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Asian/white Life and the Intimacy of Violence

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For my family

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Preface

Never am I most in unison, most at one with the body and its meaning, than in moments of anticipation. In these moments, I am often by myself and away from home. On the street, on the trail, in transit. Sometimes there are people around, and even when there are not, I figure they could show up because they can always show up. What I anticipate is an encounter, usually an unwanted one. A comment, a touch, a prolonged stare. Anticipation has become my posture, a habit, and it takes many shapes. It can double as defense, a preparedness that stems from intuition, trauma, or anxiety. It can be a distraction. Hopeful. Like a routine, anticipation provides a certain level of comfort, less an ease than a bitter confidence, as if you were to suddenly slap yourself and see on your hand your own blood and the dead mosquito that sucked that blood and whose presence you accurately sensed. Even when I am wrong, when there is no pest, when there is nothing to worry about, I expect something to happen because it has happened enough times before. The past carries over. Anticipation is merely an aid for navigating the world, a way to brace myself for what has by now become an ordinary feature of life, and that is racial and sexual subjection, persistent reminders of what my body is to its beholder: worthy of remark, a source of confusion, a sign of desire.

Made ordinary, racial and sexual subjection remain foundational features of colonization, anti-Blackness, and imperialism. This is a book about enduring such violence, and I want you to know at the outset that I have skin in the game. Life experiences inform my research questions, and the scholarship I produce helps me contextualize those experiences. Here, at the beginning, I acknowledge my embeddedness in the work to clarify that while the work touches on individual lives including my own, it does so with the intent to trace connections, contending with what concerns us all, what I describe as the *intimacy of violence*. In these pages, you will come to see how imperial expansion ensues beyond national borders, extending into the psychic lives of empire's subjects. I will ask you to confront US empire as an ambiguous, obscure, and routine relation. We will set disparate cases alongside each

other, widening the frame of empire while narrowing our focus on the tensions it engenders. Allow me to lead by example.

For as long as I can remember, strangers, even those I let become more, rarely let me forget the history I bring into the present. Misinterpreted as ancestry, this history seems to rest on visual markings like facial features and the color of my skin, a combination that incites inquiry and irritation. *Where are you from?* Let's get that out of the way. My mother is the first of her family to migrate to the United States. She arrived in California from Parañaque, Metro Manila in February 1986, just days before the demonstrations of the People Power Revolution took over the Philippines' capital city. She soon met my father, the grandson on his father's side of Italian immigrants from Lucca, Tuscany and Naples who settled in Chicago via Ellis Island in 1928 before moving to Southern California in 1952. On his mother's side, my father is a descendant of English and French settlers who made their home on a ranch in Bozeman, Montana.

Growing up, I came to expect the chatter and curiosity. *You're so fair. You have your mother's eyes. What are you?* A '90s kid, I was born and raised in Orange County (OC), California. I was never the only Asian in school, but I remember feeling both unseen and hypervisible because of the kind of Asian I was. Of course, no place is a monolith and the OC is no exception. Youth found me in Anaheim, Huntington Beach, Westminster, and Orange, each suburb lending a different perception of being. I felt most like my mother's daughter near the coast, our Filipino heritage unmistakable in scenes marked by white bodies, palm trees, and the Pacific. Traveling inland, I became more of my father's daughter, my freckled skin a confession.

I've spent the better part of my adult life making sense of why my body comes in contact with the world in the way it does. Too formulaic of an answer, ancestry never felt capacious enough to account for the body, its meaning and its doings. So, like others, I studied *because the knot in my chest will never otherwise be eased*.[1] *I read all I can for a clue*.[2] I learned that people retain remnants of a past that transcend their first breath. Like an echo, one may recall the presence of something given its reverberation, a clarity found through reemergence. These traces emerge in subtle and not-so-subtle enactments of daily living. No matter their form, the vestiges of history exist as historical record, material one may brush aside or attempt to chronicle and assemble into a repository. Sensation is evidence, bodies are time capsules, and lives are treasure troves—*the issue is to leave a record . . . a clue that will suddenly reveal the crucial fact of our connection*.[3] I began to piece together

an archive of which I am included. It encapsulates a history of interracial and imperial desire, a history alluded to in queries about my background but most readily comes to surface when an interest in my race is contingent on my gender.

As a teenager, attempts to pinpoint my race were innocent unless they weren't, forcing me into a crash course on sexuality and power. Remarking on my *exotic* look, older men would invite me into their studios to photograph me, a predatory scheme. Rejected, their requests happened most when I worked at a frozen yogurt shop. *You can make more money modeling*. In my early twenties, I found myself back in the gym where I played varsity basketball. Sitting in the bleachers with my dad, I overheard whispers behind us as we watched my brother's team on the court. After the game, some kid's father went up to my dad, shook his hand, and patted him on the back, the way men do when they're congratulatory but jealous. *How did you score her?!* This was not the only time I have been mistaken for my father's partner or presumed straight for that matter. Even at the queer bars I frequented, in West Hollywood, Pomona, Long Beach, Santa Ana, and Upland, my kind of femininity seemed out of place.

When I moved to the East Coast for graduate school, I learned how to distinguish intrigue from affection, threat from good faith. In Washington, D.C., men have asked me point blank if I would be their *geisha girl* and *China doll*. At a Honda dealership in College Park, Maryland, the mechanic, upon finding out I was Filipina, made a proposition to me. Trained in Filipino martial arts, this white man with blue eyes wanted to coach me in the art of war, in its method of reaction and recovery. *The world is dangerous*, he said. I walked away as he went on about disarming an attacker. Some interactions seem flirtatious, unwarranted, while others naive even if blunt. In northeast D.C., at a park in Eckington, a group of middle schoolers wanted to play basketball with me and my friends. After a few possessions, one boy asked if I was in the WNBA, a question about my skill given my gender. He then asked if I ate cats, a question about my race. Elsewhere, like in Louisville, Kentucky, after I was hit by a moving vehicle, a police officer ran his fingers through my hair. Concussed and sitting on the pavement, I made eye contact as he spoke. *Your beautiful thick hair saved you*. Once in Durham, North Carolina, as I sat outside Ninth Street, I felt eyes on me. Still but buzzing, I searched for the pest. When I met the gaze of a middle-aged man standing across the street, he pointed at me and yelled, *You're hot for an Asian*.

Crude and suggestive comments, I've been told, will subside over time as I "age out" of desirability. I too have been told to be fortunate, that receiving

attention is a compliment. I know, however, that these encounters have more to do with control than desire. I know also that racial subjection forces a reckoning with space and place. Outside the United States, in my ancestral homes, the sentiment rings clear. In Italy, I am Asian. In the Philippines, I am blessed. In a small hillside town in Tuscany, a woman exclaimed from her balcony, *Una China! Una China!*, alerting her family as I, the spectacle, walked along the road. In Quezon City, I see myself reflected most in billboards, the ones where light-skinned mestizas advertise American products. Before, such confrontations were shocking, sad, disorienting. Now they are the forecast, a prognosis, too likely to not foresee. What is familiar is what I anticipate and what I have begrudgingly come to accept.

When I cross paths with other Asian people with white heritage, a kinship occurs. In spite of our differences in ethnic makeup, it is gender and sexuality that determine not only how we navigate the world but also how we find affinity with one another. With cis women and queer and trans people, affirmation usually materializes in a look of recognition even if no words are spoken. Men, on the other hand, tend to initiate conversation. One time, at the Long Beach airport, as I was waiting to board a flight to Honolulu for the 2019 Annual Meeting of the American Studies Association, a veteran commented on *my beautiful hapa eyes*. We were in line for breakfast burritos. It was too early for this. Sensing my irritation, he reassured me that he wasn't being *fresh*, that he was married and hapa too. Sometimes I play along. I force a smile, engage, and deepen the encounter, manufacturing a sense of control. This was one of those times. I told him about my work and why I identify as mixed and not hapa, thinking this will put him in his place. He interrupted me, to no surprise, but then, to my surprise, he lifted his T-shirt, exposing war scars on a tattooed chest, scars he pointed to as he warned, *You die when you forget*. There was an arrogance in his voice, assuming yet urgent. I knew where he was coming from. Waiting to order, we diverged to small talk, which is to say, he asked where I was from. At the time, I lived in Vermont. He laughed. *Well, that's why you lost your color! It's nice, though. Makes your eyes pop*. Retreating from the depths, he could not help but comment on surface-level things, curtailing a bond with much deeper potential. He insisted I enjoy his military discount. I obliged. A year earlier, at Nellie's, a gay sports bar in D.C., a queer guy approached me. *Let me guess, your mom is the Asian one*. He was half-Asian too. I was in a good mood, so I asked him about himself. Growing up, he was made to feel insecure in his masculinity, bullied for what his race and sexuality did to his gender. Being mixed, he was told, was a sign of inferiority. *Our genes and bodies are weaker*

because we're mixed, you know. When I told him about the concept of hybrid vigor, that some forms of racial mixture are viewed as superior or stronger, he was beside himself. *Stronger? Stronger? We are not stronger.*

Burdened by norms and expectation, racialized gender can be a site of pain, pleasure, and refusal. Susceptible to harassment, my Asian/white femininity affords a level of access precisely because my Asianness is whitened and my gender is femme. When this access configures my presence into a less threatening one or a more adept one, it is a privilege. When it manifests into hypersexualization or assumed subservience, it is not. Whiteness is an advantage no matter its form or dosage. Nevertheless, a proximity to whiteness and racial ambiguity can recast the Asianness of Asian/white life as defunct, less than. Palatability comes at a cost. Whereas this logic applies across all forms of Asian/white life, specific discriminations of objectification, emasculation, misgendering, and gender policing unveil nuances across feminine, masculine, androgynous, trans, cis, and nonbinary life. On the whole, we are desirable and/or despised. Adored and/or envied. Exceptional and/or criticized. We represent the sex act gone right and/or gone wrong. The uncertainty conveyed in the slash frames the variability of Asian/white life.

In the face of difference, there is one constant: a presence marked by the past and present of imperial encounter. Imperialism, by all means, sets off glaring and destructive reverberations, from intergenerational trauma and the assault on refugee life to the military's culpability in environmental disaster. Empire also resonates in subtleties. It is in the prying, innuendo, harassment, and erasure. Folded into the day-to-day, war and militarism linger in the shadows of Asian/white life if not already at the front and center, a material reality that once gave me pause but to which I am now adjusted. I expect intrusion. I expect violation. This could be read as submission. I see it more as the aftermath of a reckoning, the fruits of my labor—that is, as the findings of an investigation concerned with empire's quotidian life to which I am not immune.

I begin this book this way, with anecdotes, not to introduce myself or invite sympathy but to lay the cards on the table: Imperialism constitutes our present. It fuels battles for state power, armed insurrection, and the culture wars. It encourages silence, complicity, and violation, disciplining its subjects even those most anti-imperial. That we are engulfed by imperialism, subjected to empire's hard and soft forms, is an intellectual and political diagnosis, but it is also an embodied knowledge. For me, I sense it most in moments of anticipation, when the body becomes tight and weighted, tense and ready. For

you, it could be more intense or less obvious. Although differently, we remain affected. This is my conclusion and our starting point.

Anticipation is one of countless strategies, no one more justified than the other, for contending with imperialism and its unwavering presence. Whether premeditated, inadvertent, or instinctual, these strategies are as much a method for survival as they are a sign that empire has left its mark on us. If we dare, these marks can become a means for critical inquiry, introspection, and coalition. They invite speculation and honest assessment. When and where does an empire surface? When is its violence most inconspicuous, most undeniable? Have we been trained to see the difference? My sense is that there is work to do. Questions need reframing, patterns await discovery. If you are to ask questions, ask me not where I am from, but if we are liable to an empire's extension. Ask me not what I am, but how we can be a source of its tempering. Until space is made to grapple with what underlies our present, that which not only binds us together but also distinguishes one life from another, we lose ourselves in the pieces.

Anna Storti
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Scars form. I remember.

So, what I will do instead is say *ingat*, take care, and mean it.

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I dedicate this book to my family. I am enormously lucky to have been raised by a village and to have had elders like my *lolo*, Jesus M. Moncada, whose guiding light emblazons each page, and my *lola*, Aurea Jante, a matriarch who continues to nurture all of us with her warmth, stories, and love. I owe an immeasurable amount of gratitude to my *nanay*. Mom, thank you for your grit and generosity, for doing the hard work, and for teaching me what strength looks like. Dad, your endless support moves my goals within reach. Thank you for the time spent outdoors and for always making me laugh. Michael, you are my favorite guy. I'm so proud of who you are and will always admire how you bring our family together. One thing I treasure most about this life is being your big sister. To Mama and Papa, Tita Pachie, Tita Ana, Tito John, Tita Alma, Angela Joy, Matthew, Renuka, Tashi, Ajith, Maya, Nathan, Shane, Micaela, Phuong, Tito Alex, Tita Thais, Debbie, Tita Rose, Tita Bubut, Aunty Lydia, Uncle Mark, Jack, Daniel, and the many others whose love extends across a great distance and a long time, thank you. *Mahal ko kayo*. Speaking of love, no one more than mine deserves all the praises and pleasures of this world. Sasanka, your love is a kind that reassures, frees, and anchors, a kept promise I never thought was possible. Thank you for reading each page, easing my worries, and keeping me afloat. With Sesame, our home is a cocoon, your love a haven so nourishing I can breathe deep, come undone, and reemerge feeling better than before.

