Estranging Citizenship: U.S. Prison Camps Since World War II, Forms of Memory and Address

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Preface & Acknowledgments

As I think back on the life of this project, I recall how many different frames I wanted to place around it. Finishing now, want to draw connections to a spate of violence against Chinese elders in the Bay Area during the Chinese New Year, renewed promises to close Guantánamo Bay Prison from yet another administration, the uneven distribution of care during the pandemic, including controversy around testing and vaccinating the prisoners at Guantánamo Bay as well as the prisoners in the "domestic" prison industrial complex, not to mention those who've died. I have written in light of xenophobic "bans" on Muslim countries, intensified public discourse around immigration policies and the "border wall," full-throated critiques of the criminal (in)justice system and racist police brutality, as well as a pandemic that has laid bare deep systems of racial inequity and global inequality and initiated a new arms-race to vaccinate. Though these connections are not always explicit in my work, they have always been in sight and most importantly, indicate to me that my study has only just begun.

As ever a student I will be, I want to begin by expressing deep gratitude for my teachers who have supported me throughout this process. First and foremost, I would like to thank my dissertation committee for offering their ongoing guidance, generous readership, and insightful scholarship. Each of you have helped me to arrive here in both subtle and substantial ways that I cannot fully express. My first seminar of graduate school was with Olakunle George and his careful yet expansive readings reoriented me in crucial ways as a reader of literature and theory. If I could keep taking your courses, I would for always. Tamar Katz has seen me through many reinventions and graciously persisted with me, reading and listening for the expressions that were sometimes a bit buried. Finally, I would like to convey my deep appreciation to Daniel Kim for taking me on as a student perhaps a bit later in the game than most, and for helping me conceive this project and give it shape. "Korean War in Color" and many, many conversations helped me to take leaps I didn't always know I could.

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INTRODUCTION

An Archipelago of U.S. Prison Camps

On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed into law Executive Order 9066 to authorize the designation of restricted military areas and clear the way for the removal and imprisonment of anyone of Japanese ancestry in the U.S.. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japanese Americans were perceived as an "enemy" threat to the nation's security, and it was deemed necessary to remove them from the national community. Beginning that spring, more than 110,000 Japanese Americans, the majority of whom were American citizens, were evacuated from the West Coast and incarcerated first in makeshift assembly centers (often converted racetracks or fairgrounds), and then to internment camps along the interior of the west coast states. No individual charges were leveled, no trials held, and no one was ever found guilty of sabotage or espionage (U.S. Commission 13). Internees were physically isolated in remote areas and stripped of their rights; in many cases they participated in building the camps in which they would live. Almost ironically, these citizens and residents were moved further *into* U.S. territory, and indeed, the camps were presented as not only consistent with the idea of America—founded on the principles of democracy, freedom, and equality in the pursuit of the good life—but as sites for the making of American subjects. The camps were projected as democratic communities in which internees flourished through hard work at the same time that

they were naturalized to American principles (or rehabilitated, depending on their citizenship status) through state-sponsored "Americanization" classes, intended to distance internees from the influence of their Japanese ancestry. In time, these individuals and families would be "processed" back into society, but their homes, businesses, and communities were all but lost; many were forced to relocate somewhere new and try again.

About thirty years later, the U.S. engineered another set of camps to manage a new immigrant population: refugees displaced by American military intervention in Southeast Asia. The flux of refugees produced by the United States' war in Vietnam (and Laos and Cambodia) is popularly understood and remembered as a "problem"—one that sparked, in many Americans, racist fear and suspicion mixed with pity and compassion. In the wake of a disastrously unpopular and "unwinnable" war, the "rescue" of poor, war-torn civilians became the latest strategy to recuperate the national self-image of fighting (and winning) "good wars." Thus, as Yên Lê Espiritu has methodically shown, the U.S. created "rescue" operations that capitalized on the military infrastructure already established in the Asian Pacific to "help" displaced groups caught in the violence of an anti-colonial civil war by providing a means of escape and resettlement. Humanitarian missions like "Operation Babylift" and "Operation New Arrivals" in 1975 were projected as special efforts to intervene on behalf of orphans and families by giving them the chance at a new life elsewhere (42). Along the way, they would spend time in refugee camps where they would prepare for resettlement in American life. Like the internment of Japanese Americans, the camps were also a space where "refugee subjectivity was constituted not only through legal categories but also through cultural socialization," in the form of English language classes, job training, and cultural immersion (59). The ideological engine of Executive Order 9066 fueled the deployment of these camps as well: the need to contain and control the

perceived threat of the racialized, foreign Other migrating to the U.S. and entering the citizenry. The difference this time was the point at which the U.S. intervened with the doctrine of assimilation—and the mask of humanitarianism it donned.

Espiritu historicizes the refugee camp as a product of World War II and the refugee crisis that followed. Typically, this is the historical starting point for studies of the prison camp which tend to begin with the Nazi concentration camps and the extremity of fascism that facilitated their deployment. Without a doubt, this is an important iteration of the camp that in many ways clarifies the essential paradigm of this technology, as in Giorgio Agamben's work and to a lesser extent Paul Gilroy's. I invoke this historicization, however, to focalize the *response* to the crimes and atrocities of World War II through international law which placed renewed emphasis on human rights protections and humanitarianism. As the international network of state powers were forced to legislate themselves through a commitment to universal humanity, the camp doesn't disappear but is more thoroughly accounted for and refined.[1]

This can be seen, for example, in the legal regulation of the POW camp. One of several changes made in 1949 impacted the Third Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, stipulating that "any unlawful act or omission by the Detaining Power causing death or seriously endangering the health of a prisoner of war in its custody" breaks the laws of the Conventions (cited in Charmatz 397-8). The POW camp might be thought of, most simply, as a kind of holding space to keep soldiers off the battlefield until the hostilities end and they can be returned to their own countries, and governments. Once captured, soldiers become "non-

[1] This is an important point to emphasize: the camps never exist outside the law but, as Naomi Paik explains, even as camps are "space[s] of removal" they are "regulated by law: the rights of persons and things are recognized, though in uneven and differential ways" (219). This is not unrelated to the claims Ariella Azoulay makes about the status of being governed differentially but nevertheless having in common the fact of being objects of the state. See "Citizens of Disaster" in *The Civil Contract of Photography* for a fuller discussion.

combatants" under the responsibility of the opposition's military, their lives protected by the Geneva Conventions insofar as they have been designated "prisoners of war." When compared to the racialized targets of the internment and refugee camps which were deployed through military infrastructure, it is perhaps easy to dichotomize soldiers and citizens; but it would also be a mistake to dismiss the political presence of soldiers as simply proxies of the state. Rather, the POW camp is another site to examine the machinations of state violence, especially as the mode of warfare shifted into permanent war following World War II.[2] The Korean War was in many ways the first real test of the revised Conventions, and as one prosecutor of the Nuremberg trials noted in a 1953 essay, the "disposition of Korean prisoners of war" would not merely be a matter of "legal doctrine" but would also "be determined by political considerations growing out of the larger world-wide power struggle between the communist and non-communist worlds" (393). Camps were set up and "governed" with violence throughout North and South Korea by all sides. As Bruce Cummings outlines in his famous history of the war, more so than the North, the camps in the South (where the U.S.-U.N. forces presided) became the site of "a virtual war" between different POW groups divided over allegiances. In fact, "against American presuppositions, the Communists were more discriminating in the violence they dealt out to the POWs" compared to the camps in the South (32).

While there is much to critique in the Cold War framing of the Korean War,[3] the POW camp nevertheless represents an important link in the history of American wars, the coupling of

[2] In "The Literary Afterlife of the Korean War," Joseph Darda provides a helpful overview of how this version of the Cold War state developed after World War II, becoming actualized first with the Korean War: "Whereas World War II laid the economic groundwork for today's warfare state, the Korean War in many ways introduced the narrative logic of permanent war, creating the idea of preemptive, 'limited' war making in the interest of defending humanity against its own perceived ideological degeneracies" (82). Central to Darda's discussion is a growing recognition among literary authors of the resonances between the Korean War period and the "Global War on Terror."

[3] Bruce Cummings' *The Korean War: A History* offers an insightful account explicitly pitched against the conventional American understanding of the Korean War, emphasizing its deep roots in colonial occupation and civil war. Daniel Y. Kim's *The Intimacies of Conflict* builds on this history in significant ways by casting together North and South Korean as

the military and humanitarian state, and its deployment of prison camps as a regulatory mechanism of citizenship. The designation "prisoner of war" is critical in the context of international law because it figures the soldier as a protected citizen-subject under the rules of warfare stipulated in the Geneva Conventions. This is not to say that POWs were not exploited, abused, and abandoned—they were—but this particular functioning of the camp *capitalized* on the rights of the citizen-prisoners as well. After 1949, the newly legislated POW camp reanimated this framework by concentrating on the right, and expectation, of repatriation. Like the internment and refugee camps, the POW camp also possessed these features: dual forces of containment and movement, bureaucratic record-keeping and control, "humanitarian" care of prisoners' bodies, and cultural-ideological indoctrination.[4]

In perhaps the most direct contrast to the POW camp, the men imprisoned at the Guantánamo Bay Prison since 2002 have always been designated "enemy combatants" or "detainees" so as to surpass the Geneva Conventions and create an (il)legal loophole for the U.S. As many critics and activists have noted, this so-called "detention center" could be interpreted as the most literal contemporary extension of Agamben's analysis. When the "state of exception" becomes the norm, the prison camp becomes the "materialization" of it, where persons are stripped of their political status and become "bare life" (174). While all camps are framed as "exceptions to the space of the nation" when in fact they are constitutive to the nation-state's operation, Guantánamo Bay Prison pushes this claim to an extreme. As Amy Kaplan has

well as diasporic Korean and American representations of the Korean War to add transnational complexity to cultural understandings of this war.

[4] I offer this rough definition of the prison camp as a composite description across all iterations explored in this project. My own description is based heavily in the way Espiritu defines the refugee camp: "Toward the end of World War II, the refugee camp, with its spatial concentration and ordering of camp inhabitants, first became a standardized technology of power for the management of displacement, simultaneously caring for and dominating displaced subjects via medical/hygienic programs and quarantining; perpetual accumulation of documents on camp inhabitants; law enforcement and public discipline; and schooling and rehabilitation" (57).

persuasively argued, because of its location in Cuba, the prison camp exists in a liminal zone that enables its ambiguous legal status as well. Most simply, because of its location on an American military base on a Cuban island, the prison is "not clearly under the sovereignty of either nation, nor seemingly subject to national or international law" (831-2). The camps have thus become known for "indefinite detention" where prisoners are tortured, dehumanized, and excepted from any legal process. But this extremity still cannot be accurately framed as exceptional, it is merely a refinement of imperial state power and a strategic maneuvering of the juridical structures that define the prison camp.[5] Even the invented designation "enemy combatant" should be understood as a racialized category that deliberately operates outside citizenship and recalls the manipulation or outright denial of these rights in previous iterations of the prison camp.[6] Almost immediately after it was opened with the inception of the so-called "Global War on Terror," Guantánamo Bay Prison was viewed by many as the paragon of the hyper-militarized national security state well-practiced in permanent war and by others as a shocking betrayal of American principles. This dialectic is in no way surprising and might even veer toward the banal; it also returns to the liberal consciousness at the end of World War II that wanted to renew a commitment to universal humanity and human rights *and* enable new forms of permanent war through "national security."[7]

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[5] As Amy Kaplan and Naomi Paik have both demonstrated, Guantánamo Bay Prison must also be understood in terms of the longer history of U.S. imperialism which still operates, to use Kaplan's term, a "global penal archipelago" (831). Most specifically, both authors situate the prison in the specific imperial history of the island, which served as an immigrant detention center in the 1980s for Haitian refugees. See Kaplan's "Where is Guantánamo?" and Paik's *Rightlessness*.

[6] Kaplan explains how the prisoners have been rendered "enemy combatants," through the imagined conflation of immigrants and terrorists, "brought to the threshold of the U.S. as though they were aspiring immigrants or would-be refugees who have to be kept out forcibly," and thus held indefinitely in a camp in a land that is and is not "America" (840). This conflation plays on and plays out the merged anxiety around immigrants and terrorists with deep roots in the U.S. imperial past.

[7] Once again, Joseph Darda is helpful for providing a thumbnail sketch of this development: "The United States would no longer make war, nor would it define itself on the world stage in terms of "nation" or "military." Rather, in forming the DoD, the United States was beginning to articulate itself as the defender of a normatively defined global humanity, securing civilized society from the ideological degeneracies of communism, fascism, totalitarianism, and terrorism" (83). See "The Literary Afterlives of the Korean War" for a longer discussion.

This dissertation follows on a now expansive body of scholarship in Asian American studies and critical refugee studies that highlights the convergence of anticolonial struggle and the Cold War intervention to critique the development of the military-humanitarian state. This body of work, including Jodi Kim's *Ends of Empire: Asian American Culture and the Cold War*, Christina Klein's *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination*, and Neda Atanasoski's *Humanitarian Violence: the Deployment of Diversity*, make crucial interventions in the field of American Studies to build more triangulated interpretations of American empire during the Cold War. In Kim and Klein's work especially, these studies have also attended to the cultural productions that reflect these cross-currents, and sometimes participate in the critique of U.S. imperial power (this is the focus of Kim's analysis of Asian America). Following after this scholarship, I adopt the framework of the triangulated Cold War to understand the U.S. warfare state and its imperial reach, but I foreground the prison camps that punctuate this history, what might be thought of as an "historical archipelago," to borrow Kaplan's term.[8] By using this phrase I mean to suggest the scattering of physical sites that are linked but also separated by time; the camps do not always become permanent fixtures but they do mark *some* of the territorial expanse of American empire during its wars of intervention. As Paul Gilroy has shown, the nation-state relies on the camp as ideology—producing "national camps" and "camp thinking"—and as political technology to regulate populations through racialized logics. A significant deployment of state power, the camp also provides an important lens for apprehending the attendant structures of citizenship, national identity, multiculturalism, human

[8] In addition to these Cold War scholars in Asian American studies, methodologically, my approach is shaped by Paul Kramer's call in "Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World" to center the concept of the imperial as a way of reorienting scholarship about the U.S.: the imperial "comprehends the interconnected world as wrought in hierarchy and power, even as that power is bounded and contested. Rather than contrasting emancipatory flows or oppressing borders, it includes among its subjects flows of violence and coercion, and borders that exercise power by permitting, regulating, and directing rather than merely blocking global flows" (1353).

rights, and liberal humanitarianism. One intention of this project is to examine how experiences of the prison camps mark the cultural landscape of American memory as well, a point I will turn to in the next section.

Camps are not to be understood as exclusively a feature of war,[9] but the ones highlighted in these chapters are distinct iterations that also reflect the refinement of the U.S. warfare state from World War II and the Korean War to the American War in Vietnam and the so-called "Global War on Terror." This particular archipelago expands on the genealogy of U.S. prison camps introduced by Naomi Paik in *Rightlessness*, which also begins with Japanese internment and ends with the Guantánamo Bay Prison. In her excellent study, Paik focuses especially on the dynamics of testimony and redress to highlight the interplay of rights and rightlessness within American governance, and to accentuate the political subjectivities of "the rightless" who organize for their recognition despite their exclusion from this political community. My own project routes away from a juridical analysis of the prison camp and the status of the incarcerated to offer a more extended consideration of the innovative political formations that emerge from the camps, dis-placing the primacy of the nation-state as a structure of identification and affiliation. Drawing on postcolonial theory, photography and memory studies, and literary theory, I examine how the politics of address (civic, familial, diasporic, lyric), intervene on the dominant cultural and discursive practices of the nation in ways that glimpse new templates for relationality and solidarity, travelling past both the nation-state and the imagined inter-nation of universalized humanity.

[9] A fuller account of the network of prison camps would also include the Native American boarding schools and the contemporary expansion of ICE and detention centers as two other distinct iterations of the camps. There are also other sites, geographically speaking, in the imperial archipelago (such as the Philippines, Pacific Islands, Latin America, etc.), as well as connections to draw with the broader prison industrial complex in the U.S.

Forms of Memory, Forms of Address

Toward the end of Ha Jin's Korean War novel *War Trash* (2004), Yu Yuan, the Chinese POW protagonist, thumbs through an album of American magazine clippings, photos, and newspaper articles he finds at the education center of the camp he has just been moved to. He comes across the idealized portrait of a smiling but stiff American general who "obviously enjoyed the war," and then the profile of a jaunty American journalist "with the looks of a second-rate movie actress" who earned a Pulitzer for her front-line coverage of the war (298-9). Invigorated by the adventurous war story she covers, she herself came to captivate the American public, becoming a celebrity face for the war: "Korea is her war," one article claims. A several-times-abused prisoner caught in the ideological struggle between warring parties of the Chinese Civil War (which bled into Korea's civil war that became the Korean War), Yuan is displaced, disgusted, and disheartened by this representation. Internally, he offers a rhetorical admonishment:

> Who can bear the weight of a war? To witness is to make the truth known, but we must remember that most victims have no voice of their own, and that in bearing witness to their stories we must not appropriate them. (299)

On the surface, his admonishment seems a critique of American intervention; the imposition to command the *narrative* of war through "witness" as much as the imposition to command the war itself through military might. But a fictionalized memoirist himself, writing as a victim *with* a voice, this axiom-imperative takes on additional layers of meaning, raising compounded questions of representation. As a character, Yu Yuan embodies the tension between witness and victim, the personal and the public-historical. His documentary-style account as a soldier and POW is a writing project he undertakes for his grandchildren so they "can feel the full weight" of the trauma inscribed on his body and carried by many more of his generation (5). As a fictional

character of Jin's making, *War Trash* also throws this question back on itself, highlighting the exchange between fiction and "fact," the novelist's methods of imagination and documentary, the relationship between author-as-witness and "most victims [who] have no voice of their own." Jin is a witness who must not appropriate, but so is the reading public who comes to hear Yu Yuan's address in this moment as he articulates a kind of ethics of reading and interpretation through witness. This structure of reception is made more complex, perhaps more pointed, by Jin's position as a Chinese American author writing in English with a Chinese narrator who echoes this position, writing in English for his American grandchildren. *In bearing witness to their stories* we *must not appropriate them*. The rhetorical "we" is multiply-valenced, if not universal, extending across national boundaries, while at the same time landing in a particularly didactic way on an American readership.

I return to this novel and mode of address in Chapter 2 but also begin here insofar as this set of interrelated issues—voice, witness, and appropriation—articulates the central preoccupation of my own project: literary and cultural remembrances of war told from the prison camps, as well as the political formations imagined in or enacted by these representational practices. On the one hand, this linked history of U.S. prison camps (the historical archipelago) provides a way to reframe the history of American intervention and narrative of American exceptionalism from World War II to the so-called "Global War on Terror." I therefore approach the "war stories" in this project as "scenes from the camps," which challenge "official" accounts of war and negotiate dominant forms of memory. At the same time, my intention is not to simply assemble a parallel or alternative history. Rather, I examine distinct iterations of the camp as well as their echoes and reverberations as a means of critiquing the underlying structures of the military-humanitarian state discussed above. Inasmuch as the political technology of the camp

uniquely punctuates the history of American imperialism, it is also a conceptual site that bears these histories of forced movement and containment.[10] The forms of identity, memory, solidarity, and collectivity that emerge from the camps amplify the effects of war while abandoning the "camp-thinking" that structures nationalist ideology and state-based forms of citizen-affiliation.

In many ways the movement of this critique is a reflection of the movement in my own thinking as a student of American literature interested in the inheritance of twentieth century cultures of war in the 21st century to conceptualize the "Global War on Terror" and its prison camp at Guantánamo Bay. Perhaps Judith Butler best captures this inquiry in *Frames of War* with her call to "frame the frame," to challenge, through circulation and critical reading, the normative regimes of war that recognize only some lives as grievable. In framing the frame, we might also be changing the frame, adjusting the lens to take in a wider field of view. The pursuit of more conventionally recognized "war stories," those that tell us something about the experience of national soldiers "on the front-lines" or the responses in the "homeland" aren't quite sufficient. As Viet Thanh Nguyen argues in *Nothing Ever Dies*, these conventional war stories reproduce nationalist forms of identity: nations "urge their citizens to remember their own and to forget others in order to forge the nationalist spirit crucial for war, a self-centered logic that also circulates through communities of race, ethnicity, and religion" (11). To pursue a more "just memory," on the other hand, means not only remembering one's own and others, but also admitting the complexity of inhumanity and complicity on all sides. I explore this ethics of a just memory further in Chapter 2 and 3, moving toward a slightly more pointed ethical demand to self-estrange from one's own cultural context and kinship identities. Across all four chapters, I

[10] Take this conceptual coupling from Gopinath's *Unruly Visions*, where she calls attention to "how colonial and racial power is violently consolidated through the gendered and sexual regulation of bodies in space (through spatial practices of containment, segregation, and dislocation)" as a central premise of her theorization of the aesthetic practices of queer diaspora.

foreground texts that disrupt the conventional narratives of war, national identity, citizenship, and memory. The authors, narrators, and speakers represent "marginalized" voices relative to the dominant narrative, but they are also mostly uninterested in this dialectical identity and innovate other forms of relationality that transgress the national bounds of memory – and citizenship. Reframing to widen the field of view also means disrupting the normative temporality of war altogether. Without losing a sense of the singular scale of destruction and violence perpetrated during war in the conventional sense, the prison camp is an exemplary site for understanding the extended temporality of the modern warfare state. The camps precede, persist past, and exceed the limits of wartime and the "official narratives" that reflect this normative temporality. As the Asian American critique cited above often does in reconfiguring the Cold War, this extended temporality opens up an entangled and entwined archive of cultural memories from many vantages.

I am inspired by Glissant's poetics of relation in my own ethics of reading (and witnessing without appropriating). As much as my work is interested what it means "to be put in relation" through address and memory I am cognizant of how I am also "putting in relation" through interpretation. Sharing a spine of war, the texts I examine are intentionally diverse, in all senses: generically, aesthetically, stylistically, historically, ethnically, racially, politically. They could be considered Asian American, American, diasporic, transnational—not every text pushes every term, but taken together, this movement does emerge. By putting these texts "in relation," I want to maintain the singularity of their histories while also noticing their cross-currents, the echoes and reverberations.[11] The literary and cultural texts I include reflect a particular geography of war and U.S. intervention in Asia during the Cold War but my theoretical

[11] I recognize this approach as related to the methodology of "critical juxtaposition" that Yên Lê Espiritu practices in *Body Counts*, though the juxtapositions I posit are historical as well.

commitments to postcolonial and transnational approaches to identity, relationality, and politics lead me to the tradition of Black radical thought and the work of Paul Gilroy and Édouard Glissant in particular, both of whom reconceive how we wade in the cross-currents produced by slavery, colonization, and war, seeking a critical humanism that reflects this history. As a formation itself, this dissertation is also an experiment in estranging from my own "cultural habits"[12] to connect traditions of resistance and radical imagination to frame a different narrative of history and glimpse a different form of politics.[13]

Across the chapters, I am compelled by the question of address and how it seeks identification, affiliation, solidarity, response, displacement, estrangement, intimacy, opacity (or doesn't). Most fundamentally, I understand the address as a version of "putting in relation," which produces important questions about memory, identification, and collectivity: How does the address circulate among a public, known or unknown, intended or not? How does it call upon civic subjects and disrupt that identity with the state? How does the address encroach on the nation and draw out into other spaces? How does the address affirm and displace affiliative kin? Rather than one approach to the address, I take multiple, considering different modalities: the political address of the citizen-subject, the bequeathal of memory and inheritance, the training of affiliative gazes, the lyric address that displaces and refuses to land. In my readings, I interpret these forms of address through their cultural and civic contexts, since the content of the address

[12] I lift this phrase from Gilroy, who, in *Postcolonial Melancholia*, admires a cosmopolitanism where one strives to "becom[e] estranged from the cultural habits one is born to" (70). Put differently, he asserts, "we must learn to practice a systematic form of disloyalty to our own local civilization if we seek either to understand it or to interact equitably with others formed elsewhere" (71). I engage his theory of a new cosmopolitanism later in Chapter 3. These concepts appear in his chapter "Cosmpolitanism Contested."

[13] In this experiment, I recognize a significant limitation in not addressing the settler-colonial context of American empire and the cross-currents this introduces when invoking immigration and refugee histories. I have Guyatri Gopanith's *Unruly Visions* in mind as an important reminder of the possibilities of thinking indigeneity and diaspora together, and indeed the imperative of taking these histories together.

as much as the form resist the structures of state power and nationalism that enable the prison camp and drive the wars of intervention.

Thus, in one sense, the archive of texts gathered in this project work as "counter-sites," to use Lisa Lowe's term, which "produce[] cultural expression materially and aesthetically at odds with the resolution of the citizen in the nation" (Immigrant 6). "Estranging Citizenship" considers the violations of citizenship the camps represent, when the citizen is estranged from its promise of rights and protection; the creative rearrangements of civic relationality negotiated by prisoners; and ultimately, an estrangement from citizenship altogether as an essential structure of identity and collectivity. In Chapter 1, where I discuss Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660*, the critique of state-based citizenship and its abuses is explicit, as is, I argue, the negotiation for a different set of terms, rights, and duties among the governed. In this chapter, "estranging citizenship" refers to how citizenship is compromised, estranging the citizen from its promises. Subsequent chapters move further away from an explicit preoccupation with citizenship, suggesting the movement of estranging from citizenship itself in favor of other modes of relation, intimacy, and affiliation. In foregrounding these movements and alternative formations, I hope to estrange the ideal of citizenship as it underpins both the military and humanitarian state. In Chapter 4, I return to a more robust and explicit critique of citizenship as the skeletal structure of universalized humanity in human rights discourse surrounding *Poems from Guantánamo*. In this chapter, I also introduce an alternative form of relation by examining the intimacy and indeterminacy of the lyric address, what I posit as a right to "lyric opacity." Overall, my approach in this project honors a key aspect of Lowe's own contributions: to focus on "critical acts" that enable other forms of subjectivity, collectivity, and public life (22).

I have divided the chapters into two parts, a division that indicates a conceptual shift in thinking through "estranging citizenship," alternative political formations, and the forms of address that instantiate them. This division is not meant to signal a grouping in terms of geography or history about the prison camps; the chapters themselves proceed chronologically to reflect the spine of war. Within both organizational choices, there are reverberations that I note along the way.

Part One titled "'We, the Governed': Recovering the Civic Address" explores how the political address of presenting a grievance reorganizes the affiliative identities and identifications of the national collective. Engaging Ariella Azoulay's theory of citizenship, in Chapter 1 I trace the political addressor through Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660* in which she adopts a style of documentary illustration to present herself in this capacity and displace the response of empathetic identification. Rather, with her acts of inscription, Okubo offers an alternative pledge of loyalty to other members of a civil collective beyond the binds of state-conferred citizenship. In Chapter 2, I discuss two memoir-texts that also offer a grievance of citizenship in order to reorganize the relationships between citizen, state, and nation, and this time, to overturn the claim of loyalty as the bind between them. I first consider Clarence Adams' memoir *An American Dream* in which he gives an account of his decisions as a black American to fulfill his citizenship by *not* repatriating at the end of the war. Claiming this choice as the actualization of his Americanness, Adams addresses his fellow citizens through the form of memoir. Likewise, the fictional narrator of Ha Jin's *War Trash* uses the genre of memoir to offer a personal and documentarian narrative of the Korean War and the POW camps from the perspective of a Chinese soldier. Perhaps the text most interested in war, the narrator-protagonist Yu Yuan crafts an unflinching account of what it means to be a pawn used in a political war, and bequeaths his

writing to the next generation in the U.S. A migrant figure himself, his political address transgresses the conventional bounds of nation and memory, offering a transnational form of history that invokes new responsibilities for national citizens.

Part Two, "Beyond Citizenship: Forms of Estrangement" explores forms of address, relation, and solidarity that travel further beyond the nation and state-based forms of citizen affiliation. In this section, the texts I analyze estrange *from* citizenship and introduce forms of relation that flourish in the feeling of estrangement. In Chapter 3, I examine the tension between family and diaspora in memories of the American War in Vietnam outside of "the official gaze." Examining Thi Bui's graphic memoir *The Best We Could Do*, I follow the familial gaze as an address to others inviting affiliation, and, in circulation, as a training of the gaze in certain directions. The familial gaze thus takes on didactic importance within the family, especially as a means of reckoning with past trauma, violence, and displacement. The familial gaze staged in the family album also becomes a means of retraining the gaze of the national family, in a way reminiscent of the texts in Part One. I thus turn to lê thi diem thúy's novel *The Gangster We Are All Looking For*, which introduces a diasporic gaze that affiliates through difference, the unseen, and the untranslatable, building intimacy through this irresolvable estrangement. This intimate estrangement, I suggest, offers a different mode of relation and possibility for solidarity, which I explore further in Chapter 4. In this final chapter, I critique the humanitarian framework around the *Poems of Guantánamo* as a contemporary refinement of the liberalism born of World War II and developed during the Cold War period. This humanitarian conscience relies on a subtler structure of citizenship that is nevertheless mobilized in rresponse to the suffering other, who is embodied, in this case, as the tortured prisoners who speak through poetry. As this framework strives for recognition within a failed juridical process, I foreground the lyric address as

alternative, which relates through refusal, indeterminacy, and a lingering estrangement. Drawing on the work of Édouard Glissant, I argue that this form of address honors the right to "lyric opacity," another dimension of personhood that should be cultivated so as to build relations of solidarity rather than appropriation, to recognize singularity as the basis for a new humanism.

Across these texts and the readings I offer, in the cross-currents and echoes, I am interested, as I said, in what it means to "put in relation" and "to be put in relation" through the address. This is an inquiry about identity, identification, affiliation, relation, collectivity. Working within the context of the American wars of intervention following World War II and the prison camps deployed by the military-humanitarian state, I have grounded these questions in texts that are concerned with memory and address and innovating alternative political formations that displace the primacy of the nation-state. These formations are about publics, civic and cultural—how the *I* relates to the *you*, rewriting the *we*, sending it elsewhere, and inviting the *they*. In closing, I place an epigraph here at the end, a kind of sending, from Glissant's *Poetics of Relation*:

> From where I stand I see Saint Lucia on the horizon. Thus, step by step, calling up the expanse, I am able to realize this seabow. I am doing the same thing in the way I say we—organizing this work around it.
>
> Is this some community *we* rhizome into fragile connection to a place? Or a total *we* involved in the activity of the planet? Or an ideal *we* drawn in the swirls of a poetics?
>
> Who is this intervening *they*? *They* that is the Other? or *they* the neighbors? or *they* whom I imagine when I try to speak?
>
> The *we*s and *they*s are an evolving. They find their full sense, here, in my excessive use of the words totality and Relation. (206)

CHAPTER ONE

Japanese Internment and the Bind of Citizenship: Okubo's *Citizen 13660* as Documentary Illustration

The other, even when not an enemy, is regarded only as a someone to be seen, not someone (like us) who also sees.

Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (72)

Compared to the iconicity of other World War II moments, Iwo Jima and the atomic blasts, for example, or even the Great Depression that preceded the war years, the internment of Japanese Americans remains a kind of haunting in American history, an unresolved trauma that continues to reverberate. In general, the camps "continue[] to be narrativized as a regrettable step that appeared necessary at the time – but not as bad as what other countries did," an explanation that supports the image of the U.S. as a "triumphant and moral nation," the lifeblood of the war-making state (Sturken 692, 691). As Marita Sturken has noted, the internment is "both too disruptive and domestic," becoming what she calls an "absent presence" (694). Within the cultural memory of the nation, there is no image or narrative, no accounting for the internment camps—the destruction of lives, the crisis of citizenship—beyond the dismissal of it as a

mistake, or an exceptional measure justified within the context of the war. In 1981, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians eventually concluded that the internment was a "grave injustice" and the result of a decision based on "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership" (U.S. Commission 18). This acknowledgment continues to exceptionalize the internment rather than situate the wartime policies as an intensification of the norms that structure the nation-state. Of course, embedding internment in the long history of racialized citizenship in the U.S., there is nothing exceptional about the camps, which were effectively another technology to "protect" the integrity, and purity, of the American polity. Indeed, the internment camps served as explicit sites for the making of American subjects. Within the U.S. the camps were projected as democratic communities in which internees could flourish through hard work and live by the American principles of democracy, freedom, and equality; internees would become naturalized or rehabilitated to these principles through state-sponsored "Americanization" classes intended to distance internees from the influence of their Japanese ancestry. In this way, the ideological and moral "disruption" that the internment policy might introduce is contained as a "domestic" dispute resolvable through patriotic assimilation and polite amnesia.

Part of the state's management of this "exceptional" crisis was a careful and limited documentary effort, which was conducted by Ansel Adams and Dorothea Lange. As an extension in some ways of the photography program begun during the Depression, Adams and Lange were hired by the government to produce a record of the internment. However, both photographers were given restrictions on what could be documented: no barbed wire, armed guards, or guard towers (Creef 18). Essentially, no distinct features of the camp *as a camp* could be recorded. Adams and Lange worked very differently within these restrictions. Adams' *Born*

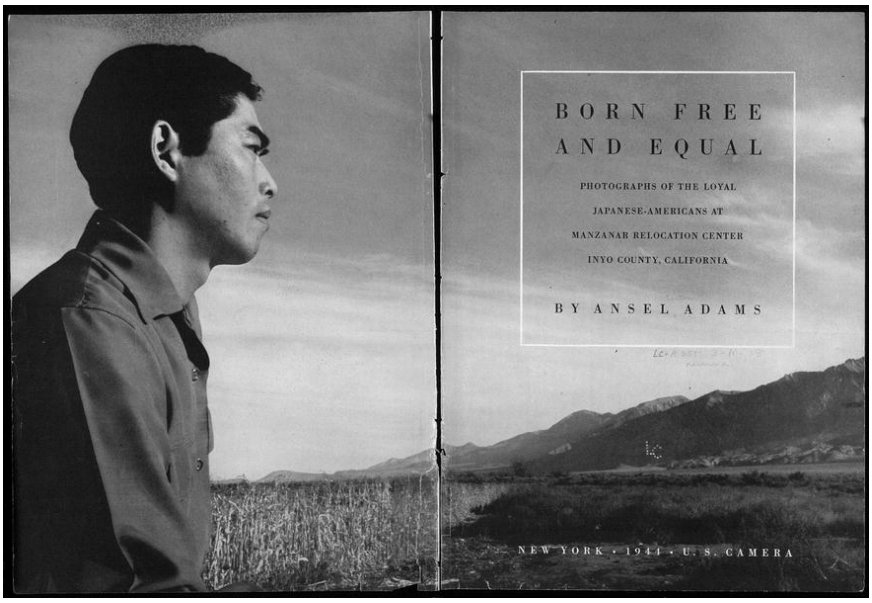


Figure 1: Ansel Adams, *Born Free and Equal*, 1944, Library of Congress

Free and Equal, which covered Camp Manzanar, explicitly works to produce "visible proof" of Japanese Americans' loyalty and the ideal of American citizenship (Creef 18). *Born Free and Equal* presents the camp as consist with American ideals of democracy, equal opportunity, and industriousness by focusing especially on happy, loyal subjects, like the "accommodationist Nisei," in gorgeous natural settings that, according to Adams, "strengthened the spirit of the people of Manzanar" (9). In contrast, Lange's project is more interested in "anchor[ing] her subjects to a particular historical and political context," and she chose to focus on, as she describes it, the "the procedure, the process of processing" involved in the evacuation and internment (Creef 39, qtd. in Creef 37). As with her Depression work, Lange's photographs fit into what can be called a "tragic mode of representation" that makes an emotional appeal through the presentation of suffering (Creef 46). As much as Lange's photographs are *now* critiqued for constructing passive "victims," at the time, her photographs were deemed too provocative by the government, and were thus impounded and withheld from the public, released only with army permission (Davidov 236).

