

DECOLONIAL BECOMING

IMMOBILITY,

INDIGENEITY, AND DISABILITY

IN TRANSPACIFIC KOREA



JEONG EUN ANNABEL WE

Decolonial Becoming





ANIMA *Critical Race Studies Otherwise*

A series edited by Mel Y. Chen, Ezekiel J. Dixon-Román, and Jasbir K. Puar

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*Immobility, Indigeneity, and Disability
in Transpacific Korea*

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To all whose hearts were shattered by borders,
And to all who pieced them back, together.

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Introduction

Perfect Storms

This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. —WALTER BENJAMIN, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*

Ruins are vestiges bequeathed to us that are at once liabilities endured from the past and assets for the future, both repressive and emancipatory. It is then left to each one of us to fathom the debris, but without instrumentalizing them. —LISA YONEYAMA, *Cold War Ruins*

Legal Fictions: Indigeneity as Monoethnicity, Indigeneity as Disability

In 2024, South Korean news outlets declared that South Korea was the “first multiracial and multicultural nation in Asia.”¹ Behind this baffling declaration was the soundbite that South Korea had become what The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) considers a “multiracial and multicultural nation (*tainjong/tamunhwa kukka*),” whose “foreign national” population amounts to 5 percent or more of its total population.² However, there is no mention in the OECD reports of South Korea’s supposed new recognition as a “multiracial and multicultural nation.”³ Untraceable OECD source notwithstanding, multiple South Korean news outlets and government portals repeated this narrative and ambivalently speculated on South Korea’s future.⁴ They reinforced

a narrative that once a homogenous, monoethnic (*tanilminjok*), and monocultural (*tanilmunhwa*) nation-state, South Korea has been confronted by a steep birth rate decline, increasing percentage of aging demographic, and deregulation of employment since the International Monetary Fund (IMF) crisis and is now at the risk of becoming a country of (im)migrants and racial mixture.⁵ This monoethnicity paints a genealogy of racial and ethnic nonmixture as the Korean essence and culture, divorced from history.

Concurrently, the mayor of the South Korean capital Seoul announced in the Seoul Foreign Resident Policy Masterplan (2024–28) that the city will actively recruit foreign “domestic managers (*kasa kwallija*)” who will offer cleaning, cooking, and childcare services to address the particularly steep birth rate decline in Seoul. A hundred Filipina women, or “Filipina aunts (*p’illip’in imo*),” so named condescendingly by South Korean media, were trained and brought to work in Seoul from September 2024 for six months.⁶ A debate has since ensued around the relation between the birth rate crisis and South Korean women citizens who work on one hand and the exclusion of the Filipina women workers from the minimum wage pool on the other.⁷

Together, the two narratives reveal a disconcerting biopolitical calculation: The projected decapacitation of the “monoethnic” Korean population would be remedied by recapacitating migrant (described as “multiracial” [*tainjong*] rather than “multiethnic” [*taminjok*]) laboring bodies deemed productive enough. The use of “Filipina aunts” as an interpellation of South Korea’s population crisis is ironic. One can read into it the threat of racial mixture and migrant coexistence that must be tolerated because the “Indigenous” Korean population is at risk, or, even worse, disabled. Historically, narratives of rehabilitating an Indigenous population have been significant in justifying Indigenous assimilation to colonialism around the globe.⁸ Here, such logic is flipped on its head to a curious effect. While these narratives seem to appeal to the need for migrant labor as a biopolitical necessity and to provide an opportunity to celebrate South Korea’s progress under globalization, it simultaneously mourns the lost national body that also affirms having always been monoethnic and monocultural. The terms *multicultural* and *monocultural* limit who counts and who is excluded from the asymmetric pairing of *monoethnic* and *multiracial*. The use of these terms conflates ethnicity, race, and culture to render the myth of a lost monoethnic body as the only legible one at the national level.

Yet rather than reading these narratives as serving only the obvious cultural-political work (e.g., ethnonationalism, developmentalism, or multiculturalism), I propose that we read them as also conveying implicit, unexamined ideas about

Indigeneity and disability in the context of South Korea. Tellingly, the imagined OECD designation of a multiethnic and multicultural nation originates from attempts to measure an aging, decapacitating society and was later misapplied to the categories of race and ethnicity.⁹ This misapplication reveals that the implicit claim about Indigeneity here—that the “monoethnic” Korean national body of the past is distinct from the current one with the influx of migrants—relies on attempts to wrestle with the constructed category of disability, which echoes an unsaid, colonial-era-derived anxiety: that Indigeneity *is* disability. It is this anxiety’s afterlife in ethnonationalism and developmentalism that creates the multiple valences around Indigeneity and disability that are in tension with each other, tensions that get smoothened over as nonrelation between Indigeneity and disability, even as both are surreptitiously invoked in crisis narratives. *Decolonial Becoming* seeks to explore and challenge these unexamined ideas around Indigeneity and disability in Korea through a transpacific lens.

In the early twentieth century, when Korea was under Japanese colonial rule, disability represented the colonized Korean majority rather than its minority in the literary and cultural imagination.¹⁰ The question is, in this imagination’s afterlife, if the Indigeneity of the “monoethnic” Korean national body is *already* a state of disability for the majority, then how do those excluded from this majority come to endure a status of debility—that is, a condition so naturalized for the population that it is not recognized as disability? Jasbir Puar has theorized how debility marks the very boundary of what is and is not cognized as disability in the biopolitics of settler colonial occupation, in which “debilitation is not a by-product of social injustice and inequity . . . [but] constitutive of the very mechanisms that enable certain populations to occupy the ‘make live’ vector . . . unevenly endemic to the quotidian realities of poverty, permanent war, racism, imperialism, and colonialism.”¹¹ We will see, for example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, how people with disabilities in South Korea and the Indigenous people of Okinawa (Ryukyu) and Guam (Guåhan) sought to articulate their experience as different from national narratives. Furthermore, I explore the tension between two concepts that constitute the gray area of *Indigeneity*: the South Korean ethnonational framework’s understanding of Korean Indigeneity as ethnically, culturally, and racially homogenous, which I refer to as “Korean monoethnicity” or “Korean Indigeneity,” and the relational understanding of Indigeneity that emphasizes the global and plural uses of the term by people who live under settler colonial systems of dispossession, genocide, and erasures, which I will refer to as “inter-Indigeneity.”¹² When the former’s singular claim to Indigeneity is confronted by the latter, in encounters between Korean settlers

and immobilized Indigenous on occupied islands, or in betrayals of ethnic Korean migrant women by South Korean civil society, a different set of narratives emerges around the question of decolonization in transpacific Korea.

That South Korea had been a homogenous, monoethnic, and monocultural nation-state is a “legal fiction” that mirrors other transformations of categories to solidify nationalist fictions of homogeneity.¹³ The Korean peninsula between 1910 and 1945 was part of the Japanese empire, whose non-Western, multiethnic, and multicultural self-fashioning was a military and cultural strategy for the moral justification of its colonial expansions. As settlers from Japan moved to Korea, people from Korea were scattered across the expanding empire as exploited sources of labor and sex. The colonial period thus created a political and economic refugee-diaspora of Koreans across Asia, Russia/the Soviet Union, the Americas, and the Pacific Islands. At the end of the colonial period, in 1945, an estimated four million ethnic Koreans lived outside of the Korean peninsula, or 13 percent of the estimated total ethnic Korean population of the time.¹⁴ Some chose to return, others not to, and some simply could not. South Korea was formed under the US and Soviet Union dual occupation of the Korean peninsula in 1948 in a cacophonous sociopolitical scene, with half of the Korean *minjok* (ethnos) living on the peninsula forcibly divided from the other, a diaspora created by a national division. The well-known colonial-era text “Theory of Ethnic Reform” (“*Minjokkaejoron*,” 1922) by Yi Kwang-su called for a reform of the Koreans’ ethnic nature in a time of perceived crisis, and its logic is echoed by the current crisis. What gets forgotten is that it began with an invocation of the Korean diaspora (*tongp'o*), who made the notion of rehabilitating ethnos (*minjokkaejo*) possible. The diaspora is invoked to outline the parameters of the Korean Indigeneity in crisis, including its divided territoriality and rehabilitative temporality.¹⁵

During the Korean War, also known as the “Forgotten War” in the United States, an estimated ten million families were separated, and six to eight million Koreans became war refugees.¹⁶ Those from the North who resettled in the South created a refugee-diaspora as *sirhyangmin* [people who lost their homes]. My grandfather was one such *sirhyangmin*, never to see many members of his family in the North except in his late-life confusions caused by Alzheimer’s.¹⁷ Whether the culture of *sirhyangmin* is considered monocultural or multicultural in South Korea, those people were accepted into the Cold War South Korean political landscape as those who *chose* the South. There have been sizeable multiethnic communities throughout modern Korea’s history, and a monoethnic and monocultural Korea can only be imagined by forgetting and selectively retelling the violence, separations, and resettlements of modern Korea as the

suffering of Korean Indigeneity. This is why ethnic Korean migrants from China and from North Korea come to occupy debility, not Indigeneity as disability, in South Korea, even if interpellated as part of the singular ethnos. Writing on such claims on ethnicity as a question of Indigeneity and disability in modern Korea from my own privileged site within the Korean-US settler diaspora in what the South Korean media might consider a “multicultural family,” I am curious about refusals and fabulations—such as forgetting to forget one’s separated family and division in a state of disability.¹⁸ I am interested in how certain refusals (forgetting to forget) enable fabulations that occur in the (non)relation between Indigeneity and disability.

This legal fiction is repeated as a national crisis. As a diasporic national project, it speaks of a *necessity* for an imagined “Korean” singular claim to Indigeneity, understood as Korean monoethnicity (*tanilminjok*), separate from other often-used concepts for Indigeneity in Korean for “other people” who withstood settler colonialism (e.g., *wŏnjumin* [original residents], *t’och’akmin* [earth-attached people], or *sŏnjumin* [prior residents], terms rarely used for ethnic Koreans except in the context of Japanese colonialism and land expropriations for military or corporate developments). The United Nations’ (UN) description of Indigenous peoples recognizes their inheritance and practice of cultures, which might align with the Korean self-reference to Korean Indigeneity in essentialist, mono-ethnic terms. However, the UN description also emphasizes the minority status of Indigenous peoples in the societies in which they live and the shared need for protection among global Indigenous peoples. As Dian Million observes about the challenge of indigenism to liberalism, “To enact any actually practiced Indigenous self-determination threatens any nation-state’s imagined homogenous territorial sovereignty.”¹⁹ This emphasis casts a big gap between the Korean understanding of Indigeneity and the above Korean terms, such as *wŏnjumin* or *t’och’akmin*, often used to refer to Indigenous peoples elsewhere.