INTRODUCTION
Torn, Together

Strange how one can see the self as a collection of pieces. Strange, too, how disparate pieces, like the fragments of a life, can form into something neither broken nor fixed but whole. In *Half*, contemporary ceramist Jennifer Ling Datchuk builds a literal and figurative container for grappling with such thoughts. Part of the permanent collection in Houston's Museum of Fine Arts, *Half* is a pair of porcelain powder puffs with porcelain-molded chicken feet as their handles. On the left, a puff made of purchased black human hair stands on a blue-and-white Jingdezhen pattern, a style synonymous with Chinese porcelain. On the right, an unmarked white puff with hair from her father's blond toupee. The puffs, used to conceal faults on the skin, deliver a flawless rendition of the artist's race. Like me, Datchuk is of both Asian and white ancestry. Two halves make a whole. Joined together but in clear distinction, the puffs also invite speculation on the history of Asian exclusion and the present-day ruse of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Observe the blue-and-white patterned puff. Pay attention to its position, its edges. It is firm, resolute, and alongside the white edifice. There is touch. There may even be a bond, but there is no subsuming into the other. The line where

FIGURE 1.1. Jennifer Ling Datchuk, *Half*, 2014.

color meets white is a border marking a rupture, an ending, a tear. I catch sight of a refusal to unify or belong. Despite what structurally appears as one cohesive piece, there is a split. Although the two puffs in *Half* meet to form one, the demarcation of difference remains stark.[1]

Coveted by the West for its pure-white color, porcelain originated in China around the tenth century and played an integral role in imperial trade when it was introduced into Europe through Asian imports in the fourteenth century. Renowned as white gold, porcelain's ascension into a global luxury item galvanized Europeans to discover the secrets mastered by the Chinese for working with porcelain in spite of its seemingly impossible properties, both strong and delicate, impenetrable yet receptive to color. That the chicken feet, a delicacy in many Asian cuisines, stand tall as handles on these objects of domesticity and beautification gestures to something explicit. Asianness remains even as it changes. With the middle finger pronounced, there seems to be an underlying gesture of defiance in this rendition of ornamental femininity.[2] Rather than force fusion, which here might mean condensing two halves into one lone puff, Datchuk interprets mixture as a process of becoming twice as much. In doing so, the artist tends to the irreparable—that which has reached its limit—not to surrender to negativity or cynicism but to insist on self-determination. On her terms, Datchuk fashions Asian/

white racialization as a synthesis between difference, touch, and the imperial conditions that brought Asianness and whiteness together. Strange, indeed, how one can see the self as a collection of pieces: torn, together.

To speak of being *torn, together* is predictably to speak of violence and to speak of intimacy. But suppose we take this analysis further to consider it a sign of the *intimacy of violence*. A deceptively simple combination of words, the intimacy of violence theorizes the pervasiveness of violence through the language and practice of intimacy. Whereas intimacy conveys closeness, sexuality, and a method of connection, violence subsists through a more excruciating variety—it can be described as colonial, imperial, state sanctioned, epistemic, racist, sexual, gendered, to name just a few—making it profoundly challenging to fully escape and account for. Resisting any easy definition, intimacy and violence both name amorphous relations. Brought together, the *intimacy of violence* extends an invitation to study violence through the ways it courses through patterns of intimacy, including romantic love, sexual desire, domestic living, national belonging, and other relations of closeness. As the theoretical framework for this study, the intimacy of violence reveals the more subtle and obscured harms of the imperial past. More pointedly, I propose it as a conceptual site to interrogate how and why US empire endures as a quotidian and durational feature of social life.

Reading for the intimacy of violence prompts attention onto how the harms of the US imperial past and present refuse neat conclusion, living on as a set of afflictions within the very bodies of empire's historical subjects, broadly construed. Attending to the long-standing effects of US imperialism, this book assembles an archive of empire, a record of objects and subjects—torn, together—that I have come to know quite intimately as a scholar who has devoted over a decade to searching through its files and, first and foremost, as a member of the archival record myself. The intimacy of violence names an inventory of embodied, psychic, and affective impressions caused by imperialism, be it war, militarism, forced migration, displacement, or a nation's exclusionary laws. I piece together this living archive to make the following argument: US imperial expansion transpires not solely on the shores, land, and sea of America's territories or colonies but through the everyday lives of the US citizenry and, more strikingly, within the psychic lives of its subjects.

That empire shapes the lives of its subjects is not an original position. There is a rich tradition of scholarship that accounts for the ways minoritarian life has been subjected, negated, and targeted by imperialism, and how minoritarian subjects have managed to outlive such forces.[3] What I seek to add to this is twofold. On the one hand, I focus on how imperialism cycles

through the ordinary. This is not to ignore the role of imperialism in seismically shifting the earth's climate, refugee crises, and rise in fascism but to elevate mixed race embodiment as a key site for understanding the magnitude of US empire and its role in such catastrophe. On the other hand, in calling attention to the more obscure remnants of the imperial past such as the internalized contradiction conveyed in Datchuk's *Half*, I do so with an interest not in recovering, reclaiming, or recuperating that past but in tracing how one might otherwise attempt to contend with what often feels irreparable or incessant. I take as my point of departure the notion that racial mixture is an enduring social friction despite growing acceptance and demographics of racially mixed people and families. From this starting point, I make a claim for the importance of understanding the tensions and lingering effects of imperial violence particularly as they manifest in subtle, seemingly ordinary enactments of mixed race life.

Given that my project concerns racial mixture, readers may think of it in connection to the interdisciplinary field of critical mixed race studies (CMRS). Formed in 2010, through the intellectual and administrative labor of queer women of color based in the arts and humanities—Wei Ming Dariotis, Camilla Fojas, and Laura Kina—CMRS is marked by a biennial conference where scholars, artists, organizers, and practitioners contend with the flexibility of racial categories, account for the relative marginalization of the mixed race perspective, and reflect on the impact our racial world has on mixed race people, transracial adoptees, and members of interracial families. In its growth, the field has ostensibly developed a social scientific bend. Much of its research conforms to a positivist tradition where qualitative and quantitative studies on mixed race identity drastically outnumber those offering insight into mixed racial subjection. I see problems with this imbalance. Not only does a focus on identity, be it ruminating on the growing multiracial demographic or exploring an understudied group, align with the feigned anti-racism of liberalism as well as the more conservative racism of color blindness, but it also fails to meet the critical undertaking of the field. In my view, the *critical* in critical mixed race studies ought not to stand for an elaboration of identitarian difference but a pursuit of why that difference exists and how that difference becomes incorporated into structures of colonialism, racial capitalism, and heteropatriarchy.[4] Before all else, I am interested in empire's remnants, in their shape, guise, and contours, and in how one seeks to liberate oneself from their continuity. To arrive at this knowledge, I attend to the imperial forces that form contemporary Asian/white life, which is to say that I approach mixed-raceness as a means not to

interpret mixed race living but to better comprehend the intimacy of violence. If, reader, you are to classify this project as a critical study of racial mixture, perhaps it will be because it has been my aim to deprioritize the mixed race *experience*, triggering an enactment of CMRS that has its eyes set on deciphering the inner workings of white supremacy, shared struggle, and the potential for solidarity beyond formal racial markings. Harkening back to the field's roots in humanistic inquiry, I examine Asian/white life as a means for tracing what I see are our world's *mass tensions*, the strains of subordination that are distinctly yet collectively felt across all forms of life.

Tension, therefore, is a key concept that arises throughout this study. At base, I strive to make clear how US imperialism simultaneously produces and subsists through bouts of tension—unmitigated yet nondescript moments of duress, strain, or inner striving—that shift how race, gender, and sexuality are inhabited by its survivors. Empire, to put it differently, has a material effect on subject formation. For my purposes, Asian/white racialization becomes the representative case study for such claims. Consider, then, as another example the following scene in Ocean Vuong's 2019 novel *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, a queer coming-of-age and refugee family history in the form of a son's letter to his mother, Rose, the daughter of a Vietnamese woman and a white American soldier. It is late in the day and Rose is settling in at home, lying face down on blankets spread on the floor as her mother is straddling her back, "kneading the knots and stiff cords" from her shoulders after a long day at work.[5] Rose's mother calls for her grandson to help her help his mother, and soon it is the two of them, one on each side of Rose, "rolling out the hardened cords" in her upper arms, wrists, fingers.[6] "You groaned with relief as we worked your muscles loose, unraveling you with nothing but our own weight."[7] This muscular tension certainly, most immediately, arises as a result of Rose's work at the nail salon, hunching over for hours on end, but "the knots and stiff cords" that her mother and son help to knead out result in a "relief" that is also, more pointedly, a sign of an intergenerational intimacy where the tension, while not permanently relieved, is transformed.[8] "For a moment almost too brief to matter," the son writes, "this made sense—that three people on the floor, connected to each other by touch, made something like the word *family*."[9]

The above scene illustrates the intimacy of violence as one of empire's quintessential attributes. Torn, a family is displaced from a homeland; together, they navigate a new country with one another. There is isolation and intimacy, tension and violence. How might one seek to contend with these afflictions? One mode is to give language to the pain. Trauma has become

one concept used both in clinical and mainstream spheres to encapsulate an unending assortment of injury and suffering. A pervasive feature of social life, trauma is critical to the ways scholars have sought to understand the human condition. Where psychoanalysis claims there is no easy elimination of trauma, queer and feminist studies build on perspectives gleaned from holistic therapies, which provide tools to learn how to acknowledge, accept, and live with trauma, recognizing the impossibility of eliminating it altogether.[10] What I seek to account for, on the contrary, are the ways one might encounter trauma (and all it stands in for) beyond the acts of preventing, eliminating, or adapting to it. How, in other words, do diasporic subjects touched by empire otherwise contend with the intimacy—the closeness—of its violence? To answer this question, I engage tension as an epistemological measure and methodological anchor. My focus is on how one moves through tension, reconfiguring the shape of empire's residue. Think of the meditation on wholeness and animacy encrusted in Datchuk's porcelain powder puffs or the scene in Vuong's novel: "Three people on the floor, connected to each other by touch, made something like the word *family*." In the latter case, Rose's muscular pain becomes an occasion for familial intimacy where tension is neither destroyed nor disavowed but transformed, made into something that, as noted by the son, evokes family but also calls to mind what Datchuk summons in *Half*: an embodied state of having been touched and *torn* by imperial contact, and yet *together* as though to be torn is simply a sign of being part of something larger than oneself.

Torn: Asian/white Life and the Intimacy of Violence puts an ever-growing archive of Asian American aesthetic, literary, and cultural representations of racial mixture, such as Datchuk's porcelain sculpture and the character of Rose in Vuong's autobiographical novel, in conversation with feminist and queer critiques of US imperialism, violence, intimacy, and repair. My chief objective is to trace the ways Asian Americans knowingly or unknowingly contend with the divisive logics of US empire. More precisely, I set out to study the lingering effects of historical violence that translate into physical, psychic, and affective tensions in the bodies of empire's subjects. To do so, I follow a distinct racialized subject, the Asian American with white heritage. A figure with many names—war baby, love child, hapa, Eurasian, Amerasian, wasian—the Asian/white subject is not always born from militarized encounter or sexual violence but is nonetheless marked by a history of imperialism, which repeatedly places Asian and white bodies in close proximity, so close, in fact, that they touch, and through that touching they are thought to meld. Asian/white life is often measured against a common assumption:

that being of two or more distinct racial histories is to be rendered a body in tension, torn between two ancestral lineages. Rather than refute this stance, I propose a conceptual shift toward tracking racial mixture as an enduring social friction. In doing so, I observe the ways artists, cultural figures, and writers have either sought to or failed to contend with all that arises from living in the legacy of empire and, most specifically, America's unrelenting war machine.

Set predominantly in the years following the Vietnam War, this book argues that imperialism, like violence writ large, is ontological, giving form to racial and sexual tensions that signal the permanence of war. Given this permanence, I do not explore injury, trauma, or suffering as afflictions to be healed from or adapted to. Instead, I ask how subjects touched by imperialism employ an array of psychic and aesthetic strategies to piece together what empire has scattered. I narrow my focus onto Asian Americans with white heritage neither with the intention to dismiss the many other racialized experiences formed as a result of imperial encounter nor to suggest that members of this particular group somehow represent an ideal point of reckoning with empire's fragments. Rather, my preoccupation with the distinct subjectivity of being both Asian and of white ancestry is to create a lens with which to expose the fundamental logics of whiteness as an accumulating racial form, which is to say that white, as Haunani-Kay Trask has articulated, is "the color of violence."[11] In this sense, *Torn* shows how whiteness attempts to ideologically and fetishistically consume Asianness and how mixed race Asian Americans have either been willing or unwilling to accept that kind of capture. Chapter by chapter, I assemble a series of case studies revolving around subjects who can trace, in a matter of generations, some kind of connection to US imperialism, including America's colonization and imperial intervention in the Philippines, Vietnam, Korea, and across the Pacific, as well as its exclusionary laws, targeted incarceration, and allyship with other imperial powers. Documenting the leftovers of imperialism as they materialize in those belonging to diasporas across Southeast, South, West, and East Asia, I follow Asian/white life as an analytic with which to account for the obscure, unquestioned, or seemingly ordinary relations that have come to define twenty-first-century Western liberalism and the fallacies surrounding its compromising project of multiracialism. If the mixed race body is central to liberal claims boasting the benefits of an increasingly multiracial society, what I seek to make visible are the ways Asian/white racialization may challenge, even as it is thought to exemplify, the promise of US multiracialism. Throughout, I point to a number of cultural and political tensions,

from accusations of appropriation and movements raising awareness on sexual violence to the rise of the far right, and I elucidate their connections to the permanence of imperial war. As host of these tensions, people of Asian and white ancestry become a timely and timeless point of reckoning.