Though Adams explicitly supports the white-washing of the camps as a policy consistent with American democracy, and Lange adopts more of an activist role to point up the humiliation, dehumanization, and injustice of the camps, they both offer a limited perspective from "beyond the wire." As outsiders (and agents of the governments at that), they fail to document the dynamic landscapes of political agency and resistance within the camps, and contribute to the hegemonic representation of Americanness opposed to its racialized Other within.[14] While the archive of counter-sites to U.S. national culture has vastly expanded within Asian American literature and scholarship, complicating the narrative of passive victims or immigrant Others, Miné Okubo's 1946 graphic novel, *Citizen 13660* remains a significant and peculiar counter-site. I turn to Okubo's work because of the way that she re-narrativizes American national memory, national identity, and the problem of citizenship, *and* because of her self-consciousness as a documentary illustrator. Ultimately, *Citizen 13660* is a documentary project that insists on the irreconcilability of the camp and nation as much as it recognizes the camp as the logical extension of the state, and through illustrative address, enacts a renewed sense of civil collectivity among the governed.

I. Documentary Illustration as Political Address

I approach Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660* first and foremost as a documentary project emerging from within the space of the camp. Most critical readings, mine included, begin with the fact that photographic equipment was not allowed into the internment camps, a point Okubo herself makes in the preface to the 1983 edition, stating that as a result she "recorded everything

[14] As Elena Creef argues in *Imagining Japanese America: The Visual Construction of Citizenship, Nation, and the Body*, one of the most important aspects of the internment history goes un-documented: "Japanese American agency and political resistance" (68).

in sketches, drawings, and paintings" (xxvi). Within this context, her sketches beg comparison to the photography projects undertaken by outside "official" documentarians such as Dorothea Lange and Ansel Adams. But in terms of form, *Citizen 13660* is a difficult text to classify. Critics grapple with naming one, the particular combination of drawn images and written text that Okubo employs, and two, the mixed mode of discourse that the text engages as both a personal narrative and a documentarian project depicting a collective historical event. Some terms that have been used to describe *Citizen 13660* include: "memoir" or "illustrated memoir," a "series of self-portraits," "visual autobiography," and a collection of "vignettes." The range is some indication of its generic ambiguity.

While I argue that Okubo's sketches most closely mimic a set of photographs with captions, what we can term "documentary illustration" (a reading I will return to), the main critical reading, as offered by Christine Hong and others, compares Okubo's drawings to comics, both the "funnies" of the 1930s as well as works like Art Spiegelman's *Maus*.[15] The strength of these analyses is that they begin to address Okubo's self-figuration in each frame, which is perhaps the text's most peculiar feature, but it does so by privileging the personal mode of discourse, building around the autobiographical "I" a means of readerly identification based on empathy. Favoring the terms "visual autobiography" and "visual memoir," Hong explains that "the first person subject whose viewpoint structures that of the reader must be exteriorized: in essence, a first person made third" (115, 113). This third person figuration, a relatively common feature of comics, thus functions as both a "testimonial conceit, verifying her presence as a historic "witness," and significantly, as that which enables a process of readerly identification (Illustrating 116). Okubo's presence in the frame, Hong argues, essentially projects a "this could

[15] See Christine Hong's essays "Illustrating the Post-War Peace" and "Introduction" to *Citizen 13660* and Kimberly L. Phillips's article "To Keep a Record of Life: Miné Okubo's Autographic *Manga* and Wartime History."

be you" message, and by encouraging the reader to empathetically identify with her as an internee, invites consideration of the "theoretical possibility that such a system of unfreedom might eventually encompass the outside 'Caucasian' viewer" (xvii).

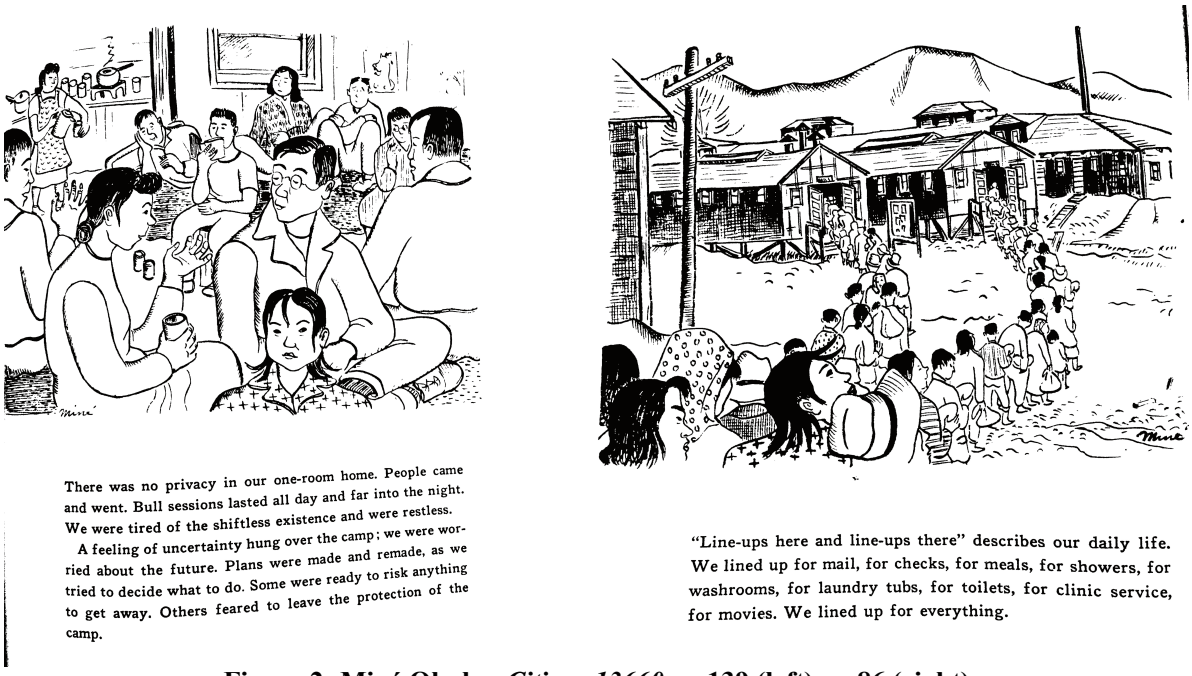
Hong persuasively argues how empathy was in fact part of a post-war American strategy to not only rehabilitate the domestic "enemy alien" but to also aid in the ideological project of spreading democracy and expanding U.S. power in Asia — and yet she remains locked into this mode of reading herself (Illustrating 129-132). Referring to the figured Okubo as a "border" and "vehicle" for readers, Hong argues that her character "serves as *a transactional figure* facilitating the spatially and temporally removed reader's vicarious access into the world of the camp" (Introduction xvii, my emphasis). This access, or entrance into the frame, depends on the reader's personal identification with Okubo's character and subject position as one of the interned. I would argue, however, that this mode of reading is problematic in a couple of ways. First, as Hong admits, this process of readerly identification white-washes the conditions of internment by "erasing meaningful structural differences" between the subject positions of the interned Japanese (the racially targeted group) and a possible white reader (the protected group and justificatory basis of the state's actions) (xv). Second, the "this could be you" logic of identification emphasizes the individual spectator instead of the implicated collective. By framing risk as risk to self, this reading elides the fact that "such a system of unfreedom" *already* implicates the outsider viewer as part of the same governed body. It is not a matter of eventuality; the outsider's status as citizen is always already bound up with the internee's functional status as non-citizen or "impaired citizen," terms I will return to. Empathetic identification, then, obscures this difference of position in the civil collective, the relationality

implied in it, and the possibility of address, response, and responsibility.[16] In other words, a reading that privileges the personal mode of discourse and the autobiographical "I" as the means of empathetic identification fundamentally circumvents the important issue of complicity and responsibility on the part of the spectator or reader.

This leads me to the second point about the mode of discourse Okubo employs — on the one hand, a personal narrative, and on the other, a documentarian recording of camp life. Readings that emphasize the personal mode of discourse, such as Hong's comparison to comics, tend to emphasize as well a sequential logic between the images, or the construction of a narrative; hence, the terms "memoir" and "autobiography." However, Okubo's images don't really insist on sequence.[17] So, while the comparison to comics might easily account for Okubo's third person figuration, there is a more fundamental issue of form insofar as comics are necessarily sequential.[18] Undeniably, there is a general historical arc structuring the text: the start of World War II, the evacuation of the Okubos and other Japanese Americans, their movement between camps, and finally their release from camp and relocation. However, the majority of *Citizen 13660* isn't really concerned with this arc. Most sketches depict the "shiftless" life of the camp — the "line-ups," the lack of privacy, the never-ending "bull sessions," the sparse barracks

[16] In slightly different terms, Susan Sontag argues in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, that the sympathetic response to a photograph actually distances the spectator from the content of the image and without being translated into action, neutralizes any further response, attesting to the helplessness of the spectator before the photographed scene. She writes, "so long as we feel sympathy, we feel we are not accomplices to what caused the suffering. Our sympathy proclaims our innocence as well as our impotence" (102). Though empathetic identification might in fact bring the spectator and subject closer, this response still avoids a structure of relations that includes accomplices. Thus our empathy, too, might be said to "proclaim our innocence as well as our impotence." Along these lines, Ariella Azoulay turns Sontag's critique on herself, arguing that the conventional approach to photography, Sontag's included, is too interested in the individual spectator/reader and "the merely psychological framework of empathy," which limits other modes of engagement (88-89).
[17] Hong herself notes in a footnote that "Okubo's memoir, on a purely visual register, is markedly nonlinear" and it is only the accompanying text that provides "orienting time markers" (Introduction xxiv FN 65). On account of this, Hong suggests that *Citizen 13660* challenges the foundational definition of comics as "sequential art" particularly in the context of "mass confinement" when progressive, teleological time in many ways does not apply (xxiv FN 65). That *Citizen 13660* might challenge our basic assumptions about comics is a seductive suggestion, but does not resolve the fact that the images themselves do not call for this sequential reading and in fact operate quite differently.
[18] This is a foundational definition of comics, put forward by Scott McCloud (Möller 167).

and stalls internees lived in, the community toilets and showers, the rationing of food and home goods, etc. — and the accompanying text reads more as explanatory or descriptive captions for these scenes (139, 86, Figure 2). Rather than progressing a narrative, each sketch might very well stand alone as a recording, testament, or document of internment. Rather than personal narration,



There was no privacy in our one-room home. People came and went. Bull sessions lasted all day and far into the night. We were tired of the shiftless existence and were restless.

A feeling of uncertainty hung over the camp; we were worried about the future. Plans were made and remade, as we tried to decide what to do. Some were ready to risk anything to get away. Others feared to leave the protection of the camp.

"Line-ups here and line-ups there" describes our daily life. We lined up for mail, for checks, for meals, for showers, for washrooms, for laundry tubs, for toilets, for clinic service, for movies. We lined up for everything.

Figure 2: Miné Okubo, *Citizen 13660*, p. 139 (left), p. 86 (right)

I would argue that the predominant mode of discourse is *documentation.* More than anything else, Okubo's sketches are interested in the representation and description of the conditions of camp life — not only the physical, but the psychological, emotional, and most importantly to my reading, the civic conditions of internment.

In light of this context, I propose a reading based *not* on the written text's assembly of the images as sequence, but on the images themselves: as "documentary sketches." To use Okubo's own definition, *Citizen 13660* is "a special group of drawings…intended for exhibition purposes" (xxvi). I contend that if we take seriously this description, we open up another reading that moves away from the process of empathetic identification, and activates instead an understanding of civic relationality and civil collectivity through the structure of address. All too

often, critics downplay, or even dismiss, the documentarian tone of *Citizen 13660* as complicit with the "official" representations of the internment sponsored by the government, and thus favor the personal and autobiographical as a necessary humanistic and humanizing counter-site.[19] Instead, I would argue that the documentarian mode makes an equally powerful claim by invoking a civil collective that functions outside of the institutions of the state. In the historical context of the internment, this address to an alternative civil collective serves as a means of restoring the civic status of internees while also demanding a reevaluation of the terms of citizenship in the U.S.

If the personal mode and empathetic identification frames risk as risk to self ("this could be you in the camp"), I propose shifting the terms to consider the risk *to the nation* that the internment of 110,000 Japanese Americans represents, the risk to the very meaning of citizenship. This reading emphasizes how the speaker's address demands "we" readers regard ourselves as fellow citizens implicated in a shared civil collective and grapple with what it means to participate as civil subjects.

Emphasizing the documentarian mode of discourse, it is helpful, then, to consider *Citizen 13660* as a visual project of documentation in the vein of Ansel Adams or Dorothea Lange's photographic work. Her sketches are not only visually suggestive of photographs (with clean black lines, simple shading, and detailed depth of field), but they also mimic the photographic encounter in a fundamental way, staging the structure of relations between the photographer,

[19] Heather Fryer warns: "Read *Citizen 13660* as objective documentary, and the Okubo figure is no different from the two-dimensional figures the OWI [Office of War Information] presented in *The Japanese Relocation*," a propaganda film that shows that democratic potential of the internment camps (92). This depiction causes individuals' stories to "disappear into the background, and the depth of the harm perpetrated against them could never come fully to the fore" (92). Another critic, Greg Robinson, insists that the first-person accounts of the internment, Okubo's included, "made a special claim to truth and authenticity and were therefore "able to reshape the general public perception of the wartime events away from the 'official truth' which was constructed by army and government officials" (50). In keeping this, he argues, Okubo employed a strategy that directly opposed documentarian detachment or distance and was instead intent on "humaniz[ing] herself and the other internees in the narrative" (53).

subject, and spectator. As a *drawn* medium, however, her images also trouble the photographic form; at the same time that she is the documentarian, she also appears as a subject in each frame. Drawing on a tradition of documentary photography as well as Ariella Azoulay's theory of citizenship and photography, I thus propose reading Okubo's *Citizen 13660* as a form of "documentary illustration." With this term, I mean to emphasize the unique nature of Okubo's hand-drawn images. Using a drawn medium, Okubo is able to project her body into each frame, taking on a doubled position of the spectator-participant, where she makes a unique form of political address not possible in photography. It might be more accurate, though, to say that she actually appears twice in each frame: every drawing also bears her signature, which "author-izes" the images as her own creation. This signature reinforces the *act* of her drawing, which is an altogether different documentary act than the taking of a photograph. Hand-drawn, Okubo's drawings are thus an act of inscription as well. In the context of internment and the loyalty oaths administered by the state, her act of inscription can signify as the symbolic signing of a different kind of loyalty oath, one made *between citizens* as participants in the same civil collective, rather than in relation to the state. In terms of documentary illustration, Okubo not only draws herself into each frame as a political addressor, but also enacts a different model of citizenship that offers a reconfiguration of the national collective in light of the camp.

Though Okubo's "documentary sketches" exceed the photographic form, it is helpful to frame her project *as documentary* through a comparison to the genre of photography typified by Dorothea Lange, whose style most closely resembles Okubo's own text. In addition to her governmental work covering the internment camps, Lange produced some of the most iconic documentary photographs of the Depression era, and was actively involved in defining the genre of documentary photography. In her prefatory remarks to *An American Exodus: A Record of*

Human Erosion in the Thirties, a photo-text about the history of the Dustbowl, co-written with her husband Paul Schuster Taylor, she writes:

> This is neither a book of photographs nor an illustrated book in the traditional sense. Its particular form is the result of our use of techniques in proportions and relations designed to convey understanding easily, clearly, and vividly. We use the camera as a tool of research. Upon a tripod of photographs, captions, and text we rest themes evolved out of long observations in the field. We adhere to the standards of documentary photography as we have conceived them. (15)

With this, she offers a working definition of documentary photography: based on "long observations" and "research," and supported by a "tripod of photographs, captions, and text," documentary photography is intended "to convey understanding easily, clearly, and vividly." She goes on to note that the captions that contain quoted speech "report what the persons photographed said, not what we think might be their unspoken thoughts"[20] (15). This empirical fidelity is not only indicative of a good standard of research and documentation, but also leads Lange to conceive of the book as a work of "collaboration" and "a product of cooperation," between her and Taylor, *and* between them and the individuals they documented (15). She writes, "Our work has produced the book, but in the situations which we describe are *living participants, who can speak.* Many whom we met in the field vaguely regarded conversation with us as an opportunity to tell what they are up against to the government and to their countrymen at large. So far as possible we have let them speak to you face to face" (15, my emphasis). It is significant that Lange frames her documentary text as orchestrating and facilitating a conversation between members of the same civil collective, the photographed participant addressing not only the state but fellow "countrymen," fellow citizens. The

[20] Interestingly, and contrary to my expectations, this style of captioning is not as prevalent in Lange's photos of the Japanese internment, perhaps owing to the different nature of the project or her own relation to the subjects. As Judith Fryer Davidov points out, Lange remained an "outsider," perhaps even more so than in the Dustbowl photographs because of a fundamental Orientalist racial bias (236). In one interview about her experience photographing the internment, she refers to the "little, dark people" who lived "static" lives inside the camps (qtd. in Davidov 236). This seems a far cry from the super-abundance of sympathy for the Dustbowl farmers and migrant workers of the Depression.

photographic encounter — between the documentarian-spectators (Lange and Taylor) and the "living participants" they photograph—thus becomes a critical opportunity for making a political address, and in so doing, for establishing a sense of relationality between members of the same civil collective.

Though not a sustained research project the way Lange's and Taylor's book is, Okubo nevertheless describes herself as a documentarian. In the preface, she writes that "in the camps…[she] had the opportunity *to study* the human race from the cradle to the grave" (my emphasis) and describes her sketches as a mode of "recording" that constitute the "first personal documentation of the evacuation story" (xxvi). In the absence of cameras, *Citizen 13660* can be said to follow Lange's standards of documentation by combining image, caption, and text to "convey understanding" based on "long observations." What makes this form of documentation unique, however, is Okubo's third person figuration in her images, which renders Okubo in both positions of the "living participant, who can speak" and the documentarian-spectator who observes. Compelled to record the situation, Okubo does not merely document the internees as subjects external to herself, but includes herself in the frame as a participant in the situation, a participant making an address. As "documentary illustration," Okubo is able to insert herself into each frame in a way that at once mimics and exceeds the photographic encounter, drawing attention to the exposure of the photographed/documented subject, compounded in this case by their exposure to the state. In so doing, Okubo intervenes on both the historic coupling of state power and photography,[21] as well as a tradition of documentary photography conducted by

[21] As Azoulay explains: "The initial deployment of photography on the part of the modern state contributed to the perpetuation of the social power relations of power, turning weak, disadvantaged, and marginal populations such as ethnic minorities, criminals, and the insane into utterly exposed objects of photography" (116). Soon, the mass utilization of photography "turned the entire population into an object of photography, albeit in conformity with a predefined set of rules — various types of identification cards, personal documents, and so on." (117). See also John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation* for a discussion of the relationship between the state and photography.

(white) outside researchers that produces passive, "tragic, yet photogenic, objects of history" (Creef 68). As both the seer and the seen, Okubo's documentary sketches disrupt this easy, binaristic dynamic. She occupies at the same time an empowered position of agency ("the photographer") and a vulnerable position of exposure and abandonment ("the photographed"). The documentarian Okubo thus avoids presenting tragic, pathetic "victims" or passive objects of history.[22] She instead projects herself into each frame as an active political addressor, as a living participant who speaks on multiple registers at once.

Other critics such as Elena Tajima Creef have argued that Okubo's doubled position, simultaneously an "insider and outsider" or "participant and observer," reflects the "hybrid" text of "written commentary and depiction as witness" (80, 77). Once again, though, Okubo's third person figuration is then enlisted into a reading of her body as a "conduit" for readers to imaginatively and empathetically enter the frame, identifying with Okubo as spectator and through that becoming some kind of participant (88). This reading fails to acknowledge how the "living participant who speaks" to her fellow "countrymen" is seeking the opportunity to address the civil collective. To put it another way, this reading obscures Okubo's embodied presence as a political addressor. Highlighting the documentarian mode, though, the address shifts from "this could be you," to "look at this; take account of this," or, posed as a question to the reader/spectator, "*how* do you take account of this?" The imperative of this kind of address is to recognize the relationality of the address and how it redistributes affiliation among the community.

[22] In *Visual Peace: Images, Spectatorship, and the Politics of Violence*, Frank Möller compelling argues that photographs "construct victims" by "reducing subjects" to the framework of "exposure" and "exploitation" implied in photography (42). By contrast, Okubo's drawings mimic the photographic "exposure" as a means of documenting the exposure, subjection, and vulnerability the internees experienced. At the same, she commands the photographer's power to frame the shot.

II. In Defense of Citizenship

In *The Civil Contract of Photography*, Ariella Azoulay reconceptualizes photography's role in politics by grounding its network of relations in an renewed understanding of citizenship. Building on the political theory of Carl Schmitt and Giorgio Agamben, Azoulay importantly shifts the terms away from sovereign power and the sovereign's decision, focusing instead on the mechanism of governing. She argues:

> Citizens are, first and foremost, governed. The nation-state creates a bond of identification between citizens and the state through a variety of ideological mechanisms, causing this fact to be forgotten. This, then, allows for the state to divide the governed — partitioning off noncitizens from citizens…An emphasis on the dimension of being governed allows a rethinking of the political sphere as a space of relations between the governed, whose political duty is first and foremost a duty toward one another, rather than toward the ruling power. (17)

In speaking of political subjectivity, the "governed" is a broader, and perhaps more pointed, category of identification, which also acknowledges the fact that citizens and non-citizens alike are exposed to state power. It is this shared condition, Azoulay argues, that can, and *should*, be the basis of a different kind of civic subjectivity and relationality. Working from the perspective of "disaster" Azoulay poses the problem of citizenship in terms of risk, injury, and protection. The "non-citizen," is "someone who does not belong to the collective of citizens in a certain country and who is perceived as threatening to the security, purity of culture, economic welfare, and health of that country's inhabitants" (32). This group includes refugees and migrants as well as Azoulay's paradigmatic example of Palestinians who struggle against Israeli state power. Not granted protection by the state, non-citizens are the most exposed to risk and injury, and though they do not have the right of full political participation, they are nevertheless subject to the state's power and rule of law. In addition to the citizen and non-citizen, there exists a third category: the "impaired" or "flawed" citizen who is discriminated on account of some kind of

difference and is therefore more vulnerable to risk, more exposed to injury, and less protected by the state, often outright abandoned by the state (15, 36).

In terms of the internment, the Issei certainly represent a governed population of non-citizens while the Nisei fall under the category of "impaired citizens," who are discriminated on account of their ethnicity and deprived recognition of their full status as American citizens. They have, in a way, been abandoned by the state, even as they are subject to an extreme form of state power in the camp. The category of the "governed" emerges, then, as a way for thinking through the conditions shared by citizens, non-citizens, and impaired citizens — the significant difference between them being "the *form* of governance" they are subject to (33, original emphasis). For if "citizenship as a protection of all the governed, is a precondition for the legitimate government in the modern era," the blatant violation of this principle reveals the fragile status of both the noncitizen and citizen (33). Indeed, "protection *from* the sovereign" is an essential right of citizens that has become a "blind spot" because of the way the category of noncitizens has been mobilized as contrary to both citizens and the sovereign (35). Reconceiving citizenship in terms of the governed, citizens and noncitizens alike, opens a distance between the citizen and the state, redistributing affiliation between governed subjects so as to build resistance to the violence *all* are exposed to.

Within this reconfigured space, Azoulay reasserts the definition of the citizen as a "political addressor…that voices grievances" to the public and to the government (46).[23] This *participation* in the political system is essential to the definition of the citizen, and moves away from the conception of citizenship as a status conferred by the state and a reciprocal duty to the

[23] Azoulay focuses her analysis and derives her definition of citizenship from the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen as well as the Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen, the first written during the French Revolution (1789) and the second written in response two years later. She then traces these foundational discourses to the human rights discourse of the twentieth century.

ruling power. Instead, citizenship becomes a "framework of partnership and solidarity among those who are governed, a framework that is neither constituted nor circumscribed by the sovereign" (23). Citizenship understood in this way introduces a civil collective independent of the institutions of the state that is enabled and empowered — and obligated — to respond to the injuries of the governed as an injury to the principle of citizenship (now based on the shared condition of being governed). In light of this, civic duty shifts away from a relation to the state and is reoriented towards a form of relation between the governed based on responsibility. The citizen, as one of the governed, thus has an obligation as a political addressor to voice the grievances of the governed, and to call attention to the injuries inflicted on them, citizen and non-citizen alike. Based on responsibility and mutual trust between the governed, citizenship can then become a "tool" in a struggle with state power against injuries to the governed (14).

With the understanding of citizenship as a civil relation among the governed beyond the institutions of the state, Azoulay turns to the "civil contract of photography" as a parallel form of civil relations "not mediated by sovereign power" (143). With the civil contract of photography, Azoulay compellingly re-articulates the photographic encounter in terms of "consent" and "mutual obligation" between "formally equal individuals," recasting the "abandoned" photographed subject and exploitative photographer in a longer history and broader network of relations: the citizenry of photography which formed with the invention of photography in the nineteenth century (116, 109, 85). It is not my aim to reconstruct this model or to walk through the derivation of this political community, as this would take some time, and ultimately, Okubo's drawings are *not* photographs and cannot be said to participate in the civil contract of photography. Nevertheless, I would argue that her drawings, as "documentary illustration," mimic the photographic encounter with a photographer, subject, and spectator. Thus, following

Azoulay, it is fruitful to think of Okubo's illustrations as functioning similarly to photographs: a critical means of presenting grievances, of making a political address as one of the governed. Going beyond Lange, the photographed (or documented) subject is not a passive visual object whose voice is amplified by the photographer's orchestration. Rather, the subject is an active participant in the photographic encounter in direct relation to the photographer and spectator as "she tries to address others through the photograph to present a grievance" (143). Essentially, the structure of address is a means for the injured party, whose civic status is harmed, to participate as political subject. In this way, the presentation of grievance — and the recognition of this address by an addressee— restores civil conditions to the injured party (143).

This structure of address necessarily calls upon the spectator, who is in a position to respond as part of the governed body. Azoulay critiques Susan Sontag and Roland Barthes, perhaps the two most important photography theorists, for "reduc[ing] the role of the spectator to the act of judgment," or the determination of the meaning of the image, thereby "eliminating his or her *responsibility* for what is seen in the photograph" (130, my emphasis). Within the civil contract of photography, the spectator recognizes the political addressor in terms of their shared condition, and thereby becomes responsible for what she sees, for the injury presented. The photograph that "allows a reading of the injury inflicted on others," and allows the political address of the injured to be recognized, can thus become a means of activating the civil relationality between the governed (14). And the spectator then becomes a "civil spectator who watches the image in order to view its conditions of fabrication and the new possibilities for intervening in what it frames" (167). In terms of intervention, this model of citizenship, based on solidarity, partnership, and responsibility, offers a means of organizing politically beyond the structures of the nation-state and against the state power to which citizens, non-citizens, and

impaired citizens are all exposed as “the governed.” To the extent that Okubo’s drawings mimic the photographic encounter, Azoulay’s theory of the photographed subject as a political addressor can be adapted to understand Okubo’s third person figuration in her sketches. Not only the documentarian, Okubo also appears as a subject in her own sketches to act as a political addressor. Speaking from a position impaired civic status, she presents the injury inflicted by the state in the space of the camp to address a broader civil collectivity of governed subjects. In so doing, Okubo transcends the divisions of the camp in a powerful way and enacts a different kind of civic relationality.

While most critical readings (especially the ones privileging the autobiographical "I") have some account of Okubo struggling for recognition as an American subject and as an American citizen, what is not often enough emphasized, is how she aligns herself with the collectivity of the camp. This context is significant because it highlights both citizens and non-citizens, the camp reiterated as a site and form of exceptional governance. Reinforcing her placement within the frame as internee and documentarian, Okubo situates the internment camps in the larger national collective; in this way, *Citizen 13660* is engaged in a critical negotiation of the terms of citizenship in the U.S. One of Azoulay’s most critical observations cut at the assumption that citizenship must be conceived as a relationship to the state: “While citizenship is enlisted for the sake of the nation and the state, citizens are commanded to defend the nation and the state instead of defending their citizenship” (48). Okubo’s documentary project, read through the structure of political address, can be understood as such a defense of citizenship, which is particularly significant in the context of internment and the state’s administration of loyalty oaths, a questionnaire explicitly demanding citizens defend the nation-sate rather than defend their citizenship.

III. Pledging Loyalty to We, the Governed

Like a photograph, the sketches enable a political addressor, Okubo as Citizen 13660, to present a grievance, and then to "allow a reading of the injury," thereby activating a form of civic relationality *between* participants of a shared civil collective, between governed subjects. This address, and the form of relationality it establishes, significantly shifts the terms of civic duty outside of the structure of the state. *As documentary illustration*, though, Okubo's sketches go one step further. These drawings not only "allow a reading" of injury, but *as an act of inscription*, signify as a symbolic pledge of loyalty to this civil collective of the governed. In this way, Okubo's sketches can be said to enact a different model of citizenship outside of the framework of state as a way of rethinking the national collective. In turn, the spectators become Okubo's addressees, implicated in the civil collectivity of the governed and called upon to negotiate the terms of citizenship and national collectivity.

As documentary illustration, Okubo's sketches constitute an altogether different documentary act than photography, which challenges both the tradition of documentary photography and the state's use of photography as a tool of power, a tool of recording and surveillance. The sketch below, for example, depicts one of the many registration processes for relocation — sitting for an identification photo (207, Figure 3). Okubo is seated before an apparatus that creates a tight frame around her face; just barely legible on the frame is a new set of identification numbers. With this photograph, the state confers yet another identity on Okubo as 13660 is exchanged for 49367. In addition to Americanization classes and workshops on "How to Make Friends" and "How to Behave in the Outside World," this process of registration and recording essentially belongs to the state's program to make subjects for the "outside world,"

After plowing through the red tape, through the madness of packing again, I attended forums on "How to Make Friends" and "How to Behave in the Outside World."
I was photographed.

Figure 3: Miné Okubo, *Citizen 13600*, p. 207

to make subjects for the national collective "outside" the space of the camp.[24] In the caption for this sketch, Okubo simply comments, "I was photographed," emphasizing in the passive voice her lack of agency as the photographed subject. But what is so striking in this sketch is the way that Okubo, occupying the empowered position of the documenter, *also* frames the state's frame. In opposition to the camera's tight frame used in the process of identification, Okubo takes a wider angle and an off-center view to expose the photographic act. As the documentarian-spectator, she becomes somewhat of a photographer herself, framing and capturing the scene before her. But of course, she is actually an *illustrator*, and Okubo *draws* herself into the frame as a participant in the scene as well, staging, through her own body, the exposure of the subject to both the camera and forms of state power.

[24] Throughout *Citizen 13660* there are drawings that show how life inside the camp tries to "keep up" with the "outside" or at least maintain some kind of relationship. For example, one sketch depicts the "victory gardens" planted in front of the barracks which became a source of "competitive pride" for the owners (97). The gardens are a reminder of the wartime conditions and signify as well the nation-wide civilian efforts to "support" the war. In this light, the gardens a way that the internees stay involved in the life of the nation, even from within the exceptional and excluded space of the camp. Similarly, in another sketch, Okubo shows a scrap-metal drive which she lists along with "bond sales, Red Cross drives, and blood donations" as ways of "keep[ing] up with the outside world" (174). As many critics have pointed out, these attempts to "keep up" or pursue a normal American life within the camp led to dangerous interpretations of the camp as consistent with American democratic ideals. Hong gives the most sustained discussion of this in "Illustrating the Postwar Peace." See also Xiaojin Zhou, "The Spatial Construction of the Enemy Race." Finally, another sketch of the camp's library depicts a slightly different dynamic between the "inside" of the camp and the "outside" nation. Okubo explains that "a great many magazine and book donations came from 'outside' to help build a substantial library in the center" (93). Referring to the "outside" in scare quotes, Okubo seems self-conscious of the division of space as a result of the camp and the dynamic of charity, if that's what it can be called, that developed in response to the forced removal of a segment of the national population.

Okubo occupies the doubled position of the spectator-participant throughout *Citizen 13660*, at times even drawing herself as the illustrator, pen poised on the sketchpad mid-drawing as she records scenes of the camp (48, 99). In these sketches she presents herself as documentarian and recorder equipped not with a camera but with pen and brush, the tools of illustration and inscription. By emphasizing the difference of this medium and documentary act, Okubo's record becomes a powerful counter-site to the state's own bureaucratic forms of record-keeping — which is sometimes photographic but is also manifest in various registrations (when moving to a new camp, or getting new supplies), official "checks," and surveillance. This record-keeping is of course epitomized in the loyalty questionnaire, which was administered first in aid of recruiting soldiers for a dedicated Japanese American combat unit and was later used by the War Relocation Authority to register all internees. While the loyalty questionnaire most explicitly reinforces the terms of citizenship, setting terms around what it means to be "loyal" to the nation, these other forms of record-keeping are also means of governing the camp and using the camp as a form of governance. What I find striking in Okubo's documentary efforts is that many of her sketches depicting these processes (the registration of family units, the delivery of bulletins, the induction of new camp residents, the distribution of blankets, etc.), make prominent not only the paperwork that is involved but the pens that various officials wield to conduct their work. Okubo draws attention to their *instruments* of documentation and record-keeping, instruments that she herself uses in her own documentary work.

In a particularly compelling sketch depicting an official's roll call visit, Okubo sets up a split frame where the house captain appears on the left clutching his notepad and pen, and Okubo appears on the right sticking her tongue out and brandishing her paintbrush in defiance (59, Figure 4). Setting up a direct opposition between the house captain, a representative of the state,

CURFEW was imposed, and roll call was held every day at 6:45 A.M. and at 6:45 P.M. Each barrack had a house captain who made the rounds to check on us twice a day.

Figure 4: Miné Okubo, *Citizen 13660*, p. 59

and herself, Okubo pits her own record and form of record-keeping, against the state's. Though in other frames Okubo depicts herself using a pen, here she stresses the difference of their instrument as indicative of the essential difference of their records. Whereas the state records as a means of regulating subjects in relationship to it—reinforcing the model of citizenship as a status conferred by the state that demands a duty to that power in return—Okubo's documentary illustration is also a creative act in the sense of producing something new. Her illustrated record enables her to project a third person political addressor who is defiant and unrestrained, establishing a different circuit of address that is conscious of the state's injury and beyond its grasp. In addressing the spectator as if making a joke at the expense of the state official, Okubo enacts a different form of civic relationality between governed subjects and a different model of citizenship. As opposed to the state's forms of recording, registration and restraint (most fully realized in the bind of the loyalty oath), Okubo's documentary record presents the conditions of her governance to the governed body and thus serves as a primary defense of the principle of citizenship. Moreover, with an emphasis on the *act of inscription*, Okubo's sketches signify as

the enactment of an alternative pledge of loyalty, not to the state, but to the civil collective of governed subjects.