To be sure, the Korean ethnonational framework was splintered—an insurgent *hyangt’o* nativism began under Japanese colonial occupation in Korea and resurged in protest culture under national division and authoritarian rules in South Korea, which did not aspire to the kind of universal status that the state-sponsored *minjok* framework did. The latter actively appropriated elements of the former for political and cultural legitimacy.²⁰ In postcolonial South Korea, authoritarian rule militarily and economically mobilized the populace through *minjok* that simultaneously created immobilities. I raise questions about this splinter in *Decolonial Becoming*, especially in chapter 4, where I examine the ceremony’s criticism of state-sponsored commemorations between the ’60s and the ’80s, and in chapter 5, where I examine the contemporary disabled community’s

and islands' criticism of the state narrative around quarantine. New questions that emerge from this book might be treated by others in future works.²¹ In *Decolonial Becoming*, my primary argument is that, in order to understand the betrayal of the particular-aspiring *hyangt'o* by the universal-aspiring *minjok*, one needs to consider this betrayal as a transpacific puzzle presented in a national(ist) shell. I deploy *minjok* and Indigeneity—a coupling that is a productive mistranslation and in dialectical tension—to argue that considerations of *minjok* and *hyangt'o* as Indigenous, Korean politics in the Pacific need to be inter-Indigenous, to avoid collapsing into a false nativism that draws on transnational frameworks of self-determination of Indigenous peoples for legitimacy but excludes those most directly impacted by militarist and settler colonial empires.²² As discussed in chapter 1, Yi Kwang-su's replacement of Wilsonian self-determination with Kantian self-consciousness is symptomatic of the mistranslations that shape the lasting claims around Indigeneity, *minjok*, and *hyangt'o* in Korea.²³ *Decolonial Becoming* explores the curiously excised and forgotten relation between Indigeneity and disability as a transpacific problem for Korea, which has been made absent but shapes the narratives South Korea tells about itself. *Decolonial Becoming* also wrestles with decolonial imaginations in and beyond Korea that articulate this relation in the shifting relation between disability and Indigeneity mediated by debility. That this triad is thoroughly gendered becomes crucial to my arguments about rewriting genre and scripts in chapters 3 and 4, which consider how narrating gendered mobilization inter-Indigenously upends the imperialist human as a genre.²⁴

Native American and Indigenous Studies have focused on the cultural and political meaning of Native American and Indigenous people's sovereignty struggles within settler colonial societies. On the one hand, essentialism "fails to theorize the relational character of identity by denying the historicity and social comprehensiveness of American Indian subjectivity," as Sandy Grande has critically posed.²⁵ On the other hand, Jodi Byrd described how the United States deployed "Indianness," "us[ing] executive, legislative, and juridical means to make 'Indian' those peoples and nations who stand in the way of US military and economic desires."²⁶ Considering both arguments on inter-Indigeneity, I ask why it is necessary for the South Korean crisis narratives to reduce Indigeneity to monoethnicity. One must ask how this claim of monoethnicity as a problem of Indigeneity within settler colonialism is also mired in the settler colonial logics of the Cold War, in the establishment of a refugee-diaspora nation-state—Israel in Palestine in 1948, the year North and South Korea became separate nation-states—and in South Korean national reconstruction projects.²⁷ How has South Korea participated in the oceanic security state that Tiara Na'puti described as

“render[ing] aqueous regions as devoid of Indigenous lifeways and perspectives” and of the “sovereign solidarity” among Guam, Hawai‘i, the Marshall Islands, and Palestine?²⁸ Considering that demilitarization on Indigenous lands is one of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, if a consensus is reached by the Indigenous peoples themselves, South Korean discourse around Indigeneity as monoethnicity creates a consensus through exclusion, even if the declaration itself has come long after such logic has prevailed. The protection of Korean Indigeneity by military means can be justified when it is singular. It thus excludes both minoritized Koreans, such as residents of lands and waters where US and South Korean military bases are installed in Korea, and people who live on militarized islands.²⁹

How do the exclusionary legal fictions of South Korea, created in the context of building a diasporic nation that has undergone national division and war, justify various disposessions of migrant, inter-Indigenous, and disabled people, through the invocation of blood over other relationalities and rehabilitation rather than political transformation?³⁰ Korean Indigeneity as monoethnicity is part of the strategic and problematic nativism that naturalizes blood ties to the premodern Korean land to navigate division politics and possibilities of reconciliation between North Korea and South Korea.³¹ Jinkyung Lee critiqued “Pan-Koreanism,” the South Korean policy-driven ideology that seeks to recruit Korean diaspora and racialized (im)migrants into “Koreanness” through paradoxical appeals to ethnicity and culture, which has also mobilized Korean American communities.³² Pan-Koreanism’s resemblance to Pan-Asianism’s imperial articulation under the Japanese empire and to what Daniel Kim described as “Military and Humanitarian Orientalism in the United States” underlines the inner workings of the legal fictions shared among empires and subempires and the mobilization of resources they enabled.³³

Reflecting on such a problematic, this book puts forth a partial view of a trans-pacific Korea: a Korea situated within the broader context of the Pacific and the Pacific inflected by relations found through Korea. While independence, freedom, and sovereignty have been often aligned with statehood in the call for decolonization in modern Korea, Korea’s decolonization has also been imagined in relation to sites, people, and history of the Pacific that differ from the Korea of this legal fiction. The figures of immobility inflected by Indigeneity and disability, while overlooked in Korean narratives of Indigeneity as monoethnicity, are the subjects and objects of Korea’s decolonization. “Decolonial becoming” refers to the dialectical unfolding of the object becoming the subject and the world that this unfolding has envisioned and will bring to bear.³⁴ It is “a sly darting dance,” to quote Cathy Park Hong, a polyrhythmic theory of dialectics from the “dust of history,”

a phrase from Yi T'ae-jun that describes those who were swept up, immobilized, and forgotten by the progress of history.³⁵ To dance with the “dust of history” is to refuse or forget to forget the (non)relation between Indigeneity and disability.

Transpacific Korea: Coloniality, Indigeneity, Militarism

The Cold War is still palpable in many ways in the Pacific long after the fall of the Soviet Union, its afterlives felt through the politics of redress and debts.³⁶ Korea remains divided by an arbitrary line created under the US and Soviet dual occupation, and the Korean War has not really ended yet, with periodic threats of a nuclear apocalypse.³⁷ Underlying the international news headlines is the expansive installment of US military bases on several islands of the Pacific, sites that sustain a high concentration of militarization, and the resulting ecological devastation.³⁸ As pawns of militarized security in northeast Asia, these islands' subjugated relationship to the broader politics across the Pacific has rendered them an essential but overlooked backdrop to territorial claims and threats. Transpacific Korea entails examining the relationality among the noncontiguous and archipelagic sites under occupation resulting from the continued legacies of imperialism, militarism, and the Cold War in modern Korea.

Triangulated by the conflicting interests of East Asian states, Pacific Islands, and the “mainland” United States, the Transpacific has a long history and varied uses. The interimperial competition between Japan and the United States during WWII in the Pacific Theater rested on the total mobilization of colonized populations into their respective war efforts to secure the islands of the Pacific as strategic outposts.³⁹ The term *transpacific* also describes the financial triangulation of East Asian states, Pacific Islands, and the United States, fanned by projects such as the Transpacific Partnership (2016) and predatory East Asian investments in the Global South. At times, *transpacific* describes the cross-ocean migrations between the Americas, East Asia, and other sites. It encompasses the long struggles of islanders of the Pacific to exercise sovereignty against the interimperial pawning of the Pacific in the collusion of settler colonialism with militarism.⁴⁰ Transpacific, in the last sense, criticizes the divisive logic of militarization in the Pacific that juxtaposed different colonized and oppressed people. The transpacific question, then, is also the question of what kind of responsibilities and alliances can and should be sought by Asian migrants in the Pacific and the Asian migrants' key roles in diffusing the efforts of sovereignty struggles in places such as Hawai'i.⁴¹

In this book, Korea as a transpacific object entails two things: first, it is an argument for analyzing modern Korea's relationality to the broader, overlooked

sites in the Pacific and Global South and not only to its diaspora and the contiguous United States; second, it is an argument that questions Indigeneity of Korean nationalist understandings of decolonization, bringing it to sites on and beyond the Korean peninsula. While the former argument is readily understandable given the transnational reach of South Korean cultural capital, the latter argument is less so but necessary to understand this book's primary contribution to several fields. Rather than a denial of the Korean claim to Indigeneity, which has been significant to the claim of Korean national sovereignty under colonialism and military occupations and toward Korean reunification, my argument is that a singular claim to Indigeneity is one that actively decontextualizes Korea from the intertwined relations of the Transpacific. I seek to engage texts that are critical of how *minjok's* interpellation of the Korean ethnos *and* nation erase the politics of migrant, inter-Indigenous, and disabled people through a militarized notion of citizenship.⁴² Building on Korean studies and Asian American studies scholarship that have illuminated the history of Korean nationalism and its sociopolitical, cultural, and economic expressions, I examine how Korean nationalism, through a singular claim to Indigeneity, erases the shared conditions of settler colonialism that had necessitated the global concepts of inter-Indigeneity. As a result, Korean nationalism limits decolonization to the granting of a settler colonial frontier reclaimed by a singular Indigenous people for national security—some “Korean” people worthy of rehabilitation.

