MODERNISM'S CHOREOGRAPHIES OF STILLNESS: HOW AMERICAN,
BRITISH, AND JAPANESE AUTHORS POLITICIZED THE INERT BODY, 1897-
1937

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To my grandmothers, biological and otherwise: Jane, Judy, Betty, Lila, Marjorie,

Carmen, and Angela.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It is a critical commonplace in modernist studies that the term "modern" implies

agitation, social excitement, and physical mobility and that stillness—in cognitive and

physical experience—is a retrograde, anti-modern condition.[1] This dissertation provides a

hermeneutic reappraisal of scenes of stillness and instances of the still body in

transnational modernist fiction. It seeks to reread these textual moments not as nostalgic

meditations on by-gone modes of life but as strategic engagements with twentieth-

century racial formations and the technologies that expressed and enforced them. In

Techniques of the Observer (1992), art historian Jonathan Crary has shown that

nineteenth-century visual culture shifted to accommodate the mobile subject. I suggest

that the twentieth century saw a resurgence of static scenes and an increasing

fetishization of the still body. This turn toward stillness spoke to a growing cultural

awareness of the fact that capitalist, technological modernity produced sites of

constriction as often as it opened wide vistas of travel. Moreover, small-scale

immobilization of bodies became a necessary condition for large-scale mobilizations such

as war, migration, and tourism. By attending to acts of sensation, perception, and

hesitation that occupy the interstices of modernist narratives, I study the cluster of

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[1] For examples of theorizations of modernism and modernity that focus on kinesis, transportation, and transnational formations resulting from travel and circulation, see Marjorie Perloff's *The Futurist Moment*, Paul Gilory's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), James Clifford's "Traveling Cultures" in his book *Routes*, and—most recently—Enda Duffy's *The Speed Handbook: Velocity, Pleasure, Modernism*.

cultural and ethical problems that the still body translates. In particular, I argue that

stillness becomes a trope by which authors as diverse as Itō Sei, Jean Toomer, Joseph

Conrad, James Weldon Jonson, and Yokomitsu Riichi investigate racial formations that

emerged across different geographical locales. The trope itself thus becomes a framework

for comparing the cultural, political, and aesthetic processes by which racial meaning

accrues on the twentieth-century body.

In their texts, Itō, Toomer, Conrad, Johnson, and Yokomitsu establish a motif of

the still body at the level of form and theme. When Conrad asserted, in his "Preface" to

The Nigger of the Narcissus, that his aim as a writer was "above all, to make you *see*," he

distilled one of the most pervasive trends of modernism—its spectacular impulse. All of

the texts I examine share a propensity for diverting attention from plot and channeling it

toward sensory impression, imagery, description, and form. In much modernist

scholarship, these tendencies have been read as a self-reflexive urge for the text to

gesture at its own crafting. A less explored idea, and one I find potentially fruitful, is that

the spectacular impulse in modernism discloses corporeal experiences specific to

technological, capitalist modernity and strives to make them communicable through the

sensory and material registers of language. In modernism, I argue, the overarching

impulse to reflect on spatial arrangements and sensory detail—rather than to push

forward with events sustains an ongoing thematic treatment of bodily and cognitive

stillness.

One example of the trope of the still body exists in Jean Toomer's "Kabnis," the final installment of his 1923 *Cane*.[2] In the basement of a workshop in rural Georgia, Father John occupies "a high-backed chair" resting "on a low platform" (Toomer, 106). This chair evokes a throne, registering his status as patriarch of the Halsey family. And yet, its location in the basement suggests repression rather than reverence. Wrapped ambiguously in repose, meditation, or stupor, Father John shows a penchant for keeping still: "He is like a bust in black walnut. Gray-bearded. Gray-haired. Prophetic. Immobile" (Toomer, 106). This likening to a bust reifies Father John's blackness, hardening a phenomenon of social relations into an object. At the same time, the absence of a real bust troubles such a concretization, because the "black walnut" figure exists only in the imagination as a mechanism of description. This description of Father John rushes toward an asymptote where the idea of racial blackness and the sensory perception of the color black come together. Father John's sustained performance of stillness illuminates this relation between race and sensory perception, reminding us that race can be thought as a regime of seeing, hearing, touching, and sensing. At the same time, his motionless posture parodies the entrenchment of racial hierarchy in visual and aesthetic practices. His stillness mimics that of the Halsey ancestors who once sat for portraits and whose likenesses now grace the mantle of the Halsey home. A painting of the English great-

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[2] *Cane* has proved difficult to classify by genre. Bontemps describes it as a mixture: "Poetry and prose were whipped together in a kind of frappé" (187). Bone makes a case for reading *Cane* as a novel, but both Turner and Harrison dispute this claim. Harrison writes that *Cane* "certainly is not" a novel but a "collection" of prose sketches, lyrics, and drama (178). McKeever describes *Cane* as an autobiography in the mode of Blues (193). This debate over the form of *Cane* in the 1960s and 1970s has been replaced, more recently, by debates over whether the text belongs more to modernism and/or the Harlem Renaissance or to the later social realism of the 1930s (see Battenfield, 1240).

grandfather forms the above-ground double to Father John, while the old man remains in darkness as if sitting for a portrait that will never be made.

While Kabnis, the eponymous character of the story, pegs Father John as a victim worthy of mockery, Toomer gives us reason to interpret the old man as a source of historical truths and an agent of potential transformation in his racially mixed community. Left alone with Father John, Kabnis attacks the old man's decrepitude and accuses him of being stuck in slavery:

> You aint got no sight… Do y know how many feet youre under ground? I'll tell y. Twenty. An do y think you'll ever see the light of day again, even if you wasnt blind? Do y think youre out of slavery? Huh? Youre where they used t throw the th worked-out, no-count slaves. On a damp clammy floor of a dark scum-hole. (Toomer, 115)

For Kabnis, Father John represents a tradition of black patriarchy and moral conservatism from which he—as a visItōr from the North—feels excluded. He fixes on what he perceives as Father John's weaknesses—his blindness and his immobility—to construct an image of the old man as an invalid whose passivity stands in the way of African American emancipation. And yet, if racial hierarchy in this community depends on a regime of sensory perception that privileges one mode of vision, Father John's detachment from that mode might register his dissent. His grand-daughter, Carrie Kate, suggests he might benefit from a different kind of sight: "He's deaf an blind, but I reckon he hears, an sees too, from th things I've heard… I've heard that th souls of old folks have a way of seein things" (Toomer, 116). Likewise, Father John's immobility translates into a kind of idleness that falls below the frequency of regular white and black relations as summed up by his grandson, Halsey: "They like y if y work for them" (Toomer 102). Viewed in this light, Father John's lingering is a spatial and temporal act of stillness that

illuminates racial injustice and exemplifies a mode of resistance through apparent passivity. In a sense, we might see Father John as a modernist Bartleby transplanted to the rural American South.

In the first few decades of the twentieth century, changing conceptions of motion and stillness were most explicitly encoded in Einstein's special and general theories of relativity, but such ideas also made their way into fiction as authors revalued the aptitude of the still body in order to critique the geopolitics of empire. This dissertation examines textual constructions of stillness—as encapsulated in acts of waiting, resting, hesitating, sensing, and perceiving—and argues that the inert or seemingly passive body becomes a trope infused with political significance in the context of American, British, and Japanese colonizing projects. Writing against the idea that non-white, non-European cultures embody social and evolutionary stasis, the authors treated in this study redefine stillness as an embodied performance that both exposes the violence inherent in imperialist narratives of progress and subverts racist regimes of perception and (mis)recognition. Never motion's opposite, stillness unfolds as a practice that defies categorization as either passive or active.[3]

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[3] The distinction between passive and active behavior has a long history. One source of this distinction is Aristotle's *De Anima* (*Of the Soul*), Book III, chapter four, in which Aristotle articulates concepts of "passive intellect" and "active intellect." St. Thomas of Aquinas, in *Quaestiones disputatae de Anima* (*Disputed Questions on the Soul*) builds on Aristotle's ideas and argues that each person has his own individual passive intellect. In the seventeenth century, Spinoza used the passive/active distinction to argue against Descartes' mind/body dualism. He argues that reason never overcomes emotion; rather, active emotions replace passive emotions as one learns the causes driving one's emotions. While the "active" and "passive" change as they are applied to philosophical, theological, and historical discussions, the distinction relies continuously on an opposition between acting and being acted upon. This idea is entrenched in the grammar of English and several other Latinate languages, and our most common use of the active/passive binary today is in distinguishing the active voice from the passive voice.

Analyzing the fiction of Joseph Conrad, Jean Toomer, James Weldon Johnson, Itō Sei, and Yokomitsu Riichi, this project takes a comparative, transnational approach to the study of modernist literature and culture. I build on postcolonial theories elucidating the intersection of race and colonization (Wilson Harris, Frantz Fanon, Edouard Glissant, Paul Gilroy, and Ian Baucom, among others), but I push the geographical and conceptual limits of these theories by studying raced embodiment in American and British contexts alongside constructions of race and colonial subjectivity in China and Japan. The dissertation contributes to current conversations in modernist studies, but it also speaks across disciplines in order to engage with critical race studies, notions of performance, and questions of what constitutes human action and creativity. Crucial to the present work is an epistemological openness to the possibility that bodies labeled as passive are actually involved in acts of creativity that influence their communities in quiet but profound ways.

Because it is a crucial term of my analyses, "stillness" needs some clarification. In this project, stillness refers to the perception of consistency in form and the ability to be located, time and again, according to set spatial and temporal coordinates. Cognates for stillness might include stasis, sameness, quietude, passivity, and even silence. But stillness is reducible to none of these terms, because its semantic meaning is expressly physical and implies a scale and a frame of reference as the technology for observing (or producing) the phenomenon of stillness. The term has a striking double valence characterized by negative meanings along the lines of confinement and paralysis and positive meanings associated with contemplation, reflection, and tranquility. Stillness also spans the Cartesian divide between mind and body. We might conjecture that the

body can be motionless while the mind is moving (as suggested by idioms such as "wandering mind" and "flight of the mind") and that, conversely, the mind can be relatively still while the body moves (as in a thoughtless, physical exercise), and we might conclude that the mind and body move independently of one another. However, this logic is flawed in that it overlooks the fact that motion and stillness are always perceived through the body's sensory apparatus, and the movement of thinking is not an abstract process but a neurological one. An important premise for the present study is that stillness is an activity of both mind and body, a behavior that implies the singularity of these entities in one whole.

One intervention this dissertation makes is its revision of a dominant view of twentieth-century modernity and the imaginative forms it inspired. Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin, and Siegfried Kracauer have shaped modernist studies through their analyses of the speed, mobility, and shock inherent in modern metropolitan life. Some thinkers interpreted changes in the tempo of perception, physical transportation, and capitalist production as a source of psychological disruption. The social psychologist Georg Simmel, argues in "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903) that "the rapid telescoping of changing images, pronounced differences within what is grasped at a single glance, and the unexpectedness of violent stimuli" separate the "psychological conditions" of metropolitan life from those of "the slower, more habitual, more smoothly flowing rhythm of the sensory-mental phase of the small town and rural existence" (11-12). Walter Benjamin writes, in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (19..) that modern metropolitan life consisted in a battery of shocks that changed the nature of human perception. For him, modernity involved a shift from experience and memory to rapid

information processing. In "Tourism and Dance" (1927), for example, Siegfried Kracauer associates political modernization with a culture of constant motion. For Kracauer, modernity connotes a time-space in which motion has detached from its moorings in a web of arrival and departure and become an end in itself. Motion becomes, paradoxically, both abstract and richly sensual. While these versions of modern subjectivity highlight something existentially disturbing, perhaps even pathological, in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century experience, they also convey the impression that critics found the speed and instability of modern life attractive.

Late twentieth-century and twenty-first century scholars of modernism and modernity have carefully documented an analyzed this preoccupation with the physical and psychological ruptures brought on by high capitalism, technological change, and urbanization. Occasionally, these scholars employ rhetoric reminiscent of that used by Simmel, Benjamin, and Kracauer. For example, Jacque Rancière describes the restless modern subject in similar terms: "a hustle and bustle of free and equal individuals… dragged together in a ceaseless whirl in search of an excitement…"[4] More recently, the literary and cultural critic Enda Duffy has studied modernist, avant-garde, and popular expressions to describe how an "aesthetic of adrenaline" becomes dominant in the twentieth century.[5] These voices and many others remind us that, in critical reflection, modernity conjures the idea of a change from fixity to movement, as the static hierarchies of the past succumb to the dizzying "whirls" of the present.

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[4] Rancière, Jacques. "Why Emma Bovary Had to be Killed." *Critical Inquiry*. 34. Winter 2008: University of Chicago. 235.
[5] See Duffy's book *The Speed Handbook: Velocity, Pleasure, Modernism*, pp. 3-5.

Such an emphasis on mobility tends to reproduce, sometimes unselfconsciously, the assumption that modernity brings a tornado of change to previously stable landscapes. This belief polarizes our responses to historical processes labeled as modernizing: we see them as liberating or bereaving, as leaps of social progress or tumbles into existential disorientation. However, my discovery in studying modernist representations of stillness has been that, for many people, modernity was lived and expressed as a magnification of coerced fixity. Sometimes this fixity was abstracted to a theoretical plane, as in anthropological models of social evolution that depicted certain cultures as developing and others as stagnant.[6] Often, however, such theoretical stillness translated directly into embodied states of arrest. In Japan, for example, the widespread view of the Ainu as a race that failed to develop was contemporary with the removal of Ainu people to designated sites dictated by Japanese imperial administrators.[7] Meanwhile, across the Pacific, the belief that rural Negro culture was quickly becoming an artifact of the past coexisted with the housing of black migrants in northern cities' cramped tenements and ghettos.[8] For these and other groups, stillness was not the uncanny underside of modern life but rather its inescapable paradigm. By sifting out the modernist representations that account for these experiences my project produces a subtler vision of modernity that mediates between the polarized responses summarized above. In places where globally-circulating discourses of race and science intersect with localized modernizing projects,

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[6] A canonical work that critiques the ethnographic impulse to see the "Other" as fixed in space and time is Johannes Fabian's *Time and The Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (2002).

[7] See Richard Siddle's *Race, Resistance, and the Ainu of Japan* (1996) pp. 63-100 for greater detail on the history of Ainu subjugation in Northern Japan.

[8] For more on the theory that rural black culture was a fading phenomenon, see Jean Toomer's notes on *Cane* as a "swan song" for a passing race in *Cane: Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*, p. 124.

modernity is thought and felt as a tightening of space, particularly for those deemed racial "others." To navigate this space, the body learns new choreographies of stillness that are neither wholly conservative nor completely subversive but are rife with creativity.

In addition to its contribution to modernist studies, this project extends an emerging body of criticism on embodiments of stillness and their importance to racial formations. Often, these studies trace racialized stillness back to the Middle Passage. Wilson Harris, in "History, Fable and Myth in the Caribbean and Guianas" (1970), treats the limbo as a performance of constriction that derives from and recalls the Middle Passage. For Harris, limbo captures the simultaneity of motion and stasis that defined the ocean-crossing: it "reflects a certain kind of gateway to or threshold of a new world." Holding poses of contortion becomes an inaugural experience of modernity that new communities appropriate as they process their own shifting places in history. The critical tradition that built on Harris in subsequent decades tended to emphasize the importance of migration, dispersal, and other types of movement to black diaspora studies. However, Harvey Young has recently pursued a different approach. In *Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body* (2010), Young starts from the fortresses along the West coast of Africa where slaves were held before embarking on the Middle Passage. He imagines the black diaspora as a network of recurring experiences in which the black subject is forced to become still. Although he depicts the constraints that oppress the black subject, he ultimately insists that the status of victimhood does not fully comprehend her. Rather, he suggests performances of stillness by groups, persons, and even body parts recall past experiences and thereby endow present experiences with cultural and critical meaning. For Young, stillness has a double-

valence that allows it to resist dominant cultures' modes of disavowal: it connotes spatial fixity and temporal remaining.

Studies of race and visual culture have likewise turned to bodies divested of movement. In a 2012 lecture, "Posing Beauty: African American Images from the 1890s to the Present," Deborah Willis assembles dozens of photographs into a montage showing the interpenetration of objectification and self-assertion in the photographic records of African-American life. Like the artifacts Griffin and Young examine, Willis's collection of images crystallizes the stillness performed by those who posed for the pictures and suggests that full understanding of these images requires that we consider the complexity of their postures in relation to both racism and self-affirmation. Young, Griffin, and Willis lay a foundation for scholarly inquiries into the relationships between race, embodiment, and stillness. My contribution to this emergent inquiry is twofold: first, I theorize how performances of embodied stillness become a modernist literary trope; second, I trace this trope across cultures with divergent definitions of what constitutes a racial group. Without eliding the specificity of discreet cultural contexts or presuming the commensurability of the oppressed groups, I shed light on the process by which codes of race detach from the bodies with which they claim to have an essential relationship and begin to circulate on a global scale.

At the heart of my dissertation is careful, textual analysis of scenes of stillness and the still body in modernist texts. These analyses, in turn, are wrapped in discussions of the cultural and political histories that inform these texts and are mirrored—with creative distortions—in the texts themselves. Considering these histories in depth allows me to carry out my comparative study of racial formations in modernity as it unravels in

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places as diverse as the Southern rural U.S., the northern Japanese archipelago, and the sea-routes of the British Empire. These contexts have taken me beyond studies of transatlantic modernism and into research on Ainu history, Japanese history, folklore, post-colonial studies, and translation.

Contested Discourses of Race in Natural Science and Philosophy

While ethnic prejudice and xenophobia have a long history, racism in particular seems to be a modern phenomenon related to the rise of European empires, transatlantic slavery, and pseudo-scientific discourses of morphology and eugenics. Still, racism as we know it draws from the cartographic and rhetorical traditions of the medieval period which constructed categories of geographical otherness. Some scholars turn to Pliny's *Natural History*, composed in the first century CE, as one of the earliest texts to record notions of racial difference. Pliny's descriptions of "monsters" that supposedly inhabit the periphery of the known world, including cannibals and men who walk on all fours, were echoed in medieval writings in which monster lore converged with accounts of ethnic and religious difference (Tchen, 42).[9] The encyclopedic aims of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century naturalists find precedence in Pliny's cosmography, which attempts to comprehend the world in its entirety.

In *Racism: A Short History*, George Frederickson locates the earliest example of racism to antisemitism in early Christendom and the Crusades. While he reminds us that "no concept truly equivalent to that of 'race' can be detected in the thought of the Greeks,

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[9] Tchen specifically identifies Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* and the *Nuremberg Chronicle* as an example of a medieval text that harkens back to Pliny's races (42).

Romans, and early Christians," Frederickson claims that a form of Early Modern racism emerged "when the belief took hold that Jews were intrinsically and organically evil" (17, 19).[10] Three features of racism emerge from Frederickson's analysis of Early Modern antisemitism: the use of the supernatural to code the racial other as evil; the belief that such evil resides in the blood and can be passed on through sexual intercourse and reproduction; and, the articulation of a broad ideology justifying persecution (24-25). These elements distinguish racism from the more inclusive phenomena of ethnocentrism and xenophobia.[11] In Christian antisemitism reaching back as far as the twelfth century, then, we see the emergence of protoracist attitudes and perceptions that "laid a foundation for the racism that later developed" (Frederickson, 19).

This brief look at the ideological roots of racism in the Early Modern period demonstrates that the racist and racialist ideas that reached their fullest articulation during the nineteenth-century were not completely unprecedented.[12] Modern racism shares with earlier examples of antisemitism a tendency to locate evil or undesirable attributes in the blood of the "other," an association of the target group with the use of or belief in

[10] As evidence of a nascent protoracism against Jews, Frederickson cites massacres of Jews in Europe during the First Crusade of 1096 (19). In addition to religious warfare, epidemics seem to have catalyzed anti-Semitism. During the Black Death of the mid-fourteenth century, Jews were massacred by the thousands when rumors spread that the disease was caused by a Jewish conspiracy to poison Christians (Frederickson, 22, 26).
[11] As Robert Bartlett has shown, during the period from 950 to 1350, English and German conquests of Irish and Slavic peoples often included the legal oppression, ghettoization, and economic dispossession of those subjugated (237-240). Frederickson argues that Bartlett misapplies the term "racism" to these Anglo and Germanic conquests and their political aftermath, but I think his dismissal might be overhasty. Bartlett makes a strong argument for why these conquests and colonizing efforts of the late Early Modern period should be considered as important precursors to modern racism (24).
[12] In *Racial Formations*, Omi and Winant suggest "racialist" as a supplement to "racist." For them, "racialist" refers to the attitude that categorical differences among black people, white people, Asian people, and others are objective. The term, "racist," signifies the belief that these groups constitute a hierarchy, with whiteness usually at the top.

supernatural forces, and constructions of broad ideologies justifying oppression.[13]

However, several things make modern racism unique: it has a close relationship with the

nascent fields of natural science and anthropology; it develops as an ideological correlate

to the economic and political practices of European colonization in the Americas, Asia,

and Africa; and, it attains a popular myth of universality that makes racial superiority and

inferiority a commonsense discourse in self-consciously "modern" communities across

the globe.[14] It is this expansive network of racial ideas—woven through commercial,

intellectual, and political exchange especially during the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries—that makes possible the inclusion of U.S.-American, British, and Japanese

literature in this dissertation. For, while the universalizing discourse of scientific racism

is inflected in each of these places by regional politics, culture, and folklore, race itself

works as a thread of continuity facilitating comparisons across these different places and

their cultural productions.

Part of the universalizing logic of racism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

century is the ascription of stillness to races perceived as inferior and the attribution of

mobility to those seen as superior and fit for modernity. This opposition of stillness and

motion provides an intellectual foundation for racism and, in turn, becomes a logic

proliferated by the political and social structures of a racialist world. In order to

understand how a binary of motion versus stasis becomes crucial to concepts of racial

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[13] German and British anthropologists attributed the practice of magic to peoples they
perceived as primitive. Hegel ascribes to Africans a belief in magic, which he sees as
their vulgar substitute for a comprehension of a higher good or divine power (111-112).
Most often, scientific and philosophical discourses relegate magic to the purview of
superstition.
[14] For a thorough analysis of modern racism, see Frederickson (chapters two and three)
and Charles Mills's *The Racial Contract.*

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difference, we have to consider the intellectual history of racial taxonomy and social evolution that begins in the eighteenth century and peaks in the nineteenth century as well as nineteenth-century philosophy about world history. In what follows, I sketch the contours of scientific racism, using Carl Linnaeus, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, Robert Chambers, and Herbert Spencer as examples of a school of thought that "attempted to organize the world's people by skin color, phenotype, and imagined immutable character" (Tchen, 126). Next, I turn to Georg Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (1837) to explore the racialization of a conceptual opposition between passive stasis and willed mobility in this highly influential work of Western philosophy. While examining the development of racist ideology in these academic discourses, it is important to remember that such discourses were not unequivocally accepted by all thinkers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The existence of racial categories has never been easy to prove, and racial hierarchy has always had its detractors. Alexander Von Humboldt gestured toward the race as an all-too-convenient replacement for older hierarchies of nobility when he wrote, "In Spain it is a kind of title of nobility not to descend from Jews or Moors. In America, the skin, more or less white, is what dictates the class that an individual occupies in society" (Quoted in Frederickson, 42).[15] The veracity of racial discourse has been contested from its beginnings. Still, just as Early Modern protoracism couched in religious terms was a powerful ideological force with popular appeal, modern scientific racism became a rallying point for those seeking

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[15] Frederickson takes this quote from Mörner (*Race Mixture*), who takes it from a Spanish translation of Humboldt's *Essai politique sur le royaume de la Nouvelle Espagne* (1811): "En Espagne, c'est pour ainsi dire un titre de noblesse de ne descendre ni de Juifs, ni de Maures. En Amérique, la peau plus ou moins blanche décide du rang qu'occupe l'homme dans la société" (51).

political and economic privilege in a world where old hierarchies were being cleared away to make space for new ones.

Early naturalists employed concepts of motion and stasis—both literally and as metaphors—to make sense of perceived racial difference by charting race along a track of linear evolution. In 1735-1739, Carl Linnaeus published *The System of Nature* (*Systema Naturae*), which built on empirical study and fieldwork to organize flora and fauna (Tchen and Yeats, 129). An ambitious scheme, Linnaeus's system was intended to allow for the classification of all plants on Earth, including those as yet unknown to naturalists. Linnaeus eventually included animals and people in his system of classification, coining the term *homo sapiens* (Tchen and Yeats, 129). He divided humans into six categories: Wild Man, American, European, Asiatic, and African. The extent to which Linnaeus's categories of man mark a transitional moment between early modern medicine and theology on one hand and the emergence of natural science on the other manifests in his inclusion of humors in the definition of each type: the American is choleric; the European, sanguine; the Asiatic, melancholy; and the African, phlegmatic (Linnaeus, 130).[16] The global scope of Linnaeus's scheme inspired his students to travel far and wide, frequently to sites of imperial subjection and trade, as they sought new specimens for classification. His pupil, Daniel Solander, joined Cook's first voyage in 1768 (Pratt, 27). Others were given free passage to foreign shores by the Swedish East India

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[16] This passage from Linnaeus is reproduced by Tchen and Yeats, and it can be found in its full context in Linnaeus' "Mammalia, order 1. Primates." of *A General System of Nature, Through the Three Grand Kindgoms of Animals, Vegetables, and Minerals* translated by William Turton and published in London by Lackington, Allen, and Co. in 1806.

Company (Pratt, 25).[17] This tradition of traveling to observe, collect, and study biological

specimens continued well into the nineteenth century, especially flourishing as

exploration of continental interiors replaced primarily maritime travel.

With Blumenbach's "Five Races of Mankind" (1795), the human skull became

the primary object of racial knowledge and skin pigmentation became the dominant

signifier of racial taxonomy (Tchen, 130). Blumenbach associated the colors white,

yellow, black, brown, and red with the categories Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian,

Malay, and American (Tchen, 130).[18] While he recognized differences among these

varieties, Blumenbach's main contribution to physical anthropology was his argument for

the unity of mankind in one species with no extant subspecies or part-animal and part-

human relatives (Bhopal).[19] The fact that Blumenbach's construction of racial categories

went hand in hand with his understanding of universal humanity underscores the extent to

which the concept of the human relies on (rather than overturns) a belief in racial

difference. On one hand, Blumenbach's work corrected popular ideas about the

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[17] Mary Louise Pratt discusses the importance of travel writing to the construction of racial taxonomy in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) Her study of European travelogues documenting trips into African and American interiors highlights the imperialist politics that sometimes inflect these writings. Nigel Leask, in *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840* (2002) points to some important limitations of Pratt's work, noting her omission of Romantic travel writing with a humanist bent. Leask demonstrates that European audiences were often skeptical toward travel writing and that authors struggled to prove the factual accuracy of their accounts (pg. #s). Problems of credibility and contrasting accounts of remote peoples heavily challenged the universalizing scheme of Linnaeus and other naturalists.
[18] See also Frederickson (57), Harris (84), and Painter's *The History of White People* (72-90).
[19] Bhopal's 2007 article, "The Beautiful Skull and Blumenbach's Errors: The Birth of the Scientific Concept of Race," acknowledges Blumenbach's flaws but presents a generally favorable view of Blumenbach as a humanitarian. Bhopal is interested in the practical use of race in solving public health problems and finds Blumenbach's work potentially beneficial.

subhuman status of people from remote places. On the other hand, he encouraged the

classification of humans by morphological traits that became visible through the use of

specific European technologies and techniques of observation (including dissection,

medical charts, and anatomical drawings). [20]

One of the ways in which naturalists and social scientists (whose fields

overlapped a good deal during the nineteenth century) reconciled the concepts of a united

human species and a variety of races was through the association of races with phases of

human evolution. Robert Chambers laid out a theory of race and infant development,

arguing that adult members of certain races retain characteristics of the fetus or infant that

are left behind in members of more sophisticated races. A Scottish phrenologist,

Chambers popularized the idea that races represent different stages of development

through the publication of his *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844).[21]

Chambers attributes what he perceives as racial differences, of which "colour is the most

conspicuous," to a process of development (278). He describes the process thus:

> We have already seen that various leading animal forms represent stages in the
> embryotic progress of the highest – the human being. Our brain goes through the
> various stages of a fish's, a reptile's, and a mammifer's brain, and finally becomes
> human. There is more than this, for, after completing the animal transformations,
> it passes through the characters in which it appears, in the Negro, Malay,
> American, and Mongolian nations, and finally is Caucasion… *The leading
> characters, in short, of the various races of mankind, are simply representations
> of particular stages in the development of the highest or Caucasian type.* The

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[20] In *Time and The Other: How Anthropology Makes its Objects* (1983), Johannes Fabian
analyzes how spatial representations of data about other cultures contribute to the
anthropologist's sense of epistemological mastery over these groups. For Fabian, visual
charts and maps make other cultures legible to Western ethnographers in a way that
reduces and objectifies the people under observation.
[21] While Chambers's work was less authoritative than that of Blumenbach or Linneaus, it
was important because of its appeal to a wide, non-specialist audience. His work should
be viewed as more speculative than scientific, but it used the prestige of scientific
rhetoric (especially regarding phrenology) to find credibility with its audience.

Negro exhibits permanently the imperfect brain, projecting lower jaw, and slender bent limbs, of a Caucasian child, some considerable time before the period of its birth. The aboriginal American represents the same child nearer birth. The Mongolian is an arrested infant newly born. And so forth. (Chambers, 307, emphasis in original)

Here, Chambers defines the human as a certain threshold of organic development. A human is one who undergoes transformation from a single-cell organism to a complex, reasoning mammal. Beyond this threshold, however, are other phases of progressive evolution that—while not different enough to comprise separate species—are distinct enough to warrant classification. By interpreting racial diversity as a direct consequence of varying amounts of development, Chambers explicitly argues not only for race but for racial hierarchy.

Through the conceit of development, Chambers erects a racial hierarchy in which principles of stasis and motion are key. His description of the Mongolian as "an arrested infant" creates the impression that members of this group are static relative to the dynamic transformations of the white group. The "*highest or Caucasian type*" is distinguished by the fetus's tendency to keep changing and developing. The Caucasian child is characterized by a greater flexibility and freedom of form with respect to other types. The quote Chambers uses from *Lord's Popular Physiology* drives home this point:

> One of the earliest points in which ossification commences is the lower jaw. This bone is consequently sooner completed than the other bones of the head, and acquires a predominance, which, as is well known, it never loses in the Negro. During the soft pliant state of the bones of the skull, the oblong form which they naturally assume, approaches nearly the permanent shape of the Americans. At birth, the flattened face, and broad smooth forehead of the infant, the position of the eyes rather towards the side of the head, and the widened space between, represent the Mongolian form; while it is only as the child advances to maturity, that the oval face, the arched forehead, and the marked features of the true Caucasian, become perfectly developed. (Serres, quoted in Chambers, 307)

Using the skull as his example, Chambers argues that the process of "ossification"—one in which malleable matter fuses into an immutable form—happens earliest in people of African descent and latest in people of European descent. White people possess the softest, most "pliant" bones, allowing them to achieve the status of the "perfectly developed" body. Meanwhile, each of the other human varieties—"Mongolian," "American," and "Negro"—tends in different degrees toward an inert state that falls short of this perfection. Chambers relegates these "unagainly" races to a twofold stasis: first, they represent an "arrested" process of development, and, second, they physically manifest that arrest in the premature ossification of their skeletons (Chambers, 307).

In terms of nineteenth-century natural history, then, motion and stasis become key concepts for distinguishing the "progressing" races from those marked for extinction. Robert Knox, in *The Races of Men: A Fragment* (1850), notes how the assumption that a certain race had ceased to evolve was transposed to an individual scale as racialized women and men were described as immature or undeveloped persons. He records that Dutch colonists in South Africa implied as much in their language: "in speaking of the persons composing a Commando, for example, they would say that there were on it thirty *men*, meaning Dutchmen, and fifty boys, meaning black men" (Knox, 156). A binary of motion versus stasis imbues Knox's own descriptions of "Hottentots," or Khoekhoe people of South Africa. While he characterizes the Saxon as having an "onward principle" and a "go-ahead principle," he describes the Khoikhoi as "a feeble race of men, living in little groups… dreaming away their lives" (Knox, 156). His description supports Coetzee's observation that European colonizers constructed an image of the KhoiKhoi as slothful and idle. This image conveniently hid the lack of knowledge that

European observers had of indigenous African forms of work, play, and action: "The moment when the travel-writer condemns the Hottentot for doing nothing marks the moment when the Hottentot brings him face to face (if he will recognize it) with the limits of his own conceptual framework" (Coetzee, 32). An exemplary instance of such side-stepping around the difficulty of interpreting another culture's forms of action occurs in Thomas Carlyle's controversial tract, "Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question": "…what say you to the dead soul of a man, --in a body which still pretends to be vigorously alive, and can drink rum? …what say you to an idle Black gentleman, with his rum-bottle in his hand… the fruitfulest region of the earth going back to jungle around him" (356). The inert racial other becomes a sign of impotence and a threat of colonial degeneration in this description. Carlyle's anti-abolitionist message is clear: if a black man is not forced to work, he will choose to do nothing, which will result in a disastrous loss of resources for Great Britain. Carlyle's rhetoric of indolence that imagined racial "others" becoming inanimate and Chambers's theory of evolution that saw certain races as standing still while others progressed toward the "highest" forms share the same ideological grounding. Both associate persons of white ancestry with movement, progress, and action while associating those of African, Asian, and Native American ancestry with stillness, stagnation, and passivity.

While Chambers's argument that a Caucasian fetus goes through African, American, and Mongolian stages was speculative even in his own day, other thinkers used empirical methods to derive evolutionary theories that were widely respected. George-Louis Leclerc de Buffon conducted experiments with iron balls to determine how

long the Earth had existed and estimated it was at least 75,000 years old (Harris, 110).[22]

Such an elongated view of Earth's existence captured the imagination of Charles Lyell,

Charles Darwin, and Herbert Spencer, who respectively theorized the changes over time

of rocks, plants and animals, and human beings. These nineteenth-century thinkers took

the classificatory method from Linnaeus and his disciples and animated it with narratives

of struggle and transformation. Their work gave, not birth perhaps, but increased

credence and weight to the word "progress." Spencer coined the term "evolution" and the

phrase "survival of the fittest," both of which Darwin later applied to biology, in his

studies of the stages of human progress. For him, progress was the universe's all-

encompassing movement toward its own perfection, and static or unadaptive beings—

while a necessary part of this process—were doomed to be blotted out by the onward

march toward the ultimate good:

> Progress, therefore, is not an accident, but a necessity. Instead of civilization
> being artifact, it is part of nature; all of a piece with the development of the
> embryo or the unfolding of a flower. The modifications mankind have undergone,
> and are still undergoing, result from a law underlying the whole organic creation;
> and provided the human race continues, and the constitution of things remains the
> same, those modifications must end in completeness… So surely must the things
> we call evil and immorality disappear; so surely must man become perfect.
> (Spencer, 13)

Spencer defines evil as "the non-adaptation of constitution to conditions" and offers "the

cannibalism of the Carrib" as an example of such failure to adapt (11). His prediction of

evil's eradication insinuates either the extinction of people who retain "primitive"

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[22] Buffon is also important because, along with Blumenbach, he was an eighteenth-
century advocate for the theory of racial degeneration. Both Buffon and Blumenbach
believed that Caucasians represented the original form of the human species and that
climate and culture had lead to the gradual degeneration of all other types. This argument
meshed well with Christian creationism, because Adam and Eve were believed to have
been Caucasian (Harris, 84).

attributes or their assimilation to civilized modes of life (11). Echoes of Charles Lyell's theory of the struggle for survival between species can be heard in this passage from Spencer. Lyell used the example of colonial conquest as proof for his biological theory: "In this case the contest is merely between two different *races*… Yet few future events are more certain than the speedy extermination of the Indians of North America and the savages of New Holland" (Lyell, 678; quoted in Harris, 113). The difference between Lyell and Spencer, however, is that the latter sees such inter- and intra-species battles for survival as united in a grand scheme of universal betterment. In the trajectory from Linnaeus to Darwin and Spencer, then, a sprawling but meticulous taxonomic system intended to organize every living thing in relation to every other living thing is given temporal, historical dimensions. Similarities and differences become an index of "before" and "after." Spencer's imagery in the above passage centers around processes of change: "the development of the embryo," "the unfolding of a flower," "modifications mankind… are still undergoing." Movement from one state to another and from one stage to another becomes the refrain of the evolutionary song.

In addition to natural history, we might turn to Romantic philosophies of history to find a binary concept of motion and stasis imposed on racial and national difference. In Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (1821-1831), Hegel's philosophical rendering of China illustrates why analyzing stillness has implications for the study of race and, more specifically, the study of the practices and ideas that make race an enduring discourse at both the common-sense level of everyday life and the theoretical level of academic contemplation. According to Hegel, "With China and the Mongols— the realm of theocratic despotism—history begins" (129). This means that China

exemplifies the earliest phase of societal development documented in prose. Yet, while

Hegel traces the origins of history to China, he excludes China from the narrative of

historical progress:

> Early do we see China advancing to the condition in which it is found at this day; for as the contrast between objective existence and subjective freedom of movement in it, is still wanting, every change is excluded, and the fixedness of a character which recurs perpetually, takes the place of what we should call the truly historical. (133)

A stark contrast between fixity and change, characterized here as despotic control and

"freedom of movement," is crucial to Hegel's conception of China. For him, Chinese

culture provides an ideal foil to the West. Whereas the body politic of China exhibits a

"fixedness of character," the "truly historical" countries of Europe evolve toward

freedom and self-consciousness. Equally telling is the language in which Hegel describes

the Chinese Emperor. The Emperor's individual power presents a potential problem to

Hegel's argument that Chinese people have no subjectivity, but he assures the reader that

the Emperor's absolute power "does not imply caprice, which would itself indicate

inclination—that is, subjectivity and mobility" (137). Rather, he explains, "Here we have

the One Being of the State supremely dominant—the Substance, which, still hard and

inflexible, resembles nothing but itself—includes no other element" (137). In an abstract

way, Hegel claims that the Emperor, indistinguishable from the State and having no sense

of personality apart from it, is as subjugated as his servants. The words "hard and

inflexible" give the Emperor a stony aspect, as if he—along with the culture he

metonymizes—is one of the carved figures that Hegel claims express the "boundless

superstition" of the Chinese (151). This fixity in which Hegel believes China to be

submerged is the result of mere "objective existence"—a world of physical surfaces and

structures with no inner spiritual life. To be still, then, is to be an object; whereas movement and flux suggest the presence of an animating spirit that attains the status of the subject. The question of being an object or a subject is all-important, for Hegel, because its answer illuminates the destiny of a body politic: stagnation, disappearance, or progress toward freedom.

While Hegel identifies China as the origin of history, he understands Africa and the Americas as continents with no history at all. He approaches this point by establishing what he terms a "Geographical Basis" for the historical emergence of distinct peoples or races (Hegel, 97). Here, Hegel clarifies that he is not concerned "with the land occupied by nations as an external locale" but rather "with the natural type of the locality, as intimately connected with the type and character of the people which is the offspring of such a soil" (97). In other words, geography influences history because human behavior and thus human typology are shaped by the natural climate. Only when a civilization neutralizes threats and mobilizes resources found in the natural environment can that culture develop into a "World-Historical" nation whose members are conscious of their own freedom (Hegel, 97). Christian Europe, especially Germany, fits in the "temperate zone" that Hegel deems fit for the emergence of world-historical civilizations. Africa, Australia, and the Americas—by contrast—occupy the "extreme zones" where human life is too encumbered with natural obstacles to cultivate the spiritual life of the individual (97).

Hegel's thesis of a geographical basis for history attributes relations of political power to natural causes. His reading of nation-building and terrItōrial expansion as

evidence of the colonizer's superior fitness shares ideological ground with Spencer's

concept of natural selection. North America serves as a case in point for Hegel:

> For, the aborigines, after the landing of the Europeans in America, gradually
> vanished at the breath of European activity. In the United States of North America
> all the citizens are of European descent, with whom the old inhabitants could not
> amalgamate, but were driven back." (Hegel, 98).

Hegel's use of the vanishing native trope leads to his claim that the indigenous people of

the Americas are "mild and passionless" and show "a crouching submissiveness" as part

of their inborn disposition (98). His metaphor—"the breath of European activity"—

emphasizes the association of colonization with natural phenomena by likening the

European conquest and settlement of North America to a gust of air. The indigenous

cultures appear, like morning dew or spider webs, to be delicate and inert matter swept

away by the mobile and active wind that is European colonization. With the fallacious

statement that "all the citizens" of the United States are "of European descent," Hegel

conflates citizenship in a nation with existence in a geographical area, equating legal

rights with physical presence. Here, his assumption that the indigenous people were all

"driven back" serves as evidence of those people's assumed "passionless" characters.

Hegel thus produces a dichotomy of human types in which the willful, active class stands

over and against the mild, passive class. Attributing these types and their different

historical experiences to the Earth's climates and continental shapes, Hegel effectively

neutralizes the violence of conquest.[23] Further, he contributes to an expectation—

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[23] Hegel does not, however, believe that natural geographic formations determine the
course of human history. He writes, "Nature should not be rated too high nor too low: the
mild Ionic sky certainly contributed much to the charm of the Homeric poems, yet this
alone can produce no Homers" (97). Though he argues that nature is the first influence on
human and social development, he argues for a threshold of physical security beyond
which humans can concern themselves with moral, spiritual, and aesthetic matters.

grounded in natural history, philosophy, and anthropology of the nineteenth century—

that non-white, non-European peoples must inevitably tend toward inertia and passivity.

The "New World" provides, for Hegel, a theater for the future of human progress

exemplified in young nations governed by people of European descent. While excluded

from history, then, the Americas at least hold the promise of a history that is yet-to-be.

Hegel thus imagines the history of the world as a geographical passage from East to

West, with civilization spawning in China, moving westward across Eurasia, and crossing

the Atlantic in ships carrying European explorers and colonizers. As the universal Spirit

of human progress travels westward, linking what might appear as episodic civilizations

in a continuous advancement toward freedom, the cultures left in its wake retain the

essence and form of whatever developmental stage they happen to embody. This is why

China, as the extreme East, becomes entirely static—ossified in its primitive historical

dawn—in Hegel's account.

Yet, an entire continent remains outside of this linear historical trajectory and

therefore takes on a special kind of stasis. According to Hegel:

> Africa proper, as far as History goes back, has remained—for all purposes of
> connection with the rest of the World—shut up; it is the Gold-land compressed
> within itself—the land of childhood, which lying beyond the day of self-conscious
> history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of Night. (109)

The capitalization of "History" and "World" are worth noting here, as Hegel uses these

terms to gesture toward a universal, gradually unfolding metanarrative whose end is the

perfect consciousness of each human being of his own relationship to a higher good.

Seeing Africa as "shut up" and "compressed within itself" is tantamount to expelling it

from that narrative. Hegel intends us to take this description literally, as he attributes

Africa's isolation to its physical shape. Yet, he also means to describe the character of

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African peoples in these terms. Trapped in "childhood" and under "the dark mantle of Night," the people of Africa appear to Hegel as unconscious, sensual beings who are incapable of enlightened thinking and refined feeling. Indeed, in Hegel's account the African continent and the African people exist on a continuum; even more than other people, the "Negroes" (as Hegel calls them) seem sprung from the soil of their land. Like the "marsh land" that is "the especial home of ravenous beasts" and "poisonous to Europeans," the indigenous people of Africa demonstrate a "perfect *contempt* for humanity" (Hegel, 109, 113). Mirroring the "ravenous" quality of the jungle animals, the Africans are cannibals who perceive human flesh as "but an object of sense" equal with any other object (113). Missionary reports of cannibalism prove useful for Hegel's justification of the European enslavement of Africans. For, according to Hegel, cannibalism demonstrates the extent to which Africans view human beings, including themselves, as "a mere Thing" and thus accept slavery as a natural state of affairs (113, 117).[24] The complete separation that Hegel imposes between Africa and the World, then, translates into a division between consciousness and unconsciousness, morality and depravity, spiritual life and carnal life. The fact that the Africans exhibit the latter term in each dichotomy is damning evidence of their need to remain enslaved.

In addition to those listed above, another dichotomy emerges in Hegel's writing to distinguish between the backward people of Africa and the forward-looking Europeans. This binary can be understood as distinction between large-scale mobility and relative stasis. In Hegel's geographical description of Africa, he notes that Africa has "a very

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[24] To be fair, Hegel does argue for the gradual emancipation of slavery, but he believes that African people and people of African descent are better off in European and American systems of slavery than they would be under African regimes of government (117).

narrow Coast Tract, habitable only in a few isolated spots" (109). This is significant, because the scarcity of coastal land correlates with a lack of sea-faring and ship-building cultures. Instead, Hegel's Africa consists primarily of "an unknown Upland" ringed by mountains and inhabited by "hordes" of alternately peaceful and warring people (110). Earlier in his Introduction, Hegel describes the people who occupy such "elevated land" as impulsive, destructive, and lawless (106). Like the Mongolians of the Chinese plains, then, the Africans of the "Upland" are on occasion known to "rush as a devastating inundation over civilized lands" but never expand their terrItōry, cross oceans, or establish trade routes (Hegel, 106). The nomadic lifestyle of "Upland" dwellers exhibits, in Hegel's estimation, a passive kind of mobility much like that of the Native Americans who are "driven back" by European settlers. He writes that in their raids, the hordes "destroyed all before them; then vanished again… possessing no inherent principle of vitality" (Hegel, 107). From a Hegelian World-Historical perspective, then, the "Upland" hordes of Africa and Mongolia live in stasis: their nomadism traces out a contained circuit and incarnates a cultural dead end.

By contrast, the expansive coastal terrItōry of Western Europe nurtures a culture that Hegel describes as the polar opposite of these interior, plains peoples. Citing the Mediterranean Sea as the seat of civilization and progress, Hegel describes the effects of the proximity of the sea on the human mind and contrasts these with the effects of living in the continental interior:

> The sea gives us the idea of the indefinite, the unlimited, and infinite; and in *feeling his own infinite* in that Infinite, man is stimulated and emboldened to stretch beyond the limited: the sea invites man to conquest, and to piratical plunder, but also to honest gain and to commerce. The land, the mere Valley-plain attaches him to the soil; it invites him in an infinite multitude of dependencies, but the sea carries him out beyond these limited circles of thought and action. (108)

For Hegel, the expansion of "thought and action"—both moral and immoral—results from nearness to the sea, as the wide ocean vistas stimulate willed mobility. Those who remain attached to and dependent on the land have "limited" agency. If the sea inspires willed mobility, a technological innovation is required to make it possible. Hegel writes at length about the "Ship—that swan of the sea" and praises its "agile and arching movements" (108). In the image of the ship—"a machine whose invention does the greatest honor to the boldness of man"—Hegel brings together the geographical movement of the most admirable civilizations with their simultaneous, temporal movement across the axis of History. To sail across the Atlantic Ocean in a ship is, at once, to blaze a trail toward human destiny. This destiny is, however, not only human but also racial: it belongs to those peoples whose geographic setting and hereditary characteristics mark them as ideal travelers and conquerors. Africa, with its narrow coastal lands, has no part in this movement. China—pinned at the point of departure—also cannot share in the passage from past to future. Of the Chinese, Hegel writes, "For them the sea is only the limit, the ceasing of the land; they have no positive relation to it" (108). And the Americas are only conceivable in this account as a destination. Turning the ship into an emblem of Europe's manifest destiny, Hegel throws into relief the races of men he believes to be immersed in passivity and stillness.

This dichotomy of stasis and dynamism, however, proves an unstable one. Particularly in the early decades of the twentieth century, innovations in transportation, conceptions of space and time, and technologies of perception put pressure on the distinction between stasis and movement and the ideology of progress. With the rise of Relativity in physics and the ascendance of cultural relativism in anthropology, a more

nuanced understanding of what it means to be going somewhere or holding still begins to emerge in intellectual and popular conversations.

Rethinking Stillness in the Early Twentieth Century

During the late nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth, stillness and motion were conceptualized anew through discoveries in physics, the emergence of cinema, changing modes of transportation, and paradigm shifts in anthropology. Cinema constructed visible movement from a series of static photographs, and proto-cinematic machines like Thomas Edison's kinetoscope, first displayed in 1891, clearly exhibited how live action could be stored in motionless images and rehashed as mechanically-produced movement. From the start, cinema offered itself up as a medium for testing the pliability of time and space. Early film advertisements boasted that spectatorship was the new travel, as audiences of all classes could now be whisked away to Europe, Africa, Asia, and even the moon (in Méliès's 1902 *Voyage dans la lune*) without leaving their home towns (Griffiths, 205). While these films carried out their own popular ethnography, in academic circles, too, frameworks for interpreting physical and cultural diversity were changing to reflect the instability of a motion/stasis binary. The Spencerian model that plotted races and cultures along a linear path, separating those that were allegedly progressing from those perceived as stagnant, began to give way in the twentieth century to methods of historical particularism pioneered by Franz Boas (Harris,

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250).[25] This method rejected grand evolutionary schemes in favor of inductive field research that sought to understand cultures on their own terms. Meanwhile, in physical science, Einstein's general theory of relativity (1915) asserted the non-existence of absolute stillness (Lightman, 117). The notion that a body moves or rests only with regard to a given frame of reference opened up the idea that time itself might be a capricious, subjective phenomenon. Through new technologies of vision and travel, shifting ethnographic paradigms, and changing principles of physics and mathematics, then, the ways in which people defined being at rest or being in motion underwent major changes around the turn of the century.