Before turning directly to the problem of loyalty and the questionnaire administered within the camps, I want to consider further how Okubo establishes herself as a political addressor through the medium of documentary illustration. In one of the opening sketches, Okubo depicts the escalation of racial hostility within the nation before the camps were instituted, and makes an address not yet as an internee but already as a citizen of impaired civic status within the national collective. As the caption describes it, when Executive Order 9066 was passed on February 19, 1942 "*the enemy alien problem* was transferred from the Department of Justice to the War Department," and as a result all people of Japanese ancestry were effectively designated a national security threat (12, my emphasis). In the sketch itself, Okubo appears just left of center, sitting in the middle of a bus, arms folded, surrounded by hostile, accusatory gazes (Figure 5). The other riders turn out of their seats to fully encircle her in their stares. She looks back with determination, singled out but nonetheless insisting on the relationality between her and the others. Defiantly addressing those who accuse her, Okubo's gaze also directs our gaze as spectators to consider this exchange of gazes. The first line of the caption is notable for the way that it describes this dynamic: "The people looked at all of us, both citizens and aliens, with suspicion and mistrust" (12). Though alone in the frame, Okubo identifies with an "us" that is distinct from "the people," a term that invokes the imagined unity of the nation.[25] The "us" that

[25] In *Against Race*, Paul Gilroy offers a brief history of "the people as one" as an essential concept of nationalism that is also linked to "raciologial drives" of the modern nation (62). Giorgio Agamben also has an interesting discussion of how "people" signifies both "the complex of citizens as a unitary political body…and the members of the lower classes" (176). It refers to both "bare life" (as people) and "political existence" (as People), and thus "carries the fundamental biopolitical fracture within itself" (177-78). Okubo's use of "the people" suggests the latter, referring to the unity of American citizens that constitute the national public, but I would argue that the force of her political address is in calling on the other meaning of "people" and in this way she shifts the frame for thinking about the national body.

includes both "citizens and aliens" has already been evacuated and severed from the national body. However, from the wider view of the frame, from the spectator's or documentarian's perspective, we can see a different dynamic. Everyone on the bus is not only framed by the image's frame but is framed by the bus windows, as if put behind bars and put there together. Visually punning on the confinement of the camp, this subtle framing has the effect of reinforcing the public assembly of the bus passengers, who, on public transportation no less, signify as a civil collective.[26]

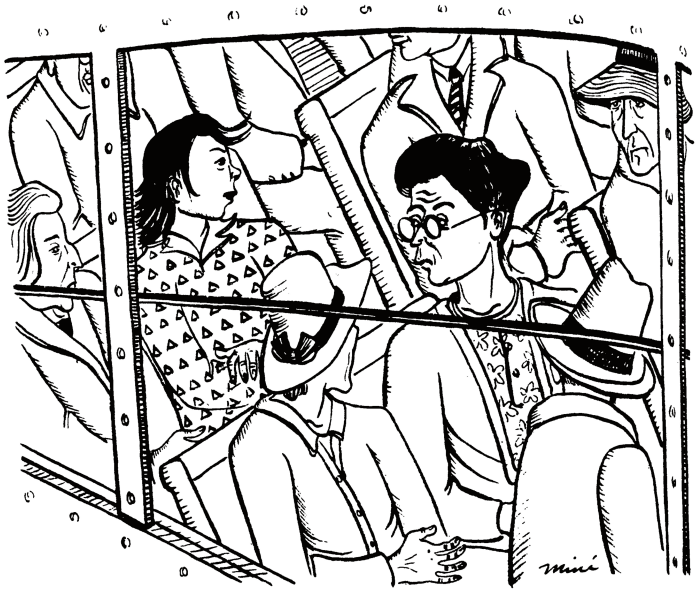


Figure 5: Miné Okubo, *Citizen 13660*, p. 12

Through her third-person figuration, Okubo projects herself into the drawing as a political addressor, embodying the citizen of impaired civic status. Within the frame, we see her look back, in defiance, to address her accusers — as much as to address the spectator-reader — insisting on the fundamental relationality between members of the same public. In the caption, Okubo is careful to point out the racial motivation behind the policy of evacuation and internment: whereas German and Italian *enemy aliens* were "restricted" (my emphasis), "all American citizens and aliens of Japanese ancestry" were ordered to evacuate (at first as a voluntary action, and eventually as a militarily enforced one) (12). As a political addressor,

[26] As subtle as this effect may be, in the case of one of Lange's photographs of gardeners, some shadows from a latticed shed appeared as bars across the frame, which the government deemed too suggestive of imprisonment and therefore too subversive for display. See Davidov, 228 for a discussion of this episode.

Okubo thus presents a grievance: the policy of internment as well as the nationalistic race prejudice underpinning it is an injury of citizenship. At the same time that she presents this grievance, Okubo also invokes the possibility of another civil collectivity through her address: a collectivity understood between participants in the same public, a collective of governed subjects. What we see on the bus isn't exactly this collective—we do not see fellow citizens relating on the basis of mutual trust, responsibility and solidarity—but it does represent the possibility of such a collective based not on a relationship to the state, but on *the relationality between members of the same public*. Most importantly, the relationality felt in Okubo's gaze, transcends the divisions of the camp and nationalist, racist camp-thinking. Of course Okubo's address, made from the doubled position of the spectator-participant, implicates the spectator/reader as well, calling on her to not only notice this collective, but *as a participant in it*, to take account of the grievance presented, to become responsive to and responsible for the injury. By activating this kind of civic relationality, Okubo recasts the national collective based on a different model of citizenship, and expands the circuity of nation-feeling and identity.

As will be clear in the following sketches, and is evident throughout *Citizen 13660*, Okubo remains very much invested in an American national identity.[27] There is no reason to suggest that she envisions any model of citizenship other than a national one, a departure from Azoulay's more radical conception of citizenship which completely separates nationality and citizenship. Indeed, many critics have pointed out that *Citizen 13660* can be read more conservatively as in line with governmental policy and objectives, although most critical

[27] In the context of internment and the question of loyalty, this national identity is made explicitly opposed to her racial and ethnic identity, which is reflected in a few of her sketches. Okubo clearly identifies herself as "American." For example, in one sketch in which she observes two older men playing a game, she explains the traditional Japanese games of *goh* and *shogi*, by comparing them to "'our' checkers and chess (105). In another, she distinguishes herself from the crowd during a traditional Buddhist ceremony by looking away, and looking towards the spectator, with a skeptical face, as if to signal her dissent from this event (187).

readings tend towards the progressive, even revolutionary, emphasizing Okubo as a figure of resistance and subversion.[28] I take a slightly different approach by way of Azoulay's theory of citizenship and argue that Okubo is indeed invested in or "loyal" to an ideal of American identity and what it means to be a citizen in the nation. However, part of that investment means becoming a "political addressor" to "present grievances" to the state and to the public — it means defending the principle of citizenship. Thus, I argue that she addresses the *governed*, as a means of revising and re-visioning American citizenship, calling attention to where it excludes and impairs, and activating the civic relationality between governed subjects outside of the framework of the state as an alternative model.

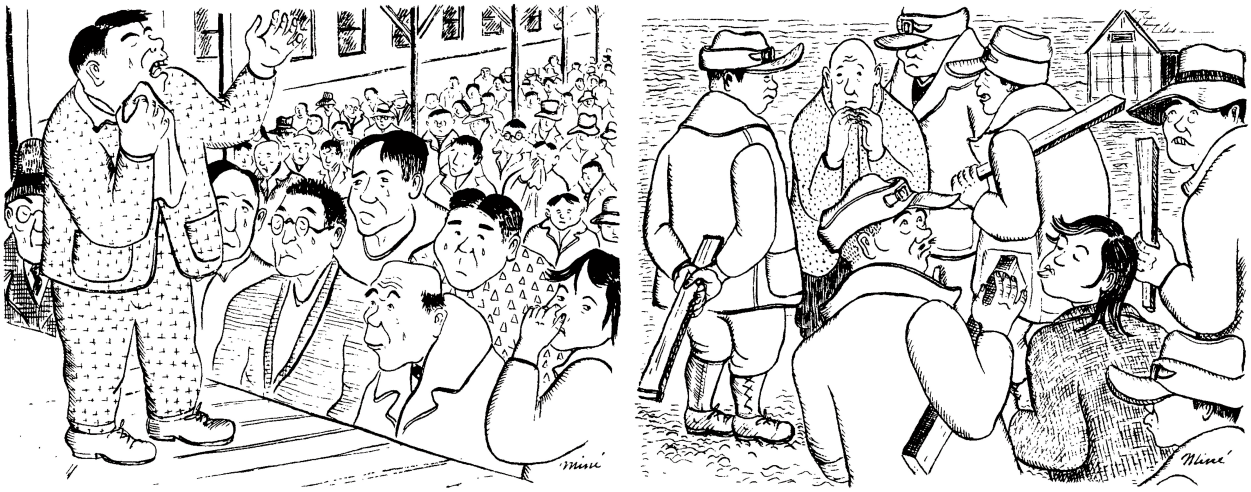


Figure 6: Okubo, *Citizen 13660*, p. 175 (left), p. 177 (right)

It is worth considering the next two sketches together in order to track the way that Okubo draws herself into the frames as a political addressor and how she thus negotiates the problem of the loyalty questionnaire. Within the first two sketches, Okubo's third person

[28] For the more dominant reading of Okubo as a figure of political resistance and subversion, see: Vivian Chin, "Gestures of Noncompliance: Resisting, Inventing and Enduring in *Citizen 13660*"; Elena Creef, *Imaging Japanese America: The Visual Construction of Citizenship, Nation, and the Body*; Heather Fryer, "Miné Okubo's War: *Citizen 13660*'s Attack on Government Propaganda"; and Stella Oh, "Paradoxes of Citizenship: Re-Viewing the Japanese American Internment in Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660*." Christine Hong provides the most thorough analysis of Okubo's alignment with the government. See especially "Illustrating the Postwar Peace: Miné Okubo, the 'Citizen-Subject' of Japan and *Fortune* Magazine." Also see Greg Robinson's "Birth of a Citizen."

figuration (her position in the frame as well as her gaze) functions as a kind of editorializing presence while the captions provide a more straightforwardly documentarian perspective (175, 177, Figure 6). The first caption explains the historical origins of the questionnaire, and the particular difficulty of Question 28, which read: "Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese Emperor or any other foreign power or organization?" (175). Okubo explains the "dilemma" of this question:

> Aliens (Issei) would be in a difficult position if they renounced Japanese citizenship and thereby made themselves stateless persons. Many of the Nisei also resented the question because of the assumption that their loyalty might be divided; it was confusing that their loyalty to the United States should be questioned at the moment when the army was asking them to volunteer.
>
> The registration form was long and complicated. The questions were difficult to understand and answer. Center-wide meetings were held, and the anti-administration rabble rousers skillfully fanned the misunderstandings. (175-76)

Though not visually depicted, Okubo draws attention to the confusion around the "registration form," the state's system of record-keeping, and how the uncertainty and lack of understanding around this process divided the camp ideologically (into pro- and anti-administration camps). Of course, as the caption to the second sketch details, the main purpose of the loyalty questionnaire was to *literally* divide the camp population:

> On the basis of the answers (plus further investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation), the 'disloyal' were finally weeded out for eventual segregation and the 'loyal' were later granted 'leave clearance' — the right to leave camp, find a job, and 'relocate.' (177)

Though perhaps obvious, it is significant that the "loyal" are immediately cast as possessing *rights*, an indicator of the eventual restoration of their civic status, secured through their pledged relationship to the state.[29] The "disloyal," on the other hand, are little more than a problem to be

[29] Oh offers an interesting reading that in answering "yes" to Question 28, Okubo "acceptably performs the discursive narrative of loyalty that the government expects" but this is simply "an initial submission to power" or "performative act"

"weeded out" and removed from the national body. While the tone of the captions is relatively neutral and informational, within the frames Okubo makes her personal opinion, and her allegiances, clear; Okubo draws herself into the scenes as a participant and political addressor. In the first sketch, she holds her nose in rejection of the histrionic performance onstage, which, judging by the rest of the audience, is otherwise quite captivating and moving (175). In the second, Okubo sticks her tongue out in defiance of the men's attempt at intimidation, a simple act but one that sincerely surprises them (177).[30] With these acts of rejection, Okubo makes visible her dissent from the "rabble rousers" and "pro-Japanese leaders" within the camp.[31] She positions herself amidst the confusion of the loyalty questionnaire in a way that documents her own loyalty as an American subject.

However, at the same time that Okubo projects herself as this loyal American subject, she challenges the simple categorization of "loyal" and "disloyal." She is careful to explain the problematic nature of the government's demand to fill out such a questionnaire of loyalty given the circumstances of the camp, and in this way offers a critique of this model of citizenship. As she explains, for the Issei, not recognized as American citizens (and prevented from gaining this status), the impossible choice was between becoming a stateless person (renouncing Japanese citizenship) or of "confirming" their official classification as "enemy aliens" (rejecting allegiance to the U.S.). And for the Nisei, recognized as American citizens in principle if not in practice, the difficulty of the question was having their loyalty doubted at the same that it was

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that actually "accords her productive power — a means of attaining her freedom from the camps" (153). In this way, Oh re-reads Okubo's act of loyalty as an act of personal empowerment. I am not entirely persuaded by this reading as I think there is enough evidence elsewhere in *Citizen 13660* to support the claim that Okubo sincerely believed in American national subjectivity and citizenship and would defend this notion as a "loyal" American subject.

[30] In "Gestures of Noncompliance," Vivian Fumiko Chin's offers a wonderful discussion of Okubo's gestures of defiance in response to authority or intimidation.

[31] It is worth noting as well that Okubo draws these pro-Japanese leaders as caricatures, reminiscent of the "buck-toothed" stereotype dominant in mainstream representations of Japanese-Americans.

invoked in the service of the state's war. This contradiction raises again the question of the citizen's relationship to the state and plays out Azoulay's observation that "while citizenship is enlisted for the sake of the nation and the state, citizens are commanded to defend the nation and the state *instead of defending their citizenship*" (48, my emphasis). Question 28 commands the defense of the nation-state while preventing any defense of citizenship. As a political addressor (as Citizen 13660), Okubo calls attention to this as a flaw in the model of citizenship conceived as a status conferred by the state and a binding duty to that power. Thus, while Okubo is intent on preserving her status as a loyal American citizen, she nevertheless does so in defense of the principle of citizenship, by presenting the injury inflicted by the state in the space of the camp. Understood through the structure of address, Okubo presents this grievance to a broader civil collective that transcends the divisions of the camp, asking "how do you take account of this?" Appealing to a civil collective structured not in terms of loyal and disloyal national subjects, citizens and non-citizens, or the internees inside the camp and the general populace outside, Okubo offers this address as a means of re-visioning American citizenship by shifting the terms of civic duty outside of the framework of the state.

And it is to this civil collective that Okubo symbolically signs a pledge of loyalty, her documentary illustrations also *acts of inscription*. In this final sketch, what is once again visible is the state's process of recording and registration. Okubo appears just off-center juggling a hefty stack of papers and two officials sit at a desk, one holds a pen and the other handles another means of recording: ink for copying thumbprints (205, Figure 7). Her left thumb pressing down on the paper, Okubo looks up in this moment as if slightly surprised by the documentarian/spectator, as if "caught in the act." But what act? Describing the "relocation programs," Okubo offers this explanation in the caption:

> Much red tape was involved and 'relocatees' were checked and double checked and rechecked. Citizens were asked to swear unqualified allegiance to the United States and to defend it faithfully from all foreign powers. Aliens were asked to swear to abide by the laws of the United States and to do nothing to interfere with the war efforts. (205-6)

What we see in this sketch, then, is the closest representation of the loyalty oath administered by the U.S. government, demanded this time as a means of qualifying internees for relocation, part of the program to "return residents to normal life" (205). Though their oaths are slightly different, Okubo draws attention to the fact that citizens and non-citizens alike were subjected to the state's repeated processes of registration and recording (checked and double checked and checked again). More specifically, all internees, as governed subjects, were forced to secure their status as national subjects (however limited it was) by making a pledge to the national body through a binding relationship to the state. While this kind of caption is typical of other sketches (including the ones focusing on the loyalty questionnaire), what is particularly striking about this drawing is the way that Okubo projects herself into the frame. Even as the caption speaks generally of internees (all citizens, all "aliens"), Okubo draws herself into the scene as a singular participant. She not only stages, once again, the regulatory actions of the state through her own body, but also calls on the spectator to witness *the act of signature.* Okubo's inked thumbprint is used for identification, but more importantly, it is also as a way of "author-izing" (signing and authenticating) the pledge of loyalty described in the

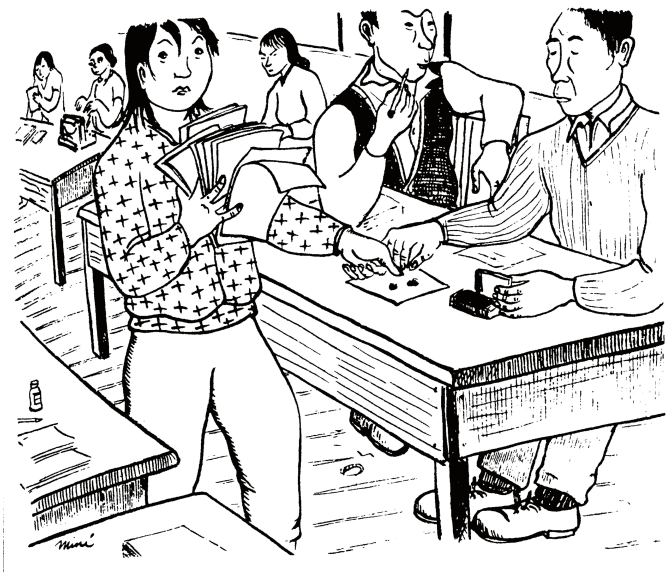

Figure 7: Miné Okubo, *Citizen 13660*, p. 205

caption—a pledge that binds the citizen to the state. Her drawing of it seems to have evidentiary value, as if proof of the act, which can be reproduced for the reading public.

At the same time, this act of signature can be helpfully compared to Okubo's actual signature, which appears in the corner of every drawing in *Citizen 13660*.[32] Indeed, in the caption that accompanies this drawing, Okubo closes with a remark about her own process of relocation; she states: "In January of 1944, having finished my documentary sketches of camp life, I finally decided to leave" (206). As others have remarked, what is remarkable in this line is that Okubo frames her departure from camp in terms of a *decision she makes* rather than the state's bureaucratic process.[33] However, her decision is explicitly linked to the progress she makes in her work as a documentarian: only once she completes her drawings is she be ready to leave. So, even as Okubo draws herself into the scene as someone subjected to the state's regulatory and recording processes (the checking and double checking and checking again), she takes herself out of this system, asserting her own agency as a documentarian and as a political addressor. Following Azoulay's model, it is through political address—and the reception of this address—that civic conditions can be restored to someone of injured or impaired civic status, restored in a way that is not reliant on a model of citizenship structured around the state. Okubo asserts herself as such a political addressor. Thus, through the medium of documentary illustration, Okubo presents not only an alternative record, but also an alternative form of civic relationality; through her acts of inscription, she introduces a counter-archive and enacts an alternative pledge of loyalty. Juxtaposing the signed loyalty oaths binding subjects to the state, Okubo offers her own

[32] It's notable that Okubo uses her first name "Miné" rather than her family name "Okubo" which can perhaps be understood in the context of the state's registration processes which organize by family unit and then replace that name with a set of ID numbers. "Miné" is the name that remains untampered with.
[33] See especially Chin, "Gestures of Noncompliance."

signed sketches as a similar document but one that shifts the terms of citizenship and loyalty outside of the framework of the state.

Okubo's forward-facing turn in this drawing can therefore be taken as an outward address, one that activates a different form of civic relationality *between* political subjects and participants in the same civil collective. In making this address, Okubo transcends the divisions of the camp and challenges the simple categorizations of loyal and disloyal, citizen and noncitizen, instead calling on a collective of governed subjects who are all vulnerable to forms of state power. Invoking this civil collective, the terms of "civic duty," and the concept of loyalty, shifts outside of the framework of the state, grounding instead in a relationships of trust, solidarity, and responsibility *between* governed subjects. In this sketch, as in every sketch in *Citizen 13660*, Okubo thus calls on this body of governed subjects, this civil collective, to take account of the grievance she presents, the injury to the principle of citizenship constituted by the camp as it is used by the state as a site and form of governance. As *documentary illustration*, Okubo her sketches also signify as an alternative pledge of loyalty, made not to the state but to the civil collective of governed subjects. In this way, Okubo's documentary sketches challenge the model of citizenship understood as a status conferred by the state and a duty to that power, and enacts an alternative model based on a relational structure of solidarity and responsibility between participants in this collective. *Citizen 13660* thus offers a means of recasting the national collective by opposing the combination of nationalism and state power that produced the internment camps in the first place. A question remains about how the grievances presented in *Citizen 13660* are heard, taken up, or remembered in the generations that come later. This documentary project and its call continue to circulate among a reading public but how is this sense of solidarity and responsibility inherited? How does this pledge of loyalty *bind*?

CHAPTER TWO

Korean War POW Narratives:
The Politics of Repatriation and Bequeathal of Memory

"The responsibility of the citizen is to become a citizen."
Ariela Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*

In the last chapter I considered the internment camp as a form of political technology deployed by the U.S. state within the nation to racially segregate the civilian population in blatant disregard of the rights of citizenship. More particularly, the internment camp, operates by a logic of inside/outside, demarcating the space inside the camp as a space of dispossession from the nation on the other side of the barbed wire fences. In this chapter I turn to the POW camps of the Korean War as a different version of the camp, one that functions more as a "between" space in the context of a international network of state power. Still a space of removal, surveillance, and domination, the POW camp operates somewhat differently than the internment camp, being a form of political technology legislated by the international Geneva Conventions wherein one state's soldiers become the wards of another. The soldiers-turned-prisoners are thus subject to a unique form of governance in their exposure to the international network of state power. Situated

in this way, the POW camp demonstrates another dimension of the U.S. prison regime, and with the problem of repatriation, which is in some ways *the* issue of the Korean War, the POW camp also becomes an occasion for thinking through the claims of nationalism contained in and secured by the state-based model of citizenship.

In the introduction to *Immigrant Acts*, Lisa Lowe suggests the collapse of the American soldier with the nation since they have "in every way submitted to the nation," becoming "the quintessential citizen and therefore the ideal representative of the nation" (6). I agree with Lowe's critique of how veterans and war memorials conventionally amplify hegemonic belonging within the nation, dichotomized against the racialized "foreigner-within" (5). However, it would be a mistake to dismiss the political presence of soldiers as completely given over to the nation-state, especially when the U.S. wars of intervention were fought with a military that relied on the draft. Undeniably, soldiers act as extensions of the state, or function as its proxies, but they too remain governed subjects—a crucial reminder of the terms of citizenship predicated on a binding relationship to the state. To return briefly to Azoulay's framework, within the state-based model, citizenship is a status conferred in exchange for the citizen-subject's loyalty such that state power becomes a "blindspot," meaning the "citizen remains exposed to the power of the state and unprotected from it by the allegiance owed to it" (35, 33). Without a doubt, every political subject contends with this "exposure," and it is heightened for racialized citizens, as I elaborated in the previous chapter discussing the internment of Japanese Americans. For the soldier (and more acutely, the conscripted soldier), the bind of loyalty is perhaps even more pronounced insofar their relationship to the state is inaugurated with an oath of service and allegiance. While from the perspective of the state, this oath makes soldiers the

"quintessential citizens," from the perspective of the citizen, the soldier crucially remains a governed subject "exposed to the power of the state," and bound, I would argue, in two ways.

As prisoners of war, this goes one step further. I would suggest that as POWs, soldiers become a population that has been "declared an exception" in terms of governance, which does not except them from governance, but rather, to use Azoulay's terms, "makes them more vulnerable to disaster or *abandons them* in ways that turns their living environment into a disaster zone" (31, my emphasis). "Disaster" in this sense conveys a population's vulnerability to violence and injury, and though this may come in the more ready sense of a "sudden" disaster (whether natural or political, a tsunami or terrorist attack, for example), disaster can also be something chronic, when the "sense of urgency" is lacking because the violence and the injury have become so regular and normalized, a feature of the "everyday" (51, 35). The everyday conditions of the camp as well as the eruptions of violence can be thought of in these terms, a point I will return to in my discussion of Ha Jin's novel *War Trash*. For now, I want to highlight the structure of abandonment wherein the prisoners have been left exposed and unprotected, even as and insofar as they are accounted for in a juridical structure as "prisoners of war." In this way, the POWs might be again most productively compared to Azoulay's "faulty" or "impaired" citizens, those who are excepted among citizens, less protected by the state, and thus made more vulnerable to injury.

As a site and form of governance, the POW camp is included in the provisions of the Geneva Conventions, which relies on an international structure for government accountability and humanitarian values. The Conventions essentially outline how exceptional populations are to be governed in the exceptional time of war, which includes not only the soldiers-turned-prisoners, but also, for the first time with the 1949 revisions, civilians as well. Despite the

Conventions' explicitly humanitarian aims and the juridical grounding, the POW camp, especially during the Korean War, became a tool of political warfare that distilled the ideological logic of the Cold War. With the war stalemated, it became clear that no territorial victory, or victory in a strict military sense, would be possible; the Panmunjom Peace Talks thus became a negotiation of ideological victory, and the issue of "voluntary repatriation" became one metric for it. At the same time, these negotiations further intensified the "between" status of the prisoners. As Chinese officials demanded the full repatriation of its soldiers, many were considering *not* returning, and American negotiators pushed the issue of "voluntary repatriation" to make a show of their "humanitarian" morals.[34] Historian Charles Young describes a perfect alignment of ideological and military strategy: "protecting the rights of prisoners would show strength, integrity, and expand defense in the process" by draining China (and North Korea) of their citizen-soldiers (Name 184). With the 1949 revisions of the Geneva Conventions, repatriation (the right to return to one's homeland) was provisioned as a means of preventing the extended detention of prisoners after the end of war and of ensuring that citizens would not be denied the opportunity to return to their country (Charmatz and Wit 398, 406). Article 118 reads: "Prisoners of war shall be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities." What this basic right did not account for were situations in which citizens did not want to return to their countries because of the possible violence they faced from the state; hence the debate at Panmunjum centered on "voluntary" rather than coercive repatriation, ostensibly empowering individual citizens against the state. However, as the negotiations grew more and more protracted, repatriation "without delay" became an empty promise, and the camps fell into

[34] As historian Charles Young notes, the emphasis on "voluntary" is a bit problematic insofar as American officials did not fully represent the situation at the camps where "the limited ranks of anti-Communist prisoners had been swelled through a massive campaign of bludgeonings, spearings, hackings, and forced tattooing of rightist slogans" (POWS 322). These violent political campaigns are illustrated throughout Ha Jin's novel *War Trash*.

an extended state of exception where the prisoners were left exposed to eruptions of violence and efforts of coercion.

It is in the context of the international ideological war surrounding the Korean War, and the way in which the POW camps become the primary site of contestation (the war no longer being territorial), that I read the prisoners as "abandoned" — made vulnerable to power, violence, and injury even as they are also inscribed in, and ostensibly protected by, an international legal structure. One could turn to Agamben for a biopolitical reading of this abandonment — reading the prisoners as form of bare life — an argument that is undoubtedly relevant and compelling to this history and the texts I explore in this chapter.[35] However, I am inclined to read with Azoulay insofar as acknowledging the camp as a form of governance and the prisoners as governed subjects leaves open a critical opportunity for destabilizing and re-conceiving the conventional model of citizenship, linked as it is to state and nation. Building off the arguments in the first chapter, I emphasize the relational structure of address as a means of locating the citizen who becomes a citizen through the presentation of a grievance to other governed subjects (and to the state). This address is thus a reclamation of citizenship and negotiation of the terms of belonging to this civil collectivity. In this chapter I consider two narratives of the POW camp that build off of Azoulay's theory of the political addressor; these citizen-prisoners speak from a condition of abandonment and confront the challenge of repatriation to restructure affiliative identity with the nation as well as state-based citizenship.

[35] See Joseph Darda, "The Literary Afterlife of the Korean War" for a biopolitical reading of Jin's *War Trash*.

I. Restoring Citizenship Through Non-Repatriation

The first text I consider, Clarence Adams' posthumous memoir *An American Dream: The Life of an African American Soldier and POW Who Spent Twelve Years in Communist China*, is more apparently comparable to Okubo's *Citizen 13660* and the mode of address she employs. Adams' memoir effectively serves as a means of documenting a history, and his personal experience of it, and this documentation is also a means of addressing his own nation, his fellow citizens and his government, to present a grievance and to re-negotiate the terms of American citizenship. Significantly, Adams' memoir is less focused on the space of the camp and the way in which prisoners are abandoned there, which draws Ha Jin's focus in *War Trash*, and to some extent Okubo's in *Citizen 13660*. Rather, Adams is primarily interested in the system of state racism that everyday abandons him as a black American citizen, and then as soldier. Notably, it is the POW camp, a space effectively beyond the direct reach of the U.S. government and military, that becomes, counterintuitively, the site where Adams experiences, for the first time, a kind of equality. Regarded as an American soldier and POW by his "Chinese captors," he was treated "as an equal [to whites] rather than as an outcast," treated with "equal dignity — or indifference" (59). Putting it this way, Adams stresses the relative equality of black and white soldiers even as he acknowledges the mistreatment of prisoners altogether within the camp. That said, I frame his memoir as a POW narrative because of the way in which Adams confronts the challenge of repatriation and gives an account of his decision as a kind of political address to his fellow citizens. In this address, Adams exposes the contradictions of citizenship based on national(istic) ideology and challenges its assumptions about the relationship between state, nation, and citizen, particularly on the basis of race.

At first glance, the title of Clarence Adams' mostly unknown memoir is as humorously informational as it is trite; the cliché is overly familiar and too general to say much; as if to compensate, the subtitle specifies precisely what the subject of the book will be: the story of an American POW who chose not to repatriate. Even invoking "repatriation," though, is doing some interpretative work around a carefully worded title that almost wants to stay above the fray of a political debate. But to consider the cliché further, the title in fact frames Adams' memoir in interesting ways, playing on the specific nationalistic culture that dominated 1950s America as well as the broader "dream" rhetoric that still holds sway in U.S. political culture today.[36] At the same time that the title secures Adams' identity as an American (his dream is American), it also asserts that the pursuit of this dream took him to "Communist China," what was regarded in mainstream culture as antithetical to America and everything it wanted to stand for. This title thus invests in the idea of the "American Dream" at the same time that it suggests the dubiousness of this ideal — what is so *American* about the "American Dream" if it is realized in China? where is the breakdown in America that someone goes to China to realize the "American Dream"? From another angle, the title also plays out the way that Adams comes to be defined as an American subject in terms of his decision to live in China; to his fellow Americans, he became "the American (soldier) who chose to live in China," a perceived "betrayal" that became the grounds for new forms of hostility when he returned to the U.S. in the mid-1960s. Because of his twelve years in China, Adams was accused of being a turncoat and Communist collaborator, and even a Communist himself. Repatriation being essentially (and etymologically) about

[36] The two epigraphs for the memoir pick up on this "dream" rhetoric in the specific context of the historic African American struggle for Civil Rights. The first epigraph is from Langston Hughes: "What happens to a dream deferred?" The second, Martin Luther King Jr.: "I still have a dream, a dream deeply rooted in the American Dream." Whereas the mainstream use of the "American Dream" ideal feels over-used and misrepresentative of the realities facing many Americans (not to mention the individuals struggling to become American citizens), both Hughes and King re-animate the "dream" by first acknowledging the limits of the "American Dream" as it is traditionally conceived. In a contemporary context, we can think of the dream rhetoric most readily in terms of the "dreamer" generation of immigrants to the U.S.

returning to one's native country, Adams' decision to do otherwise was construed as an irredeemable rejection of the identity that "the homeland" offers (especially in the context of heightened nationalism and paranoia during Cold War McCarthyism). In keeping with the Cold War logic, any choice other than America was a rejection of America, and any rejection of America was aligning oneself with the enemy.

Of course, published posthumously, the editors Nella Adams (his daughter) and Lewis H. Carlson are responsible for this title, not Adams himself, which fits with their broader project of redeeming Adams' character, still in terms of a hegemonic "American" ideal.[37] In other words, theirs is a project to place Adams back in the frame of the "American Dream." More explicitly and more particularly, though, Adams' daughter Nella casts his writing as an effort to "correct the distortions and fabrications that surrounded his decision," explaining that "above all, my father wanted Americans to understand why he went to China" (xv). Adams' memoir can thus be understood as a kind of address to the American public, to not only amend or revise his personal narrative, which has a very public life, but to also present a grievance as a citizen.

In contrast to the story of a citizen and soldier who betrayed his country, Adams, and to some extent his editors, tell the story of how his country betrayed him.[38] Throughout his memoir (and during the official House UnAmerican Affairs Committee investigations), Adams maintains, "I never belonged to the Communist Party, I never became a Chinese citizen, and in

[37] From the opening lines of Carlson's preface, the effort seems to be one to make Adams (and his choices) legible within a certain version of Americanism that claims individualism and a Protestant work ethic pave the way for prosperity: "Throughout his life, Clarence Cecil 'Skippy' Adams exhibited self-reliance, ambition, ingenuity, courage, and a commitment to learning. In short, he exemplified those character traits his fellow countrymen equated with the successful pursuit of the American Dream" (xi). Interestingly enough, there is not a single instance in which Adams himself uses the phrase "American Dream." While he remains attached to his identity as an American in a fundamental way and in the end, re-invests in the ideology of American individualism, he is also a sharp critic of American racial politics and how the American Dream has always been defined as an opportunity only available to white Americans.

[38] In *Migrant as Writer*, Jin poses an interesting challenge: "Why shouldn't we turn the tables by accusing a country of betraying the individual?…Most countries have been habitual traitors to their citizens anyway" (31-32).

no way did I betray my country" (66). Aligned with neither political ideology, he decided to go to China not because he "converted" to Communism but because his life as a black America was a "dead end," because he was "looking for a way of poverty" and "wanted to be treated like a human being instead of something subhuman" (66, 60). So while mainstream media and nationalistic politics favored the sensationalist narrative that POWs were subjected to Communist "brainwashing" (a form of terror employed by the enemy other) — and that this not only made them vulnerable, even compromised, subjects, but also that ideological brainwashing alone explains supposedly "un-American" feelings or actions such as not repatriating — Adams draws out an account about "social justice and economic opportunities," rather than political ideology (54, 69).

At every turn, in military life as much as in civilian life, Adams was confronted with a system of state racism that fails to protect black Americans, excludes them from economic and educational opportunity, and renders them "expendable" objects of state violence — and ultimately this is what he decided against in deciding to live in China. Adams enlisted in the military in 1947 as a means of getting out of town; quite literally, he sought refuge in the recruiting station as he ran from a confrontation with the police, an episode that almost metonymically suggests his escape from the oppressive, stagnant and violent life he faced as a black man in Memphis (22).[39] Flying from one arm of the U.S. state straight into another, Adams would see during his service the slow process of de-segregation within the military, he himself serving in all-black units for the entirety of career, occasionally under white officers. The discrimination, segregation, and violence that followed Adams from the Jim Crow South to the

[39] Toni Morrison's Korean War novel, *Home* also explores this issue and follows a protagonist who, like Adams, flees racial violence at home in the South to fight in the war abroad. See Daniel Y. Kim's new book *Intimacies of Conflict* for an extended discussion of the intersections between the works of Adams, Morrison, and Jin (among others), which together constitute a multiracial and transnational archive of the Korean War that challenges dominant narratives.

military in some ways culminated with the episode that led to his capture in Korea — he was, simply put, abandoned by a racist state. After witnessing the full retreat of two white companies as his black regiment was "ordered to turn [their] 155 mm guns around and lay down cover fire so these white troops could escape," a move that went against conventional military strategy and left his own regiment completely unprotected, Adams recounts, "there was little doubt in my mind that our black regiment was being sacrificed to save white troops" (35). The "sacrifice" Adams here refers to is neither the sacrifice that nationalistic ideology claims of fallen soldiers — to sacrifice one's life for one's country — nor is it the divine sacrifice upon which Agamben bases his theory of *homo sacer*, both of which ritually incorporate the death of an individual into a larger political body. Rather, as Adams explained to HUAC: "we were sacrificed because we were black, which made us *worthless and expendable* in their eyes" (125, my emphasis).