Enduring Tension: Intimacy, Violence, and the Permanence of War

Let no one mistake us for the fruit of violence—but that violence, having passed through the fruit, failed to spoil it. —OCEAN VUONG, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, 2019

Imperialism, which today is waging war against a genuine struggle for human liberation, sows seeds of decay here and there that must be mercilessly rooted out from our land and from our minds. —FRANTZ FANON, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961

An autobiographical novel, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* pieces together a series of letters written by a son, Little Dog, to Rose, his mother who was never taught to read. The letters, then, are never meant to be read, only to be written, provoking a confrontation with the rules of language and the desires it promises to satisfy. Folded into each page are fragmented recollections of refugee life in Hartford, Connecticut, woven together as an ode to Vietnamese life. Readers learn of a family who made a life in America following a war that lingered in memory and spirit. The matriarch of the family is the boy's grandmother, Lan, who worked as a sex worker for American GIs in Saigon. During those years, Lan became pregnant from a white American client and gave birth to Rose in 1968. Mixed, Rose stood out among her peers; "the children called her ghost-girl, called Lan a traitor and a whore for sleeping with the enemy."[12] These children would cut Rose's "auburn-tinted" hair and rub feces on her face and skin to make her "*brown again*, as if to be born lighter was a wrong that could be reversed."[13] At five years old, that same girl watches from afar as her schoolhouse collapses in a napalm raid. She never returns to school and thus never learns to read. By the time the family flees Vietnam for a refugee camp in the Philippines, it is 1990, and Rose is a wife with a baby boy, Little Dog. Once the family obtained asylum, they resettled in Connecticut. Not long after, the son's Vietnamese father is imprisoned for beating his mother. Rose and Lan both exhibit signs of post-traumatic stress. The first time Little Dog remembers being hit by his mother, he was four and he was teaching her how to read. In other beatings, Lan uses her body as a shield to protect her grandson from her daughter. "When does a war end?" the son writes.[14] This query summons Viet Thanh Nguyen's assertion,

"All wars are fought twice, the first time on the battlefield, the second time in memory."[15] For war's survivors, the intimacy of empire's violence persists even after asylum, which begs another question posed by Little Dog: "What do we mean when we say survivor?"

> I read that parents suffering from PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] are more likely to hit their children. Perhaps there is a monstrous origin to it, after all. Perhaps to lay hands on your child is to prepare him for war. To say possessing a heartbeat is never as simple as the heart's task of saying *yes yes yes* to the body.[16]

Here, the battles forged in the memory of war show that memory is not simply a faculty of the mind but an embodied affair where the aftermath of war produces bouts of tension ranging from sore muscles to domestic violence and laying a hand on a child. They also teach us something about survival—that it marks not only a beginning of a new life after war but a continuation of war's violence, causing one to question if there is in fact any afterward to violence.

Too often examined by its source, occurrence, and aftermath, the wars forged in imperial battlegrounds defy a linear narrative. Prone to reproduction, war and its violence are lodged within us, as survivors and as a culture. Here, the violence can fester even in spite of the passage of time or formal efforts to redress. War radically changes everyday life for Lan, Rose, and Little Dog, members of three different generations who witnessed and survived America's invasion of Vietnam. Imperial violence may subside on the battlefield, but it continues through PTSD and skewed life chances. For those of us indebted to and in pursuit of social transformation, there is much yet to learn about what imperial violence can look like and feel like, how it lingers, and how it may ripen into uncanny forms. To begin that work, one must first come to terms with a conceptual plight, which I stake as a central concern of this study: there is an intimacy to violence when surviving violence (as we all have to varying degrees) means not that the violence has come to an end but that it has begun a new trajectory where the living is left with the burden that is the fortune of living in spite of a violence that ceases to end. Survival, that is, names a condition of finding intimacy with violence's permanence.

As skilled as scholars, healers, artists, and organizers have become in differentiating between the many deployments of violence, noting the contradiction within their ties to narratives of liberty and freedom and building transformative movements to confront abuse at multiple levels, it remains undertheorized how one might confront what is arguably that most intimate

form of violence: the one within.[17] While the mere mention of violence incites theoretical debate and conjures a familiar arrangement of injurious acts and harrowing affects, it not only names a threatening force or object of critique but a breeding entity that impacts our politics and our desires, even those we might be quick to deem nonviolent, anti-racist, queer, feminist, or otherwise liberatory. To suggest that there is violence inside each of us may seem pessimistic or obvious, and it may seem to evoke singular instances of psychic distress or mental unwellness, but it is rather to say that violence is an ontological experience, a relation of everyday life that elucidates just how *differently* at risk *we all are* under racial capitalism. In my conceptualization of the intimacy of violence, I attend to this difference through intellectual traditions like women of color feminism and queer of color critique, which assess race, gender, and sexuality in relation to indigeneity, migration, and diaspora. I am informed by conceptual vocabularies such as "the intimacies of four continents," "the affective consequence of colonialism," "the wake," and "remaindered life," because of their ability to frame the enduring effects of dehumanization as material and residual processes in need of address.[18] In seeking clarification of a culture's "residual" elements—that is, of how and why pieces of the past remain often hidden or undetectable in the present—I search for "strange affinities," discerning the nuances of "complex personhood" and "group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death."[19]

To help ground the stakes of the project at hand, I will now steer us toward an exercise in juxtaposition. I ask that you please review the two epigraphs that open this section. The first transports us to Vietnam and American invasion by way of Vuong's *On Earth*. "All this time I told myself we were born from war—but I was wrong, Ma. We were born from beauty. Let no one mistake us for the fruit of violence—but that violence, having passed through the fruit, failed to spoil it."[20] Here is a passage that points toward diasporic possibility, a rupture that releases the body and its bloodlines ever so slightly from the hold of violence, which in this case takes the shape of war, the United States, and whiteness, different names for the same thing. Little Dog confronts America's imperialist force with a sensorial recognition, pointing toward the body's ability to store past injury. Violence enters the fruit, but this arrival need not be a death sentence. While Vuong's words do not supply the details of violence's escape, they reassure the reader that it can in fact depart, leaving the body intact. It enters. It passes. Even as this rendition of poetic justice fails to apply to every refugee story, Vuong makes a world in which it is possible, overwhelming me with a series of questions: What must one do for the violence to pass through the fruit? If

the fruit indeed is not spoiled, does it taste the same as it did before?[21] I wonder about the undeniable smell of rotten fruit and where the violence goes when it leaves. Does it vanish, fade, or dissolve? Like sweat, does it evaporate from the skin, becoming salt waiting to be rinsed off? Or does it scour to find another and go in for the kill, like salt to a wound? For Vuong, the intimacy of violence is that it punctures us, but it can leave us too. To scholars of queer and Asian diaspora, his words summon the unique injury ignited by the many arms of US militarism, articulating a grief with a potential neither to transform nor transport but rather to shift the gaze back toward us, an urgent lesson in survival and self-determination.

For Frantz Fanon, the mood is quite different. If Vuong's characters are simultaneously touched and untouched by violence, the subjects of Fanon's once-banned *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) are instructed to be the sinner that sinks their teeth into violence, that forbidden fruit. Through a psychoanalytic inspection of colonialism, Fanon is famous for arguing that colonized populations—people who, in the colonizer's eyes and enforcement, exist outside the bounds of humanity and its moral codes—must resist colonization through the only language the colonizer understands: violence. Speaking specifically about the Algerian struggle against French colonial rule in the mid-twentieth century, Fanon defends the use of violence as the only true counter to a dominant military presence. Of crucial importance, however, is his resolution that using violence to facilitate decolonization will prove incomplete unless the residue of violence is removed from within: "Imperialism, which today is waging war against a genuine struggle for human liberation, sows seeds of decay here and there that must be mercilessly rooted out from our land and from our minds."[22] Imperialism leaves behind *seeds of decay*. That is to say, violence enters the fruit. In raw detail, Fanon records what happens when it festers within. Briefly gorgeous, the wretched of the earth are susceptible to "indelible wounds" that mar and threaten to spoil the fruit.[23] Like Vuong's *On Earth*, Fanon's *The Wretched* offers another lesson in life's prerequisites: Anticipating the power of nations that wield violence on a devastating scale means to become intimate with violence, learning its expanse and continuation so as to acknowledge how violence, like imperialism, leaves behind *seeds of decay* that one must *mercilessly* attend to, which as this book seeks to clarify, becomes a process of attending to the tensions that stem from the permanence of war.

Before I elaborate on how violence and intimacy coalesce as conceptual tools to track tension, let me first explain what I mean by the permanence of war. The phrasing is one I glean from feminist scholars of empire who

conceptualize the ongoing effects of imperial war, globalization, and minoritarian resistance. Experts on the Philippines, in particular, have illustrated how incommensurable declarations of independence are with the continuous reverberations of US colonial and imperial rule.[24] Scholars of Asian diaspora more broadly have signaled the importance of thinking racial mixture as a central site for grappling with colonial and imperial haunting.[25] In addition to academic texts, memoir and life writing has seen a flourishing in work that seeks to explore the permanent effects of war as ghostly remnants or a life lived in fragments.[26] Whether through haunting or durability, imperial war refuses easy conclusion as evidenced by how its violence endures through affective, embodied, and psychic channels. The permanence of war, then, alludes to a set of interlocking global forces where subjectivity is made and unmade alongside the dynamics of nation, citizenship, and belonging that emerge after the official and supposed end of war or colonization. For my purposes, I track tension as the evidence of the ongoing-ness inherent to the permanence of war.

Understood as a state of stress, strain, and apprehension, tension brings one to consider the body and its ability to process, hold, and if one is so lucky, release whatever it is that causes one to tense up, be it a long day, a looming deadline, an eagerly anticipated date, or an unwanted touch. Just as one may seek relief from a tension headache, one may seek aid to help tightened muscles relax, which is to say that when one speaks of tension, one must also speak of release and relief. As embodied a phenomenon as tension is, however, it is also a social, cultural, and political relation. Racial tensions, for instance, reference a collective feeling felt by many, an awareness that things are off, on edge, or on the brink of disruption. That tension can sometimes be sensed by others may seem an obvious statement of fact, but it is precisely this sensing of tension that is central to the concerns of my study. Think here of the phrase *you can cut the tension with a knife*. This saying suggests an atmosphere is so tense that not only is the tension palatable but that there may soon be a break, snap, or sudden release, an eruption of stress rather than an easing or softening of the tension. Herein lies an important distinction: relief and release ≠ repair. If release connotes liberation or a freeing of pressure and if relief evokes comfort and the ephemeral, repair speaks toward remedy, redress, resolution. Release and relief, in contrast to repair, encapsulate brief, fading, and fugitive engagements, gesturing toward tension's opacity. What I'm after is precisely this sensing of tension.

For Rose, the tension that settles in after a long day of work calls to mind a claim raised by Laura Hyun Yi Kang in *Compositional Subjects*: "The bodies

of Asian women . . . bear a promiscuous range of afflictions."[27] Here, Kang uplifts the Asian woman as a site to explore the epistemological and methodological directions of various disciplines, which then enable and constrain the composition of Asian and Asian American women as objects of study. In *Traffic in Asian Women*, she further takes on the figure of "Asian women" as a locus to tell a larger story about US empire in the twentieth century.[28] For many others, Asian women as a group differentiated by ethnic origin, class, and citizenship have been central to the formation of Asian American feminist critique.[29] The focus on Asian women, to be clear, is not sourced through an inquiry solely related to the experience of being racialized as Asian and gendered as woman.[30] Rather, the Asian woman is taken up as an analytic to observe and think through the ways gender and sexuality are factored into empire's racial calculus. By applying this logic to subjects of racial mixture, I propose that Asian/white racialization inheres as an imperial knowledge object, which helps to unravel how empire collapses into the lives of its subjects, manifesting as racial, sexual, and gendered tensions, not unlike how when a star collapses in on itself it creates a black hole.

My study is not the first to consider the ways history leaves its mark on its subjects. In my consideration of the multivalent meanings of tension as a physical, psychic, and sociocultural relation ripe for understanding the legacies of violence, I take a cue from Avery Gordon's elaboration of the cultural phenomenon of haunting, a sociopolitical-psychological state, "an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known, sometimes very directly, sometimes more obliquely."[31] In Gordon's account, haunting is seen to symbolize the complex legacies that find themselves existing, whether subtly or overtly, outside of their historical contexts. Gordon sets forth to understand how a legacy such as slavery has been inherited in the present moment, encouraging deep engagement with haunting's affective terrain as a starting point for critical inquiry. "To study social life one must confront the ghostly aspects of it."[32] What better way to begin than turning to Patricia Williams's *The Alchemy of Race*, as Gordon does, noting "the paradox of tracking through time and across all those forces that which makes its mark by being there and not there at the same time."[33] As I search for the intimacy of violence in muscle aches, conflict, controversy, political organizing, and self-doubt, I attempt to trace tension to its source much in the same way Williams does in the context of Blackness as she looks "for her shape and his hand," an endeavor to "track meticulously the dimension of meaning" of her great-great-grandmother and the white man who owned her and fathered her children.[34] To *track meticulously the dimension*

of meaning is to confront the ghostly matters of social life with a precise attention to the ways colonialism, slavery, and war remain within the body. Insofar as I understand tension as unmitigated yet nondescript moments of duress, strain, or inner striving in which a person may soon give way to the pressure tension builds, I see tension as a state felt not only in the body but as a manifestation of imperial temporality. I view *moments* of duress, strain, or inner striving as epistemological openings for reconciling with historical violence and the ontological dimension of being torn, together. Throughout this study, I trace tensions through a mode of noticing akin to *conjuring*, what Gordon names a "particular form of calling up and calling out the forces that make things what they are in order to fix and transform a troubling situation."[35] Whereas Gordon has sought to link repair to transformation, I seek to sever these ties, employing *deidealization*, "a form of the reparative that acknowledges messiness and damage."[36] Moving away from the impulse to fix, I glean from engagements with Melanie Klein's theory of reparation, lingering with the irreparable qualities of tension that range from recurring aches and bad memories to the persistence of racism.[37] Sensing tension and efforts to ease or transform it rather than repair or redeem it therefore are my methodological imperatives for unveiling the intimacy of violence.