Contrary to such a nationalist understanding of decolonization, networks of antimilitarism and decolonization movements exist among the occupied territories of the United States, from Jeju Island to Seongju in South Korea (whose residents had protested the US and South Korean plans to install Terminal High Altitude Area Defense), on Okinawa, and on Guam. The fates of these occupied sites are interconnected as much as they are deemed geographically distant. However, the discontinuous and archipelagic nature of the military network in the Pacific has also meant that the withdrawal of the US military from one site can lead to the intensification of militarization in another.⁴³ This contracting and expanding dynamic pits the struggles for demilitarization in these sites against one another, another manifestation of what Paul Amar has described as a metaphorical archipelago created by the global security industry and militarization.⁴⁴

The significance of such entwinements is elided in popular narratives and the cultural imaginary surrounding modern Korea beyond studies that focus on militarism and social movements.⁴⁵ The Pacific conjures images of travel, the Pacific War, and transpacific partnerships, yet the predominant narrative around Korea's ethnic and cultural unity makes it difficult to see Korea's relation to the occupied Pacific sites as one of settler colonial dynamics, in which Korea and its

people are not the only ones colonized but are often active participants in the subjugation of others. This book offers an examination of incomplete, critical lines of thinking that questioned and sought to overcome a limited notion of decolonization, to ask how a different Korea can be imagined by questioning Korea's claim to a singular Indigeneity within the larger web of the settler colonial and militarized Pacific.⁴⁶

Addressing this intertwinement of occupation, migration, and political mobilization, this book contributes to transpacific studies, which names the formation of scholarship across Asian American studies, Native American and Indigenous studies, Pacific Islander studies, and Asian studies that attends to the space of the Pacific as an object of analysis to better understand militarized modernity.⁴⁷ This body of scholarship has explored the Pacific as a producer of critical inquiry amid political contestation of military occupations. Simultaneously, points of tension surfaced around the erasure of Indigenous peoples. The usage of "Asia-Pacific" as a preferred unit of analysis, even while speaking of the Transpacific, has been taken as such an erasure, as the triangulation of Asia-Pacific-United States makes Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands invisible.⁴⁸ Teresia Teaiwa criticized the tendency to ask "Where is the empire?" instead of "Where are the Indigenous or first people?" to observe "the ways that denial, marginalization, and appropriation of Indigeneity are part of the conditions" of the very inquiries on imperialism.⁴⁹

This book specifically probes the forging of transpacific futurity in immobilizing conditions of forced migration and (settler) colonial, military, and economic occupations.⁵⁰ It approaches newer and older literary texts as speculative fictions that seek "critical fabulation" from moments of stillness to offer one way of reading a "decolonial genealogy of the Transpacific."⁵¹ If a decolonial genealogy of the Transpacific has been "articulated and rearticulated as a transnational Asian/American critique of the United States' militarized colonial presence in Asia and the Pacific Islands," how does Korean militarized and economic presence in the Pacific also serve as an extension of US presence?⁵² Such extension is perhaps most palpable in South Korea's rise as a subempire through its deployment of "service economies" and blanket invocations of the Korean diaspora as well as through its status as part of "US settler garrisons."⁵³ This is because militarism—the "preservation of military institutions, hierarchies, and values, whether or not they are needed for war," according to Jodi Kim—has underwritten the movements of capital and labor and appropriation of land and waters in modern Korea as part of "US militarist settler imperialism."⁵⁴

An important aspect of this book's argument is that transpacific inquiries in and through Korea are inseparable from the questions of settler colonialism.

Although settler colonialism has a long history, it has only become a more visible object of scholarly analysis beyond Native and Indigenous activism and studies relatively recently.⁵⁵ Settler colonialism as an object of analysis enabled sharper analyses of the dynamics within a settler state that cannot be explained away as features of a “postcolonial” society—postcolonial here signifying the end of formal colonialism while maintaining its legacies.⁵⁶ By identifying the biopolitical, legislative, economic, and cultural measures through which a settler colonial state legitimizes its operation on lands and waters gained by the logic of elimination of natives, settler colonialism studies has exposed not (only) past but *present* stratifications of power in sites such as the United States, Canada, and Israel/Palestine wherein postcolonial focus had overlooked settler politics as central to colonialism.⁵⁷ Though settler colonialism’s privileged sites of reference tend to be those affiliated with the Anglophone Commonwealth, studies of settler colonialism in northeast Asia have been carried out in historical and anthropological studies.⁵⁸ Yet analyses of Indigenous sovereignty, Indigenous removal, and settler discourses in epistemic, social, cultural, and political terms of the contemporary moment remain to be further engaged in the context of northeast Asia. When we understand inter-Indigeneity as encompassing a wide range of communities that live under settler colonial structures and whose politics must address their vulnerability to extractions, dispossession, and genocide, the failure to consider how militarism and economic occupations surrounding the Korean peninsula affect migrant and Indigenous people across the Pacific who do not fall into Korean *minjok* is also a failure to consider the nature of coloniality in Korea. And the failure to engage their marginalized but pivotal place as a structural lacuna in modern Korean literature, culture, and social movements would also be a loss of opportunity to consider the layers of meaning for Korea’s decolonization, and more expansively, for decolonization in the Transpacific that thinks through Korea as a significant site of multiple colonial rule and subimperial rise.

This book argues that inter-Indigeneity in transpacific Korea must be dialectically articulated against the singular Korean mono-ethno-national claim to political and territorial independence from the Japanese, US, or Soviet empires. Koreans’ subjection to Indigeneity under occupations honed through settler colonial practices must be considered alongside Koreans’ subjection of other communities to Indigeneity in their colonial, Cold War, and neoliberal deployments as settlers, migrants, and citizens of states engaged in the militarization of islands in the Pacific. The singular Korean claim to Indigeneity as a settler colonial object of control overlooks the very possibility and condition of inter-Indigeneity. This elision justifies the direct and indirect military and economic occupations wielded to make South Korean citizenship possible, however invisibly so to the

majority of South Korean citizens. Hagar Kotef writes of home as a technology in settler colonies, “wherein the construction of one’s home, and ultimately one’s [national] identity, is the destruction of another’s,” and the violence inflicted on the other is a necessary and even accepted part of the dispossessor’s selfhood.⁵⁹ Understanding the settler colonial dimensions of developmentalism, militarism, and economic occupation illuminates how Korean nationalist claims to Indigeneity produces inter-Indigeneity as debility, a ripple effect of what Jodi Byrd has described as “Indianness in transit”—wherein “[the] United States propagates its empire not through frontiers but through the production of a paradigmatic Indianness”—in lieu of inter-Indigenous contestations against settler colonial societies.⁶⁰ The illegibility of developmentalism as a settler colonial project, and the illegibility of a diasporic nation’s claim to becoming multiracial and multi-ethnic as an exclusionary claim to Indigeneity that is coded as disability, are the contradictory effects of the (non)relations that I engage. Korean decolonization must address this nexus of Indigeneity and disability, which I trace through figures and scenes of immobilization.

Critical engagements with Indigenous sovereignty already exist in texts that think about the meaning of decolonization in Korea through the condition of immobility, but methodological experiments are necessary to appreciate them. This book brings together several theoretical frameworks on colonialism that are divided across geographies, disciplines, and time, because the question of decolonization of knowledge production has entailed a partial or total break from the assumptions of a discipline for many.⁶¹

For example, colonial modernity from East Asian studies and modernity-coloniality from decolonial thought are relevant to each other. The colonial modernity framework from the 1990s in East Asian studies was a critical intervention in the views that colonialism in Asia was beneficial, that colonialism was “interrupting” the emergence of modernity, understood as national. The colonial modernity framework proposed to focus on the temporality of “modernity” as always already immersed in the violence of global colonialisms rather than focus on the geographic differences and formal colonial history. It thereby offered a foundational theory of modernity for scholars of Asia that calls for traversing both the transnational and site-specific historiography of modernity. Especially for sites with an inter-Asian colonial history, such as in Korea, colonial modernity became a useful framework to contextualize the violent effects of modern history on culture and politics.⁶²

At the same time, decolonial thought cohered the framework of modernity-coloniality with a different geographic focus, arguing that global modernity is fundamentally colonial in structure and content. This modernity-coloniality

framework is subtly different from the colonial modernity framework, albeit complementary: Whereas colonial modernity sees colonialism as only one way (“colonial” modifies “modernity”) the non-West experienced modernity, decolonial thought distinguishes coloniality as the foundation on which modernity was built and carried out its colonialism. Decolonial thought also focused on decolonization as an aim that has not yet taken place. The difference in scope between the two approaches derives from decolonial thought taking the year 1492—the European conquest of the Americas—as a pivotal year for the beginning of European modernity and the covering of Latin America and Indigeneity as theological and racialized constructs.⁶³ From this conquest, a new logic of organizing the world—“coloniality of power” and “coloniality of gender”—was created, shaping every aspect of knowledge formation, power relations, and livelihood, including ontological possibilities through the “coloniality of being.”⁶⁴ This argument helps address one of the criticisms colonial modernity faced in East Asia, that it unnecessarily emphasizes modernity’s violence over its positive developments.⁶⁵ Rather, coloniality reveals that modernity’s accomplishments were enabled by the global systematization of dispossession of land, resources, genocide, and enslavement. What also makes this articulation of “coloniality” useful to the transpacific analysis is its insistence that the coloniality of power continues to operate past the formal end of colonialism across the world.

This global scope of coloniality necessitates connecting the centuries of colonialism and enslavement to one another and to their present hold, to contemplate the “intimacies” wrought by the colonization of continents as well as the “archipelago of resettlement.”⁶⁶ Seeing coloniality as the foundational and necessary “underside” of modernity shows how inter-Asian colonialism is less an aberration than the norm and the importance of examining coloniality across continents and oceans, as colonial modernity has done for inter-Asian inquiry.⁶⁷ Finally, by decolonization, I do not mean the formal end of colonial rule but rather an unending and transformative reordering of the world built by modernity-coloniality, beyond positions of immanence and complicity.⁶⁸

The examination and politics of Indigeneity in Latin America and the Caribbean are evolving and contextually specific. Yet subsuming Indigeneity into national and regional political identity in Latin America and the Caribbean often took the form of erasure of Indigenous people and coinciding national claims of racial mixture that overlooked presently oppressed Indigenous communities, for whom genocide, racialization, impoverishment, and political oppression work together.⁶⁹ The emergence of Indigenous political movements in the 1990s, such as the EZLN (*Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*) in Mexico, has interrupted such subsumption of Indigeneity into various national and

regional narratives. In the Caribbean, where colonialism and enslaved and indentured labor in plantations were written over the genocide of the Indigenous Tainos, the uneasy and erased place of Indigeneity haunts the thinkers I engage with, such as Sylvia Wynter and Aimé Césaire, who blur the Black and Native politics of the Caribbean in their decolonial articulations.⁷⁰ The insights from these debates can be helpful interlocutors in unpacking the narratives around Indigeneity in northeast Asia and, more specifically, Korea and diaspora, for tracing resonant logics of mixture and erasure in the subsumption of Indigeneity: What work do “we are *all* Indigenous here” and “there are *no* Indigenous people here” perform, and what work are they incapable of performing? When and how does “we are *also* Indigenous” become a meaningful point of departure for inter-Indigenous dialogue, and when does it betray that which it evokes?

Engaging Caribbean thinkers of modernity, decoloniality, relationality, and the overrepresentation of “Man” is also important to *Decolonial Becoming*’s multiple archipelagic consideration of the Transpacific. Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Sylvia Wynter, and Édouard Glissant have criticized imperialist humanism, as did Takeuchi Yoshimi and Ch’oe In-hun, examined in chapters 1 and 2, from the other occupied archipelagoes.⁷¹ For Wynter, the notion of “Man” describes the narrow understanding of the human that emerged from, first, the “degodding” process of the Renaissance (Man 1), and second, the rise of physical and biological sciences that took place alongside the internment and enslavement of Indigenous and African-descendent people (Man 2) and the transformation of the political man into the Darwinian and Malthusian model of biocentric and economic man.⁷² Through dialectical paradigm shifts, original heresies became new orthodoxies, which prompts Wynter to call for new heresies or ceremonies that inscribe new genres of the human. Methodologically, *Decolonial Becoming* begins and ends with the Transpacific and its militarized present while taking a “(de)tour of duty” through the Caribbean articulations. Teresia Teaiwa wrote of “tours of profound duty” that differently engage the intersection of demilitarization and decolonization through the lens of “militourism.”⁷³ *Decolonial Becoming* considers how this Caribbean detour might illuminate decolonization under militarized immobility of archipelagoes—the Pacific also refracted through the Caribbean—and the particular but shared condition of storms they undergo and must rewrite.