As Adams explains, his repatriation decision derived from a recognition that he was abandoned within the nation as an American citizen, and then literally abandoned on the battlefield as an American soldier. He writes of his time in the camp, "During many of my sleepless nights, I again questioned why America was in Korea and what I was doing there. The more I thought about my life, the more *I felt I had been used, cheated, and betrayed*…When I thought about my life as a young black man, I had great difficulty seeing what democracy and freedom had done for me" (54, my emphasis). But as much as he recognizes his exclusion from the American national project of democracy and freedom, he also remains outside of the Communist project, and in this way, occupies a space between them, which is literalized in the holding-space of the camp (54).[40] Giving an account of his decision, Adams notes that "an integral part of [his] worldview now included a growing understanding of class exploitation and

[40] Adams is careful to note as well that when he finally made his decision to go to China, the Chinese officials "did not trust" him, and several times asked him to justify his decision (68).

a commitment to racial equality" and with this in mind, he simply sought a better life than the one offered him in the U.S. (66). While he admits to seeing "some truth in what the Chinese were telling [them]" in the propaganda classes, he meets the favored "brainwashing" narrative with a sharp rebuttal: "how can it be brainwashing if someone is telling you something you already know is true?" (54). With this, Adams acknowledges the Cold War logic that dominates the narrative of the war, the POW camps, and his own decision around repatriation, but he steps outside of this antagonism, emphasizing instead his experiential knowledge of the gap in the American national project, and giving the latter as the justification of his decision. In some sense, the between space of the camp and the distance it affords him from the nation-state, opens up the possibility of an alternative future, the opportunity for which is finally presented through the repatriation decision. As he describes himself and the other non-repatriated American soldiers, "we were former POWs who had decided to do something different with our lives" (68). The joint statement they wrote explains this further: "Our staying behind does not change the fact that we are Americans. We love our country and our people. Therefore we love personal freedom. Our greatest concern is to fight for peace and freedom, not only for ourselves but for the American people and people of the world" (69). Indeed, empowered by the right of voluntary repatriation, Adams' decision to go to China is most simply, the act of a "*free man* who could live wherever he wished," a freedom promised in America to all American citizens but always already foreclosed for him as an African American (66). And strikingly, as Adams frames it, his decision not to repatriate is the realization of this freedom as well as a*n act in defense of it*.

Adams' active engagement with the problem of citizenship brings us back to Azoulay whose basic premise is that "citizenship is not a stable status that one simply struggles to achieve, but an arena of conflict and negotiation" (31). In a sense, the joint statement is the first

political address Adams makes; it is both a call to his fellow citizens to recognize his position as a national subject in making this decision not to repatriate as well as an invitation to rethink the terms of citizenship and national identity. Asserting their love of country and invoking a relationship to their fellow citizens as well, the non-repatriated soldiers underscore their continued claim to being Americans despite the widespread efforts in media, culture and politics to de-legitimize them. At the same time, the joint statement challenges the primariness of national identity and the assumptions of national ideology, pushing beyond the traditional conflation of "nationality, freedom, and democracy" to consider where this ideology has failed its citizenry — for in failing some, it fails all (Kramer 1373). In a similar way, Adams' memoir becomes a means of political address explicitly directed to his fellow citizens. To "correct the distortions and fabrications that surrounded his decision" is not simply a matter of personal redemption or vindication, but more essentially, it is a way of renewing a relation to his nation and his fellow citizens. Reaching out to his fellow citizens in a way that exceeds the structure of the state and invites a reconsideration of this structure, Adams enacts a different form of civic relationality and participates in *the activity* of citizenship. As Okubo did in *Citizen 13660*, Adams participates in citizenship by presenting a grievance: in rewriting his POW narrative, he places his country's betrayal at the heart of it. And in doing this, Adams creates a productive distance between the state, the nation, and the citizen-subject, working against the state-based model of citizenship that confers citizenship as a status in exchange for loyalty to the nation-state. His own actions speak to this distance, and in addressing his fellow citizens through his memoir, he encourages us as readers and fellow citizens to question both the dominant ideological narrative as well as the model of citizenship that underwrites it. It's important to note that in the end, Adams, like Okubo, re-invests in the American nation. His address, as civic

activity, operates within a national paradigm — his address is directed to his fellow Americans, rather than say, citizens of another country, or a global community of governed subjects.

And this is why Jin's novel *War Trash* is particularly compelling. Whereas Adams remains invested in the nation as the essential form of civic relationality and collectivity (even as he is critical of national ideology and the binding logic of state citizenship), Jin looks beyond the horizon of the nation to suggest another form of political formation, one that is transnational and diasporic, one that is based on the cross-currents and between spaces produced by imperialism. It is my contention that the betweeness of the POW camp, a site of competition, coercion, and abandonment that manifests the ideological struggle on the level of the state, exposes the network of power around the camp and challenges the assumptions of nationalistic politics and state-based citizenship that fuel the war. As with Okubo's view from "inside" the camp, the perspective from the "between" space of the POW camp, functions as a "counter-site[] to U.S. national memory and national culture" to not only contribute a marginalized perspective to the dominant narrative of history, but to also challenge the bound of the collective identity underwriting (Lowe 4).[41] While Adams' memoir would certainly be one such counter-site for the way in which he resists and revises the conventional Cold War narrative of the POW camps, I am primarily interested in looking to Ha Jin's novelized memoir *War Trash* as a counter-site that adopts a view from the between and speaks to American national memory from the perspective of a foreign national. In its transnational address, *War Trash* not only presents a grievance of governance but, through the gesture of gift as inheritance, establishes a structure of civic relations that operates outside of nation-state citizenship. The memory bequeathed implies

[41] In *Ends of Empire* Jodi Kim persuasively argues that Korean American literature is a critical counter-site, serving as a "non-aligned" form of memory that expose and trouble the Cold War logics that shaped the Korean War (150). This is a valuable archive for negotiating the narratives of war still dominated by American conventions. In this chapter, I consider an archive that highlights *transnational* movement to transgress the national bounds of memory and citizenship.

complicity and responsibility, making its own demand that the recipient "inventory the heritage" and in so doing, claim this history and the relationship of the inheritance.

II. Recovering the Political Address as POW

War Trash follows a Chinese soldier's experience in U.S. prison camps and his navigation of the Communist and Nationalist parties' efforts at coercion, an extension of the Chinese Civil War. Yuan is literally shuttled between groups and between camps, but through it all maintains "non-aligned" with any particular political party; as a soldier he desires only to defend his country and as a prisoner he desires only to return to his family. In the end, he is able to repatriate to China, but as he explains in the prologue, later moves to the U.S. to live with his American children and grandchildren. Read alongside Adams' *An American Dream*, Jin's fictional memoir illustrates a similar trajectory of geographical movement from China to the U.S. while moving in the opposite direction in terms of civic belonging—whereas Adams reconfigures the national collective through protest and eventual return, Yuan returns at first but only to later depart and reject the confines of national "homeland" identity. As a migrant dispossessed from his country and temporarily residing in another, he occupies yet another "between," and it is from this position that he writes his memoir, which he then bequeaths as a "gift" to his American grandchildren.

If for Okubo's *Citizen 13660* I favored the documentary mode over the personal (and documentary illustration in particular) as a means of countering the dominant historical narrative and activating another form of civic relationality, in this case, I would consider the "personal" as a form of non-alignment and a way of resisting the strictures of the political binary of the ideological Cold War (as well as the Chinese Civil War in Yuan's case). In this way, Jin's

fictional memoir, as much as Adams' "true" memoir, presents a version of history that resists the political abstraction of the Cold War narrative (the war is a war between superpowers and oppositional ideologies) and attends instead to the precarious position of the individuals caught *between* competing political powers in the POW camp and abandoned there — those who are rendered to use Jin's term, "war trash." For Jin's novel, though, the essential question is not simply whether this story is told, whether this history is remembered, but how these memories are borne and borne by whom? And this is where *War Trash* can be distinguished from *An American Dream*. Not just a narrative of self, or a historical record correcting for amnesia, or the preservation and assemblage of fragmented memories, or even a political address presenting a grievance to one's fellow citizens, Jin's novelized memoir asks to be understood through the gesture of inheritance. Related to the political address, the inheritance makes a relational claim, and in the case of *War Trash*, activates a structure of memory that disrupts national formations, and suggests instead a mode of civic affiliation that better responds to the cross-currents produced by imperialism. The gesture of the inheritance knits a different conception of the "us," and raising the issues of complicity and responsibility, moves toward a more global, non-national model of citizenship based on the recognition of citizens as governed subjects who relate to one another.

Rather than a name, the first identifying feature of the narrator of *War Trash* is a tattoo. He opens the prologue with these lines: "Below my navel stretches a long tattoo that says 'FUCK…U…S…' The skin above those dots has shriveled as through scarred by burns. Like a talisman, the tattoo has protected me in China for almost five decades. Before coming to the States, I wondered whether I should have it removed…Now I am here, and my tattoo has lost its charm; instead it has become a constant concern" (3). With this introduction, the narrator not

only reveals his status as a migrant, but more significantly, suggests his precarious status within both countries; he is in need of protecting in China, which the tattoo provides, until he goes to the U.S. when the incendiary message on his body becomes a vulnerability and threat. Nonetheless, though his stay in the U.S. is temporary, this visit affords the narrator something like "intellectual asylum" as he writes his memoir, the materials for which were in danger of being confiscated by Chinese authorities (3). Alienated from both countries, the narrator's status as a migrant and Chinese national sojourning in the U.S., is the first version of the narrator's "between" position—he seems to "belong" to neither, but the tattoo indicates the way he is vulnerable to both the Chinese and U.S. states as well. The tattoo itself, an inscription on the body, is of course a representation of his vulnerability, and indeed his abandonment to and between these state powers. Though he gives no more explanation at this point, the scarring of his skin around the tattoo suggests that it has been manipulated and altered; something has been erased, which is physically inscribed in his body and borne in the scars[42]. But the message remains legible in its new form, suggesting the transmutability of the tattoo's meaning. "FUCK…U…S…" evidences manipulation and (re)-appropriation or translation, and this is presented through the narrator's body as somehow definitional to his subject position. Indeed, the narrator continues by linking the tattoo to his story and more importantly, his writing, a project he had "planned to write for more than half of [his] life" (5). He reports that his motivation for writing is so that his children and grandchildren might one day "feel the full weight of the tattoo on [his] belly" (5). What is this weight and what would it mean to *feel* it? Marked as "memoir" how is this imparted as "memory"? He goes on to frame "these pages" as a

[42] Notably, the imagery of "burning" appears throughout the novel when lamenting or criticizing how individuals are "sacrificed" by the state to the war, or more precisely, to the political struggle, which is another way of getting at the meaning of "war trash."

"gift" he "bequeath[s]" (5). So then, what does it mean to impart memory as a gift and inheritance? How does this communicate the *full weight* of the tattoo on his body?

The narrator's anonymity suggests the "everyman" experience akin to something like Henry Fleming's narratorial perspective in *Red Badge of Courage,* but coupled with his identity with the tattoo, this also suggests, more acutely, the obscuration of his subject in and through the tattoo that signifies for someone else's political war(s).[43] When the narrator's name is revealed, buried in a piece of dialogue, he is also singled out for his knowledge of English, and in this way he is written into recognition through his linguistic usefulness (9). Yuan's ability as a translator makes him unique among comrades-in-arms, and later makes him an asset among his fellow prisoners, pro-Nationalists and pro-Communists alike, because he can speak the language of the governing power: the American military. His role as translator is not only a convenient narratological device to facilitate his movement around the camp system, but also suggests how the camp is situated in a network of state power. The camps are both a site for the Chinese Civil War to play out, the parties vying to influence the soldiers' repatriation decisions, at the same time that they are a site of surveillance and governance, in this case by the American military, whose presence is at best indifferent and at worse complicit in the power struggles of the camps.

Through the tattoo, Yuan's body is made a central locus for this network of power. After being captured by American soldiers, Yuan finds himself first in a pro-Nationalists' camp, where, under the pressure of an impending repatriation decision, they begin an aggressive tattooing campaign to intimidate and coerce prisoners into repatriating to Taiwan.[44] Yuan is

[43] There is also the sense that Yuan's anonymity indicates his representativeness as a character. When Jin describes his process in writing the novel, he discusses Yuan as a kind of assemblage of individuals, a unification of multiple fragmented perspectives (Varsava 19). In this way, Yuan's story is a kind of "our story," which also suggests the way in which the title functions as both a singular and plural noun.

[44] In 1949, Chiang Kai-Shek and his party retreated to Taiwan when the Communists took power in China. The question of repatriation after the Korean War thus became an opportunity for both the pro-Communists and the pro-Nationalists to recruit, persuade, or coerce Chinese citizens to their side.

adamant about wanting only to return home to his family in China, and he insists time and again that it is not a political decision, but a personal one. However, when he resists the pro-Nationalists' efforts to court him on account of his education and language abilities, they respond by abducting him in a drunken stupor and tattooing him with the phrase, "FUCK COMMUNISM" (98). While the tattoo is an altogether different act of inscription — it is physically written on the body — it is helpful to consider it in light of the previous discussion of the loyalty oath forced on Japanese Americans.[45] Both the oath and the tattoo follow a logic of exclusive loyalty to a political power, reducing (if not outright eliminating) the subject's agency in the act of declaration. Just as the U.S. government forced a false choice between Japan and the U.S., the tattoo represents a coercive attempt to force a false choice between the Nationalists and the Communists, seeking not so much an individual's declaration of loyalty, but simply submission to their authority. With the tattoo, Yuan's body is appropriated as a tool of ideological messaging in an attempt to write him into the strict binary of the political parties, erasing the individual and foreclosing the personal. But it's not enough to read the tattoo only in terms of the binary of the Chinese Civil War— his tattoo is in English, suggesting its message is also addressed to the Americans. Thus, Yuan's body is also appropriated as a tool of ideological messaging speaking to the broader network of power around the camps. As a physical inscription on the body, the tattoo suggests the prisoners' abandonment within the camp, their vulnerability and exposure to violence, which, Yuan reminds, occurs under the watch of the U.S.: "the Americans had adopted a let-alone policy and didn't care what happened in the compounds so long as the POWs remained behind the barbed wire, so Liu ruled this regiment like a police

[45] It's also worth noting that in addition to the tattooing campaign, Yuan mentions that Nationalist leaders also coerced prisoners into signing anti-Communist vows, literal acts of inscription intended to have a similar effect as the tattoos (i.e. intimidating prisoners and potentially barring their return) and most similar to the loyalty oaths during World War II (77).

state" (69). Regarded as prisoners merely to be kept "behind the barbed wire," the prisoners are governed subjects to be regulated and surveilled but not really protected. Their vulnerability becomes something more chronic, not registered as urgent or demanding of intervention.

This sense of abandonment is in many ways contained in the novel's neologism "war trash."[46] The term is first used not by Yuan, although he later absorbs it into his lexicon, but by one of the pro-Nationalist leaders during a brutal scene in which a prisoner, who has been tattooed like Yuan, protests against the party's attempts at coercion and insists on the integrity of his right to make his own repatriation decision, as provisioned by the Geneva Conventions. Invoking the legal apparatus around the prison camp, Wushen appeals to their shared status as prisoners and the political rights guaranteed them as such: "According to the Geneva Convention, every prisoner has a right to choose where to go…We're all prisoners and shouldn't interfere with each other's decisions" (105). This appeal, however, is immediately rejected by the Nationalist leader who insists on a distinction between the party leaders and those subjected to their power: "Liu Tai-an lifted the front of his new jacket to show that this wasn't a piece of prison issue with P and W on its patch pockets or sleeves. He said, 'I'm not war trash like you. I'm a free man, an officer appointed to command this battalion'" (105). Notably, the officer suggests the POW designation on their "prison issue" clothes is, like the tattoo, another set of letters involuntary borne on the prisoners' bodies indicating their status as the war's byproduct. Once captured and moved to the holding space that is the POW camp, the soldiers are rendered a kind of excess of battle, their bodies something to simply be managed, and manipulated, by

[46] Joseph Darda makes an explicitly biopolitical reading of the prisoners as "bare life" and Yuan's tattoo as the "indicator of this abandoned state," which is very much in the sense that Agamben draws out in *Homo Sacer*, meaning he is excluded from the political realm at the same time that his body becomes the "locus of political power" (90). In this way, the prisoners, as "war trash" are treated as the "biological remainder of war" (92). My own reading, drawing on Azoulay, is undoubtedly related to this one, but also focuses more intently on the prisoners' civic status, their being governed subjects.

various political powers. The officer, by contrast, claims to be a "free man" as a commander endowed with deciding power, which he wields over the "war trash" prisoners to restrict if not deny their agency, despite the protections of the Geneva Convention. Echoing Adams, "freedom" again arises around the repatriation decision; it is a promise contained in personal choice but also a right withheld.

In the next scene, Wu Shen challenges the officer's self-proclaimed power by linking it to the Americans' power, though it's unclear if he views the Americans as indifferent or complicit. For this spoken act of resistance, the officer hacks off "the flesh occupied by the black tattoo" and takes him into custody before publicly executing him (105-8). Even before his violent death, the prisoner's body is displaced as something that is merely occupied by ink, becoming material to be (re)possessed for use by someone else. The tattoo, as much as its removal, inscribes in the body as indication of the prisoners' abandonment, their subjection, exposure, and vulnerability—their status as "war trash"—a vulnerability that is of course most extremely demonstrated in the violence of his execution. Yet another dimension of the prisoners' abandonment is the failure of speech, when the address is ignored or silenced. When citing his rights (and every prisoner's rights) under the Geneva Conventions, Wushen can be understood as making an address and presenting a grievance of citizenship; the law has been suspended at the camp, and Wushen calls attention to this, speaking back to power, in defense of shared political and civic conditions. His address, however, is disregarded and denied, the officer re-iterating his power outside of the law as well as Wushen's subjection to this power and ultimately to the law—his only recourse is to cite the Geneva Conventions.

Throughout the novel, as in this scene, the prisoners are in the position of needing to state and justify their desires for repatriation, of presenting their injuries, or of pleading for protection

(this includes formal and informal, voluntary and coercive situations). These can be read as scenes of address, but more often than not, the structure of address fails — it does not establish a horizontal relationality necessary for a sense of responsibility to arise, a sense of responsibility that can activate a different model of citizenship among governed subjects. Rather, the address is foreclosed (because unheard, disregarded, or dismissed) and collapses back into vertical relations of power, violence, and injury, a set of relations written into the structure of the camp as well as the state-based model of citizenship. Though there are many scenes of address in the novel, including of course the screenings and registrations for repatriation, I focus on a pivotal scene in which the prisoners formally present their grievances about the governance of the camps, present their physical injuries as much as their civic injuries—and they do so to an American general.

At one point, Communist prisoners in the Korean compound begin a demonstration within their camp "demanding a face-to-face dialogue" with the American commandant, General Bell (163). At the gate of the camp, the prisoners "enumerated the prison authorities' violations of the Geneva Conventions" at the gate of the camp to which Bell responded perfunctorily, citing the Conventions in turn and resisting their accusations. The prisoners then manage a diversion and kidnap Bell in order to involve him in a "conference that includes representatives of prisoners from other compounds" with the intent of "discuss[ing] the possibilities and search[ing] for solutions of the problems" (164). In effect, the prisoners organize a political meeting in which to present their grievances and to negotiate the terms of governance — the prisoners thus reckon with the camp as a civic space and seek to reclaim their position as civic subjects insofar as they are also governed subjects. And this means making a political address to the governing body, in this case, the American military. Though Bell's attendance at the conference is coerced, it is important to note how he is regarded in this situation as a proxy of the

American military and U.S. government. Speaking to the prisoners, the Communist Colonel Choi refers to Bell's position as limited: he is "just an officer" obeying orders from higher up (all the way up to the government) (175). But in addressing Bell himself, the Colonel invokes his status as an authority as something that necessitates some measure of responsibility: "as an American general, you must have the courage to face the facts" (175). Though of course the Colonel's appeals are strategic and allow him to leverage Bell's role in the "negotiations" without really endangering anyone's life, they also point up the particularity of Bell's position — as a kind of proxy, he is both a limited and responsible agent.[47] And responsibility, or an acknowledgment of complicity, is precisely the point of this confrontation, the prisoners seeking some kind of accountability in presenting their grievances, which Bell resists taking on himself.

Over a few sessions, various prisoners present their experiences and complaints about the direct and violent actions of American soldiers as well as their "encouragement" of or "connivance" with the actions of their allies, both within and outside of the camp (174). Bell remains detached in his response: "There's lots of crimes in war, but I can't be responsible for all of them" (178). When it's Yuan's turn to present, he explains the "persecution" he witnessed and experienced himself in the pro-Nationalists' compound, recounting Wushen's execution and how the officers "cut some men to collect the tattoos they themselves had inflicted on them by force," after which he bares his own tattoo to Bell as evidence of the violence and of his own injury (178). Significantly, Bell's first response is to laugh, calling Yuan's experience a "prank" "played" by the pro-Nationalists (178). Yuan quickly corrects this mis-recognition, invoking how the tattoo jeopardizes his future in his "homeland": "This is a crime, isn't it?" he asks Bell

[47] See Judith Butler, *Precarious Life* for a short discussion of governmentality and proxy power.

(178). Bell concedes, but Yuan continues to push him to take responsibility as a representative of the governing body of the camps:

> 'Those prison chiefs were trained in Japan and Taiwan, and then sent back by your government to help you run the camp. They murdered and beat us at will. Isn't the American government responsible for their crimes?'
>
> 'If what you say is true, our government didn't do a great job. To be frank, I have no idea who trained them.'
>
> His equivocal answer infuriated me. I lost self-control, shouting at him hysterically, 'Stop dodging! You think you're clean? Let me tell you, you too are a criminal whose hands are stained with Chinese and Korean blood. You think you can pretend you don't know what crimes your men committed? You think you can bend our will and force us to betray our motherland? Do you know what the true Chinese spirit is? Let me tell you, if we're alive, we're Chinese men; if we're dead, we're Chinese ghosts. Those bastards under your protection can never change us by mutilating our bodies. (179)

The mis-recognition of the tattoo as prank is the first indication of the failed address. Yuan's injury, and his grievance (that this was allowed to happen), fails to register in a way that demands attention and intervention and is instead easily dismissed by Bell as a joke that doesn't concern him as an American soldier. As a prisoner (war trash), Yuan is an impaired or faulty citizen, and a racialized citizen of another country at that; his address fails precisely because he is not regarded as a full political subject, or one that matters, so the presentation of injury is easily disavowed or neutralized, it does not really register as a violation.[48] As a proxy in a system of governmentality, Bell resists placing himself into a structure of responsibility, displacing accountability to the abstract ("our government") or to some unknown other agent ("I have no idea who trained them").

In his own address, Yuan presents two related grievances: the interference in the prisoners' repatriation decisions (the manipulation of their "will") and the violence inflicted on

[48] In her analysis of the photographic address and the photograph as a "statement of horror" that can make an "emergency claim," Azoulay explains, "the "statements are flawed when they do not successfully generate an emergency, when the horror transmitted by these statements fails to appear as something that needs to be stopped immediately, or when they fail to depict something that requires preventative actions to be taken to ensure it from continuing" and that this flaw is bound up with the subjects' compromised civil status such that the injury is not visible in the same way (203).

them (the "mutilation" of their bodies). Having literally presented his body bearing the inscription of crime, the force of Yuan's address comes in calling on Bell through the second person to attend to these injuries, respond to them, and to recognize his role: "*you* too are a criminal," "what crimes *your* men committed," "those bastards under *your* protection." Importantly, in calling Bell to account, Yuan also acknowledges the hierarchical network of power around the camp that distributes agency among proxies, and seeks to also distribute responsibility by insisting on shared but individual complicity. It is worth distinguishing this address from the political address of a citizen speaking to fellow citizens (as with Okubo or Adams), which establishes relationality through a shared condition of governance. By contrast, Yuan addresses Bell as an authority but also seeks, through the second person address, to establish another kind of relationality within the vertical structure of power.

At the conclusion of the "conference," Bell is asked to sign "The Promise Made by the American Prison Authorities" which seeks, in the main, an agreement to end the violence in the camps against the prisoners and to end the coercive screenings process around repatriation (180). The first draft is written by the prisoners and is, in Yuan's estimation, a "wild piece of writing" that Bell could not possibly sign without becoming a traitor to his own country. Bell's revised promise, however, is a striking gesture of response and responsibility, even if it remains just a promise:

> With regard to your demands, I admit that there were instances of abuse and bloodshed in the prison compounds on Koje Island, and that some POWs were killed by other inmates and injured by the U.N. guards. As the commanding officer I am partially responsible for the loss of lives. I can assure you that in the future the POWs here will receive humane treatment in accordance with international law. I will do everything in my capacity to prevent violence, bloodshed, and corporal punishment. If such incidents occur again, I should be called to account. (183)

In the context of loyalty oaths and tattoos, Bell's signed promise presents a different kind of act of inscription. One could understand the loyalty oaths from internment as a coerced promise to the state, not unlike, in structure, the first draft presented to Bell. With the revision, however, Bell becomes "responsible" for the words of his promise and the "I" takes on a different presence in and through the address (and his promise is very much written as an address to the prisoners). With his words, Bell puts himself into a relational structure of responsibility: "I admit," "as the commanding officer I am partially responsible," "I can assure *you*," and finally, "I should be called to account." Importantly, Bell still speaks from his position as a commanding officer and invokes the structure of "international law" that governs the space of the camp. In doing so, Bell acknowledges the network of power that operates at the camps, *and his role in it*. He recognizes his position in relation to the prisoners, even if in a vertical relation, and in the last line, explicitly invites accountability in this relation. This letter signifies a significant change in his response to the prisoners' address(es); here, for the first time, is response and responsibility, and an address in return. The relational structure of address holds. Of course, the "victory" the prisoners celebrate is very much about the concrete points of his promise—to end the violence and to protect the prisoners—but the conference is also about the prisoners reclaiming their civic status through political address. Not only do they demand to be regarded as full political subjects deserving of protection, and protection from state power, but they also participate as governed subjects in the negotiation of the terms of governance.

But a promise is tenuous. Soon after the prisoners release Bell, the American military, represented now by another general, "seal[s]" the camp, revokes Bell's agreement (and demotes him), and announces his intention to "restore order" in the camp, threatening the use of force (186). A bloody confrontation with the guards ensues and results in many deaths and several

other prisoners being rounded up and moved to Koje Island as war criminals (187-9). Bell's limited power as a proxy is underscored, his agency immediately undercut and subsumed into the broader power of the American military. The structure of address established at the conference was fragile and collapses again into vertical power structure of the camp; the law is suspended and the prisoners are abandoned, given over entirely to violence and injury.

And this is where the urgency of Yuan's writing task lies. The memoir is written and imparted as a kind of address, emerging from the personal perspective that was time and again rejected in favor of the political framework of the war. Indeed, Yuan closes his memoir recounting his Commissar's wishes that someone write about their experience in the POW camps ("'Please write our story!'"), and then explicitly distances himself from this request, rejecting that invocation of the collective: "Now I must conclude this memoir, which is my first attempt at writing and also my last…But do not take this to be an 'our story.' In the depths of my being I have never been one of them. I have just written what I experienced" (350). These final lines are a stunning gesture of renunciation and a powerful assertion of the integrity of the *I*. At the same time, Yuan's independence suggests his dispossession and relative isolation.[49] China under Communist rule does not represent a "home" where he can be among "true comrades," even as he longs (and plans) to return to "the land that has raised and nourished [him] and will retain [his] bones" (5, 305). In a very real sense, he would not have been able to write *his* story from within China, and must go to the U.S. to do so, which, significantly, is also where he finally has his tattoo removed.

Originally tattooed by the pro-Nationalists, Yuan then changes camps in alignment with his repatriation desires to be among the pro-Communists who will return to China. Once there,

[49] In *The Migrant as Writer*, Jin writes, "Exile must be an individual, private experience that is so personal that solitude ought to be its ethical condition" (71).

they manage to "translate" Yuan's body and his tattoo for their purposes as well. He is almost immediately told he is a "special case" and will be useful in dealing with the Americans, equipped as he is with his knowledge of English and now a provocative tattoo that plays into *their* ideology (124). Deemed "necessary for the struggle," Yuan is thus enlisted for various political missions that eventually land him back in the pro-Nationalists' camp. He may be useful, but he is also, to echo Clarence Adams' language, "worthless and expendable." Throughout the novel, Yuan struggles to negotiate his position between these powers and to maintain the integrity of his personal choice in repatriation. Like Wushen, he holds on to the right of voluntary repatriation ostensibly protected by the Geneva Conventions and wants only to return to his family in China without taking a political stance in the Civil War.[50]

Upon repatriation, Yuan immediately seeks to remove the tattoo that has caused him so much anxiety in the camps and that poses a more severe problem under the Communist government. He finds a doctor who "helps" soldiers by "cutting the shameful words and signs off their skin" to "make a dark phrase unintelligible or give it new meaning" (341). Fortunately, because the doctor knew English, he was able to "play with the alphabet" to transform the tattoo into something else (341). The result is the tattoo Yuan bears on his body when he goes to the U.S.: "FUCK…U…S…" The description of the procedure once again emphasizes the materiality of the body as well as the violent intrusion of the tattoo and its removal. Under the careful watch of a Communist officer, this transformation is yet another act of inscription to possess the citizen-soldier's body, relocating that tattoo's meaning from the Civil War to the Cold War. When Yuan migrates to the U.S., the transformed tattoo becomes a real, tangible danger once

[50] In the last hour, Yuan considers the option of going to a third country to "disentangle [himself] from the fracas between the Communists and Nationalists" but realizes this isn't viable; any choice other than China is a choice against the Communist Party and his family would be implicated in this betrayal (313). In the end, Yuan returns to China, where, quite tragically, his mother has died and his fiancée rejects him as a "traitorous" captive (344).

again. In time, he is able to arrange to have it "erased" by a doctor with a laser procedure that "would cause little pain" (348). With this final transformation, Yuan symbolically extricates himself from the binary logic of the political war, and "pens" his memoir as another kind of inscription and another kind of address, replacing someone else's ideological message with a political address of his own.

III. Bequeathing History and Relating Memory

The terms I used to discuss Okubo's *Citizen 13660* are again relevant for this discussion; Jin too employs a mixed mode of discourse, blending the personal and documentary through the fictional apparatus of the memoir. Yuan explains his project: "I'm going to do it in English, a language I started learning at the age of fourteen, and I'm going to tell my story in a documentary manner so as to preserve historical accuracy…I regard this memoir as the only gift a poor man like me can bequeath his American grandchildren" (5).

First, to consider the personal: I have already suggested the way in which Yuan's closing statement ("I have just written what I experienced") functions as a renunciation of political affiliation and an assertion of the personal ("my story"). I do not want to suggest, however, that the personal mode is simply a means of "humanizing" war in a way that transcends politics, or, as one historian puts it, "the abstraction of the international system as well as the fetishism of the nation-state with its attendant dichotomies of enemy and ally, friend and foes, hero and villain" (West 9). Though compelling and even consistent with Yuan's critique of politics and even stated aims in writing, this argument both validates the primacy of this political system and overstates (and thereby re-entrenches) the opposition of the personal and political. I would argue that Yuan's memoir directly engages this international system of opposition and attempts to

restructure it through the relational structure of address and memory. The nature of Yuan's gift, his memoir as inheritance is, in this way, necessarily political.

So, though the genre of the memoir privileges the autobiographical *I*, and as much as Yuan emphatically rejects the "our story," it is imperative to understand Yuan's *I* as nevertheless relational.[51] His is a project undertaken *for* others, memory becoming a gift and an inheritance, a gesture signifying an essential intergenerational relation. *War Trash*, in this way, is very much interested in the question of who partakes in the memory of war, who remembers, and perhaps more significantly, who remembers whom? Here it helpful to consider Paul Ricoeur's theory of memory in *Memory, History, Forgetting*. While any memory of an-other is necessarily relational, whether voluntary or involuntary, Ricoeur argues that the "duty of memory" relies especially on the ideas of justice and debt. He writes, "it is the project of justice that gives the form of the future and of the imperative to the duty of memory," emphasizing the turn "toward others" such that the duty of memory becomes "the duty to do justice, through memories, to an other than the self" (89). The idea of debt, then, is key for grasping the relational temporality of memory. Ricoeur argues:

> The idea of debt is inseparable from the notion of heritage. We are indebted to those who have gone before us for part of what we are. The duty of memory…maintains the feeling of being obligated with respect to these others, of whom we shall later say, not that they are no more, but that they were. Pay the debt, I shall say, but also inventory the heritage. (89)

In his address to his grandchildren, Yuan imparts this memory to the next generation, thereby establishing a sense of heritage, a duty of memory, and a relational structure that is forward-looking as much as it is backward-looking. By addressing the youngest generation, Yuan

[51] As in Chapter 1, I am disinclined to read the memoir simply in terms of readerly identification and empathy with the narratorial *I*. I would argue that this interpretation risks obliterating human particularities by other means, privileging the universalism of the "human" (and therefore neglecting difference), or at least privileging the primacy of the reader's *I* and obscuring in this way the sense of relationality implied in collective memory.

establishes a direct relationship and interpolates them into a structure of remembering, implying the indebtedness of heritage, and urging them as readers to remember and *to feel*, to become in this way the bearers of his imparted memory. This history, as an inheritance, carries an injunction to remember, and reading the memoir then becomes a means of inventorying the heritage. In one sense, this dedication is simply familial and can be read in terms of Asian American diaspora and intergenerational identity, which is explored in detail in the following chapter.[52] Yuan notes that his daughter in law is from Cambodia to further emphasize the diasporic aspect of their family and behind this, the overlapping histories of Asian immigration to the U.S. However, Yuan draws attention to both his and his grandchildren's subject positions vis-a-vis the nation. Politically dispossessed from China, Yuan seeks a kind of "intellectual asylum" in the U.S. and in the English language, but still identifies as a Chinese national writing for his American grandchildren. The memory Yuan bequeaths, then, is not merely the memory of a grandfather's experience; it is also coded by the nationalist politics of the Korean War, the Cold War, and the problem of citizenship.

In this way, Yuan's memoir must also be taken in a civic context. Embracing the documentary style, Yuan, from the outset insists on the communication of memory *as history*. Privileging "historical accuracy" as a witness and participant, just as Okubo's *Citizen 13660* did, *War Trash* self-consciously participates in the construction of the historical narrative but in a way that also places the personal at the center, producing through this, another conception of civic relationality. To write for historical accuracy, to write in a documentarian mode, is not to necessarily write in an impersonal mode, but instead to recast the interpersonal potential of such

[52] In *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* Marianne Hirsch discusses how traumatic memory is passed on generationally. "Family Pictures: *Maus*, Mourning, and Post-Memory" also provides a helpful introduction.

a project. And this aspect of the writing, I suggest, comes through the relational structure of address.