One way to characterize this shift in understandings of motion and stasis is to say that the phenomenon of motion became relative, subjected to frames of reference that were deemed contingent and even arbitrary. In his 1925 essay, "Tourism and Dance," the cultural commentator Siegfried Kracauer expressed an understanding of movement as a subjective experience. He announced that movement had become an experience sought for its own innate pleasures. Travel and dance were not by any means new inventions, but for Kracauer the modern modes of kinesis were decontextualized in an extreme way. Dancing became a dizzying, out-of-body experience that happened in night-clubs and other pockets of darkness and unreality. Tourism became a reflexive practice in which the experience of displacement was more important than the places being visited. Strangely, the body was shed through movement, and with the body went the trappings of physical places, objects, and sensory data. The Futurists expressed most adamantly this tendency

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[25] Boas's 1940 collection of his own essays, entitled *Race, Language and Culture*, comprised of essays he wrote between 1887-1937, gives a comprehensive sense of his contribution to pluralistic knowledge about different, coeval cultures and races.

to abstract the body through movement. F. T. Marinetti, author of "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism" and leader of the Italian version of this art movement, wrote in 1909, "We affirm that the world's magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing car whose hood is adorned with great pipes, like serpents of explosive breath—a roaring car that seems to ride on grapeshot is more beautiful than the *Victory of Samothrace*."[26] For the Futurists, the convergence of human flesh with metallic technology in the automobile symbolized a new chapter in human history, one that could be summed up as the unleashing of youthful, masculine power and aggression. A new Eden, where the serpents are really steaming pipes, emerges in the Futurist imagination to mark the beginning of an amoral, posthumanist generation.

The Futurists provide the most flagrant example of movement's abstracting effects, but other, less radical groups also remarked on the trend. In his book on the emergence of the railroad, Wolfgang Shivelbusch describes how the rise of steam-powered locomotion changed the way in which everyday people experienced space and time. The railroad subjected physical geography to the rationalized logic of the industrial revolution and also distorted the passengers' experiences of space and time. Writes Schivelbusch, "Many passengers commented that they felt as if the train were a projectile. Thus all those rail cuttings, bridges and tunnels appeared like the barrel of a canon through which the projectile of the train passed" (2). This simile foreshadows language that Marinetti would later use in his manifesto of Futurism: "We want to hymn the man at the wheel, who hurls the lance of his spirit across the Earth, along the circle of

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[26] Displayed at the Louvre since 1884, the *Winged Victory of Samothrace* is a 2nd-century BC sculpture of the Greek Goddess of victory. Marinetti uses it as an example of conservative aesthetics and the urge to preserve accomplishments of past civilizations, both of which he heartily condemns.

its orbit." With differences in the amount of perceived individual control, these statements both compare the vehicle of travel with a projectile. Along with danger and speed, such a comparison emphasizes the sense of being in pure space, dislodged as it were from recognizable places and flung into the blurriness of motion itself. Thus, it seems that as early as the 1860's people who used new technologies of locomotion experienced to some degree a kind of abstracted movement—or of movement that abstracts space and time—similar to that celebrated by the Futurists.

What happens to stillness while movement undergoes this process of abstraction? The majority of scholarship on modernist literature and twentieth-century culture does not address this question, largely because stillness or stasis is assumed to be the negative mirror image of motion. While we have a rich critical vocabulary for talking about the ways in which people and things move—words like migration, exile, transnationalism, circulation, travel, tourism, errantry, and kinesis come to mind—we have generated little to no theoretical conversation on how people linger, remain, and wait.[27] When scholars in the humanities do address experiences of holding still, they usually work within rubrics that code these experiences negatively, such as prison studies or disability studies.[28] This lacuna has a historical precedent in the language of modernists and their contemporaries. Just as Marinetti and his contemporaries spoke in terms of modernity as a period of heightened mobility for individuals and for whole cultures, modernist scholars writing in

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[27] See Carol Boyce Davies, Farah Jasmine Griffin (migration), Paul Gilroy, Jahan Ramazani, Anita Patterson (modernism and transnationalism), Edouard Glissant (errantry), James Clifford (travel), and Ian Baucom (migration, circulation).
[28] For prison studies, see… For disability studies, see Matthew Wappett's *Foundation of Disability Studies* (2013) and *Emerging Perspectives on Disability Studies* (edited collection, 2013), and Michael Carl Gill's *Disabilty, Human Rights and the Limits of Humanitarianism* (2024).

the past few decades have tended to emphasize accounts of movement and to organize

their political, aesthetic, and cultural questions around the problems presented by modern

and modern*ist* mobility. What remains to be seen is how our understanding of modernity

and modernist expressions changes if we take the other side of the historical picture—the

experiences and representations that cluster around stillness—into critical consideration.

While movement becomes increasingly understood as a process of abstraction,

early twentieth-century representations of stillness—particularly of the still human

body—become a locus for re-materializing corporeality and rejuvenating sensory

experience. Along with the materiality of the body, problems about the categorization and

politicization of embodiment come to the fore in texts that focus on the still body. Indeed,

the play between motion and stillness—the slippery interchangeability that these states

attain in the context of modernist narrative—becomes a sign of the breakdown of

taxonomic knowledge about the body. While much has already been written about the

gendered still body, this project focuses on race and representations of stillness.[29]

The trope of the inert racial other, developed during the rise of nineteenth-century

scientific racism, remained popular during the early twentieth century. Despite an

emerging consensus among ethnographers and social scientists that racial phenomena

were culturally constructed, the twentieth century saw the "hideous fruition" and "logical

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[29] For example, Laura Mulvey's 1975 "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" argues
that the form of narrative cinema codes the female body as passive and static and the
male body as active and mobile. In *The Gender of Modernity* (1995), Rita Felski analyzes
the way a binary of passivity and activity has been projected onto gender difference in the
writing of history.

extremes" of racist ideology (Frederickson, 99).[30] In 1925 anthropologist Alfred Cort

Haddon asserted that racial characteristics are "usually a matter of individual opinion"

and that a "race type exists mainly in our own minds" (1). Haddon's destabilization of

race as an objectively viewed phenomenon was grounded in his rejection of

generalizations in favor of specific, concrete data: "Generalisations concerning such

characters as head-form, pigmentation, stature and the like of large areas tend to mask the

real ethnic diversity that exists in these areas and to produce a fictitious appearance of

uniformity" (2). In his insistence on bodily diversity, Haddon takes up a methodological

stance similar to that articulated by Franz Boas. In his 1920 essay, "The Methods of

Ethnology," Boas denies the viability of evolutionism, pointing out the Eurocentric bias

undergirding this theory:

> …it may be recognized that the hypothesis implies the thought that our modern
> Western European civilization represents the highest cultural development
> towards which all other more primitive cultural types tend, and that, therefore,
> retrospectively, we construct an orthogenetic development towards our own
> modern civilization. It is clear that if we admit that there may be different ultimate
> and co-existing types of civilization, the hypothesis of one single general line of
> development cannot be maintained. (282)

Here, Boas supplants a diachronic perspective with a synchronic one. Instead of a series

of evolutionary stages leading up to the "highest" form of civilized man, he posits the

contemporaneity of cultural and racial difference as an end in itself. In a sense, he

preserves the Linnaean impulse to collect and juxtapose data but sloughs off the

hierarchical, developmental model that Spencer used to organize those impulses.

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[30] Frederickson points to white supremacy in the United States and South Africa and the
Jewish Holocaust as the culmination of modern racism. I would add to this list the
exclusion of Chinese immigrants from the United States between 1882 and 1943.

Before Boas became an anthropologist, he studied physics in his native Germany and wrote a doctoral thesis on the color of seawater (Harris, 253). While Boas might not have had any direct influence form Albert Einstein, his attention to the ways in which perception reflexively interacts with its objects reflected a shift in physics which was largely impelled by Einstein's research. Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity (1905) started with Galileo's premise that movement occurs relative to a plane of coordinates and that no absolute plane of coordinates existed. For Einstein, Galileo's relativity contradicted the recent discovery of a constant speed of light. To reconcile this contradiction, Einstein raised the possibility that time might be a changing variable, that a body's motion through space relative to a frame of reference might elongate or shorten its experience of time. In his General Theory of Relativity (1914), Einstein built on this idea to suggest that time and space derive their shape from gravitation, with gravitation defined as the cumulative effects of matter and energy present in the universe. While Einstein's discoveries, based in mathematical formulas and thought experiments, seem strikingly abstract in contrast with Boas's detailed ethnographic studies of specific cultures, an important similarity exists between the two. Both Boas and Einstein put so much faith in their own experiments and empirical data that they willingly dismissed entrenched beliefs about time. For Einstein, formerly homogeneous time gave way before time's dependence on energy and matter. For Boas, evolutionary time was replaced by the simultaneity of difference and the coexistence of diverging programs of development.

Such new directions in theories of temporality implied the decay of a conceptual binary between motion and stasis, which in turn spelled trouble for racist assumptions about progress and evolutionary stagnation. And yet the results of these movements in

science and anthropology were far from liberating for people deemed racially inferior. Instead, the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw a deployment of new technology to increase white dominance and enforce static—even paralyzed—subject positions onto those perceived as racially dark. Modes of display, such as museum and world-fair exhibits, continued to present non-Western cultures as racial and geographical exotica. On a grand scale, these exhibits portrayed non-Western, non-white people as part of a pre-modern world whose static, unchanging nature could be contrasted with the whirling dervishes of change sweeping modern Europe and North America. On a small scale, the exhibitions literally demanded that performers repeat mundane tasks (like basket-weaving or fire-starting) and remain within the confines of simulated villages while audiences passed through their midst. At the Paris *Exposition Ethnographique de l'Afrique Occidentale* in 1895, Felix-Louis Regnault used a chronophotographe to record a Wolof woman making pottery in a reconstructed West African village (Rony, 23). Combining the innovative motion-picture technology with the space of ethnographic re-enactment, Regnault strove to break down the woman's motor activity into photographic images that could be separated and pored over for signs of a biological basis for racial difference. Critics of these methods of spectatorship and analysis have pointed to the ways in which photographs and films of presumably primitive dance, ritual, and craftsmanship revitalized the myth of a racial other's turning to stone. Jaune Quick-To-See Smith, a Native American curator, has the following to say about images produced by white cameramen who flocked to the American Southwest during the late nineteenth-century to capture Snake, Navajo, and Sioux dances: "Government surveyors, priests,

tourists, and white photographers were all yearning for the 'noble savage' dressed in full regalia, looking stoic and posing like a Cybis statue" (quoted in Griffiths, 181).

More overt attempts to realize the motion/stasis binary at the heart of a progress model of civilization materialized as modern nation-states sought to restrict the physical mobility of indigenous and racially-othered people. Native American reservations, Japanese interment camps in North America, and racially segregated schools, neighborhoods, and public transportation fulfilled this function in the U.S. Similar systems of apartheid and controlled relocation occurred in formerly colonial places such as South Africa and Australia. In Japan, Ainu communities were fenced into agricultural settlements, denied their former freedom to roam and hunt throughout Hokkaidô. In a sense, these policies reflect the power of language in intellectual and artistic traditions to influence the practices a culture deems acceptable. The rounding up and confinement of ethnic groups was due, in part, to the widely popular idea that stillness was inherent to those people who could not or would not take part in a certain performance of progress. Thus, while the boundary between movement and stasis becomes permeable in so many intellectual traditions and technological practices, where such ambiguity could threaten economic structures and political hierarchies there emerge more entrenched ideologies of stasis versus motion and more thorough policies for enforcing these ideologies.

During this transitional historical period (which happened on several continents, including but not limited to Europe, Asia, and North America), the image of a still thing coming into motion or of a moving thing acquiring a stony, fixed character becomes a powerful emblem, even an omen, of prospective political change and the undoing of taxonomic knowledge. This image mediates between a whole complex of ideas clustered

around stasis and another complex clustered around stillness, and these two sets of ideas can be used to map many of the binary oppositions popular in intellectual traditions leading up to the twentieth century: nature versus technology, primitive versus modern, barbaric versus civilized, black versus white, wilderness versus settled land, and even rural versus urban. Of course, these binaries are not and have never been stable, but they have been useful and central to many overlapping discourses with historical influence. For example, think of the symbolic role these binaries played in fueling the doctrine of manifest destiny in the nineteenth-century Westward expansion of the United States.

The image of still bodies acquiring the capacity to move and of moving bodies transforming into static ones is potent and present throughout many kinds of twentieth-century cultural expressions: drama, cinema, tableau vivant. Modernist fiction, however, aestheticizes and politicizes the body's choreographies of stillness in a way that challenges ideas about racial—and even human—identity. It brings the question of stillness-in-motion and motion-in-stillness down to the level of everyday phenomena, opening it up to a broader sphere of narratable experience beyond the more elite world of theater and the surreal realm of cinema. For modernist authors such as James Weldon Johnson and Joseph Conrad, situations as mundane as a traffic jam, a stranded boat, a long line at a train station provoke disenchantment with ideals of progress, mastery, and human advancement. These authors revise the imperialist travel narratives handed down from earlier fiction and non-fiction writers alike to suggest that, where others have seen stillness, they might have witnessed alternative forms of movement and action operating under the radar of a comparative, Eurocentric gaze. Where modernism dwells on the interpenetration of motion and stasis, it expresses this dialectic of modernity: a

commitment to advancement and a belief in the stagnant condition of pre-modern communities on one hand defines itself against a latent knowledge that those communities seethe with transformative and dynamic energy on the other.

A Nineteenth-Century Precursor: Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*

Stillness, it seems, is the purview of the uneventful. We expect to encounter it in a sleepy town, a monastery, a cave—places apparently remote from the caprices of technological change, trade, urbanization, and other processes endemic to a notion of the modern. One of the most well-known sketches of the uneventful life is Flaubert's 1856 *Madame Bovary*. As Flaubert wrote in a personal letter to Louise Colet, "What seems beautiful to me, what I would like to write, is a book about nothing… a book which would have almost no subject" (Letters, 300). For such an immaterial subject, he turned to the French provinces and wove a story of adultery, debt, and suicide around the figure of Emma Bovary, a woman whose boredom exfoliates from her inundation with sentimental and religious cliché. Despite Flaubert's determination that the book should be "dependent on nothing external," the geographic setting of *Madame Bovary* is just as important to the novel's themes as the rhetorical setting of Emma's mental life (Letters, 300). Transpiring in two country villages—the second of which Flaubert lays out in precise cartographic detail—*Madame Bovary* constructs the non-place of the French countryside in contrast to the imagined exoticism of the colonial outpost and the dynamism of Paris. In the indistinct space of the rural village, life is "a series of identical days… always the same, immovable, and bringing nothing new" (*MB*, 54). This very

spatial and temporal stasis—characteristic of Emma's monotonous experience—is the

real subject of Flaubert's novel, a subject he selects for its perceived insubstantiality.

Flaubert's relegation of the uneventful to the French provinces is not incidental.

Rather, the geographical distribution of motion and stillness—or, of change and

sameness—reflects an imperialist spatial imaginary. This ideology of space manifests as

Emma contrasts Tostes and Yonville-L'Abbaye, her villages of residence, with images of

Paris and the Orient. The metropolitan center holds glamorous appeal: "Paris, more vague

than the ocean, glimmered before Emma's eyes with a silvery glow" (*MB*, 50). That

Emma's Paris is "more vague than the ocean" suggests its abstract quality. Here, it is

almost as if the qualitative difference between Paris and rural France can be converted

into a quantity of distance. Because of the fanciful dreams it provokes, Paris is endowed

with all the strangeness of a distant, foreign place. These daydreams enter the narration:

"In town, among the crowded streets, the buzzing theatres and the lights of the ball-room,

they were living lives where the heart expands and the senses blossom out" (*MB,* 38). For

Emma, Paris evokes "buzzing" and dancing, sound and motion, and above all sensory

richness.

While Paris attracts Emma with its promise of action and vitality—at her most

melancholy Emma "wanted to die, but she also wanted to live in Paris"—an imprecise

Orient also preoccupies her thoughts (*MB*, 52). In a prolonged apostrophe, the narrator

lists features of a dreamt-of far-off place presented to Emma in novels, lyrics, and wood

engravings:

> And you, too, were there, Sultans with long pipes reclining beneath arbours in the
> arms of Bayadères; Giaours, curved swords, fezzes; and you especially, pale
> landscapes of dithyrambic lands, that often show us at once palm-trees and firs,
> tigers on the right, a lion to the left, Tartar minarets on the horizon, Roman ruins

in the foreground with some kneeling camels besides; the whole framed by a very
neat virgin forest, and with a great perpendicular sunbeam trembling in the water,
where, sharply edged on a steel-grey background, white swans are swimming here
and there. (*MB*, 33-34)

Flaubert satirizes the incongruent couplings of a romantic orientalist aesthetic here.

Animals and plants from different continents are thrown together in a landscape marked

by architecture from different civilizations. Yet this passage does more than mock

colonialist collage for its inaccuracies. Here, Flaubert shows how such collage determines

a spatial imaginary that becomes the dominant in a domestic, imperial subjectivity

exemplified by Emma. The violence of this ideology includes both its conflation of

places and cultures coded as Oriental and, crucially for Emma, its displacement of

valuable experience to either the colonial (or yet-to-be-colonized) elsewhere or the

imperial seat of power. Giving voice to this ideology, the narrator speculates, "Did not

love, like Indian plants, need a special soil, a special temperature?" (*MB*, 51). Extending

this metaphor through Emma's tour through the exotic greenhouses of the Marquis

d'Andervilliers, Flaubert insinuates that a certain notion of passion requires access to

privileged sites possessed by the colonizing classes at home and abroad.

The metaphors Flaubert uses to picture Emma's discontent further support the

idea that her malaise arises from an imperialist spatial imaginary. Though the novel is

largely void of travel, except for Emma's brief trips to Vaubyessard and Rouen, the

specter of travel looms over descriptions of Emma's unhappiness. Moreover, such

figurative voyages tend toward modes of maritime and transcontinental travel that evoke

the routes established through European exploration and colonization. To illustrate

Emma's experience of "waiting in her heart for something to happen," the narrator likens

her to a sailor without a ship:

> Like shipwrecked sailors, she turned despairing eyes upon the solitude of her life, seeking afar some white sail in the mists of the horizon. She did not know what this act of fortune would be, what wind would bring it, towards what shore it would drive her, if it would be a rowboat or an ocean liner with three decks, carrying anguish or laden to the gunwales with bliss. But each morning, as she awoke, she hoped it would come that day; she listened to every sound, sprang up with a start, wondered that it did not come; then at sunset, always more saddened, she longed for the next day. (*MB*, 53)

Capitalizing on Emma's fondness for novels, Flaubert depicts her as one of the characters she would have read about in a romance or adventure novel.[31] The narrator invites us to imagine Emma's monotonous life as an experience of immobility and solitude and her desire for change as a longing to be on the move. Her repetitive pattern of expectancy, sadness, and longing—tied to the succession of day and night—doubles this image of spatial stasis with one of temporal stasis. While Emma is vague about what kind of vehicle she wants to take her away—equally as open to a "rowboat" as an "ocean liner"—all of her hopes point toward a nautical journey. When paired with the signifiers of Oriental difference that populate her imagination, this eagerness to set sail suggests a romantic apprehension of intercontinental travel, a historical phenomenon inextricable from colonization. As … has shown, the adventure tale becomes a potent source of allegory for pro-imperialist ideology in the nineteenth century, and the prominence of the tropes of adventure and travel in Madame Bovary's mind are evidence, again, of a subjectivity steeped in imperialist culture.

Emma's stationary existence is reversed in her fantasies of mobility, allowing Flaubert to dramatize a fraught process of disembodiment through imaginary travel. At

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[31] Actually, Flaubert might be borrowing not only the figure of the shipwrecked sailor but also the metaphorical use of this figure from Balzac. In "Adieu," Balzac compares his character to a shipwrecked sailor when that character is lost in the forest. So, the trope of the shipwrecked sailor is already codified as a metaphor for a seeker with desperate longing when Flaubert takes it up.

night, Emma listens while carts of fish pass by her window on their way to Paris. In her mind, she joins the traffic: "And she followed them in thought up and down the hills, crossing villages, gliding along the highroads by the light of the stars" (*MB*, 50). This fantasy of travel suggests the evacuation of Emma's mind from her body as she trails after the caravan on its way to Paris. And yet, the incorporeal journey is vexed by the ever-returning presence of Emma's body as she lies in bed while her ears report the noise of rotating wheels on the road. In fact, it is this sound that wakes Emma in the middle of the night and provokes her imagined departure. Her dream of mobility toward the vague specter of Paris requires that Emma leave behind not only her native place but also her body as a physical feature of that place. This division ultimately proves fatal for Emma, but until the end her flights of the mind are troubled by the nuisance of her returning bodily presence, which roots her in the rural village life she so disdains.

Through Emma's temporal repetition—her experience of time as a series of identical days—and through the motif of immobility contrasted against tropes of movement, *Madame Bovary* becomes the inverse of a travel narrative. If one function of travel writing is to make places present, a correlating function of *Madame Bovary* is to erase the place in which the story happens, particularly the village of Yonville-L'Abbaye. Repeatedly, the narrator remarks on the indistinct impression the town would make on a viewer. After describing the village's primary buildings, the narrator comments, "Beyond this there is nothing to see at Yonville" (*MB*, 62). This negation of place occurs again when Emma, her husband, and their neighbors walk a mile and a half to see a new yarn mill being built. The narrator assesses the outing: "Nothing, however, could be less worth seeing than this sight" (*MB*, 85). Flaubert's account of this fictional village does the

opposite of what travel writing tends to do: it renders a place not worth seeing and

discourages any curiosity about the place on the reader's behalf.[32] In addition to offering

no interesting sights, Yonville seems devoid of action: "Since the events about to be

narrated," we read at the start of Part II, "nothing in fact has changed at Yonville" (*MB*,

63). This reflexive comment acknowledges the story as such and poses a geographical

referent whose static quality would allow the reader—if one were reading at the time of

narration—to verify the truth of the story. Yet, this invitation to validate the story's

credibility is also, simultaneously, a discouragement from bothering to do so. According

to the text, once one has read *Madame Bovary*, one already knows all there is to know

about Yonville-L'Abbaye and could not possibly benefit from going there. Yonville is a

community frozen in time, such that it can be fully rendered and consumed through

description.

In *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert depicts a landscape imbued with stillness. Emma

feels trapped in Yonville as she contrasts her fixed position against passing traffic on its

way to Paris and beyond. More importantly, however, the phenomenon of stillness is

dispersed throughout the village and surrounding countryside and manifests in

undifferentiated temporality or, in other words, the absence of events. This spatialization

of stillness reflects an imaginary geography in which the imperial "center" and colonial

"periphery" gain vibrancy as places of interest while the domestic provinces deteriorate

into timeless and placeless terrain.[33] This is not to say that the rural French village lacks a

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[32] For a thorough study of the production of curiosity in travel writing, see Nigel Leask's
2002 book, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840*.
[33] In his 2012 book, *Unseasonable Youth*, Jed Esty illuminates another way of thinking
about empire, space, and heterogeneous temporalities. Drawing on Hegel, he suggests
that colonized spaces were represented in the imperialist "center" as static and

special social or epistemological privilege granted to the colonies. Rather, the sense of

nowhereness that pervades the domestic provinces of the empire-state is one aspect of an

imperialist subjectivity that suppresses anti-colonial bids for sovereignty. In a sense, the

acquisition of colonies that are rendered as beautiful, interesting, and—above all—

dynamic sites becomes a means of compensating for the stasis imagined in the middle

space between "center" and "periphery." At one point, Flaubert employs a simile

reinforcing the notion that the interior of the continent is a place of perpetual pastness

while movement toward the future requires migration or terrItōrial expansion: "Future

joys are like tropical shores; like a fragrant breeze, they extend their innate softness to the

immense inland world of past experience, and we are lulled by this intoxication into

forgetting the unseen horizons beyond" (*MB*, 79). The word "tropical" resonates with a

history of exploration and a present of colonization, suggesting once again that an

imperialist spatial imaginary underlies the subjectivity analyzed in this novel. As

Charlotte Rogers has shown, modernist representations of the tropics playfully build on

nineteenth-century notions of tropical places as primitive, perilous, and pathological for

European people (1-3). With respect to this coding of the tropics as innately adventurous,

it makes sense that Flaubert would use the above simile to describe Emma's dreams as

both frightening and appealing.

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developmentally stunted and that this political condition was allegorized in literature
through an anti-bildungsroman form (exemplified by Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark*).
What I suggest is that this understanding of the colonized (or to-be-colonized) spaces as
stunted coexisted, paradoxically, with an impression of the colonies as sites of cultural
transformation and rapid modernization. I want to consider what we might learn by
looking at the imperial "center" and colonial "periphery" as mediated by a tertiary space
of the interior provinces that become abstract spaces across which transactions are made.

Although Emma laments the spatial and temporal stasis she experiences in Tostes and Yonville, Flaubert raises the possibility that stillness might have positive uses and aesthetic worth. His work encourages this reassessment of stasis both formally and thematically. As I argue elsewhere, Flaubert adopts repetitive syntax and weaves visual and audItōry images of recurrence into his prose. Doing so becomes a way of reinvesting literary language with sensory richness by defamiliarizing the sentimental and romantic idioms cited in his novel. Repeatedly, the ringing of a church bell and the recitation of sentimental cliché and religious catechism adorn the novel's textual fabric and draw the reader's attention away from the novel's explicit conflicts. Such narrative suspension invites hermeneutic hesitation, a kind of slow engagement with image, language, and sensation that represents the opposite of Emma's naïve consumption of discourse. Thematically, Flaubert suggests that frozen temporality and suspension of activity offer important opportunities for contemplation and physical sensation. When Emma commences her flirtation with Léon, she states that "moving about always amuses me" and insists "I like a change" (*MB*, 68). She and Léon go on to talk about their mutual love of sunsets, which signals the clichéd and superficial nature of their banter. Further, Emma's professed desire for "moving about" highlights her self-construction as a collector. A parody of the eighteenth-century explorers described in Bruno Latour's *Science in Action* (1987), Emma acts out a miniature "cycle of accumulation" in her house as she sends away for items in magazines.[34] If she, herself, cannot travel far and

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[34] Latour offers "cycles of accumulation" as a way of theorizing the relationships among travel, knowledge production, and political power. For him, the conversion of knowledge of distant places into political power happens as objects are made "mobile," "stable," and "combinable" so that they can be utilized for commercial and political ends (Latour, 223).

wide, she can at least accumulate the ethos of distance by surrounding herself with things

fashioned elsewhere and shipped by boat, train, or carriage.[35] This constant traffic in

things, which brings Emma down into debt and suicide, is a flight from stillness—a

distraction from devalued rural space and its seasonal cycles. It is a flight from stillness

into a frantic quest for novelty.

The authors whom I study in this dissertation also carry out a revaluation of

stillness as a tactic of creativity and political resistance. Unlike Flaubert, however, they

move the site of this stillness from the countryside to the urban "centers" and colonial

and semicolonial "peripheries" of the geographies they represent. Even sites deemed

expressly modern—railroad circuits, cities, factories, and shopping districts—are

perforated with spatial and temporal stillness, pockets of suspended action and sustained

rest. In James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912,

1927), the corporeal experience of stillness merges with that of travel when the

protagonist stows away in a linen basket on board a train. In Itō Sei's *Streets of Fiendish

Ghosts* (1937), a port city in semicolonial Hokkaidō where Ainu, Japanese, and Western

cultural influences intermingle, becomes a site of suffocating fixity as the protagonist

finds he has "nowhere to turn" because "Every direction is blocked" (Itō, 129-130). In

Jean Toomer's "Kabnis" section of *Cane*, a black patriarch of a biracial family lives in a

catatonic state in his grandson's basement while the town above transforms with

changing times. And, in Yokomitsu Riichi's *Shanghai*, the cosmopolitan metropolis

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[35] Nigel Leask, in his reading of Latour, describes how an aesthetics of distance congealed within objects mobilized and placed on display in London, Paris, and other European metropolises. He argues that these objects themselves then created a microcosm of the larger world, allowing "a representation of the distant world" to "be constructed in the metropolis" (Leask, 21). Flaubert scales down and feminizes this process in *Madame Bovary* through Emma's collecting.

gradually grinds to a halt as a result of a Chinese labor strike, turning a once-bustling city into a tableau-vivant of hunger and imprisonment. Like Flaubert, however, these authors do not depict the exchange of motion for stillness as an inherently negative experience. As I mention above, the advent of Relativity finds resonance in these narratives as stillness and motion become less opposites and more related phenomena whose distinction relies on embodied perspective and constructed metrics of scale. Practicing stillness—as these characters do through acts of waiting, resting, sensing, remembering, and hesitating—becomes, then, a way of testing the limits of certain scales and modes of embodiment. Foremost among these revalued paradigms, I argue, is the globally circulating (though locally inflected) ideology of racial hierarchy.

Chapter Summaries

The dissertation includes four chapters. My first chapter, "Reading Itō Sei and Jean Toomer: Stillness, Racial Formations, and Transpacific Discourse," undertakes a comparative reading of Jean Toomer's 1923 *Cane*, paying special attention to the short vignette "Blood-Burning Moon," with Itō Sei's 1937 novella *Streets of Fiendish Ghosts*. I argue two points in this chapter. First, Toomer's and Itō's texts explore the myth of a stagnant race as one rationale for the actual arrest and consignment to fixity of perceived racial Others. Second, they appropriate stillness as a willed performance rather than a coerced state and imagine stillness as an umbrella for techniques of self- and community-construction. In this sense, the still body becomes an image with double-valence, ambivalently registering both racial marginalization and its potential undoing. To make

this argument, I analyze the texts individually and in connection with the historical situations their authors evoke. While the texts were written in different languages (in English and in Japanese) and in different countries (the U.S. and Japan), a basis for comparing them rests in the parallel cultural climates they invoke. Both Itō and Toomer describe moments in which traditional, folkloric concepts of human identity are extended and repurposed through contact with globally circulating scientific discourses of race. Moreover, both interweave local storytelling conventions (gothic tales and Japanese Oni lore) with a formal experimentalism that registered as modernist: stream-of-consciousness, abstraction, genre-blending, and shifting perspective and scale. Formal syncretism presents an analogy to the ideological syncretism of folklore and science that they illuminate through their fiction. Such syncretism, I suggest, might be these works' most "modernist" feature.

My second chapter, "Becoming Still and Still Becoming: James Weldon Johnson and Joseph Conrad Reinvent the Travel Narrative," studies Johnson's *The Autobiography of An Ex-Colored Man* (1912) alongside two of Joseph Conrad's novels, *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1898) and *The Rescue: A Romance of the Shallows* (1920), and compares these authors' portrayals of the racialized inert body. For Conrad, I argue, the motionless body is informed by complex Victorian binaries of activity/passivity and progress/stasis. The sea operates as a site of mediation between these states, revealing a spectrum rather than polarity between stasis and motion, passivity and action. In my analysis of Johnson, I turn to moments in which sensation, vision, and memory interrupt narrative sequence. These pauses constitute attempts to freeze the flow of time in order to reflect on a problem or a mystery; they are also suggestive of bodily arrest and containment. In

reading these moments I find that Conrad's and Johnson's formal interest in still scenes reinforces their thematization of captivity. Both Conrad and Johnson tap into a trope of the still, black body as a locus of political and economic ambivalence within Anglophone literature. On one hand, the raced, motionless body signifies an unproductive unit of labor. On the other, it recalls the slave ship and the monetary transactions made possible by packaging the human. Inert bodies signify both the dehumanizing systems of capitalist modernity and the tendency of these systems to generate new forms of agency. A brief foray into Thomas Carlyle will allow me to demonstrate how imperialist British rhetoric coded the inert body as "savage," both neutralizing and inflating the political threat of willed passivity. Conrad and Johnson, I posit, meditate on stillness as a navigational strategy in the context of technological modernization and cross-continental travel.

Finally, chapter three takes us to 1925 Shanghai, where racial identity, colonial subjectivity, and embodiment are re-examined in the context of semicolonial China's relations with Japanese and European settlers. The capstone of my dissertation, this chapter analyzes Yokomitsu Riichi's novel, *Shanghai* (1928, 1932), in which the dynamic flows of people, objects, and capital in cosmopolitan Shanghai are brought to a standstill through a series of Chinese labor strikes which submerge the city in an eerie and transformative stillness.

The conclusion of the dissertation revisits my overarching argument: modernist authors from Britain, America, and Japan treat stillness as a narratable activity and imagine practices of waiting, resting, thinking, and hesitating as facilitating sensory perceptions that stray outside the perceptual regime of race. While characters who embody these acts rarely overthrow or subvert racial and national hierarchy in explicit

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ways—though the labor strikers in *Shanghai* represent an exception—they create alternative modes of perceiving the self and the other that constitute a gateway to ideological and structural changes. Turning to letters that Herbert Spencer wrote to a Cabinet Minister in Japan, Kaneko Kentaro, in 1892, the conclusion meditates on the importance of considering race as a social construct invented not only in Europe but also in the East—taking Japan as a case in point. By examining race in a trans-continental context, I argue, we better understand its historical fashioning and its political uses.

COMPARING ITŌ SEI AND JEAN TOOMER: THE STILL BODY, RACE, AND
TRANSPACIFIC DISCOURSE

Jean Toomer's 1923 "Blood-Burning Moon" and Itō Sei's 1937 "Streets of

Fiendish Ghosts" are separated by an ocean of difference, but the premise of this chapter

is that their ideological and thematic parallels constitute a basis of comparison.[36] Both

authors represent historical moments in which racism acts as an ideological relic of a

nationalist past that has putatively been overcome in a subsequent era of imperial

expansion. In the context evoked by Itō, the Tokugawa-era exploitation of the Ainu in the

northern frontiers of Japan has been overturned, in the official imperial narrative, by the

Meiji Restoration and its modern reforms. In that depicted by Toomer, apartheid in the

United States has been replaced by a resuscitated Union with a magnanimous stance

toward African Americans and a collective will to progress in industry, social reform, and

territorial expansion. Beneath these glossy accounts of Japanese and American

modernity, however, structural and human evidence connects the modern moment and

the past that imperialist rhetoric would disavow. In their narratives, Toomer and Itō insist

on this continuity by interweaving traditional folk forms with modernist literary

experimentation. For both, an image indispensable to their art—the still human body—

instantiates practices of hesitation that counter the politics of disavowal by asking body

and mind to linger upon the sensory details that register the effects of trauma. The motif

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[36] *Streets of Fiendish Ghosts* is the English translation, by William Tyler. The Japanese
title is *Yûki no machi*.

of the still body becomes a device for rethinking the binary opposition of activity and passivity, an opposition that has historically been mapped onto notions of racial difference.

The resonance between these two works is prescient of a postwar political environment that Naoki Sakai calls "transpacific complicity" (245). Sakai writes that after World War II a new foreign policy gained ascendance in Japan. The 1947 Constitution of Japan subjugated Japan's interests in the Pacific to those of the United States when it reorganized the military: "[S]ince its initial establishment as the Supplementary Police Force (*Keisatsu Yobitai*) under the U.S. Occupation Administration, Japanese Self-Defense Forces have been designed and organized as subordinate organs within the U.S. global command network in the United States postwar collective security system in the Pacific and East Asia" (244). What is surprising about Sakai's argument is that he sees Japanese nationalism—even when it criticizes the United States—as an ideology that supports this system of semi-coloniality.[37] He suggests that as Japanese nationalists construct their identity in relation to Americans (seen as oppressors or allies), they avoid working through Japan's relation to its Asian neighbors, its previously colonized peoples, and its racial and ethnic minorities. Consequently, Japan— or at least its hyper-nationalist sectors—retains its own imperial mentality. At the same time, American imperialism feeds on Japanese nationalism (Sakai, 256). By endorsing an image of Japan as a homogeneous political body, a nation fused by a unique culture and

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[37] I derive the term "semi-coloniality" from Shu-mei Shih's book *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semi-Colonial China, 1917-1937*. Shih uses the term to mean a situation in which a nation officially retains political autonomy but loses control of key ports, trade routes, or military resources. In the case of Japan, Western powers were not as dominant a force as they were in China, but the postwar relationship with the U.S. did usher in a protracted period of subjection in the international arena.

race, the United States casts itself as the perfect multicultural superpower.[38] In this way, the ideologies of Japanese nationalism and American imperialism become supplemental to one another, or, as Sakai puts it, operate internally to one another.

Sakai's analysis explains how the myth of a culturally and racially homogenous Japan serves the interests of both Japanese hyper-nationalism and U. S. American imperialism, both of which function as major political and economic forces in the Pacific. From this standpoint, the benefits of a comparative reading of Itō Sei's "Streets of Fiendish Ghosts" with Jean Toomer's "Blood-Burning Moon" are twofold. First, such a reading studies contemporary, textual explorations of the broad, agile transpacific discourses of racial purity and racial supremacy. Both Toomer and Itō wrote before Sakai's postwar era of complicity. Their texts depict processes of racial formation in which folkloric concepts of monstrosity become interwoven with newer scientific discourses of human typology. While the folklores engaged by Toomer and Itō— Southern gothic traditions and Japanese Oni tales— reflect their specific locations, the scientific discourse they invoke is institutionalized and broad enough to cross over national (even continental) boundaries. It thus forms a common ground for the processes of racial formation that their fiction explains and critiques. It also forms, I suggest, a basis for the recognizability of a modernist syncretism that blends folklore, formal experimentation, and scientific race discourse in a politically charged fashion.

Second, by comparing "Streets" and "Blood-Burning Moon" I hope to gain a critical understanding of the trope of the still body and its role as a mechanism for reflecting on and critiquing racial hierarchy. In particular, the still body invokes the

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[38] For more on the depiction of Japan as a racially and culturally homogeneous nation, see Michael Weiner (1-2).

spatiotemporal demands that racism places upon those rendered visible as racial Others. These Others are required to perform both spatial fixity—under various regimes of captivity, resettlement, and exploitation—and perceived temporal stasis—through relegation to a places of stagnancy on imagined axes of evolution. However, at the same time that it invokes these spatiotemporal exactions, the still body becomes an image with hermeneutic multiplicity. Toomer and Itō move outward from the idea of stillness as arrest toward a horizon of stillness as a powerful practice of hesitation. In moments of apparent inactivity, their characters slip out of the narrative frames of racial destiny and identity that others articulate for them and linger over sensory details that allow non-normative mappings of their relationships with the world. In this sense, both Itō and Toomer eschew the Western philosophical opposition between activity and passivity and its ideological analogues: male vs. female, Western vs. Non-Western, and white vs. black. In place of this binary logic they offer a spectrum of techniques that blend thinking, sensing, and performing, a spectrum that spans the active/passive divide and which manifests both formally and thematically in their fiction.

This chapter extends an emerging body of literary scholarship on the raced body's postures of stillness and rethinks a dominant narrative about modernity and modernism. In *Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body*, Harvey Young studies black diaspora as a network of recurring experiences in which the black subject is forced into stillness. Although he depicts with care the constraints that oppress the black subject, he ultimately insists that "victimhood" does not fully comprehend her. For Young, performances of stillness by groups, persons, and even body parts recall past experience and thereby endow present experience with cultural and critical meaning. In

this sense, *stillness* connotes both spatial fixity and temporal lingering, a resistance to the dominant cultures' modes of disavowal. From Young I infer that opposing victimhood to resistance—and passivity to action—is a mode of interpretation that threatens to reproduce rather than overcome oppression.

Farrah Jasmine Griffin encourages scholars of black diaspora to analyze the simultaneity of motion and confinement in histories of slavery and oppression. In a forthcoming work, Griffin holds that artists and performers dramatize this simultaneity of motion and confinement in order to remember its historical reality and manifest the forms of creativity and resistance that emerge in response to that reality. She studies the life and choreography of Pearl Primus, a twentieth-century African American dancer, as a case in point. In a 2012 lecture, "Posing Beauty: African American Images from the 1890s to the Present," Deborah Willis assembles dozens of photographs into a montage showing the interpenetration of objectification and self-presentation in the photographic records of African-American life. Like the artifacts examined by Griffin and Young, Willis's collection of images crystallizes the stillness performed by those who posed for the pictures and suggests that full understanding of these images requires that we consider the complexity of their postures in relation to both racism and communities of affirmation. Young, Griffin, and Willis lay a foundation for scholarly inquiries into the relationships linking race, embodiment, and stillness. My contribution to this emergent inquiry is twofold: first, I theorize how performances of embodied stillness become a modernist literary trope and, second, I trace the this trope across cultures with divergent definitions of what constitutes a racial group. Without eliding the specificity of either cultural context or presume the commensurability of the oppressed groups, I hope to shed

light on the uncanny ability of racist discourse to act as a blanket that drapes itself across continents and, simultaneously, as a pattern that emerges from pre-existing, site-specific structures of filiality.

As stated in the introduction to the present work, it is a critical commonplace in modernist scholarship that modernity and the "modern" describe states of agitation, excitement, and mobility and that stillness and fixity—in expressive forms and bodily experience—are retrograde qualities. In "Tourism and Dance," 1927, Siegfried Kracauer locates economic, political, and technological modernity in a culture of constant motion. For Kracauer, the subjects of modern capitalist societies seek motion for its own sake rather than a means for reaching a destination. Jacques Rancière would later reiterate this image of restless modernity, describing "a hustle and bustle of free and equal individuals that were dragged together in a ceaseless whirl in search of an excitement that was nothing but the mere internalization of the endless and purposeless agitation of the whole social body" (235). While there is something existentially disturbing, perhaps even pathological, in these versions of the modern subject's mobility, there is also a sense of healthy proportion linking the subject to her moment in history. Most recently, the modernist critic Enda Duffy has studied modernist, avant-garde, and popular cultures to describe how an "aesthetic of adrenaline" becomes dominant in the twentieth century. These voices and many others remind us that, for better or worse, political and cultural modernity requires a change from fixity to movement, from compliance to self-assertion, as the static hierarchies of the past succumb to the dizzying "whirls" of the present.[39]

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[39] Other major proponents of this version of modernity include Walter Benjamin ("On Some Motifs in Baudelaire") and George Simmel ("The Metropolis and Mental Life"). My aim here is not to refute their analytic conclusions but to supplement the pictures they

Such an emphasis on mobility tends to reproduce, sometimes unselfconsciously,

the assumption that modernity brings a tornado of change to previously stable landscapes.

This belief polarizes our responses to historical processes labeled as modernizing: we see

them as liberating or bereaving, as leaps of social progress or tumbles into existential

disorientation. My discovery, in studying modernist representations of stillness, has been

that for many people modernity was lived and expressed as a magnification of coerced

fixity. Sometimes this fixity was abstracted to a theoretical plane, as in anthropological

models of social evolution that depicted certain cultures as developing and others as

stagnant.[40] Often, however, such theoretical stillness translated directly into embodied

states of arrest. Thus in Japan the widespread view of the Ainu as a race that failed to

develop was contemporary with the removal of Ainu people to designated sites dictated

by Japanese imperial administrators. Meanwhile, across the Pacific, the belief that rural

Negro culture was quickly becoming an artifact of the past coexisted with the housing of

Southern black emigrants in cramped tenements and ghettos. For these and other groups,

stillness was not the uncanny underside of modern life but rather its inescapable

paradigm. By sifting out the modernist representations that account for these experiences,

my project produces a subtler vision of modernity that mediates between the polarized

responses summarized above.[41] In places where globally-circulating myths of race and

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offer by emphasizing the mutuality of motion and stillness, mobility and rootedness as
simultaneous experiences that characterized self-conscious experiences of becoming
modern.

[40] For a sustained study of how anthropological methods and rhetoric reinforce this
spatial fixing of the "Other," see Fabian's *Time and The Other: How Anthropology
Makes Its Objects*.

[41] I think this paragraph might make its way into my introduction, or I'll need to make it
more specific to Toomer and Itō. I include it here mostly for my own benefit, to keep in
mind how this chapter relates to the larger project.

science intersect with local discourses of the supernatural, modernity is thought and felt as a tightening of space in which fantastic encounters are to be expected. To navigate this space, the body learns new choreographies of stillness that are neither conservative nor subversive but are rife with creative vagaries.

The Fiendish Ghosts of Empire

A relationship emerges, in both texts here analyzed, between the fixity one feels in her own body and the act of seeing. The classical figure of the Medusa, whose gaze turns humans to stone, offers an allegory for the hegemony of sight at work in both the post-Reconstruction U.S. South and post-Restoration Hokkaidô. To be an object of sight, in both contexts, is very often to be comprehended as a specimen of racial or gender difference. Forms of representation that extended the visibility of such objects— photographs, scientific sketches, films, live exhibits, performances of ethnic identity for tourists—helped coordinate the diversity of still images with mapped-out hierarchies of racial and national identity.[42] While we are familiar with the story of how *being seen* turns an animate creature into an inert one, the following analysis suggests ways in which *seeing* is an operation that also captivates, absorbs, and reifies the one who looks. For the characters (and sometimes the narrators) in Itō's and Toomer's stories, becoming a subject of vision is as dangerous, as potentially disciplining, as becoming an object.

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[42] Harvey Young, Fatimah Tobing Rony, Allison Griffiths, Johannes Fabian, and others have studied this dynamic whereby hegemonic practices of viewing seemingly turn people into inert objects. They disagree, to varying extents, on the completeness and/or irreversibility of such processes.

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"Streets of Fiendish Ghosts" chronicles one day in the life of Utō Tsutōmu, a writer and translator who returns from Tokyo to the provincial port city of Otaru.[43] Though Utō lived as a student in Otaru for several years, his native village is Esashi, a rural place associated with the Ainu ethnic minority. He thus suffers a contradictory double-estrangement from Otaru's society as both a visitor from the imperial center and a native belonging to the outlying rural domain. This alienation manifests through Utō's dream-like detachment as he encounters a series of apparitions from his past. Wherever Utō wanders in Otaru, he is trailed by a legion of accusers who bring forth the corpses of his wounded friends, abandoned lovers, and aborted fetuses as evidence of his vague culpability. As the plot progresses, these accusers take on characteristics of the Oni—a creature of Japanese demon-lore—that include shape-shifting between human and inhuman forms.[44]

In the dreamlike sequence of events presented in Itō Sei's "Streets of Fiendish Ghosts," a few moments of far-sighted vision are interspersed in a story largely made up of near-sighted, claustrophobic perception. One of these occurs at the beginning of the narrative, as Utō Tsutōmu disembarks from a train and stares down a boulevard in Otaru. Utō observes:

> A string of cargo ships that regularly ply the seas north of Hokkaido lie at the end of the long, downhill slope. The boats float listlessly in the harbor, their red hulls protruding far above the waterline. Empty of cargo, they ride high, their smokestacks tilting slightly aft as a reddish-brown curl of smoke streams from each stack (Itō, 106).

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[43] William Tyler reads Utō as Itō Sei's alter ego, comparing the character-author duo to James Joyce and Stephen Dedalus.
[44] Reider suggests an analogy between the androgyny of the Oni and their human/object flux, recalling that household objects, which sometimes came alive as Oni, are not gender specific (57).

Spanning the distance from Otaru Station to the waterfront, Utō's gaze settles first on the abstract "string" formed by the boats in the harbor and then magnifies the details that register the boats' inertness: their protruding red hulls and their discreet curls of smoke. The relative stillness of the boats—they "float listlessly" rather than go anywhere— reflects a lag in trade and corresponding economic depression to which Itō will allude later in depictions of Otaru's poor districts.[45] In addition to referencing Otaru's diminishing role as a seaport, this passage initiates a trope of the harbor as a picturesque scene whose physical stillness makes it an aesthetic and emotional antidote to the bustling activity of the town. In Utō's initial description, the harbor is a space of suspension and buoyancy. Trade and travel have come to a halt, and the lightness of all the material in the scene—the boats emptied of cargo, the smoke rising from them— causes a general upward gravitation of matter.

The tranquility of the harbor and the sense of immensity that suffuses Utō's perception of it stand in marked contrast to the claustrophobic constriction of space that prevail at the story's end. The "waterline" that Utō sees from a far distance in the passage above is the earliest manifestation of a threat of submersion that gradually increases until the entire town of Otaru seems to be under water, transformed by a devastating "sea change." One of the salient features of Otaru's aquatic transformation is the inhibition of directed or self-willed movement. Despite his expert knowledge of Otaru's streets, Utō returns incessantly to sites of danger and discomfort. Denied a train ticket to Tokyo, he becomes trapped in Otaru, which itself becomes a maze of narrow straights and dead

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[45] Otaru experienced an economic downturn during the 1930's, as nearby Sapporo eclipsed it as the center of Japanese finance in northern Hokkaido. See Tyler's preface to the translated version.

ends. "I've nowhere to turn," Itō laments half-way through the story, "Every direction is blocked" (129-130). The height of Utō's physical constriction occurs when he is assaulted by a flood of strange creatures that fills "every inch of space" around him, practically suffocating him in their flesh (164).

Itō represents two kinds of physical stillness in "Streets": the stillness of the harbor as a scene of tranquility observed by Utō, and the stillness imposed on Utō himself as he is confined in smaller and smaller spaces. However, these two strands of stillness are not entirely separate: even as he is absorbed in looking at the harbor, Utō begins to mimic the immobile elements of the scene. Just as the paragraphs of description that open the story defer information about the character's personality and history, the act of observation delays Utō's walking tour. We encounter him first as a vantage point constructed from the angles at which distant objects present themselves. Moreover, while the boats and smoke on the horizon appear to be neutral objects, the images that impress themselves on Utō quickly enter a more explicitly ideological register. The wares that line the main boulevard of Otaru belong to a souvenir market that capitalizes on a fetishized, exoticized version of Ainu culture:

> Shops hawk souvenirs along both sides of the street: heavy 'Atsushi' fabric made from tree bark by the Ainu of Hokkaido…small carvings of totemic bears…maps showing Otaru's eight scenic views…examples of Temiya script explaining the origins of these strange, archaic letters…travel guides to Sakhalin…charts of the fishing grounds off the Kurile Islands (Itō, 106).

Utō perceives Otaru as a tourist center whose main attraction is the indigenous Ainu culture with which he, himself, is associated. In this sense, even the tranquil vision that opens his story describes Utō's integration with a field of objects in which his place is sketched out by Japanese imperialism and popular anthropological discourse.

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In 1937, at the time of Itō's writing of "Streets of Fiendish Ghosts," the Ainu had

suffered decades of economic and political pressure as the Meiji government encouraged

the migration of ethnically Japanese people to Hokkaido. While the Ainu language was

outlawed and the ethnic group stigmatized as backward, the exhibition of Ainu culture

was central to colonization of Hokkaidô. Both Prince Taisho and Prince Showa visited

Ainu villages and were entertained by performances of traditional Ainu ceremonies.