Immobility: Migration, Disability-Debility, and Occupation

Immobility coheres a set of questions from the scholarship on mobility that focus on gendered migration, which has been important for pushing against the glorification of mobility—both as migration and change of class status—as

an ideal to be celebrated in Korea.⁷⁴ Existing frameworks on movement at large were limited to movement as a structural symptom or movement as a cause for celebration as subjective freedom.⁷⁵ In contemporary transnational migration of Asian women, celebratory accounts of transnational mobility can ignore “the painful nature of diasporic existence,” and gendered and racialized dimensions of economic migration grant mobility “without dignity” to women migrants.⁷⁶ Furthermore, the transnational discursive explosions in the 1990s around the Japanese wartime Comfort Women system, a judicializing and depoliticizing process of justice, have created a “double-edged exemplarity” where “the tapered attention to physical and especially sexual violence against women displaced the concern with female labor exploitation” of the 1980s.⁷⁷ Gendered migration thus raises questions about the exclusions that take place in nationalist and classist accounts of movement. The stories of movement deal with core experiences of immobility that determine the temporality and geography of movement.⁷⁸

Reframing through immobility specifically asks how Indigeneity and disability are invisible terms through which gendered migration becomes a movement. As the condition of the occupied, immobility brings Indigeneity and disability—and Indigeneity as disability—into focus, highlighting how migration reproduces immobility through the (non)relation between these categories, as erased or forgotten relations that are critical to the functioning of respective categories. The seeming contradictions I examine revolve around how Korean Indigeneity as disability is an object of ethnic rehabilitation and mobilization while migrant, inter-Indigenous disability is an object of immobilization as debility (unrecognizable as disability) in colonial, imperialist, and late capitalist narratives. While disability is recognizable as such in a narrow understanding of Indigenous (“Korean”) bodies in the South Korean nationalist imaginary, debility proliferates in the Transpacific as the denial of both experiences of disability and Indigeneity beyond this narrow understanding. Debility reframes many texts toward an expansive understanding of decolonization beyond South Korea’s claim to Indigeneity, especially given that military and economic occupations are the biggest and underacknowledged producers of disability worldwide.⁷⁹

In disability studies, immobility is a question of the built environment that creates “norms of speed” in modernity and the “guarantee that mobility will be felt as freedom.”⁸⁰ Approaching disability as a social construct—how is social life premised on underlining (in)capacitations that erase or exploit nonnormative bodyminds and desires?—and an environmental construct—how are spaces designed to exclude and dispossess bodies with different capacities?—has been significant in intervening in the reliance on medical diagnosis and impairment to define, understand, and control disability.⁸¹ Highlighting the construction of

disability through such social and environmental design indeed drives disability politics' radical potential: going beyond representational inclusion of select disabled bodies toward a questioning of the relation of the body to itself and to its surroundings.⁸² Yet discussions of disability and the built environment tend to focus on disability's relation to the environment as a subjective struggle, leading to validating opportunities to change one's environment to accommodate one's needs as a form of liberation.⁸³ This is complicated by the fact that "crip is a site of tension in its very refusal of rights and recognition, as it cannot capture or honor ways of engaging with disability that might include a demand for rights that have been denied."⁸⁴

What's more, the posthuman environmental ethics that demands that the "polluter pays" may not readily offer tools and explanatory frameworks for those immobilized on the other side of the division of labor and occupation, who undergo disablement in the context of slow violence wrought by military legacies, settler colonialism, and labor, but crip as a site of tension could offer some tools.⁸⁵ Mel Chen proposes that "to think further about the kinds of invisibilized and corporeal debility introjected by certain bodies in a time of environmentally disproportionate harm" is to think about the "pollution [that] is rendered not simply a pan-species threat but a specific one decried by environmental justice, working in conjunction with existing structures that serve to intensify or double that harm (slow plus structural violence)."⁸⁶ Chen's problematic and Langan's question of built environments' "norms of speed" are more recently illustrated by the aforementioned case of Seongju, where residents faced fines for impeding traffic during antimilitarist and environmental protests and the supreme court ruled that the environmental impact of THAAD would be inconsequential.⁸⁷ The challenge of thinking about immobility at the heart of migration, then, is that it is also a linchpin in the colluding dialectics of disability and debility, of *minjok* as singular Indigeneity and inter-Indigenous sovereignty struggles, and of environmental pollution and environmentalization of migrants and Indigenous.

The engaged texts contemplate environments under economic and military occupations, in which neither posthuman environmental ethics nor subjective struggle against the disabling environment are in and of themselves liberatory; yet the conditions are also not totalizing. In these texts, the melding of human bodies with the environment is invisibilized disintegration (public "wrongs," to borrow Kotef's coinage) that materially provides for the very liberal public space and services (public "goods") to which some disability politics may seek access. Following Puar's remapping of disability, coconstituted by debilitation of bio/necropolitics, this book explores how the debilitated population's relation to the environment might be one of becoming continuous with the

environment through immobilization in these speculative fictions, and conversely, how they would search for decolonial becoming in and through such conditions of immobility.

Conditions of immobility show how disasters construct the debilitated as a population—the Indigenous, migrant-settlers, the disabled, and the ill—and how failed disaster responses ensure their reproduction through a seriality of disasters. The intersection of disability and disaster in social science and policy scholarship reveals that populations with disabilities are often severely impacted by disasters.⁸⁸ The overlap between disability-integrated disaster recovery programs in the United States and the disaster capitalism of the war on terror, arising from disaster-preparedness programs set in place after 9/11, reveals disasters as visible instances of debilitation in capitalist expansions and imperialist violence.⁸⁹ The literature on disability and disaster assumes that a population already “has” a disability prior to the event of a disaster and needs to be accounted for in the reconstruction phase. However, disaster can include the longer debilitation resulting from prolonged displacement and labor that renders the body more moldable to an industrially polluted or militarized environment. The predominance of the “dust of history” as a population destined for debility requires theorizations of decolonization, especially carried out in debilitating circumstances.

Given such, decolonial becoming is a movement that is not necessarily acrobatic or highly capacitated, but full of wit, sabotage, and subterfuge in a shared place, to overturn the future of serial disasters. It seeks *liberation* from disaster, or *t’alyōk* (脱疫), in which *yōk* includes settler colonial and military infrastructures. I discuss, in chapter 5, decolonial becoming as *t’alyōk*, or ex-disaster/illness, a neologism I use to describe South Korean disability activism’s critique of quarantine (*pangyōk*) that I connect to the militarized Pacific. If colonialism is a foundational catastrophe of modernity, *t’alyōk* is a decolonial liberation from the seriality of disasters in modernity-coloniality.⁹⁰

Hope in Despair: Dialectics, Becoming, Movement

From the standpoint of reason, it is self-evident that imperialism cannot be overturned by imperialism. —TAKEUCHI YOSHIMI, in *What Is Modernity*, 121

Movement in this book includes various kinds of mobilizations and their attendant immobilizations, amid the imperial wartime mobilization of Japan, the Cold War occupations of South Korea, and the South Korean occupation of the Pacific. After the formal ends of colonialism in many places in “the age of decolonization,” the search for a “real” decolonial movement continued as decolonial

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becoming, because mobilization did not necessarily create greater freedom of movement but multiplied finer and shifting divisions of movement and stasis.⁹¹ This search for “real” movement can be traced in the dialectics of movement and stasis. Because the notion of movement cannot exist without stasis, seeking movement must begin with stasis. This is both a problem and a method for addressing the failed search for a “real” movement in the “age of decolonization,” or decolonial becoming. In this section, I discuss decolonial becoming in conversation with thinkers who wrote on the master-slave dialectics to overcome fascism and colonialism. This discussion is then deepened in chapters 2 and 4, where the master-slave dialectics is brought to a standstill through the metaphor and materiality of “perfect storms,” in the rewritings of William Shakespeare’s *Tempest* as dialectics specific to the transpacific condition and resonant with the Caribbean.

One of this book’s interlocutors on dialectics is Takeuchi Yoshimi, who sought to identify the nature of modernity by revisiting Pan-Asianism critically. As a Japanese Marxist sinologist, Takeuchi spent several years in China in his early twenties. During the Pacific War, he was drafted and stationed in China from 1943 until Japan’s defeat in 1945. In his postwar writings, he criticized Japanese philosophy and imperial politics, arguing for a need to think Pan-Asianism more seriously, without which he claimed postwar intellectuals risked repeating the past. A diffuse body of thought, Pan-Asianism is a set of ideas, politics, and cultures surrounding the notion of “Asia” traced to China’s defeat in the Opium War (1839–42), when a sense of crisis and solidarity stirred surrounding areas.⁹² Although its earlier variants often contained revolutionary discourse that was subjected to state censorship in the early twentieth century, it was co-opted as a state ideology and stripped of its revolutionary leanings. Tarnished by this cooptation, Pan-Asianism was “largely ignored by researchers—not to mention politicians and diplomats” for a long time after Japan’s defeat in 1945.⁹³ Yet Takeuchi saw the rise of fascism in Japan as unresolved “problems” of modernity, because imperial Pan-Asianism, in presuming that Japan is indeed the most modern of Asian states, left unaddressed the question of what modernity really means for Asia. This failure, Takeuchi argued, was a result of an undialectical engagement with modernity.

Instead of Japan, it was China that Takeuchi saw as dialectically engaging the West. In *What Is Modernity?* (1948), Takeuchi turns to the Chinese writer Lu Xun’s parable “The Wise Man, the Fool, and the Slave,” in which a slave insults the fool who advises him to revolt against his master.⁹⁴ The slave instead takes the advice from a wise man, who tells the slave to fix the master’s broken house. Counterintuitively, Takeuchi saw in Lu Xun’s parable a critique of enlightenment’s humanism that the fool represents: The slave cannot break from

enslavement by an outright revolt, as the fool suggests. The critique here is of the underlying, didactic notion of progress in the fool's humanism, which presupposes linear movement flowing from ignorance to knowledge. Against humanism's wish for liberation through immediate action, Takeuchi instead argues that liberation cannot occur immediately.