If the structure of address was always foreclosed within the novel at the site of the camp—because of the prisoners' compromised status as prisoners—Yuan's memoir (a narrative of what *he* has experienced) serves as another form of address, one that he makes as an abandoned governed subject. Written in English and addressed to "American grandchildren," *War Trash* calls on a specifically American audience in his address, calling on them to attend to his story, this history of the war, and the grievance(s) he presents. He writes so that the youngest Americans might "feel the full weight of the tattoo," the tattoo on his belly embodying (and inscribing) his abandonment as a POW caught "between" in a network of power and left exposed there to violence and injury. The tattoo signifies his subjection, displacement, and dispensability relative to the state, which, at the site of the camp, is always multiple, coordinated in a network of power and governance. His address, just as he presented it before to General Bell, thus includes both his physical traumas to violence, as well as the injury to citizenship, his occlusion as a political subject and the vulnerability that follows from this lack of protection. But the novel does more than simply invite attention to this history and to this condition. As a gift bequeathed and an inheritance establishing heritage, the memoir-novel claims that this history is not only relevant but marks a significant contribution to the American memory of the Korean War. Speaking as an abandoned governed subject in his address, Yuan calls on other governed subjects to attend to his state of abandonment and the forms of state power that produce it, *and* to feel implicated in this history, to possess it as one's own heritage. Through the gift of inheritance, Yuan's memoir wants to establish a direct relationship to the American citizenry. In this way, Yuan's address, emerging from a between space of dispossession, enacts a relationality

among governed subjects to exceed the limited sphere of the nation and introduce an alternative civic formation that transgresses the borders of the nation-state. This address, as a horizontal relationality, opens onto a recognition of the shared condition of being governed subjects, which stands in opposition to the vertical relationality of state power structuring the camp and nation-state citizenship.

To return to Azoulay, it is the "citizen's possible partnership with citizens of other nations or with noncitizens" that creates a kind of political formation that can "stand up to the governmental power and confront it with the demand to be governed by the means, under the aegis, and solely in the name of their citizenship" (34). The conventional model of citizenship interferes with this possible political formation by securing and encouraging the "citizen's identification with [the] collective, which is designated either as the 'nation,' 'state,' or 'body politic,'" thereby "obscur[ing] the core of his or her political existence as governed" and foreclosing the modes of affiliation and responsibility that would arise out of a recognition of this shared condition (34). But it is precisely the recognition of being governed subjects, of being exposed to state power, and the recognition that this is common condition across the boundaries of nation-states, that produces a real political potential to resist state power and participate in the negotiation of the terms of citizenship.

In light of this civic collectivity, I read Yuan's tattoo in yet another way: not simply a condemnation or accusation of the U.S. state, the tattoo can also read "FUCK US," a condemnation against an abstract "us." Situated as Yuan is, caught between state powers at the camp, politically dispossessed from his country, and then temporarily and precariously residing in another, it is difficult to conceive the collective; indeed, Yuan explicitly writes his memoir against the "our story" of the Chinese POWs. Nevertheless, through the address and through

inheritance, Yuan reaches after a form of relationality that produces another sense of "us," one that is based on the affiliation of governed subjects. So, the same preface in which Yuan frames his memoir as the bequeathal of a gift, he begins with a condemnation that interpolates the reader, bringing her into relation with an "us" to which Yuan also belongs (among many anonymous others). This direct political address, as before in the scene with Bell, also pursues the question of responsibility and complicity; it is a calling to account. In one sense, the memoir seeks, as Yuan sought from Bell, a recognition of American responsibility, a recognition of their presence at the camp and their participation in the network of power that abandoned the prisoners, leaving them vulnerable to violence and injury as impaired citizens. *War Trash* insists on this history as a heritage that necessarily includes Americans. But the gesture of Yuan's inheritance extends beyond national or nationalistic conceptions of civic engagement in a crucial way—the address is decidedly transnational. Like Adams's *An American Dream*, *War Trash* calls on a responsibility among governed subjects to recognize, remember, and respond to this injury to citizenship, and to then negotiate its terms. *War Trash* calls "us" to account, demanding that we grapple with our shared condition as governed subjects. The address invests in an "us" beyond the nation, pivoting into an international system of state power and reconfiguring the forms of responsibility we bear as citizens caught up in the cross-currents.

CHAPTER THREE

Rereading Vietnamese Refugee Resettlement: Unsettling the Familial Gaze, Toward Diasporic Intimacy[53]

"As the body moves, where, then, does memory live?"
Katharya Um, "Exiled Memory"

In some ways, I begin this chapter where I ended the last. Ha Jin frames his novel-memoir *War Trash* with a preface by Yu Yuan, an exiled Chinese national, who positions himself as a migrant with generational connections to an Asian diaspora in the U.S., not only his children of Chinese descent but his daughter-in-law from Cambodia. He imparts his historical memoir as a gift to the younger generation, which I argued, signifies as a final address to a broader American reading public with an injunction to remember this history as its inheritance. This innovative form of memory necessarily transgresses the conventional borders of the nation-

[53] Portions of this essay were first presented in a paper I co-authored with Molly McCullough, a scholar of critical adoption studies, which is titled "No Family, No Nation: Unsettling Narratives of Migration and Adoption" and was presented at AAAS in April 2019. I owe much of the thinking in this chapter to ongoing conversations with Molly, whose insights have broadened my comparative understanding of displaced and dispossessed groups, especially in critical refugee studies and Asian American literature.

state and binding forms of belonging presumed in "citizenship" by moving into different registers of diaspora and family. In this chapter, I focus on the transnational, diasporic memories of the American War in Vietnam and the refugee "problem" that was transformed by the U.S. state into a humanitarian reclamation of the "failed" war. The POW camp was also a dual site of military state power and humanitarianism, but the terms of warfare defined the form of governance exercised there (a combination I return to in the Chapter Four on the Guantánamo Bay Prison). The refugee camp, on the other hand, echoes the internment camp more directly, functioning as a primary site for the state's regulation of immigrants and "faulty" citizens. As Yên Lê Espiritu has masterfully shown in *Body Counts*, what is essential to understanding this particular version of the camp is the way in which it is conventionally understood as a humanitarian crisis handled by the benevolent U.S., when it is merely an extension of American military aggression.[54] Indeed, I read the refugee camps as projects of American nation-making insofar as their governance was intended to cultivate good American subjects, each a potential new citizen who could assimilate into American life (as other immigrants are expected to).

In her study of "militarized refuge(es)," Espiritu notes two kinds of camps (and thus a range of camp lives): processing centers that prepare people for resettlement, and detention centers that "warehoused rejected refugees" (57-8). While the latter undoubtedly represents a greater contradiction in the delusion of humanitarianism,[55] I focus on the processing centers for the way in which they highlight the duality of containment and movement and establish the

[54] In *Body Counts*, Espiritu methodically shows how the U.S. engineered its "rescue" operations through the military infrastructure already established in the Asian Pacific, recapitulating the logics of military colonialism and American moral superiority. The humanitarianism of missions like "Operation New Arrivals" and "Operation Babylift," framed as the rescue and resettlement of orphans and families, was a PR project for the nation-state reeling from the war, one made possible by its entrenched military history in the region (42).

[55] In fact, Espiritu explains, "In these detention centers, Vietnamese lives were *not* mediated by humanitarian interventions that attempted to turn them into good modern citizens; instead they were routinely denied access to schools, health facilities, and most social services" (60).

trajectory of life for the civilians detained there. Insofar as the refugee "problem" in the wake of the U.S. war in Vietnam (and Laos and Cambodia) became an American strategy to rebrand itself as a place of "good refuge," the U.S. invested in a narrative of "the goof refugee" (25). Not unlike the educational programs Miné Okubo described in the internment camps, the refugee camps were buttressed by curriculums in job training, English language skills, and American culture. Framed as preparation, or "orientation," for their resettlement, these educational programs were interested in teaching new "immigrant" subjects the protocols of American democratic society. The refugee camp still off-shore (compared to the internment camp hidden in the nation's heartland) was an early opportunity to "persuade them to internalize the value and hierarchies of the U.S." before arrival (60).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the nuclear family, as one of the most essential values and hierarchies in the U.S. was also imposed as the internal structure of the resettlement camps and the pathway of resettlement. To first gain the designation of "refugee," and thus a claim to the rights of asylum, individuals had to establish themselves as anticommunists fleeing persecution. From there, however, resettlement policies selectively favored "family unity" through normative family arrangements (55-6). Officially, family members of priority groups would qualify for resettlement on the basis of their relationship, but even the conception of "legitimate" relationships was strict and narrow.[56] For example, many common-law marriages and mothers with Amerasian children did not qualify. In the eyes of the U.S., the refugee resettlement process was an opportunity for shaping new immigrants—and family units—to assimilate into dominant conceptions of American life. Indeed, the very collapse of the refugee experience into other

[56] Priority groups included those who worked for the South Vietnamese government or Western institutions, who belonged to persecuted minorities, or those who were sent to reeducation camps (Espiritu 55-6). The father in *The Gangster We Are All Looking For* is an example of the last.

immigrant narratives is key to maintaining this national image by obscuring the militarization of their displacement (45).[57] As a result, the U.S. established a desired trajectory of refugee life consistent with a hegemonic conception of the "good life" rooted in American democracy, freedom, economic/social mobility, and the stability of the heteronormative nuclear family.[58] To be sure, camp residents maintained their own family ties independently, or pursued other kinship arrangements, but resettlement policies were an unambiguous tool to enforce the nuclear family structure as part of early assimilation.[59]

At the same time, I want to consider how family is understood as an *internal* vocabulary or code of diaspora, which has in turn given shape to a unique body of literature. Here I draw from another voice in critical refugee studies, Khatharya Um. In her pursuit of a "new panethnic identity" of Southeast Asians and refugees forged by the so-called Vietnam War, she asks, "what other forms and manifestations can and did remembering and memorialization take privately and collectively, outside the official gaze?" (832, 841). Um turns to memory as a necessary alternative to history because it is both personal and collective (riffing on the false dichotomy of the personal/political), and thus becomes the "connective strand that links the *stateless body* of the displaced with the *roots and identities* that history and politics have pried away from them" (836, my emphasis). I want to draw attention to the way in which Um returns to seemingly more elemental identities of family and nation as the necessary "roots" within her conception of a

[57] Espiritu explains the "myth of immigrant America" as a "narrative of voluntary immigrations that ignores the role that US world power has played in inducing global migration" (45). This collapse of narratives is felt to some extent in Thi Bui's *The Best We Could Do*, as my reading will show.

[58] Here I am inspired by Gayatri Gopinath's account of queer diaspora as a disruption to neoliberal norms. Drawing primarily on Lauren Berlant, Gopinath illustrates the heteronormative pathway of the "good life" as a unidirectional movement that queerness disrupts and suspends (60-65). See her chapter "Queer Disorientations, States of Suspension" in *Unruly Visions* for a fuller discussion.

[59] Though, Espiritu illustrates, camp residents created their own full "lifeworlds" and kinships within the camp, often ones that resisted normative strictures, resettlement policies determined presumed "worthiness" as refugees and relied on the detention center alternative for those who didn't qualify (51).

more transnational, diasporic identity. Crucially for Um, remembering and recording multigenerational family stories of the diaspora is a way to "anchor" in "genealogy" and regain "wholeness and coherence…both for the individual and for the nation" (847, 841). In positing the family as "refuge," and reclaiming the language of humanitarianism, Um seems to suggest another rescue operation, one that saves the individual (and nation) from an undesirable "incoherence" due to the estrangement from roots. I do not want to de-emphasize the experiences of families separated by death and displacement, nor the amnesic regimes installed after the war, which undoubtedly generates a different orientation to nation and its recovery. However, I am interested in how the return to the more "rooted" identities of family and nation *defers* the transnational "new panethnic identity," suggesting a preference for more "coherent" identities of kin and perhaps inadvertently reinforcing dominant ideologies of "desirable" collectivity (such as those imposed at the camps). What remains of the potential for new diasporic identities if they are consolidated back to the more familiar codes of family and/or nation?

At first, Um describes memory practices that exist outside the official gaze as resistant, if not radical, because they are "fractured, dispersed, multiple, and diverse" and I would like to linger in this potential longer (835). Without fetishizing the splintering movement that characterizes the personal and collective histories of refugee groups, this description suggests the way that diaspora produces other models of identity and solidarity and can thus function as a distinctly antinational force. Here, I draw on Paul Gilroy's work in *Against Race* where he articulates the "idea of diaspora." As a rejoinder to the deconstruction of camp-thinking, Gilroy turns to diaspora identification as an alternative, if not antidote, to citizenship, and more essentially, the "stern discipline of primordial kinship and rooted belonging" (123-4). Not only does this "outer-national term" call attention to a "relational network" that exceeds the nation,

but by "valuing diaspora more highly than the coercive unanimity of the nation, the concept becomes explicitly antinational" (123, 128). Similar to Um, Gilroy returns to diaspora to de-naturalize the codes of nationalism and national identity and to revive negotiations around processes of commemoration, which are more multiple, ambivalent, and indeterminate. However, Gilroy moves the idea of diaspora into a more fundamental register by pushing back on the deeper logics of kinship and genealogy, which challenges conceptions of *identity* as well. He suggests, "by embracing diaspora, theories of identity turn instead toward contingency, indeterminacy, and conflict," terms I will return to later in the chapter (128). In passing, Gilroy critiques the role of family to build kinship-thinking on the level of the nation, but he also preserves space for smaller-scale subnational kinship, perhaps alongside or simultaneous to the supranational. If diaspora offers a different theory of identity altogether, it's not entirely clear how Gilroy reconciles its commitments to estrangement with the closer, more local structures of family, which offer their own stabilizing roots.

In my discussion of two resettlement narratives I want to magnify the tension between diaspora and family that appears when striving for alternative memory practices that counter the "official gaze" and the way it privileges the nation as the basis of memory, identity, and kinship. *The Best We Could Do* by Thi Bui (2018) and *The Gangster We Are All Looking For* by lê thi diem thúy (2003) are two literary remembrances of the Vietnamese-American diaspora. Both are narratives of Vietnamese families resettled in the U.S written by daughters who arrived as children. The two have similar trajectories of being processed through refugee camps and arriving in the U.S. to grow up in families reeling from war, displacement, and resettlement. Thematically, the texts depict the forces of containment and movement, not only at the camp, but also in their families' losses while in Vietnam, in transit, and in their American resettlements.

Thus, they are concerned in large part with the transformation of the family, both as a relational unit and as individuals. Both texts seek some articulation of refugee subjectivity and aesthetically reflect the disruptions and disjunctions of displacement, though in different mediums (the first a graphic novel, the second a novel that is more like a prose poem). In comparing these novels, I argue that we see two ways of engaging the inheritance of their refugee experiences while challenging the imposed trajectory of a settled nuclear family. *The Best We Could Do* is invested primarily in the familial gaze to reconfigure the American national self-image through diaspora. On the other hand, *The Gangster We're All Looking For* goes further to introduce the diasporic gaze and a more radical politics of "intimate estrangement" which offers a different basis for identification and solidarity beyond the nation and family.

I would be remiss not to acknowledge early on the influence of Viet Thanh Nguyen's conception of "just memory" in *Nothing Ever Dies*. He very clearly maps the most essential rule of national memory and history: remember "our own" and forget others. As a mode of critique, Nguyen argues for a different kind of memory that is more *inclusive* by remembering both one's own and others, and more *complex* by recognizing the inhumanity, and thus full subjectivity, of all sides (19, 216). This revision of war memory breaks the simple dichotomies of human/inhuman, right/wrong, and victim/perpetrator, and permits the re-narrativization of both American military intervention and Southeast Asian displacement/resettlement. This re-narrativization is essential to both challenging the "official gaze" and creating avenues for the particularity of refugee experiences to emerge distinct from assimilative immigrant narratives within the U.S. I will return to his thinking later in my reading of *The Best We Could Do*, which is in many ways a good example of the expansions of memory Nguyen calls for. However, I also want to push this argument further to explore the encounters beyond the logic of kin and finding

semblance with "our own." Though critical of identity politics, Nguyen acknowledges that the remembrance of others is essentially the "refinement of remembering one's own" (69). So, even if the "others" are permitted to be as full and as complicated as "selves," re-establishing the primacy of "our own" emphasizes likeness and incorporation to stabilize this relational network. Even if the self and community are now more capacious, the gesture is still towards securing familiarity and coherence, which replicates the logic of the "benevolent" multicultural nation-state that can open its arms wider while still retaining its core identity. So, even with a more "just" memory, the claim of kin remains essential while the horizon of inclusion is pushed further out.[60] On this basis, I move away from the familial gaze and toward the diasporic gaze, which, I argue, introduces a model of intimate estrangement that is based on contingency, strangeness, and untranslatable difference, a more radical politics that undoes the deepest structures of camp-thinking and national identity.

I. Unearthed Roots: The Familial Gaze in *The Best We Could Do*

In her prefatory drawings, Thi Bui self-situates *The Best We Could Do* in a Vietnamese American literary canon (among Viet Nguyen's *The Sympathizer* and Vu Tran's *Dragonfish*), and within that, a growing canon of Vietnamese American *graphic novels* (including most notably GB Tran's *Vietnamerica*). However, I'd suggest that Bui's work be read in a wider tradition of illustrated internment narratives in the Asian diaspora, *Citizen 13660* included. As discussed in the first chapter, *Citizen 13660* is as much a memoir as it is a documentary; but more important than this generic difference is her choice of an *illustrated* medium, by which she

[60] Nguyen acknowledges that the "common form of this ethics" of memory becomes a practice of incorporating he other into the citizenship and, secondarily, striving to "be empathetic to the ever-new others on the horizon" (69). "America is the embodiment of such an ethics of remembering others" which it wields to create more inclusion and to wage wags against newer "strangers" (69). See his chapter "On Remembering Others" in *Nothing Ever Dies* for a fuller discussion.

challenges a visual archive that is historically and conventionally an extension of state power used to contain, regulate, and remake subjects.[61] Similarly, *The Best We Could Do*, labeled an "illustrated memoir," documents, albeit in a more conventional and sequential comic style, the refugee camps produced by the American War in Vietnam and offers an alternative archive that challenges the "official gaze."

While Miné Okubo offers a close study of camp-life in *Citizen 13660*, in *The Best We Could Do* Bui only spends ten pages inside the camp as a stop along the way in a 300+ page intergenerational saga. Unsurprisingly, the focus of the camp chapter in *The Best We Could Do* is on the state's processing of individuals and families to resettle them elsewhere. However, this version of the camp is construed as a site of humanitarianism, and notably Bui herself side-steps any direct representation of state control by foregrounding instead the intervention of the International Red Cross organization. In keeping with this representation, Bui highlights her parents as agents with responsibility and choices, who can decide on the direction of their migration and resettlement, rather than be directed by the state's forces (whether Vietnamese, American, or otherwise). In this way, Bui risks projecting theirs as another voluntary immigration story, *not* a refugee story. Nevertheless, the camp is shown as an engineered space for the administration of individuals and families who are in-need and must avail themselves of an international system for the management of their "care." In a drawing reminiscent of *Citizen 13660*, Bui describes how her mother had "[their] names registered, and identification pictures taken for processing" (266, Figure 1). Like Okubo, she draws an image in which the state's camera is caught framing new subjects, a necessary step in the coordination of aid for the health and well-being of its subjects. She thus captures the staging of the photographic moment and

[61] Katherine Stanutz notes that when Okubo's *Citizen 13660* was published in 1946, there was already a precedent for illustrated prison narratives, which intervene critically in the representation of Asians in American culture (51).

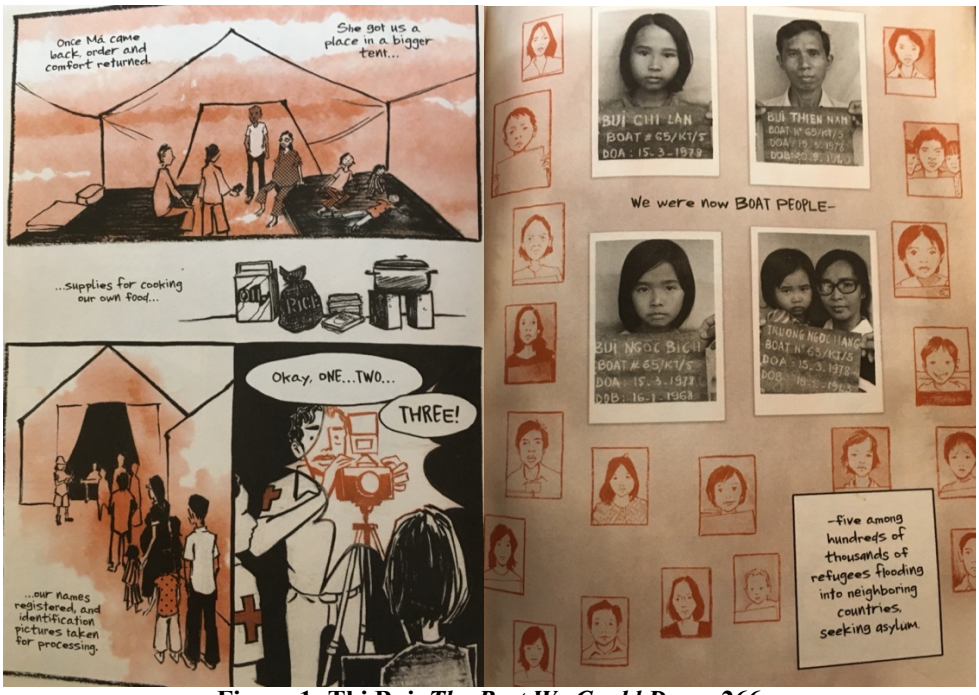

Figure 1: Thi Bui, *The Best We Could Do*, p. 266

creates one of her own retrospectively through illustration. Perhaps more directly than Okubo though, Bui chooses to frame the photographer in a full portrait, centering the seated subject and the Red Cross official in the reader's gaze from a looking-over-the-shoulder vantage. This creates a direct line of identification for the reader following the photographed subject, a point I will return to.

While, on the one hand, the camp could be perceived as a minor "episode" during their journey, this sequence in fact presents a significant moment of disruption in Bui's narrative scheme. Immediately following the drawings of the camp's processing, Bui includes copies of her family's identification photographs as part of her illustrated page. While drawings of photographs are interwoven throughout the narrative, this is the only point at which Bui includes the photographic prints amidst her own renderings of identification portraits. More specifically, she inserts fragments of the institutionalized archive in her own illustrated archive. I read this moment as simultaneously absorbing a particular interpellation by the state via an official

photographic gaze (becoming a "refugee subject") and reclaiming this subjectivity through creative effort to establish a different gaze—a familial one.

Institutionalized identification photography is a well-studied and theorized sub-genre of photography, and one especially familiar in the narratives of racialized, displaced, and dispossessed subjects.[62] What is notable here is the interaction between Bui's illustrations and the photographs. In the preceding frame, we only see the back of the head of someone being photographed, which presents this individual as anonymous, even perhaps representational; there is not even the mark of clothing to trace the character through the rest of the narrative. However, with the photographs on the next page, Bui makes a claim of indexicality and identification—she claims this person as one of the five who appear in photographs. In this way, Bui relies on the same organizational and individualizing logic of state-sponsored photography but does so to a different end, which is cued in the narration. Almost like a caption between the neatly lined up photographs, Bui writes: "We were now BOAT PEOPLE —," and continues, "—five among hundreds of thousands of refugees flooding into neighboring countries, seeking asylum" (267). Taken together, the images and text tempt a broader collective identification — the "we" who become "boat people" could include everyone appearing on the page, including the anonymous neighbors, and thus speak through a Vietnamese, or even pan-ethnic regional identity of people displaced by the war and now subject to the camp's governance (Laotians, Cambodians, and others included). However, the narration makes a clear delineation that the "we" is the family unit, who, secondarily, are now refugees. Bui breaks the sentence up syntatically and visually,

[62] Here I am thinking of Ariella Azoulay's work, especially in *The Civil Contract of* Photography, as well as Tina Campt's *Listening to Images*. Both projects examine the history of institutionalized forms of photography alongside other histories of disruption and reclamation that challenge the image regimes produced as well as the network of relations implied in the photographic encounter. My thinking is also influenced by filmmaker Rithy Panh and his film *The Missing Picture*, a documentary about the Cambodian genocide that incorporates archival footage into his own carved dioramas as a way of offering a unique history predicated on the gaps in the "official narrative."

enclosing the second clause in a text box, to underscore a shift in address. Whereas the first clause ("we were now boat people") reads more intimately, addressed to an audience who knows of the experience, the second clause is more expositional, addressed to an audience who may be less familiar with this history and thus in need of an explanation of terms (say, the general American public). A similar demarcation happens visually in the contrast between the photographs and the illustrated renderings of other photos. It's the four photographs, squared off in the center, that stabilize the page; the other images, drawn in Bui's signature washed-out orange, float behind, unaligned with the even grid of the family. While Bui acknowledges the camp as a place of "reinvention" for some, on this page the camp identification photos re-establish a stable family unit—and do so for the gaze of the reading public (269).

Bui's presentation of the photographs is an interesting move insofar as these identification photos are repurposed to produce familial likeness among the "flood" of refugees. This kinship is established not only with the reinforcement of visual sameness but in the repetition of name, boat number, and DOA (date of arrival) that accompany each portrait as their set of identifiers (267). It's as if the state's processes to keep the family together are absorbed by the family to reconstitute and stabilize itself in the face of disruption and dislocation. Significantly, and this is central to Bui's narrative, the bottom right portrait is different from the rest: there is one identification plate for two figures. The photo is a portrait of the mother who does not share the family name Bui and who carries her infant child in her arms. The child grows up to be Thi Bui, and the doubly occupied image is emblematic of one of her central preoccupations in *The Best We Could Do* — the physical and figurative image of her mother.

To frame this by Um's question, Bui's narrative offers an alternative form of memory outside of the official gaze, one that centers on familial memories and storytelling. Through her

illustrative work, Bui not only creates a kind of family album to bring together multigenerational memories, but she also offers a different account of the war and the displacement/resettlement of refugees, which is pitched to a broader American reading public. In *Family Frames*, Marianne Hirsch describes how the conventional family album emphasizes "chronology, continuity, and repetition within and across generations" (214). This form, Hirsch, argues, is essential to conveying the ideology of the familial gaze, which she defines as a "series of 'familial looks' that both create and consolidate the familial relations among the individuals involved, fostering an unmistakable sense of mutual recognition" (2). In many ways, *The Best We Could Do* structurally reflects the genre of the family album but it also doubles as an archive for the American public. In this regard, it is helpful to consider how Hirsch describes the Family of Man exhibition in the wake of World War II. As she argues, the appeal of this photography project "lies in the familial gaze it focuses on the global sphere with the aim of revealing points of intersection between familial relation, on the one hand, and cross-racial and cross-national interaction, on the other" (50). Though Bui's illustrated memoir doesn't seek a global audience in the way that Steichen's exhibition does, the doubled audience of her address does function in a similar way ideologically, creating pathways of identification intended to establish likeness and build commonality across difference within the American nation by focalizing on the family unit.

When it was published in 2018, *The Best We Could Do* was described as a "haunting memoir about the search for a better future and a longing for a simpler past" — and on this basis it became immediately popular in liberal America. As one critic put it, with migration and refugee crises all over the world (and a national conversation about travel bans and the construction of a wall along the Mexican border), this story appeared as a "happy antidote to a world of walls" by "creat[ing] a sense of place that is far less rooted in a fixed geography than in

relationships" (Mandavile). More to the point, I would contend that Bui's illustrated memoir appeals so much because it is about belonging in *familial* relationships, an experience that is supposed to cut across contexts (war, culture, history, etc.). As another critic remarks, the story is "written for Americans and immigrants alike" because it "gives understanding to those of us who are separate from her experiences while simultaneously inspiring those who seek a better future, *a future where we too can find ourselves bound with the confidence that our children can be free*" (Gomez 164, my emphasis).Though Bui's relationships with her parents are fraught and disorganized, *The Best We Could Do* centralizes the family as a means of finding subjective coherence—as a refugee-immigrant and new mother. As with the identification photos just discussed, the family is the fulcrum of the narrative; photos become a way of cohering the family and of building her own illustrated version of the family album.

Figure 2: Thi Bui, *The Best We Could Do*, p. 1

Though the memoir is not set up to be traditionally linear, and instead jumps back and forth through time or breaks narrative flow with meta-moments of explanation, Bui's story nevertheless begins rather conventionally with birth and the establishment of family. In the first pages the reader is introduced to the protagonist as a new mother who is swimming in fearful ambivalence about motherhood at the same time she is realizing a new empathy for her own mother (Figure 2). She is thus doubled as both mother and child, a position that motivates the

text and resonates with the joint identification photograph from the camp. As an adult, Bui offers a different portrait of the mother-child relationship, one cast through distance, loneliness, and the interference of past trauma not well-understood. For instance, while Bui is in labor, she notes that "Má has disappeared"; though Bui desires a supportive presence, her mother only "hovers and retreats," triggered into recalling the difficulty of her own labors with six children (1, 20). Structurally, the memoir presents a particular causality: as if prompted by the arrival of her own son, Bui sets out in her memoir to better understand her own birth family. Giving exposition to her project, she draws a two-page spread in which she appears as a spectator looking "in reverse" across the sea at her family's journey, her gaze settling on the symbolic boat that carried them across stormy waters and made them "boat people" (40-41, Figure 3). This boat is at least some

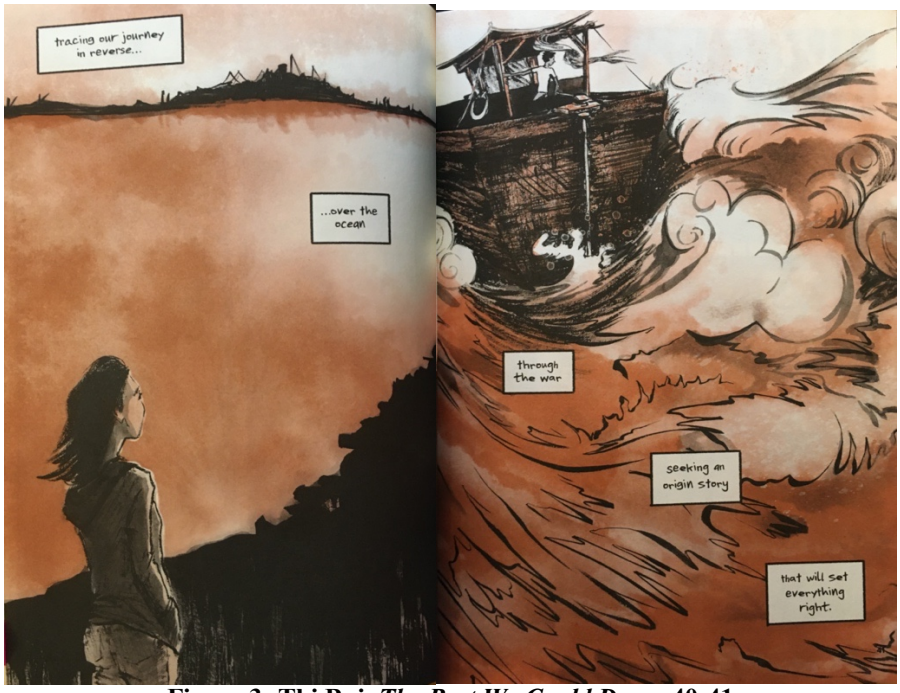

Figure 3: Thi Bui, *The Best We Could Do*, p. 40-41

part of what she seeks: an "origin story that will set everything right" (41). Underlying this desire is the implication that something is "wrong" (and needs to be set right) because the family is somewhat incoherent about itself (or at least Bui is) and these conditions won't do for a new child.

Abandoning tidy frames around her images, Bui then dives into the stream of history that flows well beyond textual and geographical borders. Spanning generations and continents, Bui first recounts the births of her siblings, setting up the cast of characters, and illustrates her parents' respective stories in Vietnam, as if the backstory for all of their lives. *The Best We Could Do* thus reads as a doubled narrative about immigrating and parenting—about war and something like child-ing. In setting up this sequence, Bui suggests that in gaining the responsibility of her son, she must also take on the responsibility of her origin, which means grappling with a national, cultural, and historical break, as well as a familial one. So, even though the narrative is fragmented and episodic, interrupted and uneven, by placing the emphasis on "origin" Bui still straightens out the trajectory for coherence—the family story becomes the template for understanding the diasporic self. In this case, one has to go to *their* "back there" to understand *her own* "here and now." For the American reading public, the family story also becomes the template for renewing their understanding this particular history of war, displacement, and resettlement—a story that is distinctly refugee and not like other immigrations, even though it is often told this way.

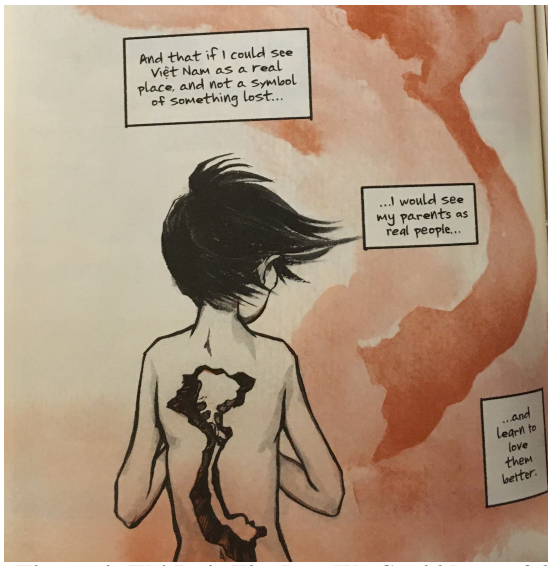

Figure 4: Thi Bui, *The Best We Could Do*, p. 36

Contrary to the book's description, what Bui seeks is not a "simpler past" but more like unearthed roots, even if gnarly, knotted or forked. To uncover and find these roots is to create lines of affiliation within her family, or to recreate the structure all together, threatened as it was by the war and its aftermath. Much as the identification photos were repurposed to

stabilize that unit, Bui illustrates her family's roots story to create a contained visual narrative of their shared history. In another early expositional drawing, Bui states that her hope in finding an origin—by retelling her family's immigration story from Vietnam to the U.S.—is to "bridge the gap" of time and "fill the void" in her parental relationships, to ultimately better understand herself (36, Figure 4). Though she confesses her hope to see "Viêt Nam as a real place, and not a symbol of something lost" in order to see her parents "as real people," the narration creates some dissonance with the highly symbolic image on the page: Bui draws a child, back-turned, the shape of the homeland Vietnam carved out of her torso, her fingertips barely visible through the hole as if to cover her exposed chest. At the same time, the girl looks back — searching for, perhaps missing, perhaps just standing witness to — the mirror shape that matches her "wound." The image of the free-standing, naked child reads in the specific visual archive of the Vietnam War, recalling the photograph of Phan Thi Kim Phuc (also known as the "Napalm Girl"), as well as the more general stories of lost or orphaned children left vulnerable and "rescued" in American missions. At the same time, Bui moves this symbolic image into another register by adding the mirrored outlines of Vietnam, calling up the displacement of refugees and the reverberation through generations of the diaspora. It's a suggestive drawing, showing the way in which she, as an embodied subject, always carries the inscription of the past and the trace of a previous home, but is also displaced from it, and has to *turn around* to confront it. As the panel on the stop of the page conveys, she "turns around" through her illustration project, seeking to fill in the gaps and voids with "real" details. By invoking the place-ness of Vietnam through the territorial outline as a key to her parental experiences (both her parents' and her own), Bui re-asserts the primacy of familial and national codes for the diaspora, and for the process of self-understanding, echoing in many ways the negotiations of memory that Um describes.