Richard Siddle links these events to the older Tokugawa custom in which Ainu villages

paid tribute to the Japanese Shogun (93). Siddle writes that scholars and tourists traveled

to Hokkaido for the purpose of seeing "how the Ainu were civilized" (94). Itō Sei's

description of the wares displayed along Number Two Fire Lane fits into this history

colonial exhibition and marketing. Atsushi fabric is a cloth made from bark that served as

a basic textile of Ainu dress.[46] In Itō Sei's Otaru, it circulates as a souvenir of Japan's

exotic frontiers. Bears, a food source as well as a revered spiritual entity for the Ainu

people, become metonyms for Ainu indigeneity to be consumed along with scenic views

of annexed Ainu land.[47]

The collection and preservation of Ainu artifacts tended to sustain a mythology of

Ainu extinction. Writing in his journal in 1910, Iwano Hōmei, dismissed plans to educate

Ainu people as "pointless," claiming: "Instead, we should preserve the things that the

once flourishing Ainu race leave behind before they disappear" (quoted by Siddle, 99). It

is the blending of this practice of ethnographic salvage with the popular industry of

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[46] See Kayano (163), and Fitzhugh and Dubreuil's *Ainu: The Spirit of a Northern People* (133, 152, 289, 317, 323) for details on the use of Atsushi fabric (also called *Attush* or *Attusi*) in traditional Ainu cultures.

[47] For more on the role of bears in Ainu spiritual and material life, see Siddle (26, 104, 106, 160) and Fitzhugh and Debreuil's *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People* (93, 200).

tourism that confronts Utō as he takes his first few steps in Otaru. From the point of view of Japanese visitors such as Iwano, Ainu culture is more valuable in decline than in renaissance. This desire to see the disappearance of the Ainu amounts to a demand on the embodied, subjective existence of the Ainu person. Itō Sei translates this demand as a pressure to become fixed, to divest oneself of movement and perform stillness as the first step in an evolutionary vanishing act.

This drive toward fixity is reinforced through the various markers of spatial organization that appear again and again in Utō's dreamlike sequence. The nature of the tourist maps hawked on Number Two Fire Lane is that they represent traditionally Ainu lands as static territory.[48] The fixity of the island's landscape makes it accessible and navigable to Japanese travelers, whose mobility is a sign of their advanced civilization. The languid stillness of the boats in Otaru's harbor, which Utō observes, becomes a literalization of the map's mythology: the transformation of Otaru into a site of cultural tourism involves it in a process of stagnation. Along with trade and transport, time has ceased to flow here.

The specter of the territorial map appears again when Utō is denied a train ticket to Tokyo by the salesman at Otaru's train station. On the wall inside of the ticket office, a genealogical chart displays clusters of names grouped into ancestral branches. Utō's name appears linked to an Ainu line of ancestry, and this linkage implicitly supplies the

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[48] The "floating pictures" (*Uki-e*) imagery evoked by the ships at rest might suggest an alternative idea of space, even of terrItōry, as that whose fixity is contingent and suppresses a capacity to drift. This kind of space can, perhaps, be only tentatively and partially mapped. *Uki-e* drawings, etchings, and paintings were so named because they seemed to float upward from the pictorial plane toward the viewer. They tended to depict alternative, entertainment, or performance spaces, but they borrowed the linear, perspectival style developed in landscape and cityscape drawings intended for mechanical viewing in the *vue d'optique* (Screech, 102-106).

reason for his being denied a train ticket. Here, the spatial fixity of the chart itself

translates into lived fixity for Utō. He is literally one who cannot travel, trapped as he is

in the place assigned to him by the genealogists and the railroad officials who constitute

arms of Japanese colonization. Though this chart is not explicitly a representation of

territory, it uses spatial organization to render the hierarchy of Japanese colonial society

and to endow this hierarchy with authority.[49] Oddly enough, the source of this authority is

mysterious. Where the chart derives its information, who created it, and why it is seen as

a valid source of knowledge are all questions that no one seems interested to ask. For

those in line with Utō, the chart conveniently supports what they already seem to know:

Utō's hair is "kinky," the man standing in front of him points out, and this detail

associates Utō with the Ainu race (Itō, 136). The stranger casually remarks that racial

Others should be expelled from Japan. To the ticket salesman and the stranger, Utō

appears both racially impure and racially illiterate. He cannot see that his hair is "Ainu"

hair. This failure to "see" race is one symptom of his Ainu-Japanese constitution. In this

sense, then, the maps and charts exist for Utō's benefit: to make legible to him the

markers of his own difference.

    The prevalence of maps and charts in "Streets of Fiendish Ghosts" bears directly

on the historical context of the story and on its theme of Ainu subordination. After the

Meiji government created the Kaitakushi (the Colonization Commission) in 1868, Ainu

labor facilitated extensive colonial projects of surveying and mapping the various regions

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[49] The genealogical chart as visual media engages in the kind of spatialization of time that
Johannes Fabian critiques in his writing on anthropology. In *Time and the Other*, Fabian
argues that visual and spatial metaphors, predominant in anthropological writing, deny
the coevalness of anthropology and its objects. Itō Sei's fictional charts and maps suggest
that the spatialization of time occurs in popular and everyday arenas as well as in
academic research.

of Hokkaido. Since the Ainu had extensive geographical knowledge of the island, they

were well suited to serve as guides and carried out much of the mapping work that

occurred early on in Hokkaido's colonization. Japanese and foreign (Russian, British,

American, French, and German) geographers and anthropologists thus depended heavily

on their Ainu employees to measure the annexed territory. Richard Siddle describes the

political significance of these projects:

> These surveys represent an important stage in the process of colonial
> legitimization through the remaking of Hokkaido in the image of the mainland
> (although with an American overlay). The physical landscape was mapped,
> named and claimed; although most of the place-names were actually of Ainu
> origin… Order was imposed on the 'wilderness' in the form of grid-like blocks of
> land divided into plots for agricultural settlement. These were then advertised in
> the national press for prospective immigrants (57).

The maps and charts in *Streets* are reminders of Hokkaido's colonial appropriation by

modern Japan. Japanese consumption of Western scientific and cultural discourse in the

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries shaped the popular and elite Japanese imagination

with regard to the empire's interior.[50] Hokkaido, formerly known in Japan as *Ezochi*

(land of the Ezo, which was the name applied to the Ainu during the Tokugawa period),

changed from an opaque, foreign place into a knowable colony. Its people, formerly

coded as inhuman outsiders, were increasingly seen as a feeble race under the

management of the Japanese state.[51]

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[50] For a study of eighteenth-century Japanese consumption of Western culture and
commodities on a popular level, see Screech's book. He argues that *Ran* (a Japanese
construct of Western—particularly Dutch—culture) was a nationwide vogue that lasted
almost a century and changed the way in which Japanese people thought about vision and
employed visual techniques.

[51] According to Siddle, the term "Ezo" was an altered pronunciation of the ideographs
used to write the earlier "Emishi" which was nearly equivalent to "barbarian" (29).
Painted scrolls from the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries portrayed Ezo as hairy, flesh-
eating demons similar to the demons that appeared in religious art from that era (30).

In *Streets of Fiendish Ghosts*, Itō Sei insinuates that the latter phase of Japan's relationship to former Ezo (and to the Ainu people) extends rather than breaks with the older agenda to buttress the boundaries of selfhood and national identity. Utō's day-long walk through Otaru re-enacts the cartographic and surveying journeys undertaken by Ainu laborers nearly half a century earlier. His personal knowledge enables his specialized navigation of the city, and yet the very maps, charts, and street-names given to the place in order to make it legible to the Japanese result in increasing confusion for Utō. Again and again, he returns to the same sites, unable to find an exit from the narrow straights imposed by the city's boundaries. By combining this navigational nightmare and the signs of cartographic hegemony with a folk motif of haunting by demons, Itō suggests that the scientific and administrative projects of "modern" Japan are linked to the earlier mythologies and folklore that delineated the self and the other in pre-modern, feudal Japanese culture.

As I mention early in this section, most of Utō's visual experiences are characterized by close-range seeing and claustrophobia. However, the scene in which Utō and his old friend, Norobu, look down from the Suitengû Shrine engages a different visual mode. This moment revives the long-range gaze that Utō performs upon leaving the train station at story's beginning:

> From the top of the hill it is possible to see all of Otaru in one grand sweep. There is the lighthouse, which has just been lit, and the breakwater way down below it. The breakwater extends for almost a mile across the harbor, and ten ships have dropped anchor inside it. The red cliffs to the left are Temiya Park, and the big, black object extending into the water from the foot of the cliffs is a raised pier designed for loading and unloading ships. On the far side of the bay, by the mouth of the Ishikari River, the mountains of the Mashike Range are still visible as they reflect the last rays of the sun. But to the left and right of us on the hill and to the rear, the city has already fallen into the gathering dark of twilight. The darkness is crisscrossed by the pale glow of numerous street lamps (Itō, 140).

This moment of long-range observation from heightened elevation inserts a pause into the troubled nightmare of Utō's return to Otaru. For a moment, he borrows the ability to see Otaru as a whole picture, to survey it in "one grand sweep." Utō carries out his own mapping of the space below, parsing the landscape according to proper names: Temiya Park, the Ishikari River, the Mashike Range. Yet, while the light of sunset still illuminates these distant geographical features, the immediate city of Otaru is already obscured by nightfall. In fact, the city itself which spreads "to the left and right of us on the hill and to the rear" mirrors the bay. Utō is as stranded within its dark expanse as he would be on the water below. The street lamps that form lines across the shrouded city recreate on land the effects of the lighthouse on the bay. They are tools of navigation that organize traffic, and they are signals of both Japanese imperial expansion into Hokkaido and Japan's appropriation of Western technology.[52]

In Utō's story, the artificial lighting that delineates the borders and internal grids of Otaru recalls the symbolic meanings of light and darkness evoked in an earlier scene of the story. One of the ghosts whom Utō encounters is an old friend, Kobayashi. We learn that during his lifetime Kobayashi was imprisoned and tortured by the Japanese government because of his Marxism. Kobayashi declares to Utō that he is a messenger from the modern "messiah," and describes Marx's influence in evangelical language:

> Imagine for a moment the small light that shone from the window of that impoverished flat in London where Our New Lord once resided! Think of how it has begun to shine and glow. Think of how it has illuminated the harsh realities of

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[52] The building of lighthouses was one of the earliest and most rapid processes of modernization applied throughout Japan. The work was overseen by a British advisor, Sir Harry S. Parkes, who represented Britain, Holland, France, and the US to the Japanese government in 1866 (Borton, 74).

modern life that were shrouded in darkness until now. Think of how the glow has gained in strength and how it has spread to the corners of the earth (Itō, 119).

Kobayashi's description implies that Otaru sits in one of the "corners of the earth," far from the centrally-located London. His speech, punctuated as it is by the commands "Imagine" and "Think," prescribes a vision of the world in terms of center and periphery. According to this vision, the source of light is in the West, and the arrival of that light in the East is a belated event. Based on Kobayashi's self-identification as a disciple of Marx, we might substitute Marxist philosophy for "light" here and conclude that Western humanism and liberalism are the agents that illuminate the "harsh realities of modern life" in Japan. Yet, Utō's vision of the twilight gathering around Otaru deflates Kobayashi's triumphant rhetoric. The lighthouse that he sees in Otaru's harbor reverses the direction of emanation. Its purpose is to illuminate the shore of Hokkaido for incoming ships, many of which would have hailed from Russia and other European nations. Sir Harry S. Parkes negotiated the implementation of lighthouses throughout Japan not so that those inhabiting the islands could have light but so that foreign ships interested in trade and conquest could find their way safely through the shallows. Utō's pause at the Suitengû Shrine allows him to perceive a reality that counters the narrative offered by Western philosophy via Kobayashi. The artificial lights glittering below him do not dispel darkness but rather domesticate it for the commercial interests of travelers. That Utō himself is kept in the dark in this scene is a reminder that the mobility of modern nation-states comes at the cost of consigning an other—construed as native, barbarian, or racially "dark"—to perpetual stasis.

At various moments of pause or embodied stillness throughout the story, Utō seems to tackle the task of formulating or mapping out a stable sense of his humanity.

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And humanity, such as it is here, is continually linked to finding a place in the social and technological milieu of modern Japan. One of the earliest of these moments occurs as Hisae, an ex-lover, ushers Utō through their old haunts, leading him toward the site of Vladimir's boxing match. Described as a scarred and sickly figure, whose face is covered by a mask of heavy make-up, Hisae forces Utō to revisit the industrial building where she aborted their fetus. But during the tour, Utō becomes distracted by the ventilators that array the outside of the building:

> A row of vent pipes lines the roof. Although there is no breeze, the ventilators atop the pipes spin as if caught in some wild, meaningless chase. They probably service the toilets on the other side of the wall, because we are standing directly under the screen windows of the lavatory. I stop to watch the ventilators spin, but Hisae forges ahead, her sandals flapping noisily against the ground (Itō, 110).

Utō's interest in the ventilators seems partly to be an absorption in their mechanically produced motion (which is highlighted by the absence of natural wind) and partly an excuse to distance himself from Hisae, the first of many demonic escorts who guide Utō's tour of Otaru. The spectacle of the spinning machines appears to Utō like a mirror image of his own peripatetic existence: they seem "caught in some wild, meaningless chase." Utō's attempt to construct a meaning for this apparently meaningless action leads to a utilitarian and architectural answer: "they probably service the toilets." Utō's moment of arrest and observation is a willed suspension of narrative progress that allows him to broach the question of what function or service might attach itself to an apparently haphazard, auto-generated motion. A psychological reading that sees this thought process as an abstract working-through of Utō's own sense of purpose for being makes sense here. But a more literal reading is also merited.

Utō is prone to distraction and absorption in sensory details. He admits this much when he states, at the story's outset, "I need only open my eyes and see a big, black transformer atop a creosote pole or a flag flying from a building to know these phenomena have the power to unleash thoughts and reminiscences and joys and sorrows that uncoil like ropes in my mind" (Itō, 107). As this early passage demonstrates, Utō's personhood—his affective and psychological self—is dispersed across the boundaries distinguishing his own body from the space and objects surrounding him. His emotional existence is disclosed to him by such technological and ornamental objects as the "black transformer" and the "flag" adorning Number Two Fire Lane. This detail is significant because it undercuts the separation of one's interior life—the life alternately trivialized and exalted across modernist literature—and one's external surroundings—the things and events documented in realistic forms of representation. The blurring of this boundary runs counter to the Cartesian idea that selfhood emerges spontaneously and independently from the thought process of a rational human being. That the self, particularly the *human* self, is a discreet, self-operating creature with stable and inherent properties is a foundational belief of Cartesian humanism and of Western taxonomic models of identity more broadly. What Utō Tsutōmu illustrates in the scene with the lavatory ventilators is an alternative process in which the understanding of self unfolds through sensory communication between the human being and the non-human world. Visual observation is one form of such sensory communication that concentrates Utō's attention at the extremities of his bodily/perceptual system. The reach of his gaze is one extremity of his embodied self that penetrates and is pervaded by the space outside his own skin, a space inhabited and sometimes even saturated by other bodies than his own.

Reading in the meaningless motion of the ventilators a reiteration of the ponderous question of his own movement through life and, more especially, through the streets of Otaru is not simply an act of symbolic projection for Utō; rather, it is a literal effect of the interconnected circuit that he constitutes together with the ventilators, a circuit of interwoven feeling and function. The suspension of narrative progress—the halting of explanatory discourse—is necessary for this moment of reflection to come about. And although the effects are not far-reaching, Utō's decision to linger outside the lavatory is a quiet subversion of Hisae's manipulative tour. It is a choice for which she scolds him, with an impatient "Hurry up, will you" (Itō, 110).

The space of the lavatory becomes important again in a subsequent scene of Utō's journey, where again it becomes a site of suspended action and uncanny stillness. This time Utō is inside of a public lavatory when he is addressed from a nearby stall by the voice of a demon.[53] The scene quickly develops into one of horror, as a ghost claiming to be one of Utō's former lovers identifies this lavatory as the one where she disposed of her aborted fetus and castigates Utō for his abandonment:

> I'll bet you've never come to terms with what you did to me, and the question still lurks somewhere deep inside you… What a dark, terrible memory it is! That's why I come back here. To this endless hell. I come to this toilet stall to see him again. My baby… I see his little arms reach out to grab hold of me. I see his ghost dance before my eyes. I can smell him… touch him… taste him… He is crying for his mother. Come over and join me, Utō. Come over and join us in this hell. (Itō, 126)

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[53] An important source for demons evoked in Itō Sei's story are Japanese oni tales, which constitute a branch of Japanese folklore that derived, according to Noriko Reider, from pan-Asian roots. The oni are gender-shifting creatures, sometimes compared to ogres or demons in Western lore. Reider writes that oni tales throughout the ages have served as coded critiques of oppression, portraits of racial identity, and comments on gender roles. She suggests that "oni can represent disenfranchised persons, groups and organizations silenced, and/or destined for elimination by those in authority and/or mainstream Japanese society" (xix).

The public toilet, a place of necessary return and temporary stillness (also a place

notorious as a frequent site of waiting in line) becomes here a haunted structure. The

disposal of waste expands to include the discarding of Utō's aborted offspring, thus

suturing the toilet with the grave as both are receptacles for unwanted or abject material:

the fetus hovers somewhere between the status of excrement and—most abject of all

things—the corpse.[54] The fact that this scene replays so many of the same details of the

narrative recounted by Hisae only a few pages earlier (we wonder, how many women has

Utō driven to mutilating or deadly abortions?) drives home the static quality of Utō's

visionary narrative. Rather than connecting a series of causally linked events, his story

repeats moments with the same internal structure of encounter, accusation, and dreadful

recollection. This model of recurrence shapes Utō's narrative so that it reflects his

mounting weariness and horror. It also reflects the vulnerability that he experiences as a

result of the built-in need for holding still that characterizes the modern infrastructure and

architecture of Otaru. Whether standing in line at the train station, waiting at a crowded

intersection, or sitting in a public bathroom stall, Utō repeatedly finds himself in

positions that preclude flight at the moments when it is most desirable.

Since exchanges in ideas between West and East are thematically central to Itō's

narrative, it is worth noting that the toilet, along with the whole sewage system, is an

invention of modernity imported into Japan from the West during the Meiji era reforms.

One memoir that recounts the everyday life of Ainu people in Hokkaido who lived

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[54] In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Julia Kristeva writes that the confronting a corpse disrupts the logical distinction between subject and object. She explains that "refuse and corpse s*how me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live" and that in encountering them "I am at the border of my condition as a human being" (3).

outside the major centers of Japanese immigration and colonization attends to this detail. Kayano Shigeru writes that digging a new toilet for his family was part of the regular shifting of seasons from autumn to winter each year. "Since outhouse toilets in the northern region freeze and rise," he recalls, "we had to dig a very deep hole for the new toilet. By the time that was ready, the real, north-country winter was on its way" (Kayano, 21). What Kayano's account highlights is the mobility of the toilet in this earlier phase of Ainu lifeways. The toilet is not a permanent structure linked to a comprehensive network of waste removal but rather a temporary provision that will soon need to move to another location. If the shift from Ainu village life to urban, industrial society included an induction into stricter methods of disposal and waste management, such a change held material and symbolic implications for the people classified as an inferior race with the potential to contaminate the genetic pool of Japan. In this sense, the public lavatory as a sign of imperial modernization becomes an adept and appropriate tool for the enactment (and horrific re-enactment) of a eugenicist-driven policy of abortion that seems embedded in story of Utō's past.

Much like the earlier moment in which Utō observes the ventilators, this scene is inundated with sensory perception. Since Utō translated James Joyce's *Ulysses* into Japanese, and scholars often read "Streets" as a creative response to that novel, it would be difficult to ignore the connection between Itō Sei's lavatory scenes and Joyce's description of Leopold Bloom as he visits the outhouse and smells the fresh odor of his excrement. One difference that is instantly manifest is that Bloom's lavatory incident is colored by pleasure while Utō's is disrupted by fear and disgust. This contrast speaks to a larger distinction in mood between the two narratives: Joyce's story is predominantly

erotic and ironic, while Itō's is primarily horrific. Itō deploys the stream-of-consciousness method in exploring states of subjectivity under the extreme duress exerted by the threat of personal and racial extermination. Under these exacting conditions, the operations of the senses merge together with acts of the imagination to suggest the existence of a reality that has been hidden or ignored by the official record of history. Thus, the ghost of Utō's former lover insists that her fetus expresses itself in sensory dimensions: "I see his little arms reach out to grab hold of me. I see his ghost dance before my eyes. I can smell him… touch him… taste him… He is crying for his mother." The ethical appeal that emanates from the abandoned fetus takes force from the imaginative interaction between parent and child, the dramatization of their reunion that can only be visualized through their reincarnation. Such dramatization, surreal as it is, trumps the taxonomic logic that would place these two figures—demon and unborn fetus—beyond the limits of humanness.

Utō's final delirium is triggered by an encounter with an old childhood friend, Yoshiko, who now works as a prostitute in Otaru's red light district. Looking to alleviate his loneliness, Utō agrees to visit Yoshiko's apartment.[55] In dialogue, they recall their romantic failures, each invoking the name of someone coveted by the other. Then Yoshiko suggests a game of role-play in which they might comfort one another by mutually acting out their fantasies. She will pretend to be Chako, the woman whom Utō once desired: "How about it, Tustōmu-san? How about if, just for tonight, I pretend to be your Chako-san? Stay with me, will you? I'll be real sweet to you. I'll do everything just

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[55] Note that of all the female characters that Utō encounters from his past, Yoshiko is the only one he is happy to see and the only one whose company he seeks. Though he responds this way to his male friends (Kobayashi, Norobu, etc.), he meets the women from his past life as "fiends" or demons who have come back to haunt him.

like Chako would" (Itō, 104). More than mere escapism, what Yoshiko offers here is

performance as an interactive self-reconstruction that has the power to redeem the self—

if only transiently—from abjection. That performance requires a suspension of immediate

reality and an imaginative abstraction of the present moment from chronological time.

They will rehearse for the future that is never to be and re-enact the past that never was.

Waiting for Utō's response, Yoshiko "continues to dance about the room, spinning in

circles and repeating the phrase 'Chako or me?' as if it were a refrain in a song" (Itō,

104). Yoshiko's repetition and her circular movements enact the rotational model of time

one might associate with trauma: the sufferer returns to traumatic experience through

memory and is forced to relive it again and again. But here, Yoshiko's trance of

repetition is colored by a blending of humor and melancholy that suggests a different

kind of derangement than that of post-traumatic distress. She grasps the imaginative act

of substitution as a source of possibility and expresses disdain for the confines of

common-sense by flaunting her ability to be either herself or someone else. Yoshiko's

disarticulation of her given identity is a creative act that blossoms in its phase of

suggestion and thrusts Utō into a hallucinatory state. From this moment on, nothing can

again be what it seems. It is not through positive action that Yoshiko accomplishes this

strange transformation but rather through an act of hesitation, in which the either/or

question charges the atmosphere with its playful uncertainty.

Yoshiko conjures alternate realities through performance even though her

performance is delayed. Her mantra—"Chako or me?"—is a question directed first at Utō

but then, through repetition, redirected toward a more diffuse and impersonal audience.

This redirection turns Yoshiko's question into a performative utterance of possibility. As

a figure of suspended identity, Yoshiko channels qualities of the oni, creatures that

Noriko Reider translates as "demons" with shape-shifting and other magical powers

(xix). Folktales about female oni were widespread in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century

Japan and often featured women who became demons due to jealousy or desire for

revenge on unfaithful men. In this respect, all the female "ghosts" who appear to Utō are

oni figures, but Yoshiko especially captures the power of the oni to cross boundaries of

identity. Reider emphasizes that "oni have no essential gender and any attempt to assign

one is a metaphysical venture at best" (56). In addition to switching genders, though, oni

can be vital things as well as humanoid creatures. Reider argues that "*tsukumogami*" or

"abandoned old household objects" that "bear grudges against people" are also iterations

of the oni motif (57). If it is true that "oni" names not a class of monster but a propensity

to change identity, to make and unmake one's human, racial, or gendered status at will,

then Yoshiko's either/or suggestion—"Chako or me?"—epitomizes this uncanny

presence. Yoshiko represents the fiend not as a misogynistic projection of feminine

bitterness but as a virtuoso of magical self-construction.

Though a surface reading would suggest that Utō himself is a victim plagued by

the presence of fiends and ghouls, there is good reason for interpreting Utō himself as an

oni figure. Pointed out as an Ainu with "kinky" hair and illegitimate ancestry, Utō feels

his status as an outsider at least twice in the story: once, when he is denied a train ticket

to travel back to Tokyo, and again when he encounters colleagues in a bar and finds that

he is invisible to them (pg. #). According to Reider, "the oni can symbolize the anti-

establishment, as 'other' or outsider vis-à-vis some form of hegemonic authority… In this

context oni can represent disenfranchised persons, groups and organizations silenced,

and/or destined for elimination by those in authority and/or mainstream Japanese society"

(xix). Seen in this light, Utō becomes paradoxically both an oni (as a person classified as

Ainu in Hokkaido) and a figure of the "mainstream" (after all, he has created a life in

Tokyo, leaving a trail of unfortunate lovers in his wake). His experience suggests that one

division between self and other, human and oni, propagates further breakdowns. The

outsider in turn constructs his own stranger; the sub-human generates its own tools of

abjection.

Stillness and the Lynching Scene

Toomer's *Cane* fits into a study of the literary uses and meanings of the still body,

because it treats the theme of embodied fixity and because it explores the relationship

between still images and narrative movement. In *Cane*, Toomer intersperses short lyrical

poems with fictional vignettes and finishes the work with a longer hybrid piece that

mixes conventions of narrative fiction, drama, and song. Imagery and story interact

reciprocally in *Cane*: sections of narrative text generate a picture with regards to which

the text becomes ekphrastic. In this sense, each story is motivated by a textual will to

arrive at the moment of pause—the caesura—at which an iconic, often fantastic image

draws in the attention of narrator and narratee. These pauses supplant the "ending" as the

new teleological reason-for-being of the story. Rather than a linear narrative plunging

toward a resolution that reveals a moral or truth, the Toomeresque story becomes a kind

of code or grammar for understanding the sensory images that emerge from its events. In

this sense, *Cane* subverts any hard-and-fast opposition between still image and moving

story, or between spatiality and temporality.

An example of this dynamic emerges if we look at "Blood-Burning Moon"

alongside the short poem, "A Portrait In Georgia," which directly precedes it in *Cane*.

Here is the poem:

Hair-braided chestnut,

coiled like a lyncher's rope,

Eyes-fagots,

Lips-old scars, or the first red blisters,

Breath-the last sweet scent of cane,

And her slim body, white as the ash

of black flesh after flame.

This poem conflates the idealized white woman's body with the body of a black lynching

victim and the objects that assist in lynching—rope and fagots. In this way Toomer

brings the iconic images of white feminine virtue and beauty into contact with the brutal

reality of lynching, hinting through juxtaposition that the former is complicit in the latter.

In "Blood-Burning Moon" this ideological justification for lynching—possession of

white femininity—is absent.[56] Tom Burwell is lynched as a result of his desire for a black

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[56] Critical debates about whether Toomer is more aesthete than protester or, alternatively, more engaged with politics than with modernism, have often hinged on analyses of "Blood-Burning Moon."[56] Whittling out a mediating position between these poles are critics who question the dichotomy of aesthetics versus politics. Rachel Farebrother, for example, attends to the "politics of form" in *Cane*, building on Houston Baker's argument that political meaning is often embedded in craft (see *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*). My own reading of "Blood-Burning Moon" continues this foray into the cultural space where political history and aesthetic form overlap. I linger over the short vignette, perhaps recreating the fixity experienced by its characters, in order to

woman who attracts both white and black men. "Portrait in Georgia" thus depicts an

iconic and oft-rehearsed—though twisted—version of the lynching event that is then

abandoned for an alternative retelling in "Blood-Burning Moon."

But threads of continuity link the poem and the narrative vignette when one

considers their stock of images and formal devices. The "fagots," "scent of cane," and

"lyncher's rope" all reappear in "Blood-Burning" moon as Toomer gives a graphic

description of Tom Burwell's execution. More to the point, these associated objects—the

props that make up the lynching scene—become fused, as in the poem, with the features

of a human face. If the rope, cane scent, fagots, and ash are objects that metonymically

evoke the lynching event, they are also images that metaphorically produce a character's

"portrait." Toomer's "Portrait in Georgia" and "Blood-Burning Moon" are both doubly

troped, then, in that they simultaneously mobilize the logic of metonym and metaphor.

Thus it is that, in "Blood-Burning Moon," Toomer's description of Tom's lynching

highlights a slippage between Tom's body, lynching violence, and the factory building

where the lynching occurs:

> Now Tom could be seen within the flames. Only his head, erect, lean, like a
> blackened stone. Stench of burning flesh soaked the air. Tom's eyes popped. His
> head settled downward. The mob yelled. Its yell echoed against the skeleton stone
> walls and sounded like a hundred yells. Like a hundred mobs yelling. (Toomer,
> 35)

Again, as in the poem, the eyes replace kindling. Tom's eyes, "set and stony" one

moment and "popped" the next, act like coal and fagots. The repetition of "stone" in "like

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rethink the relation between activity and passivity—between action and observation—
that Toomer approaches cautiously in his work. This dichotomy is reified when critics
cling to a hard-and-fast distinction between political activism and the work of thinking
and crafting an aesthetic piece.

a blackened stone" and "skeleton stone walls" suggests a resemblance between Tom's head and the walls of the factory. The factory repeats his body on a larger scale. As a "skeleton," it frames and doubles his bone structure. At the same time, Tom's head— "erect, lean, like a blackened stone"—becomes like a building, exhibiting the upright and sculpted qualities of a crafted object. In short, a conflation occurs in which Tom's body, especially his face, is the site of his own lynching and is superimposed onto the props used to carry out his murder. This conflation happens on two axes which might be labeled a metaphorical axis and a metonymic axis. Tom's head amid the flames is a member that evokes not only his own body but also the whole skeleton frame of the factory building. Meanwhile, the conflation of his body with the factory hinges on a certain likeness, as they both share qualities of a crafted edifice that is now in ruin. A cinematic translation might use double-exposure to show a close-up of Tom's face hovering over a long-shot of the lynching scene.

In "Portrait In Georgia," Toomer uses dashes as a shorthand to register his metaphor. The dashes, coming between facial features and the objects of lynching that they evoke, act like the dashes in a dictionary or thesaurus. They suggest horizontal movement and equivalence. If read as a prelude to "Blood-Burning Moon," this poem teaches the reader to approach the dashes in the short story's title and its first paragraph in a similar way. In addition to interpreting "Blood-Burning" as an adjective that modifies "Moon," one might read the dash as a lateral shift that means "or." At least one of the dashes in the first paragraph of "Blood-Burning Moon" might also work this way: Toomer lists "solid hand-hewn beams of oak" as one feature of the old cotton factory. Just as hair, eyes, and lips can become rope, fagots and scars, a "solid hand" could

become a "hewn beam of oak." If the old factory is a skeleton, its hands might as well be oaken beams. This possibility does not rule out the likelihood that those beams are also, themselves, "hand-hewn." The metonymical- metaphorical logic of the poem thus reappears in the short narrative that takes off in its wake. "Blood-Burning Moon" functions as a fleshing-out of the complex motives, desires, fears, and sexual dynamics that are woven thickly together in the dense but abstract image offered in "Portrait." In turn, the story recreates with a difference the picture that it unpacks, culminating in an assemblage of sense images that slip between ontological categories and deconstruct the stereotypical account of the lynching event.

Toomer's intertextual and transgeneric play between poetic and narrative form produces an analogous play in the world of his art between impressions and events. The time that it takes to register what has happened or what is still happening is a gift offered up by the time it takes to study an image or interact with a sense-object. Toomer wrests this time from the incessant flow of events by fixing attention on a theme and some of its associated objects: e.g., lynching and the rope, fagots, and burned body. In this sense, stillness in the form of cognitive fixation encroaches on his narrative flow and opens up pauses for reflection. Stillness, as a poetic and narrative device in Toomer's art, becomes both transformative—in that it ushers in metaphorical and metonymical logics—and therapeutic—in that it returns to the traumatic event as to a field of impressions to be registered.

While the transformations documented in the final passage of "Blood-Burning Moon" are partly literary slippages accounted for through the logic of metaphor, the lynching incident also sees material transformation in the act of burning. If the fagots and

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kerosene become Tom Burwell's body and his body becomes the cotton factory in a figurative fashion, then his material body also turns to ashes, bones, and smoke in a literal fashion. His death is a chemical change that converts matter and energy into new forms. In "Blood-Burning Moon," Toomer prefigures this type of material change when describing the boiling of cane to create sugar. Elsewhere in *Cane*, he includes a poem called "Conversion" that depicts the initiation of African polytheists into Christendom and another poem, "Face," that imagines the water turning to wine in the tears of a woman. The concept of conversion is a reappearing motif in *Cane*, and in "Blood-Burning Moon" the abundance of metaphor forms an analogue to the literal transformation of living body to ash and of old buildings to functional ruins. The problem outlined by all of this fungibility is that matter and energy will not disappear, that they will not settle themselves down in a proper ending. For Toomer, it seems, events—things that take place—also share this unquiet ceaselessness. Events instantiate matter and energy and stamp them with the memory of what has happened. In the case of violent happenings, such as a lynching, the fact that this stamped matter and energy will be transferred and transformed but never extinguished becomes problematic from the point of view of human agents willing to forget, to unburden themselves of past trauma, and to continue living. As a trope, conversion becomes a way of reflecting on this problem and a tactic for seeking what forms of transformation allow an experience to become an impression and an impression, in turn, to be sublimated through focused and rigorous registration.

For Toomer, this transition from event to impression and from impression to recuperating assimilation is expressed aesthetically by a narrative text's approach toward

a still picture. Since real events have no end, narrative alone cannot supply an adequate form of response to trauma. But an interweaving of narrative and poetry begins to treat trauma by interlacing events and impressions, linear movement and geometric pause. In addition to enacting stillness in the form of *Cane*, Toomer makes these practices available to his characters. And it is through his characters—especially through Louisa, Tom, and Bob in "Blood-Burning Moon"—that Toomer reaches beyond an elite "high modernist" arena and imagines quotidian and folk-based applications of his techniques.[57]

In "Blood-Burning Moon," landscapes, houses, and mechanical structures become receptacles of human memory. Toomer's descriptions imbue these objects with the collective memory of African American enslavement by appropriating gothic language that evokes paranormal phenomena:

> Up from the skeleton stone walls, up from the rotting floor boards and the solid hand-hewn beams of oak of the pre-war cotton factory, dusk came. Up from the dusk the full moon came. Glowing like a fired pine-knot, it illuminated the great door and soft showered the Negro shanties aligned along the single street of factory town (Toomer, 30).

Momentarily setting aside the eerie atmosphere evoked by the terms "skeleton," "rotting floor boards," and "glowing like a fired pine-knot," I want to focus on the way that this passage, which introduces Toomer's short story, suggests a particular place and time. Details about the "stone walls" and the "hand-hewn beams of oak" place the reader instantly in a concrete setting, and the prepositional object—"the pre-war cotton factory"—adds historical specificity to that setting. It situates the story around the ruins of a Southern antebellum structure, a remnant of the once-flourishing cotton industry that

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[57] It is undeniable that Toomer appropriates these quotidian voices by virtue of his class privilege and his own physical mobility, but it is also worth noting that he imagines them as sources of creativity and not as crass, primitive, or imitative soundings.

profited from the labor of African American slaves. Taking this strange citadel as a focal point, Toomer then spreads out a map of Factory town: one main street gathers a row of "Negro shanties." These shanties, illuminated by the moon in the factory's doorway, demonstrate a position of deference and subjection toward the looming cotton factory. The arrangement of space here mirrors that of a big house and its peripheral slave quarters on a Southern plantation. The moon resembles a watchful eye. At the very least it is a light source that floods the town from the point of view of the factory, serving as both a symbol and an instrument of surveillance.[58]

While the spatial and architectural information in this passage sets up a distribution of power compatible with the master-slave divide, the cadence of these opening sentences evokes another, related history—that of African American economic ascension. The refrain "Up from" recalls Booker T. Washington's influential monograph *Up From Slavery*, in which he famously asserts that black and white Americans can cooperate economically while remaining socially segregated. Toomer echoes Washington's beliefs with irony here. The rising of the moon only casts into vivid relief the prostration of the "Negro shanties" that remain on the ground. That the "dusk" rises first and launches the ascension of the moon is significant. The word "dusk," denoting the darkness after sunset, also has historical ties to racist representations of people of African descent. Romantic and idealistic descriptions of the white mission to uplift the "dusky" races of the world supplied much of the rhetorical backing for Western imperialist

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[58] The moon in "Blood-Burning Moon" might be a point of comparison with the lighthouse in *Streets of Fiendish Ghosts*, as both signify surveillance and formidable illumination.

projects in Africa and the Americas.[59] It is of import here, then, that the rising of the

"dusk" only serves to launch the moon—an image of light that evokes the lynch mob's

torches—into a higher position of authority.

The gothic tropes that establish historical connections also create the sense that

modern distinctions based on race carry on nineteenth- and twentieth-century traditions

of community-building through the construction of monstrous and supernatural others.[60]

The factory is described as the remains of a dead body: in juxtaposition with its "skeleton

stone walls," its "rotting floor boards" suggest the decay of flesh. The factory as corpse

takes on supernatural aspects in the two sentences following the excerpted passage: "The

full moon in the great door was an omen. Negro women improvised songs against its

spell" (Toomer, 30). Here, the moon's image imparts a warning, one that the women of

factory town seem able to interpret while the narrator and reader remains only vaguely

aware of its significance. As with the horizontal and vertical arrangement of the town,

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[59] One historical example is James Creelman's 1911 book *Diaz, Master of Mexico*, in which Creelman refers to Native American peoples as "the descendants of the dusky races which inhabited Mexico before the discovery of America by Columbus" (v). Creelman, however, is only one manifestation of a long-standing usage of the term "dusky" in a racial context. For more on the racial and aesthetic connotations of duskiness, see Tanner's book *Dusky Maidens: The Odyssey of the Early Black Dramatic Actress*.

[60] Scholars have recently begun to understand gothic tropes as a mediation of social realities rather than an escape from them. Toni Morrison writes that gothic romance, as exemplified by such canonical U. S. American authors as Willa Cather and Edgar Allen Poe, encodes "a dark and abiding presence that moves the hearts and texts of American literature with fear and longing" (33). She explains that this "abiding presence" refers to the African American population crucial to U. S. history but markedly obscured by its literary apparatus. Theresa Goddu has written that America's "foundational fictions and self-mythologizations" are invented "through a process of displacement: their coherence depends on exclusion. By resurrecting what these narratives repress, the gothic disrupts the dream world of national myth with the nightmares of history" (Goddu, 10). Through his representations of gothic terror, Toomer suggests that, in and around the ruptures of modernization, threads of continuity exist that ensure the proliferation of brutal acts of expulsion and the persistence of racial segregation.

this last sentence again inscribes the antagonism between the moon and the shanties, the "glowing" light-source and those in its gleam. One similarity that emerges here between Toomer's story and Itō's is the emphasis on upward movement as the prominent impression offered by an initial description of the setting. Like the dusk that rises from the cotton factory and the moon that rises from the dusk, Itō's opening paragraph features the buoyancy of ships at rest in the harbor that ride high on the waterline while their smoke curls upward into the sky. In both passages, this tendency toward ascension in features of the city-scape results in a mood not of exuberance but of ominous stillness. The atmosphere is characterized by a dreadful stasis that mirrors the failure of history to push forward into a new beginning, for either the protagonists or the larger communities surrounding them. In Toomer's opening passage, the specific gothic trope of a haunted house—in the fashion of Anne Radcliff's ruined castles that becomes the strongholds of backwards, patriarchal power—dominates the scene. While Itō's narrative dramatizes the haunting of one character whose personal trauma figures the pervasive violence of racism and imperialism in modern Japan, Toomer's story focuses on a whole community that waits in dreary expectation for the return of racially articulated violence in a modern U.S. context.

While punctuated rests from movement appear more readily from Utō's limited point of view in "Streets of Fiendish Ghosts," all of factory town seems to be immersed in a collective pause at the start of "Blood-Burning Moon." The narrator describes a scene stretched thin by the fatigue of waiting for some unidentified, terrible event:

> The slow rhythm of her [Louisa's] song grew agitant and restless. Rusty black and tan spotted hounds, lying in the dark corners of porches or prowling around back yards, put their noses in the air and caught its tremor. They began plaintively to yelp and howl. Chickens woke up and cackled. Intermittently, all over the

countryside dogs barked and roosters crowed as if heralding a weird dawn or some ungodly awakening. The women sang lustily. Their songs were cotton-wads to stop their ears (Toomer, 31).

The short vignette picks up like the opening of a symphony. The songs the black women sing to exorcise the demon-moon increase gradually in tempo. They are accompanied by the "plaintive" tones of the dogs and the cackling of the chickens, which soon become the louder voices, rippling across the countryside. The women's choir responds again, changing to a more vigorous tone that wrestles with the animal sounds. Beneath the sound itself is an intention that Toomer's narrator discloses with the equation, "Their songs were cotton-wads to stop their ears." If their singing cannot ward off whatever danger is pronounced by the ill omen of the moon, the women will at least delay their confrontation with it. They extend the quiescence of this evening over factory-town by using their own voices as a protective muffle. This same intent to put off decisive action—and the decisive action of this story already promises to be violent—manifests in Louisa's psyche as she contemplates her suspension between two lovers: the black Tom Burwell and the white Bob Stone. She muses, "To meet Bob in the canebrake, as she was going to do an hour or so later, was nothing new. And Tom's proposal which she felt on its way to her could be indefinitely put off" (Toomer, 1). Louisa's will is bent upon the deferral of a choice between the two lovers or a confrontation between them. Her energy, like that of the women diffused throughout the town, concentrates on perpetuating an indecisive present in which the either/or question remains projected onto a later time.

Tempting as it may be to interpret this performance of hesitation as a sign of weakness on the part of the women in factory-town, to read them as victims who can only wait in suspense for the coming storm with no power to avert it, the story gives pause to

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such logic. The lyricism of the women, whose songs become integrated into the very text of Toomer's narrative, becomes a locus of communal creativity that balances Toomer's gothic aesthetic much as Tom's blackness balances Bob's whiteness in Louisa's mind. The song, which repeats three times over the course of the story, reads: "Red nigger moon. Sinner!/ Blood-Burning moon. Sinner!/ Come out that fact'ry door" (Toomer, 1). The song carries an allusion to the book of Revelation in the New Testament, in which the apostle John prophesies that the moon will turn red with blood when judgment comes upon the earth at Christ's second coming (Rev. 6:12). The word "nigger" in the first line mixes the religious register with a racist one, suggesting that the sinners who are to suffer punishment are the racial other—depraved heathens. Just as the modern industrial sign of the factory becomes coopted by the older image of the haunted house (especially the Big House of the Southern plantation), the modern scientific discourse of race falls back into its superstitious and theological grounding in the Manichean binary of good and evil. Yet the last line of the song, "Come out that fact'ry door," reminds us of whose voice is singing and why. The song is an exorcism performed by the folk.[61] The women of mixed and African descent adopt the voice of patriarchal, white authority and twist it to their own purpose: to delay the violence, to deflect its harm from their community, and to assert their own syncretic process of authorship. Thus, as in the case of Utō Tsutōmu and Yoshiko, the act of waiting unfolds into a creative channeling of energy toward self and community-constitution.

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[61] Susan Edmunds reads the songs of the women in "Blood-Burning Moon" as carrying out a restorative function. Through her songs, Louisa finds a way of "removing society's denigrated scapegoats from a moral discourse that attributes their suffering to their own wrongdoing, and relocating them in a realm of artistic memory that transforms the mute traumas of individuals into 'soul sounds' (C, 15) of collective unity and survival" (153).

The air of hesitancy and anticipation that pervades the main street of factory town also presides over the setting in part two of the story. Here, men work around a steaming pot in a small clearing of the forest. They grind and boil freshly harvested cane stalks to produce sugar. This section, like the first, opens with words "Up from": "Up from the deep dusk of a cleared spot on the edge of the forest a mellow glow arose and spread fan-wise into the low-hanging heavens" (Toomer, 1). This rising "glow" seems a tributary of the full moon's luminescence. It recreates the omen of danger, this time connecting it to a scene where witchcraft is evoked through the image of the "copperboiling pan" that issues steam like a cauldron (Toomer, 1). The reds and whites and shadows of the scene suggest a mood of contrasting forces. The men gathered in a circle around the stove and grinder seem assembled for some ceremonial rite, but this ritual is motivated not by spiritual but by economic profits.[62] These men are laborers who work late into the evening, and their work of churning and boiling—accompanied as it is by acts of storytelling—is a phase in the industrial process that feeds the economic growth of their Southern village and the wealth of nearby land-owners.

Again in this passage theological imagery and modern, industrial practice become enmeshed. The sacred and the profane, the holy and the defiled, become mingled. In

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[62] Foley points out that Toomer's emphasis on cane is historically misleading, since cane was not a staple crop in Georgia during the 1920s (nor is it one now). Elaborating in detail on the 1920-1921 boll weevil blight that devastated Hancock County, Foley points out that Tom Burwell would likely not have had any work at all. The cane that saturates the air in Toomer's fictional town is both anachronistic and, due to its low nutrition value, mismatched to the needs of the malnourished, underemployed population that really inhabited rural Georgia (Foley, 186). I am curious whether Toomer's selection of cane as both a conceit and a concrete referent has to do with a desire to make connections with older phases of the American South and concurrent phases of Caribbean agriculture. If so, he compromises local specificity for a chance to invoke trans-temporal and transnational parallels.

order to see this dynamic of mixture and transformation—and how it relates to the motif of waiting and keeping still—we must attend to the central object of the text here: the cane itself and the sugar distilled from it. This substance imbues the atmosphere, creating a sense that physical space is saturated by something with both tangible and spiritual qualities:

> The scent of cane came from the copper pan and drenched the forest and the hill that sloped to factory town, beneath its fragrance. It drenched the men in circle seated around the stove. Some of them chewed at the white pulp of stalks, but there was no need for them to, if all they wanted was to taste the cane. One tasted it in factory town. (Toomer, 31)

This passage, lyrical in its use of alliteration, repetition, and assonance, simulates the intoxicating lull produced by the heat, moisture, and fragrance of the sugar-distillation process. By synaesthetic logic, the smell of cane drenches the landscape and the people. Such an evocation of immersion creates the image of a flood, perhaps even a baptism. The resonance with Christian ritual and belief is fitting, as Toomer suggests a likeness between the sugar-distillation process and the magic of transubstantiation. The three substances that fill the air and cover the sky—where messages are written to the folk— are water, blood, and cane-sugar. In Christianity, Christ is the vine that turns water into wine and the deity who gives his blood for the eucharist. Likewise, it seems that in modern Factory Town, someone must be sacrificed to turn the water soaked up by the cane stalks into sugar and to release that syrup into the wider world for the monetary redemption of a bankrupt society. Lynching becomes the sacrifice by which this society is defined, and the regular transformation of blood and water into sugar through the grueling labor of black men and women sustains that formation over time. In this sense, the economy works according to a type of cannibalism as normalized as that of the

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eucharist. Yet the problem here is that only mortal characters exist. No gods or demons appear to intervene in the human world, and so the mortals must bear the implications of their own fantastic legends of good and evil. Thus, the men at work in the forest clearing are both priests and demons. Bob Stone and Tom Burwell are innocent and guilty, saintly and ghoulish, at the same time. In factory town, abjection and worship are simultaneous phases in the process of community formation.

The "scent of cane" diffused throughout factory town heightens the heaviness of the minutes that pass as the evening wears on. The slowness of time in the first two sections of "Blood-Burning Moon," which contrasts starkly with the rapid action in the third act, seems a natural result of the syrup that infuses the air. People move as if hampered by its substance around them. Louisa's fatigue as she walks to her front steps makes palpable the difficulty of moving through this sweet and saturated atmosphere. Even the workers gathered around the stove at the forest's edge are mostly inert. They sit in a circle and chew stalks of cane, an action whose pointlessness the narrator takes extra pains to point out. As with Louisa's disposition in part one, these characters strike a posture of living in suspension—watching and keeping still while events roll in like a storm from the horizon. Yet again, their stillness is not a merely submissive or resigned state. It opens up a discursive and performative space, in which Old David Georgia tells "tales about the white folks, about moonshining and cotton picking, and about sweet nigger gals, to the men who sat there about his stove to listen to him" (Toomer, 1). His relation of history, labor, and pleasure draws in his listeners and forms a provisional community of entertainment and comradeship. That this creation is disrupted but not

destroyed by Tom Burwell's sudden departure is evidenced by his act of obeisance—his nod to old David Georgia—before he takes his leave.

Yet another type of hesitation emerges in the beginning of the third act, in Bob Stone's broken internal monologue. Bob wrestles with shame and desire as he thinks of his relationship with Louisa: "She was lovely—in her way. Nigger way. What way was that? Damned if he knew. Must know. He'd known her long enough to know. Was there something about niggers that you couldn't know? …Nigger was something more. How much more? Something to be afraid of more? Hell no. Who ever heard of being afraid of a nigger?" (Toomer, 2-3). He goes on in this way, questioning and answering himself, creating a winding pathway with his thoughts that mirrors his clandestine trek through the cane fields to meet Louisa. If Louisa demonstrates a precarious feat of mental balance, holding in suspension her contrary wills and carrying herself with composure on the taught line between them, Bob illustrates the breakdown of such an effort. He desperately wants to restore a unifying logic to the world that will make his authority and power unquestionable (hence the vision he has of enslaving and raping Louisa on his own property). He qualifies and polices his own thoughts in order to prevent any wayward thinking that would stray from the assurance of his power as a white, propertied man. His doubts hinge on the realizations that he is attracted to Louisa not in spite of his racism but partly because of it and that he fears as well as hates the black community that surrounds her. Yet the hegemony in his own mind shuts down Bob's venturesome thoughts. Idioms arise to counter his questions: "Nigger way" and "Whoever heard of being afraid of a nigger?" Thus, although Bob Stone possesses the critical ability to think beyond the assumptions of his culture, his eagerness for decisive action and certainty cut short the

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period of reflection that would enable a productive critical process. When he springs into action and attacks Tom Burwell, his act begins a series of events that happen so rapidly and smoothly that they seem to be the workings of a machine. In a sense, it is this initiation of an unstoppable process of action that carries out the dehumanization of the story's main characters.