To this end, I theorize violence through the language of intimacy and thus I align my thinking with feminist and queer theorists who defamiliarize how we come to understand intimacy as an ideology mediated by national cultures and publics. When Lauren Berlant sought to make sense of intimacy in a 1998 special issue of *Critical Inquiry*, the underlying purpose was to reframe the ways intimacy had become an issue demarcating the public from the private, the personal from the collective.

> How can we think about the ways attachments make people public, producing transpersonal identities and subjectivities, when those attachments come from within spaces as varied as those of domestic intimacy, state policy, and mass-mediated experiences of intensely disruptive crises? And what have these formative encounters to do with the effects of other, less institutionalized events, which might take place on the street, on the phone, in fantasy, at work, but rarely register as anything but residue? Intimacy names the enigma of this range of attachments, and more; and it poses a question of scale that links the instability of individual lives to the trajectories of the collective.[38]

Berlant's sense that intimacy raises a "question of scale" similarly explicates what Lisa Lowe has shown when considering intimacy as a heuristic to

discern the seemingly disparate processes of colonialism, slavery, war, and liberalism.[39] Shifting attention away from the *intimate* sphere of empire, which encompasses sexual, reproductive, and domestic relationalities, Lowe's use of intimacy offers a means to begin charting a *colonial division of intimacy* which unsettles the singularity of intimacy—which she traces to C. B. Macpherson's notion of the possessive individual—and thus makes space to examine the interrelated histories of colonialism that connect Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Europe. Contrary to intimacy's more colloquial understanding as a sense or feeling of closeness and a euphemism for sex and sexuality, for Lowe, intimacy endures as a political economy, a "constellation of asymmetrical and unevenly legible 'intimacies.'"[40] Likewise, Berlant proposes an engagement with intimacy's unevenness. By acknowledging the history of intimacy's public life, Berlant references Jürgen Habermas's formulation of the intimate spheres of domesticity, tracing the ways in which "liberal society was founded on the migration of intimacy expectations between the public and the domestic."[41] Intimacy, in other words, is a private affair living a public life.

Understanding intimacy as neither solely individualized nor private but collective and public is a prerequisite for discerning the intimacy of violence. Violence, by all means, is perpetrated by individuals as well as the state. While I discuss singular cases and acts of violence in the historical present, I do so with the larger aim to link those seemingly isolated instances to the structures that discipline subjects into committing violent acts. I treat violence as an accumulating process that not only inaugurates new and disproportionate effects against minoritarian subjects but also regulates the infrastructure of belonging that makes the US multiracial imaginary so distinctive in its ability to position its subjects, even and especially those deemed exceptional, outside the bounds of intimacy's promise.

Subjected by Empire: Asian/white Racialization in the American Century

At the turn of the millennium, *Time* magazine Asia made a bold claim. In their April 2001 issue, the faces of three entertainers—Tata Young, Maggie Q, and Asha Gill—grace a cover carrying the following caption: "All Mixed Up. Half Asian, Half Caucasian and 100% Cool. Why Eurasians Are the New Face of Asia." Uplifting Asian people with white heritage as a visual representation for a new, more cosmopolitan Asia, *Time* Asia takes notice of what seems to be a changing of the guard, a shift from monotony toward a *cooler*

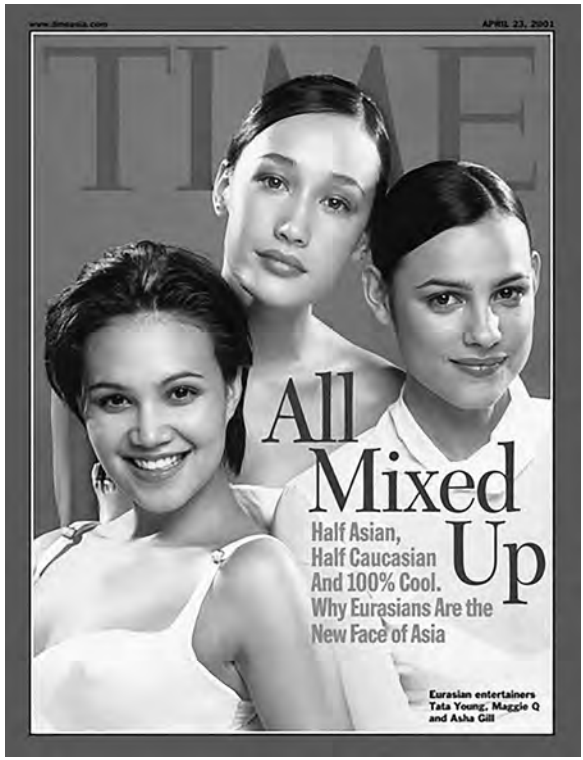

FIGURE 1.2. Eurasian Invasion, *Time* magazine Asia, 2001.

future.[42] In doing so, the periodical evokes a standard albeit eugenic interpretation of racial mixture: Asian/white life as an exemplar of hybrid vigor.[43]

In a striking parallel to *Time* Asia, the cover of *Time* USA's 1993 issue, "The New Face of America," features not three faces but one computer-generated figure known as Eve who personifies the issue's message: "How Immigrants Are Shaping the World's First Multicultural Society." Whereas *Time* calls Eve a woman, scholars have long shown how Eve functions more as an avatar representing a move away from the past peril of interraciality toward the contemporary moment's celebratory rise in multiracial citizens.[44] Indicative of how a "practical heterosexuality" is used to solve the latest crises of immigration, *Time*'s "New Face of America" cover dispels common readings of intimacy—like how we are often taught that intimacy is confined to the private realm of the bedroom or the domestic space of the home—to show instead how intimacy may function as a symbol of national identity.[45] Here, the product of interracial intimacy allows for the very interrogation of what it means for bodies to exist in relation not only to other bodies but also within

FIGURE 1.3. A remarkable preview, *Time*, 1993.

or outside the larger body of the nation-state. The cover's direct attention to the mixed race body's role in shaping the future coincides with predictions seen in other publications, such as *National Geographic*, whose 2013 special issue on the "Changing Face of America" projected that by 2050, the average American will be mixed race.[46] Again and again, turn-of-the-twenty-first-century narratives of racial mixture veer away from anti-miscegenation discourse and embrace the seductive rewards of hybridity, which as I explain later in this section, reify and rely on utopian narratives of racial harmony rooted in eugenic interpretations of racial mixture. What remains significant about *Time* Asia is that it dives deeper into this fraught terrain, identifying the future of the Asian century with a Eurasian face.

Beyond one lone magazine cover, examples abound where Asian/white life epitomizes an ideal archetype marking the transition between the so-called *American* twentieth century and the *Asian* twenty-first century. Many of these narratives resort to techno-orientalist tropes as seen in Keanu Reeves's character Neo in *The Matrix* franchise or Sonoya Mizuno's

character Kyoko in *Ex Machina*.[47] Others, like the popular photography books *The Eurasian Face* and *Part Asian, 100% Hapa*, join *Time* Asia in showing an appreciation of the mixed face, an aesthetic choice that works toward undoing harmful stereotypes associated with racial mixture only insofar as they incite a tendency for readers to view such figures as embodying the *best of both worlds*. This personification, the best of both worlds, emerges in subtle instances, like in *Time* Asia, and in more explicit ones, like in a phone call I held with Nancy Kwan in spring 2022. A self-proclaimed Eurasian and film star most known for her lead roles in *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960) and *Flower Drum Song* (1961), Kwan used this exact phrasing to articulate what she sees as "a benefit" of our shared racial identity.[48] Ann Curry, the American journalist, communicated the same sentiment in her foreword to *Blended Nation: Portraits and Interviews of Mixed-Race America* (2010): "For me it is impossible to say I am Asian or Caucasian, as choosing one would mean denying the other. No, the only way to honor the courage of my Japanese mother and white father to love in the face of adversity is to embrace both equally. As dad would say, 'You are the best of both worlds,' and so are the people you see on these pages, who cannot but strengthen America's dream, as they are living proof it comes true."[49] Being both white and Asian is seen to grant one the ability to understand two different ways of life, and herein lies a problem. To conflate Asian/white racialization into a net positive may refuse the older racism that criminalized interracial intimacy but at a cost. Not only is there an erasure of ethnicity's nuances, but there is a disavowal of the imperial history without which there would be no Asian/white subject as we have come to know it: the face of the future.

Broadly speaking, Asian/white intermixture can be traced to colonization, militarism, trade, global labor migration, sexual tourism, and international overseas study. In the twentieth century, the case of Asian/white racialization functions as a lens with which to understand the role race, gender, and sexuality play in America's empire building. One need only to recall the effects of the nation's landmark cases on immigration and interracial marriage. A dramatic shift from the nineteenth century, which saw the Page Act of 1875, the nation's first restrictive immigration law targeting Chinese women, twentieth-century laws such as the War Brides Act of 1945 allowed American servicemen to bring their spouses to the States following World War II. The War Brides Act helped to dismantle the era of Asian exclusion inaugurated by the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and reinforced by the Immigration Act of 1924, which limited the number of immigrants through

a national quota system. In 1965, the United States abolished its quota system and opened its doors to those who President Lyndon B. Johnson deemed most able to contribute to America, "to its growth, to its strength, to its spirit."[50] Prioritizing family reunification, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act produced a wave of Asian migration to the States. By and large, people from Asian countries, particularly those most tightly held by the grip of American imperialism, began to immigrate into the country, a growth magnified after the Vietnam War and subsequent legislation like the Amerasian Homecoming Act, which facilitated the entry of applicants born in Vietnam and fathered by a US citizen. During these years, the Supreme Court overturned anti-miscegenation laws through the passage of *Loving v. Virginia* (1967). As interracial relationships and Southeast Asian immigration became more commonplace, the numbers of Asian children with white heritage began to rise.

Subjected by empire, people of Asian/white descent evoke the legacy of American intervention in Asia and the Pacific. A brief appraisal of the terminology associated with this figure makes this clear. Beyond the descriptors of biracial, multiracial, and mixed, Asian people with white heritage have been referred to by a variety of terms. *Eurasian* is most often used to denote mixed European and Asian ancestry. The term tends to be attributed to mixed race people born as a result of global labor migration and trade between China and the West in the mid-nineteenth century.[51] *Amerasian* emerged as a term in the twentieth century as a result of World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, each of which saw scores of children born to US servicemen and Asian women.[52] Amerasian has been used to describe children born as a result of America's military presence in countries like Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, and Cambodia. While Eurasian denotes part-white ancestry, Amerasian may describe an Asian American with either white or nonwhite ancestry, depending on the race of the American soldier. If Amerasian invokes a history of war and militarism, the terms "war baby," "GI baby," and "love child" take on a more derogatory connotation. On the flip side, the term "hapa" conjures an idealized version of racial and ethnic blending. An indigenous Hawaiian word that translates to "half," hapa has been used to reference those with mixed heritage in general with multiracial Asians taking a particular liking to the term, a history of appropriation I explore in chapter 1.[53] In the 2020s, Gen Z popularized the term "wasian"—that is, a "white Asian" typically of East Asian ancestry—with trends on TikTok such as "the wasian check" in which a child of a white and an Asian parent proves their racial identity by sharing

family photos, removing sunglasses to expose Asian eyes, or revealing an assortment of Asian food in their home.[54]

Despite the variety of terminology, I opt for the descriptor "Asian/white." More than shorthand, my use of the solidus follows David Palumbo-Liu's move to recognize the constant and lasting rearrangements that have long designated the construction of *Asian/American*. Attentive to the porosity of multiracial whiteness, I utilize the solidus as a representation of the "*sliding over* between two seemingly separate terms."[55] That is to say, Asian/white racialization signifies multiple histories and embodiments of ethnicity where a person's phenotype is often understood as ambiguous. With *Asian* in the foreground, the slash invokes a possibility for ambiguity, while the secondary and lowercase *white* denotes a subsidiary position. Asian/white life, to be clear, is a form of Asian life no less Asian in spite of whiteness and its traces. To this end, Asian/white life constitutes both an identity and an analytic with which to examine the intimacy of empire's violence through the perspective of those partially responsible for shifting racial demographics.