Figure 5: Thi Bui, *The Best We Could Do*, p. 182 (left), p. 184 (right)

Compared to Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660*, for instance, which presents an illustrated first-hand account that mimics documentarian photography, Bui positions herself as a unique documentarian because she "lack[s] memories of [her] own" and thus has to rely on other accounts, familial, and oftentimes photographic, ones. Bui repeats the self-recognition of her "lack" twice in two pages, a variation on a theme. The first time, she writes, "Lacking memories of my own, I do research," and draws herself clicking the shutter on her camera while on a tour of her family's previous home in Vietnam (182, Figure 5). She creates her own photographs to capture the vestiges of a past that others remember easily but that she cannot recall. A few panels later, she almost apologetically captions a drawing of herself drawing, "I know this is caricature…but lacking memories of my own, I've come to depend on other people's stories" (184, Figure 5). In this case, she creates her own image in the absence of photographs to re-animate and re-narrate the past others relay to her. Bui sets up a compelling rift in her memoir by dichotomizing documenting and remembering: somewhat wistfully she sees herself

"documenting *in lieu of* remembering" (180, my emphasis). As if wishing she could remember, and can only document instead, she imbues her project with a powerful desire for belonging, participation, even recognition, through remembrance.

Throughout, Bui describes herself having to rely on imagination and analogy (rather than memory) to empathetically recreate a landscape, a history, and experiences that she can't *quite* call her own but that have nevertheless come to mark her. Seeking the "realness" of place and person, she ends up with caricature, something approximate and imitative, infused with her own perspective and references. On the one hand, this is a striking intervention on the history of racist caricatures of Asians in America, shifting the power of illustration into Asian American hands and counteracting racist depictions (as Okubo's *Citizen 13660* did). At the same time, and more central to my argument, Bui's explicit reliance on caricature centralizes a drawn medium that makes a different truth-claim than so-called official photography. While photography may be the more conventional complement to memory with the evidentiary power of indexicality,[63] Bui emphasizes her turn to illustration as a more imaginative memory process that fills in the gaps and forges new connections and affiliations. Building on the conventions of the family album to capture, contain, and connect through "chronology, continuity, and repetition," Bui also draws on the sequential genre of comics to introduce a more participatory "looking-book" (214). To imagine where you can't remember and to rely on the stories told to you, produces an actively intergenerational form of storytelling or memory-keeping. Bui draws herself into most frames in the third person engaged in the activity of looking—often in conversation with another person, but more often than not looking at photographs, drawings, an abstraction of memory, sometimes

[63] The indexicality of photography is another major point of discussion in photography studies which partly explains this complementary relationship I mention here. As a starting point, I think of Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida* where he insists on the evidentiary value of the photograph's claim on a "what has been."

even another frame. Wrestling the past through drawing, Bui not only builds deeper visual and narrative coherence by engaging a mixed archive of photography, memory, and imagination; she also offers a primer of sorts about the familial gaze, a demonstration of how to look, where to look, and how to *affiliate* through it.

Foregrounding the family unit as its structure, *The Best We Could Do* at first turns to a father-daughter story: her childhood fears and his brooding silence produces a tension that casts the longest shadow in her memories, seemingly one of the main sources of her own trauma (129). But Bui also recounts that once she figures out how to approach her father as an adult to ask about his life, the stories "poured forth" easily, giving her the material for her illustrated portrait of his life (93). She describes his stories as "anecdotes without shapes," implicitly suggesting that her own drawings—her ink, framing, and narration—are one means of giving them shape. As a result of this memory-illustration process, which inscribes, sequences, and contains, Bui shows their relationship healed with mutual empathy, understanding, and acceptance. They can finally sit side by side over her drawings, and he acknowledges, "you know how it was for me" (130, Figure 6).[64] This realization suggests a kind of relief for them both: her illustrated, caricatured documentation is more than just a substitute for memories but represents a vital, collaborative process of revisiting a shared past — and thus, reconnecting along familial lines.

[64] Later on, Bui draws a few frames of her and her father on a walk while he describes one of their previous houses. Rather poignantly, she asks him to draw it for her since she cannot remember it. Bui includes this drawing in her illustrations as the placeholder of memory before she visits the house herself and photographs (documents) it.

Figure 6: Thi Bui, *The Best We Could Do*, p. 130-1

On the facing page, the next chapter begins with Bui at the same drawing desk looking stumped. This chapter picks up the narrative about her mother, and the memory relay between them is something quite different: more halted but also more complicated because Bui finds her sense of self caught up in the image of her mother (131, Figure 6). In a way, Bui is stopped even before she starts, and strikingly, it's the physical images of her mother—photographs and her own drawings—that are the first obstacle in approaching this part of the memoir. On one page, Bui draws copies of photos of her mother as a young woman, which sit adjacent to illustrated renderings of her own drawings as a child observing her mother in their home, as well as an illustrated memory of her mother with her siblings (133, Figure 7). In this spread, Bui presents three different kinds of images of the same subject; so, rather than a lack, the challenge this time is the *glut* of images. The photographs in the first frame present a young, beautiful woman she never knew, while the drawings reproduced in the second and third frames show the intimacy, affection and admiration of a child's perspective, which are contrasted with the slight distance of

her adult recollections in the bottom right corner. These panels showcase a progression of image types, suggesting the almost seamless compatibility of image, memory, and the creative remembering Bui introduces. Notably, Bui prefaces these portraits, and her fixation on this one subject, by remarking, "people always say I look just like her" (132). She establishes her attachment to her mother's image as a kind of search for her own self, a variation on the search for an "origin" that will make things make sense, an origin already evidenced in the doubly-occupied identification photograph from the refugee camp.

Bui explains that these photos arrived in a box from Vietnam and were a "treasure trove of memories" for her parents, and for herself, "a glimpse into a glamorous past [she] didn't know [she] had any connection to" (134). The photos arrive as a kind of metonym for the family's home in Vietnam, and Bui relays how she identifies with her mother in the images (redrawn in Bui's hand) as both an "affirmation and an escape" in her own young life in the U.S. (135, Figure 7). These photos circulate around Bui as "family photos," which establishes a closed sociality that allows her to affirm a connection to an origin, even as this place and time is exoticized in her American eyes. With these photos, Bui participates in the familial gaze to establish, or claim, a particular network of relationships, and through this, a kind of subjective coherence (Hirsch 9-11). To put it differently, within the family, the family itself is extended as the primary way of knowing yourself. As Hirsch explains, "recognizing an image as *familial* elicits…a specific kind of readerly or spectatorial look, an *affiliative look* through which we are sutured into the image and through which we adopt the image into our own familial narrative" (93). Hirsch stresses that this "affiliative look" is cultivated, not universal; this look "enters and extends the network of looks and gazes that have constructed the image in the first place" (93). In other words, Bui can participate in the familial gaze because the photos circulate as *her* family photos. And as she has

Figure 7: Thi Bui, *The Best We Could Do*, p. 134-5

described, the desire to be "sutured" into these photos seems heightened all the more for someone who has no memories of the war that displaced her and so shaped her childhood.

By re-presenting the photos in her drawings, Bui can work through them, incorporating them into the family record and creating images of her own absent memories. But she also circulates them in a different sociality beyond the familial—the memoir is assumed to be read by anonymous others. It's striking, then, that she draws these photos not with the fine detail of her other panels, but a little bit fuzzy. In one sense the faded-ness suggests the layering of temporalities, foregrounding the presentness of her drawings and emphasizing the pastness of the past. But this textural difference also has the effect of withholding the details from the second audience of the memoir, as if to preserve the particularity of that "familial gaze" and keep its circulation closed. The reader is not permitted to read the photos themselves. On the one hand, this distantiation maintains the "protective circle of the familial," refusing further scrutiny, in order to protect, in Hirsch's words, the ideology of the family romance (Hirsh 107). At the same time, the way that Bui's drawings *do* invite the reader's gaze complicates this dynamic; Bui draws herself as a child who is looking as if to pulls the reader into identifying with this

exploration. This moment seems more about Bui becoming coherent to readers in and through her own photographic search for subjective coherence. In other words, we as readers come to know Bui as a subject visually exploring her embeddedness in family in order to better recognize herself. If there is a direct line of identification with her, we are intended to identify with her affiliative gaze, her looking for family. When this family "looking book" is circulated for the broader reading public it presents, as I suggested, as a kind of primer about the familial gaze. In turn, by creating lines of identification through the staging of these looks, the illustrated memoir challenges the reader's gaze to also become an affiliative one.

Since Bui counts herself *out* of the family memories, drawing the illustrated memoir becomes her means of membership in that archive as she contributes to the visual lineage and the familial gaze. Indeed, Bui confidently takes over narrating the family journey out of Vietnam, through the refugee camp and the resettlement process, seamlessly transitioning into their American life where her own memories can take over as the primary material for her illustrations. Perhaps a bit too neatly, Bui maps her new maternal responsibility onto her parents' struggles in Vietnam, identifying with the "heroism" of keeping another life alive (312). It's through this identification with them that Bui is finally able to let go of the overwhelming image of her mother. Contrasting the joint identification photo from the camp, in the end,

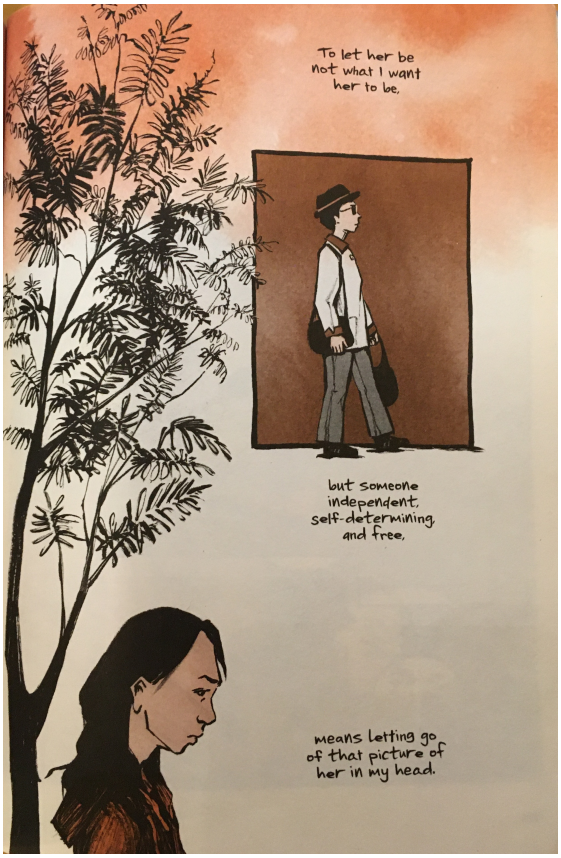

Figure 8: Thi Bui, *The Best We Could Do*, p. 319

Bui offers an alternative portrait of her mother framed alone. Bui herself still appears in parallel posture, their similarity unmistakable, but this time she is removed to the corner, separate and outside of her mother's frame (319, Figure 8). Noticeably, Bui coyly plays with framing and doesn't give a complete frame to her mother; Má's feet are still grounded in the negative space of the larger page in which Bui draws herself. Rather than the subject emerging from inside the frame to create a discrete image, it looks like the frame was added later around the subject to embellish the intended image of the full page which Bui still shares. Once again the accompanying narration betrays itself by claiming to relinquish symbolism while simultaneously conflating mother and post-colonial nationhood: Bui writes, "To let her be not what I want her to be, but someone independent, self-determining, and free, means letting go of that picture of her in my head" (319). Looking at the frame alone, it seems Bui cannot let the image stand independent and free. Further, by invoking the rhetoric of decolonization, Bui once again asserts the twinning of family and nation and the symbolism of the mother(land) origin. Rather than let go of this attachment (this picture in her head), it seems Bui claims this root for other possibilities and futures. In one sense, I read this line as an almost embarrassed moment of Bui recognizing the appropriation of her mother's life, but it also seems that the "rooted" narrative of family never really permits this kind of "freedom." In the second register of presenting to an American reading pubic, there also seems to be a lesson about how the U.S. was never interested in recognizing Vietnam this way: for the sake of national self-image, military intervention became humanitarian rescue that could not recognize the anticolonial struggle for independence.

At the close of the memoir, Bui literalizes her roots with an illustration of a family tree depicted as an underground network. Rather than show her immediate nuclear family, which the whole memoir does, Bui draws portraits that echo the identification photos of the camp to gesture to other members of their family whose lives, in unknown ways, intersect with hers (324, Figure 9). Peculiarly, these roots transform into what look like cells on the next page, transfiguring the figurative roots into "real" genetic inheritances (325, Figure 9).[65] What Bui describes in accompaniment to this familial imagery is a kind of disburdening of historical trauma: she understands she's no longer simply a "product of war," and no longer needs to

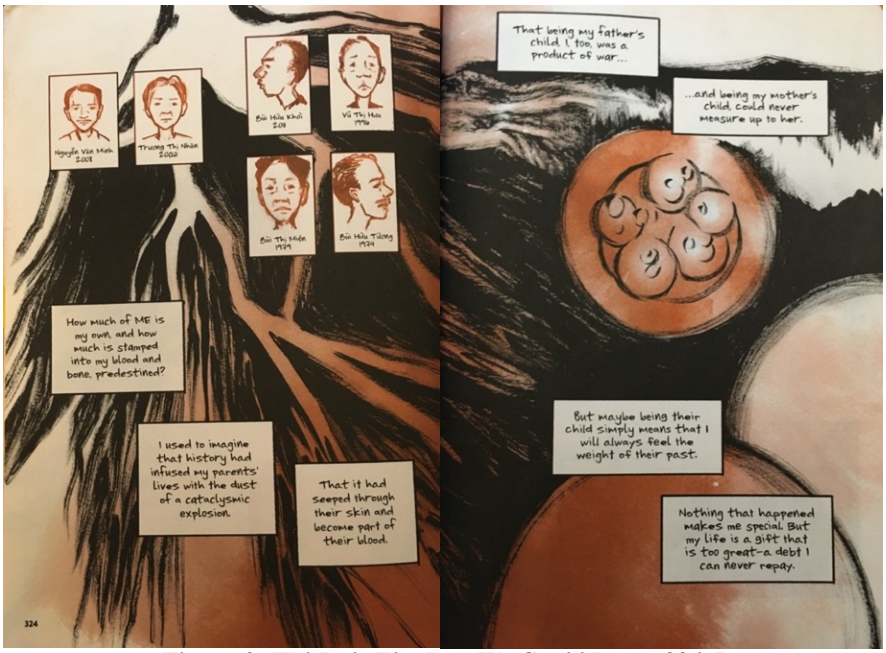

Figure 9: Thi Bui, *The Best We Could Do*, p. 324-5

reclaim a homeland (326). At the same time, she expresses a newfound indebtedness to the past and lineage, her life a "gift" she can't repay (325).[66] In these movements, Bui relocates the historical trauma into the more redemptive register of a future-bound pro-generative family.

The very last note of her memoir returns to Bui's young son. Contemplating her own

[65] A presenter at the 2019 AAAS conference drew my attention to this visualization of cells as a peculiar extension of the roots of the family tree. I have not been able to track down their name yet.
[66] Mimi Nguyen's *Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages* provides an essential reading of the ideology of gratitude in refugee narratives, which play into the humanitarian "rescues" of the U.S. military State.

Figure 10: Thi Bui, *The Best We Could Do*, p. 328-9

motherhood, Bui is anxious about bequeathing "sorrow" and causing "damage" as a result of her roots (327). But just as she tells her parents' story as one of escape to pursue "freedom" in the U.S., she narrates her own parenting through a liberal hope for freedom. In the final frame, Bui appears as a witness again, boxed in profile off to the corner, observing the main subject: her son frolicking in the sea. The page is awash with the now-familiar watercolor swirls, uncontained, no borders, but this time the page is brighter, less dense with ink. Bui narrates this page to direct the reader's interpretative gaze as it follows hers: "But when I look at my son, now ten years old, I don't see war and loss, or even Travis and me. I see a new life, bound with mine quite by coincidence, and I think maybe he can be free" (328-9, Figure 10). On first pass, this conclusion may recapitulate the family story, extending into the next generation and suggesting that in working through their shared history, reconciling memories and relationships, the family can let this mired history go and continue to grow forward, towards a better, brighter, freer future. This future isn't bound by any specific geography (neither Vietnam nor the U.S.), but it also does not sacrifice vital and original connections, which become the deep roots of necessary self-

knowledge. Framed in this way, Bui's memoir can become an assimilable *immigrant* story for a general American reading public, one that many mainstream reviewers alighted on. This illustrated family album shows that immigrant new-comers can "let go" of the violence in their pasts and integrate into the "good life" pursuits of democratic freedom and progress. As difficult as this pathway might be—they may contend with poor job prospects, re-credentialization in a new country, racism, language barriers, emotional abuse, divorce, as the Buis did—they nevertheless make new roots and new families.

It is necessary that this version of the story does not strictly adhere to territorial nationalism and instead emphasizes "good" border crossings. At the same time, it does not fundamentally challenge the ideology of democratic freedom that fueled both U.S intervention and rescue in Southeast Asia. Recalling the identification photos from earlier, "the Bui five," in almost perfect form represent the humanitarian state's configuration of a respectable family unit—it may be fraught but still holds together and holds society together. As Bui notes early in the memoir, "By American standards, we live like a tight-knit multigenerational family" where each of the siblings has grown up to start their own families but they stay geographically close enough to keep investing in the original family tree (32). At the same time, she calls attention to the unique pressures on their diasporic family which trap them "between two sets of expectations" (33). Emphasizing this "betweenness," Bui's family album is a corrective to the official gaze, filling in the "real" details of the war and their lives as a refugee-immigrant family. Recalling Nguyen's theory of "just memory," Bui introduces a different memory of the war that works effectively against the dichotomous logic of nationalism to be more inclusive and complex. She presents a war story and a refugee story, privileging neither Vietnam nor the U.S. and signaling the macro-politics on all sides of the conflict as she explores the precariousness of

individuals omitted from history—people like her parents who belong to neither political "side." Undoubtedly, *The Best We Could Do* offers the American reading public a different template for understanding this history, but I want to suggest that the recuperation of the familial gaze recapitulates the ideological structures of national identity, rendering the nation-state less a "diaspora space" than a family space consistent with dominant national values.[67]

Within the domain of family memory, Thi turned to illustration as a way of entering and participating in the familial gaze to reclaim a history as her own. When presented to the public, the graphic memoir also invites the readerly gaze to become affiliative, to identify through likeness, and ultimately to reclaim this history as part of "our own." It is important to emphasize that the appeal to likeness is specifically through familial interest—seeking the exchange of gazes in photos and drawings—and then familial coherence—captured most literally in the rooted tree. In one sense the memoir says, "Our families are just *like* yours, we share similar values, and you can understand our experiences as different as they are." This kind of "just memory" solicits recognition by refining how one remembers one's own to expand the reach of kin further outward. In his study of Vietnamese American literature, Nguyen astutely observes the preference for the "claiming of voice over the act of revolt," revolution being the loudest silence in this canon (205). I'd add that the redemption of family continues to quiet the revolt, another "inoculat[ion] against being a radical threat to American mythology" (205).

However, in looking again at the final page of Bui's memoir, I find the inkling of

[67] Here I am thinking of Guyatri Gopinath's provocation in *Unruly Visions* to "reframe" the nation-state as a diaspora space, a proposition persuasively introduced by Gayatri Gopinath. She explains the diaspora space as: "a zone constituted by ongoing histories of settler colonial violence, war, and occupation, and shot through with the migrant trajectories, socialities, and affiliations that these histories engender" (13). Co-locating settler colonial violence and military intervention, Gopinath stresses the relational formations forged by displacement as the primary way of approaching, and critiquing, the nation-state. Taken this way, the founding ideologies of the American nation-state are no longer viable, such as the centrality of state-based citizenship, protected rights for some, unquestioned moral superiority and attendant forms of nationalism predicated on a dedication to the values of democracy and freedom.

something more "revolutionary" and certainly more diasporic, in Gilroy's sense of the term. In her final lines, Bui writes: "I see a new life, bound with mine quite by *coincidence*, and I think maybe he can be free" (329, my emphasis). Casting "coincidence" as the link to freedom pushes back on the model of rooted family that one is born into and extends through creation (whether as a mother or illustration artist), and instead emphasizes the strange *contingency* of these relationships where chance plays a central role. Though she retains the sense of connection through a "bind" of some kind, I take this as an important moment of estrangement from the over-determined "naturalness" of family genealogy, the unearthed roots of Bui's memoir. The origin she sought to "set everything right" could not set *everything* (or everyone) into place. Thus, this final look reconfigures the familial gaze, as if to release her son from the familial ideology that circulates around and between them to cohere identity (what she couldn't do for her mother). On the one hand, this look conveys a different orientation toward the conventional configuration of the family, and more particularly, the imposed trajectory of refugee subjectivity within the American nation. At the same time, it remains unclear how this freedom is really imagined or how this "coincidence" is actually lived, grounded as it is in the language of roots, history, genealogy, and indebtedness. In the second register of public circulation, however, the power of "coincidence" resonates a bit more, becoming a lesson in challenging the naturalness of the nation. On this last page, Bui references her white American partner and coparent alongside their biracial child; she looks on as her son plays in the shoreline then dives into the ocean's tides, suggesting the movement between continents. In this way, Bui invites the readerly gaze to look again and see not an immigrant family that is *like* American families, but an American family that *is already diasporic*. In this sense, the affiliative look is less about "adopting" the other into the narrative of "our own," so much as it is about recognizing the familiality that

already circulates. This is perhaps the subtler and more radical transformation of "our own" *toward* the anti-national idea of diaspora that challenges "primordial kinship and rooted belonging" (Gilroy 123).

With this final gesture, Bui returns to the tension between family and diaspora, between unearthed roots and something more indeterminate evoked in the ocean's tides. Circulating the familial gaze, *The Best We Could Do* innovates a multigenerational and collaborative family album through illustration, suturing a family traumatized by war and displacement. The same "looking book" also circulates among an American reading public, challenging the readerly gaze to become an affiliative one that identifies with this family, and in the process expands its sense of "our own." Prioritizing likeness, semblance, and subjective coherence, familial identity still capitulates to the structural logic of nationalism and the specific mythology of American life—in ways that diaspora doesn't necessarily, which makes the potential held in Bui's final look so provocative for imagining other political futures. To follow the idea of diaspora would mean up-rooting to privilege cross-identification, trans-local affiliation, non-alignment and strangeness. The diasporic gaze, I argue next, doesn't affiliate through kinship but finds recognition in intimate moments of estrangement. While these affinities are forged by common (and ongoing) experiences of forced displacement and state violence, the particularities of those histories are retained, not collapsed into likeness or consolidated into a new form of "our own."

II. Unseen Depths: The Diasporic Gaze in *The Gangster We Are All Looking For*

Some fifteen years prior to Bui's memoir, lê thi diem thúy published the semi-autobiographical novel, *The Gangster We Are All Looking For*, which has since been regarded as a keystone of Vietnamese American literature. Read in much the same way as *The Best We*

Could Do, scholars such as Yên Lê Espiritu and Viet Thanh Nguyen turn to this novel as exemplary of the "memory problems" refugees face as a result of forced displacement, evacuation, and resettlement. Unsurprisingly, these analyses focalize on the family as the structure of the "everyday" that is not only missing from the "official" American-centric narrative of the Vietnam War but also necessary to recovering a sense of identity and "connectedness" for first- and second-generation Vietnamese Americans (149). I think it is productive to think of these texts sharing a canon of Vietnamese American literature, but it's also worth distinguishing what seem to be different commitments within this arena: Bui's memory text inclines toward an Asian American reading, while lê's reaches after a diasporic perspective. In "Toward a Definition of Diaspora Literature," Hyungjii Park offers an insightful distinction between these two contributions. While Asian American literature often reflects a desire for inclusion given its history of disenfranchisement, diaspora literature offers a "resistance to the assimilationist or United-States-centered tradition" by "plac[ing] Asia and America in a 'coeval' space, without relative sequence, order, or priority" favoring "contemporaneity" instead (166, 157). In many ways *The Best We Could Do* reflects a teleology toward the U.S. while *The Gangster We Are All Looking For* is more undecided about the traumatic interrelatedness and movements between the nations. In the novel's presentation, this contemporaneity is expressed through an alternating narration of past and present, memories from Vietnam and the U.S, which offers a haunting account of trauma, violence, and abuse within the family's history as well an unforgiving indictment of American hostility toward the refugee newcomers (which cannot as easily be said of *The Best We Could Do*).

As Espiritu writes, *Gangster* is essentially a novel about a "Vietnamese refugee family who is *in* America but not *of* it" (165, my emphasis). It is a novel that critiques and resists the

U.S. by presenting the nation "not as the land of opportunities but as the breaker of families—a place where family life will never be what it could or should have been" (166). Notably, in Espiritu's reading, the status of the family is the primary metric for evaluating the nation-state, the same metric the state uses to evaluate, and organize, its immigrant populations. On the one hand, this could be read as a gesture of reclamation, especially when highlighting creatively "joint lives" rather than irreconcilable "intergenerational conflict," as Espiritu argues *Gangster* does (169). Indeed, she argues that the power of *Gangster* is the way that "witnessing…enables the daughter to *see* her father as one who is never utterly defeated" (169). The novel ultimately "makes *audible* and *visible* the 'noisy silences' and seething absences' in Vietnamese life" (169, my emphasis). In this reading, intergenerational tension and disrupted identities are more or less resolved by the expansion of the daughter's *vision*, which repairs the familial circuit of looking.

Though in a very different medium than Bui's graphic memoir, lê's novel is similarly preoccupied with photographs, the familial image archive, and the familial gaze that circulates there. As many critics have drawn attention to, one of the central events of the novel is the "disturbing" arrival of a set of photos from Vietnam showing the protagonist's grandparents (Gsoels-Lorensen 6). The photos are threatened to be lost again when the family is evicted and forced to move, prompting a rescue mission that draws the family back to a house they can't call home in a city that is hostile to their arrival. The box of photos becomes a prized possession that preoccupies the mother and troubles the young protagonist, suggesting a little-understood backstory to her parents and her own life in the U.S. Not unlike the box of photos that arrives for young Thi Bui in *The Best We Could Do*, the collection's presence can be considered a pivotal event in the novel for the way in which it re-animates the displaced family in the U.S. As Jutta Gsoels-Lorensen has provocatively illustrated, the photos call up a past that does and does not

travel with them in their new lives, which returns the mother to the role of the child, unsettling their already precarious family unit (14). Notably, the photos in Gsoels-Lorensen's reading function as more of a disruptive force, rather than simply cohering a given familial sociality. In *Nothing Ever Dies*, Viet Thanh Nguyen refers to *Gangster* as emblematic of an experience similar to his own: photographs become "the secular imprints of ghosts, the most visible sign of the aura, the closet way many in the world of refugees live with those left behind" (194). Within the novel, the most powerful ghost is the protagonist's brother who dies while playing in the ocean as a child when their father is imprisoned in a re-education camp. His death comes to indirectly signify multiple losses and the persistent haunting of a previous life shaped by war, including other extensions of the family like the grandparents. In this way, photos come to symbolize the "problem of mourning the dead, remembering the missing, and considering the place of the survivors," which, Nguyen argues, is "endemic to refugees, for whom separation from family and homeland is a universal experience" (194). While the exclusions, remainders, and reminders suggested by the photos complicate Hirsch's familial gaze to suggest un-belonging as much as belonging, it is important to note, once again, how the grammar for refugee displacement and diaspora is given through the co-identification of family and homeland. In Nguyen's analysis, as with Espiritu's, these *familial* memories, as imprinted in photos, are the privileged form of disruption to an American-centric, state-engineered memory of the war inasmuch as they assert a complex yet coherent Vietnamese/Vietnamese-American identity.

While *Gangster* is undeniably structured by familial narratives, it's important to observe that the novel is more ambivalent about the family as an affiliative structure. Moreover, the real power of the novel, it seems to me, is the way it highlights another form of identification that

emphasizes the unfamiliar, un-familial, unseen, and incoherent. Rather than reinforcing the familial gaze, *Gangster* explores what could be termed a "diasporic gaze." Here, I would like to extend Hirsch's contributions by refracting the notion of "diasporic intimacy" through the networks of relation presented in the novel. As Svetlana Boym defines it, "diasporic intimacy" is "not opposed to uprootedness and defamiliarization but is constituted by it" (252). Without romanticizing displacement and exile, Boym is sincerely interested in attending to the particular aesthetics of diasporic being and un-belonging, which, I would argue, has the potential for resisting narratives that rely on stabilizing templates of familial and national codes. Instead, as she proposes, this form of affiliation might produce "an imagined community of dreaming strangers" where solidarity arises from distinct experiences of displacement (256). While, as my reading will show, this form of intimacy is more pronounced in *Gangster*, I want to reiterate that I see the emergent possibility for this affectionate estrangement in Bui's "coincidence" at the end of *The Best We Could Do*.[68] Though momentary, this emphasis reconfigures the familial gaze in a way that disrupts the expectations of familial continuity and the trajectory of refugee settlement within the nation. In *Gangster*, this disruption is more substantial, opening onto affiliations between strangers that are necessarily contingent and defamiliarized, circulating as the diasporic gaze.

Significantly, the final section of the novel is titled "nu'ó'c," an echo of the opening epigraph to *Gangster*: "In Vietnamese, the word for *water* and the word for *a nation*, *a country*, and *a homeland* are one and the same: *nu'ó'c*." As with *The Best We Could Do*, water is a generative trope throughout the novel, not only as a recollection of the refugee family's passage

[68] I derive the phrase "affectionate estrangement" from Svetlana Boym's reading of diasporic artists who "combined affection with estrangement, insisted on the distinction between sensitivity and sentimentality and developed an ethics of remembrance" (258). Not to be overly schematic, but it seems whereas Bui is an artist inclined to sentimentality, lê is an artist of sensitivity who is more attuned to the synergy of affection and estrangement.

but also as a specific traumatic haunting (specifically, in lê's case, the brother's drowning). In the context of the foregoing discussion, the definitions of "nu'ó'c" encompass the codes of diaspora, but substitute the territory of the nation/country/homeland with the more embracing water that connects across oceans to other lands. Indeed, the very first page offers a provocative reframing of family as linked "not by blood but by water" (3). Conceived this way, *Gangster* seems to prioritize a more expansive understanding of diaspora that is less fixed through family and more felt through the movement of the sea. Within the protagonist, this movement seems internalized as a constant "running to and away from, to and away from family" like the tide's ebbs and flows, which finally pulls her, alone and "unleashed," back into the sea (96, 158).

This culminating moment of independence closes a chapter that churns around the family's individual traumas, layering intimate, imagined vignettes omnisciently narrated by the protagonist. As she confronts her brother's death most directly in her own memories and reflections, she repeatedly detours and reroutes by imagining memories of her mother, her father, and even, most interestingly, her brother visiting his own funeral (141-2). Often, these imagined memories also present someone imagining someone else—for instance, her mother imagines her husband in a reeducation camp, yearning for his return (130). Not unlike Bui's efforts, this imaginative memory work is an important means of intergenerational storytelling that seeks intimacy and repair where there has been incredible loss, hurt, misunderstanding, and silence. The protagonist intertwines her trauma with her mother's doubled loss when her son dies while her husband is imprisoned in a camp; the narrator swirls these recollections further by imagining the father's disorientation in the camp and then in grief over his family's fracture. Of course, the novel as a whole has attended to their "resettled" lives in Linda Vista, California, but the narrative doesn't simply cohere them as a unit. The novel instead honors their losses by

depicting their alienation and incoherence. Rather than stabilizing relatedness or uncovering deeper roots, the protagonist-narrator appreciates the spaces between everyone as holding the untranslatable, the unsaid and unseen. Espiritu has argued that the novel makes trauma's silence and absences, visible and audible, a reading that I'd like to extend. By tending the limits of visibility, or even comprehension, the novel moves off the refugee family's memory-keeping practices and introduces the intimate possibilities in the spaces between and beyond them.

It is within these spaces that I find the diasporic gaze emerge. Throughout the final chapter, the narrator returns to an anchoring imagined memory of her father's solitary communion with a television set, a deeply affecting encounter that occurs in this space between familial attachments. As if peering into the house she has since moved out of, the narrator describes the father flipping through the news one evening, the phone ringing in the background. The clip that catches his attention shows a woman in a green field:

> The woman pointed to the ground and said something in a language my father didn't understand. The camera moved in closer. She continued pointing at the ground and then very slowly shook her head from side to side. For a moment, my father thought the footage was in slow motion. Then he decided, no it was not. The phone continued to ring. He changed the channel. (126)

There is hardly any intelligible "content" to the news story, and indeed, that is not the reason why the father watches. The narrator explains that when watching, "he focused on the images," the details emphasizing a kind of estrangement of language and context (125). And yet, at the same time that the father identifies the field as elsewhere and unknown—"My father wondered if this was Europe"—he identifies *with* the scene because it reminds him of Vietnam's lush rice paddies (126). At this point, the empathetic identification with the woman on the screen is slight and overcast by their differences: the Vietnamese father sits in his California living room watching a news clip about a woman in an apparently European landscape saying something in a

language he can't translate. But the woman's gesture stays with him as he continues his day, especially later when his wife, who has just returned home from work, asks him about the news. The banal question turns him inward:

> He had considered that image all day and it had taken him the entire day to understand that the woman had been crying…Every time the camera back to her, she shook her head and pointed to the ground. When the camera shot the ground, all he had seen was a lush field. As lush as a rice paddy, he remembered thinking. Now he had a feeling that the woman was pointing to bodied, unseen bodies, under the grass. As she directed the eye of the camera back to the grass, she kept crying because of what it could not see and what she could not stop seeing. (152)

Rather than relay any of this to his wife, he turns jocular and breezy with her, inventing a sweet joke about their married life so she can go to bed. On the one hand, the intimacy between them is notable, a kind of perseverance through the difficulty of their working-class lives, abiding loyalty throughout their history, and simple care in the quotidian. At the same time, I want to consider how the father preserves the space around the news story, as if to protect the integrity of the encounter with a stranger who has so deeply moved him.

This encounter is also a lesson in looking. Watching TV, he is in some ways given over to the guidance of the camera, but he notices as well how the woman persistently "directed the eye of the camera" herself. Refusing to be the single, stable subject in view, the woman uses her own gaze to establish a deliberate circuit of looking toward the unknowable depths beneath the grass. This exchange of looking after the unseen opens a different plane of identificatory affiliation I am describing as an instance of the "diasporic gaze." The father intuitively fills in the details of the woman's message, seeing the recollection of a killing field signified in her gestures, an interpretative sight he possesses by virtue of his own experiences. Reflecting later, once again in solitude, he strengthens the connection: "Thinking of the bright green field she stood in, he remembered the bodies that floated through the rice paddies during the war. All

those badly buried bodies. What happened to such bodies?" (156-7). The narration offers just enough detail to retain the particularity of each field while allowing a deeper continuity to rise: the unknown bodies "badly buried" who remain unseen. Without collapsing the unique histories implied, the possibility of identification comes through the commonality of war, mass death and the traumatizing disruption to their home-lands—the measure of which cannot *really* be known. The father further imagines the woman not "able to rest until she had dug, with her own bare hands, through that field" (156). A gardener himself, he extends himself toward her, into the scene: "Sitting on his porch in Linda Vista he thought about loading all his gardening equipment into his truck. He would drive to wherever she was and offer her his help, his hands" (157).