Louisa, the working men, and Bob engage in practices of cognitive stillness and physical hesitation as they grapple with the forms of self- and community-construction available to them. For Louisa and the men attending to David Georgia's yarns, the act of weaving what one sees, hears, feels, and remembers into recitable impressions crafts spaces of quiescence and authority. Though these spaces are, in fact, rooted in particular times and places and those inhabiting them will be subject to historical and social forces beyond their control, they can be momentarily abstracted from temporal flux as ornaments can be isolated from the things they adorn. For Toomer, the dreaded stillness of body and stagnancy of history that constitute one legacy of U.S. American racial formation have their balm in this second stillness, the practice of hesitation that allows even the oppressed to craft their own ornaments of sensory wonder.

Conclusion: From Modern Crowd to Mob Justice in Itō and Toomer

At the conclusion of both Itō Sei's "Streets of Fiendish Ghosts" and Jean Toomer's "Blood-Burning Moon," narratives that have primarily described anticipation and suspended action suddenly switch gears. In each, the instigation of a violent and hyperactive ending to the story occurs as a community forms into a crowd and the crowd,

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in turn, fashions itself as an agent of mob justice. In "Streets of Fiendish Ghosts," this mob appears as a swarm of creatures that blend animal, human, and mechanical characteristics. Likewise, the mob in "Blood-Burning Moon" exhibits a strange metamorphosis of the human toward a horizon of ghoulish grotesquerie. Though the contexts of these narratives differ in significant ways—Itō Sei situates his narrative in the Japanese colonial development of Hokkaido and racial marginalization of the Ainu, while Toomer addresses the post-Reconstruction American South as an atmosphere where lynch law preserves the structures of power erected during slavery—the imagery deployed in each case is strikingly resonant. The emergent crowds feature a type of swollen, ghastly, and zoologically ambiguous embodiment that seems to render them part of an aquatic environment.

Toomer's mob acts like a flood as it attacks Tom Burwell: "They *poured* down upon him. They swarmed. A large man with a dead-white face and flabby cheeks came to him and almost jabbed a gun-barrel through his guts" (36, emphasis added). The blanched, flabby-cheeked man evokes the saturated corpse of a drowned person. His humanness becomes murky as his physique ambivalently registers as morbid and animate.[63] The crowd as a whole executes verbs, such as "poured" and "swarmed," typically associated with animals or non-sentient matter. Itō Sei also introduces his mob in terms of an uncontrollable flow: "There are so many that they *spill* over the sides of the room and *drown*. Or they *swim* in formations so tight that they nearly suffocate themselves" (164, emphasis added). That the creatures spill, drown, and swim suggests

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[63] For more on the ambiguous overlapping of animate and inanimate matter, see Chen. Chen characterizes this zone of ambiguity as one where the categories of human and inhuman come into contact and blend with one another.

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that they enter the setting—Yoshiko's bedroom—in a fluid form, although it is unclear

whether they are *in* a stream or simply *are* the stream. A face-to-face encounter between

Utō Tstomu and one creature mirrors the moment from "Blood-Burning Moon" isolated

above: "Finally, the biggest of them all, a creature like a giant octopus, sails straight

toward me and sticks its bizarre, sea-monster snout in my face. I cannot get away from it

no matter how hard I try" (164). As with the flabby-cheeked man in Toomer's tale, the

"sea-monster" horrifies by virtue of its inhuman appearance and its irregular,

unclassifiable form. In each instance, such imagery connotes the transference from

perpetrator to victim of a dehumanizing gaze. The cramping of space as a crowed

congeals into a mob acts as both a cause and effect of this alienating gaze.

In this final section, I read Jean Toomer's and Itō Sei's representations of violent

acts of community- and subject-formation and suggest that both authors address the

question: is it possible to construct human subjectivity without creating subhuman

objectivity? In other words, are there tactics of self- and community-formation that

genuinely eschew the violence of expulsion? [64]These modernist authors respond to a

trend in twentieth-century imperial ideology, one that emerges across the transpacific

space of the United States and Japan, which construes selfhood and otherness in terms of

territory. While this ideology builds on modern scientific and cartographic practices of

surveying, mapping, and military planning, it also redeploys more traditional temporal

modes of distinction such as ancestral legacy and filial destiny. As they strive to find

[64] I see the processes of consolidating the singular self and constructing collective
identity—as in a real or imagined community—as internal to one another. Rather than
following the liberal humanist logic that opposes the individual to the social
conglomerate, I imitate Itō's and Toomer's examples and consider the human individual
an epiphenomenon of social practices.

grounds for the possibility of peaceful self-construction, Toomer and Itō first explore the trope of imposed fixity—both spatial and temporal—as a mode of racial formation within twentieth-century imperial regimes and then appropriate stillness as a mode of performance. Stillness as performance contains a spectrum of tactics for imagining unrealized forms of relational selfhood.

For much of the nineteenth and all of the twentieth century, the crowd was an object of interest to cultural, sociological, and imaginative writers. Prominent among these writers is the theorist Gustave Le Bon, whose 1896 *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* applies to crowds the same kind of meticulous psychological study that thinkers of his time used to advance the pseudo-sciences of criminology and eugenics. For Le Bon, the crowd offers a laboratory for studying the primitive and the feminine. He writes, "by the mere fact that he forms part of an organized crowd, a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilization" (Le Bon, 23, 19). It is likely that Thomas Carlyle's imagination hovers in the field of influences operating on Le Bon. In his 1837 book, *The French Revolution*, Carlyle depicts the peasant mob as inherently savage, feminine, and hungry. In its attack on the Bastille, the crowd can be seen "plunging" and "billowing uncontrollable" (Carlyle, 17). Carlyle's fluid imagery establishes a prescient connection with that used by Toomer and Itō to describe their own crowds. Evoking elemental forces and irrational frenzy, Carlyle refers to the peasant mob as "Maenads," who were cannibalistic, female followers of Dionysus. Fiction writers such as Edgar Allen Poe and Charles Baudelaire form an arc that temporally links Carlyle to Le Bon. Their various depictions of urban crowds mingle scientific detachment with mystical fascination.

What happens to the trope of the crowd over the half-century stretching from Carlyle to Le Bon, then, is its extension from a literary motif steeped in Classical myth toward a self-consciously modern rhetoric of science. Variations undertaken by Baudelaire and Poe critique this trajectory from within, so to speak, as they comment on the crowd as a stimulant or depressant of individual desire.[65] In each of the instances I mention above, the crowd gains noteworthy features in contrast to the individual person in whom it finds a ceaseless and dynamic foil. The questions with which Carlyle, Baudelaire, Poe, and Le Bon grapple all address this relation. Can a person pursue self-interest in the situation of belonging to a crowd? Where do his own feelings end and the crowd sensibilities begin? Can institutions that govern the human self also effectively govern a crowd? Does knowledge of the human individual translate into knowledge of humanity en masse?

The picture changes somewhat, though, if we add the work of Jean Toomer and Itō Sei to an analysis of treatments of the crowd in modernism. These authors, both of whom wrote from racially marginalized subject positions that prompted the questioning of their legitimacy as creative writers, alter the trope of the crowd by searching out its connections with the community. Their narratives in *Cane* and "Streets of Fiendish Ghosts" depart from Le Bon's theory of the crowd as a being unto itself. While Le Bon sees the crowd as a phenomenon that takes on a life of its own, springing into existence and then disappearing, Toomer and Itō Sei represent their crowds as continual phenomena that carry out social norms and mores of everyday life. The contrast emerges because, while Le Bon studies the crowd in relation to the individual (and draws on the

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[65] Poe and Baudelaire latched onto the crowd trope with the deliberate purpose of casting suspicion on the self as a discreet or autonomous agent. Charles Baudelaire's "*A Une Passante*" (To A Woman Passing By) and Edgar Allen Poe's "The Man of the Crowd" are cases in point.

apparatuses of knowledge invented with this subject in mind), Toomer and Itō imagine

the crowd as a foil to the community, the collective "self" of town, nation, or empire.

Moreover, the mobs mustered in these two stories relate to their stable communities

through extension or magnification rather than deviation. The lynch mob in "Blood-

Burning Moon" carries out, in an eerily dispassionate manner, the preservation of the

status quo in Factory town. It's operations lack the heightened emotions and impulsive

responses diagnosed by Le Bon. Rather, the mob integrates technology and an almost

assembly-line level of efficiency to carry out its aims. Similarly, the mob of creatures that

assails Utō Tsutōmu repeats and multiplies the dialogue that we see in his exchanges with

former friends and lovers throughout the story. They all insist that Utō knows them, that

he must claim them as persons whom he has wronged. In both "Blood-Burning Moon"

and "Streets," the seemingly stable community is a latent phase of the vigilante mob.

Consequently, demonic images appear interspersed with descriptions of the normal, day-

time folk who walk the streets, as the protagonists occasionally see through façades of

security.

The trope of the crowd as it appears in the work of Itō Sei and Jean Toomer also

differs from its iterations in Carlyle, Baudelaire, Poe, and West, because it begins to

evoke the embodied forms of stillness that result from a tightening of space.[66] While

Carlyle's mobs of Maenads, Baudelaire's flâneurs, and Poe's obsessive pedestrians

inhabit spaces of agitated movement and ceaseless activity, the avenues depicted in

"Streets of Fiendish Ghosts" and "Blood-Burning Moon" are sites of arrest, waiting, and

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[66] Ortega y Gasset attends to the lack of open space in modern cities as one of the main features of modernity in his study of the new mass culture. For his take on the issue of "agglomeration" or "plenitude", see *Revolt of the Masses* (1930) pp. 1-2.

increasing congestion. We see Utō Tstomu stopped at the train tracks, standing in line at

the station, and nearly suffocated by the crowd of the shopping district, *Hanazono-cho*.

More than once he complains of the straights in which he finds himself caught: "I've

nowhere to turn. Every direction is blocked"; "The street is narrow, and everything is

crammed together" (Itō, 129-130, 131).

In *Cane*, the rural village and the city alike become places where spatial

management eventuates in uncanny states of fixity. Toomer evokes landscapes of

stillness in which the absence of movement or change, rather than the shocks of upheaval,

communicate a sense of dread. Though I will focus more especially on "Blood-Burning

Moon" in this chapter, "Kabnis"—Toomer's final short story in *Cane*—evokes a similar

landscape and recollects the oppressive atmosphere introduced in the earlier vignette.

Kabnis, a school teacher of mixed race who has recently taken a position in rural

Georgia, meditates on the stringent morality of his new community: "The stillness of it:

where they burn and hang men, you cant smoke. Cant take a swig of licker" (Toomer,

84). He continues: "One might just as well be in his grave. Still as a grave. Jesus, how

still everything is. Does the world know how still it is?" (Toomer, 84). Kabnis's

persistent return to the adjective "still" at first seems a strange response to the complicity

of moral strictness and lynch law, but his allusion to the "grave" makes the connection

more lucid. The "it" that stillness qualifies in Kabnis's mind is an absurd reality

undergirding social and political life. That reality is "still" for two reasons: because it

fixes and elongates traditions of racial oppression, and because it executes those

traditions through the forced immobilization of outsiders (the racial Other or, in Kabnis's

particular case, the stranger of mixed heritage). Nowhere is this forced immobility more

concretely realized than in the effects of the lynch mob that, in "Blood-Burning Moon,"

literally binds its victim to a stake and symbolically establishes his place on the social

hierarchy.

The lynch mob that forms at the end of "Blood-Burning Moon" is characterized

by a combination of human, animal, and machine qualities. It belongs wholly to none of

these registers but facilitates their blending. After Tom Burwell kills Bob Stone in self-

defense, the mob of white men comes together with the rapidity and cohesion of a

machine springing into action:

> White men like ants upon a forage rushed about. Except for the taut hum of their
> moving, all was silent. Shotguns, revolvers, rope, kerosene, torches. Two high-
> powered cars with glaring search-lights. They came together. The taut hum rose to
> a low roar. Then nothing could be heard but the flop of their feet in the thick dust
> of the road. The moving body of their silence preceded them over the crest of the
> hill into factory town. It flattened the Negroes beneath it. It rolled to the wall of
> the factory, where it stopped (Toomer, 35-6).

Here, the narrator uses both animal and machine metaphors to communicate the manner

of the mob's formation. The comparison to ants distances the reader, as if she is suddenly

viewing the community from a vantage point high above it. Rather than discreet

persons—Louisa, Tom, David Georgia, Bob Stone—the reader sees the white men as an

undifferentiated mass. Ants, often used to allegorize military and economic cooperation,

evoke the automatic nature of the white men's response. The list of tools appropriated by

the lynch mob sutures the medieval with the technologically modern: "rope, kerosene,

torches" are used together with "shotguns, revolvers" and "high-powered cars." The

"glaring search-lights" of the automobiles recall the evil glow of the full moon, the locus

of surveillance, from the story's beginning. Thus, the agent of racist terrorism becomes

associated with a cosmic, supernatural power.

In its interminable forward motion the crowd of white men acts like a locomotive. In fact, Toomer's description of the mob's descent on Factory town makes this analogy abundantly clear: their "low roar" signals the rumble of a train across its tracks; the flattening and rolling actions of the mob suggest the power of a locomotive to demolish things in its path.[67] That the "moving body of their silence" precedes the mob suggests that the landscape falls silent in anticipation of its arrival. The crowing of roosters and yelping of dogs and human singing that filled the story's first three section evaporates. It is as if the locomotive creates a sound-vacuum directly in front of it, annihilating resistance to its power and asserting the inevitability of its aim. As it shoots this aural specter into the night, the lynch mob manifests its threefold nature: it is a blending of the supernatural, the mechanical, and the animal. An automatic demon that enacts its own extra-human properties in the service of a chillingly pseudo-humanistic form of justice.

Though it begins to appear earlier on in Itō's story, the crowd trope in "Streets of Fiendish Ghosts" is similarly coded with extra-human attributes. Our first glimpse of the crowd occurs from a vantage point much like that evoked by Toomer's ant simile. Caught up in a vision with his spiritual and philosophical guide Kobayashi, Utō Tsutōmu looks down on Otaru's masses from a great height:

> These are the people seen everyday on the streets of Otaru: the men who work at the wharves, who lay the railroad tracks, who lead lives as day laborers on the lam from the law. They are the women who work in the brothels and who look like demons, given their wild, unkempt hair… Their numbers are legion. Like weeds

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[67] In another short story from *Cane*, "Becky," Toomer describes the train as a force of destruction. Becky is an expelled from her rural Southern community after she gives birth to sons of mixed race, and she lives alone in a shack between the road and the train tracks. Tremors caused by the passing trains eventually make her house cave in, and Becky's own fate—whether she escapes or is trapped under the debris—remains ambiguous. The image of the locomotive, in Toomer, is thus evocative of correspondent violence and imprisonment.

> run rampant in a pond, they choke the very life from the land. They crawl upon the face of the earth, writing, flailing, and moving in swarms. They push and shove to get ahead. They trample one another under foot. (Itō, 119-20)

The disorganization of this population distinguishes it, at first, from Toomer's lynch mob. And yet, the seeming disorder and competition within this crowd integrates its members into a system so indissoluble that it takes on the intentionality of an organism. Comparable to "weeds run rampant in a pond," the human population of Otaru has a malicious aim, albeit an unconscious one, to annihilate alternative life-forms and hoard resources. Put forth here in ecological terms, Utō's vision has a social and economic dimension that reads the Japanese development of Hokkaido as a menace to nature and humankind alike. The laborers who "work at the wharves," "lay the railroad tracks," and "work in the brothels" all contribute to this project of environmental domination. The ellipsis that I include above refers to a long list of the types of people included in the mass that Utō observes. With some focus on gender and age, the list is primarily a catalogue of labor-oriented identities: "steel mill apprentices," "elementary school teachers," "type pickers, printers, cleaners of ditches, and plumbers." The list goes on, but mainly it focuses on professions indispensable for the urban and industrial development of Hokkaido as a Japanese territory (Itō, 119-20). What seems at first to be a haphazard collection of people, abstracted by distant viewing so that their movements appear chaotic and meaningless, turns out to be a manifestation of ruthless imperial administration.

The negative image of the society that Utō observes emerges partly through the dehumanizing language in the above passage—"They crawl upon the face of the earth, writhing, flailing, and moving in swarms"—which turns the masses into an infestation of

pests. In addition to mindlessness and insignificance, the insect imagery evokes the grave

and its processes of decomposition. Death and disease loom heavily in Utō's description

of the masses. The school teachers are "afflicted with consumption," and the

streetwalkers are "festering with syphilitic lesions" (Itō, 119-20). Vaguely qualifying the

group as a whole, the narrator adds, "They are cadavers with distended abdomens" (119).

Working, dying, and decomposing all at the same time, the crowd under Utō's gaze

performs an eerie kind of embodiment that not only straddles the boundary between life

and death but also spans the divides between human and inhuman, sentient creature and

unconscious growth.[68] As in "Blood-Burning Moon," the mob that forms over the course

of the narrative (and that finally becomes the precipitator of brutality at the story's

conclusion) is as prone to states of mixed passivity and activity, of layered latency and

potency, as are the subjective persons who constitute the psychological focus of each tale

(Louisa and Utō). Its agency gestates in periods of uncomprehending stasis.

In both Itō's and Toomer's narratives, the crowd becomes an agent of mob

justice. The final paragraphs of *Streets* show Otaru undergoing a surreal metamorphosis,

in which the people are replaced by strange creatures alternately described as "lizards,"

"baby cuttlefish," "slugs," and "plankton" (Itō, 163-4). As they emerge from the

woodwork and pour out onto the streets, the creatures seem to be part and parcel of a

larger transformation that is immersing Otaru, turning the sea-port into an aquatic

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[68] While this passage is rife with Marxist and Freudian meaning, it is also steeped in the aesthetics of rot that characterized modernism from Baudelaire onward (and that stemmed from seventeenth-century French poetics among other places). Itō Sei's imagery evokes ontological flux and fungibility at least as much as it suggests suffering and pain. Thematically, this ambivalence repeats itself in the fact that Utō Tsutōmu's consignment to the status of a demon or ghost is both a kind of social death and a kind of artistic and imaginative birth. He enters a world of ungovernable possibility just as he is expelled from a world of filial and racial legitimacy.

environment. This change is manifested by Utō's response to the creaturely masses,

which he describes as a flood: "There are so many that they spill over the sides of the

room and drown. Or they swim in formations so tight that they nearly suffocate

themselves. The oxygen in the room is being depleted. Soon it will be impossible to

breathe" (Itō, 164). That the creatures spill, drown, and swim suggests that they enter this

setting in some fluid form. Utō himself feels their presence as a threat of suffocation and

drowning. As the crowd of unclassifiable creatures saturates the space around him, he

senses that his own discreet person cannot survive their plenitude. Here, a connection

appears with Utō's earlier description of human masses as weeds that "choke the very

life from the land." The return of choking imagery suggests that the strange sea-creatures

are an evolved phase of their human counterparts earlier in the story. Itō has succeeded

figurative dehumanization through metaphor with literal dehumanization through

transfiguration. The terror that attaches to this moment resides in the fiction's suggestion

that, rather than mere hallucination that can be chalked up to Utō's unstable frame of

mind, the creaturely crowd unmasks a reality that has been hidden beneath the veneer of

social normalcy all along.

When the mob finally closes in around Utō, its assault on his body and mind is

again rendered through the maladies of suffocation and claustrophobia. While Utō

himself responds with violent action, his desperation paints this action as a disassociation

of selfhood rather than a heroic or rational act of self-preservation:

> I am completely hemmed in. There is no way out—not the slightest crack. I have
> no choice but to touch them—to reach out and tear them to shreds with my hands
> or to stomp them under my feet. But do I dare? I am overcome with fear. I feel
> paralyzed and unable to move. Caught in a life-and-death struggle, I am
> desperate. Summoning every ounce of courage I can muster, I close my eyes and
> plunge headlong into the throng. I claw my way through, grabbing them and

ripping their flesh apart. Their guts ooze out. Pieces of slimy, wrinkled skin slither down my shoulders and my chest. There is no limit to what I will do. (Itō, 165)

Here, Itō styles the Darwinian "survival of the fittest" logic as a psychological breakdown or a drama of paranoia. Utō and the creatures cannot coexist in the same space: one must die out to make room for the other to live. The allusion to natural selection, through the rhetoric of "a life-and-death struggle" and the resolute statement, "There is no limit to what I will do," is a point of contact with the racist discourse mobilized to justify Japanese subjugation of the Ainu during the decades leading up to Itō's story. The understanding that the Ainu comprised a "dying race" of inferior genetic stock than the ethnically Japanese became deeply integrated into popular conceptions and official government policy regarding the Ainu.[69] Underlying this political approach was the belief in a natural world in which species competed for resources and the privilege to survive. Itō depicts Utō Tsutōmu as the targeted victim in the midst of such a struggle, but he also shows Utō's appropriation of such tactics of survival against an encroaching otherness. Note that Utō's statement, "There is no limit to what I will do," might echo as either a

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[69] During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as Japan tightened its control over the colonial terrItōry of Hokkaido, popular and academic opinion in Japan tended toward a consensus on the inevitability of Ainu extinction. In 1899, the former governor of Karafuto, Hiraoka Sadataro, phrased it this way: "The Ainu today have nothing to contribute to the happiness of humanity; consequently their survival or extinction should be left to nature. In particular, artificial preservation through human agency is unnecessary, and moreover, is said to be impossible" (Siddle, 92). While others, such as Matsudaira Masanao and John Batchelor, advocated programs for Ainu welfare and education, even they agreed that the Ainu must soon cease to exist as an autonomous culture. The Ainu were perceived as an evolutionarily "unadapted" people (Siddle, 92). In his study, *The Ainu of Japan*, Batchelor admits: "It is true indeed that, intellectually speaking, a nobler race, the Japanese, is dispossessing the Ainu, and that his disappearance or absorption is possibly being rendered necessary by the wonderful events which have taken place in Japan of late years" (Batchelor, 34-5). The epithet that became associated throughout Japan with the Ainu people during the early twentieth century is telling: they were known as "the dying race" (Siddle, 3).

firm resolution or, alternatively, as a chilling self-observation. His aversion is aroused not by violence but by the thought of mere contact: "I have no choice but to *touch* them" (emphasis added). If "Streets" is in some ways an allegory of Ainu assimilation through Japanese imperial expansion, its allegorical distinctness dissolves at the end. Who is the racial other? Who plays the role of the subhuman? Utō, or the creatures that assail him? The openness of these questions recapitulates the suspension of certainty initiated by Yoshiko's playful question: "Chako or me?" The conclusion of the story plays out the absurdity of the discourses of racial essentialism and immutable national identity as well as the instability of the narrative forms (especially allegory) that might convey such ideas.

Finally, the moment of stillness that precedes Utō Tustomu's plunge into the crowd mirrors his various pauses and instances of reflection throughout the story. Although this moment is coded quite negatively, as one of "paralysis," it is an interval of hesitancy whose insertion within the narrative allows Utō to create and display what we might call his humanness: his ability to question and to observe, self-consciously, his own behavior. What ultimately closes down this hesitation is, quite literally, a lack of space that would make vision possible. Utō's earlier instances of pause or waiting coincide with acts of looking: he looks at the ships floating in the harbor, at the lighthouse on the shore, at the ventilators outside the lavatory. In each case, his creative generation of selfhood is dependent on acts of sensory perception that allow him to orient himself bodily toward the surrounding space. The presence of space accounts for the expansive movement of Utō's thoughts and sensory perceptions. At the story's end, the disappearance of personal and public space as it is consumed by the mob disables Utō's

visual and other sensory perceptions. Springing into action, he becomes deprived of the stillness that his body and mind could harness in order to generate an understanding of his relation to the other objects, persons, and creatures that constitute his world. In this sense, the crowd that swarms around Utō enacts the coercive immobility imposed upon the subject of modern imperialism while Utō himself manifests the possibilities of self-creation and reflection that still exist in the interstices of such networks of coercion.

The final assault of the lynch mob on Tom Burwell in Toomer's story includes several of the same features found in the conclusion of Itō's narrative. The mob's behavior is reminiscent of a flood, and the members that make up the mob appear ghoulish and otherworldly: "Tom wheeled about and faced them. They poured down upon him. They swarmed. A large man with a dead-white face and flabby cheeks came to him and almost jabbed a gun-barrel through his guts" (Toomer, 36). The lynch mob pours and swarms, moving in the fluid manner that Utō uses to describe the creaturely crowd. Since Toomer's narration is not limited by first-person perspective, the reader sees alternately the whole mob, as from a distance, and the small-scale interactions that take place directly around Tom. These details add to the monstrous characterization of the mob, as the man with the "dead-white face and flabby cheeks" seems himself to be a ghost or demon of extra-human qualities. As I mention above, the automatic and rapid motion of the mob as well as its monstrous characterization suggests as a combination of mechanical and supernatural elements. Instead of haunted houses, Toomer presents his audience with an array of factories, machines, and other modern technologies invested with otherworldly, malignant powers. As a conglomeration of the modern and the

archaic, and of the technological and the magical, the lynch mob figures the continuity of twentieth-century "progress" with older forms of racial subjection.

Like a wave that sweeps Tom Burwell along in its current, the lynch mob fills all available space and becomes an immobilizing force. Toomer illustrates the size of the mob by describing its inability to fit within the factory: "They reached the great door. Too many to get in there. The mob divided and flowed around the walls to either side" (Toomer, 36). This image of the crowd's parting only to engulf the factory in its mass becomes oceanic. Though the first effect of the mob on Tom is relocation—he is dragged from the street into the factory—it quickly works to fix him in one place, literally fastening him to a stake in the factory's floor. At this moment, Tom takes on an aspect of stillness that registers ambiguously both resignation and shock: "His face, his eyes were set and stony. Except for his irregular breathing, one would have thought him already dead" (Toomer, 36). That Tom seems to turn into stone before he is even killed might register as a spiritual or moral defeat that supersedes even his physical subjugation. And yet, the phrase "his eyes were set and stony" also suggests an ascetic performance and a willful detachment on Tom's part. He sets himself apart from the "swarming" mob through his approach of total stillness. And in this practice that mirrors passivity so closely, he harnesses some measure of control that withholds complete victory from his murderers. After all, this is a moment of racial purging that masquerades as justice. The white men are supposedly punishing Tom for the murder of Bob Stone, but their betray a broader agenda: they insist upon the sexual and social dominance of the white men over the black population. Hemmed in as he is by the mob, Tom becomes invisible to Louisa, to Factory town, and to most of the white men in the crowd. Unseen by potentially

sympathetic witnesses, he becomes a seer in these last moments. His "set and stony" eyes mark him as a perceiver, a witness of his own brutal treatment. Tom's ossification, his final performance of stillness, seals his role as a seer and interpreter of the lynching.

Toomer's and Itō's revised conceptions of the modern crowd suggest that on a collective level, as well as on the level of the person, the distinction between passivity and activity is not a hard and fast one. Periods during which the community waits and watches are intervals that prove to be crucial to racial formation and group identity. Yet such creativity and reflection do not necessarily lead toward an enlightened or liberal point of view. The uneventful hours during which the people of Factory town sit on their front steps and look at the moon, or while the residents of Otaru wander the streets in somnambulant and repetitive rhythms, constitute a time of generative suspense. More than the mere storing up of potential action, this interval sees the intricate and interpersonal practices of memory, story-telling, song, and improvisational performance. Though unnoticed by official venues of commemoration, these *practices* are just that: rehearsals whose outward insignificance is the very source of their potency. As they wait out the periods of uneventfulness leading up to the final action of each narrative, the persons that fill the settings of "Blood-Burning Moon" and *Streets of Fiendish Ghosts* make themselves into communities with the power to commit violence, register trauma, and assimilate grating impressions.

The texts "Blood-Burning Moon" and *Streets of Fiendish Ghosts* illuminate parallel cultural and political climates in which familiar, local narratives of human versus monster are supplemented by globally circulating discourses of racial hierarchy. Both interweave traditional conventions of the ghost-tale (of the American gothic and Oni

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varieties) with transnational modernist trends, such as generic blending, surreal settings, abstract imagery, and aesthetics of urban decay. Their formal and stylistic syncretism mirrors the ideological syncretism between folkloric and scientific definitions of the human on which twentieth century racial formation depends for its explanatory logic. While thus uncovering the suppressed connections between starkly racist pasts and humanist, reform-oriented presents, Toomer and Itō draw our attention to moments in the everyday life of "modern" folk that might be misapprehended as retrograde or residual of a fading regime. They highlight moments of suspended action, reflection, quiet observation, waiting, and hesitation, and they suggest that these intervals of time actively shape history. On a popular as well as an elite level, then, their work speaks to the need to reappraise the status of mere thought and perception—not to mention that of writing—in the scheme of ethical action.

CHAPTER III

MODERNIST TRAVEL NARRATIVES: A DIALECTIC OF MOTION AND STASIS
IN JAMES WELDON JOHNSON AND JOSEPH CONRAD

This chapter analyzes the ways in which two modernist authors, James Weldon
Johnson and Joseph Conrad, engage with and alter the genre of travel writing and its
close cousin—the adventure narrative. These authors draw on many of the conventions of
travel and adventure narratives.[70] Their protagonists journey by ship, train, and foot to
places they perceive as remote and foreign. They face peril on the high seas and in rural
outposts. They record sights, sounds, smells, and tactile details in order to recreate the
sensory fields that they have traversed for less-traveled readers back home.[71] While I deal
primarily with Conrad's and Johnson's fiction, these fictional works borrow tropes from
non-fiction travel writing as well as from the adventure novels of Stevenson, Haggard,
and Kipling. However, I have chosen these authors precisely because of the ways in

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[70] On Conrad's relationship the adventure narrative and travel writing, see Andrea
White's *Joseph Conrad and the Adventure Tradition*, in which White explores the
influence on Conrad of adventure tale writers such as Mayne Reid, Charles Kingsley, R.
L. Stevenson, H. R. Haggard, G. A. Henty, and Rudyard Kipling. Write also thoroughly
examines Conrad's indebtedness to travel writers—ethnologists, scientists, and
explorers—including Sir Leopold McClintock (*The Voyage of the* Fox *in the Arctic Seas*)
and Jame Brooke (*A Letter from Borneo*). According to White, Conrad balanced these
influences against his intent "to write a different kind of adventure fiction, one that
insisted upon a greater complexity by resisting easy platitudes, refusing to moralize, and
rendering rather than telling" (107).
[71] Indeed, D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke attributes Conrad with "this 'clear vision of a
seaman'" (quoting from Conrad's own description of Carter in *The Rescue*) and remarks
that this vision "enabled him so quickly to grasp essentials of life in the [Malay]
Archipelago" (54). Goonetilleke is one of many commentators (including Fernando,
Clifford, and Clemens) who have assumed one function of Conrad's Eastern fiction to be
its transmission of sensory and geographical information to English readers.

which their works challenge the conventions of these genres, and I will argue that in

departing formally and thematically from these conventions they also challenge the

ideological underpinnings that connect travel and adventure narratives with discourses of

racism and imperialism.[72] Specifically, Johnson and Conrad are interesting to me,

because they construct travel—and movement broadly construed—as something

interspersed and sometimes saturated with experiences of stasis. The journeys they depict

are rife with mechanical breakdowns, stranded ships, cramped compartments, traps,

snags, and other obstacles that continually interrupt the experience of travel. As they

problematize motion by blurring the boundaries between mobility and stillness, these

authors trouble a whole system of distinctions that tended to appear in late nineteenth-

and early twentieth-century travel writing: oppositions between native and traveler,

primitive and modern, wilderness and civilization, and passivity and power become

untenable in these texts as the motif of stillness-in-motion appears again and again. While

Johnson and Conrad construct this motif with different purposes and in different cultural

contexts, the motif itself forms an occasion for bringing the authors' works together and

evaluating the ways in which they collectively critique and remake the travel narrative in

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[72] By reading Conrad's works as signifying against the grain of imperialist beliefs about
progress, racial hierarchy, and humanistic justifications for colonization, I agree with
scholars such as Robert Hampson (*Cross-Cultural Encounters in Joseph Conrad's Malay
Fiction*) and Agnes S. K. Yeow (*Conrad's Eastern Vision: A Vain and Floating
Appearance*) who have illuminated ways in which Conrad's Eastern fiction engages
critically with imperialist projects and the production of Western knowledge about places
targeted for colonization. While Hampson emphasizes narrative and Yeow focuses on
modes of vision, both authors see Conrad opening space in discourses about the Malay
archipelago for multiple versions of the truth. I contribute to this conversation by
showing that Conrad not only relativizes frames of reference for truth but also considers
knowledge and perception to be based in lived moments of sensation that only become
experience as such through culturally-developed modes of aesthetic and explanatory
reflection.

a modernist fashion. Ultimately, by looking at three of these authors' novels—Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1898) and Conrad's *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1912) and *The Rescue: A Romance of the Shallows* (1920)—I suggest that these authors use the motif of stillness-in-motion to imagine ways in which selfhood and difference might be constructed without the ideological scaffolding of racial essentialism.

In addition to illuminating the cultural, critical, and ethical work that Conrad and Johnson do with the motif of stillness-in-motion, the juxtaposition of these two authors might teach readers something about the mutual interweaving of travel narrative and slave narrative. While Johnson's novel, which is overtly interested in examining race relations in the United States, draws more conspicuously from a certain slave narrative tradition (one we might route through Equiano, Douglass, and Jacobs), Conrad's novels also incorporate features of this tradition, including narrators who critique liberal or Christian hypocrisy, experiences of simultaneous captivity and travel, an insistence on narrating corporeality, and textual traces of the acts of narration and validation. My purpose is not to determine whether Conrad intentionally borrowed these features of slave narratives but rather to point to the ways in which his texts form a space where conventions of travel and adventure writing and those of slave narratives coexist aesthetically and create ideological tension. As they make these forms of narrative interact, Conrad and Johnson highlight the extent to which the Middle Passage (and the many myths about it) had come to serve as a touchstone for the paradoxes of modern travel, for the coexistence of stillness and motion necessary to navigate modernizing spaces, and for the shifting limitations and possibilities of agency within such straights. White writers as well as black writers (and a whole range of people who were both and

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neither) had to deal with the fact that the Middle Passage redefined the concepts of home and abroad, which as Walter Benjamin has pointed out were crucial in establishing the social function of storytelling, and that its crushing realities contradicted and undermined the doctrines of humanism that grew up alongside it. The motif of stillness-in-motion, as exemplified in Conrad and Johnson, is an index of how far the memory of the Middle Passage penetrates into narrative structures and tropes relating to modern world travel long after the historical conclusion of the transatlantic slave trade, even when these reverberations are submerged or unconscious.[73]

This chapter is composed of three sections. The first explains why we might think of motion and stillness as crucial concepts in the development of racial and racist knowledge. Sifting through some founding texts of anthropology from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, I suggest that understandings of races as either "progressing" or "stagnant" across time contribute to the distribution of space and mobility among those perceived as racially different. The second section analyzes passages of James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, and the third section turns to Joseph Conrad's *The Nigger of the Narcissus*.

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[73] In his *Specters of the Atlantic*, Ian Baucom makes the compelling argument that "time thus extends, survives, or repeats itself," explaining that the rise of the novel in the eighteenth century is a condition that made possible the ascendance of finance capital and economic dependence on credit during the twentieth century (18). For Baucom, the middle passage in general and the legal battle around the slave ship *Zong* in particular are nodes in which these two histories—literary and economic—converge. Borrowing from Baucom's title, I would suggest that the middle passage "haunts" modern Atlantic literature, especially when racial subjection emerges as a theme or trope but also in renderings of oceanic crossings that occur under duress. The trauma of the middle passage has such great magnitude and duration that it becomes a shared point of reference—though often a suppressed one—in the collective imagination of the Americas, Africa, and Western Europe and is comparable with the Napoleonic wars and the World Wars in that respect.

Polar Bears and Seasickness in Johnson's *Autobiography*

To analyze James Weldon Johnson and Joseph Conrad in the same breath, to juxtapose readings of their works in a single chapter, one must establish "grounds" for "discussing simultaneously" works typically seen as belonging to different literary and cultural lineages (Baker, 31). Unlike Houston Baker's treatment of *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* alongside Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, this chapter cannot depend on "an accomplished tradition" routed through generations of authors with strong bonds (Baker, 41).[74] Rather, I bring these works together in order to point toward a horizon that both texts illuminate without fully reaching it. That horizon is the deep questioning of the signs available for making actions and actors visible in the realms of politics and narrative. For the most part, those signs were (and remain) rooted in classificatory systems of race and culture.

To read Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* as a work that engages with and adapts conventions of the travel narrative is not to wrench it out of its place within African American literature. Indeed, Baker notes that Johnson's narrator makes "the 'grand tour'" and learns "one or two foreign languages" before embarking on his ambitious though aborted journey to the American South (36). Instead, this consideration of Johnson's narrator as a travel writer ought to raise questions about the reciprocal relationship between a certain tradition of African American literature and

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[74] Valerie Smith also points out that *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* begins in such a way as to recall "the beginning of many slave narratives," thus acknowledging Johnson's indebtedness to that tradition (92).

twentieth-century modernist travel narratives. Urmila Seshagiri has argued that race

serves as "a central organizing aesthetic category instead of merely a social problem" in

British modernism (6). This is an insightful point that Seshagiri bears out eloquently in

her analyses of Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf, Ford Madox Ford and others. In one sense,

this chapter continues in this vein, identifying places where ideas about race intervene in

aesthetic and narrative representations of other subjects. However, the texts here analyzed

invite us to take a step back from the premise that race can be an aesthetic category,

asking us to probe into the process by which sensation becomes perception, and

perception is domesticated according to organizational schemes, one of which might be

aesthetics and another of which might be ethnology. Travel literature provides a way of

thinking about this process not only because so much of it focuses on experiences of

looking, listening, and coming to know the unknown but also because it highlights the

gap between forms of agency that are registered by the traveler and those—sometimes

even his own—that go unrecorded.

Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, published anonymously in

1912 and again with Johnson's name in 1927, tells the story of an unnamed protagonist

whose sense of racial identity shifts throughout his life but who ultimately decides to

immerse himself in a white community in order to escape the brutality he sees exercised

against black people in the United States. The novel incorporates elements from several

traditions, including the sentimental novel, slave narrative, autobiography, ethnographic

description, the bildungsroman, and travel writing.[75] Johnson uses the truth-value

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[75] In this sense, it shares much in common with the eighteenth-century text, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavas Vassa, The African* by Olaudah Equiano. Like Equiano, the ex-colored man moves from marginalization to

attached to the term "autobiography" to tell a fictional story that he believed *was* true—one that reflected the suppressed truth that people passed back and forth across the "color line" on a regular basis in US-American society. In this regard, Johnson used his fiction to discredit authoritative knowledge used to justify racial hierarchy and subjection.

Throughout James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, bodily confinement and contortion repeatedly provide occasions for narrating processes of sensation. These processes of feeling and sensing, in turn, become weighted with historical and ethical significance, as Johnson uses them to link the moment being narrated and the moment *of* narration with the history of slavery in the United States. Though subjugated in many respects, the still body emerges as an instrument of agency in these instances, as the person who practices stillness reveals—if only, at first, to her- or himself—certain continuities in mechanisms of oppression across historical periods. The Ex-Colored man's practices of stillness facilitate a consideration of the self as a composite entity dispersed in space and time, linked through material processes to things temporally and spatially located outside the bounds of the individual as conceived in Western humanist philosophy.

One of the moments in which bodily confinement and contortion appear most conspicuously in Johnson's novel occurs during the Ex-Colored man's train ride from Atlanta to Jacksonville. The train ride serves as an instance of what Robert Septo has called the "grand dialectic" that "binds multiple expressions of mobility to multiple

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empowerment and comfort: Equiano joins the British navy and obtains his freedom, while the ex-colored man becomes a "white" business man and enters the middle class. Also like Equiano, Johnson's protagonist witnesses the horrors of racial subjugation: Equiano endures slavery in the West Indies and the Southern United States, while the ex-colored man sees a black man lynched by a white mob in Georgia.

expressions of confinement" in *The Autobiography* (45). At this point in the narrative, the

protagonist is in his late teens and has recently left his adolescent home in Connecticut to

attend Atlanta University. His youthful adventure takes a dismal turn, however, when on

his first day in Atlanta he returns to the boarding house to find that all his money has

been stolen. Despondent, shocked, and too ashamed to ask the University president for

aid, the narrator decides to stow away on a train headed for Jacksonville where he hopes

to find work. He recalls the experience in agonizing detail:

> I may live to be a hundred years old, but I shall never forget the agonies I suffered
> that night. I spent twelve hours doubled up in the porter's basket for soiled linen,
> not being able to straighten up on account of the shelves for clean linen just over
> my head. The air was hot and suffocating and the smell of damp towels and used
> linen was sickening. At each lurch of the car over the none too smooth track, I
> was bumped and bruised against the narrow walls of my narrow compartment. I
> became acutely conscious of the fact that I had not eaten for hours. Then nausea
> took possession of me, and at one time I had grave doubts about reaching my
> destination alive. (Johnson, 41)

Physical contortion and confinement occur simultaneously with movement in this

passage, as the narrator's train ride becomes an experience of incarceration-in-transit.

Though he chooses willingly to enter the laundry basket, once inside he notes that "the

porter… locked me in his closet" (Johnson, 41). For the duration of the journey, he is at

the mercy of this porter. If the protagonist briefly takes on the role of a criminal by

stealing space on the train, he serves an unofficial prison sentence concurrent with his

crime. On one hand, the narrator dwells on the "agonies" of this experience in order to

absolve himself of guilt in the eyes of his readers. Any debt he might owe society is more

than paid for by the immediate suffering his crime brings on himself. On the other hand,

this strange convergence of imprisonment and escape appears as the culmination of

misfortunes over which the protagonist has no control: his abandonment by a white father

who refuses to acknowledge a bi-racial child, the untimely death of his mother, the theft

of his modest inheritance and his favorite tie (a symbol of the prosperous, absent father),

and his resulting state of homelessness. Seen as the outcome of these serial injuries, the

narrator's installment in the basket inside the porter's closet on the train to Jacksonville is

a return to the womb, a re-enactment of the fetal condition in which external forces

control one's fate. In this sense, the journey by basket recalls the Ex-Colored man's

conception and birth and reminds the reader that his social and economic disadvantages

might, in fact, be traced to the interdiction on miscegenation. At the same time, the return

to a fetal condition raises the possibility of rebirth and self-invention. When he emerges

in Jacksonville, this process of self-renewal unfolds as the protagonist forms ties with

new communities, learning Spanish from Cuban-American factory workers and

integrating socially with what he sees as different "classes" of the black community

(Johnson, 48). The description of his journey by laundry basket, however, reminds us that

such rebirth is problematic, that it exacts a price of pain and—in this case—lasting

trauma. The Ex-Colored man's anecdote thus critiques incarceration as both a mode of

justice and a path to redemption or self-renewal.

The narrator's description of the claustrophobic journey to Jacksonville implies

that the protagonist's sensory experience activates a remembering of the transatlantic

slave trade. Several similarities link the protagonist's journey to that of an enslaved

person within the hold of a ship. First, one of the most iconic images of the Middle

Passage is the sketch of the slave ship *Brooks* showing the arrangement of human cargo

in cross-section and bird's-eye view. These images, which originally circulated as

abolitionist propaganda and now serve as educational artifacts, document the attempted

conversion of human beings into stored commodities and encourage viewers to imagine being chained in a narrow, tomblike space. The Ex-Colored man (though he is not yet, at this point in the narrative, ex-colored) likewise contorts his body to fit a small space: "I spent twelve hours doubled up in the porter's basket… not being able to straighten up" (Johnson, 41). The discomfort of constriction in a tight space is compounded by the violent motion of the train and the narrator's inability to stabilize himself: "At each lurch of the car over the none too smooth track, I was bumped and bruised against the narrow walls of my narrow compartment" (Johnson, 41). This last sentence emphasizes the resemblance of the train ride to a ship voyage, as the action of the car—"lurch"—recalls that of a ship in tumultuous waters and the repetition of "narrow" suggests claustrophobia and a sense of immersion. The alliteration in "bumped" and "bruised" mirrors the repetition of "narrow" in "the narrow walls of my narrow compartment," creating a punctuated rhythm that seems to replicate the bumps that the protagonist feels. The sentence uses rhythm and evocative semantics to communicate the haptic experience of the protagonist and to code that experience through its resonance with the Middle Passage. Moreover, the "hot and suffocating air," nausea, hunger, and sickening odors experienced by the protagonist also serve as an index of similarity between his experience and that of enslaved passengers on a slave ship.

The corporeal misery of this episode shoots like an arrow making a temporal arc through the moment of the Ex-Colored man's writing, the moment of the experience itself, and the distant and scattered moments of slave-ship captivity experienced by thousands of historical persons and relayed to hundreds of thousands more through personal narrative, ritual symbolism, performance, ships' logs, abolitionist pamphlets,

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sketches, and paintings. In other words, sensation becomes not only a way of experiencing the present but a form of memory work that revives suppressed temporal continuities. The wind-powered ship might seem to belong to a different world than the locomotive. One fits into a paradigm of early industrialization, exploration, warfare and imperial conquest. The other belongs to an era of high industry marked by development of internal infrastructure and social reform.[76] Yet, the Ex-Colored man's experience suggests the train might be as haunted and vexed a vessel as the ship in terms of its role in histories of diaspora-making and racial formation. It, too, carries bodies interpreted and classified according to hierarchies of racial difference and becomes a theater where the results of such systems of interpretation are dramatized. During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth, the railroad provided a scene for legalizing racial segregation and saw the emergence of many conflicts that would lead to court battles over the

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[76] Historians and cultural studies scholars have focused on the railroad as an important technological development that influenced conceptions of time and space, subjectivity, and geography. In *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century*, Wolfgang Schivelbusch explains: "'Annihilation of time and space' was the *topos* which the early nineteenth century used to describe the new situation into which the railroad placed natural space after depriving it of its hitherto absolute powers. Motion was no longer dependent on the conditions of natural space, but on a mechanical power that created its own new spatiality" (10). Barbara Young Welke emphasizes the railroad's role in changing paradigms of political thought. In *Recasting American Liberty: Gender, Race, Law and the Railroad Revolution* (2001), she argues that the law suits brought against railroad companies regarding personal injury and discrimination became a testing ground for reshaping notions of individual liberty. Most scholarly treatments of the railroad, including those by Schivelbusch and Welke, focus on how trains revolutionize the physical and social landscapes they traverse. In keeping with this trend, the train is often linked with other new technologies, sometimes even seen as a precursor to the visual technology of cinema (see Lynne Kirby's *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema*, published 1997). In this respect, the fact that Johnson's description of the Ex-Colored man's railroad journey to Jacksonville highlights retrospective qualities of the train—particularly its preservation of some experiences of journeys by ship—is interesting in that this passage reads against the grain of assumptions about the railroad as a forward-moving, progressive, and singularly different mode of travel.

meaning and enforcement of such laws (Welke, 323-375). During this same period, trains

also became instrumental in shaping the experiences of black migrants traveling from

rural to urban areas and, often, from Southern to Northern locations. With regard to the

history of the railroad in U.S.-American systems of racial oppression, the Ex-Colored

man's particular experience in the porter's linen closet prompts an understanding of the

functional and experiential continuity linking the train with earlier modes of travel.

Rather than a rupture from the past, the train emerges as a link to it. Moreover, not just

any past resurfaces here; as noted above, the sensory experience en route to Jacksonville

evokes a sensory experience of the Middle Passage, albeit on a much smaller scale and to

a lesser degree. The extent to which the narrator rejects the train as a modern

improvement manifests in the line with which he ends the chapter discussing this

incident: "If I had the trip to make again, I should prefer to walk" (Johnson, 41).

In addition to the cramped conditions, hunger, nausea, and pain the Ex-Colored

man feels during his train journey, a distinct temporality attaches to this experience. This

temporality is marked by uncertainty about how much time is left and powerlessness to

make the time of suffering shorter. The emergence of a distinct temporality announces

itself through a tense shift at the beginning of the paragraph. With the sentence, "I may

live to be a hundred years old, but I shall never forget the agonies I suffered that night,"

the narrator interrupts the retrospective story to reflect on the lasting effects of one

experience (Johnson, 41).[77] This statement ushers in a prospective future but leaps over

[77] These kinds of interruptions are relatively common in *The Autobiography*. The narrator occasionally addresses the reader directly and remarks on his acts of writing and recollection. In these moments, he draws on an eighteenth-century narrative convention of foregrounding the narrator-to-narratee relationship. Slave narratives, such as those by Mary Prince and Frederick Douglass, commonly used this technique. In following suit,

the narrator's present. In imagining himself as an old man, the Ex-Colored man defers

awareness of his present experience of the memory and its attendant feelings and

thoughts. What he does tell the reader, indirectly, is that the memory seems to constitute

an endless experience, one whose only conceivable conclusion would be the end of

consciousness itself. In this respect, the temporal experience of the memory mirrors the

temporal experience of the original journey to Jacksonville. Doubled up in the linen

basket, the narrator has no way to tell how much of his journey remains. He can say,

later, that he "spent twelve hours" in the porter's closet, but during the journey he has no

way of knowing how many hours have passed and how many remain (Johnson, 41). This

ignorance creates a time of suspense which brings a psychological dimension to his

suffering.

