keller refers to and are different from the ones that Mukherjee alludes to in *Jasmine.*

The diversity of consciousness, positionality, interests points towards a customary center that is in constant flux. Evanescence helps encompass the diversities of all of these cultural connotations in itself. By referring to a constant state of dissipation, evanescence refers to a constant state of formation as well. On one hand this refers to the nature of discourse that is constantly in definition and is being defined, evanescence is able to encapsulate the complexity of multiple moves, multiple colonization, multiple linguistic difference and multiples cores of consciousness. Additionally, it alludes to diasporic discourse which is defined by its capacity for movement and locate spaces for change and fixity. It encloses in itself the positions of transit such as refugees, migrants, who are termed so because of their incapability of defining themselves through regular parameters. Additionally, evanescence also includes the prior discussed motifs of madness and insanity by providing the discourses relief from the normative, the regular, the hegemonic, but providing the understanding that knowledge is multi-faceted and is constantly under generation and formation. Through this, it is able to highlight the epistemological standpoints of various positionalities, such as refugees and migrants, who are not the end or outside discourse, but provide the stimulus for a new kind of epistemology. Overall, the biggest asset that a concept like evanescence is able to prove us is of the awareness of the transitoriness of life by reminding us of the precarities of our own positions, the

vulnerabilities in the securities that we enjoy every day, the epistemology behind forms and the realization that parameters like citizens and migrants are just terminologies and that these positions are ontologically subject to change. Our migrants of today are our citizens and pioneers for tomorrow.

Conclusion

"Until Kashmiri became cashmere. Mosuleen became muslin. Ambi became paisley.

And a hundred and fifty years later, chai became a beverage invented in California.

How many ways can you splice a history? Price a country? Dice a people? Slice a heart? Entice what's been erased back into story? My-gritude."

- How Ambi Became Paisley, *Migritude*, Shailja Patel

Shailja Patel, is a "Kenyan-Indian-American"[313] poet and performer and the author of the book of journeys, *Migritude*. *Migritude* is both a book of poems and personal narratives as well as a one-woman performance that Patel performs, and it has been on multi-country tours. The timeline of *Migritude* begins in the 6th Century BCE when the first "boteh/ambi/paisley" motifs were depicted in Central Asian and the travels to imperial interactions in Africa and India, all the way to Kenya and then Patel's travels to the UK and then the U.S. This is the multi-geographical and multi-cultural and widely historical journey over time and space that the "epic journey" traces.

Kenya is where Patel's parents settled and raised her; India is her heritage, and America is where she lives and performs her work. By choosing to highlight all the different facets of her identity, especially according to the geographies of movement, Patel intends to highlight the redundancy of geographical nationalistic identities. Especially for transient populations, for whom families, jobs, careers, entail movement, nationalistic identities are no longer able to contain the nuances of multi-nationalistic and multi-ethnic markers. Patel comments, "to me, what actually defines a person is what they DO, not what ethnicity/ nationality/ racial identity they claim."[314] As

opposed to considering her statement a redundant cliché of the American "pull yourself up by the bootstraps" mentality, it is a comment on the truly post-national age that physical, creative, hardship migrations challenge. Her statement ushers in a consciousness that "asserts the dignity of the outsider status."[315] Patel's stance harkens to the body of "outsider knowledge," that is often oral, discredited and outside the boundaries of history and knowledge. Migritude is an epic journey, historical, violent, poetic, physical and narrative. In Patel's words, it "celebrates and revalorizes immigrant/diasporic culture."[316] By making movements as the repository of knowledge and privileging the "unique political and cultural space" occupied by migrants who refuse to choose between the identities of origin and assimilation. It is this space of two-ness that evanescence encapsulates, in a albeit different way. This dualistic space through Evanescence is not always articulable; it is a space that defies identity (not just traditional forms of identity making, but the construct of identities) and is the beginning of new knowledge.