The point of the parable, then, is that the slave must reject the apparently liberatory path out of enslavement that enlightenment humanism gives one and chart one's own path. Because humanism assumes that the existing social conditions can provide for present and future liberation, it measures progress as a linear movement mapped on a known terrain. Like the fool, Japanese leftist intellectuals end up committing "*decadence* through being progressive" because "resistance means that [social conditions for liberation] are not given, and so one rejects the fantasy that they could be."⁹⁵ Instead, the slave should question what liberation means in enslavement, without which the slave would seek subjective liberation by becoming the master who "is a true *slave* when he thinks that he is not a *slave*. And he reveals the full extent of his *slavishness* when he becomes a master, for at that time he subjectively views himself as no longer a *slave*."⁹⁶ Without dialectics, what appears to be movement is in fact a semblance of movement, and this is what Takeuchi believes the condition of modernity created for the non-West.

In G. W. F. Hegel's master-slave (also lordship and bondage) dialectics, after the contest for life and death with the master, the slave turns toward an object and away from the master's recognition. The object then becomes a site of labor through which the dialectics of self-consciousness unfold through the slave, not the master. For Takeuchi, too, the dialectical movement cannot be collapsed into a teleological progress of humanism that seeks to become the master. He argued that without a negation of modernity through "resistance," which was construed as stasis by the "progressives" of his time, there can be no transformation. Through his altered dialectics, Takeuchi sought an opening to relationality between the given terms of a dialectic, a transformation beyond recognition from another self-consciousness, in Hegelian terms.⁹⁷ The way Takeuchi gets to this point is through criticizing his contemporaries and Japan's imperial past, all the while refusing to throw the baby (Pan-Asianism's possibilities) out with the bath water (imperialist ideologies).

Writing contemporaneously with Takeuchi but on the Caribbean in the "age of decolonization," Frantz Fanon, the Martinican physician, writer, and revolutionary, discusses in *Black Skin, White Masks* (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 1952, henceforth *BSWM*) the Négritude movement as part of the unfolding Black consciousness, criticizing, like Takeuchi, teleological determinism in thinking

about the dialectics of decolonization. Though Fanon agreed with Jean-Paul Sartre's conclusion that the Négritude movement is not the end but a stage within dialectics, Fanon objects to Sartre's didacticism, emphasizing that dialectics in Hegel is unpredictable.⁹⁸ Both Takeuchi and Fanon viewed negation of the colonizer/enslaver as a necessary component of the conflict, but not the end of overcoming colonial conditions. In this view, Japan's effort to replace the West instead of negating it is not progress but amounts to "nothing," a failed attempt to replace the master.⁹⁹ In the altered dialectics of Takeuchi and Fanon in the "age of decolonization," the concept of despair becomes important to their critique of enlightenment humanism, for which modernity *as* coloniality led to dialectics different from that of Hegel.

The embodied dimension of Fanon's altered dialectics highlights the generative aspect of dialectics as a movement of becoming in a condition of immobility. Kara Keeling argued that "Fanon's injunction to introduce invention into existence . . . is a call for a theory of real movement," challenging the existing understandings of representation in contemporary theories of visual culture.¹⁰⁰ On the final prayer with which Fanon ends *BSWM*, Keeling identifies this voice as "the cinematic Fanon," whose final prayer is "a call for a motor tendency on a sensitive nerve of a slave that does not continue a present movement, but instead creates a different future movement: 'O my body, make me always a man who questions!'"¹⁰¹ The cinematic Fanon creates "real" movement by freeing the racialized Black body from the historically sedimented images of enslavement that make up the "common sense" fostered by the visual culture of white supremacy. Considering Fanon's Black spectator and spectacle, Keeling thus shows how "real" movement of the Black body had to be wrestled from the images on screen deployed to mobilize Black viewers. That this search ends and begins with the body becoming new to itself motivates my readings of immobilized bodies under occupation ahead.

Furthermore, the dialectics of *BSWM* become a point of departure for Fanon in pursuit of a global decolonial struggle, explored as dialectics in his later writings as Fanon participated in the Algerian Revolution. This is because, as Glen Coulthard observes on Fanon's dialectics, "A simultaneous turn inward and away from the master . . . reflects a profound understanding of the complexity involved in contests over recognition in colonial and racialized environments."¹⁰² Such recognition has implicated Fanon's narrator in *BSWM* in their relation to others subjected to anti-Black racism, and in Fanon's later writings, this recognition manifests as internationalist praxis.¹⁰³ Rather than a vertically driven encounter between the master and slave as the primary dialectic, Fanon's and Takeuchi's dialectics gesture toward the horizontal relationalities that share

experiences of despair as a place also to find hope. Amid Cold War geopolitical escalations, Fanon conceptualized praxis as necessarily relational and as a caution against nationalist developmentalism. Fanon describes praxis as the struggle that “explo[des] the former colonial reality . . . uncovers unknown facets, brings to light new meanings, and underlines contradictions that were camouflaged by this reality”: that it is “national, revolutionary, and collective”; furthermore, praxis consists of “the people whose struggles enact this new reality, the people who live it, march on, freed from colonialism and forewarned against any attempt at mystification or glorification of the nation.”¹⁰⁴ Such an understanding of praxis reflects Fanon’s criticism in *The Wretched of the Earth* (*Les Damnés de la Terre* 1961) of the position that sees the establishment of the nation as an end to decolonization. For Fanon, the role of the nation is defined by praxis and, therefore, is relational. Thus, Fanon’s critique of the nation emphasizes the function of the nation within the larger imperative of global decolonization. A nation that does not enact a new, redistributive reality and that does not disturb coloniality on a *global*, and not only local, scale mystifies and glorifies itself. Praxis for Fanon, then, cannot be isolated regionally and nationally but enacted through the connections among the network of disparate colonized realities. Fanon’s work in Algeria reflects this understanding of praxis as relational: There cannot be true decolonization of Martinique without that of Algeria, and there would be no Algerian Revolution without Dien Bien Phu.¹⁰⁵

Fanon’s hope—as well as the hope conveyed in most calls for decolonization and events such as the Afro-Asian conference in Bandung—may be dismissed as oversimplifying terms of oppression or as unrealistic. Yet it is precisely that there is no hope without despair (and no despair without hope) that Fanon and Takeuchi wrote of despair as an essential moment within the larger dialectics in search of a “real” movement.¹⁰⁶ Ernst Bloch similarly observed that the essential place of hope during the rise of fascism in Germany is the life of the future that is lived in the present: It was not the proletariat’s lack of class consciousness but the “noncontemporaneous” desires that needed to be fostered toward revolution. The success of fascist mobilization, despite its contradictory messaging and lack of any real economic solutions for the proletariat, derived from the way it tapped into these noncontemporaneities and the failure of the left to sufficiently attend to the spiritual and symbolic needs of the utopian dimension of everyday life that “lives in the future.” In striking analyses that are still relevant today, Bloch and Takeuchi overlapped in their critique of the left intelligentsia in the early to mid-twentieth century for effectively enabling fascism to take hold of the proletariat’s need for meaning created by capitalism and neglected by leftist classism and idealism. Rather than something false to be dismissed, fascism for Bloch

was “a complex, contradictory phenomenon, in which there was light and shade, hope and despair.”¹⁰⁷ Bloch’s suggested solution was that Marxism carry out a “multilayered dialectic” that could better take hold of the noncontemporaneous contradictions of “future-in-the-past.” Rather than combating the utopian dimensions of fascism with an anti-utopian, positivist realism, Bloch argued for “a multitemporal and multispatial dialectic, the polyrhythmics and the counterpoint of such a dialectic.”¹⁰⁸

This temporality of hope has been rearticulated as queer ecstatic temporality. José Esteban Muñoz argued that ecstatic temporality brings into view “another understanding of what matters,” dialectics that manifest as a temporality of waiting, resulting from being “cast out of straight time’s rhythm.”¹⁰⁹ Ecstasy as the casting out of straight time’s rhythm—or polyrhythmics—is an opportunity for new relations under toxic sensorium: Mel Chen thus took up ecstasy amid disability’s stasis as a dialectical experience in which “likely subjects [are] equally likely objects.”¹¹⁰ I examine ecstasy as ex-stasis more closely in chapter 5, in which stasis reveals how “everyone lives in the future,” as Bloch wrote, even and especially when utopia appears “temporally stalled, forsaken,” through the case of quarantine and serial disasters.¹¹¹ If, as Takeuchi observed, despair and resistance coexist in the reckoning that there is no known path out of modernity, and despair names the state of this reckoning while resistance names this reckoning as a movement, I also show in chapter 3 that the polyrhythmic inventions while waiting can take Indigeneity and disability as the states of despair from which hope can be traced.¹¹²

Ways to Read This Book

This book offers a heretical, or perverted, genealogy of transpacific writings in that it asks the reader to consider together texts that had not been written in conversation with one another—a rationale often used for engaging texts from different time periods, regions, and traditions—and would not be grouped together in most academic disciplines, for example, as I had been trained to in Comparative Literature, following shared genre, national tradition and language, geographic proximity, race and ethnicity, and historical proximity, among others. Yet *Decolonial Becoming* argues that considering these texts together is necessary to understanding how decolonial underpinnings do not (only) occur at the unit of the nation-state, national language, or rehearsed racial or ethnic unity but also in conditions of immobility that induce necessary creativity and relations across these units of comparison and cohesion. The book explores such a decolonial becoming—not a hyper-capacitated or acrobatic dialectics but

rather dialectics as a dancing in place to conjure a new future. It is also my hope that *Decolonial Becoming* can offer one way, among many, of conducting Korean studies, Asian American studies, Comparative Literature, and Critical Theory for others like me, whose interdisciplinary objects compel them to stray from existing rationales and genealogies. Additionally, while I often felt that I was only compelled by the materials I analyzed to order them in this way, metatextual elements also compelled me as I wrote earlier drafts of this book, on which I reflect in the conclusion.

Readers familiar with modern northeast Asian history will recognize that the chapters are in chronological order but do not cover all decades throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This chronological organization is not intended to be comprehensive of Korea's history and literary traditions, as is more customary in area studies, although the book is indebted to foundational scholarship in Korean and Asian studies. Rather, chronological organization is intended for a witnessing of the reanimation of the mid-twentieth-century questions in contemporary texts that appear to share little in common with their predecessors: to ask how immobility in Korean texts has always been, simultaneously, a question of Indigeneity and disability, that the injuries from Japanese and US imperialism in Korea—or the necessary components of “victimhood nationalism”—are connected to, rather than in conflict with, the injuries South Korea inflicts in the Pacific.¹¹³ The book, then, offers a partial and webbed examination of the Transpacific in and through Korea and of Korea in and through the Transpacific. The ideas, motifs, and arguments that run through the examined texts shapeshift from chapter to chapter: Conclusions of each chapter are challenged by the following as a dialectical unfolding takes place *between* the chapters that become something “familiar and strange” through each rendition, as I discuss Wynter’s “ceremony” in chapter 5. The most dialectical way to read this book is to read it in order, while different chapter pairings will render a more straightforward set of stories about decolonial becoming through shared themes.