Near the novel's opening, as the narrator describes his early childhood, we learn

that the father occasionally visited and that "he wore a gold chain and a great gold watch"

(Johnson, 6). The watch wins the child's admiration, and on his final visit the father gives

the narrator a ten-dollar gold piece attached to a string. This gift—a figure of the watch

and chain but lacking its functional or monetary value—represents the father's claim over

the disinherited child's admiration. It emphasizes the son's dispossession, his

abandonment by a father who still asserts rights of possession over him.[78] On the train to

Jacksonville, the narrator likely has the ten-dollar piece with him, as he explains "I have

worn that gold piece around my neck the greater part of my life" (Johnson, 6). Lacking a

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Johnson might be situating his novel in an African American narrative tradition that uses
sentimental storytelling to push for political and ideological change. Still, the pastiche
feels quite heavy-handed, and I wonder if it is also doing something else.

[78] Baker points out that the gold piece "serves as a symbol of the commercial transactions
to which black Americans were prey during the days of American slavery" (33). The gold
piece thus works as a symbol of both disinheritance and enslavement.

watch like his father's, however, his only temporal metric is his own body. He notes, "I became acutely conscious of the fact that I had not eaten for hours" (Johnson, 41). The body stands in for the watch here, but its biological time-keeping comes at a cost. The narrator senses the passage of time as a slow wasting of his body, as the gradual dissolution of his own body's boundaries. Hunger, which turns the body into food for itself, leads to nausea, which the narrator remarks "took possession" of him (Johnson, 41). As if attacking from outside of his body, nausea becomes personified and externalized here. The onset of nausea marks the narrator's total loss of control and brings death within the believable realm of possibility: "…at one time I had grave doubts about reaching my destination alive" (Johnson, 41). The idea that he might expire before he reaches Jacksonville doubles back to the sense of an elongated time of suffering, one that cannot be outlasted because it has no foreseeable finish line. The lack of an ability to chart time, to set temporal bounds around a period of suffering, provokes a state of distress from which death seems to be the only sure exit. On a larger scale, the memory of this traumatic event produces a similar sense of elongated time. One hundred years does not seem to be enough time for the extraction of the unpleasant memory. Finally, if the Ex-Colored man's journey in the porter's closet constitutes a reliving of the Middle Passage, his experience of remembering that incident reflects a larger historical phenomenon—the lingering effects of the transatlantic slave trade and the deep feeling of suspicion that these political, social, and economic inequities will never really be over.

And yet, despite the overwhelming sense of distress and discomfort associated with the Ex-Colored man's claustrophobic journey, the event involves some key details that are--if not redemptive--at least generative. First, the Ex-Colored man's haptic

recollection of the Middle Passage counteracts a politics of disavowal deeply interwoven with narratives of progress and American manifest destiny. To see the locomotive as a space imbued with sensory reminders of the Middle Passage is to reframe the racist policies guiding railroad use as threads of continuity with a living past rather than isolated problems to be dealt with and swept away by the onslaught of modern progress. Second, while installed in the porter's basket for soiled linen, the narrator exemplifies a form of dispersed selfhood that stands as an alternative to the humanist concept of the autonomous individual. His hunger and nausea underscore the extent to which his body is part of a system that extends beyond its own borders, at once dependent on external nourishment and unable fully to assimilate such nourishment. Breathing, too, becomes a process that highlights the narrator's permeability. The "smell of damp towels and used linen" becomes sickening only as the protagonist breathes in the "hot and suffocating" air inside the closet, circulating that air through his head and lungs (Johnson, 41). Even the battery brought on by "each lurch of the car" expresses the protagonist's molding by and to his environment: to be "bumped and bruised" by walls is to carry the markings of impact, the non-human writing of inanimate matter that comes into contact with the flesh. Far from an autonomous, discreet individual, the narrator experiences himself as an entity shaped through relation to his surroundings. As a model of dispersed selfhood, Johnson's construction of the Ex-Colored man exemplifies an alternative way of thinking about the self and its surroundings from a non-individualistic approach. This dispersed self—one that is composed through ongoing interactions with its environment—presents a new kind of traveler, one whose relation to the world around him is neither active nor passive but somewhere in between these modes.

In the middle of his novel, Johnson inserts a passage of description that highlights this text's intersection with the genre of travel writing. During his first transatlantic voyage, as he accompanies his "millionaire friend" and patron on a journey to Western Europe, the narrator records his observation of an iceberg from the ship's deck. In his description, a crucial connection emerges between the concepts of stasis and motion on one hand and the construction of a viewing subject and that subject's knowledge on the other:

> A little later we ran in close proximity to a large iceberg. I was curious enough to get up and look at it, and I was fully repaid for my pains. The sun was shining full upon it, and it glistened like a mammoth diamond, cut with a million facets. As we passed it constantly changed its shape; at each different angle of vision it assumed new and astonishing forms of beauty. I watched it through a pair of glasses, seeking to verify my early conception of an iceberg—in the geographies of my grammar-school days the pictures of icebergs always included a stranded polar bear, standing desolately upon one of the snowy crags. I looked for the bear, but if he was there he refused to put himself on exhibition. (Johnson, 77)

Here, the narrator's subjective, corporeally-grounded perception of the iceberg clashes with his book-learning, humorously setting scientific discourse and empirical learning at odds. Yet the lightness with which the narrator dismisses this inconsistency attests to the fact that in viewing the iceberg he seeks not knowledge about its properties but an aesthetic experience: he notes that it was pretty, and then he gets on with the story.

Yet, while this occasion seems to be of little importance to the Ex-Colored man, I submit that the iceberg holds significance for Johnson's readers as it illuminates the way his text engages with conventions of travel literature and how—and why—it departs from those conventions. First, the whole scene foregrounds problems of observation and knowledge, as the iceberg—seen through the Ex-Colored man's glasses—is simultaneously an object to be seen and an object that conceals or withholds sights. As a

great, absorbing whiteness that camouflages polar bears, the iceberg prefigures the masses of whiteness that assimilate the Ex-Colored man when he chooses to disconnect himself from black communities. The narrator's tone of humor as he notes that the polar bear "refused to put himself on exhibition" smacks of admiration for canny creatures who evade surveillance and display. In this regard, the polar bear recalls the "practical joke on society" that the narrator feels he is performing in relating his story (Johnson, 5). In other ways, too, the reticent polar bear might work as an analogue for the Ex-Colored Man: he is supposed to be seen "standing desolately upon one of the snowy crags," and this imagined posture calls up the loneliness that the narrator confesses later in life, after he has adopted a white identity. The polar bear thus works more as an index of the motives and psychology of the narrator at the time of his narration—years after the encounter with the iceberg happened—than as a record of the young man's experience. The realistic recording of travel, the collection of knowledge about animals and geography, the confirmation or careful amendment of what the civilized world already knows—all these conventions of travel or adventure narratives are parodied here as part of the Ex-Colored man's own "practical joke" on the dominant white culture that he confesses to having infiltrated.

Second, the Ex-Colored man's perception of the iceberg as a moving thing that "changed its shape" points toward ways in which this text departs from the conventions of travel writing and some conceptual oppositions—stasis and motion, passivity and action, nature and modernity—that tend to surface through those conventions. The narrator's statement, "I was curious enough to get up and look at it," presents the iceberg as a curiosity on display. This impression is heightened in the subsequent sentence, which

posits the iceberg as a passive and beautiful object. The diamond simile emphasizes the feeling that the iceberg was formed by an external intelligence, "cut" by someone's hand. Further, it suggests that the iceberg, as a beautiful sight, might be appropriated into capitalist economies of value. But the next sentence features a shift: the movement of the ship seems to jolt the iceberg out of its static, passive mode: "As we passed *it constantly changed* its shape; at each different angle of vision *it assumed* new and astonishing forms of beauty." On one hand the phrase, "As we passed," is a concession on the narrator's part that the iceberg only seems to move and change shape, that its apparent dynamism is an illusion caused by the ship's movement. Contrasted with the ship, the iceberg is relatively still and will quickly be left behind in the ship's wake. On the other hand, optical illusion provides an unexpected route to reality in this case. In reality, the iceberg is no more static than the ocean on which it floats, and the water it holds does assume "new" forms as it melts and freezes over long stretches of time. Over several moments of absorbed watching, the narrator glimpses the process by which the iceberg moves and changes its own shape as well as the shape of its environment. In this respect, this instance of observation draws the narrator into a state of heterogeneous temporalities, as the plodding pace of geological time intersects with the hastiness of modern travel. In this state, stillness and motion become interchangeable, and the difference between passivity and action decays. After all, it is the Ex-Colored man whom the iceberg holds rapt, glued to his binoculars, as he stares from the deck of the ship.

"The Sensation of Vertiginous Speed and of Absolute Immobility" in Conrad

In *The Rescue: A Romance of the Shallows* (1920), Joseph Conrad sets up a hierarchized opposition between Western mobility and action on one hand and non-Western stasis and passivity on the other. This thematic binary in Conrad has been read as a manifestation of Conrad's anxiety about colonial inefficiency.[79] Yet, while Conrad's narratives do represent the dangers of slowness for modern imperialism, they also employ the still human body as a signifier of the unstable boundary between modern, human time and primordial, non-human time. Conrad's loathing of stasis and waste—epitomized by the iconic ship stranded in the shallows—reproduces at the turn of the century older Victorian values of progress and social evolution. Yet, by close reading Conrad's trope of stillness, I also discover that he is fascinated by the motionless body and by landscapes drained of movement. Rather than wholeheartedly eschewing stillness, Conrad reproduces the seductive quality of the frozen image in his own works by blending spectacle and narrative

At the beginning of *The Rescue: A Romance of The Shallows* Conrad describes a vessel that has halted near an island in the South China Sea. The ship is owned and captained by a white man, Lingard, and manned by a Malaysian crew. Conrad's description abstracts the ship from the trappings of its journey and fixes it squarely in a seascape of stillness. He writes:

> The calm was absolute, a dead, flat calm, the stillness of a dead sea and of a dead atmosphere. As far as the eye could reach there was nothing but an impressive immobility. Nothing moved on earth, on the waters, and above them in the unbroken luster of the sky. On the unruffled surface of the straits the brig floated tranquil and upright as if bolted solidly, keel to keel, with its own image reflected

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[79] In *The Speed Handbook*, Enda Duffy uses the image of a broken-down car with its wheels in the air—one of the first images that greets Marlowe when he first arrives in the Congo—as an emblem of administrative incompetence and slowness, both of which serve as evidence of a corrupt colonial regime (90).

in the unframed and immense mirror of the sea. To the south and east the double islands watched silently the double ship that seemed fixed amongst them forever, a hopeless captive of the calm, a helpless prisoner of the shallow sea. (*The Rescue*, 5)

Conrad's words span a wide possibility of what motionlessness might entail: calm equilibrium, death, mechanical locks, absorbed staring, captivity, and even despair. The images he evokes lend themselves to vagrant associations. One moment we see a ghost ship suspended in a "dead sea" or a "dead atmosphere." Haunting, so often registered through inexplicable motion, is evoked here through motion's absence. Earth, water, and sky seem oddly pregnant with potential movement, such that the word "Nothing" might itself connote a strange, nameless thing that moves against their inertness. The next moment we see the brig doubled by its reflection and bolted, as if by invisible steel rods, to its inverse image. The horizontal axis suggested by the wide sea and skyline now is coupled with a vertical one, as the ship's masts reach out in two directions above and below its bulk. The bolts call to mind the boat as a product of industry, a piece of floating architecture. The seascape becomes itself an envelope that repeats such technologies of fastening and holding. Also doubled is the island. It spreads out above and below the water-line and takes on the role of a gazer. Staring at the ship, the islands seem as captivated as the brig is captured: intent, motionless, enamored. And, finally, captivity is the metaphor with which Conrad wraps up the passage. The vantage point he has introduced sees the ship as imprisoned. The evacuation of movement from a vessel crafted for speed is surely a sign of "helplessness" in the face of a great paralyzing force.

This ship in the shallows emblematizes the central problem of the novel. The driving conflict of the book is that a yacht with white people on board is trapped in the shallows of an island where the natives are about to execute a violent coup. The novel's

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protagonist, Lingard, encounters the ship and must choose between his loyalty to a native friend (the organizer of the coup) and his desire to protect the white woman, Mrs. Travers, on board the yacht. Thus, the plot pivots around a very mundane nautical problem: boats that stray into the shallows get stuck. The brig whose image opens the novel foreshadows the beached yacht. It also recalls several images of inert vehicles from *Heart of Darkness* (1902), including the ship on which Marlow relates his yarn. Enda Duffy has argued of *Heart of Darkness* that "the most vivid and continuous pleasures of the text are provided… by the day-to-day frustrations of malfunctioning technologies of transport" (Duffy, 90). He cites the first thing that attracts Marlow's gaze at the African coastal station as a case in point: He sees "an undersized railway truck, lying there on its back with its wheels in the air" (*HD*, 22). The upturned truck evokes as much impotence as a beetle on its back. For Duffy, this moment showcases bureaucratic inefficiency and technological ineptitude as the monsters that wreak colonial havoc. We might say the same for the British ship stranded in shallow waters in Southeast Asia.

But the doubled images of the island and the ship also suggest a double-valence for the novel's opening scene. The reflection of island and ship obscures the parts of those bodies that lie beneath the waterline. Just as the scene suggests a coexistence of surface-image with hidden depth, Conrad's symbolism splits into competing terms of meaning. If the still vessel represents the mismanagement of technology and incongruity of Western economic enterprise with Eastern sites, then it also provokes thinking about the juxtaposition of modern capitalist time with the lengthy, natural time of erosion and island-making. In other words, from the point of view of Conrad's characters on board the brig—a Malay crew, an English mate, and Lingard—the brig's immobility is a

frustrating delay. From the point of view that Conrad constructs in his descriptive paragraph, however, the lack of wind creates a visual scene of panoramic potential. The onlooker can take in details at leisure, since the lack of motion causes nature to imitate the permanence of a photograph or a painting. As the ship becomes absorbed into the fabric of the natural setting, its associated temporality of human coming and going gives way to the temporality of solar and lunar passing, slow tides, and oceanic drift. Barely perceptible to a human observer, this temporality makes the impression of atemporal stasis.

In Conrad, these different temporalities—that of industrial, modern progress and that of natural, extramodern stasis—might be seen as envelopes. The time of progress is the smaller envelope around which the time of stasis is wrapped, like the figurative cloud of meaning evoked by Marlow to offset the proverbial kernel of truth (*HD*). This concentric figure might be mapped onto the real geographies that Conrad explores in his novels. In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow's journey into the Congo might be understood as a venturing into the thickness of the larger temporality of stasis that enfolds the budding temporality of modern progress, which we might locate in the starting place of England. In *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, the ship's slow voyage from Bombay to London becomes a difficult labor of extraction from the time of primordial stasis and re-entry into the time of modern progress. And in *The Rescue*, the entire drama takes place in proximity to the larger envelope, which appears in patches through the string of Malaysian islands that draw the horizon near to the ships. That this spatiotemporal design reflects racist thinking and imperial epistemology is undeniable. But what interests me most is the function of the sea as a space that mediates between the two timetables of modern progress and

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extra-modern stasis and, more specifically, the role of the human sensorium in navigating

that liminal world. This turn takes us not away from a concern with race but rather

toward a deeper understanding of the ways in which Conrad's concepts of race crystallize

around the figure of the still body.

In a haunting passage from his 1920 novel *The Rescue: A Romance of the

Shallows*, Conrad imagines an experience of alternating stillness and motion that gives

way to a merging of these states in Mrs. Travers's subjectivity. In this scene, the white

sea-captain Lingard and the bourgeois, white woman Mrs. Travers are traveling by

dinghy under cover of night to sneak onto the island where a Malaysian community has

captured her husband. I'll quote at length to give a full sense of the passage's mood and

rhythm:

> Thus on that starless night the Shallows were peopled with uneasy souls. The
> Thick veil of clouds stretched over them, cut them off from the rest of the
> universe. At times Mrs. Travers had in the darkness the impression of dizzy
> speed, and again it seemed to her that the boat was standing still and only her
> fancy roamed free from all trammels. Lingard, perfectly motionless by her side,
> steered, shaping his course by the feel of the wind. Presently he perceived ahead a
> ghostly flicker of faint, livid light which the earth seemed to throw up against the
> uniform blackness of the sky. The dinghy was approaching the expanse of the
> Shallows. The confused clamour of broken water deepened its note. (Conrad, 243)

The narrator describes this experience as impressionistic: "the impression of dizzy

speed" gives way to yet another feeling, "it *seemed* to her that the boat was standing still"

(emphasis added). The contents of Mrs. Travers's "fancy" that roam "free from all

trammels" are undisclosed here, except for their inclusion of mobility and

motionlessness. But the imagination alone is not responsible for this experience; rather,

fancy interacts with the physical world that stimulates Mrs. Travers's senses. It interacts,

also, with the physiological workings of her own body as she begins to fall asleep in the

boat. The experience Conrad's narrator relays is a product of physical bodies—human, earthly, oceanic, airy—acting upon and with imaginary or metaphysical ones—the self, the stranger, the obscure universe. Conrad's own symbolism has the impression of emerging organically out of the sensory systems that connect his character's imaginations with their physical domains.

Just as physical matter works on personal imagination in this passage, so the political relationships and uneven distributions of power that underpin this scene intervene in Mrs. Travers's moment-by-moment impressions. These implications manifest most clearly in her observations on approaching the shore. She sees a "motionless black bank" that stretches "infinitely right in their way in ominous stillness" and describes the object to Lingard as "this awful cloud" (247). The land appears as a barricade that blocks the continuation of Lingard's and Mrs. Travers's phantasmagoric journey through the shallows. It is "black" and "ominous" in contrast with the gentle negativity of the sea, which Mrs. Travers finds soothing in its obliteration of memory and action. But if the shore marks a barrier, an end of one kind of space and the beginning of another, it suggests a permeable boundary—at least to Mrs. Travers. She sees it as "less palpable than a cloud, a mere sinister immobility above the unrest of the sea" (247). Far from solid, the shore seems to take on the same uncertain form as the sea, albeit with a more pronounced stillness and a more dispersed liquidity. The shore becomes a strange threshold. It extends the obscurity of the shallows while also containing that obscurity. Held apart by distance, it is a reified thing and an amorphous horizon.

If Mrs. Travers finds the amorphous, uncertain realm of the shallows soothing, then it is worth asking why the shoreline, which extends these properties, strikes her as

"ominous" and "awful." The answer lies in Lingard's statement that she echoes mentally: "Was it land—land!" (247). This land that is unlike land to Mrs. Travers impinges on her willing forgetfulness and recalls the stakes of her journey. The land is inhabited, she remembers, by "men who, to her mind, were no more real than fantastic shadows" (247). This is not the first time that these other humans, whose language she cannot understand and whose political struggle imperils her white, male companions, have appeared fantastic and obscure to Mrs. Travers. She finds incredible the fact that the Malay characters' words have meaning for Lingard. She senses the existence of native South-Sea people, such as Immada and Hassim, as vague disturbances on the periphery of her perception. Is it possible that her hypnotic mood while on board the little boat is a magnification of the oblivion she imagines to hover behind the forms of Immada and Hassim?

Mrs. Travers's vision of the shore bears noteworthy resemblances to other literary moments whose parallels illuminate the political stakes of this passage. First, consider the passage from Conrad's own *Heart of Darkness* in which Marlow describes the shore of Africa from a French steamer that is taking him to the Belgian Congo:

> Every day the coast looked the same, as though we had not moved, but we passed various places—trading places—with names like Gran' Basam, Little Popo, names that seemed to belong to some sordid farce acted in front of a sinister back-cloth. The idleness of a passenger, my isolation amongst all these men with whom I had no point of contact, the oily and languid sea, the uniform sombreness of the coast, seemed to keep me away from the truth of things within the toil of a mournful and senseless delusion. (*HD*, 17)

The impression of immobility while on board a vessel, the coding of the shore as "sinister," the somberness of the setting, and the sense of mental fatigue link this passage with the one from *The Rescue*. Published more than twenty years after *Heart of Darkness*,

The Rescue retains much of the earlier novel's dominant adjectives and imagery. That Conrad's coding of the African continent as a site of existential disorientation, moral opacity, and epistemological obscurity reflects imperial and racist discourses of his day is a well-rehearsed claim. Though scholars disagree on the extent to which an imperialist agenda backs Conrad's imagined geographies, even the most generous readers accept that his constructions of space encode thematic concerns with race and empire. His construction of the Malaysian island's coast rehearses these themes, with a difference. The land inhabited by a racial "other" is again "sinister" and the white traveler's approach is wrapped in a "somber" mood. Again, the overwhelming impression created by this approach is stillness, as a progressive journey is supplanted by the experience of moving-in-place. Just as Marlow feels that the boat remains still while the shore slips past in an illusion of movement, Mrs. Travers feels that her boat ceases to move and that all movement is only, now, fanciful.

Mrs. Travers's impression of the island's shore also resonates with one of the most famous passages from Edgar Allen Poe's novel, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*. This novel, which recounts the adventures of Pym after he stows away on a whaling boat, ends in a surreal Antarctic region. Sailing along in a small dinghy with two companions, Pym witnesses inexplicable phenomena: the water becomes hot and milky, a rain of ash falls from the sky, and a cloud of vapor gathers on the Southern horizon. Eventually, a current sweeps the boat through a cleft that opens in the wall of vapor— which Pym describes as a "cataract" and a "curtain"—and a humanoid white figure appears. Here the narrative abruptly ends. Rather than closure it offers an opening, an opening in the "curtain" of vapor and an opening of the narrative fabric that invites the

reader's surprise and uncertainty. The variety of critical interpretations given for this

ending reflects its evasiveness. Kenneth Silverman remarks on the ambiguity of the white

figure, who might herald protection or destruction (56). Toni Morrison reads the

abundance of whiteness at the novel's conclusion—the milky water, the wall of fog, the

white ash, and the humanoid apparition—as symbolic of a white American identity

created over and against an imagined black, Africanist presence (48). Morrison holds that

Poe plays an integral role in a US-American literary tradition that casts its white,

individualist mythos against a negative image of racial blackness and that these images

retain their racist charge even when abstracted toward fantastic or metaphysical planes.

Conrad, who is well-known as a crafter of Africanisms in the British literary

tradition that thrives across the Atlantic from Poe, deploys several of the same tropes that

appear at *Pym*'s ending in his discussion of Mrs. Travers's approach toward the island.

As Mrs. Travers and Lingard sail toward the island they enter an atmosphere cloaked in

vapor: "The thick veil of clouds stretched over them, cut them off from the rest of the

universe" (243). Like Pym, Mrs. Travers experiences as a meteorological ordeal her

detachment from the known, the charted world. In both accounts, the point of focus

becomes a concentration of obscure matter—cloudy, vaporous—on the horizon. Here is

Pym's description of his entrance into the strange Antarctic climate:

> Many unusual phenomena now indicated that we were entering upon a region of
> novelty and wonder. A high range of light gray vapour appeared constantly in the
> southern horizon, flaring up occasionally in lofty streaks, now darting from east to
> west, now from west to east, and again presenting a level and uniform summit- in
> short, having all the wild variations of the Aurora Borealis. (Poe, XXV)

That the gray vapor settles into a "uniform summit" suggests its figural resemblance to a

mountain. That is, it tends to take the shape of a land mass on the horizon. But if it looks

like a land mass, the vapor is so unlike land as to be described by Pym as liquid: "I can liken it to nothing but a limitless cataract" (XXV). In the next sentence, Pym changes similes and describes the looming vapor as a "gigantic curtain" that "ranged along the whole extent of the southern horizon" (XXV). What Mrs. Travers perceives on the horizon is, likewise, a conglomerate of land, liquid, and air. She sees that a "motionless black bank resting on the sea stretched infinitely right in their way in ominous stillness" and calls to Lingard, "Look at this awful cloud" (247). When Lingard explains that the "cloud" is the island, she responds with disbelief, "It seemed to her even less palpable than a cloud, a mere sinister immobility above the unrest of the sea…" (*The Rescue*, 247). The coast of the island is no more solid to Mrs. Travers than the vaporous cataract is to Pym.

Both travelers, Mrs. Travers and Pym, encounter an unclassifiable border that represents a limit to their knowledge as well as an inevitable stop to their mobility. They approach this border with relative passivity, since Mrs. Travers plays no part in the dinghy's navigation and Pym's boat is pushed along by a current too strong for him to resist. Each, while looking at the distant shore, becomes a motionless subject, paralyzed—it seems—by the magnetism of the ambiguous mass on the horizon. Pym describes this state as an absence of will: "I felt a numbness of body and mind—a dreaminess of sensation—but this was all" (XXV). Mrs. Travers experiences a similar loss of self-interest and control:

> Puffs of wind blew about her head and expired; the sail collapsed, shivered audibly, stood full and still in turn; and again the sensation of vertiginous speed and of absolute immobility succeeding each other with increasing swiftness merged at last into a bizarre state of headlong motion and profound peace. The darkness enfolded her like the enervating caress of a sombre universe. It was gentle and destructive. Its languor seduced her soul into surrender. Nothing

existed and even all her memories vanished into space. She was content that nothing should exist. (*The Rescue*, 245)

Even Lingard, the man-of-action, is lulled into temporary impotence as he approaches the island: "Every thought of action had become odious to Lingard since all he could do in the world now was to hasten the moment of his separation from this woman…" (246). On the cusp of discovery, just as they are about to cross a boundary that separates one known world from an unknown one, Mrs. Travers and Lingard, like Pym, become increasingly inanimate, their bodies seem whittled away to hardly more than perceptual apparatuses. They drift toward mysterious thresholds in states of abandon.

Visually, one stark difference stands out between Poe's ending and this scene from *The Rescue*. While Poe's characters enter a world shrouded in whiteness, Conrad's journey into blackness. Conrad's picture acts as a negative of Poe's. Undergirding this reversal, however, are a shared reliance on the opposition between black and white and a presentation of largely monochromatic scenes. In the Antarctic world of milky water, white ash, grey vapor, and "pallidly white birds," a few traces of black remain. Pym's captive, Nu-Nu, has black skin and black teeth (XXV). Similarly, in the shallows of Conrad's South-sea archipelago, the intense blackness of sky, water, and land is occasionally broken by veins of white. Lingard notices that "… a mass of white foam whirling about a center of intense blackness spun silently past the side of the boat…" (245). In particular, one moment from *Pym* in which darkness descends while light emanates from the ocean depths is reiterated in *The Rescue.* At the beginning of his last installment, Pym recounts, "A sullen darkness now hovered above us- but from out the milky depths of the ocean a luminous glare arose, and stole up along the bulwarks of the boat" (XXV). Likewise, as Lingard and Mrs. Travers approach the island's shore, there

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appears "a ghostly flicker of faint, livid light which the earth seemed to throw up against the uniform blackness of the sky" (243). In both narratives, light from below signals the proximity of a threshold to another world. The "luminous glare" in Poe heralds the dinghy's approach of a contact point where a horizontal current meets a vertical one and a superhuman being appears to humans. The shallows in Conrad are a space where ocean meets land, where encounters between Western and Eastern, White and indigenous, people become inevitable. What to make of these iterations of a light that comes from below? In Conrad the phenomenon has a realistic dimension, since waves breaking in the shallows would generate foam. But it's far from clear that the "ghostly flicker of faint, livid light" is constituted by sea foam.

The features these passages share in common—the vaporous mass in the distance, the bodily stillness of the travelers, the white and black palettes of description—become more meaningful when connected with these works' treatments of racial belonging and racial otherness. In fact, one might say that these works describe and critique processes of race-making through the above networks of images. Each text recounts and, to an extent, enacts a process of sensory perception that moves from amorphous apprehension to figural comprehension. That which troubles the boundaries of the self by its uncertain form and unclassifiable matter is shaped into something that puts the self in a clearer light. Both Pym and Mrs. Travers (and, to a lesser degree, Lingard) begin to detach affectively and cognitively from their own constitution as subjects as they feel, see, and hear an environment that is strange enough to defer categorization. They reappear as subjects only as the narrative shifts to a mode of recollecting what happened in a closed-off past, becoming distant from the temporality of immediate sensing and perceiving.

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This trajectory, from subject to dispersed perceiver and back to subject via a shift in temporality, might map out a particular process of racial formation, one that entails the construction or expectation of apparitions and vanishing acts that organize understandings of temporality.

Stillness, Memory, and Resistance in *The Nigger of the Narcissus*

The *Nigger of the Narcissus* tells a haunting story about the absolution of white guilt through the sacrifice of a racial other. A motley crew of English, Irish, Scottish, Russian, and Norwegian sailors pities and pampers the one black sailor among them—a West Indian named James Wait but called "our nigger"—until he rewards their troubles by keeling over into a watery grave (*NN*, 21, 23). Wait is insolent; he refuses to work, castigates the hands for singing and joking, complains about the food, manipulates a fellow sailor into stealing a fruit pie from the officers, and coughs all over the captain's papers. While his double—an emaciated white wretch named Donkin—receives a sound beating and social rejection for similar behavior, Wait receives a cabin to himself and the sympathy of his shipmates (excluding Donkin). The pretext for this treatment is Wait's apparently declining health. He comes on board the *Narcissus* with a ghastly, rattling cough that worsens during the voyage, and he dies before the ship arrives in Liverpool. However, through the crew's reaction to Wait's deterioration, Conrad raises the question of what—or who—is really responsible for Wait's death. When Wait's coughing fit interrupts the sailors' lighthearted repartee, we are told that the men looking at him from the corners of their eyes "resembled criminals conscious of misdeeds" (*NN*, 21). What

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misdeeds can these sailors possibly have committed against their ailing peer who, as the narrator puts it, "made himself master of every moment of our existence" (*NN*, 23)? Curiously, their "misdeeds" come after their guilt, motivated by a sense of foreclosed *a priori* criminality, rather than preceding it. The sick room reserved for Wait is as much a prison as a privilege. The sailors' respectful quietness in his presence becomes a pre-mortem mourning to summon his demise. Wait himself accuses the crew of trying to poison him by sharing their rations (*NN*, 23). This circularity points toward a sinister cause of death: that is, a collective act of paranoid racializing and expulsion for the sake of community formation.

Conrad is strategic about Wait's entrance to the ship, which doubles as the stage in this highly theatrical novella. He is the last sailor to board, but the charged energy of racial significance that ultimately clings to him is discernable, dispersed in the ship and its crew, even before he appears. In the first ten pages, Conrad sets up a nautical space imbued with gothic overtones of incarceration and interment. The forecastle, where sailors await the coming voyage, appears first as a two-dimensional shadow world, as immaterial as the spectacles projected by magic lanterns or cinematographs:

> …through the open doors of the forecastle, two streaks of brilliant light cut the shadow of the quiet night that lay upon the ship. A hum of voices was heard there, while port and starboard, in the illuminated doorways, silhouettes of moving men appeared for a moment, very black, without relief, like figures cut out of sheet tin. (*NN*, 1)

Surreal, cinematic, the forecastle as seen from the quarter-deck is a screen for the projection of contrasts: light and dark, white and black. Even the symmetry created by the port and starboard doorways reinscribes this two-ness, this duality that undergirds visible phenomena. A few pages later, the narrative eye moves inside of the forecastle, and this

two-ness of dark and light—abstracted in the first description—takes on fleshy characteristics: "Over the white rims of berths stuck out heads with blinking eyes; but the bodies were lost in the gloom of those places, that resembled narrow niches for coffins in a white-washed and lighted mortuary (*NN*, 4)." The "berths," here, are wooden frames for the sailors' bunks, but the term creates an analogy between human bodies and ships, as it commonly refers to the site where a ship docks. Like tethered boats, the men's bodies drift at anchor, unsettled in their beds as canoes in a gloomy sea. Again the contrast of light and dark manifests: the "white rims" delineating each bunk stand out against the "gloom" behind them. The heads of the sailors seem decapitated, as their bodies are obscured in darkness. Light and shadow effect a dismemberment of the body. This piecemeal effect is something Conrad uses over and over in describing the sailors. When they finally retire for their first night on the *Narcissus*, he reports like an eye tracing the surface of the room of sleepers: "A leg hung over the edge very white and lifeless. An arm stuck straight out with a dark palm turned up, and thick fingers half closed" (*NN*, 13). This close-up description reminds us that the term so often used to refer to the sailors—*hands*—is itself a metonym that subjugates the whole body under a sign of helpful service. Because this impulse toward synecdoche is mingled with evocations of the morgue and the crypt, it looms as a reminder of the body's vulnerability to decay and dismemberment. White, clinical, clean, the sailors' quarters resemble a morgue where autopsies would be carried out and the mysteries of death explained. Yet, this glossy sheen seems pulled taught like a gauze over something mysterious and foreboding that exists in the ship's crevices. That ominous thing, whatever it is, announces its presence in the narrowness of the berths, the tightness of space that is so contrary to the endless

expanse of the ocean. The ship is an assemblage of "niches," or small spaces, that attest

to its dual functions of confinement and transport. I want to suggest that the "gloom" that

immerses the bodies of these sailors, turning their heads into phantoms and pulling them

into a premature deathlike repose, is a byproduct of the reification of race—whiteness

and blackness alike—through the mobile incarceration instantiated in the merchant

vessel.

Though the passages cited above appear before James Wait boards the *Narcissus*,

these early pages have no shortage of racially-charged signifiers. The prominence of

whiteness and blackness, light and shadow, might not by itself evoke concepts of racial

difference, but it begins to do so alongside an abundance of ethnic and national

descriptors. The first of these appears as the narrator describes the audible clash of West

and East while sailors are ferried to the *Narcissus* by Bombay locals: "The feverish and

shrill babble of Eastern language struggled against the masterful tones of tipsy seamen,

who argued against brazen claims and dishonest hopes by profane shouts" (*NN*, 1).

Stereotypes about sailors—drunken, crass—meet with stereotypes about Indians—

greedy, subservient, dishonest. The cacophony of mixed languages suggests broader

stereotypes about Asian and European cultures. Vulgar though it may be, the European

speech of the sailors is "masterful" and direct. The "babble" of the Asian ferrymen does

not even attain the coherence of language but manifests sickly, effeminate qualities.[80] The

message is clear; we hear the unfolding drama through an ear slanted by Western

prejudice and racial consciousness.

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[80] The association of fever and madness with tropical climates and their cultures is
explored at length in Rogers's book *Jungle Fever*. Rogers pays special attention to
Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and I'd venture that many of her conclusions could also be
applied to *The Nigger of the* Narcissus and *The Rescue*.

Speech continues to be an audible index of ethnic or racial difference as the

sailors come on board the ship and their tipsy, masterful tones resolve into individual

voices. A passionate and amicable Irishman known as Little Belfast speaks in a

conspicuous dialect as he tells a story to amuse his fellow sailors:

> Belfast shrieked like an inspired Dervish: "…So I seez to him, boys, seez I,
> 'Beggin' your-r-r pardon, sorr, the Board of Trade must 'ave been drunk when
> they granted you your certificate!' 'What do you say, you---!' seez he, comin' at
> me like a mad bull… all in his white clothes; and I up with my tar-pot and
> capsizes it all over his blamed lovely face and his lovely jacket…" (*NN*, 4)

Belfast's Irishness manifests in his vowel sounds and chiasmic cadences ("I seez to him,

boys, seez I"). His yarn establishes a class-based contempt for authority as well as the

hot-headedness associated with a certain stereotype of the Irish. Even the timber of his

voice betrays a measure of racial and cultural otherness. Belfast's impassioned speech

makes him like a Dervish, a Muslim ascetic whose strivings toward ecstasy were

popularized and flattened by the English idiom "whirling Dervish." The simile also

underscores his poverty, since a Dervish traditionally lives as a beggar or common

laborer. Conrad appropriates Oriental stereotypes to display Belfast's distinct racial and

national profiling in the eyes and ears of his shipmates.[81]

In addition to aural resonances of race, the novel's early pages engage racially-

charged language to depict the physiques of the *Narcissus*'s sailors. The word "cannibal"

makes noteworthy appearances. Donkin uses it as an insult—"Are you men or a lot of

'artless cannybals?" –on entering the forecastle (*Narcissus*, 6). Meant as an appeal to the

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[81] This is not an original move on Conrad's part. It exemplifies a long-standing motif of
the Oriental Irish, a cluster of associations and cultural interpretations that helped support
claims of England's superiority and right to rule Ireland. See Mansoor's *The Story of
Irish Orientalism* and Lennon's *Irish Orientalism* and McMannus's *The Story of the Irish
Race*.

some sort of vague racial and gender-based solidarity, Donkin's question echoes the

narrator's description of Singleton, the oldest and most revered sailor on board the

Narcissus. Here is that description, a few pages back:

> Old Singleton, the oldest able seaman in the ship, sat apart on the deck right under
> the lamps, stripped to the waist, tattooed like a cannibal chief all over his
> powerful chest and enormous biceps. Between the blue and red patterns his white
> skin gleamed like satin; his bare back was propped against the heel of the bow-
> sprit, and he held a book at arm's length before his big, sunburnt face. With his
> spectacles and a venerable white beard, he resembled a learned and savage
> patriarch, the incarnation of barbarian wisdom serene in the blasphemous toil of
> the world. (*NN*, 3)

The absorbed, admiring, homoerotic gaze that takes in Singleton in this passage mixes

types and tropes in a fashion that might be transgressive if it weren't so tied to a hypnotic

fetish with masculine power. Here, the "cannibal chief" is one with the bespectacled

scholar. Physical might is wedded with intellectual curiosity, and the primitive is not

transformed but preserved through literacy. Singleton is undressed but decorated by red

and blue tattoos (of what we can only guess), and his face bears the natural tattooing of

the sun. Artistry and nature bleed into one another on Singleton's body, and his

persona—both cultivated and unchangeable—erases the boundary between art and

instinct. And although, as the words "chief" and "patriarch" suggest, he is markedly

masculine, his gender is not entirely crystallized. The book Singleton is reading is a

popular novel, *Pelham* by Edward Bulwer Lytton, about the adventures of a dandy. In

reading its "polished and so curiously insincere sentences," Singleton enters "an

absorption profound enough to resemble a trance" (*NN*, 3). He grows passive and inert,

taking on features of certain stereotypes about nineteenth-century female readers of

novels. To the extent that novel reading was understood in the early twentieth century as

a classed and gendered activity, associated with bourgeois womanhood, Singleton's

enthrallment throws his manhood into a gray area.[82]

Singleton's unexpected mixture of racial and gender-related characteristics makes

more sense, perhaps, if we consider the narrator's assertion that Singleton represents the

last of a unique race that is defined, not by its attachment to any continent, but by its

detachment from all of them. His race, the brotherhood of the sea, is on the brink of

disappearance:

> As for Singleton, …he was only a child of time, a lonely relic of a devoured and forgotten generation. He stood, still strong, as ever unthinking; a ready man with a vast empty past and with no future, with his childlike impulses and his man's passions already dead within his tattooed breast. The men who could understand his silence were gone—those men who knew how to exist beyond the pale of life and within sight of eternity. (*NN*, 15)

Features of the earlier description of Singleton—as a venerable, tattooed tribal chief

reading a novel about a dandy—resurface here, as the narrator positions him as the last of

a pre-modern lineage of seamen. Singleton's unconsciousness of time and history recalls

and explains his inert, passive stance and fixed attention on tangible things at hand.

Conrad's language suggests that Singleton is alone, empty, and—figuratively at least—

turning into stone. Just as he has no connections to place, he has no associations with

people and no ties to the past or prospects for the future. He lives in untarnished

immediacy, experiencing a here and now circumscribed by a bleak and fatalistic sense of

the eternal. In this respect he mirrors the iconic image of the noble savage, a motif

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[82] The most famous instance of this stereotype is probably Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, which has been read many times as a novel about the frailty of women readers. Flaubert's use of the trope points to a much wider cultural association between women and the novel that spread during the Victorian period, during which it became increasingly acceptable for women not only to read but also to write novels.

crafted, refined, and popularized in Western descriptions of the peoples native to locations targeted for colonial settlement.[83]

Yet, Singleton is not so much a living savage as he is a monument to the valiant, childlike race that Conrad dreams up as the earlier generations of sailors. His status as monument comes across as he demonstrates increasingly stony features. He first takes on these features as he sits "intensely absorbed" with his eyes glued "fixedly" to his novel (*NN*, 3). Singleton's motionless posture resonates with the narrator's statement, later on, that he is "a lonely relic" of a deceased generation (*NN*, 15). The generation of men that he memorializes is itself, it turns out, statuesque and rocky in its characteristics: "But the others were strong and mute; they were effaced, bowed and enduring, like stone caryatides that hold up in the night the lighted halls of a resplendent and glorious edifice" (*NN*, 15). A caryatid is both a statue and a column, a functional piece of architecture and a decorative human likeness. The simile that compares Singleton's lost brotherhood of seafarers to this feature of ancient Greek architecture suggests that group's stoicism, antiquity, strength, and aesthetic value. In his own unchanging and immovable qualities—we constantly see him in postures of fixity and stoic immobility—Singleton becomes like a stone engraving of the vanished race whose memory he preserves. In a sense, Singleton's folk are to Conrad what the Southern rural black folk are to Jean Toomer in *Cane*; the book is a swan song to a culture whose transient existence is quickly approaching its end in an era of technological, capitalist, and political modernization.

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[83] For example, see Michel de Montaigne's essay "Of Cannibals," in which the indigenous people of the Americas represent a primitive state of innocence, courage, and virtue.

Let us revisit the space of the forecastle for a moment. Though it is the closest thing the sailors have to a domestic space, the narrator associates the forecastle with death rather than life, labeling it alternately a mortuary and a graveyard. As such, the forecastle highlights a certain paradox of the nautical profession. For, as the narrator points out, the choice to live at sea signals a will to escape fixity and confinement: the sailors forfeit both "the refuge of a home" and "the dark menace of a narrow grave" (*NN*, 15). The fate of James Wait, whose corpse is cast into the ocean in chapter five, underscores this fact. Yet the narrator's metaphors and similes continually undermine the idea of such an escape. Consider this description of the forecastle full of sleeping sailors: "The double row of berths yawned black, like graves tenanted by uneasy corpses" (*NN*, 13). Conrad mixes metaphor and simile in this sentence, creating an excess of figuration that codes the ship simultaneously as a body and as a container of bodies. The berths take on the characteristics of a gaping mouth, and its yawning imitates the "loud breathings" and "sighs" of the sailors (*NN*, 13). At the same time, it becomes like a cemetery plot. The image of an open mouth becomes interchangeable with the image of a grave, suggesting the ship as a kind of monstrous structure that threatens to devour its passengers. Yet another metaphor is folded into the berths-as-graves simile, as the corpses are compared to tenants. The insinuation is that these corpses have only temporary and contingent claims on their resting places. One half expects the corpses, subject to eviction, to rise and wander around like zombies. So, if we take stock of all the figurative twists and turns of this sentence, two things become clear. First, the sailors are ambivalent toward the ship they occupy; while it—or "she," as they call the *Naricissus*— protects them from the natural elements, it also grips them in its jaws, so to speak,

threatening to sink and imprison them all as in a tomb. Second, in its capacity as crypt, the ship refuses to offer the rest of pure annihilation. The uneasiness of its contents suggests a failure on death's part to make an end of what came before, resulting in a sort of unfinished business. So, if the sailors escape the physical permanence of homes and graves on land, they fall under the spell of temporal stasis brought about by the sense of restless haunting that symbolizes a recycling of past events.

Such is the situation on board the merchant vessel from the very beginning, but the sailors themselves do not become aware of anything ominous or strange until James Wait joins their crew. The descriptions of the forecastle I have cited thus far are mediated by an unnamed, impersonal narrator who oscillates between the third person and a vague, first person plural. But later, when Wait is the focal point of description, the narrator settles down distinctly into a point of view shared with the other crew members. On a regular day at sea, the hands are gathered outside the forecastle enjoying some hearty banter. They are interrupted by a coughing fit from within the forecastle, and the lighthearted conversation immediately dissipates. Then:

> In the blackness of the doorway a pair of eyes glimmered white, and big, and staring. Then James Wait's head protruding, became visible, as if suspended between the two hands that grasped a doorpost on each side of the face… He seemed to hasten the retreat of departing light by his very presence; the setting sun dipped sharply, as though fleeing before our nigger; a black mist emanated from him; a subtle and dismal influence; a something cold and gloomy that floated out and settled on all the faces like a mourning veil. (*NN*, 21)

This description bears some commonalities to those given of the forecastle earlier in the novel—the emanation of gloom, the blackness of interiors, and the allusion to death—but unlike those earlier passages, this one is grounded in the sailors' own perceptions. Conrad clarifies this alignment of perspective by recording the sailors' reactions to what they see:

some, he writes, "turned their backs, trying to look unconcerned" while others "sent half-reluctant glances out of the corners of their eyes" (*NN*, 21). What the sailors see first is that James Wait is watching them. They fixate on the whiteness of his eyes and imagine them to be larger than average. This emphasis on Wait's optical organs makes sense in light of the sailors' feelings of guilt, for it is immediately after this encounter that the narrator confides: "They resembled criminals conscious of misdeeds more than honest men distracted by doubt" (*NN*, 21). From their perspective, Wait's gaze is judgmental and vindictive. The sailors feel his gaze as if it were a palpable substance and shrink under it as under an oppressive exertion of force: "He [Wait] leaned his back against the doorpost, and with *heavy eyes* swept over them a glance domineering and pained, like a sick tyrant overawing a crowd of abject but untrustworthy slaves" (*NN*, 21, emphasis added). The comparison of Wait to a "tyrant" and the other sailors to "slaves" drives home the extent to which the crew perceives a dramatic reversal of historical, racially-marked roles. The sole man of African descent on the ship is now the slave-driver of a mixed group of Europeans. Elsewhere the narrator remarks that Wait makes "himself master of every moment of our existence" (*NN*, 23). As they return Wait's stare, the sailors imagine their own abjection via Wait's mediating gaze.

This inversion, however, is profoundly subjective. It comes to pass in the sailors' minds without Wait's having to do anything more than show his face in the doorway. The sailors see Wait in a stylized way that recalls images from earlier in the novella. The image of his head "suspended" in the black doorway is reminiscent of the sailors' heads that hovered, seemingly decapitated, "over the white rims of berths" (*NN*, 4). Fixing their attention on the way Wait's head seems to float in the doorway, they betray a

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connection—perhaps an unconscious one—between their dread of Wait's sickness and their uneasiness in their own bunks on board the ship. The "something cold and gloomy" that emanates from Wait in this scene also recalls the initial description of the forecastle, in which the narrator points to "the gloom of those places, that resembled narrow niches for coffins" (*NN*, 4). The fact that these images are recycled suggests that they derive less from Wait's actual features and actions and more from the sailors' stock of images for interpreting their surroundings and sensations on board the *Narcissus*. Indeed, the name "Narcissus" characterizes the sailors' response to Wait's appearance quite well here, as they project onto his visage the fears and fantasies that constitute their own search for self-definition.

Through his sedentary habits, James Wait takes on an ambiguous role within the *Narcissus*'s crew. When Wait's cough worsens, the captain orders a cabin to be set aside as his sick room. In removing Wait from the forecastle, the captain effectively quarantines him. Wait's self-imposed seclusion gives way to institutional confinement. Concealed in what is basically a storage closet, Wait takes on properties of the ship's cargo: he is motionless, compartmentalized, and increasingly speechless. Instead of words, he produces coughs and moans—sounds that echo the creaking of the ship itself. Cedric T. Watts has point out that "the eponymous James Wait is, homophonically, a 'weight' or burden to the ship" (Watts, 28). The process of Wait's dehumanization is, however, full of holes. For instance, it is important to remember that Wait's illness and his quarantined state also give him ambiguous status as a romantic figure with a kind of eerie, superhuman authority. In a strange way, he vies with the captain for control of the crew. An example of this contest of power occurs when the sailors refuse to wash the

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forecastle, because Wait objects to a wet floor (*Narcissus*, 46). The crew's sympathy for the ailing Wait gives them a basis of solidarity from which to resist orders.

As the story progresses, James Wait occupies a role ambivalently charged by both helplessness and authority. In this sense, he fits a type with whom readers of Conrad are likely familiar: the leader marked by spectacular feebleness. A well-known iteration of this type from Conrad's fiction is Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness.* Kurtz takes over an unnamed village on the Congo River only to waste away and die among his new followers. What makes Kurtz interesting is that his hold over others—particularly his magnetism for Marlowe—is grounded in his dilapidation. Marlowe imagines him as merely a voice, as if Kurtz's physical deterioration leads to his premature disembodiment. James Wait is the quiet center of action in *The Nigger of the Narcissus* in much the same way that Kurtz is in *Heart of Darkness*: he seems to do nothing, but his presence motivates the actions of the story's main characters and forms the basis for conflicts of loyalty. In Conrad's nonfiction, too, we find leader figures whose authority is tainted with apparent weakness. Indeed, it would be difficult to read the following passage, in which Conrad describes a sea-captain under whom he worked, without thinking of James Wait:

> The good MacW____ would not even come out to his meals, and fed solitarily in his holy of holies from a tray covered with a white napkin. Our steward used to bend an ironic glance at the perfectly empty plates he was bringing out from there. This grief for his home, which overcomes so many married seamen, did not deprive Captain MacW___ of his legitimate appetite. In fact, the steward would almost invariably come up to me, sitting in the captain's chair at the head of the table, to say in a grave murmur, 'The captain asks for one more slice of meat and two potatoes.' We, his officers, could hear him moving about in his berth, or lightly snoring, or fetching deep sighs, or splashing and blowing in his bath-room; and we made our reports to him through the keyhole, as it were. It was the crowning achievement of his amiable character that the answers we got were given in a quite mild and friendly tone. Some commanders in their periods of seclusion are constantly grumpy, and seem to resent the mere sound of your voice as an injury and an insult. (*The Mirror of the Sea*, 6)

Here, reminiscing about his time as a chief mate, Conrad uses MacW___ as an example

of what he claims was a common behavior for ships' captains. As he puts it, "They would

take a long dive, as it were, into their state-room, only to emerge a few days afterwards

with a more or less serene brow" (*The Mirror*, 5). These captains, he explains, were

probably pining for their wives and children and required solitude to adjust to life at sea.

The merriment in Conrad's tone, as he describes MacW___ as a hermit-governor, speaks

to the absurdity of invisible power and the awkward pairing of travel and confinement.