The politics of multiracialism therefore name an important cultural and temporal backdrop to this project. Following the landmark cases discussed above, the racial makeup of America began to change. Growing numbers of interracial families resulted in the "biracial baby boom," which signaled a new division in American racial politics.[56] A largely ubiquitous interest in legally recognizing multiracial people and families created a divide between a conservative advocacy of color blindness and a liberal investment in establishing "multiracial" as a protected class.[57] Although the emergence of mixed race community organizations, university courses, family support groups, and artistic and academic writings—collectively regarded as the multiracial movement—stems from political activism during the civil rights era, the majority of the movement came into fruition during the Reagan years, coinciding with the rise of neoliberalism.[58] By the 1990s, these communities and organizations pushed for representation, and after years of deliberation, the US Census Bureau decided to offer a "check more than one box" option on the 2000 US Census. As expected, demographics culled since project a future nonwhite majority.[59] Obscuring the enduring legacies of colonialism, slavery, and empire, these statistics obfuscate how historical violence occasioned interracial encounter in the first place, helping to proliferate racial mixture. The pre-*Loving* peril and illegality of interracial heterosexual sex shifted into a celebratory rise in multiracial citizens, where Asian people with white heritage in particular were met with a peculiar enchantment. These racial subjects function as "servants of culture" or "children of

the future" who usher the nation into "a new, more colorful sort of 'melting pot,' where racial groups do not separate and segregate, but marry and have babies."[60] As Kina and Dariotis argue, "the figure of the 'love child' has been transformed subversively into a positive (but still stereotypical) image of mixed race people as harbingers of racial harmony—even as 'racial saviors.'"[61] Asian/white life clarifies how race is not just a fixed subjectivity but rather a way of describing how certain bodies stick to certain spaces, inciting an account of racial mixture along the logic of interpellation, which yields the following interpretation: Asian/white life is simultaneously stuck *to* the future and hailed *as* the future.[62] Scholarship about multiracialism perpetuates this fixation on what lies ahead, specifically how the reproductive product of interracial sex is regarded as evidence of the "world's first multicultural society," a phenomenon variously identified as "national heterosexuality," the "general economy of racialization," the "hybrid future," "*la raza cósmica*," "the browning of America," and the "mulatto millennium."[63] The popularity of wasian celebrities may have prompted *Time* Asia to endow the Eurasian as the new face of Asia and, by association, the Asian century, but there is in fact a deeper set of circumstances at work.

On the one hand, the exceptionalism granted to the Asian/white subject evokes a privilege assigned to those with a proximity to whiteness.[64] Interracial encounters between the so-called East and West are seen to have changed the world for the better, producing a clear and uncompromising message: the twenty-first century is less white, more Asian.[65] For *Time*, this is cause for celebration but not without dangerous insinuations, ones rife with anti-Blackness, indigenous erasure, compulsory heterosexuality, and even anti-Asian racism. Where are Black, brown, and Indigenous people in the mixed future? Are Asian people more palatable or attractive if they're mixed with white? Colorism and white desirability inform such progress narratives with the assumption overwhelmingly being that the mixed child is born from a white man and a woman of color. What of the mixed race people neither mixed with white ancestry nor raised in a cishet nuclear family? Periodicals like *Time* and *Time* Asia may depict an important shift in a changing global citizenry, but they also illustrate a curious susceptibility surrounding specific embodiments of mixture. Vulnerable to whiteness by nature of a supposed proximity to it, Asian/white life sees that vulnerability evolve into a whitened Asian exceptionalism, an advantage granted to those who can conform to white standards of beauty through light skin and normative gender performance with just the added touch of difference, that allure of being half.

On the other hand, the racial and sexual logics at the center of Asian exceptionalism begin and end with whiteness, writ large. A construct of colonialism, whiteness is the standard and default for which other races are compared and measured up against. In the Americas, we can refer to the Spanish *casta* system, which delineated a racial hierarchy that named and ranked various forms of intermarriage against those with the "purest" Spanish blood. Even earlier, in the 1700s, the Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus developed a taxonomy of race, which classified humankind into four distinct races corresponding to the four continents known at the time: Europe, America, Asia, and Africa. Germinal work on racial formation has given us language to understand such modes of social stratification as a product of sociohistorical processes where racial categories are constructed, reconstructed, and dismantled.[66] Although whiteness is widely understood as a racial identity, it also functions as a basis for the right to property.[67] The rise of the far right as well as stringent work in critical race studies on such phenomena as "white rage," "white fragility," "white tears," and "white feelings" denotes whiteness as a porous omnipresence, encompassing a racial form, a nationalist agenda, and a structure of feeling.[68]

In the context of twentieth-century Asian America, whiteness functioned as the rubric for which Asianness was defined. From a legal standpoint, the Supreme Court cases of Takao Ozawa and Bhagat Singh Thind, as well as the California Supreme Court case of Salvador Roldan established legal parameters for determining Asianness in relation to whiteness. In a more everyday or *mundane* sense, the Asian American's unique ability to assimilate and be branded as a model minority allows access to a proximity to whiteness foreclosed to other racialized groups: "The paradox of Asian American racial formation," writes Ju Yon Kim, "is sustained through the mundane's ambiguous relationship to the body: it is enacted *by* the body, but may or may not be *of* the body."[69] Whiteness lingers within Asian America not simply as a rubric, a racial standard, or a residual marker of interracial intimacy. The whiteness inside Asian America functions as a lens with which to expose the fundamental illogics of white supremacy. Whiteness, without question, is a "bad habit" and a "truth game" that is "rigged insofar as it is meant to block access to freedom for those who cannot inhabit or at least mimic certain affective rhythms that have been preordained as acceptable."[70] It bears repeating that my preoccupation with the distinct subjectivity of being both Asian and of white ancestry is to explore how whiteness attempts to ideologically and fetishistically consume Asianness and how mixed race Asian Americans have either been *willing* or *unwilling* to accept that kind of capture.

Let me be very clear here. I turn to Asian/white racialization as a site to apprehend how racial difference becomes a nexus for laying bare the shifting terrains of white supremacy. Racial mixture, then, becomes the grounds for conceiving empire as a structure of racial subjection. What *Time* Asia and *Time* gloss over are the ways racial mixture continues to operate as a tool for maintaining the boundaries and falsifying hierarchies of race. Racist science has been paramount in this regard. Fabricating racial norms, racist science has sought to naturalize the construction of racial mixture as a means to uphold racial and colonial hierarchies.[71] Building on work demonstrating how such histories shape discursive understandings related to interracial heteronormative sex and the mixed race body, I side with criticism that suggests "we have yet to truly encounter the body, to learn precisely what it is or, rather, what it can do, to think creatively about its *becoming* rather than to pronounce upon its *being*."[72] Exercising an intention to observe more pointedly the effects of enduring a racially mixed life through processes of racialized sexuality and gender, I refuse and refute the preoccupation with mixed race representational narratives including demographical projections and statistics. Also, I operate from the premise that the psychic and embodied ways of analyzing race and genealogy deeply unsettle how we have come to understand racial formation as a sociohistorical phenomenon crudely assumed, by some, to be a biological fact. To this end, my study attempts to not merely delineate an alternative mode of understanding mixed-raceness but uses mixed-raceness to open up how we might come to understand race and racial form at large.

My stake in this work is to offer a critical examination into how the felt dimensions of Asian/white life unveil the structure of imperialism as an embodied palimpsest of past, present, and future. I glean from racially informed posthumanist thought, new materialism, and object-oriented ontology where the ontological conditions surrounding the organizing logics of race and racialization continue to redirect us to sites of matter, object life, and materiality.[73] In doing so, I address the flexible, perhaps unsettling ways in which racial mixture inheres within systems of oppression. It is not only that mixed-raceness emerges from the logics of whiteness but that the imprint of those logics converge and compound at the site of embodiment, objecthood, and traumatic feeling. From this angle, I attend to the subtleties of Asian/white life, eschewing the racial scientific study of racial mixture in order to trace how the violent history of imperialism emerges as an embodied remnant within the very body in which Asianness is thought to converge with whiteness, be it the literal body of the daughter of an

American soldier and a Vietnamese woman or the more obscure pair of porcelain powder puffs.

Epistemological Tensions: Race, Repair, Embodiment

There are three interrelated epistemological tensions that arise throughout this book. The first is one I have gestured to in previous pages and will now elaborate on at length, and that is the study of racial mixture and the emergence of CMRS. As a field of knowledge, CMRS takes the fluidity of race as its starting point, and as an association, it is most known for its biennial conferences and flagship journal, the *Journal of Critical Mixed Race Studies*.[74] Its mission statement foregrounds a commitment to critique "dominant conceptions of race" and "to undo local and global systemic injustice rooted in systems of racism and white supremacy through scholarship, teaching, advocacy, the arts, activism, and other forms of social justice work."[75] In its growth, CMRS has created as many members as skeptics, and in my view, the field has veered away from its queer origins given the trend to pronounce upon mixed race experience without seeking to problematize racial mixture as an object of analysis.[76]

A contested theoretical tension, racial mixture is both a fallacy and a lived experience. As a racial ideology, racial mixture has historically been operationalized as a scientific discourse developed through settler colonial processes of extinction and racial purity. Leftovers from racist science, both racial categorization and racial hybridity are grounded in the idea that race is biological, resulting in the fabrication of race into a eugenic knowledge object utilized to discourage heterosexual interracial sex for the purposes of preserving Eurocentric notions of white superiority. It was under such circumstances that racial mixture became inherent to the logics of genocidal conquest, racial slavery, and imperialist war. Racial mixture was not only the taboo consequence of the forbidden interracial relation, but it was also a strategy used to "whiten" nonwhite races through the reproductive labor of women of color who would birth children from white colonizers, settlers, or servicemen. The legacy of anti-miscegenation laws, the one-drop rule of hypodescent, mestizaje, and the documentation of indigeneity via blood quantum mark a path for interrogating the subject of racial mixture alongside the logics of whiteness, which view the "mixing of races" as both prohibited and imperative. That is to say, racial mixture not only became the central narrative in eugenic efforts to preserve the boundaries between races or even "whiten" nonwhite races, but it has also been used

as evidence supporting the myth that the harm and peril that pervaded the anti-miscegenation past has been relieved through growing demographics of mixed people.

When faced with the biological, political, and cultural history of racial mixture, it is reasonable to note the propensity for whiteness to linger at the center as many in CMRS do. It is certainly the case that too often with discourse on racial mixture, there is a tendency to prioritize US-centric narratives of people mixed with white.[77] As a result, some in the field strive to "decenter" whiteness and uplift the voices of nonwhite multiply marginalized people of mixed race.[78] This endeavor to know more about the subjugated histories, imagined futures, and aesthetic alliances across nonwhite multiracial diasporas is necessary and pressing. As much as I align politically with the call to decenter whiteness, I likewise fear that decentering whiteness without also acknowledging its central role in the structural implications of racial mixture is to come short of a critical mixed race study. A disavowal of whiteness emerges in what is called a decentering. To fully understand the phenomenon of racialization, specifically multiracialism, we must come to terms with race's shifting forms and the role that whiteness plays in that reorganization of power. Whiteness, to put it simply, is the very sign of the intimacy of violence. Even though I am all for *decentering white people*, I remain more interested in a racial politics *in opposition to whiteness*, and thus I write toward a critique of whiteness in an attempt not to decenter it but to contend with its imperial life. To do so, I seek not to reinforce its hegemony but to tease out the methods in which whiteness deepens its hegemonic hold through narratives of racial mixture. Decentering whiteness in CMRS is not enough to eliminate or resist whiteness, which I would stake is a central aim in any field concerned with race and racism's death-dealing logics. Whiteness is the condition of possibility for the idea that races can mix. A critical study of racial mixture therefore must reckon with the conditions in which subjects become racialized as mixed. To that end, I treat multiraciality not as a white-free, white-marginal, or off-white beacon of liberal progress but as the colonial production of new race categories that utilize whiteness in the formation of racialized subjects who fail to fit neatly into already established racial categories.

My chief interest with CMRS is whether a field purporting to foster a critique of racial mixture in fact reinforces both the eugenic pronouncement of hybrid vigor and liberal progress narratives that suggest the ends of racism manifest through heterosexual reproductive futurity. Like multiculturalism, some interpretations of CMRS reify biological determinism, allowing white

supremacy to go unchecked. Fixated on experience or identity, CMRS can precipitate an inability to acknowledge mixed race subjection as an embodied phenomenon that results when multiple racial histories converge in one body. Rather than cede an engagement with CMRS, I shift attention away from the boundedness of both the field and the mixed body to pursue an interdisciplinary critique of racial mixture. As with any identitarian field, CMRS will have growing pains.[79] It will fail, reinvent itself, and come up short again, as identity knowledges do. Insurgent modes of inquiry in CMRS are possible—they must be—insofar as its practitioners and theorists think more carefully about the habits of our thinking, which are, for better and for worse, intent on using scholarship to deliver us from an unjust world. For there to be a *critical* mixed race studies, that field must thoroughly reckon with the ways in which whiteness propels our treatment of racial categories as discrete entities. Deprioritizing mixed race *identity*, I propose turning to the "critical" in mixed race studies as a means of tracing shared struggle across and beyond formal racial markings. Doing so tends to the interiority of racially mixed life without prescribing it as inherently reparative or injurious.

This brings me to the second epistemological tension: the genealogy of repair and reparation. The reparative turn has shaped feminist and queer studies since the 1990s when theorists began shifting toward a reparative mode of criticism as opposed to a paranoid reading practice, a dichotomy laid out by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in her influential essay "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You." While some feminist and queer theorists have taken up the call for reparative reading, others conceptualize the limit of healing or "the ruse of repair," as Patricia Stuelke puts it.[80] Paranoid critique and reparative criticism are often understood as contradictory stances, and it is this assumed binary that my book seeks to unravel.