Migritude draws heavily from the negritude movement started by young Leopold Sedar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, and Leon Damas in France in the 1930's. These young intellectuals transformed the attitude towards blackness, from stigma and inferiority to one of pride and beauty. Patel draws from this political and cultural source that negritude opens up for young black intellectuals as a black artistic intellectual movement. She transforms the space of migration from one of hardships, loss and barrenness to one of growth, creativity and the unearthing of lost heritages. Hence, "How Ambi Became Paisley" becomes a necessary journey. Tracing the journey of the pattern, *Migrtitude* makes the reader aware of the loss of origins, reshaping and colonialism that the imperial enterprise entailed. It is to imperialism that Patel's parents owe their movement, and it is from this imperialism that Patel draws the materials for her epic journey.

In her performances of *Migritude*, Patel uses a variety of props to describe this historical and personal journey. One of them is a trousseau of saris that her mother collected and gifted to her. A trousseau of saris is usually an offering that is made to a girl's family to her on her passage from girlhood to being a bride. Patel and her two sisters decided to never get married. In spite of this decision, their mother had collected saris for her girls' weddings since they were kids. Respecting her children's decision, Patel's mother decided to gift her girls their trousseaus anyway. Patel uses these saris to unpack the impact of the garment and its narrative inspiring function that started from the imperial times. Patel narrates that when she arrived in both the UK and the U.S., she encountered "Western stereotypes about women in saris are exotic, mysteriously alluring, sexy, mystical- and racist/sexist- Indian women in saris must be oppressed, uneducated, un-cosmopolitan, not fluent in English."[317] The epistemological function that the piece of clothing serves speaks to the interpretive nature of Western prejudice and discourse. It also refers to the journey that concepts make across cultures such that it becomes almost unrecognizable. Chapter 3 explores this interaction of culture, events, artifacts in their contact with Western audiences. Just as Patel's performances intends to unsettle the praxis of interpretation, Evanescence intends to destabilize the methods of interpretation such as practices of reading, teaching, narration and prejudice. I differ my stance from an artistic and creative journey like *Migritude* through Evanescence's focus not just on history, imperialism, and politics, but also through the politics of everyday interpretation and myth making that produces the exotic, strange and magical, which are then reified through violence and policies.

Evanescence espouses a new way of evaluating ourselves in our everyday situations. One of the major characteristics that this ethical engagement foregrounds is change, the unavoidable, changeable aspect of everyday life, circumstances, history and civilizations. Displacement and

the existential space of diasporic life is where one experiences this change reified. Hence, using evanescence as a paradigm for looking at life as well as looking at life in terms of global humanity has the possibility of opening up a new ontological means of interaction and existence. However, seeing the other's misfortune, status in life, positionality as transitional and always encompassing the possibility of change might evoke both a sense of relief as well as the paranoia of being replaced. The anxiety of been taken over by the other and understanding that the other's change always entails your change are two of the critiques that might be incurred by an ethical standpoint that is so reliant on change. But that is not a new anxiety; one faces such anxieties in the first U.S. ethnic interactions, both European and otherwise. What such anxieties fail to comprehend is that the nature of reality is constantly in flux, irrespective of what one desires. The other's change will inherently necessitate the self's adjustment, just as Agha Shahid Ali envisions. Sitting at home in this moment, we have all just been affected by the Covid 19 pandemic in the U.S.

I have just received information that my school is going to be closed for two weeks to counter the spread of the virus. In this moment of global panic, one wonders about one's safely, and this would not have been imaginable two months ago. We sat smug as the number of death counts rose in China, every day. Given our Asian languages at the Comparative Literature and Intercultural Studies Department, I have the privilege to know colleagues with friends and families back in China and to go through the nightmare of seeing them spend their days wondering what their friends and families were going through back home. The fear of not being able to see your closest one in case they are sick or hearing the unfortunate news of their passing away and not being able to give the proper care or respect, are haunting thoughts. In these moments, I wonder about vulnerability, about the fact that disasters like pandemics, war,

drought, floods or wildfires are not dependent on our individual capacities to maintain our status and privilege. These disasters rush towards us, unprecedented, and naked. To accept "change," hence, as a normal cycle of life, is the only reality that we can control for ourselves.