On one hand, Conrad mocks the captain's unspoken sense of superiority by comparing

his isolation to religious seclusion: he "fed solitarily in his holy of holies from a tray

covered with a white napkin" (*The Mirror*, 6). Lacking spirituality, indeed wholly given

to his carnal appetites, the captain benefits from the privacy accorded to moral suffering

without—we are led to suspect—actually suffering. His demands for extra rations of food

underscore that his self-confinement is an assertion of control. The captain is a bit of a

tyrant, and a whiny one at that. On the other hand, MacW___'s tyranny is slippery at

best. While he rests in his cabin, his officers run the ship. His chief mate even sits "in the

captain's chair at the head of the table" while the captain takes his meals in private (*The

Mirror*, 6). In his account, Conrad parallels this image of usurpation with infantilizing

images of the captain. The crew hears him snoring, tossing in bed, and splashing in his

bath-tub. We are led to imagine him in a simulated domestic space in the heart of the

ship, neutralized and neutered. Finally, the passage of information "through the keyhole,

as it were" draws attention to the fact that the captain's door locks. The lock could secure

a boundary from within or without. The image of the keyhole, which also conjures up

practices of voyeurism that suggest the captain's body as an object of vision, raises the question of where the line exists between privacy and prison.

The above reading opens up possible trains of thought about the ship as a space for dramatizing class and labor relations and for charting overlapping spheres of public and private behavior. Less obvious in the above passage from *The Mirror of the Sea* is the role that slippages between power and passivity might play in establishing ideas about race and imperial relations. The parallels between MacW___ and James Wait illuminate such slippages and underscore how ambiguities in the structure of authority and power on the ship reflect shifting ideas about racial hierarchy and racism. Like Captain MacW___, Wait is sequestered from the rest of the crew in a private cabin and takes his meals alone. Also like MacW___, he receives extra food on demand—a pot of jam from the skipper, biscuits from the sailors, a fruit pie filched from the kitchen—even if his demands are less straightforward than the captain's (*Narcissus*, 44). Just as the officers on MacW___'s ship speak to him through the keyhole in his cabin door, the crew of the *Narcissus* communicates to Wait through the walls of his compartment: "We spoke through the crack cheerfully, sometimes abusively, as we passed by, intent on our work. He fascinated us" (*NN*, 46). The voyeurism evoked by the keyhole returns here through the word "fascinated." While the walls of Wait's sick bay contain and conceal him, effectively installing him in the ship as a specimen of pathology, they also expose him to a certain kind of observation. As in a peep show, his concealment is a part of his exhibition. For both MacW___ and Wait, then, a state that mirrors incarceration emerges in mid-voyage. Furthermore, both become targets of fascination, ridicule, and pity as their confinement makes them objects of mediated observation. While we might be

tempted to read Wait's treatment as a sign of his powerlessness, these similarities

between him and Captain MacW___ underscore the complex position his character holds

within the ship's social order. In a sense, he becomes a double for Allistoun, the captain

of the *Narcissus*. His sick bay mirrors the captain's cabin, as these two men are the only

ones on the ship who enjoy private quarters. As the narrator records, "Knowles [a sailor]

affirmed having heard [Wait] laugh to himself in peals one day" (*NN*, 46). The sudden

good humor that comes over Wait after he moves into his cabin suggests that he might be

playing a prank, seizing privileges above his station.

And yet, if Wait grasps power that would traditionally belong only to the captain,

Conrad makes it clear that the results of this upheaval are disastrous. MacW___'s

reclusive behavior bodes well for his ship, as Conrad claims "those were the men easy to

get on with" (*The Mirror*, 5). However, Wait's lethargy seems to place an evil charm

over the ship. As long as he remains bed-ridden, the ship cannot get a good wind and

makes no progress toward its destination. For the crew, a causal connection exists

between Wait's refusal or inability to work and the ship's inability to move along its

charted path. Demonic descriptions of Wait underscore this perception of his supernatural

effects on the *Narcissus*:

> He overshadowed the ship. Invulnerable in his promise of speedy corruption he
> trampled on our self-respect, he demonstrated to us daily our want of moral
> courage; he tainted our lives. Had we been a miserable gang of wretched
> immortals, unhallowed alike by hope and fear, he could not have lorded it over us
> with a more pitiless assertion of his sublime privilege. (*NN*, 47)

Strangely, it is not the nearly-dead man who becomes a ghost in this description. The

vague, collective first-person narrator hints that James Wait, in his nearly-dead condition,

inflicts immortality on those around him. In a sense, his suffering suspends the claim the

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others have on their own human identity. Wait, on the other hand, asserts a supreme claim on humanity as he flagrantly displays his dying process. The words, "He overshadowed the ship," seem to suggest that Wait's presence is ubiquitous, though his body is contained. His cough, which in the first pages of the book causes "the iron plates of the ship's bulwarks" to "vibrate in unison" with it, draws the ship into collusion with him and reasserts his control over the fates of those on board (*Narcissus*, 19). The phrase, "Invulnerable in his promise of speedy corruption," drives home how the visible wasting of Wait's allows him to transcend reproach. A double meaning for corruption surfaces here, as it references both the imminence of Wait's decay and his corrosive effect on the ship's chain of command. This is a strange way to represent sympathy for the dying. In fact, the language used in the passage above implies that what the sailors feel is not sympathy, not even pity, but a profound and disturbing sense of guilt: "…he trampled on our self-respect, he demonstrated to us daily our want of moral courage; he tainted our lives." Loss of self-respect, an awareness of moral failings, and an impression of carrying a "taint" are all wrapped up in the ideology of guilt. This ideology breeds disaster for the ship *Narcissus* and ultimately results in the sacrifice of James Wait's life.

At this point, we can understand *The Nigger of the Narcissus* as a novel that condemns guilt and pity as motives for human action, especially in high-risk situations. But there is a latent connection here between race, guilt, and incarceration at sea, which, if tapped, will help to clarify Conrad's construction of ethics along an anti-humanist line of thinking. From the moment James Wait steps on board the *Narcissus* and announces his presence, he is described as racially different from the others, but the source of his racial difference is discursive and performative rather than purely corporeal. This

difference first manifests in the ledger where his name appears "all a smudge" (*NN*, 10). The illegibility of Wait's name causes the chief mate to skip over him when mustering the crew, and this oversight foreshadows Wait's marginalization through quarantine and death. The "smudge" also prefigures the ubiquItōus gloom that surrounds Wait throughout the novel, emanating from him to the rest of the ship. It is the first indication of his opacity. Just as the chief mate cannot read Wait's name on the ledger, the cook cannot tell on sight whether Wait is human. Relating his first encounter with Wait, he reports: "The poor fellow had scared me. I thought I had seen the devil" (*NN*, 11). Similarly, the crew sees Wait's body as a covering for something hidden. At first sight, "The whites of his eyes and his teeth gleamed distinctly, but the face was indistinguishable. His hands were big and seemed gloved" (*Narcissus*, 10). The exaggeration of Wait's white teeth and eyes and the emphasis on gloved hands recalls the uniform of a minstrel performer. Wait himself, it seems, is in blackface here. This impression deepens as the description continues: "He held his head up in the glare of the lamp—a head vigorously modeled into deep shadows and shining lights—a head powerful and misshapen, with a tormented and flattened face—a face pathetic and brutal; the tragic, the mysterious, the repulsive mask of a nigger's soul" (*NN*, 11). The gaze trained on James Wait in this passage is racist in a very specific way. Not only is Wait different and frightening, he is "modeled" and masked. The racial identity attached to him here is decisively that—attached, added. The narrator fixates on the mask metaphor here, insisting that the crew beholds not an authentic face but a trick of light and shadow that produces deformation. This "mask" bears semblance to those used in Greek tragedy: it conjures feelings of pity and fear by its mixture of "pathetic" and "brutal" traits. At the

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same time, this description borrows key terms and ideas from traditions of anti-slavery writing and black criticism. The notion of a black person as an inherently tragic figure recalls the "tragic mulatto/a" trope. (It's worth noting here that Wait himself does not use "black" or "Negro" to talk about race. He uses "colored." (11)). More noteworthy still is the phrase "a nigger's soul," for while this phrase includes the derogatory term employed by the crew (and the narrator), it pairs that label with one of the most resonant words in early African-American criticism: soul. W. E. B. DuBois's *The Souls of Black Folk* hovers behind this half-allusion, creating tension between dignity and caricature in the text's framing of Wait. Drawing on minstrelsy, Greek tragedy, ideologies of racial inferiority and savageness, and on traditions of black intellectualism, Conrad cobbles together a conflicting and heterogeneous impression of Wait. In doing so, he presents Wait's racialized appearance—as perceived by the sailors of the *Narcissus*—as something pieced together through a slippery hermeneutic process.

Thus, while Conrad introduces James Wait as a racialized person, he simultaneously constructs a setting in which race is a matter of artifice, discourse, and piecemeal hermeneutic practices rather than a biological fact. More importantly, he illustrates a scenario in which the doubt surrounding racial definition is the condition for the emergence of race and in which the practices of racism function to perpetuate the emotional and cognitive experience of uncertainty. In other words, we end up with an understanding of race that goes something like this. Race is a system of classification that strives to bring all human beings into a taxonomic matrix, the better to produce knowledge about them. However, at the same time, race is seen, felt, or otherwise experienced when our systems of classification are vexed by perceived opacity or

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inscrutability. The overwhelming cultural response to these disruptions is a powerful

vamping-up of the taxonomic machines which exist in disciplines as diverse as natural

science, social science, art, law, history, political theory, and medicine. And yet, while

these machines purport to strive toward an elimination of the unknown or the

unclassifiable, their real purpose and outcome is the creation of new mysteries and

curiosities. Taxonomies of human types beget human anomalies, also described as freaks

or savages, and these anomalies in turn beget further taxonomic practices. My purpose

here is not to determine what economic, political, and personal motives drive this process

but rather to dwell on the observation that the work of racial taxonomy produces endless

simulacra of the unknown and the opaque and to tease out of this observation an

understanding of the role that modernist narrative plays in twisting these simulacra to

reveal their farce.[84] At stake here is the cultural and political effect of troubling

authenticity, a project undertaken by most authors to whom the label "modernist" has

been applied, regardless of their gender, class, race, or language. Such an undoing

disarticulates a metonymic chain of ideas whose links consist of racialized signifiers,

imagined cultures, people, bodies, and parts of bodies. It is a chain that has held many

hostages over the past several centuries and continues to claim many hostages today.

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[84] Others have probed the motives behind the work of racial taxonomy. For a reading of political motives behind racial taxonomy, one might look to Edward Said's landmark text, *Orientalism*. The field of postcolonial theory contains a great deal of writing on the relationship between racism and imperial subjugation (Homi Bhabha's "Signs Taken for Wonders," Guyatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?", and Sara Suleri's *The Rhetoric of English India* are key examples). For studies of how economic profit drives racism, see Eric Williams's historiography *Capitalism and Slavery* and George Schuyler's satirical novella *Black No More*. To understand the intangible benefits gleaned from racial taxonomy—social power, cultural capital, and buffers against psychological suffering— see the work of Lisa J. Cohen ("The Psychology of Prejudice and Racism" in *Psychology Today*) and Graham Richards (*'Race,' Racism, and Psychology*).

In *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, the narrator incessantly describes James Wait as inscrutable and strange. For example, the same passage that describes Wait's installation in his sick bay includes the statement: "He fascinated us. He would never let doubt die" (*Narcissus*, 29). The sailors, it seems, cannot let their doubts about Wait die, because they cannot decide whether he is "shamming sick" or is truly ill (*NN*, 74). The narrator accounts for their inability to read Wait by resorting to racial stereotype: "You couldn't see there was anything wrong with him: a nigger does not show" (*NN*, 27). Implicit in this statement is the idea that certain kinds of racial difference preclude interpretation of bodily signs used to diagnose illness. The black body is assumed to be opaque. Such an assumption returns to the perception of Wait's body as surface and artifice, a perception exemplified in the images of his hands as gloves and his face as a mask. In this context, to see James Wait as black is not to prescribe his corporeality but rather to deny his corporeality altogether, replacing it with artifice and symbolism that cannot be processed meaningfully. Blackness emerges here as a deviant kind of embodiment that resists the transparency accorded to bodies under medical observation. If such a category incites intrigue and romantic feeling in the sailors of the *Narcissus*, it also spells doom for James Wait who—as the black man on board—is understood to fall beyond the pale of medical treatment and recovery. However, it is important to note that Wait's opacity does not simply occur naturally. In order to see James Wait as the mysterious, inscrutable person that the narrator imagines he is—as a "nigger," in other words—the crew has to put him, literally, out of sight. Only when he has been forcefully relocated to his private cabin, where the sailors can pass by and glance at him through the cracks, does James Wait begin to "overshadow the ship" with his inscrutability. It makes no sense, then, to claim

that Wait's body naturally concealed its own symptoms. Clearly, Wait's systematic confinement conceals him in a much more mundane way.

The opacity accorded to Wait comes into question even more if we consider the ease with which racially-charged signifiers attach to other characters. Racial difference, embedded as it is in the language of pigment, morphology, and inherited behaviors, appears in unexpected places throughout the novel. Conrad uses sound and sight— lingering over his characters' voices and physiques—to illuminate a mosaic of human types aboard the ship. He uses motifs commonly associated with racial difference to categorize a wide swath of diversity: generational, ethnic, national, and class-related. In Belfast's case, dialect and dramatic flair become markers that suggest his distinctness is racial in nature. This fact is underscored in the narrator's description of Belfast's face: "His eyes danced; in the crimson of his face, comical as a mask, the mouth yawned black, with strange grimaces" (*Narcissus*, 4). This depiction of Belfast's face as "strange," with its emphasis on pigmentation and grotesquerie, foreshadows the portrait of James Wait's face that appears a few pages later: "a tormented and flattened face—a face pathetic and brutal; the tragic, the mysterious, the repulsive mask of a nigger's soul" (*Narcissus*, 11). In these passages, both the comic Irishman and the tragic West Indian are perceived as having masks for faces. They seem to be opposites that balance each other in a mythical drama of racialized types. And yet, race on board the *Narcissus* explodes this neat duality and emerges everywhere. Singleton, as mentioned above, is explicitly described as a member of a unique, archaic race of seamen diminishing in the wake of a new, softer generation. The Russian-Finnish sailor, Wamibo, is also accorded racial specificity among the crew. He is described as having "an unconscious gaze" indicative of "those

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weird visions that haunt the men of his race" (*Narcissus*, 7). As in Singleton's case, racial identity is not only a feature of one's external appearance but also a product of how one sees, what kind of attention one fixes on objects and things in view.[85]

Finally, the impertinent English sailor, Donkin, is introduced as an abject embodiment of whiteness. Having lately fled an American ship where he met with abuse, Donkin arrives on the *Narcissus* scantily clothed. As he asks for clothing from his new shipmates, his exposed body becomes a point of focus. The narrator catalogues Donkin's white eyelashes, his red eyelids, his shoulders that "peaked and drooped like the broken wings of a bird," and sums him up as "an inefficient carcass" (*Narcissus*, 5). In contrast with Belfast's redness and Wait's blackness, his whiteness is a striking lack of color that suggests lifelessness, relegating him to the status of a corpse. His white skin is an ambiguous sign that solicits both compassion and disgust from his new comrades: "…he stood there with the white skin of his limbs showing his human kinship through the black fantasy of his rags" (*Narcissus*, 7). If Donkin's visible flesh signifies his claim on the charity of others, it also underscores the pretentiousness of his posturing in other men's clothing. The terms "white skin" and "black fantasy" merit careful attention here, particularly because they recall and invert the conversion of non-white skin into clothing. While Wait's and Belfast's faces are interpreted as masks, Donkin's clothing is perceived as a false skin. While Donkin's white limbs are bare (even skeletal), the narrator tells us that Wait's "hands were big and seemed gloved" (*NN*, 10). Somehow, non-white body parts take on the aura of clothing, suggesting artfulness, coverage, and protection.

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[85] This allusion to Wamibo's Russian and Finnish heritage seems to resonate with the construction of a kind of northern Oriental mystique that Conrad explores in more detail in his novel *Under Western Eyes*.

Singleton's sun-burned face and red and blue tattoos place him among those who wear race as something more than skin, as a kind of special adornment. Donkin's whiteness, by contrast, is not only revealed by his lack of clothing but seems to be a consequence of his nakedness. Whiteness appears as a baseline, a minimum of humanness that suggests incompleteness or an unsophisticated stage of development.

When he steps on board the *Narcissus*, then, James Wait is not a lone black man in a pool of homogenous white faces. On the contrary, the men who greet him are already deeply divided by national allegiances, cultural inconsistencies, generational gaps, and projections of caricature that undergird constructions of race. Still, a special kind of difference seems to accrue to James Wait as soon as he steps into the lamplight on the quarter-deck. His appearance sends a "surprised hum—a faint hum that sounded like the suppressed mutter of the word 'Nigger'" through the mustered crew (*Narcissus*, 10). What sets James Wait apart from the others so starkly that he becomes a point of concentrated racial difference for the remainder of the novel? What allows a strange, tenuous racial sameness to emerge among the men who, throughout the novel's first few pages, are conspicuously different from one another? The answer rests, partly, in the way that Wait comes to emblematize a paradox of capaciousness and constriction—the ambiguous overlapping of mobility and stillness—on board the *Narcissus*. By epItōmizing mobile incarceration he becomes a channel of historical memory linking the twentieth-century merchant vessel with its predecessors, especially the slave ship. Through Wait's figure, Conrad depicts race and racism as inventions produced through the strange partnering of physical travel and perceived stasis.

James Wait and the ship *Narcissus* share a bond of reciprocity brought to life in Conrad's descriptive passages. Wait's first scene in the novel emphasizes this bond, as the ship echoes Wait's cough: "He put his hand to his side and coughed twice, a cough metallic, hollow, and tremendously loud; it resounded like two explosions in a vault; the dome of the sky rang to it, and the iron plates of the ship's bulwarks seemed to vibrate in unison" (*NN*, 11). Even before the ship magnifies the sound of Wait's cough, the sound from his body is qualified by words that suggest an analogy to the ship: the Narcissus, like Wait's cough, is also "metallic," "hollow," and "loud." Wait's voice has a propensity to make metal vibrate. Further down the passage, we read: "…he condescended to put his head through the galley door and boom out inside a magnificent 'Good evening, doctor!' that made all the saucepans ring" (*NN*, 11). Wait's voice resonates with the material of his setting, sending waves of his presence throughout the ship and effectively setting up a perimeter for the space of the story. Rather than an open expanse, the sky turns into a "dome" and the ocean setting becomes a "vault" as his voice reverberates. The narrator observes that Wait's "words, spoken sonorously, with an even intonation, were heard all over the ship" (*Narcissus*, 11). From the moment Wait steps on board, he transforms the *Narcissus* into a transmitter for his voice, as if the ship itself becomes a microphone.

If James Wait exerts control over the ship by making it an instrument for his voice, it is equally true that the ship as a machine of containment and mobility asserts its power over Wait. This fact becomes clear when Wait's incarceration by the captain almost incites rebellion from the crew. Having spent most of the voyage lying in his bunk, Wait insists one day that he is ready to return to work, but Captain Allistoun has other plans: he orders that Wait "is not allowed to be on deck to the end of this passage"

(*NN*, 74). The crew responds to this order with indignation. As they rally to form a proto-

mutinous mob, Conrad's prose becomes as fragmented as the disintegrating social order

on the ship:

> Never mind, Jimmy, we will see you righted," cried several together. An elderly seaman stepped to the front. "D'ye mean to say, sir," he asked ominously, "that a sick chap ain't allowed to get well in this 'ere hooker?" Behind him Donkin whispered excitedly amongst a staring crowd where no one spared him a glance, but Captain Allistoun shook a forefinger at the angry bronzed face of the speaker.—"You—you hold your tongue," he said warningly.—"This isn't the way," clamoured two or three younger men.—"Are we bloomin' masheens?" inquired Donkin in a piercing tone, and dived under the elbows of the front rank.—"Soon show 'm we ain't boys…"—"The man's a man if he is black."— "We ain't goin' to work this bloomin' ship shorthanded if Snowball's all right…"—"He says he is."—"Well then, strike, boys, strike! (*NN*, 74)

Conrad marshals several kinds of punctuation to break up the flow of prose here:

embedded quotation marks, dashes, and ellipses create an impression of chaotic,

interspersed sound. As the passage progresses, the context falls away from represented

acts of speech. At the beginning of the paragraph, the narrator correlates snippets of

speech with gestures and embodied speakers, telling us that the old seaman "stepped to

the front" of the crowd and that Captain Allistoun "shook a forefinger." These details

create intervals between utterances, suggesting that narrative can still lay out the

happenings in a linear, temporal fashion. Near the end, though, such details are eclipsed

and replaced by dashes and ellipses that seem to indicate an overlapping of voices and a

simultaneity of actions. The temporal and spatial distance required for traditional

narrative process disappear. The substitution of choppy phrases for integrated sentence

structures dramatizes the near-deterioration of social order and professional etiquette that

normally structure interactions on the ship.

Along with such formal fragmentation, the language Conrad uses to describe this incident reflects the precariousness of social order and unity on the ship. A fracture occurs between the captain and officers on one hand and the rest of the crew on the other, and this division is dramatized by the physical formation of a crowd. Conrad uses darkness and blackness to characterize the crowd: "In the shadows of the rigging, a dark mass stamped, eddied, advanced, retreated… They clustered round that moribund carcass, the fit emblem of their aspirations" (*NN*, 75). Similar imagery appears a few paragraphs down: "The black cluster of human forms reeled against the bulwark, back again towards the house" (*NN*, 76). These descriptions shift the reader's perspective from a spot within the crowd to a more remote position, perhaps above the ship or situated on the poop deck at the stern. Described as a "dark mass" and a "black cluster of human forms," the indignant sailors become abstract and fused together. The verbs "eddied" and "reeled" compare the mass of sailors to turbulent ocean water. Seeing the sailors in this way aligns us for a moment with Captain Allistoun and the officers, who would be looking down on the men from the poop deck. Their gaze abstracts, simplifies, and exaggerates the dangerous, irrational power embodied in the crew. This description, then, expresses the depth of the division between different ranks of the *Narcissus*. At the same time, the words "black cluster" and "dark mass" point to the convergence in this moment of symbolic blackness, blackness as a perceived color, and blackness as a racial term. In this theatrical moment of rebellion, the "black cluster of human forms" refers at once to the ominous threat the crowd poses, the sight of their silhouette against the sky and rigging, and the way in which their solidarity with Wait racializes them all as "black." When a voice calls out—"The man's a man if he's black"—someone is making a plea for

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Wait's humanity, for his claim to fair treatment and dignity. But the view from above

shows not a collection of humans advocating on behalf of a fellow human; rather, we see

an encompassing blackness that signals a threat to social hierarchy and proper

professional conduct.

Interestingly, it is the ship itself that seems to put an end to the crew's subversive

action. In a passage of lyrical description about the ship and its interaction with the wind,

Conrad restores both formal integration at the sentence level and social and professional

order at the level of story:

> The *Narcissus*, left to herself, came up gently to the wind without any one being
> aware of it. She gave a slight roll, and the sleeping sails woke suddenly, coming
> all together with a mighty flap against the masts, then filled again one after
> another in a quick succession of loud reports that ran down the lofty spars, till the
> collapsed mainsail flew out last with a violent jerk. The ship trembled from trucks
> to keel; the sails kept on rattling like a discharge of musketry; the chain sheets and
> loose shackles jingled aloft in a thin peal; the gin blocks groaned. It was as if an
> invisible hand had given the ship an angry shake to recall the men that peopled
> her decks to the sense of reality, vigilance, and duty. (*NN*, 76)

Here, the near-uprising leads to the neglect of the ship's handling, and a resulting loss of

control over the *Narcissus* leads a quick foreclosure of revolt. The sailors, recalled to

their "sense of reality, vigilance, and duty" forget Wait's captivity and return to work.

Order is rapidly restored in the next few paragraphs. In this turn of events, the narrator

gives implicit credit to the ship as an agent in control of the men's behavior.

Grammatically, the ship participates as a subject executing action verbs: it "came up

gently," "gave a slight role," and "trembled from trucks to keel." The sails of the ship

even seem to take on a degree of sentience, insinuated in the phrase, "the sleeping sails

woke suddenly." Though the narrator introduces a simile that points away from the ship

as an actor and toward an unseen, supernatural power—"it was as if an invisible hand had

given the ship an angry shake"—the simile is not quite as powerful as the detailed, concrete descriptions leading up to it. By definition, the simile undercuts its own accuracy, reminding us with the words "as if" that what it tells is only an approximation of what happened. By contrast, the "trembling" of the ship, the jerk of sails, and the clamor of shackles and chains give sensory information that simulates for the reader the sailors' abrupt call to attention. More than this, these details make us hear and see the ship as never before. They bring to the surface the ship's materiality and also its material relationship with maritime traditions. Planting in the reader's mind images of muskets, shackles, and chains, this scene insinuates a likeness between the merchant vessel and earlier vessels of conquest, battle, and enslavement. It is no accident that this likeness comes into view just as the rebellion on Wait's behalf dies out. Wait is not only up against Captain Allistoun; he is up against the historical legacy of anti-black racism and oppression as manifested in the *Narcissus*'s structural and sensory revival of the slave ship.

As he "lies-up," imprisoned in the ship's sick bay, Wait performs a kind of stillness-in-motion that recalls the experiences of black people captured and confined in small spaces on slave ships over the hundreds of years spanned by the Middle Passage. His suffering is evidence of the persistence of racist beliefs and practices in the contexts of twentieth century travel, maritime labor, and commerce. At the same time, however, his simultaneous incarceration and mobility cuts in two directions. Wait is both a victim and a tyrant, both an invalid and a powerful spokesperson for his own self-interest. His very presence reminds the crew that not he alone by they as well are subject to racial caricature, mass confinement, and arbitrary orders from above. Wait's occupation of the

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ship makes it a ghost-ship of sorts, haunted by the memory of slave ships and brutal conquests. This transformation happens not because Wait is black but because he objects to the expectations of submissiveness and readiness for obedient action placed on him.

Ultimately, Wait's character can be summed up in an exchange he has with the crew and the first mate upon his arrival on the *Narcissus*. After Mr. Baker skips over Wait's name on the ledger, Wait calls out his name in the darkness: "Wait" (*NN,* 10). Mr. Baker becomes indignant, thinking that the call is a command from an impertinent sailor. Then, as Wait steps into the light, a "faint hum that sounded like the suppressed mutter of the word 'Nigger'" spreads through the mustered crew. To both Mr. Baker's anger and the crew's automatic derogatory labeling, James Wait gives a cool, measured response: "The captain shipped me this morning. I couldn't get aboard sooner. I saw you all aft as I came up the ladder, and could see directly you were mustering the crew. Naturally I called out my name. I thought you had it on your list, and would understand. You misapprehended" (*NN*, 10-11). Wait is the only one of the sailors whose speech Conrad renders in standard orthography, with no indication of an accent or a regional vernacular. The starkness and clarity of his communication seems to make his word unimpeachable. Moreover, his last sentence condemns the sailors' mutter of "nigger" as well as Mr. Baker's indignation. Conrad's portrayal of James Wait as an objector and an outcast interrupts his nostalgic reminiscence on the seafaring life. It turns what would otherwise be a happy swashbuckling tale into a novel about the coexistence of mobility and incarceration as a retrenchment of racist ideology in modern regimes of travel.

Conclusion

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In his essay, "The Frontier on Which *Heart of Darkness* Stands," Wilson Harris characterizes Conrad's work as a "frontier novel" not because it takes place in a borderland—though it does—but because in a literary-historical sense it stands on the threshold of a new kind of narrative accomplishment (162). Stating that Achebe's devastating denunciation of Conrad as a "bloody racist" might be a bit too dismissive, Harris suggests that the value of *Heart of Darkness* is its demonstration of the "necessity for distortions in the stases of appearance that seem sacred and that cultures take for granted as models of timeless dignity" (162). In other words, Conrad begins to unmask liberalism as a set of beliefs that may often "shelter the greatest evil" and thus attacks the "sovereign ego" of his own culture (163). For Harris, Conrad does not manage the next important step, which would entail constructing an alternative source of value, community, and dignity. This limitation is why his work stands on a "frontier" rather than plunging into an abyss and emerging again, reborn. However, Harris mentions someone else whom he thinks has stumbled across the boundary where Conrad halted. He writes that Jean Toomer succeeds in constructing "imagery that points through itself, beyond itself, into a visionary comedy of wholeness that can never be structured absolutely" (Harris, 165). Thus, while Conrad's comedy of manners attains the status of protest literature, Toomer's "comedy of wholeness" exceeds the requirements of protest writing and tends toward creative exuberance.

Is it possible to conceive of the works analyzed here—Conrad's *The Nigger of the Narcissus* and *The Rescue,* and Johnson's *The Autobiography of An Ex-Colored Man*—as standing on the same frontier that Harris sees outlined in *Heart of Darkness*? As I have

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tried to show in my analysis, these works reflect on the genres that might be seen to contain them, pushing the conventions of at least one of those genres—travel narrative—to the point of parody. At the same time, they unsettle conventional modes of seeing, hearing, and otherwise perceiving otherness according to racial indexes of sameness and difference. And yet, they do not quite offer another way to dwell with or affirm such experiences of difference. The novel considered in the final chapter of this dissertation, Yokomitsu Riici's *Shanghai,* perhaps offers a text that steps beyond the frontier on which Conrad's and Johnson's works stand. In particular, this novel explores acts of stillness that suspend perception and recognition in order to extend experiences of commensurability replete with anti-imperial potential.

CHAPTER IV

"GROUND TO A HALT": THE POLITICS OF URBAN STILLNESS IN
YOKOMITSU'S SHANGHAI

Modern motors throbbing with the power of eighty horses march abreast with
tattered one-man power rickshaws; velveted limousines with silk-clad Chinese
multi-millionaires surrounded by Chinese and Russian bodyguards bristling with
automatics for protection against the constant menace of kidnapping (foreigners
are not molested); Chinese gentlemen in trousers; Chinese gentlemen in satin
skirts.
    All About Shanghai: A Standard Guidebook, 43

The street scene in China she was gazing at now was different from such scenes
in Japan. There was something relaxed about it. There were many people there
who, like Osugi, leaned from railings and gazed blankly at the canal without
going to work in the morning. The sun on the water sparkled, entwining the
shadows in among the supports of the bridge. Tea and scraps of straw, clinging to
the oars of boats, dead still as though rotting, drifted in the foam amid wavy
shadows of poles and inverted reflections of crumbling bricks. The purple petals
of a discarded iris continued to bloom, vital among the yellow corpses of chicks
and scraps of cloth.
    Yokomitsu Riichi, *Shanghai*, 139

The two epigraphs above describe the same city in strikingly different ways. The

first, from a 1934 travelers' guidebook published by a small American and English press

in Shanghai, documents the grandeur of Shanghai's wealthy elite and captures the

juxtapositions that, according to the guidebook, make Shanghai a "city of amazing

paradoxes and fantastic contrasts" (43). Among those paradoxes are the simultaneity of

automobile traffic with rickshaws and the presence of Chinese men wearing traditional

Eastern clothing alongside those donning Western apparel. From the guidebook's tone,

which suggests the writers were more impressed by the "[m]odern motors throbbing with

the power of eighty horses" than the "tattered one-man power rickshaws," one might

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deduce that the contrast between modern and antique technologies—or between those

traditionally used in China's cities and those imported through global networks of trade—

is inherently hierarchized. The words "throbbing with the power" gesture toward a

certain ideal of masculine virility that seems to infuse the automobiles, while the words

"tattered" and "one-man powered" evoke poverty, exhaustion, and comparable weakness.

Even in its celebratory language, the guidebook expresses an ideology of anti-Chinese

racism which justifies Western colonization of the Pacific: the Chinese are malleable,

attracted irresistibly to Western culture and consumption practices, and dangerous to

themselves.

Another "amazing paradox" emerges from this passage, one which the narrative

voice seems keen to gloss over without drawing attention to its implications. While the

Chinese multi-millionaire requires a squad of bodyguards for protection, the text assures

us that "foreigners" are in no danger in Shanghai. Clearly, the writers of this guidebook

wouldn't have wanted to scare away tourists who were potential customers, but this trite

comment about the unassailable security of foreigners in Shanghai bespeaks deeper

political realities. The fact is, Chinese people *were* the most vulnerable population in

Shanghai—the most exposed to crime, poverty, and violence (though Russians and

Japanese also experienced noteworthy degrees of these ailments). The safety enjoyed by

Europeans and Americans in Shanghai—both tourists and long-term residents—resulted

from the semicolonial relationship between these Western nations and the nascent

Chinese republic. Due to diplomatic arrangements giving settlements and the right to

govern those settlements to England, America, France, and Japan in many of China's port

cities, about half of Shanghai's terrItōry was possessed by these foreign powers in the

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1920s.[86] The foreigners protected their interests through a Euro-American volunteer military corps and a municipal police force composed of British and Indian agents.[87] This military muscle (largely embodied by naval power) is absent from the guidebook's colorful description of Shanghai, where the only signs of violence are the automatic weapons that the Chinese and Russians point at their own kind in a spectacular drama of high-tech barbarism. By circumscribing violence and criminality as something foreigners might observe without complicity or danger, the guidebook's authors reinforce the notion that the presence of Western tourists, businessmen, and administrators in Shanghai is at best beneficial—for the preservation of social order and commerce—and at worst innocuous.

The second epigraph, taken from Yokomitsu Riichi's 1928-1929 novel *Shanghai*, seems to describe an entirely different city. Instead of a bustling street where bodies strain under the weight of rickshaws or speed along the road in cars, Yokomitsu describes a street scene so "dead still" as to suggest a tableau vivant. Idle bodies pose at railings and stare at a clogged canal where garbage accumulates around the forms of motionless boats. Despite its inanimate quality, this scene, too, contains "fantastic contrasts" (*All About Shanghai*, 43). Sparkling sunlight and shadows mix, "entwining" on the surface of the water under the bridge. Dead and living matter, such as the "discarded iris" and the "corpses of chicks," cluster together to form islands in the canal. Solid matter stands side by side with its wavy reflection, as the poles and bricks are mirrored in the canal. These

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[86] For details on the geographical breakdown of semicolonial Shanghai, see Shih, pg. 236.
[87] For an extensive discussion of the Shanghai Volunteer Corps, organized by the U.S., Britain, and France in 1853, see Lethbridge's introduction to *All About Shanghai*, pp. 4-10.

contrasts are of a different kind than those detailed in the guidebook. They exist not in the juxtaposition of hierarchized opposites—as in the motor car and the rickshaw—but rather in the simultaneity of various states of decay. The corpses of chicks evoke the imminent death of the as yet still "vital" iris. The "crumbling bricks" insinuate the potential collapse of the bridge, suggesting the frailty of stone structures against the onslaught of time. Thus it is that even the boats, presumably designed to move, are "still as though rotting," their inertia recollecting their material composition and the inevitability of its decay or erosion. Each image of rot heightens the impression that every sensible thing is in a state of ceaseless change, one that can only *seem* to be arrested by an act of perception. Yet, here, even the act of perception is part of the tableau vivant. The "many people" who gaze "blankly at the canal without going to work" seem to mirror in their blank stares the uneventfulness of the scene before them. Unlike the foreign readers invited to look at Shanghai (the chapter from which I draw my epigraph is entitled "Seeing Shanghai") from the safety of a tourist's sealed-off subject position, Osugi and her neighbors are implicated in the scene they observe and even act in accordance with its atmosphere and mood. The phrase "discarded iris" hints at the extent to which Osugi experiences affinity with the things under her gaze. Just as this flower has, apparently, been cast away carelessly, Osugi has been thrown from the bath-house where she once worked and abandoned by the friend who initially sheltered her. The momentary blooming of the flower is all the more poignant because it evokes Osugi's youth and health, which deteriorate throughout the novel as she succumbs to poverty and prostitution.

It is through such scenes as this that Yokomitsu depicts a very different Shanghai

from the cosmopolitan wonder described in Western imperialist discourse, of which *All

About Shanghai* is one example. There are many ways to approach the peculiarity of

Shanghai as a reimagining of this oft-imagined urban space. One might focus on

Yokomitsu's ambivalent combination of Japanese nationalism and anti-colonialism, the

novel's interesting strain of Japanized Orientalism, its portrayal of a violent labor revolt

using imagery reminiscent of Sergei Eisenstein's 1925 *Strike*, or its vibrant descriptions

of Shanghai's jazz culture and dance clubs that provide rich material for a study of

colonial hybridity.[88] Yet the most radical achievement of Yokomitsu's novel is—as I will

argue throughout this chapter—its implicit critique of forms of motion that perpetuate

racial classification and its imaginative construction of stillness as a range of practices

that subvert such classificatory regimes through emergent networks of sensory

perception. As Yokomitsu's descriptions attest, there is no absolute distinction between

stasis and motion; rather, the illusion of stillness is produced through the biological and

cognitive limits of human attention. If one dwells on the perceived phenomenon of

stillness, in processes such as rot and erosion, this phenomenon acts as a window through

which non-human and non-Western temporalities can be accessed. For example, in the

above passage quoted from *Shanghai*, the narration of the plot is arrested by the street

scene—which, itself, is a picture of intensified arrest—and this hiatus directs readerly

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[88] I borrow the term "Japanized Orientalism" from Shu-mei Shih, who argues that
Imperial Japan in the early twentieth century imagined China, Korea, and other Asian
countries as exotic, backward, and inferior in a way that mirrors—with differences—the
attitudes of France and England toward the Orient in the nineteenth and twentieth
centuries (23). I take the term "colonial hybridity" from Homi Bhabha's "Signs Taken for
Wonders," in which Bhabha theorizes the colonial subject's encounter with an English
book as an event that, unexpectedly, disrupts the colonizer's authority (162-171).

attention toward the slow progress of decay, thus heightening awareness of the porous

boundaries between human, animal, plant, and mineral life. Racial classification—

particularly in the semicolonial context of 1920s Shanghai—depends on adherence to a

temporality contained within an idea of civilizational progress. For the Japanese

characters, this temporality is further coded as the narrative—past, present, and future—

of a racial nation that demands filial loyalty. As Yokomitsu narrates acts of stillness,

alternative temporalities erupt out of the text to revise or replace the story of the racial

nation.

Stillness and Motion in Perceptions of China

While modernity as social fragmentation and historical rupture is a well-rehearsed

truism, the ways in which modern political, economic, and social regimes repeat and

preserve traditional forms tend to fall out of academic descriptions of the modern.[89]

Likewise, while forms of mobility amplified through twentieth-century technology and

globalization receive careful attention—under rubrics such as migration, travel, diaspora

studies, transnationalism, and cosmopolitanism—forms of *stillness* tend to go neglected

in studies of modern spatial and temporal organization.[90] This dissertation interprets the

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[89] I am thinking of the narratives of modernity we receive from George Simmel, Walter
Benjamin, Theodore Adorno in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and the
critical accounts of modernism and modernist culture that we find in the contemporary
scholarship of Paul Gilroy, Marjorie Perloff, and Enda Duffy.
[90] Scholarship in this vein often pairs modernist study with a transnational perspective, as
writers such as Rebecca Walkowitz, Anita Patterson, and Jahan Ramazani ask us to think
beyond the nation in considering how trade routes, translation, migration, diaspora,
internationalism, and influence form constellations of literary production that exceed
national and ethnic categories. Other scholars who tackle the theoretical problems

second problem is a subset of the first and seeks to address the forms of stillness made

possible in twentieth-century political, social, and economic systems in order to discover

important continuities linking past and present, tradition and innovation, that trouble our

assumptions about what makes modernity unique. Modernity, it turns out, is entwined

with a belief in the racial embodiment of phases of social development that proceed from

primitive to advanced civilization. This narrative of advancement sets up certain

relationships linking motion and stasis, race, and modernity: races perceived as superior

move through phases of progress while those deemed inferior sit idle and unchanged,

tethered to a single stage.

 We might trace the notion that stasis describes pre-modern human civilization

while mobility characterizes societal advancement to the Romantic writers and,

especially, to George Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (1821-1831).

According to Hegel, "With China and the Mongols—the realm of theocratic despotism—

history begins" (129). This means that China exemplifies the earliest phase of societal

development documented in prose. Yet, while Hegel traces the origins of history to

China, he excludes China from the narrative of historical progress:

> Early do we see China advancing to the condition in which it is found at this day;
> for as the contrast between objective existence and subjective freedom of
> movement in it, is still wanting, every change is excluded, and the fixedness of a
> character which recurs perpetually, takes the place of what we should call the
> truly historical. (133)

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clustered around comparative and transnational approaches to modernism include David
Damrosch (*What is World Literature*), Matthew Hart (*Nations of Nothing But Poetry*),
Christopher Bush (*Ideographic Modernism: China, Writing, Media*), Winifred Fluck,
Donald E. Pease, and John Carlos Rowe (*Re-Framing the Transnational Turn in
American Studies*), and Francoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih (*The Creolization of
Theory*).

A stark contrast between fixity and change, characterized here as "objective existence" and "freedom of movement," is crucial to Hegel's conception of China. For him, Chinese culture provides an ideal foil to the West. Whereas the body politic of China exhibits a "fixedness of character," the "truly historical" countries of Europe evolve toward freedom and self-consciousness. Equally telling is the language in which Hegel describes the Chinese Emperor. The Emperor's individual power presents a potential problem to Hegel's argument that Chinese people have no subjectivity, but he assures the reader that the Emperor's absolute power "does not imply caprice, which would itself indicate inclination—that is, subjectivity and mobility" (137). Rather, he explains, "Here we have the One Being of the State supremely dominant—the Substance, which, still hard and inflexible, resembles nothing but itself—includes no other element" (137). In an abstract way, Hegel claims that the Emperor, indistinguishable from the State and having no sense of personality apart from it, is as subjugated as his servants. The words "hard and inflexible" give the Emperor a stony aspect, as if he—along with the culture he metonymizes—is one of the carved idols that Hegel claims express the "boundless superstition" of the Chinese (151). This fixity in which Hegel believes China to be submerged is the result of mere "objective existence"—a world of physical surfaces and structures with no inner spiritual life. To be still, then, is to be an object; whereas movement and flux suggest the presence of an animating spirit that attains the status of the subject. The question of being an object or a subject is all-important, for Hegel, because on this distinction hinges the destiny of a body politic: stagnation, disappearance, or progress toward freedom.

Hegel's philosophical rendering of China gives a clue as to why a turn toward

analyzing stillness in modern spatiotemporal settings has implications for the study of

race and, more specifically, the study of the practices and ideas that make race an

enduring discourse at both the common-sense level of everyday life and the theoretical

level of academic contemplation. Racial difference has long been articulated across a

spectrum of stasis and mobility, with the "primitive" races being coded as trapped in a

phase of historical development and the "advanced" races depicted as moving toward a

telos of the ideal civilization. From Hegel's dialectic model of history and Spencer's

evolutionary model of cultural development, these ideas have spiraled out into capacious

orbits of cultural and social reiteration.[91] Jamaica Kincaid, for example has written on

practices of tourism in the Caribbean as participation in a cultural ideology that posits the

people in Antigua and other formerly colonized islands as timeless, unchanging

components of a static landscape (52-54). So, despite the fact that academic history is no

longer written this way—as the advancement of certain races and the stagnation and

inevitable extinction of others—this meta-narrative retains a surprising amount of

credibility in the social imagination of the West, as it legitimates global economic

disparity and produces vestiges of the exotic for which a thriving market exists.

In light of this situation, it behooves us to look back at the way that race was

constructed and critiqued during a time with crucial economic and social parallels to our

own, namely the interwar period of the twentieth century. Characterized by the expansion

of capital through a global network of finance, by the spread of communication and

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[91] I discuss Hegel and Spencer in greater detail in my introduction, using Hegel's
Lectures on the Philosophy of History (1821-1831, 1837) and Spencer's *First Principles
of a New System of Philosophy* (1862).

transportation technology, and by dynamic international diplomacy through bodies such as the League of Nations, this era bore noteworthy similarities to our current wave of globalization, technological proliferation, and international politics in the twenty-first century.[92] In this chapter, I turn to Yokomitsu Riichi's novel *Shanghai* (1928-1932) in order to understand how this Japanese author politicized the still body as a sign of racial ambiguity. Specifically, I study three mechanisms within Yokomitsu's novel—synecdoche, metaphor, and images of the still body—to illustrate how the author 1) constructs race through the logic of piece substituting for whole, 2) sees race operating through concrete and imaginary transactions made possible by networks of exchange and migration connecting Japan, China, and the West, and 3) uses the still body to imagine ways of shedding race and national allegiance in order to facilitate more fluid interactions with others. These three components of my thesis fit respectively with the three mechanisms, synecdoche, metaphor, and images of stillness. This analysis yields two important outcomes with regard to the terms in which we currently study modernity and those we use to talk about race. First is the idea that modernist authors like Yokomitsu, who were attuned to questions of colonial subjectivity, recognized that modernized spaces were as prone to containment and fixity as they were open to mobility and flux and thus were sites in which traditional hierarchies—of caste, class, race, and gender—could be easily reproduced. Second, this reading suggests that race can be understood as a

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[92] Shanghai, which was a center of finance as well as a cosmopolitan hub in the 1920s, might be seen as a precursor to what Saskia Sassen has defined as a "global city." Sassen argues that "the more globalized the economy becomes, the higher the agglomeration of central functions in a relatively few sites, that is, the global cities" (5). While Sassen limits globalization to a post-1960 phenomenon, she concedes that cities have long served "as centers of international trade and banking," and Shanghai in the 1920s fits this description. A question that remains to be answered is whether Shanghai is now a "global city" and what historical forces have led to its current status as a global or not-global city.

regime of sensory perception that organizes the subject's relation to her environment. These broader ideas can help to explain the perseverance of racial ideologies in our contemporary moment.

My choice to analyze Yokomitsu's work in this chapter, as opposed to the work of any number of his contemporaries, is motivated by aesthetic, theoretical, and historical reasons. I will engage each type of reason respectively in the next several paragraphs. Aesthetically, Yokomitsu's *Shanghai* engages my interest in stillness and motion as simultaneous features of modernity. In theme, the novel departs from other early twentieth-century Japanese texts set in China by dropping the mode of travel writing and taking up instead a story of exile and urban containment.[93] Possibly responding to Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's *Travels in China*, written after Akutagawa's 1921 trip to China, Yokomitsu rejects the subject-position of a traveler who observes ethnographic and entertaining details about the host culture in favor of an exilic subject position of a colonial whose "problems would be worse if he went back to Japan" (Yokomitsu, 44). Thus, in Yokomitsu's novel the dichotomy of static native and mobile traveler decays and is replaced by the figure of the expatriate living in a foreign ghetto. As the plot unfolds, the conditions of mobility actually invert those found in travelogue, as the Japanese protagonist must dress in a Chinese disguise in order to travel freely throughout Shanghai.

In terms of its form, *Shanghai* lends itself to a study of the simultaneity of stillness and motion because the motion-driven mode of narrative is mixed with the more static mode of sensory-rich description. The text resists its own narrative form,

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[93] For more on Japanese travel literature and its representations of China, see Shu-mei Shih's *The Lure of the Modern* pp. 21-26.

incessantly producing catalogues of sensory detail which then get recycled in later scenes

so that we seem to be watching a broken film rather than reading a proper story with a

clear beginning, middle, and end. Serialized in the journal *Kaizo* from November 1928 to

December 1929, the novel would have appeared less like an integrated story and more

like a string of short vignettes rich in visual, aural, and olfactory detail. Each installment

was given its own title, and the titles—while evocative of setting and embodiment—

failed to give information linking the chapters to the grand narrative. For example, one

piece was titled "Legs and Justice," a pairing of the concrete and the abstract which

gestures at a conceptual balance internal to the vignette (which examines sexual desire

and racial hierarchy) rather than tying this chapter to the previous one.[94] While some

degree of fragmentation might be inherent in the mode of serialization, *Shanghai* retains a

piecemeal quality even in book form as its short chapters register abrupt changes in

perspective and setting. The chapters have more internal unity—sameness of setting,

time, and action—than the novel has overall, which gives a cellular aspect to the

chapters. The narrative voice drifts in the spaces between chapters and rests in the

chapters themselves, like an insect flying from flower to flower and soaking in the

peculiar ambience of each bud. This pairing of free-floating, meandering narrative voice

with an impulse to dwell on the details of a scene gives rise to a particular sensibility in

this novel, one characterized by an awareness of the simultaneity of change and

continuity. The tension between movement and stasis—between change and fixation—in

the novel's form mirrors the political situation in 1925 Shanghai, in which unrest and

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[94] For more details on the serial publication of *Shanghai*, see Keene, pg. 167.

modernization appear to the Chinese laborers to signal nothing but "the same old thing…

happening again in the same old way" (Yokomitsu, 38).