Like many Asian Americanists, I am drawn to the ways Asian Americans are negatively impacted by American imperial intervention, Asian exclusion, and racial fetishism, but I seek to examine such harms beyond the dichotomy of paranoid and reparative reading. Rather than search for the ways Asian Americans seek to recover from feeling torn (reparative reading) or insist on Asian Americans' internalized complicity (paranoid reading), I spotlight the unsettling affinities that emerge from empire's afflictions. How do some Asian Americans manage to sympathize with US imperial endeavors, the same ones that produced such devastating acts of violence against their own lineages? Why do political polls show that Asian Americans are

growing increasingly more conservative? What fuels the desire for assimilation and national belonging? Whereas some may deem these questions the epitome of paranoid reading, I understand them as attempts to locate the paranoia festering within normative approaches to repair. I examine sympathy, belonging, and assimilation as dangerous reverberations of the reparative turn. The reparative, therefore, emerges in my study not only through critical inquiry and genuine efforts to heal but through what I see are its dangers: acts of disavowal or spiritual bypassing that in turn have the potential to convince us that repair is underway even if the harms have not let up. Ultimately, my attention on mixed race Asian America and the array of its unsettling affinities with whiteness, the nation-state, and neoliberalism—as I explore in chapters on serial rapist Daniel Holtzclaw, spree killer and incel Elliot Rodger, and the popular interior designer Joanna Gaines—argues for the importance of contending with the irreparable. Doing so, I insist, is not a paranoid stance but a prerequisite for ever reaching all that is promised within the broad rubric of repair, from joy and catharsis to the potential for justice and liberation.

What conjoins multiracialism and the reparative turn as epistemological tensions, it seems to me, is a mutual interest in moving past violence. That is, both multiracialism and the reparative turn, albeit differently, shape notions of historical harm and social change. On the one hand, multiracialism structures the central telos of racial progress, but as an ideological site, it can also lay bare the shifting terrains of white supremacy. In my study, I give language to the ways Asian Americans either challenge or internalize the logics of racial progress that have long fueled US empire. I ask how Asian/white life is folded into systems of domination. I ask how artists, writers, and cultural figures refuse, rework, or reify stereotypes of assimilation and complicity. In doing so, I regard the mixed body not as evidence of progress but as a recurrent site and source of tension. Multiracial literature, visual culture, performance, and installation art become critical indexes to detect the formal strategies and failures of attempting to ease tensions that stem from white supremacy and the permanence of war. On the other hand, the reparative turn has been instrumental in efforts to reconceptualize the meanings and enactments of survival. As students and teachers seeking to survive a violent world, we have only to remember Sedgwick's call to turn away from paranoid critique and toward reparative reading while—and this is vital—heeding Stuelke's repositioning of the reparative turn alongside US neoliberal empire. Doing so unearths how deeply implicated political, cultural, and theoretical investments in repair

have been in colonial and imperial histories as well as emergent activism. Taking seriously the limits of reparative criticism, both in and out of the academy, as a response to state violence, I have found that tension reverts the focus away from healing, repair, and punishment in favor of a politics of relief summed up evocatively by Alexis Pauline Gumbs in the foreword to *Beyond Survival: Strategies and Stories from the Transformative Justice Movement* (2020): "You have survived. Numerous disastrous harms that could have destroyed you did not quite destroy you. You live. Beyond that, you must also acknowledge that the relationships, organizations, and spaces you have moved through have survived *you*, a person like other people, shaped by systems of harm."[81] Within these words lie what I see as a refusal to resolve, which in turn creates a potential to alleviate the pressures that burden multiracialism and reparative reading. If violence is pervasive, the human condition names a relation of enduring the unbearable. I am interested in how subjects have sought to make life beyond the category of repair. How, in other words, might a refusal to resolve animate the most promising enactments of tension relief?

The challenge in forwarding any theory on violence is to allow it the affordance to perceive the theorist's complicities. Another challenge is more methodological, which is to elucidate violence without replicating it. I seek to meet these challenges. That is to say, *Torn* is driven by the ontological implications of empire's pervasive nature, and although I will confess my own desires to reach the other side of violence—freedom, safety, forgiveness, return—I am more interested in formulating a conceptual framework for venturing through violence's expanse, slowing down the process Vuong describes as "the violence passing through the fruit." This endeavor not only necessitates a writerly comportment of pace and patience, moving deliberately to notice the violence as it evolves into bouts of tension, but—and this is of utmost importance—it means that any critic of violence, myself included, must acknowledge the ways that violence impedes all aspects of life, intimacy and knowledge production notwithstanding. To be clear, I am not making an argument about eliminating violence, what Fanon describes as *mercilessly* rooting it out. That, quite frankly, is outside the scope of any one book project. I also do not give attention to the revolutionary modes of resistance that keep so many of us alive in spite of it all. There is a long and growing list of queer, feminist, decolonial, and trans of color work on such life-sustaining and life-giving practices.[82] Instead, I underscore just how pervasive, normalized, and ordinary violence has become even in light of powerful healing-centered work.

I say this to explain my reservations surrounding a growing interpretation of healing, which has been encapsulated by some as "wellness capitalism" or "deadly biocultures."[83] Healing, in this sense, has become a cultural paradigm that informs the care economy and holistic health alike, impacting movements of restorative and racial justice. These paradigms of healing under capitalism elide and even replicate violence. Our present is saturated with positive psychology and desires for mindfulness, wellness, and willpower, forms of productive denial that take precedence over a critical heuristic for understanding how ordinary violence and harm have become. I have suspicions about the ways healing functions as a neoliberal distraction, deflecting attention away from the body, the worker, and the human where there is much to *nourish* and less to mend. In healing, the onus is on the human. My interest lies more in attending to that which extracts from the human, producing the very imposition to heal.

To that end, embodiment is the third epistemological tension that arises in this book. In critical theory, the body functions as a theoretical lacuna, a "blind spot" in spite of the abundance of scholarship surrounding it as a figure.[84] Feminist and queer scholars have long argued that the body is a socially constructed entity too often rendered male, cisgender, and heterosexual and, moreover, that there remains a tendency to regard the body, in all of its corporeal materiality, in discursive terms. Theories on affect have sought to bridge this gap.[85] Interchangeable with emotion and feeling, affects are sticky and visceral, and they are as attached to individuals as they are to the social and political world. The affective turn denotes a call to historicize subjectivity, accounting for differences like race and gender or class and ability along the lines of emotion and sensation. What this means for studies on embodiment is that the body functions not only as a critical epistemological tool but as a matter of methodology. Rather than focus solely on what the body can do, affect theory proposes an interrogation of what bodies are "made to do."[86] It is this query into bodily "doing" that I seek to explore.

To carry out this venture, I join theorists whose vibrant documentation of the historical present epitomizes the move to consolidate the study of race, diaspora, and colonialism.[87] I use intellectual tools—namely, queer of color critique, aesthetic inquiry, and critical promiscuity—to track the material effects of imperial violence by situating queer theories of temporality and feminist perspectives on positionality in relation to Asian Americanist investments in empire, performance, and memory.[88] Drawing on and departing from critical theorizations of the body, I approach Asian/white racialization through a queer reading practice concerned with bodily doing, where

bodies are understood not simply as sites that store present and past pain but as entities capable of being folded into national discourse and nationalist agendas ranging from far right conservatism to neoliberal multiculturalism.[89] Challenging the traditions of critical theory, queer scholarship invested in race and diaspora wields a perspective primed to grapple with historically subjugated knowledge and marginalized subjectivities.[90] Here, the body represents a cultural form, historical site, and a mechanism for political expression where terrains of race, gender, and sexuality are seen as constitutive of imperialism, racialization, nationalism, and the impossibility of assimilation. With embodiment as a focal point, I utilize methods of literary analysis, movement analysis, visual cultural analysis, artist interviews, and historical contextualization to compile an archive of empire that functions as an instructive site to consider the political and ethical ramifications of multiracialism. By delving into this archive, I reveal moments in art, record, and practice in which the body—its literal surface, its embodied histories, and the ways writers and conceptual artists have creatively traversed and stretched beyond its borders—becomes the very site in which relief may become possible. To this end, I am especially drawn to scholars of minoritarian performance who follow in the Muñozian tradition of searching for the *hermeneutics of residue*.[91] Thinking of the wake of performance, José Esteban Muñoz asks, "What is left? What remains?" and offers the possibility that "ephemera remain. They are absent and they are present, disrupting a predictable metaphysics of presence."[92] I consider ordinary enactments of everyday life an especially ripe arena to track such affective correspondences.

By means of an example, I return once more to Vuong's *On Earth*. Part 2 of the novel opens with words once spoken by Rose: *Memory is a choice*. Little Dog wonders if it really is.

> There are times, late at night, when your son would wake believing a bullet is lodged inside him. He'd feel it floating on the right side of his chest, just between his ribs. *The bullet was always here*, the boy thinks, older even than himself—and his bones, tendons, and veins had merely wrapped around the metal shard, sealing it inside him. *It wasn't me*, the boy thinks, *who was inside my mother's womb, but this bullet, this seed I bloomed around*. Even now, as the cold creeps in around him, he feels it poking out from his chest, slightly tenting his sweater. He feels for the protrusion but, as usual, finds nothing. *It's receded*, he thinks. *It wants to stay inside me. It is nothing without me*. Because a bullet without a body is a song without ears.[93]

Is the bullet, this phantom figment of an unlived past, merely the violence passing through the fruit? Recall that statement. "Let no one mistake us for the fruit of violence—but that violence, having passed through the fruit, failed to spoil it." Somehow, we are told, violence passed through the fruit, sparing it from destruction, but perhaps it is rather that a choice was made, and it was this choice that, in a son's eyes, helped to facilitate the violence outward. Having passed through the body, the violence remains, though smaller and less harsh, like a memory. To survive is to live on with violence after the fact, easing tension time and time again.

> Yes, there was a war. Yes, we came from its epicenter. In that war, a woman gifted herself a new name—Lan—in that naming claimed herself beautiful, then made that beauty into something worth keeping. From that, a daughter was born, and from that daughter, a son.
>
> All this time I told myself we were born from war—but I was wrong, Ma. We were born from beauty.[94]

In Lan's renaming, beauty took the place of violence. For violence, then, to have passed through the fruit means not simply that an act of naming, an act of defiance or self-love eliminated the violence, but rather that a conscious choice, a steady attention to the violence was held by its person who then introduced something else—beauty—into the equation. Now recall the scene when Lan and Little Dog massage Rose. Tension relief is more often than not a collective affair, like intimacy and violence. If the bullet in the son's chest is older than himself, banishing it necessitates a return to its source, his mother, for it is her body that this particular violence entered. What he feels is not his but hers. Theirs.

Soon after the son's dream, he is asked by his mother again to tend to her back and he obliges, "releasing the bad winds" from her body.

> Through this careful bruising, you heal.
>
> I think of Barthes again. A writer is someone who plays with the body of his mother, he says after the death of his mother, in order to glorify it, to embellish it.
>
> How I want this to be true.
>
> And yet, even here, writing you, the physical fact of your body resists my moving it. Even in these sentences, I place my hands on your back and see how dark they are as they lie against the unchangeable white backdrop of your skin. Even now, I see the folds of your waist and hips as I knead out the tensions.[95]

Roland Barthes's *Mourning Diary* functions as a touchstone throughout Little Dog's letter, and it is worth reflecting on Barthes here. His notes on grief written in the two years following his mother's death illustrate a mode of reading intimately and against Western epistemology. For Little Dog and for Barthes, the mother's body should not be abandoned in life or in death but recognized and addressed for all its markings. In writing their works—for Little Dog, the letter, and for Barthes, the diary—they refuse the very methodological sign of Western epistemology as knowledge becoming Knowledge insofar as it is consumed. Their mothers will never read these works, but that is not the point. The point of reckoning is the body and its remembrance. Again, it is Rose's body that hosts the violence, and even though a family kneading out the tensions does not eliminate past injury, it does serve as a form of recognition, a kind of rehearsal or inauguration of continued living. Tension is a sign, which is to say it can be engaged as an invitation. You can say yes, no, maybe, or ignore it altogether. Tension may also break, a possibility that can produce feelings of anxiety or relief. Just as a mother's tension provokes a family to aid in bodily relief, my endeavor with this book is to notice tensions as they are and to follow how people have sought relief, not to claim that tension relief is ever enough to undo the harms of empire but rather that this is the place we must start in order to get to the place we want to be.