In comprehending ever changing and evanescing reality, I think it is necessary to understand the non-identity nature of events and artefacts. Adorno's Negative Dialectics analyzed in Chapter 1, becomes as important interpretive paradigm here. To be able to preserve the uniqueness of events and people, such that they are not subsumed under concepts that distort and disfigure, is an important aim. One experiences this in the prejudice towards the Chinese Men in the nineteenth century. How is it that such a prejudice becomes reified into violence and policies? Micro-aggressive perspectives eventually become reified in action. Peeling the layers from the prejudices towards the Chinese Men, one observes the contact between stereotypes towards immigrants, their capacity for hard work, and the shortage of jobs in a developing and modernizing economy, such that these men become the scapegoats for insult, violence and eventual exclusion. Similarly, Shailja Patel asks, "Why does the "Islamic" always precede the word "terrorist" when the word "Catholic" never precedes the word "Nazi"? And why has the Catholic Church never excommunicated Hitler?"[318] This selection of questions reminds us of the fate of Italian and Irish immigrants along with the Chinese immigrants in the nineteenth century and of the selective prejudice that operates during times of crisis. Hence, as much as concepts distort and disfigure, they also operate within another larger realm of the conceptual understanding of nationalistic narratives. These narratives, otherwise nationalistic concepts of the establishment of nations, determine inclusion and exclusion. Adorno's negative dialectics aimed to assert non-identity on the different levels of narrative formation and conceptualization.

Evanescence emphasizes on the equitable nature of non-identity formation, such that true forms of democracy or governmentality have a possibility of being experienced.

Asian American Literature, as in the case of many Ethnic American Literatures bring a different level of reality to literary practice by making the fictional process of narrative making meet events of reality. These texts become the meeting point of discourse, prejudice, policies, impacts and the reality of living through these complicated processes. Through these lenses, these literatures bring forth paradigms of encounter, interpretation, and action in a truly democratic sense. Evanescence is an action-oriented ethic that evaluates these moments of encounter to bring forth a just and equitable interactive ethic which distributes responsibility towards both the self and the other. It also brings forth an awareness of the awkwardness that these literary texts hold in the process of reading and confrontation with reality as well as the actionable sensitivity that they necessitate.

As a teacher, being able to convey this sense of changeable reality to students, as well the value of equitable reality and interpretation continues to be an ongoing challenge. These narratives bring forth an awareness of the times of a truly fragmented postmodern reality where metanarratives and experience dominate our conceptualization of reality. But they also provide an ongoing commentary on the ways in which these paradigms of "postmodernism" and "experience" also fall short in conveying what lived life really means. Evanescence embodies these contradictions of perception through an actionable epistemological accommodation towards "displaced lives," such that realities are not isolated, but preserved in their encounter with the other, fruitfully, producing knowledge and sustaining themselves over time.

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1. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/mexico-mothers-missing-migrant-children-start-their-own-caravan-warn-n934146
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3. http://time.com/4162306/alan-kurdi-syria-drowned-boy-refugee-crisis/
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6. Bhabha Interview: https://blog.degruyter.com/diaspora-and-home-interview-homi-k-bhabha/
7. Shailja Patel Interview: https://blacklooks.org/2009/05/interview_with_shailja_patel/

[1] There has been a recent surge in politics of the "make first" rhetoric. This can be observed in recent campaigns touting slogans like "Make America Great Again", French President Emmanuel Macron's statement at the 2017