One moment in the novel serves as a metaphor for the work's form. While

ascending a flight of stairs, Sanki watches the reflection of his companion, Fang Qiu-lan,

in mirrors spaced between each step: "Her smiling face appeared at each step in the

mirrors inlaid in the tile risers, changing from moment to moment as if he were watching

a film of her" (Yokomitsu, 100). Here, repetition combines with change to create a

precarious sense of another's identity. As he observes Qui-lan's image reappearing with a

difference in each mirror, Sanki sees an ephemeral record of her body's movement

through space. This experience heightens his sense of her vulnerability; he recalls hearing

that "'Even she may be killed'" in the impending labor riots (Yokomitsu, 100). Beyond

Sanki's own wish to distance himself from danger by seeing his life *as* a film and as if

through a film, this brief analogy to cinema gestures at Yokomitsu's effort to chronicle

the act of perception throughout his novel. Whereas perception itself seems dependent on

some kind of motion—as, in this case, the "film" of Qiu-lan ascending the stairs requires

her to walk—sensation is possible without movement. Indeed, perception can be

understood as a passage from reception of sensory data to an organization of that data

along lines of classification. The categories that make perception possible are

epistemological technologies in which a particular society invests time, energy, and other

resources at its disposal. Here, in the example of Sanki's walking up the stairs,

nationality, race, and gender intercede to make sense of what he sees in the mirror:

"…Sanki felt happy that he had touched the delicate anguish of this Chinese lady"

(Yokomitsu, 100). The erotic appeal of tormented Chinese femininity fills out the

contours of what Sanki apprehends as Fang Qiu-lan's face, intensifying his pleasure by coloring this encounter with a hint of Japanese superiority. So much of the novel's ideological work is captured in this moment, and the novel's structure is also reflected in miniature here. Just as each interval in the stairway has its own small mirror, each chapter in the novel offers up images to the reader's attention. As Sanki's movement up the steps facilitates his observation of an activity, our passage from one chapter to the next enables our reading of a story recounting a historical event (the May Thirtieth Incident). Yet, at each step, Sanki has to pause—even if the pause is indistinguishable from his walking— and the beat on which he rests allows him to look at the mirrors. Likewise, each chapter initiates a caesura, and it is in lengthening those rests that the narrative voice allows categorical perception to roll back into sensation, retreating from the taxonomic logic of race to alternative modes of attention. Here, the philological resonance between the French *attendre* ("to wait") and the English "attend" (to be present, to give notice) comes into play as a reminder that hesitation is often necessary for radical, transformative acts of attending.

In a theoretical vein, Yokomitsu is important because he has been a key figure in discussions of Japanese modernism and its relation to other modernisms, including those situated in China and the West.[95] My interpretation of *Shanghai* contributes to existing criticism on Yokomitsu by demonstrating Yokomitsu's relevance to theories of race and sensory perception. English-language critics studying Yokomitsu have expressed a

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[95] Shu-mei Shih gives close attention to Yokomitsu's exchanges with Chinese modernists, especially Mu Shuying in her introduction (Shih, 29) and in chapter eleven of *The Lure of the Modern*. Dennis Washburn, Seiji Lippit, and Dennis Keene have all written extensively on Yokomitsu's role as a pioneer of Japanese modernist writing and a cultural liaison between English and French modernism and Japanese writing.

variety of views on Yokomitsu's politics, but they usually couch their analyses in terms

of colonial subjectivity, Japanese nationalism, and resistance to Western imperialism.

Race, as a topic in its own right, is usually nowhere to be found in these conversations

and when it does appear is relatively under-theorized. Shu-mei Shih reads in *Shanghai*

evidence of "the Japanese colonizer's anxiety about not maintaining the absolute

superiority which Western colonizers enjoyed over the Chinese (due to their race) that

produced Japan's fervent need to fix the boundaries of Chinese-ness and Japanese-ness"

(28). Here, the parenthetical reference to race suggests that readers will know,

automatically, what "due to their race" means and accept a racial explanation of the

unequal power and wealth held by Japanese and Western colonizers in China. While Shih

gives an apt reading of Yokomitsu's politics, I want to suggest that race proves a poor

explanatory mechanism: it reproduces the assumption of homogeneity between Chinese

and Japanese people and the inherent heterogeneity of White and Asian people. Rather

than assume racial hierarchies operated unambiguously in semicolonial China, this

chapter on *Shanghai* examines the variety of ways in which racial sameness and

difference are produced and adapted in that context. In this respect, it adds to the

important insights that Shih has already provided into the ideological work of

Yokomitsu's writing.

My reading of Yokomitsu addresses a problem noted by Dennis Washburn in the

postscript to his 2001 English translation of *Shanghai*. According to Washburn,

Yokomitsu's primary goal was "to fuse the subjective, parochial qualities embedded in

Japanese nationalism with the internationalist aspirations of modernist aesthetic

movements" (225). In other words, Yokomitsu sought to merge his politics of resistance

to Western imperialism with an aesthetic practice borrowed, as many have argued, from the West.[96] What Washburn sees as "contradictory cultural aims," however, might be posited differently (225). As Washburn explains, Yokomitsu's aesthetic project was shaped by a desire to represent "perception through surface signs," thereby demonstrating the emergence of subjectivity through the situated, embodied process of sensory perception (223). There is nothing innately Western-inspired in this goal, and Yokomitsu may have been just as heavily influenced by his Japanese and Chinese contemporaries, such as Kawabata Yasunari and Mu Shiying, as he was by Paul Valéry.[97] Further, Yokomitsu's notion of subjectivity as an exfoliation of sensory perception draws his attention to the embodied self and its surroundings. It makes sense, then, that Yokomitsu's aesthetic and political projects align, and they do so as he reveals race as an ideology that lives in the dominant patterns of sensory perception.

The bulk of critical race studies takes for its context national settings, such as Brazil, South Africa, and the United States, that are historically sites of racial apartheid and/or other formal institutions of racial hierarchy.[98] Although these settings teach us much about white conquest and racial hierarchy, there are reasons to look beyond these locales. Looking exclusively at Africa, the Americas, and even Europe prevents one from seeing the adaptability of racial discourse and practice to different local cultures where

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[96] For a detailed discussion of how Western modernism influenced Yokomitsu, see Keene's *Yokomitsu Riichi: Modernist*, chapters 2 and 3.

[97] For a full treatment of Yokomitsu's relationship with Mu Shiying, see Shih's *The Lure of the Modern*, chapter 11. For more elaboration on Yokomitsu's relationship with Kawabata Yasunari, see Keene, pp. 70-71.

[98] Marx's *Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of the United States, South Africa, and Brazil*, Winant's *The World is a Ghetto*, Degler's *Neither Black Nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States*, and Daniel's *Race and Multiraciality in Brazil and the United States* provide evidence of this pattern of linking critical race studies to specific contexts.

specific non-Western forms of belonging prevail. In this chapter, 1920s Shanghai

provides a setting where racial hegemony is layered in complex ways. Shih points out

that a state of semicolonialism existed in China during the 1920s and 1930s, in which

China's port cities and resources were handed over as "concessions" to American,

European, and Japanese governments (30-32). This state of affairs resulted in "a hybrid

social formation that had not been anticipated by classical historical materialism," one in

which feudalism and capitalism were contemporaneous (Shih, 31). In this context,

imperialists used racial identity to rationalize and facilitate governance of semicolonial

China. At the same time, the encounters enabled by colonization forced redefinitions of

racial and ethnic groups. As Seiji Lippit explains, the novel *Shanghai* provides "a double

inscription of Japan as an imperial power (which thus identifies it with the West) and as

an Asian (non-Western) culture" (77). Depending on their politics, Japanese characters in

Yokomitsu's *Shanghai* variously describe Chinese people as being racially the same or

racially different from themselves. Slippage between nationality and race signifies

ambivalence toward the homeland as the racial nation is alternately affirmed and negated.

Both racial sameness and racial difference are used as justifications for Japanese

expansion into China, which raises the question of what, truly, is at stake in the rhetoric

of race.

In what follows, I will lead up to my close analysis of scenes from Yokomitsu's

Shanghai with a discussion of the historical context of the novel—Shanghai during the

1920s and the May 30th movement in 1925. This will be helpful in situating my own

comments on his work and especially my thoughts on his relationships with China and

West and his aesthetic commitment to New Sensationism. Ultimately, I hope to show that

Yokomitsu exemplifies a strain of modernism that attended to the still body and its machinations as a way of engaging with problems of racism and systemic oppression of racialized people in the context of self-consciously modernizing societies. What makes Yokomitsu unique, however, is his commitment to perception as an act—a process—that, like bodily stillness, almost disappears into seeming passivity. Only by turning a skeptical mind toward the binary of passivity and activity can one begin to unpack the important ethical and political work happening in these quiet acts.

Semicolonial Shanghai and the Incident of May 30, 1925

In the postscript to his 2001 English translation of *Shanghai*, Dennis Washburn observes that *Shanghai*'s "predominant images are related to water—images of flowing, dampness, fecundity, and decay; of shaking, swelling, rising, and sliding" and adds that these images combine with Yokomitsu's syntax "to create a visceral sense of movement and flux" (239). While my analysis departs from Washburn's by pointing to moments of stillness that punctuate this flux, the significance of these moments emerges only in relation to the "flow" they interrupt. Washburn's comments on Yokomitsu's imaginary Shanghai resonate with language used to describe the real Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s. The guidebook, *All About Shanghai*, describes the city as the "cork of a vast bottle containing the major share of a great nation's vital life" (*All About Shanghai*, 27). Similarly, a local Chinese newspaper called Shanghai the source of the "milk of civilization" with the potential to "irrigate the entire nation" (Xiong, 146). Shih has noted that both these metaphors evoke the Yangtze River and register a desire to direct the

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wealth of Shanghai as one might manipulate the flow of a river (Shih, 236). While foreign and Chinese interlocutors agreed on Shanghai as a valuable economic center, they imagined "the city's bounty as flowing in opposite directions;" the imperialists hoped to turn its resources outward to benefit their empires, and the Chinese aimed to disperse those same resources across the Chinese interior (Shih, 236). Yokomitsu's use of liquid imagery to construct a fictional Shanghai—the "images of flowing" pointed out by Washburn—thus reflects the widespread belief in the first few decades of the twentieth century that Shanghai was a special city, one whose fortunes were entangled with the destinies of imperial world powers and the success or failure of the nascent Chinese Republic.

A bit of history will help to clarify why Shanghai was important enough to be called the "cork of a vast bottle" and the wellspring of the "milk of civilization." Starting in the 1840s after the opium wars, European and U.S.-American companies zeroed in on this Chinese port city. The Euro-American (and, from about 1900, Japanese) colonists concentrated a good deal of Shanghai's wealth within their settlements, and built infrastructure for pumping resources collected and manufactured in Shanghai throughout their empires (Shih, 234). Chinese merchants in Shanghai traded with the foreigners and gained a substantial amount of capital for themselves. The Shanghai Chinese businessmen, in fact, grew wealthy enough to provide much of the funding for Sun Yat-sen's 1911 coup against the Qing dynasty (Battacharyya, 137). Although the Chinese in Shanghai during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first few decades of the twentieth had cause to resent the presence of European and Japanese imperialists, they tended to be more preoccupied with economic success than anti-imperialist movements.

Shih points out the extent to which cultural and ethnic differences among the Chinese living in Shanghai discouraged political solidarity: "For the eighty percent of the Chinese population in Shanghai who were immigrants from the vast Chinese interior, and whose identities were far from unified, the pressing issue was not anti-imperialism but rather economic livelihood" (236). This state of affairs allowed Japanese, British, American, French, German, Russian, Dutch, Portuguese, and other colonial powers to gain footholds in Shanghai where they developed capitalist machinery that turned the city into a massive factory for churning out China's resources.

Shanghai was not alone. The political situation of China in the 1920s was characterized by dynamic shifts in power as the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese Nationalist Party or *Kuomintang* vied with one another for domestic control and contended against the encroachment of foreign imperialists. Among those imperialist powers with mentionable footholds in China's port cities were England, the United States, France, Germany, and Japan. Through the influence of Comintern on the CCP, Soviet Russia also became a key player in the domestic affairs of China (Zhao, 91-95). Coastal China became a major site of inter-imperial rivalry as well as one of colonial subjugation, racial hierarchy, and class conflict. According to Robert Bickers, "This was not the terrain of formal British or French empire, but it was not 'not-empire.' The Qing and their successors ruled independent states, and yet they were not wholly so" (12). Shih describes this condition as one of "semicoloniality," which means that Chinese terrItōry was partially governed by foreign states seeking to strengthen their empires. She points to the 1919 Versailles Conference as the moment at which Western powers carved up desirable terrain in China in a manner that mirrored the division of Africa among

European nations at the Berlin Conference of 1884 (32). Shih draws the language of

semicoloniality from Mao Zedong, who used it to emphasize the peculiarity of China's

experience of international subjugation, one which involved the penetration of foreign

capitalism into a semi-feudal society (Shih, 31-32). Japan played an aggressive but

complex role in this semicolonial scene. Japan built infrastructure in China to export the

resources necessary for its development into a world power that—as Japanese nationalist

rhetoric claimed—could lead Asia and, eventually, the world into a more harmonious

modernity than that wrought by the Western imperialists (Lockyer, 281; Shih, 20-21;

Anderson, 34-35).

Semicolonialism in China was concentrated along the shoreline, where foreign

nations were given "concessions" through treaties with the Qing dynasty and, after 1911,

the nascent Republic. Rather than acquiring extensive terrItōries, England, the US, Japan

and other foreign nations seized strategic nodal points where resources from the interior

were refined, processed, and exported. Like Beijing to the north, Shanghai was a primary

example of this kind of city. Within it, foreign powers erected an international settlement

governed by municipal police forces. In Yokomitsu's *Shanghai*, this facet of semicolonial

life manifests in the Indian police operating under British command (66). The Chinese

living in Shanghai were subject not only to semi-foreign rule and an unequal distribution

of wealth between foreigners and natives but also to racial segregation. Public parks,

enjoyed by English, American, and Japanese residents, were off-limits to Chinese

residents. Yokomitsu weaves these policies of segregation into his novel, writing of one

Japanese character, "It was too much of a bother for him to ask why the only legs not

permitted to enter the park from this gate were Chinese" (52).[99] At the same time, however, the Chinese bourgeoisie had a thriving presence in Shanghai. Shanghai exhibited a multilayered social landscape in which the political, racial, and cultural allegiances of groups overlapped one day and conflicted the next.

It was in this political climate that the famous events of the May 30th Incident (also known as the May 30th Massacre) took place in Shanghai in 1925. Yokomitsu takes this incident as the turning point of his novel, *Shanghai*, and many of the complex relationships among his characters hinge on the sociopolitical dynamics shaping that moment of history. For a short time during the mid 1920s, the CCP and the *Kuomintang* (Nationalist Party) found it necessary to band together to form a unified front against the foreign imperialists. While the CCP was opposed to bourgeois society and had for its ultimate goal the rise of the Chinese peasants and proletariat, its leaders enlisted the help of the Nationalists (lead by the bourgeois class and intellectual elite) in hopes that ousting foreign capitalism would be the first step toward liberating China from capitalism broadly (Zhao, 90-95). On May thirtieth of 1925, the CCP in Shanghai mobilized a demonstration in response to the killing of a Chinese textile worker in a Japanese-owned factory. The protestors demanded "an end to extraterrItōriality and a return of the Shanghai international settlements to Chinese sovereignty" (Zhao, 92 n37). The protest erupted into violence when British police fired on the crowd, and this outburst provoked a series of crippling strikes and riots over the next several months. Zhao describes the extent of the turmoil by reproducing a table published by the communist paper *Xiangdao zhoubao*

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[99] I have not confirmed this, but I suspect the chapter from which I draw this quote—in which Kōya and Miyako have a flirtatious meeting in a park—is the piece entitled "Legs and Justice" in the serialized novel.

(Guidance weekly), which reports that from January 1 to April 1 of 1926 a total of 16,400 workers went on strike in Shanghai. Fourteen of the eighteen strikes targeted the textile industry, with finance, printing, packing materials, and socks constituting the industries chosen for the remaining four strikes (Zhao, 93). The period of CCP-organized unrest did not come to an end until Chiang Kai-shek succeeded Sun Yat-sen as head of the KMT and, after declaring marshal law and banning all strikes, purged the party (and Shanghai generally) of communists (Zhao, 94).

The drama of the rise and sudden fall of the CCP in Shanghai and this organization's tension with the KMT finds its way into Yokomitsu's novel through the character of Fang Qiu-lan. A local organizer of the urban riots and strikes against foreign capitalists, Fang Qiu-lan becomes the voice of communism in *Shanghai*, and as such she grapples with the need to ally temporarily with the Chinese bourgeoisie. When confronted by Sanki, her Japanese lover, about the apparent contradiction in her ideology, Fang Qiu-lan insists on Chinese solidarity as a means to a more universal, worldwide proletarian liberation: "It's natural to fear foreign capitalism more than Chinese capitalism… Our resistance to Japan is not aimed at its proletariat… We believe we have to liberate China for the sake of Japan's proletariat" (Yokomitsu, 102). For Fang Qiu-lan, the Chinese communists' ultimate aim of liberating the underclasses of all countries justifies their temporary solidarity with the Chinese capitalists and their practice of violence against foreigners—particularly the Japanese—in China. Yokomitsu implicitly troubles this thinking, however, by making Fang Qiu-lan the victim of her own party's methods. Suspected of being a spy because of her love affair with Sanki, she is executed shortly after the break-out of the riots. Through her death, Yokomitsu undermines the

rhetoric of political salvation and liberation, highlighting how such language functions as a justification for brutal tactics. As readers of *Shanghai*, we are encouraged to condemn the racial apartheid and political oppression inherent in imperialism but we are also prompted to critique the communist uprising that violently resists that regime.

If Yokomitsu's novel is critical of the communist movement in China, it also expresses disillusionment with Japanese capitalism and imperialism. The May 30th Incident provides an appropriate lens for examining Japan's role in China between the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), because the shooting that set off the initial demonstrations in Shanghai took place in a Japanese-owned factory. The antagonistic relation between Chinese labor and Japanese capital was distilled in this incident, which Chinese labor unions saw as evidence that Japan was as oppressive an imposter as its Western counterparts. Indeed, Japan's capitalist ventures in China were intertwined with its military campaigns there, as the extraction of resources and industrial development in China were used to bolster Japan's wealth at home and its military power abroad. Anderson lists two driving forces behind Japan's expansionist tendencies in the early twentieth century: first, the "village misery" of "a peasantry wracked by the world slump in rice and silk prices" and, second, "the external pressure from Japan's exposed position with the inter-imperialist rivalries of the time" (34). Though Anderson designates the latter as the dominant force, the poverty and hunger of Japanese peasants increased the stakes of Japan's economic ventures in its colonial and semicolonial holdings. In his novel, Yokomitsu underscores the psychological effect of these urgent economic needs at home on the Japanese expatriates in Shanghai. His protagonist, Sanki, muses: "The truth is, if he were in Japan the only

thing he would be good for is reducing Japan's food supply" (Yokomitsu, 45). This sense that success in economic competition with imperial powers abroad was necessary for the survival of Japan's growing population was reflected in the difference between Japanese strategies and Western strategies in China. One important difference was that "Japan invested massively in the industrialization of its conquests in Manchuria and Korea" (Anderson 34). This was true, increasingly, during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945).

The ideological basis for Japan's industrial, economic, and military projects in China both mirrored European imperialist ideologies and differed from them. Japanese rhetoric on national destiny and modernization bore similarities to Western discourses of "manifest destiny." The shared belief in divine or spiritual obligation to modernize other countries might be one reason why Japan and the USA were later, in the postwar era, able to develop close ties that Naoki Sakai describes as "transpacific complicity" (Sakai, 242-244). However, Japan's nationalist ideology was shaped by resistance to white supremacy and Western imperial domination, and it mobilized Asianist language hailing the emergence of a new world order with Japan as the leader of global affairs. Shih uses the term "Japanized Orientalism" to describe a set of attitudes toward China, Korea, and other Asian countries seen as premodern and vulnerable to Western conquest. According to this perspective, Japan was the only recourse Asia had to Western hegemony and, as such, deserved to dominate its neighbors politically. Positioning Japan as the savior of China, apologists for colonization argued that Japan was obligated "to help its Asian brother to modernize" (Shih, 21). This argument found expression in such slogans as "*dōbun-dōsha*" ("common culture, common race"), "the yellow man's burden," and

"*kyōka*" ("civilizing mission"), all of which justified Japanese expansion in China through a myth of cultural and racial inheritance (Shih, 21). Japan's right to rule parts of China derived, according to this myth, from perceived racial kinship with the Chinese and, simultaneously, from its ability to rival Western military power.

The merit of the Japanese nation and culture was couched in racial terms that derived the right to political dominance from a particular genealogy. In his study of Japanese exhibition culture, Lockyer describes the myth of common ancestry and cultural superiority that gained traction in interwar Japan:

> Briefly, such a narrative begins by assuming a point of (divine) origin freed from the contingencies of the historical environment. This assumption of autopoesis allows subsequent historical experience to be rewritten as the inevitable self-realization of a genetically programmed destiny: one studies the past to anticipate the future. Temporal and spatial distinctions are collapsed: the articulation of organism and its environment and the resulting change over time are characterized as the extension across time and space of the unchanging, self-same code and so the heroic yet effortless creation of a world by the organism… Modern Japanese development is not understood as the outcome of an intricate pattern of interaction with the contemporary world; rather, a world of international harmony will result from the natural development of the Japanese empire. (Lockyer, 281)

While Lockyer's purpose in providing this summary is to show distinctions between Japanese nationalism and Italian and Spanish Fascism during this period, his findings also illuminate the intersection of race and imperialist politics in this moment of Japanese history. Lockyer's references to genetics and the organic nation reiterate the "seasonal metaphors" that clarified Japan's role in establishing Asian modernity (280). The defining feature of the above narrative is its insistence on the essential, in-dwelling nature of Japaneseness as something that, once it achieves its fullest manifestation in the global theater, will transform the environments and peoples with which it comes into contact. This narrative serves as a powerful justification for imperial expansion and for the

subjugation and, sometimes, extermination of those who do not share in Japan's

"genetically programmed destiny."[100]

One source for this particular narrative justifying Japanese expansion was *Kokutai no Hongi* (Cardinal Principles of the Nation), a handbook published by the Ministry of Education in 1937 for Japanese schoolchildren. The following excerpt from an English translation of *Kokutai no Hongi* demonstrates the rhetoric marshaled to support Japanese imperial expansion:

> The unbroken line of Emperors, receiving the Oracle of the Founder of the Nation, reign eternally over the Japanese Empire. This is our eternal and immutable national entity. Thus, founded on this great principle, all the people, united as one great family nation in heart and obeying the Imperial Will, enhance the beautiful virtues of loyalty and filial piety. This is the glory of our national entity… This should be done not only for the sake of our nation but for the sake of the entire human race, which is struggling to find a way out of the deadlock with which individualism is faced. (quoted in Henshall, 117-118)

The phrase "eternal and immutable" recalls Hegel's description of Oriental cultures as changeless. Yet, here, the *Kokutai* deliberately sets up Japan's "national entity" as an alternative to Western "individualism"—the very ideal of personal freedom that Hegel posits as the end goal of human civilization. In this sense, *Kokutai* rejects a Eurocentric narrative of world history in favor of a narrative of Japanese ascendance and leadership.

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[100] The massacre of Koreans in Tokyo after the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake, the mass execution of soldiers and civilians at Nanking in 1937, and the conquest of the Ainu over many decades in Hokkaidō and Sakhalin are key examples of this imperial policy of subjugation and extermination. See Michael Allen, "The Price of Identity: The 1923 Earthquake and its Aftermath" and J. Charles Schencking, "The Great Kanto Earthquake and the Culture of Catastrophe and Reconstruction in 1920s Japan" on the Korean massacre. See Iris Chang's *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* on the Nanking genocide. I address the relationship between the Ainu culture and the Japanese Empire in Chapter 1, drawing heavily on Richard Siddle's *Race, Resistance, and the Ainu of Japan*. Michael Weiner's *Race and Migration in Imperial Japan* is also an important source on violence toward non-Japanese people under the control or influence of the Japanese Empire.

While this narrative diverges from that of Western imperialism through its refusal of

individualism, it shares with other imperialist discourses a racial logic. The terms

"unbroken line of Emperors" and "great family nation" suggest the nation as a

genealogical structure as well as a body politic. Along with this genealogical basis for the

nation comes an assumption of homogeneity and blood ties, understood to bind the nation

regardless of domestic and international strife. Yet, *Kokutai* is not concerned only with

the Japanese racial nation. The text seems to map race in concentric circles, suggesting

that racial kinship at the level of the nation is analogous with racial ties at the level of the

species. Japanese solidarity is key to the wellbeing of the "human race" as a whole, it

would seem. The text at once insists on the uniqueness of Japan and the universality of

the good that Japan offers the human world. It thus interweaves particularity and

generality, absorbing cosmopolitanism into ultra-nationalism and leaving no room for

dissonance with Japan's imperial projects.[101]

As Yokomitsu's novel explores, the Japanese colonists who lived in foreign sites

such as China and Korea faced a reality much different than the utopia described by

Kokutai no Hongi. In Shanghai, where they coexisted with both indigenous Chinese

people and fellow-colonists from Europe and America, this interesting diaspora of

Japanese expatriates towed a dangerous line. They were often excluded from the most

beneficial financial and political sectors of Shanghai's life and deemed culturally and

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[101] Japanese nationalism in the early twentieth century shares some ideological features of U.S. American exceptionalism, and one might argue that Japan's aggressive stance toward Korea, China, and Taiwan (among other neighboring countries) mirrors the U.S.'s stance toward Central America and the Caribbean from the Monroe Doctrine onward. On the relationship between the U.S. and Japan in international affairs, see Naoki Sakai, "Transpacific Complicity and Comparatist Strategy: Failure in Decolonization and the Rise of Japanese Nationalism."

racially inferior by much of the Western population. Indeed, Japan withdrew from the

League of Nations in 1932 after the League voted to condemn Japan's annexation of

Manchuria in northern China (Fletcher, 249). The Cambridge Companion to Japan

History adds that Japan's departure from the League of Nations was partly a response to

the League's voting against a resolution to eschew racism in international politics. In

addition to this tension with the Western imperialists, Japanese settlers had social and

political friction with the Chinese—even in Shanghai, where so many Chinese businesses

cooperated with foreigners. As the May Thirtieth Incident attests, conflicts between

Chinese laborers and Japanese factory owners, bankers, and merchants sometimes

escalated into violence. Inhabiting this intersection of inter-imperial rivalry and

colonizer-on-colonized conflict, the Japanese living in Shanghai in the 1920s were at the

fringes of their own nation. It is this marginal existence and vexed relation to the

homeland that Yokomitsu explores in *Shanghai*, as he critiques the construct of the racial

Japanese nation through the trope of the still body.

Beyond Racial Taxonomy in *Shanghai*

Shanghai is a novel written in the third person and broken into forty-five short

chapters.[102] Filled with vivid descriptions of the city, the novel portrays the experiences

of several young Japanese expatriates living in Shanghai during the May Thirtieth

incident: Sanki, a pensive and anguished bank clerk; Kōya, an ambitious and fiercely

competitive lumber broker; Osugi, a bath-house worker who, when fired, becomes a

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[102] In some versions of *Shanghai* chapter 44 is omitted. See Washburn's "Note on the Text and Translation" pg. 239.

prostitute; Takashige, the manager of a cotton mill under threat of an impending strike;

Oryū, the bath-house madam and wife of a wealthy Chinese businessman; Yamaguchi, a

pan-Asianist who sells corpses to Western medical companies; and Miyako, a dancer

rumored to be a spy. While Japanese characters (especially Sanki, Kōya, and Osugi) are

the protagonists of the novel, Yokomtisu's descriptions populate the fictional Shanghai

with Chinese, Russian, British, German, American, Portuguese, Filipino, Indian, Spanish,

Norwegian, French, Italian, and Bulgarian people. The colonization projects of Europe,

America, and Japan are manifested in the presence of bodies astride rickshaws and

carriages, emerging from dance halls and restaurants and office buildings, bearing these

national identities. In a sense, the cityscape, layered as it is with garbage and sewage,

forms an analogue to the densely layered social world of semi-colonial Shanghai. Here,

Russian beggars and Chinese rickshaw runners scrounge for survival while Sikh police

officers under British command battle Chinese students protesting in the streets.

    The opening scene of *Shanghai* provides an example of Yokomitsu's pairing of

images of motion with images of stillness and introduces the racialized inert body. At the

novel's beginning, Sanki—a young, Japanese, white-collar worker living in Shanghai—is

at the docks waiting for his friend, Kōya. The narrator records the scene as Sanki might

see it as he approaches the wharf:

> At high tide the river swelled and flowed backward. Prows of darkened
> motorboats lined up in a wave pattern. A row of rudders drawn up. Mountains of
> off-loaded cargo. The black legs of a wharf bound in chains. A signal showing
> calm winds raised atop a weather station tower. A customs house spire dimly
> visible through the evening fog. Coolies on barrels stacked on the embankment,
> becoming soaked in the damp air. A black sail, torn and tilted, creaking along,
> adrift on brackish waters. (Yokomitsu, 3)[103]

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[103] All quotations from *Shanghai* are from Dennis Washburn's 2001 translation, which
Washburn describes as "an appropriation of Yokomitsu's story" that strives "to preserve

Here, the "movement and flux" described by Washburn appears in the river's motion and the bobbing of docked boats. However, the atmosphere evoked by this passage is also marked by an absence of movement, pervaded by a sense of suspended action. The narrator skims over the surface of things, creating an almost cinematic effect as if the scene were a series of close-up shots. After the first sentence, the predicates drops out, leaving us with a catalogue of images and a sense of deferred or foreclosed action. The catalogue has a leveling effect, such that the "mountains of off-loaded cargo," the "black legs of a wharf," and the "Coolies on barrels" are all pieces in a composite setting. Distinctions of human or non-human, animate or inanimate, are absent. Indeed, while the narrative voice focuses on first one image and then another, isolating small details, the mist acts as a unifying substance. Seen first in the fog around the customs house spire, the mist recurs in the description of the laborers who are "becoming soaked in the damp air." Acting as an extension of the river, the mist disperses and saturates. Not entirely static, this mist nevertheless evokes an atmosphere of immersive stillness, as indicated by the "calm winds" detected by the weather tower. Within this stasis, the mist breaks down the boundaries of insides and outsides. The dock workers breathe and absorb the moisture, becoming increasingly blended with their physical surroundings. This blending reinforces their status as "Coolies"—that is, as figures who belong to the docks and the off-loaded cargo. We can assume that the laborers are hired to load and unload cargo, but here we see them in a moment of idleness. Whether their inactivity constitutes rest remains

the quirkiness of the original" (Washburn, 240). Because Washburn's is the only English translation, I am wholly dependent on his work, and the text that I read here is really a hybrid creation of his and Yokomitsu's. Thus, this text has multiple relevant contexts, including both 1920s Japan and the New Sensation movement on one hand and twenty-first century U.S.-situated Japanese studies programs on the other.

unclear, but as they "become soaked" the dock workers become physically integrated with their environment in a way that mirrors the phenomenon of their blending into the background of Shanghai's social milieu. The impression of stillness that emerges from this passage, then, is not only a sense of immediate physical stillness but also a hint of changeless routine from day to day and, perhaps, from year to year. The passage introduces Yokomitsu's readers to a kind of modernity antithetical to the hustle and bustle of urban activity so prevalent in representations of twentieth century life.

At first glance, this passage seems to recreate in miniature the "fixed character" of China described by Hegel. But this scene of stillness is, significantly, set in one of China's most cosmopolitan, most capitalist cities (in the 1920s). The stasis pictured here is not pastoral, not associated with traditional Chinese culture. Rather, the stasis wraps around a zone of East and Western contact. The docks are where cargo from all over the world temporarily accumulates, where Russian prostitutes rest on a bench, where stateless laborers pause from work. The dock's status as a crossroads is especially apparent because Sanki is supposed to be meeting Kōya there. This stillness, then, is not that of an unchanging ancient race but rather that produced by transpacific interactions in a world of modern transportation.

This scene accomplishes several things for Yokomitsu: it commences his ongoing representation of perception, gestures toward the political and economic exploitation that existed in 1920s Shanghai, and foreshadows the urban stoppage that will occur at the novel's climax with the Chinese laborers' strike. The catalogue of images that begins the novel is the first of many such catalogues of sensory data. Yokomitsu's own definition of sensation is helpful in understanding the way these catalogues work. As a founder of the

New Sensation School (*Shinkankaku-ha*) with Kawabata Yasunari and Kataoka Teppei, Yokomitsu laid out his literary goals in his essay, "*Shinkankakuron*" ("A theory of the new sensation," 1925). He developed the following definition of sensation: "The general concept I call Sensation (*kankaku*) refers to the surface signs (or symbols, *hyōchō*) of perception; it refers to the intuitive triggering mechanism (*shokuhatsubutsu*) of subjectivity that strips away the external aspects of nature and merges with an object" (Washburn's translation, 223). For Yokomitsu, perception is a temporal, interactive process that gives rise to subjectivity. Subjectivity emerges as one responds to objects that are gradually disclosed by their surfaces—by their tangible, visual, audible and olifactory aspects. Subjectivity is thus itself a contingent phenomenon, a process of relation rather than a given ontological status.

Repeatedly constructing the processes of perception that lead to subjectivity in *Shanghai*, Yokomitsu exposes processes of racialization and othering enfolded in acts of perception. In this opening passage, for example, the term "Coolies" implies that the narrator's perspective is informed by the hierarchy of racial and class-based distinctions that operates in 1920s Shanghai. Though unselfconscious about the label "Coolie," the narrator does seem to grasp—at least on an intuitive level—the presence of political and economic exploitation in this scene. The phrase, "The black legs of a wharf bound in chains," is impossible to ignore in its close proximity to the "Coolies." The personifying language and the image of binding chains, combined with the qualifier "black" (which appears later in the novel as a racial term in alongside the terms "white" and "yellow"), suggest that the image of enslavement modifies the workers as well as the wharf. Hired at low or subsistence wages, these laborers are part of an international system of economic

exploitation compounded by colonial practices of racial subjugation. Here, the mere

perception of their bodily presence is already rife with a vexed apprehension of their

status as exploited, confined, semi-enslaved. Is it possible that the final image of the

opening paragraph—the "black sail, torn and tilted"—is seen through the eyes of these

laborers? Coming across them in an idle moment, does the narration ooze into their

processes of subjectivity as the mist settles into their pores? This possibility of shifting

and overlapping processes of perception—highlighted through the diffuse third-person

perspective—is ever-present in *Shanghai*. As he experiments with networks of

sensation—as opposed to an individualist concept of sensory perception—Yokomitsu

turns repeatedly to stillness as a mode that interrupts automatic perceptions of racial

likeness or difference.

In what follows, I focus on three of Yokomitsu's characters, Kōya, Sanki, and

Osugi, and trace the emergence of their subjectivity through engagement with the sensory

world, the semi-colonial space of Shanghai, and the dominant perceptual regime of race

(along with its reigning ideology of racism). I frame my reading of these three characters

with key passages of *Shanghai* in which racial formations, imperialism, and politics are

explicitly taken up. Then I move on to explore how Kōya—the character who most

whole-heartedly embraces the notion of a Japanese racial nation—develops his

subjectivity while accumulating capital in Shanghai. Sanki, by contrast, reflects critically

on the racial nation and its utility as an ideology that supports imperialism. Osugi, the

most unorthodox of these three characters, channels her sensory experience toward acts

of recognition that subvert racial categorization and national allegiance in favor of

circumstantial proximity that links her to an array of other people living in the locus of

Shanghai. For each of these three characters, I argue, racial hierarchy is perpetuated by technologies of motion that keep the city's resources and people flowing, and moments of stillness that interrupt these flows open up possibilities for alternative modes of perceiving others and the self.

Conversations on Race: Yamaguchi and Li Ying-pu, Kōya, and Qian

Yamaguchi is perhaps the seediest character in *Shanghai*. He makes his living by selling Chinese cadavers to Western doctors. His political views reflect this willingness to exploit Chinese bodies in order to increase Japan's capital and its position vis-à-vis the West. A self-proclaimed Asianist, Yamaguchi insists that Japanese aggression is Asia's only viable weapon against the "White Calamity" (Yokomitsu, 66). His discussions often take a turn toward racialist rhetoric. The following letter, sent to Yamaguchi from a Chinese associate, Li Ying-pu, summarizes one position on the interwoven questions of race and imperialism in East Asia:

> …The main races in the world today are the yellow and the white. Black and red have already been subjugated by the white. American Indians, the Malay of Southeast Asia, the African Negro. Within a few decades all will be extinct. The white man strictly enforces his plan of racial extermination, and the aims of his imperialism will be achieved only after he controls the entire world. The wickedness of his heart and the extremism of his aims are plain to see. We yellow people are on the verge of a crisis. The white race has subjugated four of the five continents. The only unspoiled paradises left are the nations of Asia, the home of the yellow peoples. Yet try examining a map of Asia, my friend. The southernmost Pacific islands, the Philippines, western India, Annam, Burma, Hong Kong, and Macao. The white man dominates them all, and yet his ambition is not quenched. Japan and China share the same race, the same culture. They are neighbors, and closely related. If China collapses it will do Japan no good. So why raise high the national flag and put your trust in it? My friend, we are now being lulled by mellifluous voices that distract us from the white man's plan of racial extinction. When we look closely at our two nations, they seem to be

asleep, in a daze, hoping for some great happiness, unaware of the impending tragedy of the death of a race. (Yokomitsu, 192)

Here, the alarm registered in response to white imperialism produces a pleading tone and a rhetoric of catastrophe. Li Ying-pu's assumption that American Indians, Malaysians, and black Africans (and, by extension, the black diaspora) are on the verge of extinction reflects a naïve acceptance of the absolute power that white-dominated nations have exerted over their colonies. The "White Calamity" appears as a super-villain of comic-book proportions, and this label—which reinforces the truth value of racial categories—echoes that of "Yellow Peril" wielded by rhetoricians and policy-makers of Western nations.[104]

And yet the political relations between China and Japan on one hand and the European nations and U.S.A. on the other justify the pitch of melodrama in Li Ying-pu's correspondence. In 1917, the United States passed legislation to restrict immigration from Japan, responding in part to strong anti-Asian racist sentiments in California and the greater Pacific coast.[105] While Japanese people were systematically refused entry into the United States, Americans and Europeans had been forcing their way into these Eastern nations, through naval power, since the 1850s. Diplomatic relations among China, Japan, and the West regularly favored the interests of Western nations, giving them "concessions"—small terrItōrial holdings—and trading rights in the Pacific without

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[104] For an authoritative account of how Western interlocutors have constructed Asian people as dangerous and immoral, see *Yellow Peril!: An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear*. Edited by John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats, this collection focuses on the Enlightenment as a cultural movement that perpetuated and strengthened such prejudicial images of the East.

[105] The Immigration Act of 1917 banned many types of people deemed undesirable from entering the United States, including people from East Asia, epileptics, homosexuals, alcoholics, and beggars. It effectively expanded the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act to include Japanese as well as Chinese people.

giving equal privileges to the Eastern nations. Li Ying-pu's letter proposes an answer to this undesirable situation: China and Japan must form a racial and cultural alliance that will empower them to defend Asia from Western encroachment. His use of the terms "the same race, the same culture" recalls the political rhetoric of *dōbun-dōshu* which circulated in Japan as a justification for expansion into China. Yet the end of the letter reminds us that this united East-Asian culture is more of a speculative fiction than a political reality. When Li Ying-pu writes, "So why raise high the national flag and put your trust in it?" he pleads with Yamaguchi to set aside Japan's imperialist interests and ultra-nationalist ideology in order to embrace a broader, anti-Western campaign. When he writes that China and Japan "seem to be asleep, in a daze, hoping for some great happiness, unaware of the impending tragedy of the death of a race," he implies that the nationalist movements in these countries—the nascent Republic in China and the highly-organized military regime in Japan—are distractions preventing these cultures from seeing the urgency of the need for action against the West. Race emerges as a discursive method in the service of a specific political agenda, here. Just as the construction of whiteness in America and Europe has seemed to fuel successful conquests abroad, the construction of Asianness—or of the "yellow people"—is intended to form the basis of a coalition to counter white conquest.

Just how fraught the idea of "yellow people" would have been during the 1920s becomes clearer in a later conversation between Kōya and Qian, a wealthy Chinese businessman. Like Yamaguchi and Li Ying-pu, Kōya and Qian want to work toward mutual interests, but their concerns are economic rather than political. Kōya visits Qian's house—by invitation of Qian's Japanese wife—as a salesman looking for new markets

for his lumber company. His first rhetorical move is flattery aimed at the Chinese as a whole:

> The Chinese are far ahead of other races when it comes to laying railroads, digging in mines, and farming the land… Only intellectuals understand that the world revolves around China. That's why the world is ganging up on the Chinese and fighting them. After all, the Chinese are the most populous race on earth. (Yokomitsu, 117)

Kōya's compliments have an undertone of warning. Although he praises the Chinese as an advanced "race," "far ahead" of others in industrial and agricultural practice, he simultaneously demeans the Chinese by claiming they are fit for physical labor. His words depict Chinese people "laying railroads" and "digging in mines" but not sitting in offices and orchestrating these projects. By relegating an appreciation for China's central place in the modern world order to "intellectuals," Kōya implies that the popular opinion of China is low. He also alludes to the degrading diplomatic relations China has to its imperialist intruders, reminding Qian that "the world is ganging up on the Chinese." Kōya's flattery thus acts as a thin screen for his real message: China is in trouble.

The fact that Kōya designates the Chinese as a race rather than a nation or a culture hints at the logic that undergirds his vision of the modern world. For Kōya, the nation is the apparatus by which a certain race gains resources and security in the twentieth century global theater. Race seems to be a first-order category, something derived from nature and ancestry, whereas nationality is artificially constructed. Thus, the destinies of modern nations depend, first and foremost, on the racial characteristics of those nations. After Qian's lukewarm response to this first attempt at conversation, Kōya turns to a discussion of international race relations. For him, the question of which empires will achieve lasting dominance is, at bottom, a question of interracial

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reproduction: "What remains is the question of interracial mixing. There's simply no way to get around this difficult problem, even for the superior Europeans" (Yokomitsu, 119). Kōya argues that when white and black people mix, they produce "colored people," but when "yellow" and black people mix they simply produce more "yellow people" (Yokomitsu 119). This, he claims, makes marriages with Asians more desirable to black people than marriages with whites. He explains the effect this state of affairs will have on the future balance of power:

> Naturally this phenomenon proves that the race that will continue increasing into the future isn't the white or the black, but the yellow. Thus the center of genuine power in the world lies with the yellow race. Once this phenomenon becomes clear, then the opposition between yellow and white will become increasingly conspicuous in our ideologies. The next world war won't be an economic war. It'll be a race war. That's why if China and Japan keep quarreling with each other as they are now, the race that will benefit most is the white. (Yokomitsu, 119)

Here, again, is a plea for China and Japan to ally against the white imperialists. Kōya reiterates the *dōbun-dōshu* ("common culture, common race") rhetoric used by the *Tōa Dōbun Shoin* ("East Asia Common Culture Academy"), a Shanghai-based institution that trained Japanese colonial administrators from 1900-1945 (Shih, 20).[106] Kōya's use of this rhetoric, however, illustrates the slipperiness of racial identity and the convenience of its malleability. In the course of one conversation, he switches racial registers—speaking first of the "Chinese race" and then, only later, of the "yellow race" as a group encompassing both Chinese and Japanese people. This shift seems to happen in response to Qian's nonplussed attitude after the first speech. Kōya wants Qian to buy lumber, and Qian is not demonstrating interest. Thus, racial difference and racial sameness are tools to be taken out and wielded when circumstances require them. Kōya oscillates between

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[106] The East Asia Common Culture Academy was located in Shanghai, so it makes sense that this rhetoric would have been available to Kōya.

identification with and discrimination against the Chinese among whom he lives, as he pursues financial success over and against the Western capitalists.

Kōya's articulation of race, which occupies an intersection of eugenics and imperialism, sheds light on some of the ways in which Japanese racial ideology of the early twentieth century was distinct from well-rehearsed racial ideologies of the West. When Kōya begins speaking about interracial marriage, he adopts a scientific tone. Race is, for Kōya, biological. And biology favors the Asian races by making their genes dominant in cases of black and Asian interracial reproduction. This scientific, or pseudo-scientific, argument hinges on some of the same core beliefs found in doctrines of white supremacy: namely, the self-evident inferiority of black people and the assumed desire of black people to produce lighter-skinned posterity. Kōya also assumes that while whiteness is superior, Asianness is preferable to blackness. Yet, whereas white supremacy—especially as articulated in the United States—often prohibited interracial reproduction through laws, punishments, and enforced sterilization, here interracial marriage supplies an answer rather than a problem. Instead of racial purity, Kōya welcomes interracial mixing as a means for producing more people who identify as Asian and will side with the "yellow race" in conflicts against the whites. Miscegenation is perceived as a means of assimilation and population growth that will increase political power. This perspective totally ignores the possibilities that offspring of Asian and black marriages might identify as black or as black *and* Asian. Indeed, there is no room for biracial identity in Kōya's formulation. Interracial reproduction works like a factory with one output. In this particular racial ideology, compartmentalization is less important than combination according to strict logics of racial production.

The undertones of the conversation between Kōya and Qian surface more readily

when one attends to the images that constitute the scene of the dialogue. After Kōya

expounds upon his racial theories, Qian gives a vague reply, which Kōya deems

"equivalent to a cipher," and then begins trembling from opium withdrawal (Yokomitsu,

120). Oryu, his wife, leads him to a bed where the two lie down and smoke themselves

into a deep slumber. As Qian starts to smoke, the text shifts into a sensual, surreal

register: "[Qian's] lips began to move like a fish, and the sizzling sound of opium began"

(Yokomitsu, 120). The comparison to a fish evokes Qian's elusiveness with respect to

Kōya's politically-framed sales pitch and suggests his apathy toward Kōya's racial

rhetoric. Qian seems to have the slippery quality of a changeling. At the same time, the

comparison seems to derive from Kōya's viewpoint, suggesting disgust on his part. As

the passage continues, Kōya is designated as the observer of this scene:

> Kōya suddenly realized that the two had no doubt invited him to this room for the
> pleasure of having him watch them. He felt angry. The he sensed the pitifulness of
> his own face, which had been chattering away so earnestly. Soon the two of them
> closed their eyes like some enraptured insects. Oryu's voluptuous hair came
> undone, tumbling into an opium tray inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The nose of the
> hunchback expanded as he breathed softly in the space between rows of amber
> and jade. (Yokomitsu, 121)

Kōya's painful self-consciousness manifests in these thoughts, as he perceives Qian's and

Oryu's indulgence as a performance intended to display their indifference toward him.

The image he forms of the sleeping pair—"enraptured insects"—reflects a distancing of

himself from them, seeing them as other than human and thus as opaque and

unsympathetic. As he takes in Oryu's hair, the mother-of-pearl tray, the hunched back of

Qian, and the amber and jade ornaments, Kōya projects a mixture of beauty, sensuality,

and debauchery onto the sleeping figures. This projection fits within an economy of

perception that Shu-mei Shih has called Japanized Orientalism. Even the fact that Kōya notes Qian's hunched back shows his selective process of sensory perception. He sees the deformity instead of seeing Qian in particular. Whatever Kōya might say about "yellow" solidarity, this image of deformity underscores the racializing of Qian as Chinese.

Still, Qian's response to Kōya's racially-charged rhetoric (and his attempt to win Qian's business) cannot be entirely explained by his enclosure within a stereotype of the Chinese opium addict. The image of the sleeping Qian and Oryu—one characterized by minute bodily motions encompassed in a posture of passivity—resonates with the final sentence of Li Ying-pu's letter: "When we look closely at our two nations, they seem to be asleep, in a daze, hoping for some great happiness, unaware of the impending tragedy of the death of a race" (Yokomitsu, 192). The Chinese Qian and the Japanese Oryu, entangled in sleep, literalize this metaphor. Uninspired by Kōya's discussion of "yellow" solidarity, which serves as a veiled appeal for Chinese submission to Japanese economic, military, and political power, the couple chooses drug-induced stupor over negotiation with the colonial entrepreneur. Moreover, the image of them paired together seems to introduce a parody of Kōya's victorious narrative of interracial reproduction. Depending on which racial logic one uses, Qian and Oryu are racially the same or racially different. Qian, Chinese, belongs to "the most populous race on earth," while Oryu belongs to the Japanese nation distinguished by its divine, imperial lineage. On the other hand, though, Qian and Oryu are both described as "yellow" in contrast to the European and American imperialists in Shanghai. Nestled together, their bodies seem to signify the kind of reproductive potential that Kōya insists is the key to Asian survival and sovereignty. Yet, Oryu and Qian are without children. Their partnership, while erotic, does not serve the

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reproductive function crucial to expanding racial mass. Rather, their relationship falls

outside the paradigm of racial (re)production and perpetuation of kinship, tending instead

toward a plane of sensory pleasure and cyclical temporality (which is so often associated

with addiction). In contrast to their practice of stillness, Kōya's "chattering away" is

exposed as vanity, and his racial justifications for imperialism are deflated.

Acts of stillness become more motivated in *Shanghai* as Yokomitsu proceeds to

narrate the labor strikes around the May Thirtieth Incident. Before moving onto those

passages, however, I want to examine in more detail how Yokomitsu links mobility—and

technologies of transport—to the perpetuation of racial ideology in semicolonial

Shanghai. To do so, I turn to the experiences of his protagonist, Sanki.

Sanki and Kōya

When Washburn notes that a "visceral sense of movement and flux" pervades

Shanghai, his comment resonates not only with the text's portrayal of physical motion

but also with its attention to linguistic ambiguity and ontological instability (Washburn,

239). The impression of flux arises, in part, from Yokomitsu's detailed descriptions of

Shanghai's waterways and their traffic of sampans, steamers, and barges. It is magnified

by his sketches of immigrant populations, semi-itinerant groups of beggars and rickshaw

pullers, bustling street traffic, rioting crowds, and bodies swaying in the smoky light of

dance halls. The abundance of physical motion in Yokomitsu's narrative seems to jive

with a sense of hermeneutic disorientation diffused throughout the novel. Dynamic as the

flows of people, goods, and capital are, the language deployed by characters is perhaps even more difficult to follow and more wayward in its trajectories.