I want to emphasize that to participate in this diasporic gaze, to exchange looks, and interpret recognition along these lines is something quite different than finding recognition in the affirmation of visual likeness and continuity, which the familial gaze of the photo album offers. Whatever the father feels he has in common with the woman is also something ultimately unknowable. As strangers, they cannot fill in the spaces between them with history, culture, family, home; their estrangement is not one to resolve but is carefully held, essential to any recognition that passes through this gaze. To conceptualize the diasporic gaze, I maintain one of Hirsch's starting premises that "the structure of looking is reciprocal: photographer and viewer collaborate on the reproduction of ideology" (Family Frames 7).[69] Though it does not settle into "mutual recognition" or "suture" into a shared narrative, the diasporic gaze nevertheless offers affiliative possibilities (Family Frames 2, 93). The woman makes an address to a nonspecific

[69] To more fully theorize this exchange, Ariella Azoulay's conception of the civil contract of photography is helpful again. Within this understanding of the photographic moment, the subject is an active participant in the making of the image, not merely the object of the camera's gaze. As I've suggested, the woman in the news story refuses to be a passive subject as much as she refuses to be the only subject of the camera's and viewer's gaze. See her chapter "The Civil Contract of Photography" for a fuller discussion.

recipient, actively engaging the camera through an exchange of looks. Indeed, one could interpret her crying "because of what it could not see and what she could not stop seeing" as an expression of pain in the known failure of that communication. And yet, the father in Linda Vista (and who knows what other dreaming strangers) becomes the unlikely recipient of her address, someone who *can* and *does* decode their shared language of the unseen and unspeakable.

Like an undercurrent to this scene, the phone naggingly rings in the background; its accumulating effect disturbs the father, producing a kind of terror as he acknowledges its intrusion and tries to avoid its claim. Slowly it becomes clear that what he fears most is a call from Vietnam: "His fear was vivid and though probably unfounded, it pinned him to the bed like a weight" (137). Inasmuch as the father is called back "home" through the woman's address, he also resists the actual call he imagines coming from his family "back there." Tellingly, what he fears is the flow of intimate details of place—"the creaking bicycles; the sound of flip-flops slapping against the road…the smell of the river; the cemetery filled with red earth and seashells piled high as hills"—these familiar markers too much to bear (138). Evincing a much more traumatized orientation to the past, the father didn't feel he could connect the call or "disconnect" it, and instead sets out for the night in a city that doesn't understand him or much care (139). Distancing himself both from his family "back there" and his wife "here and now," the father isn't exactly avoiding his past, but finds more recognition in the "diasporic intimacy" imagined with the stranger presented on screen. Rather than family images, he finds connection in the estrangement of an image definitively not his own, becoming a dreaming stranger among unknown others.[70]

[70] Notably, the father leaves the house to go fishing at a favorite secluded destination where a posted sign prohibits the activity. In this episode, the narrator describes the way the father wields his "foreignness" as protection of his solitude and

The fact that this encounter and the reflections that pour from it are narrated through the daughter-protagonist-narrator's perspective is significant. Recalling Bui's project, it might be tempting to interpret all of this imaginative memory work as expanding the protagonist's awareness of her family, her history, and her own situatedness, leading toward understanding, acceptance, even belonging. While I don't disagree with this dimension of the narration, I am not persuaded that it is a sufficient reading on its own. To return to the daughter like this, I would argue, diminishes the power of the father's encounter as well as the daughter's care in imagining the emergent possibility of this diasporic intimacy that displaces the family as primary. In contrast to the collaborative memory-work Bui depicts in her illustrated memoir, the protagonist's imaginative memories are a distinct gesture of love by offering space to be more "independent, self-determining, and free." With this in mind, the shoreline at the end of *Gangster* might encourage a reconsideration of the shoreline at the end of *The Best We Could Do* as well. In the final scene of *Gangster*, the daughter breaks away from her parents on the beach, running again, but this time toward the water and the "luminous bodies washed to shore" (158). With her parents intimately, perhaps blissfully, coupled and "leaning into each other," the protagonist pursues her own course, an image of her own independence and freedom. But the light in the water that catches her eye also recalls her brother's ghost, "left behind" in Vietnam. Perhaps somewhat willfully myself, I used to gloss this final invocation of "lights" as the lights of the city, as if this were the symbolic moment of her maturation as she commits to her own life—and her life in the city. The fact that she is drawn back to the sea's reminders of her loss complicates her movement, holding her in the tension and the tides. Likewise, Bui's observation

freedom, outsmarting the police with a subtler use of language when they have already interpellated him as an uncomprehending foreigner. "He understood the English; he knew what it meant, that circle with the line drawn through it of a man holding a fishing pole. But if the police came, he would say, No know.' And they would wag their fingers at him and say, 'That's right: No, no.' Then he would leave" (140).

of her son in the waves suggests a release, an offering of space, in a way that still holds him in nu'ó'c, where he might play in its movement rather than "return" to its roots.

As a final note, I want to recall Um's provocation to consider, and seek, other forms of remembering outside the official gaze. Whereas the familial gaze is a powerful means of reconstitution, offering complex histories that trouble the dominant narrative of war and reclaim significant means of self-representation, the diasporic gaze enacts an alternative form of remembering that is refracted through estrangement and the unseen/unspoken to produce a different intimacy among strangers. Here I think of Paul Gilroy's call in *Postcolonial Melancholia* for a "demotic cosmopolitanism" that refuses state-centeredness and arises from below, following a "vernacular style":

> This cosmopolitan attachment finds civic and ethical value in the process of exposure to otherness. It glories in the ordinary virtues and ironies—listening, looking, discretion, friendship—that can be cultivated when mundane encounters with difference become rewarding. The self-knowledge that can be acquired through the proximity to strangers is certainly precious but is no longer the primary issue. We might consider how to cultivate the capacity to act morally and justly not just in the face of otherness— imploring or hostile—but in response to the xenophobia and violence that threaten to engulf, purify, or erase it. (67)

Before developing this capacity to act against violence, to intervene, disarm, or resist—a more active, recognizable politics—Gilroy encourages one cultivate a different sensibility that arises from ordinary exchanges and encounters like the ones the father has in Linda Vista from lê's novel. To move into action as the extension or fulfillment of this sensibility is undoubtedly Gilroy's point here, but he also appreciates the cultivation of this sensibility or orientation as an ethical and political project. He notes further on, "The opportunity for self-knowledge is certainly worthwhile, but, especially in turbulent political climates, it must take second place behind the principled and methodical cultivation of a degree of estrangement from one's own culture and history. That too might qualify as essential to a cosmopolitan commitment" (67). I

want to suggest that the diasporic gaze is one means of manifesting this commitment, and of cultivating this politics. Developing along other lines of affiliation to access histories of violence but outside the official gaze *and* the familial one, the diasporic gaze disrupts national formations of identity and solidarity as well as the familial inscriptions of this ideology. Gilroy's "demotic cosmopolitanism" calls for a "new way of being at home in the world through an active hostility toward national solidarity, national culture, and their privileging over other, more open affiliations" (68).

In the next chapter, I continue this consideration of estrangement and "more open affiliations" through the lyric address and the "right to opacity" which conveys the singularity of the other that we encounter in these ordinary moments. Reading the *Poems from Guantánamo*, there is a call to respond and to act against the violence we as readers end up witness to. Pitched to a humanitarian conscience, many poems appeal to the reader's morality and sense of justice, an encounter the paratext around the poems facilitates. Without diminishing the need to act, this kind of reception restates the danger of "engulfing, purifying, or erasing" otherness by restructuring the relation back into an implicitly hierarchical and orientalist dyad of moral responder and the suffering other. In order to move into "just" action, I heed Gilroy's insistence that one must also commit to self-estrangement, and that this might be the real opening toward a different kind of political solidarity to emerge.

CHAPTER FOUR

Estranging from the Humanitarian Conscience: The Right to Lyric Opacity in *Poems From Guantánamo*

"Was my freedom not given to me then in order to build the world of the *You*?
…
O my body, make of me always a man who asks questions!"
Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

With its publication in 2007, *Poems from Guantánamo: The Detainees Speak* was tagged as an artifact documenting the "detainees" held at Guantánamo Bay Prison[71] "speaking" for the first time. Edited by one of the defense lawyers, Marc Falkoff, and endorsed by Amnesty International, this collection is made out to be a humanitarian effort through poetry to acknowledge, even to re-instate, the humanity of the individuals who were imprisoned in the extra-legal space of the camp, dehumanized through torture and indefinite detention. Inasmuch as the central claim of the collection is one of speech, the question of reception and response can

[71] This prison camp goes by many names. Sometimes the reference to imprisonment (simply "Guantánamo," or "Guantánamo Bay") is omitted, sometimes the name is shortened to a military abbreviation of "GTMO." It is formally called the Guantánamo Bay Detention Camp. I deliberately refer to this camp as a prison to call attention to the prisoners' long-term captivity and to explicitly link this camp to the U.S. prison complex.

be framed as a problem of address: where are the poems directed, to whom are the prisoner-poets speaking? But perhaps more importantly, how does the "hailing" and the "hearing" change how the speaker is assumed to be speaking? Though Falkoff acknowledges that many if not all of the poems were "composed with little expectation of ever reaching an audience beyond a small circle of their prisoners," the collection has now packaged and distributed them with a singular audience in mind, an American reading public complicit in the legal and moral abandonment of the prisoners (1). The poems thus become a form of testimony that can compel a response to the injustices and force a self-reckoning. Perhaps the most well-known account of the poetry is in Judith Butler's *Frames of War*, where she theorizes the frames of recognizability that enable a particular culture of war to take hold and calls upon critical readers to "frame the frame" and even notice where the frame *breaks*. She writes, "The frames that, in effect, decide which lives will be recognizable as lives and which will not, must circulate in order to establish their hegemony…As frames break from themselves in order to install themselves, other possibilities for apprehension emerge" (12). The poems' publication in this collection is one such circulation, which allows the frames of recognition around the "enemy combatants" to break. In Butler's reading, the power of the prisoner-poets' speech is both how they demonstrate a moral responsiveness in their poems and create a network of solidarity that reminds all of us (especially us on the outside) of our shared precariousness in order to cultivate a "critical outrage" to war and state violence (58-61, xxx).

In keeping with this reception, a number of poems in the collection make an explicit address to "America," or give an explicit testimonial account that can be heard on a similar register as Miné Okubo's, Clarence Adams' or even Yu Yuan's political addresses to a civic

community that is unevenly governed.[72] For example, "The Truth" by Emad Adullah Hassan, is a poem of multiple and shifting addresses, and in a brief section makes a direct address to the reader:

> You, get up and question events.
> Will you stand up to evil and oppression?
>
> No, you will never settle for mere talk.
> You believe the sword is the only arbiter. (25-28)

Confronting the reader through the immediacy of *you*, the speaker interpellates them into a structure of accountability, giving a command and a challenge to recognize the "evil and oppression" and to do something about it. But the doing the speaker demands is through talk and questions, positing the power of speech, a power he wields as poet, against the power of the "sword." In a previous stanza, the speaker claims: "My song will expose the damned oppression/And bring the system to collapse" (15-16). In making the direct address, the speaker invites the reader into this political project of speech, exposure, and resistance, but in the second stanza immediately doubts their responsiveness, suggesting the reader is allied instead with the "tyrants" who run the system with the power of the sword. In this way, the poem is explicitly a testimony intended to call its readers to conscience through an incitement to response as well as reflection on their own complicity, a reading that is reinforced through the paratextual apparatus, as I will show. While this form of address can be most clearly related to the political address explored in previous chapters, the civic context is noticeably absent, reflecting the prisoners' unique conditions in a prison designed to circumvent both national and international law. They

[72] As I argue in Chapters 1 and 2, all of these figures are political addressors who present a grievance of governance to their fellow citizens, meaning those who are also governed. Each speaker speaks from "impaired citizenship" and reorganizes the structure of state-based citizenship by claiming their rights to grievance and to affiliation with the civil collective of governed subjects beyond the vertical power of state and citizen.

are regarded as "detainees" or "enemy combatants" as a purposeful refusal of legal (and moral) recognition.

There is another version of this direct address to the reader that makes the *you* implicit, though still central in the poem's attention. Jumah al Dossari's "Death Poem" makes this kind of address through the imperative mood. The first two stanzas are structured through a simple repetition of the imperative to 'take" and "send":

> Take my blood.
> Take my death shroud and
> The remnants of my body.
> Take photographs of my corpse at the grave, lonely.
>
> Send them to the world,
> To the judges and
> To the people of conscience,
> Send them to the principled men and the fair-minded. (1-8)

The action of taking and sending could also be the action of the poem: the poet sends words that the reader would take. In the imperative mood, the speaker commands, or at least encourages, the reader's taking (*you*, take), but then also calls the reader into the act of sending (*you*, send). Significantly, this sending is again an explicitly moral project, so that the evidence of suffering would reach "the judges," "the people of conscience," and "the principled men and the fair-minded." Through this address the speaker invokes a moral, humanitarian community, and suggests the reader's membership in it by participating in the humanitarian action of the sending.[73] But there is another imperative address that follows:

> And let them bear the guilty burden, before the world,
> Of this innocent soul.

[73] Toward the end of his essay "Humanitarian Reading," Joseph Slaughter extends the conventional arguments about the moral power of sentimental and cosmopolitan reading (offered most prominently by Richard Rorty and Martha Nussbaum) by emphasizing the "inaugural act of generous narrative imagining" wherein the storyteller imagines the reader as already "belonging to a common community" of universal humanity (105).

> Let them bear the burden, before their children and before history,
> Of this wasted, sinless soul,
> Of this soul which has suffered at the hands of the 'protectors of peace.' (9-13)

With this turn, the speaker also holds the community of conscience accountable, assigning them the "guilty burden" of the suffering, and innocent, soul, making it theirs to "bear." Making an address in this way, the speaker appeals to the humanitarian conscience by calling on their guilt as well as their ability to respond. Unsurprisingly, this poem is one of the most cited from the collection and appears on the back flap of the dust jacket as well, offered up as perhaps the most representative of the "detainees speaking."

These two poems, but especially the latter, are also representative of the way in which *Poems from Guantánamo* as a collection has been taken up as crucial testimony to aid in the advocacy of human rights violations at Guantánamo Bay. Most readings situate the text within the failed juridical process at Guantánamo Bay Prison and the campaign for human rights in response. In direct contrast to how the designation "prisoner of war" operates at the POW camp, prisoners are held as "enemy combatants" or "detainees" to intentionally exceed the legislated protections in the Geneva Conventions. An invented category, this leaves the prisoners unrecognized as persons before the law, both national and international, an enabling feature of their "indefinite detention." This crisis of personhood at the prison camp is literalized in the extreme torture and abuse the prisoners suffer and signified in their elusive legal status. It is well understood that the prisoners' status, as well as the prison camp itself, are contextualized by a longer history of imperial logics and maneuvers, that, for example, produce the "enemy combatant" as an imagined conflation of immigrants and terrorists (Kaplan Where 840). At the same time, this problem of recognizing personhood also remains a peculiarly legal one. In *Rightlessness*, Naomi Paik gives a powerful account of the testimonies prisoners provided in the

"political theater established in Guantánamo's parallel legal system" as a means of reclaiming that space for their own speech, resisting their imprisonment, and thus reasserting their personhood (156).[74] *Poems from Guantánamo* can be understood as another effort from the lawyers to not only produce and circulate testimony, but to also break the frame of legal recognition and to present the prisoners as persons, moral and human.

This frame of recognition also contains a paradox of aspiring toward universalized humanity while retaining the hierarchized structure of state-based rights accompanied by moral capacity. Insofar as the address to the humanitarian conscience appeals to "our" complicity, it also appeals to our morality and responsiveness, the ability and inclination to respond, and offers an opportunity to repair our conscience. The circuit of address proceeds something like this: by becoming witness to suffering, "we" experience a disruption of its self-understanding and wants to repair this identity by responding to the suffering other, protecting or rescuing them, and thereby restoring meaning to the core principles of liberal humanitarianism, and furthermore, reinforcing that they are "our" values. In the readings that follow, I argue that the paratextual apparatus around the poems reinforces a humanitarian framework that extends only a limited range of recognition for the prisoner-poets while reinforcing the full capacities of the humanitarian-citizen. In no way do I mean to undermine the efforts toward political activism and action that counter this form of state violence; with Guantánamo Bay Prison still open in 2021, 41 men still imprisoned, it is clear we need a response, and a complex one that will ensure the livelihoods of the men inside *and* the men released. At the same time, my intent in this chapter is to draw on other frameworks for hearing the prisoners speak, and other frameworks in which to

[74] See Paik's chapter "Creating the Enemy Combatant: Performances of Justice and Realities of Rightlessness" for a fuller discussion of these dynamics and close-readings of two prisoners' testimonies. The chapter that follows also details other forms of protest the prisoners engage in as a means of asserting their political subjectivities.

be hailed, as a measure of restoring a fuller personhood to these poets that exceeds the codes of the law or the military-humanitarian state. To heed the right to "lyric opacity," as I argue, not only enables other modes of speech but permits a more ethical relation in receiving it.

I. Testimony & The Humanitarian Conscience

The central claim of *Poems from Guantánamo* is that the text facilitates direct speech, and that this poetic speech is significant for providing valuable evidence against the prison camp and restoring the humanity of the prisoners. As a supplement to legal testimony, and many times, in place of it (this form of speech also a right that is withheld), the poems are presented as documents that "make visible" the conditions of imprisonment and torture, the injustices and the dehumanizing violence of the prison camp, which remain otherwise invisible.[75] As defense attorney and editor Marc Falkoff writes in the introduction, the poems were composed "inside the wire" and "offer the world a unique opportunity to hear directly from the detainees themselves about their time in America's notorious prison camp" (1). Two dimensions aspects of the editor's claim participate in the humanitarian reading of the poem in crucial ways: First, the prison camp is presented as singular and exceptional in U.S. history, and thus more of an emergency. In fact, it is only the latest iteration in a long-standing and complex prison regime of American statecraft, as this project has attempted to illuminate, a deeper history ensnared with the American ideals of citizenship, democracy, and liberal humanitarianism. Second, there is a subtle claim to direct speech when in fact the contents of the collection are all translations made

[75] In an important essay "Paranoid Empire: Specters from Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib," Anne McClintock discusses the tension between participating in the spectacle of violence and the demand to "make visible (the better politically to challenge) those established but concealed circuits of imperial violence that now animate the war on terror" (52). Her article focuses especially on the photographs of torture and violence, but there is also a way in which the poems or Mohamedou Ould Slahi's diary do similar work.

beyond the authors' authority.[76] As Falkoff explains in the acknowledgments, the original papers remain in possession of the U.S. government and the lawyers were only able to access translations made by recognizably talented professionals who had short deadlines and no access to dictionaries or other aids (x). As far I know, it is still impossible to read these poems in any other format or in their original language, which is, admittedly, a limitation in the readings I provide as well. Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish the mediation of this speech as a reflection of both the militarized state's imprisonment of the poets *and* the humanitarian apparatus that seeks to champion them.

As a collection, the edited volume combines poetic speech with biography and editorial paratext in order to work against the invented legal category of "enemy combatants" and to humanize the prisoners who are made to embody the racialized Muslim Other through this moniker, seen as a particular existential threat to the U.S. as possible terrorist. Part of their evidentiary value arises from the understanding of poetry as a means of survival. Falkoff explains that "many men at Guantanamo turned to writing as a way to maintain their sanity, to memorialize their suffering, and to preserve their humanity through acts of creation" (3). His explicit hope is that the poetic creations presented in the collection would be approached as "representative voices of the detainees" so that "as the courts move sluggishly toward granting the detainees fair and open hearings, and as politicians bicker about whether to extend Geneva Conventions protections to the detainees, the detainees' own words may now become part of the dialogue" (5). While this inclusion is undoubtedly important, not merely as a legal right, I want

[76] A different kind of publication exists with Mohamedou Ould Slahi's *Guantánamo Diary*, for example. First published in 2015, his manuscript (written in English) was taken from the prison in redacted form and published—in redacted form—with the help of his editor, Larry Siems, a prominent human rights activist. Siems is explicit about his role, its limitations, and his relationship to Slahi. They worked together to publish a "Restored Edition" in 2017 in which Slahi attempts, from memory, to fill in the original redactions that were published.

to note how this goal is framed. Tellingly, Falkoff emphasizes the inclusion of the prisoners' voices not in terms of their participation in a political process (and we could read their poems as a kind of political address), but in terms of the potential power of the poems' testimonies to "prick the conscience of a nation," to incite some kind of response from the apparently ignorant but powerful, and guilty, American public (5). Testimony becomes less about the prisoners' "speaking" and more about the reception of it, and more specifically, its reception within the perpetrator's culture. *There*, the political process may take place.

As one reviewer writes: "You don't read this book for pleasure; you read it for evidence. And if you are an American citizen you read it for evidence of the violence your government is doing to total strangers in a distant place, some of whom (perhaps all of whom, since without due process how are we to tell?) are as innocent of crimes against our nation as you are" (Chiasson). Showing his own biases perhaps as well as commenting on the book's presentation, this review suggests how the poetry's "evidence" raises the issue of citizenship but only as it relates to an American reading public, the prisoners remaining no more than "strangers in a distant place" and foils for an "innocent" citizen's self-reflection. This reading of testimony is thus interested, most of all, in the recovery of the reading public's conscience, an American public of rights-bearing citizens. Approaching a text like *Poems from Guantánamo* in this way becomes a project of self-understanding that, as one critic puts it, enables the reconstitution of a "community that has deviated from its own core values" (Banham 387). On the one hand, this intra-community concern arises from the debates around which set of rights the prisoners might claim—if not the Geneva Conventions and international law, perhaps rights under the U.S. Constitution. However, this self-preoccupation with the status of the rights-bearing community reinforces the hierarchy

of personhood through nationalized and racialized citizenship.[77] As Joseph Slaughter stresses in *Human Rights Inc.*, human rights law "responds" to rightlessness by first "imagining the normative rights-holding citizen-subject—an abstract 'universal' human personality that 'presumes particular forms of embodiment and excludes or marginalizes others'" against which the "rightless and marginal emerge as creatures who lack" (43).

I would argue that the overall paratextual apparatus installed in the collection of poems works hard to present human rights subjects *for* the humanitarian conscience. The biographies in particular are designed to mediate the reader's "translation" of the poets' voices, and as literary critic Erin Trapp notes, these sketches support testimony readings of the poems by "enforcing" the "identity between poet and sufferer" who speaks in the poem. She explains that "through the biographical 'close up,' we get what seems to be missing in the translated poems: the original, innocent prisoner—a victim of anti-terrorism and not a terrorist" (Trapp). To project the men in this way is to secure a relationship to them as prisoners and as speakers, one that follows human rights discourse—they are the "suffering other" whom the "moral self" must take account of (Trapp).[78] Without a doubt, this form of recognition and advocacy is crucial, especially in light of the fact that the Guantánamo Bay Prison is still open and 40 men are still suffering in American custody. However, I want to push the limits of this recognition, insofar as the claim to universal humanity still slips into orientalist habits of relation. The relationship articulated here is a *moral* one with human suffering at its center, even though, recalling the American reviewer

[77] In Naomi Paik's account, she stresses the importance of remembering that "the power relations that create rightless people are not limited to the terrain of the law, but pervade our social and political culture" and produce "variegations of rights and gradations of rightlessness" (8-9).

[78] Butler's account departs in some ways from this reading by positing the prisoner-poets as showcasing a "moral responsiveness" in their poems which actively works against a "military rationale that has restricted moral responsiveness to violence in incoherent and unjust ways" (59). Significantly, Butler locates morality *with* the prisoners already but nevertheless moves into a universalist discourse of precariousness that leads to a kind of humanitarian response that heads to the call of the poems. See her chapter "Survivability, Vulnerability, Affect" in *Frames of War*.

from before, it is meant to reflect something back to the American *citizen* whose conscience is supposedly pricked. While the humanitarian framework intends to restore the prisoners' legibility as persons (legal and otherwise), it nevertheless maintains a unidirectional relationship of response that recoups both morality and civic status for the humanitarian citizen-reader while reinforcing the illegibility of prisoners as full political subjects on their own terms.[79]

To be sure, the biographies present more comprehensive personal portraits of the prisoners to humanize them beyond the generalized portrayals of their lives in journalism or legal proceedings. Appearing on the page opposite the poems, the details included are meant to not only underscore these men's innocence (and thus evidence the injustices of the camp) but to also cast them as more sympathetic characters (and thus undeserving of the atrocities inflicted on them). Some of the profiles highlight the fact that these men have families: for example, Jumah al Dossari is introduced as the father of a "young daughter," which is followed by a brief description of his solitary confinement at Guantánamo and suicide attempts (31). Others are introduced as talented writers: Ustad Badruzzaman Badr is a "prolific Pakistani essayist with an MA in English" and was imprisoned along with his brother Shaikh Abdurraheem Muslim Dost, a "Pakistani poet and essayist" who "composed thousands of lines of poetry in Pashto" while at Guantánamo, most of which still has not been made public (27, 33). Some men are presented through their occupations: Sami al Haj was working as a journalist for al-Jazeera in Afghanistan when he was arrested in 2001, Osama Abu Kabir was a water truck driver in Jordan, and Ibrahim al Rubaish was a teacher and "religious scholar who dislikes hostility and was once a candidate

[79] In *Rightlessnes*, Paik argues that the rightless must rely on the discourse of rights to "resist rightlessness" and regain recognition in this regard. She writes, "Rightless people have no choice but to resist state violence from within the state's structures" (13). I do not contend that this is the case in the juridical domain of recognition which underpins citizenship, humanitarianism, and the field of human rights. By arguing for the right to lyric opacity in this chapter I hope to add another dimension to the way in which the addresses of rightless people are received and apprehended, working toward other forms of solidarity than along the axis of state-based rights.

for a judgeship" (49, 64). In general, these portraits are an attempt to make each man singular, personal, known to have a life that exceeds the prison camp. At the same time, the details of their arrest, imprisonment, torture, and sometimes release, are also included, if not emphasized. In this way the biographies also function as a record of human rights violations with specific invocations of international law.

Across these portraits, it is notable that *Poems from Guantánamo* favors a universalizing mode of humanity in the biographies for each poet, and carefully avoids mention of the prisoners' citizenship—*in most cases*. While many of the biographical sketches mention national origin, only four of seventeen poets are described as "citizens" of anywhere. On the one hand, this elision seems consistent with the emphasis on "person" in human rights discourse, what Joseph Slaughter calls the "mask for the human" in its efforts to make a universal subject who is equal before the law (18). In this way, the omission of civic recognition seems to manage the paradox of state sovereignty within the human rights regime for the rights-bearing reader. As Slaughter concisely outlines in the introduction to *Human Rights Inc*., one of the primary paradoxes of the human rights regime is its dependence on state sovereignty (and nation-state identity) as it strives after the universal category of humanity (and inter-national community). The state plays two role, after all: it is "historically both the violator of human rights and the administrative unit that capacitates individuals as subject of rights and duties" (20). The humanitarian citizen-reader is thus called upon *as a rights-bearing citizen* to think past their limited sphere of civic identity (where their rights are at least legislated by the state, if not fulfilled) and into the "imagined inter-nation" to find community with these strangers on a different basis of personhood (33).[80] What I want to emphasize is how this paradox strives

[80] Undeniably, there is an echo here with the movement of Yu Yuan's address, through the gift of memory, at the end of *War Trash* (discussed in Chapter 2). The key difference I would mark is the way Yu Yuan positions himself as a migrant

beyond state sovereignty to recognize "humanity" as universal but relies on and affirms the rights regime that is linked to the state and claimed through citizenship.

In this way, the limited mention of citizenship status can be more strategic. The four whose citizenship status is identified are also defined in two other significant ways: they have an explicit relationship to either the U.S. or the U.K. and they are portrayed as political leaders. Abdulla Majid al Noaimi, who is also given the title "The Captive of Dignity," is acknowledged as a "citizen of Bahrain who attended Old Dominion University in Virginia" (58). Moazzam Begg is a British citizen who maintains a relationship with Amnesty International; Martin Mubanga is described as a citizen of the UK and Zambia who "continues to campaign on behalf of the British residents who remained imprisoned" (29, 55). Finally, Shaker Abdurraheem Aamer is a "Saudi Arabian citizen and British resident," who is also noted as a "leader among the Guantánamo detainees" who "helped broker an end to one of the hunger strikes (19). Finally, and the fourth is acknowledged as (29, 55, 58). . Although unique circumstances in each case, the descriptions demonstrate that these "citizens" are already linked to the "humanitarian" nation-states; they have spent time in these communities, participated in them, sometimes to the point of being granted full "membership" status in the form of state citizenship. Practically speaking, the inclusion of these details could be tactical, illustrating a "voluntary relationship" with the U.S. in order to validate the prisoners' claims to rights under the U.S. Constitution, one means of restoring the legal process that was contested by the Justice Department (Kaplan Where 853). At the same time, these men also emerge as the political, and perhaps moral, leaders advocating and organizing for the rights of the prisoners, which perhaps inadvertently, reinforces the alignment of civic rights and political action with the U.S. and U.K. (the same alliance that led the invasion

figure extending toward a diaspora that moves across nation-state boundaries but is not exclusively made by them. The bequeathal itself instantiates a different relation than the imaginative leap of the "inter-nation."

of Afghanistan and Iraq and now shepherds the humanitarian movement). These profiles therefore end up investing even further in the humanitarian model of the "first-world" citizen-responder who has a moral conscience. The remaining thirteen poets in the collection are and do many other things but their profiles center on their suffering and their writing, placing them outside of this inner circle of citizenship and direct political action. As the rightless, racialized Other they remain unincorporated in the "inter-nation" community; they are more distant geographically and imaginatively for the humanitarian citizen-reader, occupying the role of the suffer who calls out, seeking response from someone who can act on their behalf.[81]

In this manner, the paratextual apparatus around the poems in the collection establishes a clear framework of humanitarianism within which the reader is hailed and the poets are heard. In previous chapters I highlighted how "impaired citizens" nevertheless entered a negotiation of citizenship through the structure of the political address, insisting on their civic status by re-establishing the civil collective on a different basis of relation. Here, I take a different course to problematize the nationalized, racialized hierarchy of citizens encoded in humanitarianism by resisting the appropriation of poetry for that end. Reading against the paratextual apparatus that serves the humanitarian conscience, I offer a more formalist reading of the poems included in the collection in order to center movements of refusal and estrangement that build toward what I am calling "lyric opacity." In *Poetics of Relation*, Édouard Glissant introduces "the right to opacity" as a means of respecting the "irreducible singularity" of something (or someone, or a community, etc.), because it goes further than the "right to difference" which may bring

[81] It might be useful to think of the paratextual framing as similar to the humanitarian narrator Joseph Slaughter discusses in his article, "Humanitarian Reading." In a compelling interpretation of *A Memory of Solferino*, Slaughter alights on the "triangulated structure of transnational empathy" that edifies the readership in humanitarian feeling through "a sense of responsibility to the integrity of one's own class of humanity" (103). At the end of his essay, however, Slaughter cautions against "overlook[ing] the inaugural act of generous narrative imagining" in which the storyteller make the first extension of identification with the audience, assuming a kinship through sympathetic or empathetic response (105).

recognition but risks reduction and generalization (190). This opacity is experienced in self and other, confronted always when "put into relation." Turning to the lyric as form, I argue that this opacity is carried forth in the address that shifts with multiple destinations, implicit and explicit, intentional and unexpected. This indeterminacy communicates unknowability and movement such that the address (the putting into relation) is constantly being made and remade between a singular *I* and *you*. To recover lyric opacity as a "right" displaces the primacy of the audience being hailed and creates a more intimate space of estrangement that invites solidarity without appropriation, inclining toward a different political community imagined beyond both the joint citizenry of the nation-state or the "universal" humanity of the inter-nation.

II. The Turn Away: Intimate Estrangement in the Lyric

Building off Northrop Frye's foundational definition that the lyric is "not heard but overheard," Jonathan Culler argues, in his most recent formulation, that the "triangulated address" is the "root-form of presentation for the lyric," meaning the poem makes an "address to the reader by means of address to something or someone else" (186). The lyric functions, in this way, through both direct and indirect address, a simultaneity that makes the lyric address peculiar to other forms of address. Culler notes, rightly, that the significance of this address goes beyond its "apparent communicative purpose," as a reading of testimony would stress (187). Rather, the lyric address is also an event, it *enacts*. For Culler, the significance of this event is that it introduces a "special temporality of the lyric present," in which the poet is constituted as a poetic subject with the power to "make something happen" (243, 240). And though he acknowledges that this poetic subject is established through a relationship to the addressed object, this is an "act of will" on the poet's part that makes the poet *poetic* (223). I would like to

emphasize instead how the lyric enacts a relation that is posited (sometimes several times) through the dyadic *I* and *you*, even as the destination of the address shifts and expands, creating a space of intimate estrangement.

The lyric poem, most simply, stages the event of address—the lyric is a voicing that is always oriented towards a *you*, whether implicit or explicit, and one that is, I would emphasize, always ambiguous, open, unfixed, and shifting. The lyric claims a dyadic structure, drawing in the reader as an addressee, the *you*, then displaces her position to the poem as primary, thereby destabilizing that structure. This shift foregrounds how the address hangs suspended and might be directed, redirected, misdirected. Of course, this kind of redirection is immediately felt with the prisoners' poems, which reached a new, in many cases unintended, audience through a publication process the prisoners themselves could not participate in. It is the openness, and slipperiness, of the address that constitutes the peculiar and indeterminate space of the lyric, which, I argue, is a way to move beyond the limited readings of the poems that adhere to a humanitarian structure of response. Reinstating the indeterminacy of the lyric address is one means of honoring the "right to opacity," a resistance to being generalized or reduced, in favor of a relation more unknowable.

As suggested in the opening, some of the poems in the collection includes moments of direct address to a reader that is representative of the responsive humanitarian public. Considering the failure of the juridical process to even provide a platform for testimony, it is indeed imperative to heed the call of these addresses, arguments that both Naomi Paik and Judith Butler make in their work. However, the majority of the poems in this collection don't make their address in such direct, or transparent ways, and my intention in examining the more complex forms of address is to refocus attention on the unmistakable moments of refusal and

estrangement that complicated how we are "put in relation." In addition to the address to the reader, Culler outlines two other forms of address, which differ in degrees of indirection: the address to another, and the address to an "impossible addressee." Though Culler links apostrophe to the last category of address as the attempt to animate an inanimate addressee—as in Shelley's address to the "west wind"—I am more inclined to read with Barbara Johnson, who returns apostrophe to its etymological meaning: the turn away. Taking apostrophe in this sense is closer to Frye's definition of the lyric as a voicing that is overheard, the speaker turning away from the direct audience and displacing her in favor of an absent addressee. This other, absent addressee may or may not be impossible, may or may not be inanimate, but it's the act of turning away that expands the address, making it at once direct and indirect (or "fictional," to use Johnson's terms) (30). In this sense, I would suggest apostrophe is significant to understanding the second category of address as well, when directed to another, even as the distinction of the *inanimate* addressee remains important, as I will discuss later.