Attentive to Asian/white life, I cull from an archive less attuned to an official or legitimate collection of a people or a place but to what Julietta Singh has termed the *body archive*. In *No Archive Will Restore You*, Singh offers a sustained reflection on the urgency of assembling an archive of the body, "a way of thinking-feeling the body's unbounded relation to other bodies."[96] Part memoir, part theoretical prose, Singh's journey into the body's historical crevices begins with a summoning by the Italian intellectual Antonio Gramsci: "The starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical processes to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory. . . . Therefore it is imperative at the outset to compile such an inventory."[97] Gramsci's call to compile an "inventory" with "an infinity of traces" precipitated Singh's reckoning with Asian/white life, pain, and pleasure outside the strict limits of The Archive. The body archive attends to what our bodies have been trained to disavow like the bullet in Little Dog's dreams. Through a sensorial relation to oneself as a "messy, embodied, illegitimate archive," Singh dislocates the archive from the past, illuminating how archival labor necessitates an engagement with our own pain, sound,

waste, and pleasure.[98] That such a feat is "imperative at the outset" matters for a political project inspired by Gramsci's revolutionary thought and requires one's curation to be neither complete nor selective but attuned to the body as an open and malleable archive containing traces of history. If, as I argue throughout this study, Asian/white life is imbued by multiple racial histories, then assembling a body archive attuned to mixed-raceness must acknowledge the body's capacity to cross borders delineating race, nation, and language. That Asian/white life blurs the lines of difference in this way gestures to something peculiar, perhaps even spectacular, about how mixed people may come to understand their unbounded connection to others, including those that came before them.

In the pages that follow, these three epistemological tensions collapse and break against one another. My focus on Asian/white life denounces post-racial rhetoric claiming that mixed race citizens will repair racist histories as it also remains critical of the residual and oft-forgotten effects of imperialism that manifest in embodied living. Each chapter, overviewed in the next section, inspects an ordinary afterlife of violence, drawing attention to the varied dimensions of all that lives on in the wake of harm: nonbelonging, disavowal, complicity, mass violence, intergenerational trauma, femme uprising, and an urge to think, feel, and remember otherwise. What arises is twofold: an archive of tension and a cautionary tale warning of what may ensue depending on the methods in which one seeks to relieve tensions both singular and shared.

Tensions Unfolding

In *Half*, Datchuk fires clay into porcelain, reconfiguring one material into another. Her piece is a meditation on racial mixture and its peculiar relation to malleability. The aesthetic motives embedded within *Half* represent one of many strategic, instinctive, or unintentional modes of artistic and bodily expression enacted in an attempt to alleviate tensions that can be sourced back to imperial expansion and intervention. Throughout this book, I illuminate such processes of malleability—from Datchuk's ability to form clay into durable powder puffs to Vuong's scene of intergenerational tension relief. In doing so, I account for the ways one may confront the range and reach of traumatic feeling produced by empire. In each chapter, I focus on cases that exemplify the shortcomings of repair, and in turn, I think through the promise of orienting toward tension through a deliberate or latent attempt to alter the very form of American empire's strange afflictions.

Chapter 1 considers the affliction of not feeling whole in one's identity and explores the lengths one goes to manufacture a sense of wholeness. Through a critique of ethnographic photography, I recount how wholeness is pursued through the visual image, focusing on Kip Fulbeck's *Part Asian, 100% Hapa* (2006), Paisley Rekdal's *Intimate: An American Family Photo Album* (2011), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's nationwide manhunt for Andrew Cunanan, the spree killer who murdered Gianni Versace and four others in 1997. A reckoning with the fragmented racial position and the ways racial mixture is folded into the infrastructure of settler colonialism, this chapter inquires into a seemingly banal act of cultural appropriation—biracial Asians and their identification with the term "hapa." I interrogate the complicitous tensions of this discursive co-optation as they arise in Fulbeck's work in particular. Turning to Rekdal, I highlight how one may pursue a decolonial recognition of settler complicity and familial legacy.

Chapter 2 studies the affliction of feeling out of place, traversing questions of national belonging, domesticity, and the reverberations of American empire present in home decor. I open the chapter with a vignette on Isamu Noguchi, the world-renowned sculpture artist, before I focus attention on the curious yet undeniable rise to fame of Joanna Gaines, a Texas-based TV personality most known for her role in HGTV's *Fixer Upper*, a home renovation show. Teased for being half-Asian, both Gaines and Noguchi struggled with feelings of shame throughout their childhoods. As adults, they turned toward art and design to cope and escape, enacting what I call *racial renovation*, an act of repurposing the racialized pain of past societal rejection, exclusion, or ostracism for the benefit of others' potential comfort and belonging. Reparative at times, racial renovation can also be suspect and, as seen with Gaines, deeply implicated with whiteness and the Christian right.

A brief interlude appears to mark a shift in the body chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 study Asian/white life through the arguably casual, more tolerable repercussions of empire, from cultural appropriation to racial renovation. The next two chapters turn toward overt but made-ordinary violences: Asian emasculation, sexual predation, misogyny, and racial fetishization. My hope is to guide readers in adjusting their analytical lenses to account for what lies beyond the most provocative and explicit details of a case, which tend to dominate our attention. Moving forward, sex is only part of the story.

Chapter 3 attends to the affliction of unjust treatment and the feeling of grievance in instances of sexual assault and misogyny. Specifically, I unpack the logics of heteropatriarchy that reside at the heart of the Hapacalypse theory, a joining of the words "apocalypse" and "hapa." The portmanteau

speculates that Asian/white people in the twenty-first century will commit or be subjected to abhorrent acts of violence. The Hapacalypse theory originated on the subreddit r/hapa as a result of a series of cases in the mid-2010s—namely, that of Daniel Holtzclaw, a former Oklahoma City police officer convicted for his serial sexual violence against Black women, and Elliot Rodger, whose 2014 killings in Isla Vista, California, made incel (involuntary celibate) a household term. Attending to the details of each case, I juxtapose Holtzclaw and Rodger alongside the literary and performance work of feminist artists Chanel Miller, the author of the award-winning memoir *Know My Name* based on the aftermath of her assault by Brock Turner on Stanford's campus in 2015, and Emma Sulkowicz, the artist who carried the mattress they were raped on across the Columbia campus in 2014 through the durational performance *Mattress Performance (Carry That Weight)*. Through discussions of consent and accountability in the years preceding #MeToo and #TimesUp, I frame the Hapacalypse around a larger historical context of white supremacy, its investment in obscuring legacies of violence, and feminist opposition.

Chapter 4 addresses the affliction of being an object of racial fetish. Thinking racialized sexuality alongside anti-imperialist critique, I identify orientalist desire as a remainder of empire, focusing on the work of contemporary performance artists Chanel Matsunami Govreau and Maya Mackrandilal. By staging an encounter between white masculinity and Asian femininity, the two artists mobilize performance alter egos and queer aesthetics to rehearse the limits of bodily autonomy in the context of sexual fantasy. I argue that insofar as Asian femininity forms the object of imperial desires, it can also function as the basis for feminist revenge and resistance. This chapter locates Asian/white sexuality beyond the romance narrative, showing how it may labor toward minoritarian retribution for imperial harm. In doing so, I apprehend the ways neoliberal multiculturalism has further embedded itself within the infrastructure of everyday encounters, and I show how Asian/white life confronts the intimacy of that violence.

To close, the coda comments on shared struggle and the collective forms of relief present in the mass mobilization for a free Palestine. Israel's decades-long genocide of the Palestinian people cannot possibly be relieved. However, what I argue for is a consideration of relief as a relation of anti-imperial solidarity. I piece together protest slogans alongside Palestinian poet Naomi Shihab Nye's poems to decipher how the fleeting yet impactful moments of joy that arise in pro-Palestine demonstrations may signal a different interpretation of *torn together*, one not split by the punctuation mark

of a comma, and thus not disjoined through pause, separation, or distinction, but rather one indicative of what it means to exist alongside or next to. Set apart only by a single space, *torn together* extends a culminating gesture to the book. Without the comma, the phrase offers a meditation on the ways genocide and ethnic cleansing—crimes against humanity too often minimized as global tensions in the Middle East—are resisted and challenged. Through mass mobilization and community organizing, these tensions are met with a momentary relief that may not undo excruciating levels of death and destruction but tend to the necessary conditions for shared struggle, keeping alive the enduring promises of multiracial solidarity and the antiwar movement.

Notes

PREFACE

1 Hall, "Eating Salt," 241.
2 Moraga, "Breakdown of the Bicultural Mind," 231.
3 Hall, "Eating Salt," 251.

INTRODUCTION

1 An earlier version of my writing on Datchuk's *Half* appears in "Half and Both: On Color and Subject/Object Tactility," *Women and Performance: a journal of feminist theory* 30, no. 1 (2020): 104–12.
2 Cheng, *Ornamentalism*.
3 See Abu-Lughod, Hammami, and Shalhoub-Kevorkian, *Cunning of Gender Violence*; Choy, *Empire of Care*; Gonzalez, *Securing Paradise*; Hasso, *Buried in the Red Dirt*; Hochberg, *Becoming Palestine* and *Visual Occupations*; Kapadia, *Insurgent Aesthetics*; Kelly, *Invited to Witness*; Jinah Kim, *Postcolonial Grief*; Jodi Kim, *Settler Garrison*; Maira, *Missing*; Maurer, *Ocean on Fire*; Ngô, *Imperial Blues*; Puar, *Right to Maim*; Rafael, *White Love*; Said, *Orientalism*; Saranillio, *Unsustainable Empire*; and Stoler, *Imperial Debris* and *Duress*.
4 Here, I am referencing language from Joan Scott's "The Evidence of Experience" (1991) and the book series *Difference Incorporated* published by the University of Minnesota Press.
5 Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, 33.
6 Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, 33.
7 Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, 33.
8 Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, 33.
9 Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, 33; emphasis in original.
10 See Saketopoulou, *Sexuality Beyond Consent*; Ninh and Roshanravan, "#WeToo"; and Buggs and Hoppe, *Unsafe Words*.
11 Trask, "Color of Violence."
12 Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, 61.
13 Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, 61; emphasis in original.
14 Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, 12.
15 V. Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, 4.
16 Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, 13; emphasis in original.

17 On violence folded into narratives of freedom, see C. Reddy, *Freedom with Violence*; Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*; and Butler, *Force of Nonviolence*. On lessons from the transformative justice movement, see Chen, Dulani, and Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Revolution Starts at Home*; INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, *Color of Violence*; Mullan, *Decolonizing Therapy*; Spade, *Normal Life*; Kaba and Hassan, *Fumbling Towards Repair*; and Dixon and Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Beyond Survival*.

18 See Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*; Ruiz, *Ricanness*; Sharpe, *In the Wake*; and Tadiar, *Remaindered Life*.

19 R. Williams, *Marxism and Literature*; Hong and Ferguson, *Strange Affinities*; Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*; and Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*.

20 Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, 23.

21 I credit Boram Jeong for bringing me to this point during a writing workshop with the Asian American Feminisms section at the 2022 Association of Asian American Studies conference.

22 Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 181.

23 Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 181.

24 Think of Neferti Tadiar, who has examined how permanent imperial war produces modes of living outside the binary of productivity and disposability, and Josen Masangkay Diaz, who reimagines the racial and gendered possibilities of Filipino American subjectivity that arise within a diaspora contending both with postcoloniality and authoritarian rule. Especially relevant to my study, Vernadette Vicuña Gonzalez's archival reckoning with the life of mixed race vaudevillian and actress Isabel Rosario Cooper offers an intimate portrayal of how beauty and desire inform the soft power of imperialism through the lens of transpacific femininity, a point elaborated at length by Denise Cruz, illuminating how sexuality is critical to understanding the inner workings of imperial masculinity and its role in the more "hard" power of militaristic presence. See Tadiar, *Remaindered Life*; Diaz, *Postcolonial Configurations*; Gonzalez, *Empire's Mistress*; and D. Cruz, *Transpacific Femininities*.

25 Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora*; Haritaworn, *Biopolitics of Mixing*.

26 Brina, *Speak, Okinawa*; Cho, *Tastes like War*; Saraswati, *Scarred*; and Troeung, *Landbridge*.

27 Kang, *Compositional Subjects*, 71.

28 Kang, *Traffic in Asian Women*.

29 See Bow, *Asian American Feminisms*; Bow, *Betrayal and Other Acts of Subversion*; Cheng, *Ornamentalism*; Chuh, *Imagine Otherwise*; and Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*.

30 See Scott, "Evidence of Experience"; and Mani, "Multiple Mediations."

31 Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, xvi.

32 Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 7.

33 Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 6.

34 P. Williams, *Alchemy of Race*, 19.

35 Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 22.

36 Amin, *Disturbing Attachments*, 11.

37 See Eng, "Colonial Object Relations"; and Eng, "Reparations and the Human."

38 Berlant, "Intimacy," 283.
39 Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, 17–18.
40 Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, 18.
41 Berlant, "Intimacy," 284.
42 Not only is this an overt and racist preference toward those with white ancestry, but it is also erroneous in that the future, to be clear, is not anticipated to get cooler but warmer with climate change and environmental disaster. I credit Kimberly Skye for helping me see this latter point during the Performance Studies summer workshop on ecologies at Northwestern University in 2018.
43 Unlike hybrid degeneracy, hybrid vigor implies a racially mixed offspring is genetically superior to both or one of their parents. Hybrid vigor, otherwise known as heterosis, is a genetic phenomenon where outbreeding yields improved functionality or increased growth in a hybrid offspring. A hybrid is heterotic, then, if it exhibits more enhanced biological traits than either of its parents. The concept has been applied to organisms across the plant and animal kingdoms, yet its influence on human breeding is most contentious. Human beings are genetically very similar, so when the notion of hybridity is extracted from its genetic context and applied to the sociality of race, the racist pillars upholding racial difference broaden and strengthen. As a systemic tool of racial control, the notion of hybrid vigor exists in a peculiar relationship to hypodescent and the one-drop rule, which classifies a person with one Black ancestor as legally Black. A curious reversal of hypodescent occurs when hybrid vigor is thought to remove traces of inferiority in people of color, regenerating the ideology of white supremacy.
44 Anthropologist Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe has called attention to the ways *Time*'s 1993 cover represents "the dangerous ways in which confused media . . . induce fantasies about a future replete with 'interracial' cyborgs" (2). Deeming mixed race people "artefacts of the past and beacons of the future" (1), Ifekwunigwe situates the problematic origins of miscegenation alongside contemporary discourse which celebrates mixed race as a new racial category primed to beget an answer to racial conflict. See Ifekwunigwe, "*Mixed Race" Studies*, 1–2.
45 Berlant and Warner, "Sex in Public."
46 Funderburg, "Changing Face of America."
47 See Roh, Huang, and Niu, *Techno-Orientalism*.
48 Nancy Kwan, personal interview, March 18, 2022.
49 Tauber and Singh, *Blended Nation*.
50 Lyndon B. Johnson, "The Immigration and Nationality Act," October 3, 1965.
51 See Teng, *Eurasian*.
52 American writer Pearl S. Buck coined the term "Amerasian" before the Department of Justice and Immigration and Naturalization Service formalized it as "an alien who was born in Korea, Kampuchea, Laos, Thailand or Vietnam after December 31, 1950, and before October 22, 1982, and was fathered by a U.S. citizen." See INS Form 360, *Petition for Amerasian Widow(er) or Special Immigrant*. For a history of Amerasians, see Doolan, *First Amerasians*; and Doolan, "Cold War Construction of the Amerasian."