Paris Climate conference stating, "make planet great again" and Indian prime Minister Narendra Modi's slogan "Modi makes it possible" putting him at the forefront of his party's speech.
[2] https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/mexico-mothers-missing-migrant-children-start-their-own-caravan-warn-n934146
[3] https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/01/18/people-used-to-move-heres-how-that-changed-and-why-they-became-immigrants-instead/
[4] http://time.com/4162306/alan-kurdi-syria-drowned-boy-refugee-crisis/
[5] https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/06/05/new-photos-emerge-omran-daqneesh-boy-became-symbol-aleppos-suffering/
[6] https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/02/opinion/the-refugee-crisis-is-humanitys-crisis.html
[7] Zepetnek, 16
[8] Refer to *Of Hospitality*, Derrida, pp. 1 and https://biblehub.com/greek/3581.htm
[9] See Kristeva Chapter 2, "The Greeks among Barbarians, Suppliants and Metics" in *Strangers to Ourselves*
[10] Arendt, 6.
[11] Arendt, 7.
[12] Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks,* Introduction
[13] *Strangers,* Kristeva, 42.
[14] ibid
[15] *Interviews*, Kristeva, 45.
[16] *Strangers,* 43.
[17] Interviews, Kristeva, 47.
[18] *Strangers,* Kristeva, 44-45.
[19] *Powers of Horror,* Kristeva, 4.
[20] *Strangers,* Kristeva, 95.
[21] Ahmed, 19
[22] *Of Hospitality,* Derrida, 3.
[23] *Strangers,* Kristeva, 95.
[24] *Strangers,* Kristeva, 2.
[25] *Strangers,* Kristeva, 3.
[26] *Strangers,* Kristeva, 3.
[27] *Strangers,* Kristeva, 28.
[28] Ibid.
[29] *Strangers,* Kristeva, 1.
[30] *Of Hospitality, D*errida, 87.
[31] *Strangers,* Kristeva, 95.
[32] *Strangers,* Kristeva, 3.
[33] *Strangers,* Kristeva, 2.
[34] *Strangers,* Kristeva, 13.
[35] *Strangers,* Kristeva, 13.
[36] Clifford, Diasporas, 355. See arguments on the Jewish Diaspora as a place of no return, "Debating Identity" by Simon During in *Cultural Studies: a critical introduction*.
[37] *Oneself*, Ricoeur, 157.
[38] Baron, 86.
[39] Baron, 87.
[40] *Homo Sacer,* Agamben, 132.
[41] *Imagined Communities,* Anderson, 142.
[42] *Imagined Communities,* Anderson, 149.
[43] *Home is Somewhere Else,* Furst, 217.
[44] Refer to Deborah Cook, Introduction and Influences and Impact for more on Adorno's life and his relationship to the Frankfurt School and philosophical influences.
[45] *Minima Moralia*, Adorno, 170.
[46] Ibid.
[47] *Minima Moralia*, Adorno, 169.
[48] *Minima Moralia*, Adorno, 170.
[49] *Minima Moralia*, Adorno, 170.
[50] Brunkhorst, 12