Decolonial Becoming begins with chapter 1, “Exquisite Corpse and Queer Rocks: Mobilization and Haptics in Late Colonial Korean Literature,” and examines how two Korean authors, Kim Saryang and Yi T’ae-jun, dealt with portrayals of the racialized colonial bodies and Indigeneity in the context of imperial mobilization under Japanese colonialism in the ’30s and ’40s, when technologies such as film and the train introduced sedimented ways of seeing bodies and landscapes. Tracing the fantasies and failures of their ethnic Korean characters to rehabilitate themselves under the visual and biopolitical grids of wartime mobilization, the chapter considers how Kim and Yi respectively experimented with the exquisite corpse and haptics to question colonial power to see and see

through their objects, to find a way out of immobility imposed by colonialism. Particularly, Yi's turn toward objects and landscapes in lieu of humanist recognition leads him down a dead-end of the Hegelian master-slave dialectics. The chapter ends by reflecting on Takeuchi and Fanon's invocation of despair as the beginning of a new dialectic.

Following the failures of decolonial dialectics and the necessity of critical Pan-Asianism from Takeuchi, chapter 2, "The Transpacific Tempest: Relational Sovereignty and Spiritual Sociogenesis," examines an alternative imagination of third-world decolonial politics and the nonalignment movement in the South Korean author Ch'oe In-Hun's novel, *The Typhoon* (*T'aepung* 1973). The chapter analyzes the archipelagic orientation and settler-Indigenous relationality in Ch'oe's novel and its vision of Korea's decolonization inflected by a rewriting of the Divine Wind (*kamikaze*) narrative, Pan-Asianism, William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, and the Afro-Asian conference in Bandung (1955) from the 1970s authoritarian South Korea amid the Vietnam War. More broadly, chapter 2 tells the story of Caribbean and transpacific rewritings of *Tempest*, such as Aimé Césaire's (1969), and how Ch'oe's speculative text unravels the master-slave dialectics toward decolonial becoming through "spiritual sociogenesis," an analysis for which I deploy Fanon, Wynter, and Glissant. Chapter 2 ends with reflections on the Pacific, Caribbean, and Afro-Asian questions of decolonization and grappling with inter-Indigeneity.

If chapter 2 engaged a South Korean text that looked to the Pacific, the following chapter engages diasporic and Native American texts that looked at histories of violence across the Pacific. Chapter 3, "Ceremony Found, Commemoration Lost: Crip Ghost Dance and Speculative Plot," follows literary texts in English (more accurately, multilingual) by Gerald Vizenor and Cathy Park Hong. The chapter looks at debility and postwar military occupations in the Pacific, and how the texts take the condition of immobility to create new ceremonies that reimagine millenarian dances—the Ghost Dance and Dance Dance Revolution. Chapter 3 probes how these texts forego commemorative practices surrounding the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Native American dispossession, and the Gwangju Uprising to instead experiment with tactile ceremonies, sabotage, and plotting. Doing so reveals crip embodiments in the present as central to decolonial becoming, contrary to the logic of visual display of disablement in commemoration. Building on disability studies and Wynter's writings on ceremony and plot, chapter 3 ends by exploring speculative plotting as a remapping of occupied bodies' relation to landscapes toward crip survivance.

Chapter 4 continues the question of speculative plotting from chapter 3 and pulls on several threads of preceding chapters. "Archipelago of the *Damnées*:

Debility and Genre” analyzes immobility as dissolution into the landscape in contemporary (2010s) South Korean women authors’—Kang Yöngsuk, Kim Sagwa, and Yun Göün—speculative fictions on migrants and Indigenous in disaster zones at the margins of Korea. Colonial affects from chapter 1 have an afterlife in the familiar but strange context of South Korea’s rise as a corporate subempire in the Pacific. With South Korea replacing the Japanese empire, the exquisite corpse of colonized Koreans is replaced with the plethora of discontented and debilitated migrants and Indigenous who live under South Korea’s economic occupation across disparate developmental zones (or “islands”). Chapter 4 builds on Puar’s articulation of debility and Wynter’s theory of “genre” to probe how migrant and Indigenous bodies, under forced permeability with the environment (“environmentalization”), are sites of contestation between subimperial disaster capitalism and decolonial becoming. While the protagonist of chapter 2’s perfect storm involved transformation of the self through the typhoon as decolonial becoming, chapter 4’s perfect storm involves a tsunami that blows up the landscape of military occupation as decolonial becoming. This shift brings into focus the critical place and methods of the Transpacific in South Korea’s subimperial rise and calls for expanding what it means for Korea to decolonize beyond the spaces of the nation, the peninsula, and the diaspora.

The last chapter turns to the pandemic-era politics of immobility in contemporary South Korea. Chapter 5, “Speculation in the Interval: Disability, Ecstasy, and *T’alyök*,” examines debility in serial disasters and the lack of accessible information and actionable policies for people with disabilities left stranded awaiting death. When quarantine is cast as disabling for *all*, how does disability become debility for vulnerable populations stranded by their nation-states? The chapter engages a 2020 political party formed by South Korean disability organizers that pushed against the seriality of disasters and their profitability in financial speculation. Looking at narratives of people with disabilities in quarantine, the chapter argues that the deinstitutionalization movement of disability activists objected to quarantine (*Pangyök* or prevention of disease and disaster) and espoused what I call *t’alyök* (exiting the cycle of disease and disaster, shared prefix “*t’al*” with *decolonial* and *postcolonial* *t’alsikmin* in Korean) by bringing new genres into being.¹¹⁴ The chapter connects the islands of immobility created by quarantine and the movement against it to the occupied islands of the Pacific and the call for Indigenous Sovereignty.

At large, *Decolonial Becoming* is concerned with how texts wrestle with discourses of mobilization at junctures where colonial relations find new grounds and when mobilization discourses gesture toward something more than physical relocation—the making of a new subjectivity and future. Yet these texts find

alternatives to such forms of mobilization by de-emphasizing individual capacities in favor of communal relationality. Such liberatory possibilities in immobilization and forced migration attend to the contexts of Indigenous peoples surviving settler colonialism and of the people debilitated by the violence of state and capitalist developments, even when they become irrelevant to popular legal fictions of nation-states.

Situating Korea within the larger Pacific also means shedding light on the fleeting encounters and collision of interests that take place through migration and militarism. The transpacific framework underlines how islands of the Pacific take on renewed significance as producers of knowledge amid the political strife often administered by surrounding continents and their concerns over territorial claims and security. This book contributes to the efforts in Korean studies to understand the colonial legacies in Korea, legacies that transpacific texts engaged to varying degrees of success. These dimensions of Korea only become legible when they are examined beyond the frameworks of the peninsula, the South Korean and North Korean nation-states, and the Korean people. Perfect storms, those dialectics differently imagined by authors, thinkers, and activists, call upon the debris wrought by the storm of progress and the decolonial becoming that begins with the debris.

DUKE

Notes

INTRODUCTION

Altered sections of chapter 2 and the introduction have previously appeared as “The Transpacific Tempest: Relational Sovereignty and Spiritual Sociogenesis,” in *Cultural Dynamics* 31.4: 375–98 and “The Spirit of Bandung Beyond Colonial Mobility,” in *Bandung: Journal of the Global South* 6.2: 190–209.

1. Kim Soyeon, *Maeilgyŏngje*, August 30, 2024. By invoking “Asia” this way, these outlets created a Borgesian Asian landscape and people less interested in truths than amazement, from “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius.”

2. I use the McCune-Reischauer romanization system in italics for transcribing Korean. For Korean names of people and places, I have tried to use commonly used or preferred romanizations, when they existed. Where applicable, I rendered Korean names of people with surnames first as is customary in Korean, unless they published with their surnames last.

3. In spite of South Korean news outlets’ claims that South Korea’s foreign nationals’ percentage surpassed Japan’s, the 2024 OECD report on South Korea notes that “the inflow of skilled foreign workers to Korea is significantly lagging behind other OECD countries, both in absolute terms and in relation to the population” in a section on foreign worker population. “Economic Surveys 2024,” OECD, July 24, 2024, 124, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-economic-surveys-korea-2024_c243e16a-en.html.

4. Chang Sejeong, *The JoongAng*, November 12, 2023, <https://www.joongang.co.kr/article/25206712>; Pak Hyeri, *Kukchemunhwahongbojŏngch’aeksil*, January 17, 2024, <https://www.kocis.go.kr/koreanet/view.do?seq=1047344>; “Transition to a Multicultural Society,” Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, accessed September 1, 2024, <https://www.korea.net/AboutKorea/Society/Transition-to-a-Multicultural-Society>.

5. A debate ensues on whether the right term would be multiethnic, multiracial, or multicultural nation. The slippages between ethnicity, race, and culture are notable, and they arise from the use of *injong* (race) to delineate non-Koreanness, while *minjok* (ethnicity) is omitted here but invoked in the ethnonational framework for ethnic Korean unity. Additionally, *munhwa* (culture) is used to euphemistically mark interracial and

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interethnic mixture between ethnic Koreans and nonethnic Koreans. The asymmetric slippages, then, are more concerned with the boundaries of “Koreanness” in shifting forms and less with precise transnational usages.

6. “Oh Se-Hun Sijang, Oeguginjumin Chŏngch’ack Masŭtŏp’ŭllaen,” Mayor Seoul Website, updated May 20, 2024, <https://mayor.seoul.go.kr/oh/seoul/newsView.do?photoGallerySn=2805&main=pc>.

7. Yi Chuhŭi, *Hankyoreh*, September 24, 2024; Hŏ Yunhŭi and Im Chisŏn, *Hankyoreh*, October 15, 2024. As of October 2024, many of the Filipina women earned only half of their promised income of ₩ 1,000,000 Korean Won (about \$720 USD). There have also been criticisms of the funneling of the women to the affluent Gangnam district of Seoul according to Sŏ ōri, *Pressian*, October 22, 2024.

8. Bolton’s account in *Crip Colony* of how the discourses of racial mixture and disability worked to discipline the Philippines as a colony is useful for thinking about South Korea’s staging of multiculturalism, especially as a “crisis resolution” as analyzed in Park, *Capitalist Unconscious*, 12. If for Bolton the invocation of Indigeneity as disabled functioned to underline *mestizaje* as a desirable rehabilitation, my argument here is that the invocation of Korean Indigeneity as disability is used to limit Indigeneity to Korean monoethnicity, through which Indigeneity and disability are unimaginable for those who do not fall into Korean monoethnicity.

9. Seol Dong-Hoon, who had been South Korea’s correspondent to the OECD SOPEMI (*Système d’observation permanente des migrations*), clarified in a *Chuganchosŏn* interview with Kim Yŏnjin on November 14, 2023, that the unfounded soundbite likely stemmed from South Korean application of the measurement for an aging society, in the context of Japan, to immigration rate in South Korea, an application that was misattributed as an existing measure of the OECD.