53 Hapa haole linguist R. Keao NeSmith has shown how the term originated in the early nineteenth century to describe the growing presence of hapa haoles, half-white or half-foreigner Hawaiians who were born after the European and American colonial occupation of Hawai'i. See Porzuki, "How the Hawaiian Word 'Hapa.'"

54 King-O'Riain, "#Wasian Check."

55 Palumbo-Lio, *Asian/American*, 1; emphasis in original.

56 Root, *Racially Mixed People in America*.

57 Rico, Jacobs, and Coritz, "2020 Census."

58 See DaCosta, *Making Multiracials*; Dalmage, *Politics of Multiracialism*; and Sundstrom, *Browning of America*.

59 The US Census Bureau began collecting detailed data on multiracial people in 2000. In that first year, 6.8 million people checked more than one box. By 2010, that number jumped by 32 percent making multiracials the fastest growing racial group in the nation.

60 Nakashima, "Servants of Culture," 271, 272.

61 Kina and Dariotis, *War Baby/Love Child*, 13.

62 See Saldanha, "Reontologising Race"; and Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses."

63 See "The New Face of America"; Berlant and Warner, "Sex in Public"; Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes*; Nyong'o, *Amalgamation Waltz*; Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*; Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race/La raza cósmica*; Root, *Racially Mixed People in America*; and Elam, *Souls of Mixed Folk*.

64 See Shiao, "Meaning of Honorary Whiteness"; and Yip, "Biracial Asians Viewed More Favorable."

65 For a different, *stranger* interpretation of interracial encounter, see Mannur, "Matter Out of Place."

66 Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 55.

67 Harris, "Whiteness as Property."

68 See C. Anderson, *White Rage*; DiAngelo, *White Fragility*; Hamad, *White Tears/Brown Scars*; and Matias, *Feeling White*.

69 Ju Yon Kim, *Racial Mundane*, 3; emphasis in original.

70 See Ahmed, "A Phenomenology of Whiteness"; and Muñoz, *Sense of Brown*, 10.

71 For a convincing analysis on racist science in the context of Indigenous dispossession in the Pacific, see Arvin, *Possessing Polynesians*.

72 See Koshy, *Sexual Naturalization*; Coráñez Bolton, *Crip Colony*; and Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes*, 9–10; emphasis in original.

73 See Bow, *Racist Love*; Bui, "Eugenic Ecologies" and "Objects of Warfare"; M. Chen, *Animacies* and *Intoxicated*; Cheng, *Ornamentalism*; Choudhury, "Making of the American Calorie"; R. Lee, *Exquisite Corpse of Asian America*; Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe"; Musser, *Sensational Flesh*; Tompkins, *Racial Indigestion*; and Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*.

74 Since its formation, the journal has published a total of three issues. The inaugural issue, "Emerging Paradigms in Critical Mixed Race Studies," was published in 2014. Since then, a second issue of the first volume was published in 2022, and a second

volume was published in 2023. Quite a significant gap in publication years, the journal has struggled to find consistency. G. Reginald Daniel, the longtime editor of the *Journal of Critical Mixed Race Studies* and founding member of CMRS, expressed an editorial interest in forming issues around mixed-raceness in a regional context, with the second issue titled "Mixed Race in Nordic Europe" and the third "Mixedness and Indigeneity in the Pacific." Daniel passed away in 2022. During the 2024 CMRS conference, it was announced that the journal would undergo a revamping.

75 See Critical Mixed Race Studies web page, https://criticalmixedracestudies.com/.

76 Three queer women of color, all Asian and white, founded CMRS: artist-scholar Laura Kina, literary scholar Wei Ming Dariotis, and American studies scholar Camilla Fojas. Since their founding, the association has leaned social scientific with a focus on education and identity, retreating from the kinds of queer and insurgent intentions Kina, Dariotis, and Fojas embodied in their leadership.

77 On racial mixture beyond US borders, see King-O'Riain et al., *Global Mixed Race.* For a history of racial mixture in the Americas, see Bost, *Mulattas and Mestizas*.

78 See Rondilla, Guevarra, and Spickard, *Red and Yellow, Black and Brown*; Guevarra, *Becoming Mexipino*; M. Washington, *Blasian Invasion*.

79 Wiegman, *Object Lessons*.

80 See Cvetkovich, *Depression*; Love, *Feeling Backward*; Freeman, *Time Binds*; and Wiegman, "Times We're In." See Saketopoulou, *Sexuality Beyond Consent*; Singh, *No Archive Will Restore You*; and Stuelke, *Ruse of Repair*.

81 Pauline Gumbs, "Foreword," 4; emphasis in original.

82 A few studies that come to mind: Balance, *Tropical Renditions*; Bruce, *How to Go Mad*; Chambers-Letson, *After the Party*; J. Chen, *Trans Exploits*; Dolan, *Utopia in Performance*; V. Huang, *Surface Relations*; Kina and Bernabe, *Queering Contemporary Asian American Art*; N. King, *Queer and Trans Artists of Color*; T. King, *Black Shoals*; Kondo, *Worldmaking*; Khubchandani, *Decolonize Drag* and *Ishtyle*; Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, and *Disidentifications*, and *Sense of Brown*; Lothian, *Old Futures*; McMillan, *Embodied Avatars*; L. Pérez, *Chicana Art*; Ponce De León, *Another Aesthetics Is Possible*; Ramos, *Unbelonging*; Reed, *Art of Protest*; Shomali, *Between Banat*; Tsing et al., *Arts of Living*.

83 See Nopper and Zelickson, "Wellness Capitalism"; and Ehlers and Krupar, *Deadly Biocultures*.

84 See Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*. Think also of the Cartesian mind-body split, the Spinozian notion that the body is an extension of the mind, the Butlerian theory of performativity, Foucauldian biopower, Valerie Fournier's attention to how gender is performed through pain, violence, and other inscriptions on the "hurting flesh," and Thomas Laqueur's work on hierarchy, dichotomy, and the social life of scientific models of gender and sex. Let us also recall Grosz's intervention for a Deleuzian rejection of dichotomy.

85 While many scholars have found it difficult to materialize affect, affect theorists argue that studying viscerally charged attachments is crucial to the dialectic between individual embodiment and contemporary sociocultural analyses. In

particular, Patricia Clough suggests that "the turn to affect is a harbinger of and a discursive accompaniment to the forging of a new body," what she calls the "biomediated body." Thus, the affective turn symbolizes the creation of a new body, a biomediated body that challenges the late nineteenth-century notion of body-as-organism. See Clough and Halley, *Affective Turn*, 2.

86 Clough and Halley, *Affective Turn*, 5.

87 Examples of recent work include Cheung-Miaw, "Fate of 'Shared Interests Among People of Color'"; Cuéllar, "Waterproofing the State"; Edwards, *Other Side of Terror*; Hobart, *Cooling the Tropics*; Hu Pegues, *Space-Time Colonialism*; M. Huang, *Reconfiguring Racial Capitalism*; Karuka, *Empire's Tracks*; Lowe and Manjapra, "Comparative Global Humanities After Man"; and Vimalassery, Pegues, and Goldstein, "Colonial Unknowing and Relations of Study." One can also think of the intellectual labor behind moves to departmentalize studies at the intersection of race, colonialism, migration, and sexuality. For example, the Department of Race, Diaspora, and Indigeneity (University of Chicago), the Consortium of Studies in Race, Migration, and Sexuality (Dartmouth College), the Department of Studies in Race, Colonialism, and Diaspora (Tufts University), and the Program in Ethnicity, Race, and Migration (Yale University).

88 See Bascara, *Model-Minority Imperialism*; Chong, *Oriental Obscene*; Chuh, *Difference Aesthetics Makes*; Collins, "Some Group Matters"; De Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't*; Eng and Han, *Racial Melancholia, Racial Dissociation*; Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black*; Freeman, "Queer Temporalities" and *Time Binds*; Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*; Haraway, "Situated Knowledges"; Hartsock, "Feminist Standpoint"; Love, *Feeling Backward*; Mani, "Multiple Mediations"; Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*; Scott, "Evidence of Experience"; Shimakawa, *National Abjection*; Son, *Embodied Reckonings*; and Yao, *Disaffected*.

89 See Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion* and *Promise of Happiness*; P. Anderson, *So Much Wasted*; Balce, *Body Parts of Empire*; Berlant, *Female Complaint*; Butler, *Bodies that Matter*; Crosby, *A Body Undone*; Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*; Espiritu, *Body Counts*; Fleetwood, *Troubling Vision*; Hall, "Eating Salt"; Hennessy, *Profit and Pleasure*; Love, *Feeling Backward*; McSorley, *War and the Body*; McCormack, *Queer Postcolonial Narratives*; Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*; Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*; H. Pérez, *A Taste for Brown Bodies*; Schalk, *Bodyminds Reimagined*; Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*; Singh, *Unthinking Mastery*; Somerville, *Queering the Color Line*; and Stoler, *Haunted By Empire*.

90 See Eng, *Feeling of Kinship*; Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black*; Gopinath, *Impossible Desires*; Manalansan, *Global Divas*; Ponce, *Beyond the Nation*; and Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*.

91 See Amin, Musser, and Pérez, "Queer Form"; Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent*; Chambers-Letson and Son, "Performed Otherwise"; Chung, "Defiant Still Worker"; Huang and Lee, "Contingency Plans"; S. K. Lee, "Staying In"; León, "Forms of Opacity"; McMaster, "Revolting Self Care"; Mengesha and Padmanabhan, "Performing Refusal/Refusing to Perform"; R. Pérez, "Proximity"; and Ruiz, "Waiting in the Seat of Sensation" and "El Caribe on the Horizon."

92 Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 71.
93 Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, 76–77; emphasis in original.
94 Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, 231.
95 Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, 85; emphasis in original.
96 Singh, *No Archive Will Restore You*, 29.
97 Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 324.
98 Singh, *No Archive Will Restore You*, 27.

CHAPTER 1. SEDUCED WHOLE

1 For more on how the narrator's self-reflexivity is situated within the novel's political project, see Wolfson, "Man of Two Faces."
2 V. Nguyen, *Sympathizer*, 63.
3 This notion, that white masculinity and Asian femininity form the perfect match, is discussed in Teng's 2013 study, *Eurasian*. It also plays a part in Nguyen's *The Sympathizer* when the narrator discusses Asian/white interracial sexuality and that it is, for the white man, "impossible not to nibble on dark chocolate." In chapter 3 of *The Sympathizer*, there is a blurring of lines between "us and them," with a connection made between yellow fever and the white men it ails.
4 See Saldaña-Portillo, *Revolutionary Imagination*.
5 Such narratives also transpire in popular children's books. See Oz and Annisa, *I Am Whole*; and Diggs and Evans, *Mixed Me!*
6 I credit Livia Maguire, a Duke University undergraduate student in my "New Directions in Asian American Studies" class, for bringing this latter point to my attention during a conversation on April 8, 2024.
7 There is also a collection of books that feature portraits of interracial couples and families. See Kaeser and Gillespie, *Of Many Colors*; Kalman, *No Difference Between Them*; and Pfluger, *Holding Space*.
8 This passage appears inside the front cover of Zimmern's *Eurasian Face*.
9 These are words used in the blurbs on the back of Fulbeck's *Part Asian, 100% Hapa*.
10 "Pushed to the Limit" is one of the titles of porn films investigators found while searching through Cunanan's possessions, as noted in a July 1997 *Newsweek* article "Facing Death" by Evan Thomas.
11 For more on Loving Day, see the organization's web page, https://lovingday.org/.
12 FBI, "Andrew Phillip Cunanan."
13 Perry and Pasternak, "Cunanan Doesn't Fit."
14 *Oprah Winfrey Show*, April 24, 1997.
15 In 2009, Tiger Woods fell from grace after several women reported having affairs with him.
16 See Blanco Borelli, *She Is Cuba*; Carter, *United States of the United Races*; Daniher, "Yella Gal"; Mitchell, *Imagining the Mulatta*; M. Washington, *Blasian Invasion*.
17 Orth, "Killer's Trail."
18 See Isaac, *American Tropics*; Balance, "Notorious Kin"; Lim, *Brown Boys and Rice Queens*.