[51] Adorno grew up in a family where his father, mother, sister, ibid, 14.
[52] *Negative Dialectics*, 342.
[53] *Negative Dialectics*, 343.
[54] *Negative Dialectics,* 146.
[55] *Key Concepts,* Cook, 91.
[56] *Key Concepts,* Cook, 93.
[57] *Negative Dialectics,* 150.
[58] *Negative Dialectics,* 25.
[59] *Key Concepts,* Cook, 92.
[60] *Key Concepts,* Cook, 81.
[61] *Negative Dialectics,* 41.
[62] *Negative Dialectics,* 53.
[63] *Negative Dialectics,* 147.
[64] *Key Concepts,* Cook, 83.
[65] *Jasmine,* 39.
[66] *Strangers*, Kristeva, 39.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Medieval Maps which divided the world into a T in an O to signify the West, Africa and the East. Refer to John Williams, "Isidore, Orosius and the Beatus Map", Vol. 49 (1997), Imago Mundi, Ltd., pp. 7-32.
[69] *Strangers,* Bauman, 87.
[70] *Strangers,* Bauman, 86.
[71] *Strangers,* Bauman, 17.
[72] *Strangers,* Bauman, 24.
[73] *Strangers,* Bauman, 29.
[74] *Liquid Times*, Bauman, 17.
[75] *Strangers,* Bauman, 30.
[76] *Liquid Times*, Bauman, 41.
[77] *Strangers,* Bauman, 38.
[78] *Strangers,* Bauman, 45.
[79] Ricoeur, 140.
[80] Ricoeur, 143.
[81] Ricoeur, 147.
[82] Ricoeur, 148.
[83] *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston, 134.
[84] *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston, 117.
[85] Agamben, 3.
[86] Agamben, 6.
[87] Agamben, 6.
[88] Agamben, 7.
[89] Agamben, 8.
[90] Agamben, 131.
[91] Agamben, 131.
[92] *Wreath,* Spariosu, 28-29.
[93] *Wreath,* Spariosu, 30.
[94] *Wreath,* Spariosu, 30-31.
[95] Memorable Christmas, Santos, 161.
[96] *Strangers,* Takaki, 315.
[97] Elaine Kim elaborates on the different stages in Santo's exile, which includes the schedule for one of his novels that was scheduled for publication. It was also scheduled to be taught at schools that Fall. Unfortunately, becausUSe of the martial law, the publication was canceled, and the schools were closed. (Kim, *Asian American Literature, An Introduction to the Writings and their Social Context,* 271)
[98] *Scent*, Santos, xix
[99] *Scent*, Santos, xvii
[100] *Scent*, Santos, xx.
[101] *Scent*, Santos, xx.
[102] *America is in the Heart*, Bulosan, 147.

[103] Campomanes, Oscar V. "Filipinos in the United States and Their Literature of Exile" In Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Amy Ling (eds.), *Reading the Literatures of Asian America* (Philadelphia: Temple university Press), 49-78. This is reprinted in *A Companion to Asian American Studies,* Kent A Ono (ed.) (Blackwell Publishing, 2005) 296-314.
[104] Compomanes, 298.
[105] Espiritu, 339.
[106] Espiritu, 338.
[107] Popular word for describing young Filipino populations, used in Ronald Takaki's chapter "The Forgotten Filipinos".
[108] *Strangers*, Takaki, 336.
[109] *Strangers*, Takaki, 337.
[110] The Tydings-McDuffie Act, officially the Philippine Independence Act enacted on March 24, 1934 established the process of transition of the Philippines from a colony under the U.S. to an independent country with its own constitution. It limited the movement and migration of Filipinos to the U.S.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid.
[113] *Strangers*, Takaki, 333.
[114] *Strangers*, Takaki, 341.
[115] See Ronald Takaki "Dollar a Day, Dime a Dance: The Forgotten Filipinos" *Strangers From a Different Shore*, Black bay Books, 1989. 315-356; Elaine Kim. "Multiple Mirrors and Images: New Directions in Asian AMerican Literature" *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to their Writings and Social Context,* Temple University Press, 1982. 214-279*;* Oscar V. Campomanes "Filipinos in the Unites States and Their Literature of Exile" *A Introduction to Asian American Studies*, Blackwell Publishing, 2005. 296- 317.
[116] Takaki uses this term to indicate the forgotten statuses of the Filipino struggle for existence in the USUS.
[117] Espiritu, 344.
[118] Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*
[119] Compomanes, 305.
[120] Compomanes, 269.
[121] Compomanes, 305.
[122] This citation is from F. Bret Harte, *That Heathen Chinee and Other Poems Mostly HumorousUS.* London: John Camden Hotten, 74 & 75, Piccadilly, 1871, 15-18. It was reprinted again in Bret Harte, "The Heathen Chinee," *Overland Monthly* XL (September, 1902), 234-37.
[123] ibid
[124] Elaine Kim details the different editions of the poem in *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to their Writings and Social Context,* (pp 15)
[125] McClellan, 49.
[126] Ibid.
[127] "Plain Language for Truthful James" was the original name of the poem when it was published in the Overland monthly in 1870. It was soon republished under the name "The Heathen Chinee" in 1870 itself. It was simultaneously republished with new illustrations in the later years. This link provides a few examples of the illustrations associated with the poem https://twain.lib.virginia.edu/roughingit/map/chiharte.html
[128] Iris Chang, 118
[129] Refer to Lee for more information, 37.
[130] Lee, 39.
[131] Look at Kim, McCellan and Lye for extended analysis.
[132] Lye, 13.
[133] For the difference, see Cesaire, *A Tempest*, 35
[134] Cesaire, 35.
[135] McCellan, 54.
[136] Lye, 15.
[137] *Black Skin,* Fanon, 95.
[138] Kim, 15.
[139] Takaki, 105.
[140] Kim, 15
[141] Takaki, 105.
[142] Takaki, 106.
[143] Takaki, 107.