10. This is “a distinctively modern projection of Koreans who lacked mobility and control [under] . . . colonization, capitalization, modernization, and urbanization.” Choi, “Impaired Body,” 434.

11. Puar, *Right to Maim*, 69.

12. I use the uppercase *Indigenous* throughout. I use inter-Indigeneity in this book to emphasize the relational dimension that is missing in the monoethnic account and will leave engagements with other terms and methods (such as Allen’s “Trans-Indigenous”) for ensuing work by others, such as forthcoming works of Sandra Sohee Chi Kim and Ivanna Sang Een Yi. See also Oh, “Emergence of Political Indigeneity.” Where the engaged text uses terms like “Native,” “native women” and “Desert native,” for example in chapter 3, I kept these terms in my analysis.

13. Postwar Japan transformed the former imperial subjects (*shinmin*) from the colonial period into either Japanese nationals (*kokumin*) or foreigners. Lie, *Zainichi*, 14. James Joyce’s protagonist in *Ulysses* famously said, “Paternity is a legal fiction.”

14. Caprio and Yu, “Occupations of Korea and Japan.”

15. Park writes of “transnational Korea involv[ing] a simultaneous crisis in South Korea, North Korea, and China, and their interlocking process of crisis resolution.” Park, *Capitalist Unconscious*, 12. On the “parameters” of postcolonial South Korean engagement with the colonial past, see An, *Parameters of Disavowal*.

16. The numbers differ depending on the organization and time of estimates. Part of the difficulty is from relying on self-reports and applications from surviving members when nonprofit and state organized family reunions become possible. Boo and Lee, “Divided Korean Families.”

17. As Nguyễn-võ Thu-hương aptly described about her mother, “her memory . . . did not stay memory, and her dead did not stay dead.” Nguyễn-võ, *Almost Futures*, 155.

18. There are multiple articulations of refusals, most significantly Audra Simpson’s notion of ethnographic refusal in *Mohawk Interruptus*, which describes Indigenous people’s refusal to cooperate with extractive practices of anthropological knowledge production under settler colonialism. Sandy Grande links Simpson’s notion of refusal to Aníbal Quijano and Walter Dignolo’s epistemic disobedience in *Red Pedagogy*, 6–7. Fabulation also has several genealogies, among them Saidiya Hartman’s critical fabulation and Donna Haraway’s use in relation to SF. Hartman sees fabulation as “jeopardiz[ing] the status of the event, to displace the received or authorized account, and to imagine what might have happened or might have been said or might have been done. By throwing into crisis ‘what happened when’ and by exploiting the ‘transparency of sources’ as fictions of history.” Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” 11. See my discussion of fabulation in relation to decolonial thought in “On Faith and Fabulation.”

19. Million, *Therapeutic Nations*, 3, 8. In lieu of definitions, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs’ Social Inclusion webpage on Indigenous Peoples offers “inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment . . . [who] have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live . . . [and] Indigenous Peoples from around the world share common problems related to the protection of their rights as distinct peoples.” “Indigenous Peoples,” UN, accessed April 11, 2025, <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/indigenous-peoples>. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the General Assembly in 2007 and has been a common referent for global communities to seek protection as Indigenous peoples, even if debated and incomplete.

20. On Park Chung Hee–era state appropriation of folk culture, see Kwon and Park, *Spirit Power*, 74–83.

21. On my tentative engagement with these questions toward my next project, see We, “Minor Settler Grief” and We, “‘Archipelago.’”

22. I thank Youngju Ryu for offering key critical feedback on this point.

23. This observation draws on the analysis of Yi Kwang-su in Workman, *Imperial Genus*, 17. On the productive work of translation, see Apter, *Against World Literature*; Suh, *Treacherous Translation*; Rafael, *Motherless Tongues*; Cho, *Translation’s Forgotten History*; Kim, “Hardly Emotion.”

24. I thank Jodi Kim for sharing this observation.

25. Grande, *Red Pedagogy*, 150.

26. Byrd, *Transit of Empire*, xx.

27. The invocation of the Korean diaspora coincides with an identification with the Israeli state project as a diasporic settler nation. See Sin, *Hanminjok Sae Tiasŭp’ora*.

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28. Na'puti and Frain, "Indigenous Environmental Perspectives," 118; Na'puti, "We Are Not 'Where America's Day Begins.'"

29. "United Nations Declaration on the Rights," UN, accessed September 28, 2024, <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/indigenous-peoples/united-nations-declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples>. I thank the anonymous reviewer for helping me clarify this point.

30. Systems that sought to racially and arbitrarily define Indigeneity, such as the blood quantum in Hawai'i, are part of "a colonial project in the service of land alienation and dispossession" based on exclusion, whereas, "Hawaiian kinship and genealogical modes of identification allow for political empowerment in the service of nation building because they are inclusive." Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood*, 194.

31. Ryu, "Truth or Reconciliation?"

32. Lee, *Service Economies*, 20–21. On how Korean emigrants and diasporas navigate belonging in China, Japan, and the United States, see Kim, *Contested Embrace*; Chuh, *Imagine Otherwise*; and Kang, *Compositional Subjects*.

33. Kim, *Intimacies of Conflict*, 6.

34. Here, I am also thinking with Mel Chen's formulation in the opposite direction—"likely subjects [as] equally likely objects." Chen, *Animacies*, 203.

35. Hong, *Dance Dance Revolution*, 118; Yi, "Mōnji (Dust)," 295.

36. Yoneyama, *Cold War Ruins*; Kim, *Settler Garrison*.

37. A US House Resolution was introduced by representative Ro Khanna to formally end the Korean War. "H.Res.152: Calling for a Formal End of the Korean War," Congress.gov, accessed May 1, 2025, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/152>. In October 2018, North Korea threatened to launch missiles at Guam, addressing the US Government. The North Korean state saw Guam as does the US military intelligence, a noncontiguous territory of the United States, a strategic necessity and liability for the US military hold on the Asia-Pacific. In January, 2024, Kim Jong Un officially declared South Korea a principal enemy. Yi Chehun, *Hankyoreh*, January 11, 2024.

38. Alexandra Ossola observes in a *National Geographic* article on December 27, 2018, that "Guam's ecological fate is in the hands of the US military."

39. When discussing a more general condition of islands, such as Jeju and Okinawa, as sites of militarization beyond Pacific Islands as Oceania, I use the more general term islands/islanders of the Pacific.

40. Beyond the scope of this book, engagements with the Transpacific have included cultural, social, and economic dimensions of migration between Asia and the Americas. Rothwell, *Transpacific Revolutionaries*; Seijas, *Asian Slaves in Colonial Mexico*.

41. Saranillio, "Why Asian Settler"; Saranillio, *Unsustainable Empire*.

42. Similar questions have played out differently: The "human-genus being" discourse of imperial Japan continued in post-1945 ethnic nationalisms of Japan and North and South Korea; the post-1987 South Korean neoliberal reconstruction involved disciplining *minjung* (people, as evoked by democratization struggles) into *simin* (citizen). Workman, *Imperial Genus*; Lee, *Memory Construction*.

43. The United States plans to transfer 4,000 of 19,000 marines stationed in Okinawa to Guam in 2024–28 while protests over a new military base installation in Okinawa

continue according to the *Japan Times* article on May 14, 2019. More than 18,000 US marines have been transferred to Guam in 2023. The US marines are planned to send further detachments from Okinawa to Camp Blaz in Guam in late 2024. According to Irene Loewenson's *Marine Corps Times* article on December 29, 2023, "the base will serve as a 'strategic hub' in the Indo-Pacific region, the area that is the Defense Department's top priority amid tensions between the United States and China."

44. Amar, *Security Archipelago*.

45. Kim, *Interrogation Rooms*; Kim and Joh, *Feminist Praxis*; Baik, *Reencounters*; Hong, *Violent Peace*; Kim, *Intimacies of Conflict*; Jung, *Menace to Empire*; Kim, *Among Women*.

46. Chungmoo Choi defined the decolonization of Korea as an issue also of "colonization of consciousness" involving "agonistic, linguistic combat" and not only an issue of national sovereignty understood as national independence. In her 1991 article, Choi pinpoints how the framework of the Third World was influential to the discourse of decolonization in South Korea and argues that "the discourse of decolonization cannot safely rely on the self/other formula of the anticolonial discourse." Yet the role of the *minjung* movement as decolonization for Choi remains an issue of "the Korean identity" in this reflection, a point worth revisiting in the present through engagements with decolonial thought. Choi, "Discourse of Decolonization," 79, 91, 93.

47. Diaz and Kauanui, "Native Pacific Cultural Studies"; Diaz, "To 'P' or Not to 'P'?"; Kauanui, "Asian American Studies"; Teaiwa, "Native Thoughts"; Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism*; Shigematsu and Camacho, *Militarized Currents*; Uchida, *Brokers of Empire*; Byrd, *Transit of Empire*; Sakai and Yoo, *Trans-Pacific Imagination*; Saranillo, "Why Asian Settler Colonialism Matters"; Hoskins and Nguyen, *Transpacific Studies*; Yoneyama, "Toward a Decolonial Genealogy"; Huang, "Ecologies of Entanglement"; Mok and Bahng, "Transpacific Overtures"; Lu, *Making of Japanese Settler Colonialism*; Kim, *Postcolonial Grief*; Byrnes, "Transpacific Maladies"; Kim and Sharma, "Center-to-Center Relationalities"; Suzuki, *Ocean Passages*; Roh, *Minor Transpacific*; Kim, *Settler Garrison*; Gandhi, *Archipelago of Resettlement*, to name a few.

48. Shigematsu and Camacho, *Militarized Currents*; Hoskins and Nguyen, *Transpacific Studies*.

49. Teaiwa, "Reflections on Militourism," 851.

50. Aimee Bahng and Christine Mok write: "Whereas colonial, neocolonial, and neoliberal enterprises rely on imaginaries that configure the Pacific as an emptied expanse primed for military incursion, scientific experimentation, waste dumping, and fantastical projection . . . [we] advance a decolonial approach to fabulating transpacific futurity." Mok and Bahng, "Transpacific Overtures," 5.

51. Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts."

52. Yoneyama, "Toward a Decolonial Genealogy," 472; Byrd, *Transit of Empire*.

53. Lee, *Service Economies*; Kim, *Settler Garrison*.

54. Kim, *Settler Garrison*, 31, 68.

55. The debate surrounding the genealogy of scholarship on settler colonialism has led to the criticism that settler colonialism studies have ignored significant contributions from Native and Indigenous studies before the circulation of Patrick Wolfe's definition

of settler colonialism. Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism." See also Trask, "Settlers of Color"; Saranillio, "Haunani-Kay Trask"; Mamdani, *Neither Settler nor Native*.