The novel begins with a failed rendezvous, which serves as a figure of miscommunication. Kōya and Sanki have plans to meet at the dock, but Sanki grows restless when Kōya is late. Sanki walks to the bath-house where, incidentally, he misses Kōya by only a few minutes. Meanwhile, Kōya heads to the wharf to find that he, too, has missed Sanki. This mishap emblematizes the disjointed nature of interpersonal relationships throughout the novel (and the image of Sanki and Kōya changing places foreshadows the way these two will later oscillate in Osugi's mind as she struggles to identify which one is her rapist). Just as Sanki's and Kōya's bodies pass by one another without achieving the intended encounter, words and phrases of dialogue tend to miss their mark or arrive too early or late to facilitate understanding. For example, when Sanki finally receives word of the death of his beloved Kyōko's husband, the news is made obsolete by the Chinese strikes that have left Sanki penniless and starving. A metaphorical link between linguistic signs and street traffic emerges again, when Kōya observes a nighttime scene: "Cars sliding by, their bellies reflected in the light. An alphabet of signs marching on toward this citadel of illumination" (Yokomitsu, 52). The automobiles appear first as creatures—through the bodily word "bellies"—and then as symbols in motion. This paratactic construction evokes a similarity between conveyance as transportation and conveyance as the sharing of a message: the cars are vehicles of motion and also "signs" whose acceleration through the street creates the effect of syntax. Yet these objects are evacuated of meaning as the gaudiness of the signs supersedes their function as carriers of persons or messages. Just as Sanki and Kōya fail to navigate the

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city, allowing the city's built-in distances and the time needed to cover them to rearrange their social agendas, the cars seem to be drawn hither and thither by the infrastructure they inhabit. By "citadel of illumination," the narrator references Kōya's infatuation with the wealthy international settlement run by American and European business moguls. The cars passing Kōya on his walk thus have no distinct meaning of their own—each one appearing identical to that which takes its place—but their incessant circulation through the city spells out the grandness of the inter-imperial network of control established by Westerners in Shanghai.

The phenomenon of slippage illustrated above through Kōya's and Sanki's disconnect and the automobiles-becoming-signs is not contained, in *Shanghai*, within problems of communication and representation. Indeed, the uncanny ability of things to change into other things and to shed their discreet identity while traveling a labyrinth of interconnected routes results in a high level of ontological instability. In the example above, the cars are not literally modes of transportation and *figuratively* symbols marching toward a citadel. Rather, they are literally both vehicles and signs, and as such they highlight the utility of physical space and place for constructing social meaning. Throughout *Shanghai*, metaphors regularly carry out this ontological reconfiguration of their own terms. Chapter six, a brief chapter of only two pages, revolves around a metaphorical conceit comparing rickshaw traffic to a river. In this chapter, Sanki and Kōya ride rickshaws through Shanghai's busy streets on their way to work. I will quote from this scene at length to address the way the narrator's use of metaphor seeps into a more literal phenomenon of transfiguration:

> It was rush hour, and rickshaws filled the streets, flowing like a river… Other streams of rickshaws flowed out from between buildings. When those streams

combined at street crossings, the figures of the rickshawmen disappeared as their cars squeezed ever more tightly together. The passengers formed a silent throng, their upper bodies floating on waves that slid past all at the same speed. To Sanki it didn't seem there could be rickshawmen hidden beneath that crowd. Running along the walls of brick buildings, he gazed on this lively flood tide of people of all nationalities and searched for the faces of acquaintances. (Yokomitsu, 32)

This river metaphor is a tricky one, because the one to one comparison shifts slightly throughout the passage. First, we have "streams of rickshaws" with passengers floating above the stream; this impression grows stronger as the rickshawmen seem to disappear from the scene. Further down, the passengers are absorbed into the river itself, turning into a "lively flood tide of people." The figurative side of the metaphorical pairing seems to expand over the course of the paragraph, encroaching on the literal and erasing social boundaries between the rickshaw pullers and the passengers. Sanki seems, here, to be viewing the dehumanizing effects of the hard, low-paid labor that the rickshawmen perform, as that labor gradually erases them from sight. Moreover, the metaphor employed by the narrator—which seems to exfoliate from Sanki's perspective while riding in his rickshaw—forces us to think of the street traffic as a tangible manifestation of foreign imperialism in China. The "tide of people from all nationalities," though not elaborated on here, references the Japanese, American, British, French, German, and other national groups that have settlements in Shanghai for the goal of increasing their home nations' wealth and political power. Even the language "flowing like a river" resonates with imperialist rhetoric such as that sighted earlier, which depicted Shanghai to the English-speaking world as the "cork of a vast bottle" of riches (*All About Shanghai*, 27). Thus, the metaphor in the above passage signifies dually: it is both a reference to nature—perhaps to Shanghai's actual geographic proximity to the Yangtze—

depicting the qualities of an urban setting and a reference to imperialist rhetoric used to aestheticize and naturalize acts of conquest and seizure in China.

Still, this complex metaphorical passage does not quite suggest that anything is being transfigured. The rickshaws and human beings are not quite turning into a river, although the comparison does seem to build so much momentum that it exceeds its original target (the rickshaws, not the passengers). What happens next, though, makes the ontological ambiguity of the material things represented in this scene more explicit. Sanki spies "[r]ickshaws filled with flowers and vegetables" and becomes engulfed in the "scent of roses and Chinese cabbage" (Yokomitsu, 33). He moves from this sensory experience to an interpretive act, reading the flowers as "a sign of the death of Kyōko's husband" and inwardly reprimanding himself for willing someone else's misfortune to promote his own happiness (Yokomitsu, 33). Perhaps it is this propensity to graft disparate things to one another through association—a metonymic act—that allows Sanki to then see himself as Kyōko's husband and conjure an imaginary other to whish for his, Sanki's, death. This series of thoughts brings Sanki to a sense of his own interchangeability with others, depersonalizing his desire for Kyōko and dispersing his emotion throughout the "river of the living" rushing around him "in torrents" (Yokomitsu, 33). In this paragraph, the metaphor that we begin with—the vision of a river of rickshaws and passengers—produces an excess of changeable and interchangeable components, such that Sanki's subjectivity takes on the malleability of the stream flowing around him. The flowers impress themselves on Sanki's consciousness as funereal symbols, but this symbolic death of another quickly erupts from Sanki's wishful dream and signals his own mortality. The sense of imminent death

in the immersive scent of the flowers destabilizes Sanki's sense of himself as a discreet individual and pushes him toward a more diffuse, collective mode of consciousness.

What exactly does all of this "movement and flux" accomplish in Yokomitsu's text? Does the novel represent mutation and flow in order to critique them, celebrate them, or do something altogether different? An answer to these questions begins to come into focus with the recognition that flux is not boundless in *Shanghai* but rather occurs according to certain patterns that reflect what I want to call colonial logics. Two types of colonial logic are crucial to the fluctuation represented in *Shanghai*, and they can be understood by returning to the concepts of metaphor and metonymy. The first is what I'll call a logic of conversion whereby one thing is transformed into another through an equivalence assumed to exist between the two things. One way in which this logic plays out is through the conversion of one currency into another. Another, more figurative, application of this logic is the use of metaphor. Both are operating in the following passage describing Sanki's work in the trade division of Far East Cotton Mills:

> Copper coins flowed out from the seaport to the provinces. Silver coins in the seaport began to disappear. Brokers' carriages raced between Japanese and British banks. The gold market soared in response to copper and silver. Sanki's pen grew weary with calculating the conversion of British pounds… On the bulletin board was a note that the American cotton market was up because of storms. The raw cotton market in Liverpool was being propped up by the Bombay futures market. The smaller speculators' markets of Kutchakhandi and Tejimandi were in turn supporting Bombay. The main responsibility of Sanki's division was to track the fluctuations in these two smaller Indian markets to determine where they should purchase raw cotton. The decision as to where to obtain resources had a great impact on the productivity of the company. Thus small markets such as Kutchakhandi and Tejimandi, which were usually overlooked, were a hidden whirlwind that could wreak havoc sometimes on the worldwide cotton market. (Yokomitsu, 77)

Several kinds of conversion enter into this passage: the mention of copper coins and silver coins evokes the changing of money from one national currency to another, and the

racing of carriages between Japanese and British banks suggests the frequency of such conversions. From Sanki's perspective in the trade division office, raw cotton is transformed into a processed commodity which then, through equivalence, turns into capital for the company. The movement of cotton on a global scale—from India to England, America, and China—seems to facilitate this fungibility within networks of production and consumption. Weather's interference with global trade first enters the picture when the narrator references "storms" that have elevated the American cotton market. In this case the "storms" are natural phenomena meddling with manmade markets, but further down the narrator attributes weather-like qualities to the markets themselves. The "small markets" on which Sanki has his eye are compared to "a whirlwind that could wreak havoc on the worldwide cotton market." Here, a figurative process of conversion is at work, as the narrator marshals meteorological language to describe the magnitude of impact small markets can have on international economics. While one might be tempted to see the literal conversion of coins into other coins as categorically different from the figurative conversion of markets into natural disasters, a connection emerges between these two forms of interchangeability. Dealing in metaphors involves the same principles as trading goods for capital: perceived equivalence authorizes the substitution of one thing for another, and the fundamental substitutability of all things is at the heart of a both a system of valuation and one of meaning-making.

As the image of carriages shuttling between Japanese and British banks suggests, technologies of transport are crucial to the systems of substitution that allow Shanghai to operate as a semicolonial, capitalist stronghold. What is important to note is that traffic in Shanghai is not a free-for-all but is organized according to asymmetrical power relations

between China and Japan, between China and the West, and between Japan and the West. As Shih points out when remarking on the way both Western and Eastern commentators compared Shanghai to a water source, the flow of riches was carefully managed by foreign imperialists to the detriment of the Chinese laborers and peasantry. Mastery over conversions comes to the fore in an early chapter in *Shanghai*, as Kōya speaks with Yamaguchi at a night club. In response to Kōya's questions, Yamaguchi begins to describe how he makes his living: "I buy bodies from the Chinese and sell them. For what it costs for one corpse you can keep seven Russian mistresses. Seven. And that's Russian nobility, mind you!" (Yokomitsu, 17). By this logic of conversion, one Russian mistress is worth one seventh of a Chinese corpse. A hierarchy of gendered and racialized persons is articulated here, with the White Russian refugee at the bottom, the Chinese just above her, and the Japanese settlers striving to rival the Western imperialists for the top position. The parceling of bodies into units of monetary value strikes Kōya as a process of transformation. He ponders Yamaguchi's business, thinking, "It was the very essence of turning waste into wealth" (Yokomitsu, 18). Just as coins and cotton can be converted for the purpose of accumulating wealth, Chinese bodies and poor Russian women are exposed to a ruthless logic of conversion serving imperialist ends. In this sense, fluctuation in *Shanghai* comes under strict controls that endow flux with direction and purpose.

Alongside this logic of conversion, which I associate with metaphor, Yokomitsu depicts the logic of synecdoche. Like the transfigurations in the above examples, synecdoche operates in *Shanghai* as a colonial logic. In particular, synecdoche becomes a

mode for articulating race in connection to nationality. Sanki's reflections on the

semicolonial social world of Shanghai underscore this function of synecdoche:

> Another way to look at it was that each respective race of people made their living
> here as suckers on the tentacles of a giant octopus, pulling in a huge amount of
> wealth for their home countries. Thus, with the exception of the Russians, even
> people who were idle, unemployed, or simply aimless could be thought of as an
> expression of patriotism simply   by their mere presence in Shanghai. Sanki
> laughed at that thought. The truth is, if he were in Japan the only thing he would
> be good for is reducing Japan's food supply. But because he was in Shanghai, the
> space his body took up was always a territory of Japan. (Yokomitsu, 44-45)

Figuring the racial nation—or "race of people"—as an organism and the person as one of

several appendages attached to that organism, Sanki imagines the instrumentality of the

part for the whole. Here, substitution of part for whole translates into the person's

standing for the race. Except for the ex-Russian nobility, who are more exiles than

colonizers, the foreigners dwelling in Shanghai appear as extensions of a racialized,

national body.

A metonymic chain begins to emerge when we connect this large-scale body of

the nation to the small-scale body of the person. At both levels, the logic of synecdoche

reinforces racial classification. Just as the individual serves as a stand-in for the nation-

as-organism, specific features of the body supplant the whole self in racialized moments

of perception. For example, after the Chinese labor riots begin, the Japanese characters

are besieged in certain neighborhoods of Shanghai. Driven by hunger, Sanki puts on

Chinese clothing and sneaks out of the International Settlement to find food. Sensing

danger, he ponders his Japaneseness:

> He became aware again of the fact that he was Japanese. How many times had he
> been informed of that fact? Because of the danger posed by his being a flesh-and-
> blood embodiment of Japan, he felt that the crowd pressing in on him was a beast
> with fangs. He pictured simultaneously in his mind the spectacle before him now
> and the spectacle of his own body flowing from his mother's flesh. His own time,

the flow marked by the interval between these two spectacles, was undoubtedly also the time of Japan's flesh and blood. And perhaps from this point on as well they would be one. So what could he do to liberate his heart from his body and freely forget his mother country? His flesh could not resist the simple fact that the external world forced him to be Japanese. It wasn't his heart that resisted. It was his skin that had to take on the world. And so his heart, in obedience to his skin, also began to resist. (Yokomitsu, 157)

Certain aspects of this scene—Sanki's impression that the crowd is "a beast with fangs" and his visualization of his own birth—reflect Sanki's increasing delirium as hunger affects his cognition. The all-importance of flesh here heightens our awareness that Sanki's flesh is diminishing in these latter chapters of the novel, as he and the rest of the Japanese characters enter the early phases of starvation during the crippling Chinese strikes. The ideology of the racial nation comes to the fore here, as Sanki interprets his Japanese identity as something passed to him from his mother's body. In Sanki's mind, he becomes bifurcated in terms of the "heart" and the "flesh." While "heart" evokes emotion and desire, it also references a piece of the body. Its "obedience" to the skin highlights this status as organ. Most capacious of all organs, the "skin" obtains a supreme role, determining Sanki's place in the social world of Shanghai. This emphasis on skin returns us to the dominance of racial ideology in Sanki's world. Just as the skin replaces the self in economies of racial perception, the self replaces the racial nation in the semicolonial extraction of wealth. Thus, the nation, the self, and the skin become links in a chain of synecdoche that undergirds the Japanese colonial culture in which Sanki lives.

Sanki is not the only character who comprehends race through the logic of synecdoche. Kōya has a tendency to zero in on certain body parts as he observes other people, emphasizing legs, eyes, and noses above other details. These features are erotic for him, especially when partially concealed. In the following passage, Kōya turns his

gaze toward Fang Qiu-lan—a mysterious Chinese woman rumored to be active in the

Communist Party—while dancing in one of Shanghai's night clubs:

> …each time they spun around, Qiu-lan's face would leap up, peeking out from behind the man's shoulder in Kōya's direction. He couldn't help smiling faintly when he thought that his own brother knew the beautiful woman before him. Qiu-lan's perfectly clear eyes continued to move about calmly in front of Kōya's smiling face until the dance ended. (Yokomitsu, 20)

Here, the movement of the dance facilitates Kōya's voyeurism. The shoulder of Qiu-lan's

dance partner acts like a veil alternately concealing and revealing her face. Kōya's

fixation on her "perfectly clear eyes" suggests his infatuation with her beauty. There is

also something distant and unassailable about Qiu-lan's face as Kōya sees it. Her "clear

eyes" contrast with the "searching eyes" Kōya attributes to his own dance partner,

Miyako (Yokomitsu, 20). The difference, it seems, has something to do with Qiu-lan's

being Chinese. Upon first noticing her, Kōya immediately identifies her this way, noting

"a pair of Chinese faces" in the crowd of dancers (Yokomitsu, 20). For him, Qiu-lan's

Chinese identity registers in her eyes' transparency. Her eyes are there to be looked at or

looked *through*, while Miyako's eyes are troubling instruments of scrutiny. Even in this

brief moment of visual contact, racial stereotypes intervene in Kōya's perception: he sees

Miyako as wily and active, while he sees Qiu-lan as artless and passive.

In the example above, the dance steps shape Kōya's observation of Qiu-lan and

facilitate his piecemeal viewing of her face. Technologies and techniques of motion

facilitate Kōya's racializing gaze, a fact which manifests again when he leaves the dance

hall and pursues Qiu-lan in a rickshaw. As he urges his rickshaw puller onward, Kōya

eyes Qiu-lan from a distance: "Every now and then Qiu-lan's high-bridged nose would

turn toward the shop fronts on her left and right as her rickshaw slipped in and out of the

shade of trees lining the street" (Yokomitsu, 22). As in the dance hall, Kōya's voyeurism

here depends on the partial concealment of Qiu-lan's face as she moves in and out of

sight. The trees along the street cast shadows that obscure Qiu-lan's face at intervals, and

her appearance and disappearance becomes a visual record of her movement through

space. In addition to observing Qiu-lan, Kōya watches the people who watch her. He

notes the "Beggars spitting phlegm" and "Rickhawmen pitching pennies" who "stare at

Qiu-lan's face" as she passes them (Yokomitsu, 22). Qiu-lan's "high-bridged nose"

arches above these street-dwellers, distinguishing her in Kōya's eyes as a member of a

different class. However, Qiu-lan's proximity to a dirtier, poorer China is precisely what

makes her alluring. An angel of exotic beauty, she moves in the foreground against a

panorama of abjection. This combination heightens Kōya's attraction to her.

If synecdoche and metaphor constitute kinds of movement—the displacement of

a whole onto a part and the conversion of one thing into another—then the ceaseless

traffic of rickshaws and automobiles in *Shanghai* might be read as concretizing these

more figurative modes of movement. The regular circulation of cotton, capital, people,

and rickshaws—a circulation routed through Shanghai but not limited by its borders—

shapes the ways in which people perceive and process sensory data to produce an

understanding of their social relations. When expected flows of traffic and circulation of

goods come to a halt, those same frameworks of perception begin to unravel. Just as

staring at an object indefinitely causes the borders of that object to grow blurry, sustained

stillness interrupts the modes of automated perception that allow persons to be classified

according to race, gender, and nationality. Such stoppage occurs on a large scale in

Shanghai when the May Thirtieth Incident results in a massive labor strike organized by

the Chinese Communist Party. The narrator records the eerie caesura initiated by the strike:

> Operations for the most part ground to a halt at Takashige's mill following the evening of the riot… The machines had stopped rotating and began to show signs of rust as a result of a southerly breeze overnight. Workers remained among the silenced equipment, looking pale because of rumors that violence would soon sweep over them. Closed in by the equipment like so many lice in a row, they began removing the rust. (Yokomitsu, 128)

The halted operations of the cotton mill are manifest in the stillness of the machines that have "stopped rotating" and are already showing signs of dilapidation. The idleness of these machines has registers the ceased production and circulation of cotton, a commodity which under normal circumstances should flow from Shanghai to America and Europe. The rust collecting on the machines manifests a process of accumulation and corrosion. Rust's buildup mirrors the accretion of raw cotton in the mill while the factory stands still. As in the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter—in which Osugi watches the slow decay of a boat stranded on an island of garbage—corrosion suggests a metaphor for bleeding categories here. As the machines rust, they lose their sharp edges and precise shapes. These solid objects need to be kept in perpetual motion in order to maintain their assigned forms. For people, too, idleness will lead to the deformation of borders set up to establish identities within the semicolonial regime.

We can begin to see this process of deformation at work when we trace the rippling effect of the halted machinery in Takashige's mill. The narrator traces what might be termed an epidemic of stillness as it spreads throughout Shanghai:

> Ships floated idly in the harbor loaded down with cargo. The printing of newspapers became impossible. Musicians carried food to the guests at hotels. Bakers disappeared. Meat and vegetables were no longer available. Foreigners were gradually besieged in the seaport, struck by the new power of the Chinese. (Yokomitsu, 177)

The ships floating in the harbor are massive proof of the strike's efficacy. Their state of rest mirrors the industrial arrest imposed by the laborers who refuse to work. As newspapers cease to circulate, a discursive stasis blossoms in the city. This hiatus cripples the communication technologies of the foreign colonizers, further barricading them in the "besieged seaport." The term "besieged" is particularly significant. It suggests that the willed stillness of the strikers—their collective refusal to go to work—translates into coerced stillness for their new prisoners. The employee class, especially the foreign bourgeoisie, becomes incarcerated within the walls that formerly established its privilege. Their freedom of movement, it becomes clear, was dependent on the controlled movement of those hired or enslaved to work. In this sense, the passage describing the halted machinery in the cotton mill suggests a metonym: Shanghai is a socioeconomic machine brought to a grinding halt by the Chinese strike.

While Yokomitsu narrates several riots of the Chinese proletariat, in his novel the most powerful weapon of the underclass is hunger. As the passage above suggests, hunger spreads rapidly once the strike sets in. As "meat and vegetables" vanish and bakers go underground, the Japanese characters survive on a diminishing supply of rice. This scarcity comes as a result of the stoppage imposed by the strike: if the ships don't come and go, if the machines don't run, if capital doesn't flow, then food also stops circulating. Hunger brings not only corporeal suffering but also social distress: it eats away at the social relations that undergird semicolonial culture in Shanghai. For example, as musicians carry "food to guests at hotels," their shifting roles reflect the sudden obsolescence of an entertainment industry central to semicolonial culture. Implicit in this statement is the danger involved in going outside in search of food. Those who can afford

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to have food "carried" to their apartments know that roaming foreigners are being

attacked. Thus, their besiegement in the city is compounded by confinement in living

quarters. Hunger marks the reversal of power from the imperialists to the Chinese.

Just as the machines in Takashige's mill begin to corrode when they come to a

halt, the categories of human identity that constitute a technology of perception in

semicolonial Shanghai become soft and porous during the strike. As starvation sets in,

Yamaguchi acquires a horde of corpses which he intends, in due time, to sell to medical

doctors. On a visit, Kōya has the unpleasant experience of seeing Yamaguchi's collection

and the new method he has adopted for cleaning skeletons:

> Just then he glanced at the wall. Rats were scurrying around some of the white
> ribcages hanging there. Two, then three, then a lot more than three. Gradually he
> made out a swarm of rats crossing from one of the pitch-black corners, crawling
> in and out of the openings in the ribcages as they followed along the wall and
> descended. (Yokomitsu, 188).

Yamaguchi explains to Kōya that the rats "save us a lot of work" by eating the flesh off

the bones (Yokomitsu, 188). While people throughout Shanghai starve, these rats feast on

human flesh in Yamaguchi's basement workshop. Though we don't know whether these

particular corpses are those of starvation victims, the ribcages hanging from the walls

evoke images of hunger. Indeed, all of the bones in Yamaguchi's workshop evoke the

thinness of those above ground surviving on a dwindling food supply.

In this scene, pieces of the body work differently than they do in Kōya's

voyeuristic moments in the dance hall and on the street. The bones evoke the whole

bodies that they came from, but they fail to rearticulate cohesive, racialized bodies. The

ribcages—so permeable that rats can crawl through them—offer themselves as metaphors

for a notion of the body as riddled with empty, uncharted spaces. As the rats eat the

humans and then inhabit the remains, the distinction between human and animal is exposed as fiction. Further, the bodies cannot be identified as Japanese or Chinese, as European or Asian. The first image Kōya sees after descending into Yamaguchi's workshop imprints this unmaking of race through the dead body's dismemberment and decay: "Kōya's legs froze. Under white bones dangling from the wall a Chinese assistant was washing a severed leg with a brush and alcohol" (Yokomitsu, 187). Here, Kōya's legs and the severed leg draw our attention back to Kōya's earlier preoccupation with legs as a synecdoche for the racialized body. Strolling through a park with Miyako, Kōya ruminates on her rejection of his marriage proposal:

> He knew instinctively that the sturdy long-legged foreigners who gathered around her were attracted to her legs. *Why should a Japanese man be scorned in this way?* Lamenting his own short legs, Kōya strolled up to the front of the park gate. It was too much of a bother for him to ask why the only legs not permitted to enter the park from this gate were Chinese. (Yokomitsu, 52)

This scene occurs before the labor strike, and it records the link between synecdoche and perceptions of racial difference in Kōya's mind. By contrast, the severed leg in Yokomitsu's workshop is racially ambiguous. When we first meet Yamaguchi, we learn that he trades in Chinese corpses. However, with the famine brought on by the strike, Japanese corpses become more readily available. Indeed, at one point Sanki blames his racialized Japanese body for his hunger, noting "If his body were Chinese, then all he'd have to do was lift his hand to be able to eat" (Yokomitsu, 178). The nausea that overwhelms Kōya when he sees Yamaguchi's collection is not only a reaction to the corpse as such but also a response to the dismembered corpse as ambiguously raced. The inscrutability of these bodies thrusts upon Kōya a recognition that he is as vulnerable now as the Chinese were before the strike. His membership in the Japanese racial nation is no

longer a guarantee of a place above the Chinese in the sociopolitical hierarchy of
semicolonial Shanghai.

For Kōya, the deterioration of strict racial categories provokes nausea and fear.
By contrast, Sanki seems to find respite and an increased sense of freedom in the
permeability of racial identities. He dresses in Chinese clothing in order to exit the
International Settlement in pursuit of Fang Qiu-lan, who briefly becomes his lover
(Yokomitsu, 157). His ability to pass as Chinese in a crowd suggests that Japanese race is
not so legible on the body as Kōya and others would like to think. Like passing narratives
in other contexts—Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* in the United States,
for example—this one exposes race as something learned and performed. Further,
Sanki's passing illustrates how the desirability of a certain racial role might change with
the tides of political and economic fortune. We learn that, for Sanki, no particular racial
identity is intrinsically better or worse than another; racial identities are more strategic
than permanent, and the exigency of racialized self-presentation is contingent on shifting
balances of political power. If Sanki resigns himself to the new state of affairs brought
about by the strike, Osugi goes even further. She embraces the idleness initiated by the
labor strike and finds comfort in the temporary suspension of rigid racial categories. Her
peculiar response is due to both her marginalization from Japanese colonial society and
her honed ability to perceive the sensible world without recourse to the taxonomic logic
of race.

Osugi

If, as Washburn has asserted, water is the predominant image that runs throughout
Yokomitsu's *Shanghai*, then we might say that Osugi in particular is characterized

through her proximity to *boiling* water. Osugi boils water and watches it cool. This activity becomes a way of marking time and, in long stretches of monotony, a way of killing time. Paragraphs about Osugi begin with phrases such as "As the water was heating…" and "At about the time the water came to a boil," driving home the function of boiling as a temporal metric (Yokomitsu, 30-31). The boiling of water—the rise of bubbles and output of steam and the slow entropy that follows—becomes more than a symbol for Osugi's uneventful life. The narration of water's boiling gives evidence of Osugi's attention to the immediate sensible world and of her tending to that world through acts that seem to erase themselves under the guise of passivity. Through Osugi's character, Yokomitsu explores the formation of racially coded colonial identities through processes of abjection and violent perception. He also illustrates how someone subjected to these processes might craft alternative, peaceable formations of selfhood through largely unnoticed acts of attentiveness.

Driven from her job in a bath-house to homelessness and prostitution, Osugi is the most downtrodden of *Shanghai*'s Japanese characters. When she is fired from her job, her employer carries out the sentence as a literal jettisoning: "For a reason [Osugi] never understood, Oryū had abruptly pulled her along by her collar and thrown her on Sanki's torso as he was lying in the rising steam. She continued to cry in the bath until Oryū dragged her out, chased after Sanki, and threw her once more on top of him" (Yokomitsu, 216). The reason for Osugi's ejection, unknown to her, is that Sanki—a patron of the bath-house—has angered Oryū by hinting that he prefers Osugi to Oryū. Thrown by Oryū onto Sanki's body, Osugi becomes a weight tossed around to register the emotional battle between two people. Feeling guilty for Osugi's misfortune, Sanki invites her to come

home with him. Once installed in Sanki's apartment, Osugi again suffers violence. This time, she is raped by Kōya and plunged into confusion because she cannot tell which man—Kōya or Sanki—is her rapist. At this point, Osugi again becomes a burden passed back and forth, as Sanki and Kōya each hope the other will take responsibility for her. Both men silently agree to abandon her in order to pursue the relationships and the career goals they find more alluring. Osugi's second eviction is a quiet one: hunger eventually drives her from Sanki's apartment to the streets below where she feeds herself by working as a prostitute.

For Osugi, physical and social expulsion are part and parcel of a stripping away of racial and national belonging, a symbolic shedding whose concrete consequences include hunger, homelessness, and rape. Osugi's casting out from the bath-house and from Sanki's apartment are experiences of debasement in the sense that she is thrown down, first onto Sanki's prone body and then onto the city street. In a more figurative sense, her lowering occurs through the imaginative perceptions other characters form of her. At the novel's end, for example, Sanki seeks shelter in Osugi's new home—a shabby room where she entertains her clients. In this room, the electricity has gone out, shrouding the apartment in darkness. But rather than protecting Osugi's vulnerable body, the darkness provides a canvas for Sanki's degrading projections: "…Osugi, whose body he could imagine crawling through the mud, was now more alluring than ever before" (211). While the idea of Osugi's body covered in filth increases Sanki's erotic attraction to her, it does not increase his empathy or his awareness of her as a feeling being. Rather, his fantasy of Osugi as a crawling, dirty creature is self-empowering: "He thought that now he could reach out for her in the way that Kōya had" (Yokomitsu, 211). Considering that

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Kōya raped Osugi, forcing himself on her under the cover of darkness much like that which now cloaks Osugi and Sanki, this thought reveals Sanki's longing for violence as well as sex. Sanki's new impulse to "reach out" for Osugi also shows how far Osugi has drifted from anything like a fold of Japanese racial and national solidarity. Earlier, Sanki resists the urge to have sex with Osugi, because he fears he will have to marry her. But now that she is a prostitute, now that she has slept with Chinese customers and been dragged—as Sanki sees it—through the "mud," she is no longer a prospective bride. Among the expatriate Japanese in Shanghai, Osugi was part of a diaspora of sorts. She had a distinct role in Shanghai, occupying space for the Japanese empire. In Sanki's words, her body was a "terrItōry of Japan" adrift in China (Yokomitsu, 45). But her detachment from Japanese social life and economic enterprise is tantamount to a deracination and de-nationalizing, which makes her vulnerable to unchecked sexual conquests.

In Osugi's story, race and nationality slip into one another as both operate within a paradigm of debt-repayment. Because her childhood story is one of disownment by the state, it is fitting that only after Osugi has been isolated from the other Japanese characters do we learn her back-story. When Osugi was a child in Japan, her father—an army colonel—died in a military maneuver. After his death, Osugi and her mother survived on a pension from the army. For reasons that seem vague to Osugi, this pension was eventually declared "improper" and military officials ordered Osugi's mother to return all the money she had received (Yokomitsu, 137). Faced with both the loss of her livelihood and an impossible debt, the mother committed suicide, leaving Osugi orphaned. The language the narrator uses to explain her suicide is telling: "Overcome by

a surfeit of grief, she took her own life" (Yokomitsu, 138). The mother's grief is in proportion to her debt here; it is as if the debt transforms directly into a psychological dilemma. The mother's suicide leads to the daughter's disinheritance and exile. Osugi may not incur the unpaid debts of her mother, but she follows the mother into a type of "netherworld" by drifting from her homeland to China, where she atones, in a manner of speaking, for her mother's debt to the nation by feeding from foreign reserves. For Osugi, then, life in the International Settlement in Shanghai is akin to life in a debtor's colony.

Along with the death of Osugi's mother, the declaration of her father's pension as "improper" is an event that severs Osugi's ties with Japan as a racial and national home. The word "improper" carries heavy implications for Osugi's identity and lineage. Is the allotment of funds to Osugi's mother deemed unlawful because she and the colonel were never married? The text never refers to Osugi's parents as husband and wife, never mentions a marriage or the role of in-laws, and never provides the name of either parent. Through these omissions, the stigma of bastardy encroaches on Osugi's memories of her childhood. Admittedly, Osugi's memories are vague and largely constructed from what others have told her. Sifting through Osugi's thoughts, the narrator comments: "Why had Osugi ended up drifting into Shanghai? Her memory was no longer clear" (Yokomitsu, 137). However, beneath this veneer of innocent misremembering the reader can sense a purposeful—if not intentional—process of repression. Later in her musings, Osugi also asks herself "whose fault it was that her life had come to this" (Yokomitsu, 138). She senses that the cause of her trouble lies outside her personal choices and circumstances, as if larger forces are pushing her, causing her to "drift" toward misery. The role of the state in setting the stage for Osugi's plight hovers behind this impression. By cutting off

Osugi's mother's pension, the army renounces Osugi as a ward of the state and implies

the illegitimacy of her parentage. In this sense, she becomes doubly orphaned as the death

of her parents is coupled with her disownment by Japan. Osugi's situation is thrown into

sharp relief when contrasted with Sanki's. Working as an entrepreneur in Shanghai, Sanki

feels his subject-position is that of a loyal servant of the Japanese empire. He puts this

nationalism into familial terms: "I'm still alive because I'm a filial son. My body is my

parents' body. My parents'" (Yokomitsu, 5). This heavy sense of duty to one's parents

carries over, for Sanki, to a sense of duty to Japan as the motherland. And though, to

some extent, Sanki's duty is its own kind of debt (he feels he would rather commit

suicide than continue to work at the bank), it also gives him a sense of belonging and

purpose. Osugi, on the other hand, is increasingly cast off—first from the Japanese

mainland and then from Japanese society in Shanghai.

In *Shanghai*, family becomes one conceit through which racial identity is

articulated, and race—in turn—serves as the conceit through which imperial ideology

finds expression. Through his characterization of Sanki and Kōya, Yokomitsu reproduces

this rhetoric of familial, racial, and imperial identity, but his depictions of Osugi

demonstrate the limitations of such rhetoric and gesture toward alternative formations of

relational selfhood.[107] Cast off as she is, Osugi takes on an ambiguous racial and national

identity, one that opens its boundaries as she makes contact with the various types of

people living in Shanghai. The following passage leads into the recollection of Osugi's

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[107] The *Kokuai no Hongi* was published in 1937, so Yokomitsu could not have been
alluding to this particular document. However, it drew from rhetoric of national unity and
familial bonds that had been officially instated during the Meiji Restoration of 1868 and
gradually mobilized to support Japan's foreign expansion in Asia. (I should look for more
examples of this rhetoric that predate the novel.)

childhood. Here, in the early morning, Osugi is looking down at a bridge from a second-story window:

> The people crossing the bridge moved along upside down on the surface of the water, where dented cans, insects, jet black foam, fruit peels, and many other objects swirled about. A small boat that had probably come down the river last night from Suzhou was loaded with split firewood. It was stopped, as if stuck fast on the muddy water… Osugi could see an old lady sewing inside the boat, and she thought of her own mother in Japan. Osugi's mother committed suicide when Osugi was still a child. (Yokomitsu, 137).

Something about this boat, beached in a garbage heap of "dented cans" and "fruit peels," draws Osugi's attention. The river as an externalization of the "stream of thought" metaphor so prevalent in modernist descriptions of consciousness appears here in an altered form, as a stagnant canal or a bed of filthy accumulation rather than a lively flow of association. The wedged boat is an externalization of Osugi's subjectivity—not just her consciousness but her sensory and perceptual life—which is characterized by a paradoxical combination of wayfaring and being-in-confinement. An exile with respect to Japan (and to the smaller loci of the bath-house and Sanki's apartment) and a prisoner within the International Settlement in Shanghai (a place literally barricaded in once the Chinese labor riots begin), Osugi is a stranger but not a traveler, a low-class street-dweller but not a native. As she zeroes in on the old woman, Osugi perceives a similarity between this woman and her own mother. She doesn't exactly project her mother onto this woman, but she notices the woman and then allows this noticing to trigger memories of her mother's suffering. What she does not notice—and this makes her exceptional among Yokomitsu's characters—is whether the woman is Chinese, Russian, Japanese, or otherwise nationally or racially coded. In this moment, we begin to see how Osugi's

neither/nor status opens her up to empathic relations and recognitions with non-Japanese others.

Long before the labor strike arrests the circulation of goods and people through Shanghai, Osugi attends to pockets of stillness nestled in the city's slums. Her observations upon leaving Sanki's apartment foreshadow the stasis that will enfold the city after the strikes bring production to a halt:

> A set of cranes suspended at rest over the mud bared the rusted teeth of their gears. Stacks of lumber. A crumbling stone fence. A mountain of greens spilled from a cargo hold. White fungus grew like skin on a small boat split open on the side. A dead infant, one leg sticking up, floated amid the stagnant bubbles puddling on the keel. Moonlight tumbled down everywhere, lusterless as though bred in the dust. (Yokomitsu, 62)

These cranes at rest will be doubled, later, by the halted machinery in the cotton mill. Here, the machines takes on qualities of a living creature: they rest and bare their teeth like beasts of prey. In Washburn's translation, the double-entendre on "crane" magnifies this convergence of the animal and the machine. Through Osugi's eyes, the distinctions among living, dead, and non-living matter become blurred. The stagnant boat and the fungus growing on it become one body. The vegetables "spilled from a cargo hold" seem like internal organs of the container whose bounds they overflow. The infant who draws Osugi's gaze remains raceless and genderless, though its leg evokes the discussions of race and sexual desire that are still to come in the novel. Like the mist in the opening scene of *Shanghai*, the moonlight in this passage colors all things equally. A sense of deferred categorization emerges here, as the suspension of motion facilitates accumulation, mixture, and sustained attention to mundane detail.

In this setting, stillness initiates an alternative temporality that diverges from both the timetables of production and circulation and the imperialist timeline of colonization

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and modernization. The images of boats going nowhere and machinery in suspense undermine these temporalities. Decay becomes its own clock, charting the passage of time through "crumbling" stones and fungus growth. For Osugi, time becomes a non-issue as she absorbs herself into the view before her: "Osugi looked at the moon and became like the moon. She looked at the canal and became like the canal. She had absent-mindedly passed the whole day in this state" (Yokomitsu, 62). The hiatus opened up by Osugi's sustained gazing at the moon and canal is characterized by the emergence of strange likenesses. What exactly it means for Osugi to become "like the moon" is not clear, but her willingness to merge with the things she sees endows Osugi with powers of empathy and reflects her rejection of allegiance to race, nation, and even humanity. We see this point confirmed when Osugi notices that "a Cinese woman who had been carrying some flowering plants was staring *just like Osugi* onto the surface of the water" (Yokomitsu, 137, emphasis added). This capacity for unbounded likeness is linked repeatedly to Osugi's idleness, which distances her increasingly from the bustling, industrious sectors of semicolonial Shanghai. For her, stillness becomes a practice that reroutes sensory perception away from the classifications offered by racial and colonial hierarchy.

Conclusion

In his book on Yokomitsu and the Tokyo modernists, Dennis Keene articulates one critical opinion of the literary movement to which Yokomitsu contributed: "Probably all Japanese critics agree that the modernist movement which began with *Shinkakakuha*

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was a failure, something rootless and unproductive, a literary movement alienated from society, with no impact upon it" (90). Keene goes on in a later chapter to address the particular place of *Shanghai* in this failed literary movement: "…*Shanghai* as a novel is not a success either. It is the last word in [Yokomitsu's] concern with *Shinkakakushugi*, a demonstration of its failure to mean anything more to him, and his farewell to it" (167). Keene critiques Yokomitsu's New Sensationism and of *Shanghai* in particular for being detached from social problems and therefore having "no impact" on the culture in which it circulated. From Keene's point of view, Yokomitsu was more interested in experimenting with Western aesthetic techniques in the Japanese language than in connecting meaningfully with his Japanese audiences. He references a debate between Yokomitsu and the proletarian critics as further evidence of this disconnect.

Keene points out very real limitations of Yokomitsu's work and his extensive research into the literary world of *Shinkakakuha* makes *Shanghai* legible to English-language readers through comprehensive historical and aesthetic framing. However, in this chapter I have revisited the novel's engagement with its colonial context. My analysis suggests that, if Yokomitsu's depictions of the Japanese diaspora in Shanghai were unpopular, this might not have been because he was had nothing to say relative to politics and social organization. Rather, Yokomitsu's critique of colonial structures of racial hierarchy and his suggestion that the undoing of these structures might be within the power of Japanese outcasts and Chinese rabble might have been unpopular because of the radical nature of his ideas. As *Shanghai* now circulates among a new audience of readers, thanks to Washburn's English translation, this work might also put added pressure on our received wisdom about race and racism in the West.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In *Suspensions of Perception*, Jonathan Crary makes a point about the unsustainability of attention: "In any number of ways, attention inevitably reaches a threshold at which it breaks down. Usually it is the point at which the perceptual identity of its object begins to deteriorate and in some cases (as with certain sounds) disappear altogether" (47). With this statement, Crary identifies two operations that produce dissolution. The first is that by which the object—the thing designated by its openness to being acted upon—recedes from the perceptual apparatus of an observer and grows inscrutable. This power of nondisclosure is akin to what Edouard Glissant calls the right to opacity, a kind of secrecy built into the physical laws of time and space. The second is that by which a steady application of perceptive energy reveals the arbitrariness of the concepts of identity we use to categorize sensory data. Like a warm laser pointed at a wax figure, the fixed beam of attention melts the edges and boundaries that hold an object apart from its surroundings. This two-directional event, the object's withdrawal and the sensing mechanism's exhaustion of its sense-making function, is the work of stillness. Whether carried out by a person, a thing, or a mere reflection, the art of lingering charts a path through time toward the limits of all notable distinctions.

Stillness is usually something we perceive as external to us. Indeed, the projection of stillness onto an object of perception can act as an index of its otherness. Walking through the zoo, we remark how still are the animals that seem most alien to us:

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crocodiles, tree frogs, starfish, anemones, and corals. Their immobility, framed by their containment in cages and aquariums, illuminates by contrast our own freedom of movement and will. A similar contrast is produced in exhibitions of humans of history and difference. Mannequins draped in faux animal skins, squatting by fire pits and stunted huts, vaguely announce their primitiveness through the stasis conveniently etched in their postures. (One might note that modern mannequins are almost never found in museums. Instead, modern furniture and clothing are displayed, with the absent bodies acting as signs that the modern human cannot be captured.) Whether intended to display prehistoric man or contemporary tribal cultures, these crouching figures embody the inertia of otherness: the non-advancement and passivity attributed to the races that are not "I" signal their irreducible difference. Even before this difference is valued as inferiority or unfitness, it is ideological. It comes into being through a social process of perception that compartmentalizes the truly vital and the sluggishly inert.

When the figure of otherness on display is subtly animated—as with the Yoruba woman weaving her baskets for a Parisian audience at the 1895 *Exposition Ethnographique de l'Afrique Occidentale*—the impression of stillness is reinforced through narratives of biological and cultural development that inscribe certain behaviors with an excess of cyclicality. The difference between antique crafts such as basket-weaving and assembly-line manufacturing is that, while both are composed of repetitive tasks—the latter is absorbed into a corporate process of accumulation and advancement while the former is episodic and socially stationary. The body in motion, in the modern world, is the body of the state, the nation, or the empire. A truly *still* body is one on the margins, disconnected from the whole and thus mutilated by its isolation. This mutilation

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is apprehended through the paradigm of race, which ascribes unassimilable difference to the other. The catatonic Father John, the Ainu-Japanese man trapped in a labyrinthine ghetto, the (ex)colored man folded up inside a basket on a moving train, and the black sailor imprisoned in a ship's closet: all are examples of the inert other whose threat of divergence from a regime of racialized perception must be neutralized through removal from the public.

And yet, if coerced stillness neutralizes a threat to racial hierarchy through amputation from the operative social body, willed stillness proves problematic to this scheme. When stillness is perceived not as something external to me but as something I inhabit, its valence changes. The first clue as to this change is the fear with which the dominant culture responds to the apparent stillness and passivity of those deemed racially other. Returning briefly to a passage referenced in my introduction, we glimpse this fear in Thomas Carlyle's gothic description of the emancipated black body: "…what say you to the dead soul of a man, --in a body which still pretends to be vigorously alive, and can drink rum? …what say you to an idle Black gentleman, with his rum-bottle in his hand… the fruitfulest region of the earth going back to jungle around him" (356). Here, the stillness of the racial other is predicted to bring about the deterioration of the empire's peripheries. The black body—freed from slavery—becomes the gangrenous extremities of the national body. It must either be cut off or restored to its subordinate labor. This phobia of the still body betrays the colonizer's implicit understanding of the power in willed slowness—in stopping, hesitating, resting, and idling.

The purpose of this manuscript has been to show that such acts of stillness have political meaning, particularly in relation to the racial formations salient in the British,

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American, and Japanese empires of the early twentieth century. While part of that meaning is caught up in industrial and economic functions (e.g. the power of the labor strike exhibited in 1925 Shanghai), the full extent of a politics of stillness comes into view only when we consider the hermeneutics that physical and mental fixity make possible. As my allusion to Crary's statement about the unsustainability of attention suggests, *stillness* is at base a refusal to move away from one thing and on to something else. It is an act of suspension that makes temporality increasingly present and puts pressure on categorical distinctions used to accumulate encyclopedic knowledge. In this sense, stillness is a practice in the mode of Keats's "negative capability": "when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason."[108] This tolerance of uncertainty becomes, in acts of stillness such as those analyzed in this dissertation, a creative standpoint generative of strange identifications and unregimented associations. Further, when those deemed racial others perform stillness (even under duress), their lingering is an announcement of presence and continuity that defies socio-evolutionary predictions of vanishing peoples.

One contribution of this project is its commitment to studying race in both Western and Eastern cultural contexts. While localized studies of race are essential to historicizing racial and racist ideas, trans-continental perspectives can help to enlarge our understanding of race as a discourse born out of exchanges between the East and the West. Far from being imported into Japan from Britain, Germany, Spain, France and other Western nations, modern racial ideology is continuously diffused through global

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[108] Keats defines "negative capability" thus in a letter to his brothers George and Tom, written in 1817. See John Keats, *Letters of John Keats*, ed. Robert Gittings. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970. 43. Print.

networks in which scientific and popular definitions of the human are passed back and forth. Herbert Spencer's correspondence with Kaneko Kentaro, a Cabinet Minister in Japan, exemplify this pattern of exchange. In 1892, Spencer advised Kaneko that Japan's best policy would be one of "keeping Americans and Europeans as much as possible at arm's length" (Spencer, 255). While this is sound advice considering America's and Europe's aggressive imperialism, Spencer offers a racial basis for his warning: "It is a root question of biology. There is abundant proof, alike furnished by the inter-marriages of human races and by the inter-breeding of animals, that when the varieties mingled diverge beyond a certain slight degree *the result is invariably a bad one* in the long run" (Spencer, 256, emphasis in original). Racial degeneration, rather than political subordination, seems to be the evil Spencer thinks should inform Japanese policy.

The overall direction of Japanese policy during the Meiji era and leading up to the Pacific War reflects the embrace of a racial and racist ideology. The rhetoric of Japanese nationalism in the late nineteenth and twentieth century revolved around the concept of *Kazoku kokka* (the family-state) which included the "potent fusion of the 'sacred and inviolate' body of the Emperor with a mythic past" (Lo and Bettinger, 254). Henshall has shown that the need to protect this "sacred and inviolate" body stretched so far as to justify the killings of approximately 6,000 Koreans after the *Kanto* earthquake of 1923 (110). At the same time, violence inside and outside of Japan was justified through the notion that the Japanese nation-state was destined to liberate Asia from Western imperialism (Henshall, 117). What designates the extreme nationalism of Japan's expansionist era as a racial ideology—as opposed to a merely nationalist or ethnocentric one—is the centrality to *Kazoku kokka* of biological ties to a common ancestor and the

belief that such ties determine a political right to govern other peoples and control their resources.

So far, it might sound as though Spencer (and other Western scientists) introduced the discourse of race to Japan, where a racial ideology was then adopted as part of a program of modernization. However, this view needs to be adjusted to include the fact that long-standing traditions of familial duty and patriarchal rights shaped the development of national and racial ideology in modern Japan (Lo and Bettinger, 238-9). It is likely that the tradition of reverence toward ancestors practiced in Japan and other Eastern cultures influenced the course of racial ideology in the West as well. For example, one of the most famous executives of racist and imperialist policy in the history of the United States—Theodore Roosevelt—uses the state-as-family metaphor in his romantic history of American expansion, *The Winning of the West*. He writes, "We of this generation were but carrying to completion the work of our fathers and of our fathers' fathers," in describing the conquests of Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.[109] Roosevelt certainly wouldn't have needed to be influenced by Japanese concepts of the family-nation in order to frame imperialism in this way: an extolling of Anglo-Saxon ancestry was already entrenched in U.S. nationalism from the time and works of Thomas Jefferson. Yet, Roosevelt's interest in the history of East Asia and his involvement in the international politics of Japan—he negotiated the terms of peace between Russia and Japan in 1904—suggests that his vision of world history and might have been shaped by

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[109] See: Roosevelt, Theodore. "Forward." *The Winning of the West, Volume One From the Alleghenies to the Mississippi, 1769-1776.* Project Gutenberg EBook. (April 7, 2004). Web. accessed at www.gutenberg.net on June 2, 2014.

concepts of filial duty and destiny circulating in the East.[110] In a response to Jeremiah

Curtin's history, *The Mongols* (1904), he writes that "the most stupendous fact" of the

thirteenth century was "the rise of Genghis Khan and the spread of the Mongol power

from the Yellow Sea to the Adriatic and the Persian Gulf" (Tchen, 173). Though he

likens the Mongolian people to the Comanches and Apaches in terms of their brutal

tactics and nomadic way of life, Roosevelt implies that the political dominance achieved

by the Mongolians sets a precedence for modern-day Americans. Furthermore, he notes

that the Mongolian hoards were eventually turned back by "no Christian or European

military power" but by "the armies of Japan" (Tchen, 175). In this sense, then, we have

reason to believe that Roosevelt saw both the Mongolians and the Japanese as exemplars

of political might whose stories might serve as ensigns to twentieth-century U.S.-

Americans.

The racist and racialist belief system bolstered by both scientific and mythic

discourse in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was thus woven into existence

through trans-continental exchanges of knowledge, political tactics, and nation-building

metaphors. The art and literature that rose to challenge such beliefs resonated on this

same, trans-hemispheric scale through allusions, shared tropes, and translation. This

dissertation suggests that we consider early twentieth-century racial formations in this

trans-continental context in order to see more clearly the reciprocity and contingency

inherent in such dualisms as East and West, black and white, self and other. In focusing

on the shared trope of the racial other who appropriates stillness as an act of creativity,

the present work documents the way anti-imperialist literature from diverse locations—

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[110] See Tchen and Yeats (172).

the U.S., Britain, and Japan—encouraged a hermeneutics of indeterminacy and a politics of hesitation over and against the imperative to do one's part in the modern nation's march toward progress.

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