[144] Kim, 15.
[145] Refer to Peter D. O'Neil, "Gender Laundering Irish Women and Chinese Men in San Francisco" *Famine Irish and the American Racial State* 117-146
[146] *Black Skin*, Fanon, 1.
[147] Kim, 12.
[148] Kim, 12.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Refer to F. Bret Harte, *That Heathen Chinee and Other Poems Mostly HumorousUS*, 19-22
[151] Refer to Ronald Takaki. "Gam Saan Haak: The Chinese in Nineteenth-Century America" *A History of Asian Americans Strangers from a Different Shore* 79-131
[152] *ChinaMen,* Kingston, 116
[153] *ChinaMen,* Kingston, 118.
[154] For a more detailed description refer to Shu-Mei Shih "Exile and Intertextuality in Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men*" in *The Literature of Emigration and Exile,* 68
[155] Shih, 68.
[156] Shih, 73.
[157] Chinua Achebe "An image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness". MassachusUSetts Review. 18. 1977.
[158] Scharnhorst, 19.
[159] Scharnhorst, 36.
[160] O'Brian, 212.
[161] Nissen, 113.
[162] Scharnghorst, Letters, 48.
[163] Scharnghorst, Letters, 52.
[164] Scharnghorst, Letters, 53.
[165] Scharnghorst, Letters, 55.
[166] *Camb Comp*, 48.
[167] See Charles Long, *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion.*
[168] Obasan, 286.
[169] *Buddha,* Otsuka, 115.
[170] *Buddha,* Otsuka, 115-7.
[171] *Buddha,* Otsuka, 128.
[172] *Buddha,* Otsuka, 129.
[173] Refer to Traise Yamomoto, Cambridge History for more information on different strategies by writers to provide coded critiques, 173.
[174] John Okada's book was a massive failure when it was first published, and Okada died without knowing that his book was a success. See Ruth Ozeki's Introduction to the reprint of *No No Boy*, Introduction.
[175] The No-No Boys received their name by answering two questions on a survey given to Japanese Americans evacuated into concentration camps: Question 27: "Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United Sates on combat duty, wherever ordered? Question 28: "Will you swear unqualified allegiances to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or other foreign government, power or organization?", quoted in Ruth Ozeki's introduction to John Okada's *No No Boy.*
[176] CARP sent out a call for narratives from Japanese Americans that reflected life post WWII. Okada's second book manuscript was rejected because it reflected life during the internment. Since Okada had already passed away by then, his wife was instructed to destroy the manuscript, which she did. Refer to Ruthe Ozeki's Introduction to *No No Boy.*
[177] Ronald Takaki, Elaine Kim, Lisa Lowe all assert the importance of the internment in the widening of the generational gap in the Japanese immigrants in the USUS.
[178] Takaki, 181.
[179] See Takaki for more, 195-203
[180] Takaki, 205.
[181] Takaki, 206.
[182] Takaki, 213.
[183] Kim, 128.