The most common lyric form found in *Poems from Guantánamo* is the apostrophic address to another. Some of the poems are also prayers in which the speaker invokes Allah, God, Lord, or Father. In Abdulaziz's "I Shall Not Complain," the Lord becomes the absolute "You," the speaker stating he "shall not complain to anyone other," which puts the reader in a position of overhearing something not meant for them (4). Other poems are more in keeping with the political addresses considered above as testimony. "Is it True?" by Osama Abu Kabir builds from a series of obviously "true" rhetorical questions—"Is it true that the grass grows again after the rain?" (1)—to the real question—"But is it true that one day we'll leave Guantánamo Bay?/Is it true that one day we'll back to our homes?" (6-7)—before making an address:

> But do you hear me, oh Judge, do you hear me at all?
> We are innocent, here, we've committed no crime.

Set me free, set us free, if anywhere still
Justice and compassion remain in this world! (13-16).

The speaker again invokes a world community supposedly founded on the principles of "justice and compassion," and calls on a figural Judge to recognize and respond to the prisoners' innocence. In this case, the reader is not immediately called upon, or called on to respond; they are displaced by the Judge, a displacement made more acute by the movement through the set of rhetorical questions that could be posed to any audience. In this way, the reader overhears the cry for a judicial process and becomes witness to injustice. Culler acknowledges that lyric apostrophe represents embarrassment for the poet, even for critics, as the poet assumes an unusual, excessive, and pretentious power to produce and predict (most extreme with the animation of an inanimate other) (190). However, there is another site of potential embarrassment that he doesn't mention—the displacement of the reader who now overhears something they were not supposed to.[82] Thinking more broadly about this collection, one could interpret much of the "first-world" humanitarian response to the human rights crisis at Guantánamo Bay Prison Camp in terms of a kind of embarrassment at inadvertently becoming witness to the crimes and injustices and recognizing their own complicity as citizens. The speaker's address in "Is it True?" underscores the legal process that has been both invoked and withdrawn as well as, it seems, the ethical failing of "compassion" among the international community of universal humanity. In recognizing themselves in this community, the reader can both acknowledge their complicity and resolve their conscience by aligning with these values, extending a kind of commitment to their restoration. Foregrounding the more subtle movement

[82] Interestingly, Mohamedou Ould Slahi discusses a kind of embarrassment and "moral dilemma" at overhearing a personal conversation from one of his guards who was on the phone with family speaking in Arabic with an accent Slahi found familiar. He admits the eavesdropping brought him great comfort but it was also a problem of keeping his own dignity and respecting others. He ends with an apology for his "unintentional transgression" (xxiv).

of apostrophe, however, the speaker's address displaces the reader by focusing attention on the Judge's role, casting the reader as a more passive participant in this process.

Indeed, most of the poems direct their addresses to family members, which establishes a more private circuit that is overhead. Sami al Haj's poem, "Humiliated in the Shackles" begins: "When I heard pigeons cooing in the trees,/Hot tears covered my face./When the lark chirped, my thoughts composed/A message for my son./Mohammad, I am afflicted" (1-5). With this introduction, the speaker goes on to give an account of his experience at the hands of the "oppressors" who "move freely about the world" and his refusal to cooperate with them (7-8). Interestingly, the speaker folds into his message two other addresses, ventriloquizing the explanation (and accusations) he gives to his oppressors: "America, you ride on the backs of orphans/And you terrorize them daily" and "Bush, beware./The world recognizes an arrogant liar" (21-24). The speaker then resumes his address to his son to reinforce this circuit of address and their relationship: "Mohammad, do not forget me./Support the cause of your father, a God-fearing man," (27-28). And it's with an emphasis on this relationship that the poem ends, making one final address, a prayer: "Lord, unite me with my son Mohammad" (37). The *you* remains implicit throughout most of the poem, only appearing twice in thirty eight lines ("you ride" and "your father"), so the address feels looser—in giving an account to his son, the speaker could also be giving an account to any reader, folding in his direct accusations. But the repetition of his direct address to Mohammad works to define a circuit of discourse that displaces the reader—the speaker intends his message for his son. In contrast to other poems, there is no invitation for the reader's response or invitation for the reader's identification with a responsive world. Instead, the poem emphasizes its lack of interest in a reader other than his son, even as the address can, and does, open to others.

With the turn away, the lyric address opens a more indeterminate space that cannot be contained by the over-determined framework of moral relation and response. I am persuaded by Avital Ronell's conceptualization of the Greeting as a mode of critical reading that attends to figures of the stranger while abandoning the impulse to master, know, incorporate, and appropriate. This orientation means first rejecting responses of astonishment or awe at the beauty of a poem: "our astonishment would mean that we took the poem for an object, one created by a poet. We would stay within the confines of the history of poetic production. We would admire a product, a possession, and be pleased by a cultural achievement" (19). In terms of *Poems from Guantánamo*, I would argue that the limited context of the human rights crisis and humanitarian response, stimulate readings of awe or pity for the poets who write under the conditions of imprisonment at Guantánamo, which confines the poems as objects in the history of poetic production. And this kind of reading fails to be caught by the Greeting. To be attuned to the event of the lyric address, Ronell suggests, "we have to hold still and risk nonrecognition":

> The poem should resemble nothing, nothing grand or classifiable, nothing secured. To recognize in the poem the markings of a great work is not to let oneself be greeted by its word but to grasp its perceived importance — that is, to grasp it (conceptually), to account for its status as a beautiful object that one can proudly classify as canonical or as belonging to one's heritage. Such reception gives a sense of mastery over the object. (21)

While Ronell, by way of Heidegger and Hölderlin, poses the problem of mastery or appropriation in terms of the "great works" that constitute a "canon," there are parallels to draw with the "perceived importance" attributed to the prisoners' poems. These poems have been collected and assembled in order to be "secured," "grasped," and "classified," and ultimately "mastered." Undoubtedly, the poems do have testimonial power, and I do not wish to undermine the importance of including the prisoners' own words in "the dialogue," to recall Falkoff's statement. However, I am wary of the generalized appropriation of the poetic word within a

liberal humanitarian culture. Though the readings of testimony may not go so far as to incorporate the poems into a cultural canon or heritage, they are made knowable primarily through human rights discourse, which represents another kind of "first-world" cultural heritage.[83] In this way, the poems are made recognizable, and consumable, through English translation, and the poets are made recognizable as the "suffering others" who must be responded to by a moral, humanitarian world. Through this framework, the stranger is "grasped" or assimilated into a familiar schema of understanding. As Glissant might say, this kind of recognition reduces the other for the sake of transparency, preserving the *I* and *you* unto themselves, rather than in relation. Recognizing difference produces this mode of response: "I understand your difference, or in other words, without creating a hierarchy, I relate it to my norm. I admit you to existence, within my system" (190).

To encounter the poem as Greeting calls for a mode of critical reading that permits the poem to say what it will. This kind of reading abandons the conceptual apparatus that categorizes and fixes a structure of relations, and instead stays open to the shifting indeterminacy of the address. This would also mean permitting the stranger *to be* in its singularity.[84] Rather than seeking to assimilate, incorporate, secure, or master the other, this kind of reading stays open to "moments of disturbing estrangement" as, and between, subjects (30). I want to acknowledge that this might mean disavowing the lyric as yet another stabilizing form, but I turn to the

[83] There is, indeed, power in claiming *Poems from Guantánamo* as well as the prison itself as "American" as a means of being accountable to the prison, the torture and abuse, as well as the broader war operates around it. This would be something like an "imperial history" to use Paul Kramer's terms (see "Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World"). However, I would resist this inclusion given the forcible removal of the prisoners from their homelands, and in the case of the *Poems* collection, the publication that proceeded without them. Slahi's *Guantánamo Diary*, on the other hand, might be an example of literature (and now a film) that has intentionally entered an American cultural archive and should be taken up as such.

[84] In one of the most striking passages of Ronells' essay "On the Misery of Theory Without Poetry," she turns to Arendt's meditation on meeting the stranger with love, when to love means "I want you to be." In this mini-discussion, the "we" becomes the stranger which, Ronell identifies, signals an important political reorientation, especially in contemporary American politics (20).

indeterminate space created by the lyric address because of how it hangs suspended, slipping and shifting continually, direct and indirect, redirected and maybe misdirected.

"My Heart Was Wounded by the Strangeness," written by Abdulla Majid Al Noaimi, is one of the poems in the collection most absorbed in the act of poetic address and the suspend space of the lyric that establishes an intimacy through movement. Strikingly, the poem opens with a literal greeting embedded in a lyric address:

> My heart was wounded by the strangeness.
> Now poetry has rolled up his sleeves, showing a long arm.
>
> Time passes. The hands of the clock deceive us.
> Time is precious and the minutes are limited.
>
> Do not blame the poet who comes to your land,
> Inspired, arranging rhymes.
>
> Oh brother, who need not be named, I send you
> My gift of greetings. I send heavily falling rains
>
> To quench your thirst and show my gratitude.
> My poem will comfort you and ease your burdens. (1-10)

As if the wounding and the strangeness move him into poetry, compel him into speech, the speaker, self-identifying as "poet," directs his greeting to his brother in line 7, but not before finding another *you* two lines before: "Do not blame the poet who comes to your land." But whose land? Read as a "poem from Guantánamo" this is a pointed question. Is this "land" Cuba? The United States? The reach of poetic words to any reader's "land"? The poem's speaker evokes the status of prisoners as migrants, which I read on two registers. On the one hand, this identification recalls the imperial history around Guantánamo, which Amy Kaplan has so powerfully outlined, describing how the "enemy combatants" have been "brought to the

threshold of the U.S. as though they were aspiring immigrants or would-be refugees who have to be kept out forcibly" (840). In another sense, and more in keeping with the previous chapter on refugee movements, the speaker seems to call attention to himself as a migrant estranged from his homeland and community (perhaps one sense of the "strangeness"). However, instead of remarking on the forcible, violent "migration" of capture and detention, the speaker projects himself as a kind of agential migrant through his poetry: a poet who "comes to your land/Inspired." Through speech, the poet reclaims his presence in the land, but does so through the invocation of an open, undetermined *you*. With this *you*, the speaker makes an address to the reader, but leaves open multiple instantiations—the *you* is never fixed but always shifting. Read as part of the collection, "your land" *could* suggest an American readership but also avoids over-determining this meaning. Indeed, it would be a mistake to interpret the speaker through the frame of immigration, which colludes with the state's racialized representation of the prisoners as "enemy combatants." Rather, to understand the poet as migrant respects the migration of address, displacing the reader's exclusive identification (my "here") to entertain the you's *anywhere* and thus the *yous* everywhere else.

With the plea, "do not blame," the speaker signals both the hostility against migrants thought to be threatening (those who might "have to be kept out forcibly") and the potential power of the "inspired" poet "arranging rhymes," raising the central question that preoccupies the poem: what does poetry do? To read with Culler, this is a variation on the central question behind the lyric address, what power does the poet have to make something happen? There is an immediate echo of the military state's concern over the prisoner's power as poets. As Falkoff notes in the introduction, and has been regularly commented on, the Pentagon still regards the poems written by prisoners at Guantánamo as a risk to national security because of their "content

and form" (4). The premise is not only that there is information being communicated, but that poetry communicates in a special way and the original languages enfold further secrets. "My Heart Was Wounded by the Strangeness" takes this question further. This poem is self-reflexively and meta-poetically active, offering its own account of poetry's doing that goes well beyond communication. In the course of thirty-six lines, the poem is said to comfort, ease, appease, express, and the poem's speaker offers advice, hopes, asks, and invokes. All of these "modes" can be incorporated into the poem's Greeting, or the event of address, which the speaker articulates in the fourth couplet.

With the "gift of greetings," the poem shifts its address. One might expect a break here, but the poem does not mark the transition. Indeed, the only divisions in the entire poem are the unrhymed couplets,[85] each line ending in a full-stop. Of course, the couplet in which the speaker explicitly signals his address to his brother ("Oh brother, who need not be named") is the only exception to this rule with the enjambment of lines 7-9:

> Oh brother, who need not be named, I send you
> My gift of greetings. I send heavily falling rains
>
> To quench your thirst and show my gratitude.

As if enacting the lines, the "sending" of line 7 reaches into the following line and the "falling rains" tumble into the next couplet. That these lines break the overall form of the poem suggests a kind of second opening that complicates the structure of address. The remainder of the poem adheres to the form of unrhymed full-stop couplets, but this doubled opening keeps both senses of *you* in the balance – both the open address of an unidentified and re-iterable *you* and the address to the brother. The double opening thus establishes two structures of relations and

[85] I want to note that the unrhymed couplets contradict the promise in line 6, and it's possible, perhaps likely, that this is a result of translation into English.

literalizes the experience of apostrophe: turning away from the *you* of "your land" to address the "brother." Foregrounding the turn away suggests the way in which the poem's set of relations might situate, then slip and shift, highlighting the instability of the *you* and the openness of address, which is neither fixed nor to be taken for granted.

The rest of the poem oscillates precisely in this way, slipping in and out and between these two structures of relation: one between brothers and one between the speaker's implied *I* and the *you*. It's worth noting that the poem never breaks attention to the *you*. Unlike "Humiliated in the Shackles," which demonstrates a lack of interest in the reader, this poem is very interested in *you*. With the exception of the two opening couplets and another, every couplet in the poem includes an explicit reference to *you*. The next fourteen lines continue:

> If you blame yourself, my poem will appease you.
> My mind is not heavy with animosity.
>
> I will be satisfied once you are free, and I will embrace you.
> There is nothing, brother, like a mild, agreeable temper.
>
> I will offer advice out of pure cordiality –
> Advice from one who has experienced the impossible:
>
> You will not gain everything that your soul desires;
> Some things will come to you, but others will not.
>
> Forget what people say and be satisfied with who you are.
> Patience, the bony animal, will lead you to meat.
>
> Be generous to others, brother,
> And leave behind your avaricious spirit.
>
> If your brother has hurt you,
> Recall his good deeds and the pain will go away. (11-24)

With the repeated reference to "brother" the speaker seems to establish the addressee, rendering the poem apostrophic again, so that the reader overhears the conversation between brothers, one-sided though it may be. But the references are a bit more slippery than this. In line 23, the speaker seems to refer to himself, "your brother," but this iteration of the term also expands to include a general, non-specific brother more along the lines of a brotherhood of man that echoes the "others" in line 22. Indeed, even the first invocation in line 6 is not "my brother" or "Brother" but simply "brother." By avoiding either the possessive pronoun or the proper noun, the speaker invites the non-specific *you* into the intimacy of brotherhood and expresses a deeply empathetic love: "*I* will be satisfied once *you* are free" (my emphasis). Again, to read it as a poem from Guantánamo, the speaker's address takes on an ironic tone, reversing the conditions of imprisonment and freedom. To identify with this brotherhood of man, means to receive this address direct: "If you blame yourself, my poem will appease you" (11).

For a poem that is so concerned with the address and the gift of greetings, the slipperiness of the *you* might be troubling; indeed, the paratextual frame tries to circumvent this by fixing the poem's references, address, and destination. Just above the poem, a prose introduction explains the circumstances of the poem, presumably taken from a letter written by Noaimi to his lawyer: "This is a poem that I have written about my brother and friend Salman al Khalifa at the Guantánamo prison, after a long separation between us. The Americans were keen on keeping us apart" (61). With this introduction, the poem is clarified as words of advice from one prisoner to another, an exchange between "insiders" who thus possess a singular intimacy. That said, what I find particularly striking about these lines is that it includes the name of the brother, even as the poem disavows naming — "Oh brother, who need not be named" (7). In this sense, the paratext explicitly contradicts the lyric space of the poem: the paratext wants to identify and stabilize a set

of relations, which the poem itself resists. To *not* name the brother suggests a close familiarity, but to signal the not-naming so explicitly is to also indicate an awareness of an audience that is not the brother addressed—as if to avoid identifying the brother to this audience. The awareness of audience is likely a specific awareness of the scrutiny of the security state: "the Americans" who imprison the brothers and work to keep them apart. In this context, giving a name is a loaded piece of information with potentially dire consequences for the beloved. Within the poem, this gesture of refusal also signals the turn away of apostrophe, the address being reoriented to unfold as both direct and indirect. For it's the *you* hanging at the end of the line, "I send you," that opens out into the suspended space of the poem's address.

The poem's introduction wants to fix the references and relations in the poem, emphasizing the poem's communicative purpose. Framing the poem like this reinforces how it is overheard by a sympathetic audience (in this case, the readers of *Poems of Guantánamo*), rather than being addressed directly to them. For the sake of the testimonial reading, the reader indulges in the overhearing, leaning in further, to be able to comprehend and assimilate this encounter into their matrix of understanding—there is a suffering subject who must be responded to by a moral, humanitarian "we." Without a doubt, this kind of advocacy on behalf of the prisoners is still needed. At the same time, I want to emphasize the gesture of refusal in the poem's "turn away," in order to appreciate the totality of the lyric address, the potential in its movements. Accepting this refusal leaves open other circuits of discourse that, by honoring opacity, reveal a fuller personhood than is granted by either the juridical or humanitarian frameworks.

In her reading of Hölderlin, Ronell argues that "the poem's language…casts about for allies, interlocutors, or guardians in the form of friendship," but "the friends are not 'there'" (30). The poem thus becomes an inquiry into friendship: "primed by absence and the solitary echo, the

poet breaches the narcissistic returns of friendship, keeping the friend necessarily remote, insubstantial, and out of political reach" and moves into an understanding of "nonreciprocity and nonrequital" instead (30, 31). The "unrequited question" of the poem thus "argues for an even more fragile establishment of community," which, Ronell suggests in a final turn, "blow[s] apart the premises on which one could build a substantial work or project of asserted nonalienation and secured returns" (31). Ultimately, this is a critique against slipping into the "narcissistic totality of the state,"[86] which can be extended, necessarily, as a critique against the narcissism of humanitarianism as well (31). Assimilating the stranger as a suffering other to be responded to, this structure of relation is a closed circuit referring back to itself, reinforcing the collective identity of a moral, responsive "we" with a conscience.

Reading against this totality, and the desire to know, categorize, fix, and master, I propose another approach to the poems through an understanding of the lyric address as Greeting, wherein the Other cannot be assimilated, and the address hangs suspended, open, casting about for those who are not there, uncertain as to whether or not the address will arrive. While this uncertainty is always true of address, the extension, suspension, and displacement is concretized in the lyric address. This orientation to the poems as lyrics is not meant to de-politicize the prisoners' writings nor the conditions of publication; rather, I want to frame the lyric address precisely through the conditions of imprisonment: when to write is, as Mohamedou Ould Slahi puts it, "shouting in the dark" (Restored Edition lii).

[86] Here, Ronell makes an oblique reference to the Nazism that Heidegger was involved with. I find her critique of the totality of the state highly resonant with the totality of the U.S. state as well, which several of the poems and Slahi's *Guantánamo Diary* highlight.

III. Shouting in the Dark

To shout in the dark might be another way of approaching Culler's third category of address, in which the speaker addresses an "impossible addressee" and apostrophe becomes about animating an inanimate other as well. In many ways this lyric address is the most familiar, or at least most traditional; as Culler writes, "the less ordinary the addressee, the more the poem seems to become a ritualistic invocation," concerned with the "poetic vocation" (188, 216). In this specific sense of apostrophe, the "function…would be to posit a potentially responsive or at least attentive universe, to which one has a relation" (216). And ultimately, this address is about "the testing of ideological limits through the multiplication of the figures who are urged to act, to listen, or to respond" (242). Once again, though, I would suggest that Barbara Johnson offers a more subtle understanding of the device of apostrophe. In addition to emphasizing the anthropormorphic aspect of apostrophe, she makes this distinction about the kind of animation the speaker attempts: the transformation is to "turn silence into mute responsiveness" (30). What I find interesting about this articulation is that the move is from silence to muteness. As she points out about Shelley's west wind, the speaker "gives animation, gives the capacity to responsiveness to the wind, not in order to make it listen to him — in order to make it listen to him doing nothing but address it" (31). In this way, there is still a distancing from or displacement of the other being addressed—the other is animated but also muted. This address is necessarily non-reciprocal and non-requited and in this way rethinks the notion of a responsive world. The subject position of the humanitarian reader is now compromised; they are invited into a more fragile community that doesn't have the assurance of universalisms but maintains a strategic asymmetry between speaker and world in order to "speak back" in a different register.

Within *Poems from Guantánamo*, there are the fewest examples of this kind of address. Abdulaziz's poem "O Prison Darkness" opens with an address to the darkness explicitly — "O prison darkness, pitch your tent./We love the darkness" — as a kind of defiant challenge to the speaker's environment (1-2). The rest of the poem drops the address, but builds as a charged call against despair in the face of oppressive darkness, ending with another address: "O crisis, intensify!/The morning is about to break forth" (13-14). Employing a similar trope, the speaker in Hassan's "The Truth," describes the "face of the universe" as "dark/as if its lights were covered by a curtain," and in the last section makes an address through apostrophe: "Oh Night, I am a bright light/That you will not obscure/Oh Night, my song will restore the sweetness of Life:/The birds will again chirp in the trees" (45-46, 64-67). Both addresses want to animate the environment, the darkness, by calling on its oppressive indifference to the speaker, but the address is extended (to give animation) as an *act of resistance*, positing the speaker's speech against the environment's muteness, its non-responsiveness. Through these passing moments of apostrophe the poems' speakers make addresses elsewhere to resist, to "persevere" through the darkness, and to claim a different personhood than is enforced by the context (47).

Ibrahim al Rubaish's poem "Ode to the Sea"[87] is unique for the way in which it maintains this apostrophic address through the entirety of the poem, and like "My Heart was Wounded by the Strangeness," maintains a close attention to the *you*. This is the first half of the poem:

> O Sea, give me news of my loved ones.
>
> Were it not for the chains of the faithless, I would have dived into you,
> And reached my beloved family, or perished in your arms.

[87] I must note that one of the epigraphs to *Poetics of Relations* is a line from Derek Walcott, "sea is history," also the title for one of his poems. In the opening stanza of this poem, the sea is a "grey vault" that has locked up "tribal memory." In Chapter 3, I briefly discuss how the sea appears as a motif in Vietnamese diaspora literature to suggest trauma and history, and more specifically how "nu'oc" is used in *The Gangster We Are All Looking For* to signify movement, relation, indeterminacy between and around the territory of the nation-state.

Your beaches are sadness, captivity, pain, and injustice.
Your bitterness eats away at my patience.

Your calm is like death, your sweeping waves are strange.
The silence that rises up from you holds treachery in its fold.

Your stillness will kill the captain if it persists,
And the navigator will drown in your waves.

Gentle, deaf, mute, ignoring, angrily storming,
You carry graves.

If the wind enrages you, your injustice is obvious.
If the wind silences you, there is just the ebb and flow. (1-13)

Unlike Noaimi's double opening, the first line makes an address (really a demand) that posits the dyadic structure of *I* and *you*, between the speaker and the anthropomorphized Sea, immediately displacing the reader to a position that *only* overhears. The opening address animates the Sea as one who might "give" news, might even be the means of escape; at the same time, its "arms" represent a cruel embrace of "sadness, captivity, pain, and injustice." Though animated, the Sea remains "calm like death" — its "sweeping waves are strange" in their "silence" and "stillness," and lethal. Having demanded "news" from the Sea, whose beaches hold him captive, the speaker is pained by and impatient with its non-responsiveness. And it is precisely the fact that the Sea is "gentle, deaf, mute, ignoring," not just "angrily storming," that it becomes the bearer of graves, not of news. Animating and anthropomorphizing the Sea into muteness, the speaker doesn't simply describe the Sea's silence, but also enacts the nonreciprocity and nonrequital that is always risked in an address to *you*.

Again, in this poem nearly every couplet includes a reference to *you*, and though the opening address seems to confirm the addressee, through the turn away of apostrophe, the

speaker still reaches towards an indeterminate *you* beyond the Sea, keeping open the direct and and indirect address. With the next set of stanzas the speaker repeats his direct address to the Sea, but now poses a series of questions that explicitly ask after the Sea's response:

> O Sea, do our chains offend you?
> It is only under compulsion that we daily come and go.
>
> Do you know our sins?
> Do you understand we were cast into gloom?
>
> O Sea, you taunt us in our captivity.
> You have colluded with our enemies and you cruelly guard us.
>
> Don't the rocks tell you of the crimes committed in their midst?
> Doesn't Cuba, the vanquished, translate its stories for you?
>
> You have been beside us for three years, and what have you gained?
> Boats of poetry on the sea; a buried flame in a burning heart. (14-23)

Possibly offended, the Sea is made to be something moral; unknowing, the Sea is supposed to be paying attention. But more than this, the Sea is to be held accountable, for not only taunting the prisoners, but actively collaborating with their captors, and in fact becoming one of them. Part of the collusion is of course through the Sea's silence, muteness, stillness. Strikingly, the speaker animates other speakers in the poem—the rocks speaking of crimes and Cuba translating stories—but even their addresses do not reach the muted, nonresponsive Sea. The speaker's last question marks an interesting turn, however. If the opening invocation asked for something to be gained from the Sea ("give me news"), by this point, the speaker becomes interested in what the Sea itself has gained—offense, knowledge, understanding? "Boats of poetry." Speech.

"You have been beside us for three years, and what have you gained?" is perhaps the most open of addresses in the poem, the *you* most detached from the direct address to the "Sea."

Indeed, in the line following, the speaker posits the "sea" as object, no longer the animated, anthropomorphic subject. However, the slipperiness of address is felt throughout the poem, as if the poem is, in Ronell's words, casting about for friendship through the articulation and re-articulation of address. If in the first half of the poem the speaker affirms, cruelly, the Sea's oppressive presence, in the second half, the speaker's questions mount towards an essential question: are you there? is anybody? The Sea is there, with strange waves and unjust beaches, but deaf and mute, the *you* is not attending, not responding. Through apostrophe, the reader is set up to overhear, displaced but also interpellated into this structure of relation—and thus also cast as mute, nonresponsive. The speaker's voicing, as much as the rocks' and Cuba's, is posited against the *you*'s muted-ness, culminating in that final question that offers "boats of poetry," but only to become "a buried flame." One might read this line as a figure for the collection itself, and an invitation to read through the humanitarian framework established by the paratext. In this sense, the speaker's calling to account is also a call to conscience: what have you gained, standing by for three years?[88]

[88] One of the essays included in the collection is by Ariel Dorfman titled "Where the Buried Flame Lies," an essay that Butler also enlists in her readings of the poetry. In Dorfman's own lyrical moment, he suggests a particular mode of reading we might recognize as the testimonial: "Poetry as a call to those who breathe the same air to also breathe the same verses, to bridge the gap between bodies and between cultures and between warring parties" (71). Characterizing the prisoner-poets' writing as "a way of affirming [their] defiant humanity," Dorfman continues to make his own address to the readers of this volume:

> "Think of the prisoners, breathing in and out those words, close by an ocean they can hear nearby but never see and never touch. Think of them, now represented to their faraway foes by words of fire and sorrow, asking us to listen, to acknowledge the buried flame of their existence. Think that we have a chance to help them complete the journey that started in a cage inside a concentration camp, merely by something as simple as reading these poems" (71-2)

It is significant that Dorfman begins his essay with a moment of reflection on how "shameful" it is that the U.S. "supposedly a democracy" and "supposedly a beacon of freedom…a model of justice" would stoop to the same level as other "desolate governments" in the way it treats its prisoners (69). Undoubtedly a familiar mantra of human rights activism, as a frame for *Poems from Guantánamo*, this essay has the effect of imposing a humanitarian lens of recognition that posits a suffering other in need of response from the "first world" citizens invested in protecting human life even when their governments fail to do so.

However, in the final lines of the poem, the speaker makes an extreme turn that resists this appropriative reading by displacing both himself and the *you*. Abandoning the first person singular voice, the speaker closes:

> The poet's words are the font of our power;
> His verse is the salve for our pained hearts. (24-25)

Consistent with the second half of the poem, the speaker retains the first person plural, suggesting his identification with the other prisoners, but by this point has dropped the singular "me" and "I" he opened with ("O Sea, give me news of my loved ones"). Of the twelve couplets, this is also the only one that doesn't include an explicit reference to *you* — the address has become entirely implicit. Effectively, in the same line that the speaker describes the poetic word as something primary, its power profound, he distances himself from the title of poet and from the *you* who has fixed his attention throughout the preceding poem. Instead, he builds up an "our" that is both powerful and pained.[89] Moving away from the model of positing a suffering other to be responded to by a humanitarian world, the speaker presents another self-standing "we" that is receiving poetry, empowered and comforted by it. Readers might infer that this "we" encompasses Muslim prisoners reading Qur'anic verse, which particularizes this community and suggests a kind of inward turn meditating on the perhaps sacred effect of poetry. The humility of this movement is also a self-displacement that exempts the speaker's poetic production from "poetry" to be read for its "perceived importance." Rather, the speaker subtly returns to the space of the address and what it means, or feels like, to be "put in relation" this way.

In both "My Heart was Wounded" and "Ode to the Sea" the indeterminate space of the

[89] In Butler's reading of *Poems from Guantánamo*, these moments when the speaker displays their "longing" or their experiences of being affectively moved are significant for establishing a different "moral responsiveness" that directly opposes the military logic around the prison camp and the war-making it supports. See especially her discussion of "I Write My Longing" by Abdulla Majid al-Noaimi (58-60).

lyric is structured through the turn away of apostrophe, in which the speaker displaces the immediate audience while at the same time maintaining a fixed attention on *you*, in this way enacting a shifting network of relations that is both direct and indirect. In "My Heart Was Wounded" the *you* literally hangs suspended in the gesture of sending, of greeting — "I send you" — such that the address extends out, vulnerable to the risk of redirection or misdirection. In "Ode to the Sea," the *you* also hangs suspended, but through an address that animates muteness, nonreciprocity and nonrequital. And in the last instance, the speaker becomes disinterested in response at all. To attend to the shifting structure is to open, and keep open, the circuit of address, to regard how the poem "casts about" for allies and friends who are not there. Apostrophic address is a way of reaching toward absence but not quite bringing into presence — this address extends toward and invites then turns away and displaces, animates silence but only into muteness. Through displacement and muteness the lyric poem disrupts and reroutes readings that assume a framework of response through knowing, grasping, or incorporating. Rather, the event of the lyric address creates a moment of estrangement that honors the right to opacity, proceeds with indeterminacy, and permits nonrecognition as another basis of relation.

To be greeted by the poem, by the address, is to also recognize oneself as not addressed. Even as one is interpellated as *you*, through apostrophe the speaker indicates that his interest is also elsewhere — his message is intended for someone else, somewhere else and happens to be redirected here. This turn away not only displaces and de-privileges the reader but undermines the presumption of response so that the audience cannot simply locate themselves as the morally responsive "we" attending to the call of the suffering other. The address is more slippery, perhaps even suspicious of—if not altogether disinterested in—response. The address *does* make relation explicit, though the structure cannot be stabilized or finally known and the encounter

between *I* and *you* is between strangers who remain strangers. In "Ode to the Sea" this is most clearly asserted in the last couplet in which the speaker draws a boundary of sorts between the "our" and *you*, also drawing a distinction between two experiences of poetry. In "My Heart was Wounded" the distinction isn't so definite; at the same time that the speaker signals a division between addressees (brother and *you*), he also seems to invite the *you* into the intimacy of brotherhood. But reading for the rift between *I* and *you* as strangers has interesting implications for this intimacy—it would not be based on familiarity, but on not-knowing.[90] And this is the crux of the Greeting: to relinquish knowing.

Towards the end of *Poetics of Relation*, Édouard Glissant elaborates, to some extent, his argument for the "right to opacity for everyone" (194). He "clamors" for this right as a rejection of universality (which makes transparent through reduction) in favor of the "irreducible singularity" of self and other (whether an individual, community, culture, etc.), which thus creates an ethical basis for relation (194). It is important that opacity is not simply an obscurity encountered in the other. Rather, opacity is the textures of singularity one experiences in oneself as well: "It does not disturb me to accept that there are places where my identity is obscure to me, and the fact that it amazes me does not mean I relinquish it" (192). With this understanding, relation is possible:

> I thus am able to conceive of the opacity of the other for me, without reproach for my opacity for him. To feel in solidarity with him or to build with him or to like what he does, it is not necessary for me to grasp him. It is not necessary to try to become the other (to become other) nor to 'make' him in my image. (193)

Instead of grasping, collapsing, or assimilating, relation becomes a kind of "questioning" when navigating "mutual forms of opacity" (194). In "Ode to the Sea" this questioning is literal, the

[90] I borrow the term "rift" from Ronell's essay "On the Misery of Theory Without Poetry," and she lifts it from Heidegger originally. Ronell invokes the term to suggest how philosophy attempts to resolves alienation while poetry stays in "moments of disturbing estrangement" (30).

list of questions mounting over the poem precisely on the matter of how the *you* stands in relation to the speaker's "our." I want to suggest that the lyric address, whatever its form, is always staging this kind of relationality through indeterminacy as a means of permitting opacity and encouraging questioning. Staying in the second person, the address invokes the singularity of the self and other not to be grasped and maintains the rift between subjects that is at once estranging and intimate. To narrate the other in the third person is to already subjugate into a kind of knowledge, and in that way to incorporate, but the address brings the other into an animated relation that is active and open, drawing close as much as it holds apart, and even sometimes searching for other *you*s.

At the end of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon articulates a similar ethics in building the "world of You" as the path towards a humanism that does not universalize but singularizes: "Was my freedom not given to me then in order to build the world of the You?" (181). This attention in the second person, this relation, gives meaning to the freedom outside of invented categories like black/white, a freedom headed toward the human. Notably, Fanon's final line is written in the form of a classical lyric address: "O my body, make of me always a man who questions!" (181). It is an interesting moment of self-reflexivity, almost a devotional embodiment, worth exploring in light of Fanon's own project; for now, I want to remark on the echo between Fanon and Glissant in committing to "questioning" as the only real basis for relation, one that is consistent with the right to opacity and a new humanism. Glissant ends with the claim that "widespread consent to specific opacities is the most straightforward equivalent of nonbarbarism" (194). To regard the "irreducible singularity" of the other, as much as the self, would mean that "thought of self and thought of other here become obsolete in their duality. Every Other is a citizen and no longer a barbarian" (190). Without making an argument for

sameness, Glissant suggests a way of deconstructing the opposition of self/other by abandoning the modes of knowing that secure these categories. Staying with singularity (of the *I* and *you*), and questioning the opacities, he rejects the accumulation of knowledge through the reductive schema of difference, producing any number of structuring dualities (self/other, order/chaos, citizen/barbarian). This is also how I hear Fanon's line: *Was my freedom not given to me then in order to build the world of the You?*

It is notable that Glissant explicitly invokes the citizen/barbarian dyad as a direct translation of the self/Other problem that arguably remains coded in the humanitarian conscience and legislated in the human rights regime despite their aspirations for universal humanity. To start with opacity, as an encounter with radical singularity, would inaugurate a different basis of recognition—one that permits nonrecognition in favor of the question, perhaps an open address. As I've attempted to show, the lyric address instantiates a different kind of relation, located in the indeterminacy of the encounter between *I* and *you*. Rather than relate into known schemas that reinforce investments in the self (as citizen-humanitarian, in this case), this kind of encounter also disrupts self-understanding, and creates a space of estrangement to promote questioning and an appreciation for opacity rather than transparency. Considering the prisoners' poems in particular, this opacity is partly about suffering—that this is beyond understanding or assimilation, it is necessarily *strange* to those outside. To recognize this limit means disavowing the assumptions of audience: that one is intended as the audience, that one might be able to assimilate this call, and that the audience might be expected to "respond" from some moral authority. To instead become attentive and receptive to the event of address, to be pulled into and displaced from the relation of the *I* and *you*, would mean honoring the right to lyric opacity and letting the poems truly "speak."

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