56. To be sure, one of the founding thinkers of postcolonial studies, Edward Said, had written passionately on Israel/Palestine, and my point here is on the general development of the fields' inquiries and the debate that ensued on their difference. Ella Shohat criticized treatment of the United States as a "postcolonial" nation-state in "Notes on the Postcolonial." For an argument on the difference in expected roles of the Indigenous people in settler colonialism versus other colonialisms, see Veracini, "Introducing Settler Colonial Studies." For an argument on the inadequacies of colonial and postcolonial studies to understanding settler colonialism, see Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*.

57. Iyko Day expounded on the abstraction of Asian labor within white settler imaginary that sees white settler identity as aligned with nature in North America in *Alien Capital*.

58. Uchida, *Brokers of Empire*; Lu, *Making of Japanese Settler Colonialism*.

59. Koteř, *Colonizing Self*, 2, 17.

60. Byrd, *Transit of Empire*, xxxv.

61. Linda Tuhiwai Smith has argued in the context of the Maori people that the methods for Indigenous people's sociopolitical work toward sovereignty need to be found beyond disciplinary formations created under colonial structures. Smith's concern as to what alternative research agenda and forms of knowledge can be produced as part of the political project of Indigenous sovereignty is echoed by other scholars. Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; Million, *Therapeutic Nations*; Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*; Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*.

62. Shin and Robinson, *Colonial Modernity in Korea*; Barlow, "Debates Over Colonial Modernity"; Barlow, *Formations of Colonial Modernity*; Cho, "Colonial Modernity Matters?"

63. Pushing the frame of reference from postcolonial theory's focus on British and French colonialisms of later centuries to the Spanish and Portuguese colonialisms from the fifteenth century also questions the construction of European modernity through the interimperial difference between old and new colonialism. Mignolo, *Darker Side of Western Modernity*; Mignolo, *Idea of Latin America*. On the Valladolid debate, see Wynter, "Unsettling."

64. Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality"; Lugones, "Coloniality of Gender"; Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being."

65. Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity*.

66. Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*; Gandhi, *Archipelago of Resettlement*.

67. Dussel, *Underside of Modernity*.

68. For an intervention against rhetoric to decolonize without land return, see Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor."

69. Feliciano-Santos, *Contested Caribbean*; Mora, *Kuxlejal Politics*.

70. Newton, "Returns to a Native Land."

71. As all projects are, in some sense, incomplete, this book doesn't engage with the Caribbean thinker C. L. R. James from lack of space and time, but James has been helpful elsewhere in thinking through the question of Koreans in Cuba. We, "Koreans of Cuba,"

Caliban's Readings, accessed September 20, 2024, <https://caribbeanphilosophy.org/blog/koreans-of-cuba>.

72. Wynter, "Ceremony Must Be Found"; Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being."

73. Teaiwa, "Reflections on Militourism," 849.

74. For example, see Newsdesk, "Korean Air Successfully Completes World's First Comprehensive Urban Air Mobility Operations Demonstration," *World of Aviation*, April 26, 2024, <https://worldofaviation.com/2024/04/korean-air-successfully-completes-worlds-first-comprehensive-urban-air-mobility-operations-demonstration/>.

75. Lee, *Service Economies*, 34.

76. Kim, *Transnational Migration*, 8–9; Choo, *Decentering Citizenship*.

77. Yoneyama, *Cold War Ruins*, 13; Kang, *Traffic in Asian Women*, 15–16. The adjudication around Comfort Women colluded with US, South Korean, and Japanese state powers to exclude various women who fell outside of the category of a transnational victim, such as Korean and other migrant women in South Korea who worked in the extended Comfort Women system for the US and South Korean military, or migrant military brides who lived outside of Korea. Moon, *Sex Among Allies*; Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow*.

78. From a different context, this observation is also shared by Youngju Ryu's description of *minjung* art's "mobility against mobilization" in the 1970s–80s South Korea, where the contradictions of the Yusin-era national mobilizations (and the earlier Japanese colonial era's total mobilization) are juxtaposed with the fundamental immobility they imposed on Koreans, which the *minjung* movement protested. Ryu, *Writers of the Winter Republic*, 139–40.

79. Erevelles, *Disability and Difference*.

80. Langan, "Mobility Disability," 463.

81. Oliver, *Politics of Disablement*; Charlton, *Nothing About Us Without Us*.

82. Ray and Sibara, *Disability Studies*.

83. Gleeson, *Geographies of Disability*; Moss and Dyck, "Inquiry into Environment and Body."

84. Chen et al., "Introduction," 5–6; Berne, "Disability Justice," cited in Chen et al.

85. Alaimo, *Bodily Natures*, 14; Ray and Sibara, *Disability Studies*; Nixon, *Slow Violence*; Puar, *Right to Maim*; Meekosha, "Decolonising Disability"; Kim, *Care at the End*; Erevelles, *Disability and Difference*.

86. Chen, *Intoxicated*, 78.

87. O Yönsö, *Hankyoreh*, March 28, 2024; Paek Kyöngyöl, *Kyönghyangsinmun*, October 24, 2024. THAAD stands for Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, a missile system designed for intercepting missiles.

88. Chakraborty et al., "Hurricane Harvey"; Priestley and Hemingway, "Disability and Disaster Recovery."

89. Disaster-preparedness, disability accommodation, and securitization coincide with preemption. Explaining why the US response to Hurricane Katrina (2005) better integrated disability concerns than that in tsunami-impacted South Asia (2004), Mark Priestley and Laura Hemingway describe the connection between disability emergency preparedness and national security: "Reactions to the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade

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Center provided a further catalyst for preparedness activity, in the establishment of the National Organization on Disability's Emergency Preparedness Initiative and the National Center on Emergency Planning for People with Disabilities . . . In July 2004, the US Government established an 'Interagency Coordinating Council on Emergency Preparedness and Individuals with Disabilities' under the auspices of the Department of Homeland Security." Priestley and Hemingway, "Disability and Disaster Recovery," 36.

90. Maldonado-Torres, "Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality," *Frantz Fanon Foundation*, October 23, 2016, <https://fondation-frantzfanon.com/outline-of-ten-theses-on-coloniality-and-decoloniality/>; Bonilla, "Coloniality of Disaster."

91. The invocation of "real" movement here comes from Kara Keeling's analysis of the cinematic Fanon discussed below.

92. Saaler and Koschmann, *Pan-Asianism*, 5.

93. Saaler and Koschmann, *Pan-Asianism*, 10.

94. Takeuchi argues that Japanese intellectuals mislabeled Lu Xun as a modernist: "distort[ing Lu Xun] (like everything else) into a thinker of progress, a superior enlightenment figure who desperately chased after Europe in trying to improve backwardness" in *What Is Modernity?*, 74. To be a modernist in such terms would be an insult for Takeuchi, but not because he is an antimodern traditionalist.

95. Takeuchi, *What Is Modernity?*, 72.

96. Takeuchi, *What Is Modernity?*, 72.

97. Calichman, "Introduction," 27.

98. Fanon, *BSWM*, 113. Coulthard writes, "In contexts where recognition is conferred without struggle or conflict, this fundamental self-transformation . . . cannot occur, thus foreclosing the realization of freedom," the realization that is the aim of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in *Red Skin, White Masks*, 39.

99. This statement was a provocative conclusion in light of Japan's longer imperialist debate: on the one hand, the idea of "leaving behind" the underdeveloped rest of East Asia to join the West in the infamous *Datsuaron* (Leaving Asia 1885) proposed by Fukuzawa Yukichi emerged, leading to ideas of demonstrating Japan's military prowess in Asia to the West; on the other hand, the idea that Japan is more than "the Orient" but should lead the rest of Asia toward independence from Western powers through the *Daitōakyōeiken* (the aforementioned Greater Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere 1930–45) also emerged.

100. Keeling, *Witch's Flight*, 67.

101. Keeling, *Witch's Flight*, 67.

102. Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 44.

103. On the horizontal relations in *BSWM*, see Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*.

104. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 96.

105. Fanon finds an infectious network of global decolonial imaginaries and epistemic ripples in Vietnam: "From July 1954 onward the colonial peoples have been asking themselves: 'What must we do to achieve a Dien Bien Phu? How should we go about it?' A Dien Bien Phu was now within reach of every colonized subject" in *Wretched of the Earth*, 31. Vietnam also appears in *BSWM* where Fanon articulates an earlier version of the

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revolutionary-terrorist figure from *Wretched of the Earth* in the boy soldiers of Vietnam whom French soldiers feared.

106. The debate between despair and hope as the groundwork of politics is a long one that this book cannot exhaust. However, the most immediate points of reference in Black and queer studies are the Afropessimist scholars Frank Wilderson II and Jared Sexton and the critiques of optimism and figures of the future by Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman. Their discussants—Saidiya Hartman, Christina Sharpe, Fred Moten—and outright critics—José Esteban Muñoz, Greg Thomas—together underline how this debate is neither new nor over.

107. Geoghegan, *Ernst Bloch*, 105.

108. Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, 115, cited in Geoghegan, *Ernst Bloch*, 123.

109. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 182.

110. Chen, *Animacies*, 203.

111. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 98.

112. Takeuchi, *What Is Modernity?*, 71.

113. The structure of this argument is indebted to Kotef's questioning of the "assumption, that people cannot reconcile their self-image with the violence they inflict on others" in *Colonizing Self*, 17. I also find Million's formulation illuminating for this argument, that "the colonized subject became a trauma victim" in "caring capital" in *Therapeutic Nations*, 6.

114. I use *t'alyōk* instead of *taryōk* to emphasize the connections to other uses of the prefix *t'al*.

CHAPTER 1. EXQUISITE CORPSE AND QUEER ROCKS

1. Yi, "Minjokkaejoron."

2. As Workman and others argued, Yi's emphasis on reform as necessarily occurring at the individual, moral, and cultural realm outside of politics aligned with the cultural policy of the Japanese empire and its "biopolitical reformation of life." Workman, *Imperial Genus*, 17.

3. Workman, *Imperial Genus*, 64.

4. UN, "United Nations Declaration."

5. Kim, "Kaein, Kungmin, Nanmin," 198.

6. "Rehabilitation," WHO, updated April 22, 2024, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/rehabilitation>.

7. Kim, "Into the Light (*Hikari no naka ni*)."

8. Rachel Lee's argument in *Exquisite Corpse* on the operability of biologized fragments in Asian American art works and texts as exquisite corpse is a resonant mode of reading here. My argument is different from Lee's in that Kim's strategy of weaving together Korean characters through exquisite corpse ultimately prepares for a fantastical imperial belonging. I also am not deploying exquisite corpse as a fragmentation of body parts but as the mobilization narrative's attempt to connect the gaps within its own ideology. Assemblages, according to Jasbir Puar, are "a series of dispersed but mutually implicated and messy networks, draws together the enunciation and dissolution,

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