[184] These are terms used in Intercultural Studies to differentiate between cultures that are less verbal and rely more on context, hence high context, as opposed to cultures that are more explicitly verbal ad have very less context to the, hence high context culture. Usually collectivist cultures, such as in the East are more high context, whereas individuated cultures with nuclear family structures, such as in the West are low context.
[185] Takaki, 216.
[186] Kim, 135.
[187] For the detailed report, see, Frank Chin's introduction to *Aiiieeeee: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*
[188] Chin, 52.
[189] Chin, 53.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Chin, 59.
[192] Chin, 61.
[193] Read notes on the internment in Peter Suzuki's notes (Chin 61) and AT Hansen's rebuttal (65) in Frank Chin "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake", *The Big Aiiieeeee An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature.*
[194] Refer to Chapter 1 in Coleen Lye "A Genealogy of Yellow Peril" *Asia's America: Racial Form and American Literature 1893-1945*
[195] Lye, 10.
[196] Lye, 5.
[197] Lye, 143.
[198] Read Coleen Lye, Chapter 3 "The End of Asian Exclusion" for more details.
[199] The naming controversy of the Vietnam War, by Daniel Y. Kim and Viet Than Nguyen, *Cambridge Companion*, 60
[200] Kim and Nguyen, 60-61.
[201] Daniel Y Kim, 61
[202] Kim, 64.
[203] Kim, 221.
[204] Nguyen, 66.
[205] Nguyen, 67.
[206] Nguyen, 68.
[207] Nguyen 71-72.
[208] Nguyen 9.
[209] Lee, 10.
[210] Lee, 11.
[211] *Nothing Ever Dies*, 9.
[212] *Nothing Ever Dies*, 11.
[213] *Nothing Ever Dies*, 17.
[214] Refer to Viet Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Die*s Pages 287-292 for more on this
[215] For more, Refer to "Refugee Aesthetics" Cathy J. Schlund-Vials in *Cambridge History* of Asian American Literature.
[216] Vials, 490.
[217] Vials, 492.
[218] Thale, 369.
[219] Thale, 378.
[220] Thale, 371.
[221] Thale, 367.
[222] Thale, 370.
[223] This is an excerpt from Gabriel Garcia Marquez's Nobel acceptance speech delivered on December 8, 1982. The complete speech is available on the Nobel Prize website at nobelprize.org
[224] *Diacritics,* Spariosu, 50-51.
[225] *Womanist Ethics*, Towns, 5.
[226] *Comfort Woman,* Keller, 86.
[227] Gunn Allen, 31.
[228] Gunn Allen, 30
[229] Jagger, 304.
[230] Jagger, 305.

[231] Scott, 797.
[232] Refer to Sau-ling Cynthia Wong's essay "Autobiography as Guided Chinatown Tour? Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and the Chinese-American Autobiographical Controversy" for a list of critiques of Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*.
[233] *The Woman Warrior,* 27.
[234] *The Woman Warrior,* 97.
[235] Topley 29, 30.
[236] *The Woman Warrior,* 105.
[237] *The Woman Warrior,* 186.
[238] *The Woman Warrior,* 186.
[239] *Comfort Woman*, 16.
[240] *Comfort Woman*, 186.
[241] *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy,* 480-81.
[242] Feagin and Chou, 20.
[243] Ibid.
[244] Feagin and Chou, 4.
[245] *Modernism and Exile,* vii.
[246] Ibid.
[247] *Madness in Civilization,* 25.
[248] *Nostalgist's Map,* Ali, 41.
[249] *Nostalgist's Map,* Ali, 35.
[250] *Nostalgist's Map,* Ali, 39.
[251] *Nostalgist's Map,* Ali, 39.
[252] Home and the World, 141.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Refer to endnote xii for more information on these terms.
[255] Reverse Diasporas, Hess, 290.
[256] So Hee Chi Kim, 337.
[257] So Hee Chi Kim, 388.
[258] So Hee Chi Kim, 345.
[259] So Hee Chi Kim, 343.
[260] *The World and the Home*, 141.
[261] https://blog.degruyter.com/diaspora-and-home-interview-homi-k-bhabha/
[262] *Home and The World*, Bhabha, 147.
[263] *Reflections on Exile*, Said, 177.
[264] *Modernism and* Exile, 30.
[265] Ibid.
[266] Ibid.
[267] Schmitt, 505.
[268] For more, see Versluis, *American Gurus*, 9-10
[269] ibid, 12
[270] Refer to Versluis section on the "English Romantics and the Orient Fair" in *American Transcendentalists and Asian Religions*, pp 29-36
[271] *American Gurus,* 21
[272] *American Gurus,* 8
[273] *American Gurus,* 40
[274] Emerson, "The Over-Soul"
[275] http://www.theinterfaithobserver.org/journal-articles/2012/6/15/charles-bonney-and-the-idea-for-a-world-parliament-of-religi.html
[276] Bridges also states that, "Affiliated with the Ramakrishna Order (which has over a hundred centers in India and the rest of Asia, and one each in England, France and Argentina), the American centers are led by resident swamis trained in India by the Ramakrishna Order". In addition the Vedanta that is taught in America embraces mainstream Hindu Philosophy as the Vedantic non-dualism of Sankara, *Brahman, Atman,*etc. Refer to Bridges for more, pp. 341-342.
[277] Bridges, 345
[278] Bridges, 345

[279] *American Transcendentalism,* 67
[280] *Black Skin*, Fanon, 112.
[281] Ibid.
[282] *Black Skin*, Fanon, 113-4
[283] Inouye, 15.
[284] Slice, 180
[285] Walden, 371
[286] Slicer, 183
[287] Slicer states, "It is an extremely sensuous passage, all tactile images- feet feeling for cart paths and game trails and even the faint tracks he had worn with his hand groping pine trees, and then finally his own familiar door latch. While the visual image, along with the ego, has evanesced into the darkness, the tactile, probably that sense most akin to the animal body, comes to the fore. And once we lose ourselves, our attachment to ego, that putting-together-self, we "appreciate the vastness then" and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations" pp. 194
[288] Slicer, 188
[289] Slicer, 191
[290] Slicer, 192.
[291] "Sometimes after coming home thus late in a dark and muggy night, when my feet felt the path which my eyes could not see, dreaming and absent-minded all the way, until I was aroused by having to raise my hand to lift the latch, I have not been able to recall a single step of my walk, and I have thought that perhaps my body would find its way home if its master should forsake it, as the and finds its way to the mouth without assistance." Walden, pp. 164-65
[292] "In giving a right, if I can put it like that, to unconditional hospitality, how can one give *place* to a determined, limitable and delimitable- in a word, to a calculable- right or law?" Derrida, *Of Hospitabilty,* pp. 147-149
[293] Norinaga, 173
[294] Inouye, 21
[295] Inouye, 21
[296] Inouye, 6
[297] Inouye states, "This epithet occurs in thirty-nine poems of the *Man'yoshu*, and suggests that even prior to the advent of writing, the Japanese might have already been developing a feel for evanescence as a fundamental quality of reality" *Evanescence and Form,* Inouye, 19.
[298] Inouye, 23
[299] Inouye, 56
[300] *Camb. Hist*., 325
[301] *Reflections,* 185.
[302] *Casebook*, 3
[303] Wong, 13
[304] Grice, 19
[305] Wong, 34
[306] Grice, 15
[307] Radhakrishnan, 224
[308] ibid
[309] Radhakrishnan, 232
[310] Kingston, 96-97
[311] Wong, 38-39
[312] Clifford, 24
[313] *Migritude, 144*
[314] ibid
[315] https://blacklooks.org/2009/05/interview_with_shailja_patel/
[316] ibid
[317] *Migritude, 142*
[318] *Migritude*, 36